



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Mahakaleshwar Temple - 2025

Published On: 28-01-2026

In News: The **Supreme Court of India** recently declined to entertain a petition challenging the practice of **VIP darshan** at **Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple, Ujjain**, observing that courts are **not meant to regulate temple entry or darshan protocols**, unless there is a clear constitutional violation.

About Mahakaleshwar Temple

Basic Information

- **Location:** Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh
- **River:** Situated on the banks of the **Shipra (Kshipra) River**
- **Deity:** Lord Shiva (as Mahakaleshwar – “Lord of Time”)
- **Religious Significance:** One of the **12 Jyotirlingas** of Lord Shiva, making it among the most sacred Shaivite shrines in India

Historical Background

- The temple has **ancient origins**, with references found in:
- **Puranas**
- Other Hindreligious texts
- The celebrated Sanskrit poet **Kalidasa** mentions Ujjain and Mahakaleshwar in his literary works, highlighting its cultural and spiritual prominence.
- The temple has been **destroyed and rebuilt multiple times** due to invasions and natural decay.
- The **present structure** was constructed in the **18th century** by **Ranoji Shinde**, a Maratha ruler and founder of the Scindia dynasty.

Unique Religious Features

- The **Jyotirlinga at Mahakaleshwar is Swayambhu** (self-manifested).
- It is believed to be the **only Jyotirlinga facing south (Dakshinamurti)**, symbolising Shiva as the lord of death and time.
- The temple is especially famous for the **Bhasma Aarti**, a pre-dawn ritual performed using sacred ash.

Architectural Features

Architectural Style

- A blend of:
- **Maratha**
- **Bhumija**
- **Chalukya** architectural styles

Structural Layout

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

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- The temple complex is spread over **five levels**, including:
- **One underground level**, housing the main sanctum
- Key components:
- **Garbha Griha (Sanctum Sanctorum)**: Houses the Jyotirlinga
- **Sabha Mandap**: Assembly hall used for rituals and gatherings

Artistic Elements

- Intricately carved **pillars**
- **Ornate ceilings**
- Sculptures depicting:
- Hinddeities
- Mythological narratives
- A towering **Shikhara (spire)** that dominates the skyline

Cultural & Civilisational Importance

- Ujjain was one of the **Sapta Puri** (seven sacred cities) of Hinduism.
- Historically served as a:
- Major **religious centre**
- Hub of **astronomy and learning** (linked with ancient Indian timekeeping and the Prime Meridian of India)
- Mahakaleshwar represents the **Shaivite tradition** deeply embedded in Indian civilisation.