

Shiva is the God of Earth

Aum namoh namah Shivaya Shivayah namah Aum

Composed and compiled by Jyotikar Pattni [All copyrights to this article are waived]

This article is dedicated to my Ada: Shree Mansuklal [aka Hemantkumar] Morarji Gordhan who passed away in the spirit world on December 20th 2007.

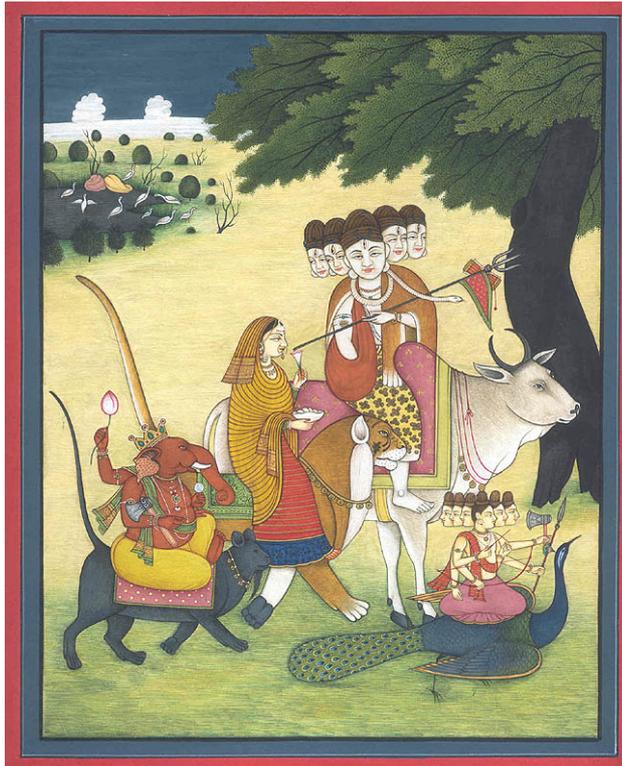


We are ships, each one of us, pilgrims across the vast ocean. From shores to shores, from ports to ports, from station to stations, we wonder. Our journey finally becomes a pathless journey into the diminishing shadows of the fading sunlight. Eventually we find ourselves at the mercy of sheer Mother Nature. Our paths may vary, our pilgrimages may differ, but eventually we all submerge into the destiny of deep pathless ocean. Embarking upon journey across from one land to another is but the very nature of human and all restlessness surrenders to death. Death brings solace to all sufferings as it ends all life in it. We return to the emptiness where we came from in order to find a light of delight. To find a light of delight here on human earth during a human lifetime therefore is a rare human enlightenment. Aum shantih shantih shantih.





The aum symbol



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Karma is superior to birth charts, as divine intention is superior to fate and destiny superior to fortune. We may not realise it but when we own and possess more than one tenth of our wealth, we invoke diseases, worries, epiphany, and catastrophe in our humanity at large. What we do unto ourselves is nothing more than a ripple of the coexistence of the existential inborn divine intention in us. Whatsoever we shall sow that shall we reap without a doubt. Empty we came and empty we go. We are born only to give not to take!

The Shvetashvetera Upanishads say of Shiva, "He is more minute than the minutest. In the midst of confusion, He is the world creator? By knowing him as the auspicious being one attains peace forever." Shiva is worshipped in the form of an oval shaped image called Shiva Lingam. Shiva means world benefactor, the seed, and the point. Lingam means a symbol, emblem or sign. Li comes from Laya, which means destruction, and Gam comes from Agaman, which means recreation. Therefore it is the entity, which destroys and recreates. Shiva, the world benefactor whose form is the point of life energy, the supreme soul, destroys negativity, and recreates a golden aged world. This he does when the world is at the darkest point, in chaos and in confusion (no moon day of Falgun).

Shiva is the truth. He is the Mahakaal-Akaal [one without the beginning or the end and one who construes time]. Out of the five elements (paanch dhoota), any kind of evil cannot touch him. He is neither destroyed by death, time, knowledge, fate, jealousy or attachments. Nor is he involved in any worldly ailments to experience its pain or gain, nor he is connected with lust or desires. The past, present and future have nothing to do with him. No one is his guru nor is anyone his creator. He has neither beginning nor any end. He is not bound by the duties of humankind. He has no relatives nor any friends or enemies.

No one is greater than him, nor anyone above him. He is beyond birth and death. Nothing is beyond his capacity. He is beyond law and regulation. He is out of all kinds of evils and sins, but he holds all the beneficent powers, and he is the only supreme. This whole universe is within him, and without him is no existence.

According to our scriptures, three attributes (Sat, Raj and Tam) appeared from the supreme energy. They are represented by Brahma, the birth or creator, Vishnu the life as preserver and Shiva the death or destroyer. Death is the only truth of this illusory world. Truth is always beautiful. So Lord Shiva is the only truthful beauty. Everything finally has to merge in death or in Shiva. Even the death stays within him. So he is the Mahakal, he is the beginning and he is the end.

Why is he worshipped in the form of a lingum?

Once Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu were involved in a fight for supremacy. As the fight took a furious shape, it seemed like the universe was heading towards destruction. All the deities were worried and went to Lord Shiva. Only he could stop the war between Brahma and Vishnu.

Lord Shiva went towards the location where the fight was going on. He hid himself behind the clouds to understand what was going on. He noticed that to destroy each other they were using his weapons (Maheshwar and Pasupatya). He could not tolerate any more. So he took the form of a huge Lingum and stood between both of them like a pole. Lord Vishnu took the form of a boar (sukar) and went downwards to find the base. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew to find the top of the pole. Vishnu went deep in patal but was unable to find the root or the beginning point of the pole. He came back totally disappointed. Brahma had seen the Ketki flower, and came to Vishnu with an assertion that he had seen the end of the pole. Vishnu believed him and touched his feet. Seeing the fraud of Brahma, Shiva got upset and appeared in front of them in his full image or form.

Vishnu immediately touched his feet in full humility and politeness. Shiva was impressed, and gave him a position equal to him. Thereafter he turned his attention towards Brahma. He was angry and created Vairav to punish Brahma. Vairav took away Brahma's fifth head. Brahma also fell down at Shiva's feet. Even Vishnu pleaded for mercy for Brahma. But Shiva told Brahma that since he had cheated to seek supremacy, and so would be deprived of position and worship. But when Brahma asked for forgiveness, he said: "I give you a boon. Though you cannot get position and respect in religious services, you are going to be Acharya of Ganas, and so will be required in Yagyas.

This happened during chaturdashi of falgun, which is now celebrated as Shiva Ratri. Shiva said that on this day everyone who will fast and follow chastity, and do Puja of his Lingam would achieve Moksha. "I appeared in the form of Lingam, so people will know my formless form as Lingum."

There are many other explanations of the lingum too. It is said that Shiva stood on one foot for several hundred thousand years transforming himself into Aja Ekapada, the one-footed lord, the axis of the revolving cosmos. This axis has neither beginning nor an end; this is considered to be the great lingum of Shiva. According to the Mahabharata and the Matsya Purana, Shiva's lingam is the divine phallus, the source of the soul-seed, which contains within it the essence of the entire cosmos. All life is created from it. And when life is destroyed, it returns to the primal phallus of Shiva. Together with the yoni-bhaga which forms its base, the lingam represents the union of man and woman, Shiva and Shakti, the cosmic spirit combined with the cosmic substance that makes existence possible. According to the Padma Purana, the sage Bhrigu came to Mount Kailas and found Shiva and Parvati so lost in love that they refused to acknowledge his presence. In his fury, the sage cursed Shiva that people would worship him without a form, as a lingum trapped by a yoni.

Why do we have a serpent with the lingum?

The serpent represents the coiled energy of kundalini, the power that enables seeds to germinate and animals to conceive. The serpent is also said to be Ananta Sesha, the great serpent of eternity, within whose coils rests the universe. Shiva is always depicted wearing venomous serpents as if wearing jewelry. In this case, serpents represent our desires. And Shiva is imploring us to control our desires and wrap it around our neck totally under our control. Incidentally, Shiva's sons are also associated with serpents. Kartik holds one under his feet while Ganapati ties one around his waist.

Why do we have Nandi in a Shiva Mandir?

Nandi is Shiva's vahana or vehicle. A bull also has a lingum shaped hump by coincidence. The bull also symbolizes restrained power.

Why do we have a turtle at the temple?

A turtle is usually situated between Nandi and the lingum. This turtle is Kurma. The turtle could be the great Akupura on whose back rests the entire cosmos. Some believe that this turtle is Kurma, Vishnu's avatar who held aloft mount Mandara, which the gods used as a churning staff when they churned the cosmic ocean. The turtle is also a symbol of Pratyahara or a yogic practice by which mystics dissociated themselves from all sensory stimulation and regressed into the world within, like the turtles could. Turtle is also a symbol of longevity in almost all Eastern cultures.

Why do we offer Bel-patra to Shivji?

The leaves and fruit of the bel or bilva tree are very dear to Shiva. Some say that this tree grew out of Parvati's sweat. According to a folk story, once a tribal lost his way in the jungle and took shelter on top of a bel tree. The cries of wild animals, jackals and cheetahs kept him awake all night.

The night happened to be Shiva Ratri, and the bel leaves were accidentally offered to a Shiva lingam underneath. The tribal was blessed by Shiva with Moksha.

Why is Shiva covered with ashes?

Shiva covers himself with ash, which symbolizes the rejection of the material world and identification with the permanent supreme soul.

Which are the main holy 'tirthas' for Shiva?

Though there are thousands of famous and popular Shiva Lingums throughout the Indian sub-continent, the following are known as Jyotirlingas. It seems that Shiva's spirit; his radiance or jyoti is locked in twelve different lingums located on the sub-continent.

They are some of the holiest Shaivite shrines.

1. Somnath in Saurashtra.
2. Shaileshwar Malikarjun in Andhra Pradesh on the banks of river Patal Ganga.
3. Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain on the banks of river Kshipra.
4. Onkareshwar in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh on an island of the Narmada river amidst the Vindhyachal mountains.
5. Kedarnath in the Himalayas.
6. Bhimashankar in Dakini, near Pune, Maharashtra on the banks of the river Bhima, amidst the Sahyadri Hills.
7. Vishwanath in Varanasi on the shores of the Ganges.
8. Trambakeshwar in Nasik, Maharashtra.
9. Sri Vaidyanath in Jaysidhi on the Howrah-Patna line.
10. Nageshwar in Dwarka, Gujarat.
11. Rameshwar near the southern tip of India in Tamil Nadu.
12. Ghushmeshwar in Ellora, near Aurangabad in Maharashtra.

Why is Shiva Ratri celebrated?

All over India and abroad, Maha Shiva Ratri is celebrated on the 14th night of the new moon during the dark half of the month of Falgun. On a moonless night in February occurs the night of Shiva, the destroyer. This is the night when he is said to have performed the Tandava or the dance of primordial creation, preservation and destruction. As described in the story above, moksha is attained by devotees who worship him on this day and night. Devotees fast during the day, and maintain a long vigil during the night. In Shiva temples across the world, bells ring, mantras are recited, bhajans are sung and Shiva Dhun is repeated throughout the night. Traditional offerings of bel leaves and milk are made to the Shiva lingum.

Is Shiva worshipped in other cultures?

In Greece, this image of Lingum is worshipped and called Phallos. Phallos is a derivative of the Sanskrit word, Phalesh meaning the giver of boons. In Greece this symbol is also worshipped on the darkest night as in India. This image of Shiva Lingum is not isolated in India and Greece only. Recent research has revealed that this has been a form of worship in the Sumerian valley, Java, Sumatra, Rome, Germany, Egypt, France, Syria, America, Brazil, Hawaii and aboriginal Australia. Jews used to take an oval shaped stone in their hands when taking a solemn oath. Abraham, regarded equally by Jews, Christians and Moslems as a messenger of God, built for his wife and son the place of worship called Kaba in Mecca, where a black oval shaped stone was kept. Prophet Mohammad took possession of Kaba and destroyed all other idols. It is now the pilgrimage place for Moslems. The people wear white and encircle the stone just as Hindus wear a white dhoti and do pradeekshana of the Shiva Lingum.

All religions represent God in the form of light, the sun or an oval shaped image symbolic of the supreme energy. Rather than debate about image worship and the surrounding rituals, there is an undercurrent of similarity in all religions.

God is beyond birth and death. He is Swayambu, the one who takes self-birth. He is the soul within each of us. The soul is Mahakala, Shiva himself or herself. "Brahmahnah" loka, the "Swarga" loka and the "Bhumi" loka are three spheres of existences namely the celestial, the spiritual and the terrestrial worlds of existence. In the realm, the Bhumi-loka, or the earth is the breathing pranna-swaroop or the manifestation of the "RUDRA-SHIVOHA" in the Himalayas and therefore the lingam is the representation of shiva's infinite macro-cosmic rudra-somamm as a Somma-Passupattayeh nathah.

Narmada Shiva Lingams come from the Narmada River in India, which is one of the seven sacred holy places of pilgrimage in India and the collection of these stones is passed down from generation to generation. The Narmada River is considered to be very sacred. The Narmada River is considered the mother and giver of peace. Legend has it that the mere sight of this river is enough to cleanse one's soul, as against a dip in the Ganga or seven in the Yamuna. The Ganga is believed to visit this river once a year, in the guise of a black cow to cleanse herself of all her collected sins. The Shivalings are made of crypto crystalline quartz, and are said to have been formed from a meteorite that fell to Earth several million years ago. They contain one of the **loftiest vibrations of all stones on Earth**. The Narmada shivalingas represents the blending of male and female energy, with the shape of the stone representing the male (knowledge), and the markings representing the female (wisdom). **Shiva and Shakti** (consort of Lord Shiva represent this union of male and female energies - essential for the growth of the human race.

The shivlings works with the breath and the fluids of the body creating a harmony in the body's flow. The Shiva of Narmadeshawara Lingam stones are sacred in both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. They are gathered one sacred day a year from an area near the source of the Narmada River about 300 miles north of Mumbai. Of the stones gathered, the most beautiful are polished into this traditional egg/oval shape by the action of the river.

Shiva is the dissolver, the destroyer of dying decay, the diminishing powerful cosmic force of destruction for enacting a new form. Lord Brahma's first creation-Rudra had manifested himself as Ardha narishwar(half male and half female). At the request of Brahma,Rudra dismembered his female part resulting into the creation of two distinct forms- one male and the other female.Later on,ten more Rudras manifested from the male form and all of them collectively came to be known as 'Eleven Rudras'. Similarly, goddess Rudrani, who had manifested from lord Shiva and had gone to Nilgiri mountain to do her penance had killed a mighty demon named 'Ruru'. Ruru was a very powerful demon king.He ruled over Ratnapuri, which was situated in the middle of the ocean.He had become invincible on account of a boon received from lord Brahma.After being defeated by him,all the deities went to seek the help of goddess Rudrani. Goddess Rudrani, who is also known as 'Chamunda' finally killed Ruru-the dreaded demon.

One who observes purity and recites the mantra of the Rudra, and observes the "vratha" of Shiva-Rudra: Every five days ruling the Vad-Ekadashi [eleventh day of the dark cycle of the moon] to the Vad-Amavassya [darkest day of the dark cycle of the moon]; firstly liberates one's obligatory karma with the terrestrial world, secondly one is freed from the burdens of the "Pitru-pitri-Swarga-Pitari" loka, and thirdly one is invited by Shiva to the Akshaar-Mokshadhama - to be granted emancipation and to be crowned the liberated soul.

Thus ends the Varaha Purana as Lord Varaha blesses Mataji Paravatee and returns to celestial. One tenth of the recitations are offered as hommamm; one tenth in flowers, one tenth in oblation of milk, one tenth in oblation of grains, one tenth in oblation of charity, one tenth in oblation of water to the NANDI COW, one tenth in oblation of the rice to the poorest, one tenth in oblation of the Lord SuryaNarayana for pitri, one tenth in oblation towards all the rivers, one tenth in oblation towards all the oceans, one tenth in oblation towards the divine air, one tenth in oblation towards the earthen clay, one tenth in oblation towards the spiritual spheres and finally only one tenth for our own atman. This is the most interesting analogy of Varaha Purana: Why we are entitled to reap proliferation only in one tenth of everything we do, collect, or own? It is something, we need to understand that only when we apportion our wealth appropriately will good health follow us and our children. Therefore reciting the holy scriptures and reciting the holy hymns offering our homage to Shiva-Lingam in the name of our ancestors and Lord Sun all bring us good health in the food and grains that we eat from our kitchen. Hara is the remover of all fears! The five days from ekadashi to amavashya are most auspicious time to recite *"AUM NAMOH NAMA SHIVAYA SHIVAYAH NAMA AUM"*

Hara Hara Hara MahaDeva Shiva Shiva Shiva Shambhoo

Bamm Bamm Bamm Bhole

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This article is dedicated to my Ada: Shree Mansuklal [aka Hemantkumar] Morarji Gordhan who passed away in the spirit world on December 20th 2007.

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