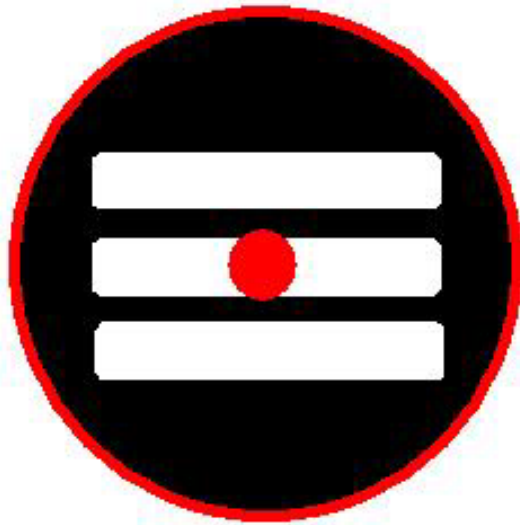


PUJA

THE TENETS AND NATURE OF
TANTRIC RELIGIOUS WORSHIP



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“... the gods were never dethroned in India. They were not disintegrated and dissolved by criticism and natural science, as were the deities of the Greeks ... The gods of Homer became laughable, and were ... later regarded as incompatible with the more spiritual and ethical, later concepts of divinity ... India, on the other hand, retained its anthropomorphic personifications ... to assist the mind in its attempt to comprehend what was regarded as manifested *through* them ... What is expressed through the personal masks was understood to transcend them, and yet the garb of the divine *personae* was never actually removed. By this tolerant, cherishing attitude a solution of the theological problem was attained that preserved the personal character of the divine powers for all the purposes of worship and daily life, while permitting an abstract, supreme and transcendental concept to dominate for the more lofty, supraritualistic stages of insight and speculation.”

“No one who is not himself divine may successfully worship the divinity. Having become the deity one should offer sacrifice to it.” [Ghandarva Tantra] The identity of the hidden nature of the worshipper with the god worshipped is the first principle of the Tantric philosophy of devotion [Bhakti].

Heinrich Zimmer

“Once upon a time a sannyasin entered the temple of Jagganath. As he looked at the holy image he debated with himself whether God had a form or was formless. He passed his staff from left to right to feel whether it touched the image. The staff touched nothing. He understood that there was no image before him; he concluded that God was formless. Next he passed the staff from right to left. It touched the image. He understood that God had form. Thus he understood that God has form and, again, is formless.

The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kali temple that is was She who had become everything. She showed me that everything was full of Awareness. The image [Murti] was Awareness, the altar was Awareness, the water-vessels were Awareness, the door-sill was Awareness, the marble floor was Awareness – all was Awareness. I found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in Bliss – the Bliss of Satchitananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). I saw a wicked man in front of the Kali temple; but in him I also saw the power of the Divine Mother vibrating. That was why I fed a cat with the food that was to be offered to the Divine Mother.”

Shri Ramakrishna

THE RELIGIOUS TENETS OF TANTRA

THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE AWARENESS

THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE GOD

GOD [SHIVA] IS AWARENESS

AWARENESS IS ALL THAT IS AND MORE.

GOD IS EVERYTHING AND MORE.

GOD IS WITHIN EVERYTHING.

EVERYTHING IS WITHIN AWARENESS.

EVERYTHING IS WITHIN GOD.

EVERYTHING IS AWARENESS.

EVERYTHING IS GOD.

THE NATURE OF TANTRIC WORSHIP

Spiritual worship [Puja] mostly begin with salutations to God. Generally speaking, these salutations are offered in the first person e.g., ‘I offer salutations to God, and pray that all obstacles may be removed so that I may attain my real nature.’ In Kashmir Shaivism, the manner of salutation is not only different but also unique in that here the one who offers homage to Shiva is none other than Shiva, nor are the obstacles (for the removal of which the prayer is offered) other than Shiva; and, even the means through which homage is offered, is one with Shiva.

Swami Lakshman Joo

The worship of Shiva as an image or ‘Murti’ (whether in the abstract form of a rock, stone or phallic linga, or in human bodily form) is not understood as any form of ‘idolism’ in the Tantric Shaivist tradition of Kashmir. Instead human images of Shiva, like the human body, are seen as a living symbol and embodiment of divinity – an external embodiment of our own divine inner body or awareness body (Vijnanadeha). That is why worship itself (Puja) is understood in the way primarily associated with ‘Tantra’ - as a process of ‘theosis’ through which the worshipper becomes the god or goddess which he or she worships, identifying with the Divine Awareness and with his or her own androgynous Awareness Body. For just as the individual’s inner self has countless faces and genders, so does Shiva, who is often represented as androgyne or through his female counterparts or consorts (the Great Goddess or ‘Mahadevi’ in the form of both Kali and Parvati). Whilst ultimately every thing and every being is a face of the Divine - of Shiva - the faces, looks and gestures of religious Murti each embody specific transcendental qualities of awareness and allow the worshipper to feel and identify with these qualities. Murti or god-images are not ‘idols’ – profane materialisations and ‘objectifications’ of divinity. Instead they are intended as SUBJECTIFICATIONS - divinisations - of matter itself. And indeed, in a long-forgotten past, higher beings or subjectivities - ‘gods’ – could and did incarnate a portion of their vast awareness in massive stone images and monuments, silently sensing, resonating, and communicating with the human world and worshippers around them. The essence of ritual worship of Shiva is a relationship to the Murti as the temporary body of the indwelling deity. This may be sensually heightened by the sounding of bells or the lighting of candles and incense. Yet Puja can also consist simply of silently uttering or even just THINKING the name ‘Shiva’, or the mantra ‘Shivoham’ (“Shiva is my I”) whilst identifying with pure awareness. For the essence of thinking is THANKING – a thanking recognition of that Divine Awareness which grants us all Being - and that is the very source of our innermost Self.

SHIVA BHAKTI 1

DEVOTIONAL SUTRAS FOR SHIVA PUJA

Listen: neither accepting nor rejecting anything, but just sharing joyfully in everything, being as you are.

I extol that ultimate awareness from which and within which the entire fullness of being is emitted by means of will, knowing and action - whose power is always new, and the God, the great Lord, who is hidden by that power.

Always new, hidden, yet old and apparent to all, The Heart, the Ultimate, shines alone with the brilliance of the Supreme.

In You, the Supreme who transcends the abyss, You without beginning, the unique one who has penetrated the secret depths, You who rest in everything, You who are found in everything ... in You I take refuge.

Listen! Our Lord whose nature is awareness, is unlimited, the absolute master of ... every power.

I bow down to Shiva, new and hidden, in the form of the great pair [Shiva-Shakti].

The Supreme Goddess is the absolute Freedom [Moksha] of Awareness ...

In the divine abode of the body, I adore you, Oh God, together with the Goddess.

I adore you with the priceless goblet of The Heart, which is full of the ambrosia of bliss.

Abhinavagupta

SHIVA BHAKTI 2

Awareness is the Self.

Awareness, Shiva, is the soul of the world.

The Shiva Sutras

**Every appearance owes its existence to the light of awareness.
Nothing can have its own being without the light of awareness.**

Kshemaraja

**Shiva is the Self shining in all things,
all-pervasive, all quiescent Awareness.**

**May the Shiva in-penetrated into my limited self through his
power, offer worship to the Shiva of the expansive Self – the
concealer of himself by himself!**

Somananda

**How wonderful it is that although only one sound, that is, Shiva's
name, is always on the tips of their tongues, yet [His] devotees can
taste the ineffable relish of all the objects of the senses.**

Utpaladeva

THE WORSHIPFUL LIFE

The worshipful life is one in which at all times we identify with the very essence of the Divine – which is nothing but awareness.

That means learning to distinguish awareness as such from each and every thing we are aware of.

To do this we need only remember that our awareness of any thing or thought, sensation or perception, feeling or emotion, is not itself a thing or thought, not itself a sensation or perception, not itself an image or emotion. It is free of things and thoughts, sensations and perceptions, images and emotions.

The name 'Shiva' points to the truth that awareness is what 'lies behind' (SHI) all things and can therefore free us from or 'cut asunder' (SHVI) our attachment to any thing we are aware of.

That is why Shiva, as awareness, is associated in the Tantric tradition with absolute Freedom.

Awareness transcends all that we are aware of. Only through identification with this 'transcendent' nature of awareness [Shiva] can we also take full delight in every thing and being that we are aware of - knowing it as a mirror and manifestation of the Divine Awareness, a unique shape and a unique face of that Awareness.

Only then can we experience the Divine Awareness as not only 'transcendent' (transcending each and every thing we are aware of) but also 'immanent' (present within each and every thing).

The name 'Shiva' does not denote a divine being or god 'with' awareness. For God as Shiva IS awareness – that Divine Awareness which is the source of all beings.

What the name Shiva does denote is a fundamental aspect of the Divine Awareness – its own self-recognition or 'I'-ness. For knowing itself in and as all things and beings, it is their very Self.

And knowing our innermost Self or 'I' as identical with the Divine 'I' is the experience of 'Shiv-a-wareness'.

If meditation means identifying with the Divine Awareness that IS God, then the worshipful life consists in recognising that Awareness as our innermost Self or 'I', and in recognising that 'I' as identical with the 'I'-ness of the Divine - with Shiva.

MANTRA FOR SHIVA-PUJA

**‘SHIVA’
IS THE VERY ‘I’-NESS
OF THAT TRANSCENDENTAL AWARENESS
THAT IS IMMANENT WITHIN US ALL
MIRRORED AND MADE MANIFEST
AS ALL THINGS AND BEINGS;
PRESENT WITH THEM ALL
AS THEIR ULTIMATE
SELF OR ‘I’**

**THE MANTRA
OF SHIVA IS THUS
SHIVOHAM
‘SHIVA AM I’**

THE WONDERS OF HINDU 'IDOL WORSHIP'

The belief that an icon or idol is a cruder, more naive or 'primitive' object of religious reverence or worship – or even an unholy object – is itself as crude as the belief that painting, sculpture and music are cruder or more 'primitive' mediums of expression of spiritual truth than the written or spoken word. In reality they can be wondrous mediums. As for the attack on idol worship by the Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – this is nothing if not hypocritical. For not only do they have their own idols – the Christian crucifix or the Muslim Kaaba for example. They also revere their own holy books as sacred *objects* in themselves – not only decorating them or filling them with iconic images but going so far as to effectively elevate them to the status of religious 'idols'. Thus in Jewish religious practice, the holy scroll of the Torah is consecrated, housed in a sacred chamber, veiled and unveiled, carried round in procession, its tassels kissed etc.

What distinguishes the Abrahamic faiths from Hinduism and other 'Dharmic' religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, is not their rejection of idol worship as such therefore, but rather their exclusive iconisation and idolisation of *the word* – not least in its concrete, material manifestation as the stone tablets of Moses. The idolisation of a Holy Book is a recognition of the truth that it is more than a material artefact of paper and ink. Similarly however, there is more to a temple, cathedra, synagogue or mosque than brick or stone, more to music than man-made material instruments and the sound vibrations they produce, just as there is more to a painting than its pigments, more to a great religious sculpture or 'idol' than wood, stone or bronze or some idle fancy of the sculptor. That is why, in the Hindu tradition, worship of sculpted idols (Pratima) is no mere religious prop for the illiterate, the ignorant or the spiritual neophyte, even though there may be some who consider it so. For as Swami Sivananda writes:

“[Only] a pseudo-Vedantin ... feels that his Advaita [non-duality with the divine] will evaporate if he prostrates [before an idol]. Study the lives of the Tamil Saints ... They had the highest Advaitic realisation. They saw Lord Shiva everywhere, and yet they ... prostrated before the idol and sang hymns ... The idol in the temple was all Chaitanya or consciousness for them. It was not a mere block of stone.”

And yet there *are* indeed sacrilegious forms of idolatry - two of which in particular dominate today's world. One is the 'bibliolatry' of literalist religious fundamentalisms – which take the words of their sacred texts literally, never going beyond their 'letter' to their many-layered meanings or polysemous 'spirit'. This is like mistaking the

menu with the meal. The other form of sacrilegious idolatry is what Marx called “the fetishism of the commodity” and “the monotheism of money” – in other words the religion of consumerism, which makes idols of branded products and uses glossy media icons to promote their worship. An advertising mantra such as “Real chocolate. Real feeling” says it all – showing how manufacturers seek an almost religious feeling of devotion to their brands and iconic logos by a purely artificial association with the entire range of authentic human feelings and values, from love to spirituality - even worship itself.* Just as Hinduism offers an alternative to the global disarray and conflicts brought about by the Abrahamic religions, so does genuine religious idol worship offer an alternative to - and a powerful weapon against - the religious fetishism, idolisation, and pseudo-spiritualisation of crass material commodities, whether chocolate, skin creams or cars. Even religious icons and idols are today reduced to the status of mere decorative items, whether sacred African carvings or statues of Buddha on the suburban mantelpiece of the bourgeoisie.

From a Hindu perspective, meditation of a ‘Murti’, whether in the form of an image, symbol or three-dimensional idol, no more negates an acknowledgement of God’s formless or invisible omnipresence in all things than does carrying round and studying an artefact of paper and ink in the form of a Holy Book such as the Bible or Koran. On the contrary, precisely by virtue of its tangible, material form, the Murti makes it easier to experience the presence of the divine in all things, to understand that things are just as much symbols of the divine as words are, and to come to a direct experience of things (and not just the words with which we name them) as the manifest word of the divine, its material metaphors, its solidified speech. The Murti does not hinder but offers a far more direct route to a living experience of the essence of the divine, revealing it as something neither formless and immaterial nor reducible to a particular form, but rather as a dynamic relation between formlessness and form - in tantric terms, the relation between pure awareness (Shiva) and its innate power (Shakti) of formative activity and material manifestation.

The multiplicity of human forms taken by icons, idols or ‘murti’ of the Hindu gods does not imply any sort of ‘anthropomorphic’ idea of God of the sort that belongs exclusively to the Abrahamic religions – with their claim that Man was made “in the image of God”. In contrast, the human form given to Murtis of the Hindu gods is designed to awaken the worshipper’s experience of their own human bodily form as a fleshly embodiment and expression of ‘spirit’ – of that higher ‘air’ or ‘aether’ of awareness (Akasha) that ensouls all bodies as their vital breath (Prana) and from which matter itself is formed. This aether may be perceived only as the seemingly empty space ‘in’ which the Murti stands as a mere object. In reality space itself (Kha) pervades every object in it, just as it itself is pervaded by the aether of which all

objects are formed. As the physicist Paul Dirac noted: “A place is nothing; nor even space, unless at its heart – a figure stands.” The sacredness of the space in which the Murti stands is both distinct and inseparable from it. It is what allows the Murti to stand out or ‘ex-ist’ in its sacrality, just as it is the presence of the Murti that makes the space around it sacred, offering an experience of the divine aether of awareness (Akasha) surrounding and pervading it.

Yet just as a spiritual text or scripture may in itself be more or less superficial or deep in meaning, and the ‘letter’ of its word a more or less distorted human expression or translation of its wordless inner meaning or ‘spirit’ - so too can a Murti be more or less crudely or beautifully crafted as an expression of spiritual truth. It is no accident that the most wondrously powerful Murtis, particularly in the form of sculptures, are not just ‘objects’ of reverence, worship or even meditation but show the very gods they represent *in states of meditation*. A Murti of this sort is not just a particular divinity given a characteristic human form that enables one to recognise, name and worship it as this or that ‘god’. Instead its form is spiritually crafted to reveal the nature taken by the human form when it itself becomes an *embodiment* of particular states and qualities of meditative union with God – with the divine as such. Murti meditation is not ‘worship’ understood as mere ‘obeisance’ to a particular divinity through its image. Nor is it even meditation ‘of’ the divine in the form of a particular divinity. It is co-resonance with a divinity - one whose image is crafted in such a way that its whole bodily form and bearing itself embodies a profound resonance with the divine as such. Sivananda again:

“Even as you can catch the sound waves of people all over the world through the radio receiving set, it is possible to commune with the all-pervading Lord through the medium of an idol. The divinity of the all-pervading God is vibrant in every atom of creation. There is not a speck of space where he is not.”

Just as a radio is more than a box of electronic parts but a vehicle of transmission, so is a Murti. And just as the images on a television screen are not inside the ‘box’ itself but relayed to it from without, so is the Murti itself an embodied transmission of spiritual truth carried on the waves of the divine-cosmic aether. Meditation of its bodily form (Rupa) is a way of entering into resonance with it, a resonance that can be tuned to different frequencies and ‘channels’, and that result in feeling experiences, visions and ‘hearings’. It was such hearings (‘Shruti’), borne of meditative inner silence, that first inspired the *words* of the Vedas, and all the world’s holy scriptures.

To those capable of entering into deep inner silence and resonance with the Murti – on any number of different wavelengths of spiritual attunement - its visible form will transform before their eyes. It will

cease to be a mere object of their worshipful gaze, but communicate wordless wisdom to them through its own gaze. Indeed it will also speak to them directly - in the form of 'hearings' transmitted to their inner ear. To come to know the divine through meditating the Murti of a chosen divinity is a truly profound and ever-new experience - an inexhaustible source of revelations, and not the mere repetition of a prescribed ritual. The Murti itself ceases to be a mere image or 'idol' of a divinity. Instead through it, the divinity itself becomes one's most intimate partner and most revered Guru in meditating, understanding and experiencing the divine - capable of answering one's deepest personal or religious questions through the knowing awareness it embodies and transmits, both in inner silence and through the word, inwardly heard. 'Puja' - ritual worship - is unthinkable without 'idol worship' - sitting in the presence of the Murti and using one's whole body and all its senses to resonate with the awareness it embodies and transmits. Through *co-resonance*, 'idol worship' becomes an experience of the particular truth of Tantric Puja - that 'to worship a god is to become that god'.

“Regular worship, Puja and other modes of demonstrating our inner feeling recognition of Divinity in the idol unveils the Divinity latent in it. This is truly a wonder and a miracle. The idol speaks. It will answer your questions and solve your problems. The God in you has the power to awaken the latent Divinity in the idol ... Puja makes the idol shine with Divine resplendence. God is then enshrined in the idol ... the idol will perform miracles. The place where it is installed is at once transformed into a temple.”

Sivananda

As Sivananda also reminds us, a Sanskrit word for meditative contemplation is 'Upasana' - which simply means 'sitting near'. The meaning and value of Murti meditation in ritual worship or Puja derives from the basic act of 'sitting near' the Murti of a god or divinity - for doing so brings us into the nearness and presence of God and Divinity.

“Upasana is approaching the chosen ideal or object of worship by meditating on it in accordance with the teachings (Shastras) and the Guru ... Upasana helps the devotee to sit near the Lord or to commune with him. It purifies the heart and steadies the mind. It fills the mind with ... pure love for the Lord. It gradually transmutes man into a divine being.”

Yet for those to whom 'meditation' is merely a method of steadying the mind and calming the soul, and not also a matter of feeling the Divine from the very *heart* of one's soul - a medium of *living relationship* uniting the Self with a divine Other - such spiritual words will mean

nothing without Upasana - sitting in the nearness of a material Murti, and experiencing it in all its wonders. For the sitter or Upasaka, after the ritual process of lighting oil lamps and scenting the air with incense, the meditational process begins with ensouling their own body and breathing with ever-greater awareness, particularly those regions of their body that feel tired or tense, muddied or dissonant in tone. The sitter then ensouls the body of the Murti with their own awareness, using their own body to outwardly sense and resonate with it from without and within. In time the Murti will in turn ensoul the inwardness of the sitter's body from within and from without - allowing them to feel their own fleshly form as no less a manifestation of the divine-cosmic aether around them than the material form of the Murti itself. Union with the divinity ensouling the Murti comes to a climax when the worshipper kneels to touch the foot of the Murti, and peer up at its face allowing an even more powerful direct transmission of awareness from it - one that will pervade if not overwhelm the body and mind of the worshipper, bringing with it not only a culmination and ultimate consecration of the union they have experienced through the sitting, but an experiential answer to the deepest questions they may have felt or consciously meditated in the course of it.

The word 'worship' derives from the Indo-European root *wer* or *uer* - 'to turn'. The turning point in idol worship comes when the worshipper first turns to outwardly face and/or inwardly sense the Murti, and then in turn to be turned - transformed - by it.

Notes:

* An advertisement (2007) showing dark-skinned neo-Mayan tribe worshipping the image of a leading branded ice-cream bar and ending with the slogan 'I am a worshipper'.

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Swami Sivananda *The Philosophy and Significance of Idol Worship*
Divine Life Society 1960

THE SACRED SHRINE



In Puja, the Murti or ‘idol’ is no mere physical object ‘in’ space, nor is it merely a symbolic representation of some non-physical divinity. On the contrary, it is the worshipper’s meditative awareness of the Murti that first give it, the space around it and the objects in that space, the character of a sacred space or shrine – an unbounded space of Divine Awareness. It is the sacred space of this Divine Awareness that is then felt by the worshipper as manifest in the variety of sensory shapes and forms that make up the objects of the shrine, not least as an awareness indwelling and emanating from the Murti itself. In traditional Hindu forms of Shiva Puja, we often see worshippers chanting, and at the same time offering flowers or betel leaves to the Murti or Shiva Linga. In the understanding of Abhinavagupta however “by ‘flowers’ are meant all substances, external and internal, which nourish the Heart, because they bestow their own nature to the heart.” The “internal flowers” are those innate qualities of awareness - soul qualities - felt in the body and heart of the worshipper as manifesting themselves in such sensory qualities as the scent of incense, the burning flame of a candle, the various objects of the shrine etc. Taking sensuous delight in all these objects and their qualities, but doing so from and as the pure light of the Divine Awareness **“the worshipper is both the pure and the purifier”** (Abhinavagupta).

THE SHIVA LINGAM

The chief symbol of Shiva is the 'Shiva Lingam'. Worshippers of Shiva revere the Lingam in the form of a rounded, egg or phallic-shaped stone of any size. The stone as symbol or 'lingam' symbolises nothing more or less than the fact that there is nothing in the universe which is not a living symbol of the divine awareness that is Shiva – every material thing being a condensed or solidified mass of that awareness. Yet 'lingam' is a word that means nothing but 'symbol'. What sort of religion can knowingly worship a symbol that is not only understood as a symbol but whose name actually means 'symbol'?

Since the divine awareness (Shiva) manifests in and as all things, all things are symbols (Linga) of it – 'Shivalinga'. The Lingam as symbol is what symbolises this spiritual truth. Meditating a stone as Shiva Lingam both reminds us of this truth and allows our awareness to expand to appreciate the awareness present and compacted in all material things. It also allows us to experience the pure immaterial awareness that is simultaneously immanent and transcendent, manifest and unmanifest in all things. For awareness of any thing is only possible in the light of awareness as such – pure awareness. Any particular thing can only manifest within a surrounding field or space of pure awareness and become visible through the pure light of awareness. Meditating such a hard, earthly and material thing as a stone allows us to experience all things as Linga – as symbols of a symbol-free awareness, materialisations of the immaterial, manifestations of the unmanifest, forms of the formless – and to know them not just as things 'in' space and 'illuminated' by light but as solidified shapes taken by space, and as luminous condensations of the very light that illumines them. Then the boundary of every single bodily thing can be experienced tantrically - as a sensual surface through which it is ever in blissful erotic contact with the space and light of awareness around it, this being the womb within and into which it arises like a phallus. Thus it is that the Lingam in its phallic form symbolises both the 'penetration' of an unbounded and divine awareness into the womb of our physical universe through every body in it, and its pervasion of that womb - a universe whose very space is nothing but the pure space of awareness that first makes room for things to arise within it.

Lingam 'worship' then, means granting awareness to such a single, simple and seemingly insentient thing as a stone in such a way that we experience that awareness as not only seeing but sensually surrounding and touching its surface, which is a glistening reflection of the very light of awareness. And since the dense solidity of the stone is a compact mass of the very same awareness out of which *every body* in the *entire universe* arises, our worship consists in nothing but seeing this *single* stone as a solid symbol (Lingam) of that *singular* universal awareness which is Shiva, condensing its universal

power (Shakti) of material manifestation. The stone, as Shiva Lingam, is like the dense core of a nuclear reactor or bomb, containing within it an *infinite* power of universal creation and destruction, and yet ever sustained within the universal awareness whose power it solidifies and manifests. Thus it is that, being physical bodies ourselves, we can also come to experience, know and say *for ourselves* the profound ‘mantra’ of Shaivist ‘tantra’, the one which says:

“I am Shiva, of compact mass of awareness and bliss - and the entire universe is my body.”

Whatever the specific ‘symbolic’ form of the Lingam stone, whether upright and phallic, round or egg-shaped - like the egg of Brahman which contains the entire universe and from which it is born - for the worshipper it is no ‘mere’ symbol ‘representing’ some other ‘thing’. Instead it is a literal ‘putting or throwing together’ (Greek *sumballein*) of *all things in one*. Those Gurus who can produce Lingam stones from out of their mouths show they have tapped the power of material manifestation that is awareness as such, the divine womb or ‘mouth’ of creation. Yet just hearing the Linga ‘Strotram’ (devotional song) during Puja – whilst at the same time granting sensual awareness to a Shiva Lingam, is enough to attune us to that mouth of creation - a mouth which utters things themselves as its sensual words or ‘symbols’.

WHAT IS THE SHIVA LINGAM?

Any thing in space,
Can be thought, seen and
Directly sensed as a miracle.
A miracle of creation, constantly
Manifesting and materialising out of the
Seeming vacuity of that pure thought-free,
Sense-free, and thing-free awareness
That is space, and that is
SHIVA.

A simple stone
Is a miraculous thing.
Seemingly insentient, it is in truth
A dense and compact materialisation of the
Pure awareness that is Shiva, both manifesting and
Reflecting the pure light of awareness
That pervades all of space.

Such a simple stone,
Can be thought, seen and sensed
As a miracle, not only of its own manifestation
From the awareness that is SHIVA, but that of all things.
As such it is also symbol - LINGAM - of this miracle of
Universal manifestation and
Materialisation.

A simple, single stone, selected
For its solid density and simplicity of form and colour,
Whether colourless black, absorbing all light, or bearing a
Shining surface that reflects the light and all things around it,
Can, by virtue of its simplicity of form become a symbol of the
formless,
Pure awareness that is Shiva taking form in the most compact way.
Then the stone ceases to be just one single thing among others
'In' universal space, but can be thought, seen and sensed AS
The entire universe, and AS a compact mass of that
Singular, universal awareness that is Shiva.

Such a simple, single stone,
Thought, seen and directly sensed in this way,
Becomes a spiritual STEPPING STONE to experiencing its truth
As a symbol - LINGAM - the truth that
All things are in each, and all things are
SHIVA.

Thus can a stone become the
Most singular of all symbols of Shiva,
The revered SHIVA LINGAM.

PUJA FOR THE GREAT LORD

**On the blessed occasion of Shivratri,
I have again performed Puja for the Great Lord ...
Before him and for him, with and within him, in him and as him.
I have lit the primordial flame of The Great Lord, that burns forever.
I have seated myself before the Murti of The Great Lord.
I have meditated the majesty of his supreme Mudra.
I have received the grace and wisdom of his gaze.
I have seen his third eye as a singular star.
I have heard his inward speech as mine.
I have known him knowing me.
I have heard him hearing me.
I have seen him seeing me.
I have felt him touching me.
I have understood him teaching me.
I have breathed the sweetness of his breath.
I have absorbed the sublime nectar of his divine bliss.
I have been put to supreme rest by his infinite patience.
I have seen and sensed his Lingam stone as all things in one.
I have sensed the boundless span of his awareness across time.
I have become the boundless expanse of his awareness in space.
I have felt his divine power of action pervading all of space and time.
I have let awareness rise as coiling incense to the heights of his sky.
I have let it descend into the depths of the Great Mother's womb.
I have let it become the tall column of fire that unbinds all bonds.
I have experienced all things as the pure awareness that He is.
I have performed Puja for the Great Lord,
Before him and for him, with and within him, in him and as him.
I have thus enacted the supreme Mantra of the Great Lord,
I have become the Mantra that he and I are two as one.**

SHIVOHAM