

## BAAN STAMBHA AND BAN GANGA OF SOMNATH ARE THE SYMBOLS OF INDIAN THEOSOPHY

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## ABSTRACT

The Baan Stambh (Arrow Pillar) is an ancient, historically significant pillar situated on the sea-facing defensive wall of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, India. It features an arrow pointing directly south towards the sea, signifying that there is no land between the pillar and the South Pole. Ban Ganga in Somnath is a coastal shrine in the Arabian Sea, located about from the main Somnath Temple in Gujarat. It features two ancient, self-emerged (Swayambhu) Shivlingas on a rocky shore, which are visible and accessible only during low tide. The site is historically significant as the spot where the hunter Jara worshipped before hitting Lord Krishna with an arrow.

**KEYWORDS:** baan stambh, ban ganga, sculpture, shivalinga, jyotirlinga.

## INTRODUCTION

The **Baan Stambh** (Arrow Pillar) is an ancient pillar located on the sea-facing boundary wall of the Somnath

Temple in Gujarat, India. It is renowned for its inscription indicating that no land exists in a straight line from that point to the South Pole.



Figure-1: Baan Stambh of Somnath.

Key Details of Baan Stambh.

**Location:** Situated on the southern boundary wall of the Somnath Temple, facing the Arabian Sea.**Meaning & Inscription:** The pillar features an arrow pointed towards the sea, with a Sanskrit inscription:

“आसमुद्रांत दक्षिण ध्रुव, पर्यंत अबाधित ज्योतिर्मार्ग,” which translates to "From this point of the sea to the South Pole, there is an unobstructed straight path of light".

**Historical Significance:** References to this pillar date back to around the 6th century, suggesting it is over 1500 years old, highlighting ancient Indian knowledge of geography, oceanography, and astronomy.

**Geographical Truth:** Modern satellite imagery confirms that if one sails directly south from the Somnath Temple, there is no landmass until Antarctica, which is nearly 10,000 km away.

**Purpose:** It is believed to have served as a navigational landmark for maritime voyages. The pillar is considered a testament to the advanced scientific knowledge of ancient India.

**Baan Stambh**, also known as the Arrow Pillar, is a marvel in architecture located within the Somnath Temple premises. Dating back to around the sixth century, this pillar bears a Sanskrit inscription stating that there is no hindrance in a straight line from this point to the South Pole.

The Somnath Temple in Gujarat, India, is historically recorded as having been looted, destroyed, and rebuilt 17 times. Often referred to as a symbol of resilience, this holy Jyotirlinga site was repeatedly targeted by invaders, most notably starting with Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026.

Key Details about the Somnath Temple:

- Location: Prabhas Patan, Veraval, Gujarat, on the western coast of India.
- Significance: It is the first among the twelve sacred Shiva Jyotirlinga shrines. [Prof. Dr. Dhruvo Jyoti Sen and Anuru Sen; Jyotirling of Lord Shiva reflects on swyambhu: World Journal of Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences: 12(1), 189-203, 2026. [https://www.wjpls.org/home/article\\_abstract/4514](https://www.wjpls.org/home/article_abstract/4514)
- Invaders: Besides Mahmud of Ghazni, the temple was looted by forces under Alauddin Khalji and Aurangzeb, among others.
- Rebuilding: Despite 17 destructive raids, the temple was rebuilt each time, with the current, final structure constructed after India's independence in 1951.
- Reconstruction Pledge: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first Deputy Prime Minister, pledged to rebuild the temple in 1947.

The story of the temple is often cited as a testament to the endurance of faith. The Somnath temple was destroyed multiple times over several centuries by various invaders, most notably by **Mahmud** of Ghazni in January 1026, who looted and burned it. Other major destructions were carried out by forces under Alauddin Khalji (1299), Zafar Khan (1395), and finally Aurangzeb in 1706.

**1026 (Mahmud of Ghazni):** This was the most famous, devastating raid on the temple. Mahmud, the ruler of the

Ghaznavid Empire, destroyed the structure and shattered the linga.

**1299 (Alauddin Khalji's Army):** Ulugh Khan, a general under Khalji, attacked during the invasion of Gujarat.

**1395 (Zafar Khan):** The last governor of Gujarat under the Delhi Sultanate destroyed the temple.

**1451 (Mahmud Begada):** The Sultan of Gujarat again attacked and desecrated the shrine.

**1706 (Aurangzeb):** The Mughal emperor ordered the final destruction of the temple before the modern era.

The temple was repeatedly rebuilt, with the current structure constructed after India's independence, initialized by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and inaugurated in 1951.

The Somnath temple was destroyed multiple times—starting with Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026 AD—primarily to plunder its immense wealth, fulfill iconoclastic religious agendas, and psychologically shatter Hindu morale. Its position as a sacred, wealthy, and politically significant site made it a repeated target for invaders.

Key Reasons for Destruction.

**Immense Wealth:** Somnath was incredibly rich, with gold walls and, according to legend, the valuable Syamantak Mani (philosopher's stone) hidden within, attracting looters.

**Religious Fanaticism:** Invaders like Ghazni were motivated by an urge to act as a "destroyer of idols" and gain legitimacy in the Islamic world by destroying a prominent place of worship.

**Psychological Warfare:** By destroying a highly revered shrine, invaders sought to humiliate the local populace, destroy their morale, and establish political dominance.

**Strategic Location:** Its position as a major port and religious center meant attacking it held immense economic and symbolic significance.

The temple was rebuilt several times over the centuries by Hindu kings and leaders, becoming a symbol of resilience.

**Ban Ganga**, located near the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, is a sacred site where two ancient Swayambhu (self-emerged) Shivalingas are situated in the Arabian Sea, visible only during low tide. It is historically associated with the hunter Jara, who is believed to have shot an arrow at Lord Krishna here. The name 'Banganga' comes from the special ban or arrow Rama shot into the ground and the holy water similar to the Ganga river that surged upwards. Since Rama shot the arrow in Patal, Banganga is also known as 'Patalganga'.

Ban Ganga at Somnath is a significant pilgrimage spot on the Arabian Sea coast, known for two large, self-emerged (swayambhu) Shivalingas located on the rocky seabed, visible during low tide and partially submerged

during high tide, where the hunter Jara worshipped before accidentally hitting Lord Krishna.



Figure 2: Ban Ganga of Somnath.

Key Historical & Mythological Aspects.

**Connection to Lord Krishna:** It is believed that after unintentionally shooting Lord Krishna near Bhalka Tirtha, the hunter Jara came to this spot to worship.

**The Legend of the Arrow (Baan):** Legend says this is the spot from which the arrow was released towards Krishna, causing the holy water to emerge (Baan-Ganga).

#### Baan Ganga (Banganga) at Somnath

**Location:** A separate sacred site located near the Somnath Temple and the sea.

**Mythology:** Legend has it that Lord Rama shot an arrow (Baan) into the ground here, bringing forth the Ganges (Ganga) to drink.

**Swayambhu Shivalings:** It is known for naturally formed Shivalingas submerged in the sea, which are visible during low tide. Both spots are located in the vicinity of the Somnath temple and are considered important pilgrimage points.

**Mythological Association with Lord Rama:** Some beliefs suggest Lord Rama shot an arrow into the earth here to bring forth holy Ganga water to quench his thirst.

**Natural Shrines:** The two Shivalingas are on a rocky, often slippery, sea shore, and the sea waves act as a natural abhishek (continuous bathing of the deity).

#### Visiting Information

- Location: Near the Arabian Sea, about 1-2 km from the main Somnath Temple.

- Best Time to Visit: Low tide is necessary to see and access the Lingas; proper footwear is advised due to algae.
- Experience: Devotees perform abhishek using milk available from local vendors.

These are tied to some legends of deities or divine figures in Hinduism shooting an arrow into the ground, resulting in the emergence of water that is considered as sacred as the Ganges River. According to legendary stories, there are several Bangangas in the different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Baanganga is a Sanskrit word. It is the combination of the two Sanskrit terms Baan and Ganga. The literal meaning of the term Baan is an arrow. The term Ganga in Hinduism is used for denoting sacred water or the Ganga River. Thus the literal meaning of the combined term Baanganga is a sacred water body pierced by of an arrow. Banganga in Somnath is a sacred coastal shrine located in the Arabian Sea, roughly 1 km from the main Somnath temple, featuring self-emerged (swayambhu) Shivalingas visible during low tide. It is historically linked to the legend of Jara, the hunter who worshipped here before accidentally shooting an arrow at Lord Krishna.

#### Key Historical and Mythological Aspects

**Association with Jara the Hunter:** It is believed that the hunter Jara used this site to worship Shiva before firing the arrow that led to Lord Krishna's departure from the mortal world. In the Mahabharata, Jara refers primarily to the hunter who mistakenly shot an arrow at Lord Krishna, causing his death, which marked the end of the *Dwapara Yuga*. It is believed that Jara was the reincarnation of Bali from the Ramayana, fulfilling a karmic cycle where Krishna (as Rama) had killed him.

#### Key Details about Jara

**Significance:** The name "Jara" also translates to "old age" or decay, symbolizing that Krishna lived a full, human-like life and finally succumbed to the natural decay of the physical body.

**Association with Jarasandha:** A different Jara was a demoness who joined the two pieces of the infant King Jarasandha together, giving him his name.

**The Incident:** While Krishna was resting in the forest near Dwarka, Jara mistook his foot for a deer and shot an arrow.

**Karmic Justice:** Lord Krishna accepted this, explaining it was his destiny and a result of actions in a previous life, where Rama killed Bali from behind a tree.

**Significance in Krishna's Final Days:** The site is directly linked to the Bhalka Tirth story, where Lord Krishna was shot. The arrow is sometimes linked to this area's significance in that event.

**The Shivling in the Sea:** The location is known for two Shiva Lingas that are washed by sea water at high tide, and visitors can perform abhisheka during low tide.

**Etymology:** The name Ban (arrow) + Ganga (sacred river) is also associated with the belief that Lord Krishna shot an arrow into the ground to bring forth water.

**Visitor Caution:** As the rock surfaces are covered with algae, visitors are advised to take caution when accessing the shrine.

## CONCLUSION

The Baan Stambh and Ban Ganga are distinct, yet geographically proximate, sacred features at the Somnath temple complex in Gujarat, both linked to themes of arrows, sea navigation, and divinity. The Baan Stambh is a 6th-century directional pillar pointing south towards Antarctica, while Ban Ganga is a coastal spot associated with Lord Krishna's final moments, where a hunter named Jara fired a fatal arrow.

**Geographical Proximity:** Both are located within the coastal precincts of the ancient Somnath Temple complex, on the southern side overlooking the Arabian Sea.

**Thematic Link (Arrow):** Both represent the "Baan" (arrow) theme, though one is a structural landmark (Stambh) and the other a legendary spot (Ganga).

**Baan Stambh Significance:** This pillar marks the "unobstructed path" (Avadhita Jyotirmarga) to the South Pole, signaling advanced ancient knowledge of geography.

**Ban Ganga Significance:** Ban Ganga is where Shiva lingas are visible during low tide, specifically known as

the place where Jara released the arrow that led to Krishna's departure.

**Historical Context:** Both sites are deeply intertwined with the Skanda Purana and the Mahabharata, highlighting the Somnath region as a pivotal site for early Indian astronomy and mythology. While the Baan Stambh acts as a scientific, northward-facing marker for navigation where Ban Ganga represents a sacred point of legend.

## REFERENCE

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somnath\\_Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somnath_Temple) and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baanganga>