

# Shiva

**Shiva** (/ˈʃiːvə, ˈʃɪ-/; Tamil : சிவபெருமான், Devanagari: शिव, IAST: Śiva, lit. '*the auspicious one*') is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. He is the Supreme Being within Shaivism, one of the major traditions within contemporary Hinduism.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

Shiva is the "destroyer of evil and the transformer" within the Trimurti, the Hindu trinity that includes Brahma and Vishnu.<sup>[1][11]</sup> In Shaivism tradition, Shiva is the Supreme being who creates, protects and transforms the universe.<sup>[12][13][14]</sup> In the tradition of Hinduism called Shaktism, the Goddess, or Devi, is described as supreme, yet Shiva is revered along with Vishnu and Brahma. A goddess is stated to be the energy and creative power (Shakti) of each, with Parvati (Sati) the equal complementary partner of Shiva.<sup>[8][15]</sup> He is one of the five equivalent deities in Panchayatana puja of the Smarta tradition of Hinduism.<sup>[9]</sup>

According to the Shaivism sect, the highest form of Shiva is formless, limitless, transcendent and unchanging absolute Brahman,<sup>[16]</sup> and the primal Atman (soul, self) of the universe.<sup>[17][18][12]</sup> There are many both benevolent and fearsome depictions of Shiva. In benevolent aspects, he is depicted as an omniscient Yogi who lives an ascetic life on Mount Kailash<sup>[1]</sup> as well as a householder with wife Parvati and his two children, Ganesha and Kartikeya. In his fierce aspects, he is often depicted slaying demons. Shiva is also known as Adiyogi Shiva, regarded as the patron god of yoga, meditation and arts.<sup>[19][20][21]</sup>

The iconographical attributes of Shiva are the serpent named Vasuki around his neck, the adorning crescent moon, the holy river Ganga flowing from his matted hair, the third eye on his forehead, the trishula as his weapon, and the damaru drum. He is usually worshipped in the aniconic form of Lingam.<sup>[2]</sup> Shiva is a pan-Hindu deity, revered widely by Hindus, in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.<sup>[22][23]</sup>

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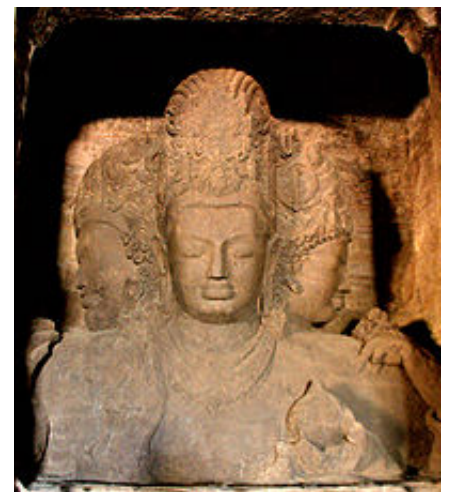
Mohini(female avatar of  
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## Etymology and other names

The Sanskrit word "*Śiva*" (Devanagari: शिव, transliterated as Shiva or Siva) means, states Monier Monier-Williams, "auspicious, propitious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, friendly".<sup>[24]</sup> The roots of Śiva in folk etymology are *śī* which means "in whom all things lie, pervasiveness" and *va* which means "embodiment of grace".<sup>[24][25]</sup>

The word Shiva is used as an adjective in the Rig Veda (approximately 1700–1100 BC), as an epithet for several Rigvedic deities, including Rudra.<sup>[26]</sup> The term Shiva also connotes "liberation, final emancipation" and "the auspicious one", this adjective sense of usage is addressed to many deities in Vedic layers of literature.<sup>[24][27]</sup> The term evolved from the Vedic *Rudra-Shiva* to the noun *Shiva* in the Epics and the Puranas, as an auspicious deity who is the "creator, reproducer and dissolver".<sup>[24][28]</sup>



A sculpture of Shiva at the Elephanta Caves

Sharma presents another etymology with the Sanskrit root *śarv-*, which means "to injure" or "to kill",<sup>[29]</sup> interprets the name to connote "one who can kill the forces of darkness".<sup>[30]</sup>

The Sanskrit word *śaiva* means "relating to the god Shiva", and this term is the Sanskrit name both for one of the principal sects of Hinduism and for a member of that sect.<sup>[31]</sup> It is used as an adjective to characterize certain beliefs and practices, such as Shaivism.<sup>[32]</sup>

Some authors associate the name with the Tamil word *śivappu* meaning "red", noting that Shiva is linked to the Sun (*śivan*, "the Red one", in Tamil) and that Rudra is also called *Babhru* (brown, or red) in the Rigveda.<sup>[33][34]</sup> The *Vishnu sahasranama* interprets *Shiva* to have multiple meanings: "The Pure One", and "the One who is not affected by three Gūṇas of Prakṛti (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas)".<sup>[35][36]</sup>

Shiva is known by many names such as Viswanatha (lord of the universe), Mahadeva, Mahandeo,<sup>[37]</sup> Mahasu,<sup>[38]</sup> Mahesha, Maheshvara, Shankara, Shambhu, Rudra, Hara, Trilochana, Devendra (chief of the gods), Neelakanta, Subhankara, Trilokinatha (lord of the three realms),<sup>[39][40][41]</sup> and Ghrneshwar (lord of compassion).<sup>[42]</sup> The highest reverence for Shiva in Shaivism is reflected in his epithets *Mahādeva* ("Great god"; *mahā* "Great" and *deva* "god"),<sup>[43][44]</sup> *Maheśvara* ("Great Lord"; *mahā* "great" and *īśvara* "lord"),<sup>[45][46]</sup> and *Parameśvara* ("Supreme Lord").<sup>[47]</sup>

*Sahasranama* are medieval Indian texts that list a thousand names derived from aspects and epithets of a deity.<sup>[48]</sup> There are at least eight different versions of the *Shiva Sahasranama*, devotional hymns (*stotras*) listing many names of Shiva.<sup>[49]</sup> The version appearing in Book 13 (*Anuśāsanaparvan*) of the *Mahabharata* provides one such list.<sup>[50]</sup> Shiva also has *Dasha-Sahasranamas* (10,000 names) that are found in the *Mahanyasa*. The *Shri Rudram Chamakam*, also known as the *Śatarudriya*, is a devotional hymn to Shiva hailing him by many names.<sup>[51][52]</sup>

## Historical development and literature

The Shiva-related tradition is a major part of Hinduism, found all over India, Nepal, Sri Lanka,<sup>[22][23]</sup> and Bali (Indonesia).<sup>[53]</sup> Scholars have interpreted early prehistoric paintings at the Bhimbetka rock shelters, carbon dated to be from pre-10,000 BCE period,<sup>[54]</sup> as Shiva dancing, Shiva's trident, and his mount Nandi.<sup>[55][56][57]</sup> Rock paintings from Bhimbetka, depicting a figure with a trishul, have been described as Nataraja by Erwin Neumayer, who dates them to the mesolithic.<sup>[58]</sup>

### Indus Valley origins

Of several Indus valley seals that show animals, one seal that has attracted attention shows a large central figure, either horned or wearing a horned headdress and possibly ithyphallic,<sup>[59][60][61]</sup> seated in a posture reminiscent of the Lotus position, surrounded by animals. This figure was named by early excavators of Mohenjo-daro as Pashupati (Lord of Animals, Sanskrit *paśupati*),<sup>[62]</sup> an epithet of the later Hindu deities Shiva and Rudra.<sup>[63][64][65]</sup>



A sculpture of siva with Moustache at Archaeological Museum GOA

Sir John Marshall and others suggested that this figure is a prototype of Shiva, with three faces, seated in a "yoga posture" with the knees out and feet joined.<sup>[66]</sup> Semi-circular shapes on the head were interpreted as two horns. Scholars such as Gavin Flood, John Keay and Doris Meth Srinivasan have expressed doubts about this suggestion.<sup>[67][68][69]</sup>

Gavin Flood states that it is not clear from the seal that the figure has three faces, is seated in a yoga posture, or even that the shape is intended to represent a human figure. He characterizes these views as "speculative", but adds that it is nevertheless possible that there are echoes of Shaiva iconographic themes, such as half-moon shapes resembling the horns of a bull.<sup>[66][70]</sup> John Keay writes that "he may indeed be an early manifestation of Lord Shiva as Pashu-pati", but a couple of his specialties of this figure does not match with Rudra.<sup>[71]</sup> Writing in 1997, Srinivasan interprets what John Marshall interpreted as facial as not human but more bovine, possibly a divine buffalo-man.<sup>[69]</sup>

The interpretation of the seal continues to be disputed. McEvelley, for example, states that it is not possible to "account for this posture outside the yogic account".<sup>[72]</sup> Asko Parpola states that other archaeological finds such as the early Elamite seals dated to 3000-2750 BCE show similar figures and these have been interpreted as "seated bull" and not a yogi, and the bovine interpretation is likely more accurate.<sup>[73]</sup> Gregory L. Possehl in 2002, associated it with the water buffalo, and concluded that while it would be appropriate to recognize the figure as a deity, and its posture as one of ritual discipline, regarding it as a proto-Shiva would "go too far".<sup>[74]</sup>



Seal discovered during excavation of the Indus Valley archaeological site in the Indus Valley has drawn attention as a possible representation of a "yogi" or "proto-Shiva" figure.

## Vedic origins

The Vedic literature refers to a minor atmospheric deity, with fearsome powers called Rudra. The Rigveda, for example, has 3 out of 1,028 hymns dedicated to Rudra, and he finds occasional mention in other hymns of the same text.<sup>[75]</sup> The term Shiva also appears in the Rigveda, but simply as an epithet that means "kind, auspicious", one of the adjectives used to describe many different Vedic deities. While fierce ruthless natural phenomenon and storm-related Rudra is feared in the hymns of the Rigveda, the beneficial rains he brings are welcomed as Shiva aspect of him.<sup>[76]</sup> This healing, nurturing, life-enabling aspect emerges in the Vedas as Rudra-Shiva, and in post-Vedic literature ultimately as Shiva who combines the destructive and constructive powers, the terrific and the pacific, as the ultimate recycler and rejuvenator of all existence.<sup>[77]</sup>

The similarities between the iconography and theologies of Shiva with Greek and European deities have led to proposals for an Indo-European link for Shiva,<sup>[78][79]</sup> or lateral exchanges with ancient central Asian cultures.<sup>[80][81]</sup> His contrasting aspects such as being terrifying or blissful depending on the situation, are similar to those of the Greek god Dionysus,<sup>[82]</sup> as are their iconic associations with bull, snakes, anger, bravery, dancing and carefree life.<sup>[83][84]</sup> The ancient Greek texts of the time of Alexander the Great call Shiva as "Indian Dionysus", or alternatively call Dionysus as "*god of the Orient*".<sup>[83]</sup> Similarly, the use of phallic symbol as an icon for Shiva is also found for Irish, Nordic, Greek (Dionysus<sup>[85]</sup>) and Roman deities, as was the idea of this aniconic column linking heaven and earth among early Indo-Aryans, states Roger Woodward.<sup>[78]</sup> Others contest such proposals, and suggest Shiva to have emerged from indigenous pre-Aryan tribal origins.<sup>[86]</sup>

## Rudra

Shiva as we know him today shares many features with the Vedic god Rudra,<sup>[87]</sup> and both Shiva and Rudra are viewed as the same personality in Hindu scriptures. The two names are used synonymously. Rudra, the god of the roaring storm, is usually portrayed in accordance with the element he represents as a fierce, destructive deity.<sup>[88]</sup>

The oldest surviving text of Hinduism is the Rig Veda, which is dated to between 1700 and 1100 BC based on linguistic and philological evidence.<sup>[89]</sup> A god named Rudra is mentioned in the Rig Veda. The name Rudra is still used as a name for Shiva. In RV 2.33, he is described as the "Father of the Rudras", a group of storm gods.<sup>[90]</sup>

The hymn 10.92 of the Rigveda states that deity Rudra has two natures, one wild and cruel (rudra), another that is kind and tranquil (shiva).<sup>[91]</sup> The Vedic texts do not mention bull or any animal as the transport vehicle (*vahana*) of Rudra or other deities. However, post-Vedic texts such as the Mahabharata and the Puranas state the Nandi bull, the Indian zebu, in particular, as the vehicle of Rudra and of Shiva, thereby unmistakably linking them as same.<sup>[92]</sup>



Three-headed Shiva, Gandhara, 2nd century AD

## Agni

Rudra and Agni have a close relationship.<sup>[93][94]</sup> The identification between Agni and Rudra in the Vedic literature was an important factor in the process of Rudra's gradual development into the later character as Rudra-Shiva.<sup>[95]</sup> The identification of Agni with Rudra is explicitly noted in the Nirukta, an important early text on etymology, which says, "Agni is also called Rudra."<sup>[96]</sup> The interconnections between the two deities are complex, and according to Stella Kramrisch:

The fire myth of *Rudra-Śiva* plays on the whole gamut of fire, valuing all its potentialities and phases, from conflagration to illumination.<sup>[97]</sup>

In the Śatarudrīya, some epithets of Rudra, such as *Sasipañjara* ("Of golden red hue as of flame") and *Tivaṣīmati* ("Flaming bright"), suggest a fusing of the two deities.<sup>[98]</sup> Agni is said to be a bull,<sup>[99]</sup> and Lord Shiva possesses a bull as his vehicle, Nandi. The horns of Agni, who is sometimes characterized as a bull, are mentioned.<sup>[100][101]</sup> In medieval sculpture, both Agni and the form of Shiva known as Bhairava have flaming hair as a special feature.<sup>[102]</sup>

## Indra

According to Wendy Doniger, the Puranic Shiva is a continuation of the Vedic Indra.<sup>[104]</sup> Doniger gives several reasons for her hypothesis. Both are associated with mountains, rivers, male fertility, fierceness, fearlessness, warfare, transgression of established mores, the Aum sound, the Supreme Self. In the Rig Veda the term *śiva* is used to refer to Indra. (2.20.3,<sup>[105]</sup> 6.45.17,<sup>[106][107]</sup> and 8.93.3.<sup>[108]</sup>) Indra, like Shiva, is likened to a bull.<sup>[109][110]</sup> In the Rig Veda, Rudra is the father of the Maruts, but he is never associated with their warlike exploits as is Indra.<sup>[111]</sup>

The Vedic beliefs and practices of the pre-classical era were closely related to the hypothesised Proto-Indo-European religion,<sup>[112]</sup> and the pre-Islamic Indo-Iranian religion.<sup>[113]</sup> The earliest iconic artworks of Shiva may be from Gandhara and northwest parts of ancient India. There is some uncertainty as the artwork that has survived is damaged and they show some overlap with meditative Buddha-related artwork, but the presence of Shiva's trident and phallic symbolism in this art suggests it was likely Shiva.<sup>[114]</sup> Numismatics research suggests that numerous coins of the ancient Kushan Empire that have survived, were images of a god who is probably Shiva.<sup>[115]</sup> The Shiva in Kushan coins is referred to as Oesho of unclear etymology and origins, but the simultaneous presence of Indra and Shiva in the Kushan era artwork suggest that they were revered deities by the start of the Kushan Empire.<sup>[116][117]</sup>

The texts and artwork of Jainism show Indra as a dancer, although not identical but generally resembling the dancing Shiva artwork found in Hinduism, particularly in their respective mudras.<sup>[118]</sup> For example, in the Jain caves at Ellora, extensive carvings show dancing Indra next to the images of Tirthankaras in a manner similar to Shiva Nataraja. The similarities in the dance iconography suggests that there may be a link between ancient Indra and Shiva.<sup>[117][118]</sup>

## Later literature

Rudra's evolution from a minor Vedic deity to a supreme being is first evidenced in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (400–200 BC), according to Gavin Flood.<sup>[68][119]</sup> Prior to it, the Upanishadic literature is monistic, and the *Shvetashvatara* text presents the earliest seeds of theistic devotion to Rudra-Shiva.<sup>[68]</sup> Here Rudra-Shiva is identified as the creator of the cosmos and liberator of souls from the birth-rebirth cycle. The period of 200 BC to 100 AD also marks the beginning of the Shaiva tradition focused on the worship of Shiva as evidenced in other literature of this period.<sup>[68]</sup> Shaiva devotees and ascetics are mentioned in Patanjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (2nd-century BC) and in the *Mahabharata*.<sup>[120]</sup> Other scholars such as Robert Hume and Doris Srinivasan state that the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* presents pluralism, pantheism, or henotheism, rather than being a text just on Shiva theism.<sup>[121][122][123]</sup>

The Shaiva Upanishads are a group of 14 minor Upanishads of Hinduism variously dated from the last centuries of the 1st millennium BCE through the 17th century.<sup>[126]</sup> These extol Shiva as the metaphysical unchanging reality Brahman and the Atman (soul, self),<sup>[127]</sup> and include sections about rites and symbolisms related to Shiva.<sup>[128]</sup>

A few texts such as *Atharvashiras Upanishad* mention Rudra, and assert all gods are Rudra, everyone and everything is Rudra, and Rudra is the principle found in all things, their highest goal, the innermost essence of all reality that is visible or invisible.<sup>[127]</sup> The *Kaivalya Upanishad* similarly, states Paul Deussen – a German Indologist and professor of Philosophy, describes the self-realized man as who "feels



Vima Kadphises with ithyphallic Shiva.



Coin of the Kushan Empire (1st-century BCE to 2nd-century CE). The right image has been interpreted as Shiva with trident and bull.<sup>[103]</sup>

### Self-realization and Shaiva Upanishads

He who sees himself in all beings,  
And all beings in him,  
attains the highest Brahman,  
not by any other means.

—*Kaivalya Upanishad* 10  
[124][125]

himself only as the one divine essence that lives in all", who feels identity of his and everyone's consciousness with Shiva (highest Atman), who has found this highest Atman within, in the depths of his heart.<sup>[124][129]</sup>

The Shaiva Puranas, particularly the Shiva Purana and the Linga Purana, present the various aspects of Shiva, mythologies, cosmology and pilgrimage (*Tirtha*) associated with him.<sup>[130][131]</sup> The Shiva-related Tantra literature, composed between the 8th and 11th centuries, are regarded in devotional dualistic Shaivism as Sruti. Dualistic Shaiva Agamas which consider soul within each living being and Shiva as two separate realities (dualism, *dvaita*), are the foundational texts for Shaiva Siddhanta.<sup>[132]</sup> Other Shaiva Agamas teach that these are one reality (monism, *advaita*), and that Shiva is the soul, the perfection and truth within each living being.<sup>[133][134]</sup> In Shiva related sub-traditions, there are ten dualistic Agama texts, eighteen qualified monism-cum-dualism Agama texts and sixty four monism Agama texts.<sup>[135][136][137]</sup>

Shiva-related literature developed extensively across India in the 1st millennium CE and through the 13th century, particularly in Kashmir and Tamil Shaiva traditions.<sup>[137]</sup> The monist Shiva literature posit absolute oneness, that is Shiva is within every man and woman, Shiva is within every living being, Shiva is present everywhere in the world including all non-living being, and there is no spiritual difference between life, matter, man and Shiva.<sup>[138]</sup> The various dualistic and monist Shiva-related ideas were welcomed in medieval southeast Asia, inspiring numerous Shiva-related temples, artwork and texts in Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, with syncretic integration of local pre-existing theologies.<sup>[132][139][140]</sup>

## Assimilation of traditions

The figure of Shiva as we know him today may be an amalgamation of various older deities into a single figure.<sup>[23][141]</sup> How the persona of Shiva converged as a composite deity is not understood, a challenge to trace and has attracted much speculation.<sup>[142]</sup> According to Vijay Nath, for example:

Vishnu and Siva [...] began to absorb countless local cults and deities within their folds. The latter were either taken to represent the multiple facets of the same god or else were supposed to denote different forms and appellations by which the god came to be known and worshipped. [...] Siva became identified with countless local cults by the sheer suffixing of *Isa* or *Isvara* to the name of the local deity, e.g., Bhutesvara, Hatakesvara, Chandesvara."<sup>[143]</sup>

An example of assimilation took place in Maharashtra, where a regional deity named Khandoba is a patron deity of farming and herding castes.<sup>[144]</sup> The foremost center of worship of Khandoba in Maharashtra is in Jejuri.<sup>[145]</sup> Khandoba has been assimilated as a form of Shiva himself,<sup>[146]</sup> in which case he is worshipped in the form of a lingam.<sup>[144][147]</sup> Khandoba's varied associations also include an identification with Surya<sup>[144]</sup> and Karttikeya.<sup>[148]</sup>

# Position within Hinduism

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## Shaivism

Shaivism is one of the four major sects of Hinduism, the others being Vaishnavism, Shaktism and the Smarta Tradition. Followers of Shaivism, called "Shaivas", revere Shiva as the Supreme Being. Shaivas believe that Shiva is All and in all, the creator, preserver, destroyer, revealer and concealer of all that is.<sup>[13][12]</sup> He is not only the creator in Shaivism, he is the creation that results from him, he is everything and everywhere. Shiva is the primal soul, the pure consciousness and Absolute Reality in the Shaiva traditions.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Shaivism theology is broadly grouped into two: the popular theology influenced by Shiva-Rudra in the Vedas, Epics and the Puranas; and the esoteric theology influenced by the Shiva and Shakti-related Tantra texts.<sup>[149]</sup> The Vedic-Brahmanic Shiva theology includes both monist (*advaita*) and devotional traditions (*dvaita*) such as Tamil Shaiva Siddhanta and Lingayatism with temples featuring items such as linga, Shiva-Parvati iconography, bull Nandi within the premises, relief artwork showing mythologies and aspects of Shiva.<sup>[150][151]</sup>

The Tantric Shiva tradition ignored the mythologies and Puranas related to Shiva, and depending on the sub-school developed a spectrum of practices. For example, historical records suggest the tantric Kapalikas (literally, the "skull-men") co-existed with and shared many Vajrayana Buddhist rituals, engaged in esoteric practices that revered Shiva and Shakti wearing skulls, begged with empty skulls, used meat, alcohol and sexuality as a part of ritual.<sup>[152]</sup> In contrast, the esoteric tradition within Kashmir Shaivism has featured the *Krama* and *Trika* sub-traditions.<sup>[153]</sup> The Krama sub-tradition focussed on esoteric rituals around Shiva-Kali pair.<sup>[154]</sup> The Trika sub-tradition developed a theology of triads involving Shiva, combined it with an ascetic lifestyle focusing on personal Shiva in the pursuit of monistic self liberation.<sup>[155][153][156]</sup>



Lingodbhava is a Shaiva sectarian icon where Shiva is depicted rising from the Lingam (an infinite fiery pillar) that narrates how Shiva is the foremost of the Trimurti; Brahma and Vishnu are depicted bowing to Lingodbhava Shiva in the centre.

## Vaishnavism

The Vaishnava (Vishnu-oriented) literature acknowledges and discusses Shiva. Like Shaiva literature that presents Shiva as supreme, the Vaishnava literature presents Vishnu as supreme. However, both traditions are pluralistic and revere both Shiva and Vishnu (along with Devi), their texts do not show exclusivism, and Vaishnava texts such as the *Bhagavata Purana* while praising Krishna as the Ultimate Reality, also present Shiva and Shakti as a personalized form and equivalent to the same Ultimate Reality.<sup>[157][158][159]</sup> The texts of Shaivism tradition similarly praise Vishnu. The Skanda Purana, for example, states:

Vishnu is nobody but Shiva, and he who is called Shiva is but identical with Vishnu.

— Skanda Purana, 1.8.20–21<sup>[160]</sup>

Mythologies of both traditions include legends about who is superior, about Shiva paying homage to Vishnu, and Vishnu paying homage to Shiva. However, in texts and artwork of either tradition, the mutual salutes are symbolism for complementarity.<sup>[161]</sup> The Mahabharata declares the unchanging Ultimate Reality (Brahman) to be identical to Shiva and to Vishnu,<sup>[162]</sup> that Vishnu is the highest manifestation of Shiva, and Shiva is the highest manifestation of Vishnu.<sup>[163]</sup>



## Shaktism

The goddess-oriented Shakti tradition of Hinduism is based on the premise that the Supreme Principle and the Ultimate Reality called Brahman is female (Devi),<sup>[165][166][167]</sup> but it treats the male as her equal and complementary partner.<sup>[8][15]</sup> This partner is Shiva.<sup>[168][169]</sup>

The earliest evidence of the tradition of reverence for the feminine with Rudra-Shiva context, is found in the Hindu scripture Rigveda, in a hymn called the Devi Sukta:<sup>[170][171]</sup>

I am the Queen, the gatherer-up of treasures, most thoughtful,  
first of those who merit worship.

Thus gods have established me in many places with many  
homes to enter and abide in.

Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them, – each man  
who sees, breathes, hears the word outspoken.

They know it not, yet I reside in the essence of the Universe.  
Hear, one and all, the truth as I declare it.

I, verily, myself announce and utter the word that gods and  
men alike shall welcome.

I make the man I love exceeding mighty, make him  
nourished, a sage, and one who knows Brahman.

I bend the bow for Rudra [Shiva], that his arrow may strike,  
and slay the hater of devotion.

I rouse and order battle for the people, I created Earth and  
Heaven and reside as their Inner Controller.

(...)

– Devi Sukta, *Rigveda* 10.125.3 – 10.125.8,  
<sup>[170][171][172]</sup>



Ardhanarishvara sculpture,  
Khajuraho, depicting Shiva with  
goddess Parvati as his equal  
half.<sup>[164]</sup>

The Devi Upanishad in its explanation of the theology of Shaktism, mentions and praises Shiva such as in its verse 19.<sup>[173][174]</sup> Shiva, along with Vishnu, is a revered god in the Devi Mahatmya, a text of Shaktism considered by the tradition to be as important as the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>[175][176]</sup> The Ardhanarishvara concept co-mingles god Shiva and goddess Shakti by presenting an icon that is half man and half woman, a representation and theme of union found in many Hindu texts and temples.<sup>[177][178]</sup>

## Smarta Tradition

In the Smarta tradition of Hinduism, Shiva is a part of its Panchayatana puja.<sup>[179]</sup> This practice consists of the use of icons or anicons of five deities considered equivalent,<sup>[179]</sup> set in a quincunx pattern.<sup>[180]</sup> Shiva is one of the five deities, others being Vishnu, Devi (such as Parvati), Surya and Ganesha or Skanda or any personal god of devotee's preference (Ishta

Devata).<sup>[181]</sup>

Philosophically, the Smartha tradition emphasizes that all idols (murti) are icons to help focus on and visualize aspects of Brahman, rather than distinct beings. The ultimate goal in this practice is to transition past the use of icons, recognize the Absolute symbolized by the icons,<sup>[182]</sup> on the path to realizing the nondual identity of one's Atman (soul, self) and the Brahman.<sup>[183]</sup> Popularized by Adi Shankara, many Panchayatana mandalas and temples have been uncovered that are from the Gupta Empire period, and one Panchayatana set from the village of Nand (about 24 kilometers from Ajmer) has been dated to belong to the Kushan Empire era (pre-300 CE).<sup>[184]</sup> The Kushan period set includes Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Brahma and one deity whose identity is unclear.<sup>[184]</sup>

## Yoga

Shiva is considered the Great Yogi who is totally absorbed in himself – the transcendental reality. He is the Lord of Yogis, and the teacher of Yoga to sages.<sup>[185]</sup> As Shiva Dakshinamurthi, states Stella Kramrisch, he is the supreme guru who "teaches in silence the oneness of one's innermost self (*atman*) with the ultimate reality (*brahman*)."<sup>[186]</sup>

The theory and practice of Yoga, in different styles, has been a part of all major traditions of Hinduism, and Shiva has been the patron or spokesperson in numerous Hindu Yoga texts.<sup>[187][188]</sup> These contain the philosophy and techniques for Yoga. These ideas are estimated to be from or after the late centuries of the 1st millennium CE, and have survived as Yoga texts such as the *Ishvara Gita* (literally, "Shiva's song"), which Andrew Nicholson – a professor of Hinduism and Indian Intellectual History – states have had "a profound and lasting influence on the development of Hinduism".<sup>[189]</sup>

Other famed Shiva-related texts influenced Hatha Yoga, integrated monistic (*Advaita Vedanta*) ideas with Yoga philosophy and inspired the theoretical development of Indian classical dance. These include the *Shiva Sutras*, the *Shiva Samhita*, and those by the scholars of Kashmir Shaivism such as the 10th-century scholar Abhinavagupta.<sup>[187][188][190]</sup> Abhinavagupta writes in his notes on the relevance of ideas related to Shiva and Yoga, by stating that "people, occupied as they are with their own affairs, normally do nothing for others", and Shiva and Yoga spirituality helps one look beyond, understand interconnectedness, and thus benefit both the individual and the world towards a more blissful state of existence.<sup>[191]</sup>

## Trimurti

The Trimurti is a concept in Hinduism in which the cosmic functions of creation, maintenance, and destruction are personified by the forms of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the maintainer or preserver and Shiva the destroyer or transformer.<sup>[192][193]</sup> These three deities have been called "the Hindu triad"<sup>[194]</sup> or the "Great Trinity".<sup>[195]</sup> However, the ancient and medieval texts of Hinduism feature many triads of gods and goddesses, some of which do not include Shiva.<sup>[196]</sup>



Oleograph by Raja Ravi Varma depicting a Shiva-centric Panchayatana. A bearded Shiva sits in the centre with his wife Parvati and their infant son Ganesha; surrounded by (clockwise from left upper corner) Ganesha, Devi, Vishnu and Surya. Shiva's mount is the bull Nandi below Shiva.

# Attributes

- **Third eye:** Shiva is often depicted with a third eye, with which he burned Desire (*Kāma*) to ashes,<sup>[197]</sup> called "Tryambakam" (Sanskrit: त्र्यम्बकम्), which occurs in many scriptural sources.<sup>[198]</sup> In classical Sanskrit, the word *ambaka* denotes "an eye", and in the *Mahabharata*, Shiva is depicted as three-eyed, so this name is sometimes translated as "having three eyes".<sup>[199]</sup> However, in Vedic Sanskrit, the word *ambā* or *ambikā* means "mother", and this early meaning of the word is the basis for the translation "three mothers".<sup>[200][201]</sup> These three mother-goddesses who are collectively called the *Ambikās*.<sup>[202]</sup> Other related translations have been based on the idea that the name actually refers to the oblations given to Rudra, which according to some traditions were shared with the goddess *Ambikā*.<sup>[203]</sup>
- **Crescent moon:** Shiva bears on his head the crescent moon.<sup>[204]</sup> The epithet *Candraśekhara* (Sanskrit: चन्द्रशेखर "Having the moon as his crest" – *candra* = "moon"; *śekhara* = "crest, crown")<sup>[205][206][207]</sup> refers to this feature. The placement of the moon on his head as a standard iconographic feature dates to the period when Rudra rose to prominence and became the major deity Rudra-Shiva.<sup>[208]</sup> The origin of this linkage may be due to the identification of the moon with Soma, and there is a hymn in the Rig Veda where Soma and Rudra are jointly implored, and in later literature, Soma and Rudra came to be identified with one another, as were Soma and the moon.<sup>[209]</sup>
- **Ashes:** Shiva iconography shows his body covered with ashes (*bhasma*, *vibhuti*).<sup>[210][211]</sup> The ashes represent a reminder that all of material existence is impermanent, comes to an end becoming ash, and the pursuit of eternal soul and spiritual liberation is important.<sup>[212][213]</sup>
- **Matted hair:** Shiva's distinctive hair style is noted in the epithets *Jaṭin*, "the one with matted hair",<sup>[214]</sup> and *Kapardin*, "endowed with matted hair"<sup>[215]</sup> or "wearing his hair wound in a braid in a shell-like (*kaparda*) fashion".<sup>[216]</sup> A *kaparda* is a cowrie shell, or a braid of hair in the form of a shell, or, more generally, hair that is shaggy or curly.<sup>[217]</sup>
- **Blue throat:** The epithet *Nīlakaṇṭha* (Sanskrit नीलकण्ठ; *nīla* = "blue", *kaṇṭha* = "throat").<sup>[218][219]</sup> Since Shiva drank the Halahala poison churned up from the Samudra Manthan to eliminate its destructive capacity. Shocked by his act, Parvati squeezed his neck and stopped it in his neck to prevent it from spreading all over the universe, supposed to be in Shiva's stomach. However the poison was so potent that it changed the color of his neck to blue.<sup>[220][221]</sup>
- **Meditating yogi:** his iconography often shows him in a Yoga pose, meditating, sometimes on a symbolic Himalayan Mount Kailasha as the Lord of Yoga.<sup>[210]</sup>
- **Sacred Ganga:** The epithet *Gangadhara*, "Bearer of the river Ganga" (Ganges). The Ganga flows from the matted hair of Shiva.<sup>[222][223]</sup> The *Gaṅgā* (Ganga), one of the major rivers of the country, is said to have made her abode in Shiva's hair.<sup>[224]</sup>
- **Tiger skin:** Shiva is often shown seated upon a tiger skin.<sup>[210]</sup>
- **Serpents:** Shiva is often shown garlanded with a snake.<sup>[225]</sup>
- **Trident:** Shiva typically carries a trident called *Trishula*.<sup>[210]</sup> The trident is a weapon or a symbol in different Hindu texts.<sup>[226]</sup> As a symbol, the *Trishul* represents Shiva's three aspects of "creator, preserver and destroyer",<sup>[227]</sup> or alternatively it represents the equilibrium of three



Shiva with Parvati. Shiva is depicted three-eyed, the Ganges flowing through his matted hair, wearing ornaments of serpents and a skull garland, covered in ashes, and seated on a tiger skin



A seated Shiva holds an axe and deer in his hands.

Gunas of "sattva, rajas and tamas".<sup>[228]</sup>

- **Drum:** A small drum shaped like an hourglass is known as a *damaru*.<sup>[229][230]</sup> This is one of the attributes of Shiva in his famous dancing representation<sup>[231]</sup> known as *Nataraja*. A specific hand gesture (*mudra*) called *damaru-hasta* (Sanskrit for "*damaru-hand*") is used to hold the drum.<sup>[232]</sup> This drum is particularly used as an emblem by members of the *Kāpālīka* sect.<sup>[233]</sup>
- **Axe (*Parashu*) and Deer** are held in Shiva's hands in Odisha & south Indian icons.<sup>[234]</sup>
- **Rosary beads:** he is garlanded with or carries a string of rosary beads in his right hand, typically made of *Rudraksha*.<sup>[210]</sup> This symbolises grace, mendicant life and meditation.<sup>[235][236]</sup>
- **Nandī:** Nandī, also known as "Nandin", is the name of the bull that serves as Shiva's mount (Sanskrit: *vāhana*).<sup>[237][238]</sup> Shiva's association with cattle is reflected in his name *Paśupati*, or *Pashupati* (Sanskrit: पशुपति), translated by Sharma as "lord of cattle"<sup>[239]</sup> and by Kramrisch as "lord of animals", who notes that it is particularly used as an epithet of Rudra.<sup>[240]</sup>
- **Mount Kailāsa:** Mount Kailash in the Himalayas is his traditional abode.<sup>[210][241]</sup> In Hindu mythology, Mount *Kailāsa* is conceived as resembling a *Linga*, representing the center of the universe.<sup>[242]</sup>
- **Gaṇa:** The *Gaṇas* are attendants of Shiva and live in Kailash. They are often referred to as the bhutaganas, or ghostly hosts, on account of their nature. Generally benign, except when their lord is transgressed against, they are often invoked to intercede with the lord on behalf of the devotee. His son *Ganesha* was chosen as their leader by Shiva, hence Ganesha's title *gaṇa-tīśa* or *gaṇa-pati*, "lord of the *gaṇas*".<sup>[243]</sup>
- **Varanasi:** Varanasi (Benares) is considered to be the city specially loved by Shiva, and is one of the holiest places of pilgrimage in India. It is referred to, in religious contexts, as Kashi.<sup>[244]</sup>

## Forms and depictions

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According to Gavin Flood, "Shiva is a god of ambiguity and paradox," whose attributes include opposing themes.<sup>[245]</sup> The ambivalent nature of this deity is apparent in some of his names and the stories told about him.

### Destroyer and Benefactor



Shiva is represented in his many aspects.<sup>[246]</sup> Left: Bhairava icon of the fierce form of Shiva, from 17th/18th century Nepal; Right: Shiva as a meditating yogi in Rishikesh.

In *Yajurveda*, two contrary sets of attributes for both malignant or terrifying (Sanskrit: *rudra*) and benign or auspicious (Sanskrit: *śiva*) forms can be found, leading Chakravarti to conclude that "all the basic elements which created the complex Rudra-Śiva sect of later ages are to be found here".<sup>[247]</sup> In the *Mahabharata*, Shiva is depicted as "the standard of invincibility, might, and terror", as well as a figure of honor, delight, and brilliance.<sup>[248]</sup>

The duality of Shiva's fearful and auspicious attributes appears in contrasted names. The name *Rudra* reflects Shiva's fearsome aspects. According to traditional etymologies, the Sanskrit name *Rudra* is derived from the root *rud-*, which means "to cry, howl".<sup>[249]</sup> Stella Kramrisch notes a different etymology connected with the adjectival form *raudra*, which means "wild, of *rudra* nature", and translates the name *Rudra* as "the wild one" or "the fierce god".<sup>[250]</sup> R. K. Sharma follows this alternate etymology and translates the name as "terrible".<sup>[251]</sup> Hara is an important name that occurs three times in the *Anushasanaparvan* version of the *Shiva sahasranama*, where it is translated in different ways each time it occurs, following a commentarial tradition of not repeating an interpretation. Sharma translates the three as "one who captivates", "one who consolidates", and "one who destroys".<sup>[252]</sup> Kramrisch translates it as "the ravisher".<sup>[221]</sup> Another of Shiva's fearsome forms is as *Kāla* "time" and *Mahākāla* "great time", which

ultimately destroys all things.<sup>[43][253]</sup> The name *Kāla* appears in the *Shiva Sahasranama*, where it is translated by Ram Karan Sharma as "(the Supreme Lord of) Time".<sup>[254]</sup> *Bhairava* "terrible" or "frightful"<sup>[255]</sup> is a fierce form associated with annihilation. In contrast, the name *Śaṅkara*, "beneficent"<sup>[30]</sup> or "conferring happiness"<sup>[256]</sup> reflects his benign form. This name was adopted by the great *Vedanta* philosopher *Adi Shankara* (c. 788–820),<sup>[257]</sup> who is also known as *Shankaracharya*.<sup>[43]</sup> The name *Śambhu* (Sanskrit: शम्भु swam-on its own; bhu-burn/shine) "self-shining/ shining on its own", also reflects this benign aspect.<sup>[43][258]</sup>

## Ascetic and householder

Shiva is depicted as both an ascetic *yogi* and as a householder (*grihasta*), roles which have been traditionally mutually exclusive in Hindu society.<sup>[259]</sup> When depicted as a *yogi*, he may be shown sitting and meditating.<sup>[260]</sup> His epithet *Mahāyogi* ("the great *Yogi*: *Mahā* = "great", *Yogi* = "one who practices Yoga") refers to his association with *yoga*.<sup>[261]</sup> While *Vedic religion* was conceived mainly in terms of sacrifice, it was during the *Epic period* that the concepts of *tapas*, *yoga*, and asceticism became more important, and the depiction of Shiva as an ascetic sitting in philosophical isolation reflects these later concepts.<sup>[262]</sup>



Shiva is depicted both as an ascetic yogi, and as a householder with goddess Parvati.

As a family man and householder, he has a wife, Parvati and two sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya. His epithet *Umāpati* ("The husband of *Umā*") refers to this idea, and Sharma notes that two other variants of this name that mean the same thing, *Umākānta* and *Umādhava*, also appear in the *sahasranama*.<sup>[263]</sup> *Umā* in epic literature is known by many names, including the benign *Pārvatī*.<sup>[264][265]</sup> She is identified with *Devī*, the Divine Mother; *Shakti* (divine energy) as well as goddesses like *Tripura Sundari*, *Durga*, *Kali*, *Kamakshi* and *Minakshi*. The consorts of Shiva are the source of his creative energy. They represent the dynamic extension of Shiva onto this universe.<sup>[266]</sup> His son Ganesha is worshipped throughout *India* and *Nepal* as the Remover of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings and Lord of Obstacles. Kartikeya is worshipped in *South India* (especially in *Tamil Nadu*, *Kerala* and *Karnataka*) by the names *Subrahmanya*, *Subrahmanyan*, *Shanmughan*, *Swaminathan* and *Murugan*, and in *Northern India* by the names *Skanda*, *Kumara*, or *Karttikeya*.<sup>[267]</sup>

Some regional deities are also identified as Shiva's children. As one story goes, Shiva is enticed by the beauty and charm of *Mohini*, Vishnu's female avatar, and procreates with her. As a result of this union, *Shasta* – identified with regional deities *Ayyappan* and *Aiyanar* – is born.<sup>[268][269][270][271]</sup> In outskirts of *Ernakulam* in *Kerala*, a deity named *Vishnumaya* is stated to be offspring of Shiva and invoked in local exorcism rites, but this deity is not traceable in Hindu pantheon and is possibly a local tradition with "vaguely Chinese" style rituals, states Saletore.<sup>[7]</sup> In some traditions, Shiva has daughters like the serpent-goddess *Manasa* and *Ashokasundari*.<sup>[6][272]</sup> According to Doniger, two regional stories depict demons *Andhaka* and *Jalandhara* as the children of Shiva who war with him, and are later destroyed by Shiva.<sup>[273]</sup>

## Iconographic forms

The depiction of Shiva as *Nataraja* (Sanskrit: *naṭarāja*, "Lord of Dance") is popular.<sup>[274][275]</sup> The names *Nartaka* ("dancer") and *Nityanarta* ("eternal dancer") appear in the *Shiva Sahasranama*.<sup>[276]</sup> His association with dance and also with music is prominent in the *Puranic period*.<sup>[277]</sup> In addition to the specific iconographic form known as *Nataraja*, various other types of dancing forms (Sanskrit: *nṛtyamūrti*) are found in all parts of India, with many well-defined

varieties in Tamil Nadu in particular.<sup>[278]</sup> The two most common forms of the dance are the Tandava, which later came to denote the powerful and masculine dance as Kala-Mahakala associated with the destruction of the world. When it requires the world or universe to be destroyed, Shiva does it by the Tandava,<sup>[279][280]</sup> and Lasya, which is graceful and delicate and expresses emotions on a gentle level and is considered the feminine dance attributed to the goddess Parvati.<sup>[281][282]</sup> *Lasya* is regarded as the female counterpart of *Tandava*.<sup>[282]</sup> The *Tandava-Lasya* dances are associated with the destruction-creation of the world.<sup>[283][284][285]</sup>

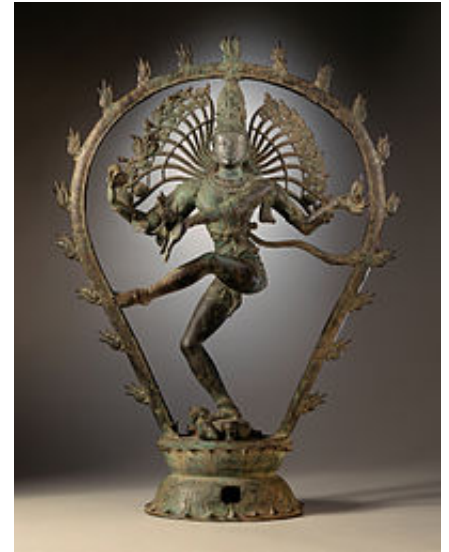
Dakshinamurthy (*Dakṣiṇāmūrti*)<sup>[286]</sup> literally describes a form (*mūrti*) of Shiva facing south (*dakṣiṇa*). This form represents Shiva in his aspect as a teacher of yoga, music, and wisdom and giving exposition on the shastras.<sup>[287]</sup> This iconographic form for depicting Shiva in Indian art is mostly from Tamil Nadu.<sup>[288]</sup> Elements of this motif can include Shiva seated upon a deer-throne and surrounded by sages who are receiving his instruction.<sup>[289]</sup>

An iconographic representation of Shiva called Ardhanarishvara (*Ardhanārīśvara*) shows him with one half of the body as male and the other half as female. According to Ellen Goldberg, the traditional Sanskrit name for this form is best translated as "the lord who is half woman", not as "half-man, half-woman".<sup>[290]</sup>

Shiva is often depicted as an archer in the act of destroying the triple fortresses, *Tripura*, of the Asuras.<sup>[291]</sup> Shiva's name Tripurantaka (*Tripurāntaka*), "ender of Tripura", refers to this important story.<sup>[292]</sup>

## Lingam

Apart from anthropomorphic images of Shiva, he is also represented in aniconic form of a lingam.<sup>[293][294][295]</sup> These are depicted in various designs. One common form is the shape of a vertical rounded column in the centre of a lipped, disk-shaped object, the *yonī*, symbolism for the goddess Shakti.<sup>[296]</sup> In Shiva temples, the *linga* is typically present in its sanctum sanctorum and is the focus of votary offerings such as milk, water, flower petals, fruit, fresh leaves, and rice.<sup>[296]</sup> According to Monier Williams and Yudit Greenberg, *linga* literally means "mark, sign or emblem", and also refers to a "mark or sign from which the existence of something else can be reliably inferred". It implies the regenerative divine energy innate in nature, symbolized by Shiva.<sup>[297][298]</sup> Some scholars, such as Wendy Doniger, view *linga* merely as an erotic phallic symbol,<sup>[299]</sup> although this interpretation is disputed by others, including Swami Vivekananda,<sup>[300]</sup> Sivananda Saraswati,<sup>[301]</sup> and S. N. Balagangadhara.<sup>[302]</sup> According to Moriz Winternitz, the *linga* in the Shiva tradition is "only a symbol of the productive and creative principle of nature as embodied in Shiva", and it has no historical trace in any obscene phallic cult.<sup>[303]</sup>



Chola dynasty statue depicting Shiva dancing as Nataraja (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)



Shiva Lingam with tripundra.

The worship of the lingam originated from the famous hymn in the *Atharva-Veda Samhitâ* sung in praise of the *Yupa-Stambha*, the sacrificial post. In that hymn, a description is found of the beginningless and endless *Stambha* or *Skambha*, and it is shown that the said *Skambha* is put in place of the eternal Brahman. Just as the Yajna (sacrificial) fire, its smoke, ashes, and flames, the *Soma* plant, and the ox that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Shiva's body, his tawny matted hair, his blue throat, and the riding on the bull of the Shiva, the *Yupa-Skambha* gave place in time to the *Shiva-Linga*.<sup>[304][305]</sup> In the text *Linga Purana*, the same hymn is expanded in the shape of stories, meant to establish the glory of the great *Stambha* and the superiority of Shiva as Mahadeva.<sup>[305]</sup>

The oldest known archaeological *linga* as an anicon of Shiva is the Gudimallam lingam from 3rd-century BCE.<sup>[296]</sup> In Shaivism pilgrimage tradition, twelve major temples of Shiva are called Jyotirlinga, which means "linga of light", and these are located across India.<sup>[306]</sup>

## The five mantras



The 10th century five headed Shiva, Sadashiva, Cambodia.

Five is a sacred number for Shiva.<sup>[307]</sup> One of his most important mantras has five syllables (*namaḥ śivāya*).<sup>[308]</sup>

Shiva's body is said to consist of five mantras, called the *pañcabrahmans*.<sup>[309]</sup> As forms of God, each of these have their own names and distinct iconography:<sup>[310]</sup>

- *Sadyojāta*
- *Vāmadeva*
- *Aghora*
- *Tatpuruṣa*
- *Īsāna*

These are represented as the five faces of Shiva and are associated in various texts with the five elements, the five senses, the five organs of perception, and the five organs of action.<sup>[311][312]</sup> Doctrinal differences and, possibly, errors in transmission, have resulted in some differences between texts in details of how these five forms are linked with various attributes.<sup>[313]</sup> The overall meaning of these associations is summarized by Stella Kramrisch:

Through these transcendent categories, Śiva, the ultimate reality, becomes the efficient and material cause of all that exists.<sup>[314]</sup>

According to the *Pañcabrahma Upanishad*:

One should know all things of the phenomenal world as of a fivefold character, for the reason that the eternal verity of Śiva is of the character of the fivefold Brahman. (*Pañcabrahma Upanishad* 31)<sup>[315]</sup>

## Avatars

Puranic scriptures contain occasional references to "anah" – literally portion, or avatars of Shiva, but the idea of Shiva avatars is not universally accepted in Saivism.<sup>[316]</sup> The Linga Purana mentions twenty-eight forms of Shiva which are sometimes seen as avatars,<sup>[317]</sup> however such mention is unusual and the avatars of Shiva is relatively rare in Shaivism compared to the well emphasized concept of Vishnu avatars in Vaishnavism.<sup>[318][319][320]</sup> Some Vaishnava literature reverentially link Shiva to characters in its mythologies. For example, in the Hanuman Chalisa, Hanuman is identified as the eleventh avatar of Shiva.<sup>[321][322][323]</sup> The Bhagavata Purana and the Vishnu Purana claim sage Durvasa to be a portion of Shiva.<sup>[324][325][326]</sup> Some medieval era writers have called the Advaita Vedanta philosopher Adi Shankara an incarnation of Shiva.<sup>[327]</sup>

## Festivals

There is a Shivaratri in every lunar month on its 13th night/14th day,<sup>[328]</sup> but once a year in late winter (February/March) and before the arrival of spring, marks Maha Shivaratri which means "the Great Night of Shiva".<sup>[3][329]</sup>

Maha Shivaratri is a major Hindu festival, but one that is solemn and theologically marks a remembrance of "overcoming darkness and ignorance" in life and the world,<sup>[329]</sup> and meditation about the polarities of existence, of Shiva and a devotion to humankind.<sup>[328]</sup> It is observed by reciting Shiva-related poems, chanting prayers, remembering Shiva, fasting, doing Yoga and meditating on ethics and virtues such as self-restraint, honesty, noninjury to others, forgiveness, introspection, self-repentance and the discovery of Shiva.<sup>[329][330]</sup> The ardent devotees keep awake all night. Others visit one of the Shiva temples or go on pilgrimage to Jyotirlingam shrines. Those who visit temples, offer milk, fruits, flowers, fresh leaves and sweets to the lingam.<sup>[3]</sup> Some communities organize special dance events, to mark Shiva as the lord of dance, with individual and group performances.<sup>[331]</sup> According to Jones and Ryan, Maha Sivaratri is an ancient Hindu festival which probably originated around the 5th-century.<sup>[329]</sup>

Another major festival involving Shiva worship is Kartik Purnima, commemorating Shiva's victory on the demons Tripurasura. Across India, various Shiva temples are illuminated throughout the night. Shiva icons are carried in procession in some places.<sup>[332]</sup>

Regional festivals dedicated to Shiva include the Chittirai festival in Madurai around April/May, one of the largest festivals in South India, celebrating the wedding of Minakshi (Parvati) and Shiva. The festival is one where both the Vaishnava and Shaiva communities join the celebrations, because Vishnu gives away his sister Minakshi in marriage to Shiva.<sup>[333]</sup>

Some Shaktism-related festivals revere Shiva along with the goddess considered primary and Supreme. These include festivals dedicated to Annapurna such as Annakuta and those related to Durga.<sup>[334]</sup> In Himalayan regions such as Nepal, as well as in northern, central and western India, the festival of Teej is celebrated by girls and women in the monsoon



Maha Sivaratri festival is observed in the night, usually in lighted temples or special *prabha* (above).



season, in honor of goddess Parvati, with group singing, dancing and by offering prayers in Parvati-Shiva temples.<sup>[335][336]</sup>

The ascetic, Vedic and Tantric sub-traditions related to Shiva, such as those that became ascetic warriors during the Islamic rule period of India,<sup>[337][338]</sup> celebrate the Kumbha Mela festival.<sup>[339]</sup> This festival cycles every 12 years, in four pilgrimage sites within India, with the event moving to the next site after a gap of three years. The biggest is in Prayaga (renamed Allahabad during the Mughal rule era), where millions of Hindus of different traditions gather at the confluence of rivers Ganges and Yamuna. In the Hindu tradition, the Shiva-linked ascetic warriors (*Nagas*) get the honor of starting the event by entering the *sangam* first for bathing and prayers.<sup>[339]</sup>

## Beyond Indian subcontinent and Hinduism

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In Shaivism of Indonesia, the popular name for Shiva has been *Batara Guru*, which is derived from Sanskrit *Bhataraka* which means “noble lord”.<sup>[342]</sup> He is conceptualized as a kind spiritual teacher, the first of all Gurus in Indonesian Hindu texts, mirroring the Dakshinamurti aspect of Shiva in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>[343]</sup> However, the Batara Guru has more aspects than the Indian Shiva, as the Indonesian Hindus blended their spirits and heroes with him. Batara Guru's wife in southeast Asia is the same Hindu deity Durga, who has been popular since ancient times, and she too has a complex character with benevolent and fierce manifestations, each visualized with different names such as Uma, Sri, Kali and others.<sup>[344][345]</sup> Shiva has been called Sadasiva, Paramasiva, Mahadeva in benevolent forms, and Kala, Bhairava, Mahakala in his fierce forms.<sup>[345]</sup> The Indonesian Hindu texts present the same philosophical diversity of Shaivism traditions found on the subcontinent. However, among the texts that have survived into the contemporary era, the more common are of those of Shaiva Siddhanta (locally also called Siwa Siddhanta, Sridanta).<sup>[346]</sup>

In the pre-Islamic period on the island of Java, Shaivism and Buddhism were considered very close and allied religions, though not identical religions.<sup>[347]</sup> The medieval era Indonesian literature equates Buddha with Siwa (Shiva) and Janardana (Vishnu).<sup>[348]</sup> This tradition continues in predominantly Hindu Bali Indonesia in the modern era, where Buddha is considered the younger brother of Shiva.<sup>[349]</sup>

The worship of Shiva became popular in Central Asia through the Hephthalite Empire,<sup>[350]</sup> and Kushan Empire. Shaivism was also popular in Sogdia and the Kingdom of Yutian as found from the wall painting from Penjikent on the river Zervashan.<sup>[351]</sup> In this depiction, Shiva is portrayed with a sacred halo and a sacred thread (“Yajnopavita”).<sup>[351]</sup> He is clad in tiger skin while his attendants are wearing Sogdian dress.<sup>[351]</sup> A panel from Dandan Oilik shows Shiva in His Trimurti form with Shakti kneeling on her right thigh.<sup>[351][352]</sup> Another site in the Taklamakan Desert depicts him with four legs, seated cross-legged on a cushioned seat supported by two bulls.<sup>[351]</sup> It is also noted that Zoroastrian wind god Vayu-Vata took on the iconographic appearance of Shiva.<sup>[352]</sup>



Shiva has been adopted and merged with Buddhist deities. Left: Daikokuten is a Shiva-Ōkuninushi fusion deity in Japan;<sup>[340]</sup> Right: Acala is a fierce Shiva adaptation.<sup>[341]</sup>

Daikokuten, one of the Seven Lucky Gods in Japan, is considered to be evolved from Shiva. The god enjoys an exalted position as a household deity in Japan and is worshipped as the god of wealth and fortune.<sup>[353]</sup> The name is the Japanese equivalent of Mahākāla, the Buddhist name for Shiva.<sup>[354]</sup> Shiva is also mentioned in Buddhist Tantra. Shiva as Upaya and Shakti as Prajna.<sup>[355]</sup> In cosmologies of Buddhist tantra, Shiva is depicted as passive, with Shakti being his active counterpart.<sup>[356]</sup>

The Japuji Sahib of the Guru Granth Sahib says, "The Guru is Shiva, the Guru is Vishnu and Brahma; the Guru is Paarvati and Lakhshmi."<sup>[357]</sup> In the same chapter, it also says, "Shiva speaks, and the Siddhas listen." In Dasam Granth, Guru Gobind Singh has mentioned two avatars of Rudra: Dattatreya Avtar and Parasnath Avtar.<sup>[358]</sup>

## In contemporary culture

In contemporary culture, Shiva is depicted in films, books, tattoos and art. He has been referred to as "the god of cool things"<sup>[359]</sup> and a "bonafide rock hero".<sup>[360]</sup>

Popular films include the Gujarati language movie *Har Har Mahadev*<sup>[361]</sup> and well-known books include Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, which has sold over a million copies.<sup>[359]</sup> On television, *Devon Ke Dev...Mahadev*, a mythological drama about Shiva on the Life OK channel was among the most watched shows at its peak popularity.<sup>[362]</sup>

In the *Final Fantasy* videogame series, Shiva is often depicted as a benevolent ancient being of Ice Element who frequently aids the heroes against mighty foes (via summoning).<sup>[363]</sup> Shiva is also a character in the video game *Dark Souls*, with the name Shiva of the East.<sup>[359]</sup>



The statue of Shiva as Nataraja at CERN in Geneva.

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and of the Goddess Devi too"

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160. Gregor Maehle (2009), *Ashtanga Yoga*, New World, ISBN 978-1577316695, page 17; for Sanskrit, see: *Skanda Purana* (<https://archive.org/stream/SriSkandaPuranam-SankaraSamhitaPart1#page/n31/mode/2up>) Shankara Samhita Part 1, Verses 1.8.20–21 (Sanskrit)
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167. David Kinsley 1988, pp. 101–105.
168. Tracy Pintchman 2014, pp. 85–86, 119, 144, 171.
169. Coburn 1991, pp. 19–24, 40, 65, Narayani p. 232.
170. McDaniel 2004, p. 90.
171. Brown 1998, p. 26.
172. "The Rig Veda" ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Rig\\_Veda/Mandala\\_10/Hymn\\_125](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Rig_Veda/Mandala_10/Hymn_125)) – via Wikisource.
173. Brown 1998, p. 77.
174. Warrier 1967, pp. 77–84.
175. Rocher 1986, p. 193.
176. David R. Kinsley (1975). *The Sword and the Flute: Kālī and Kṛṣṇa, Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology* ([https://books.google.com/books?id=Ih1By08\\_Yj0C](https://books.google.com/books?id=Ih1By08_Yj0C)). University of California Press. pp. 102 with footnote 42. ISBN 978-0-520-02675-9., Quote: "In the Devi Mahatmya, it is quite clear that Durga is an independent deity, great in her own right, and only loosely associated with any of the great male deities. And if any one of the great gods can be said to be her closest associate, it is Visnu rather than Siva".
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194. For definition of trimurti as "the unified form" of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva and use of the phrase "the Hindu triad" see: Apte, p. 485.
195. For the term "Great Trinity" in relation to the Trimurti see: Jansen, p. 83.
196. The Trimurti idea of Hinduism, states Jan Gonda, "seems to have developed from ancient cosmological and ritualistic speculations about the triple character of an individual god, in the first place of *Agni*, whose births are three or threefold, and who is threefold light, has three bodies and three stations". See: Jan Gonda (1969), *The Hindu Trinity* (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40457085>), *Anthropos*, Bd 63/64, H 1/2, pages 218–219; Other trinities, beyond the more common "Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva", mentioned in ancient and medieval Hindu texts include: "Indra, Vishnu, Brahmanaspati", "Agni, Indra, Surya", "Agni, Vayu, Aditya", "Mahalakshmi, Mahasarasvati, and Mahakali", and others. See: [a] David White (2006), *Kiss of the Yogini*, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 978-0226894843, pages 4, 29  
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197. For Shiva as depicted with a third eye, and mention of the story of the destruction of Kama with it, see: Flood (1996), p. 151.
198. For a review of 4 theories about the meaning of *tryambaka*, see: Chakravarti, pp. 37–39.
199. For usage of the word *ambaka* in classical Sanskrit and connection to the Mahabharata depiction, see: Chakravarti, pp. 38–39.
200. For translation of Tryambakam as "having three mother eyes" and as an epithet of Rudra, see: Kramrisch, p. 483.

201. For vedic Sanskrit meaning Lord has three mother eyes which symbolize eyes are the Sun, Moon and Fire.
202. For discussion of the problems in translation of this name, and the hypothesis regarding the *Ambikās* see: Hopkins (1968), p. 220.
203. For the *Ambikā* variant, see: Chakravarti, pp. 17, 37.
204. For the moon on the forehead see: Chakravarti, p. 109.
205. For *śekhara* as crest or crown, see: Apte, p. 926.
206. For *Candraśekhara* as an iconographic form, see: Sivaramamurti (1976), p. 56.
207. For translation "Having the moon as his crest" see: Kramrisch, p. 472.
208. For the moon iconography as marking the rise of Rudra-Shiva, see: Chakravarti, p. 58.
209. For discussion of the linkages between Soma, Moon, and Rudra, and citation to RV 7.74, see: Chakravarti, pp. 57–58.
210. Flood (1996), p. 151.
211. This smearing of cremation ashes emerged into a practice of some Tantra-oriented ascetics, where they would also offer meat, alcohol and sexual fluids to Bhairava (a form of Shiva), and these groups were probably not of **Brahmanic** origin. These ascetics are mentioned in the ancient Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. See: Flood (1996), pp. 92, 161.
212. Antonio Rigopoulos (2013), Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume 5, Brill Academic, [ISBN 978-9004178960](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-04-17896-0), pages 182–183
213. Paul Deussen (1980). *Sechzig Upaniṣad's des Veda* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=XYepelGUY0gC>). Motilal Banarsidass. pp. 775–776, 789–790, 551. [ISBN 978-81-208-1467-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-208-1467-7).
214. Chidbhavananda, p. 22.
215. For translation of Kapardin as "Endowed with matted hair" see: [Sharma 1996](#), p. 279.
216. Kramrisch, p. 475.
217. For Kapardin as a name of Shiva, and description of the kaparda hair style, see, Macdonell, p. 62.
218. [Sharma 1996](#), p. 290
219. See: name #93 in Chidbhavananda, p. 31.
220. For Shiva drinking the poison churned from the world ocean see: Flood (1996), p. 78.
221. Kramrisch, p. 473.
222. For alternate stories about this feature, and use of the name *Gaṅgādhara* see: Chakravarti, pp. 59 and 109.
223. For description of the *Gaṅgādhara* form, see: Sivaramamurti (1976), p. 8.
224. For Shiva supporting *Gaṅgā* upon his head, see: Kramrisch, p. 473.
225. Flood (1996), p. 151
226. [Wayman & Singh 1991](#), p. 266.
227. [Suresh Chandra 1998](#), p. 309.
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233. For use by *Kāpālikas*, see: Apte, p. 461.
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237. For a review of issues related to the evolution of the bull (Nandin) as Shiva's mount, see: Chakravarti, pp. 99–105.
238. For spelling of alternate proper names *Nandī* and Nandin see: Stutley, p. 98.
239. Sharma 1996, p. 291
240. Kramrisch, p. 479.
241. For the name *Kailāsagirivāsī* (*Sanskrit* कैलासिगिरिवासी), "With his abode on Mount Kailāsa", as a name appearing in the *Shiva Sahasranama*, see: Sharma 1996, p. 281.
242. For identification of Mount *Kailāsa* as the central *linga*, see: Stutley (1985), p. 62.
243. Dictionary of Hindu Lore and Legend (ISBN 0-500-51088-1) by Anna L. Dallapiccola
244. Keay, p. 33.
245. For quotation "Shiva is a god of ambiguity and paradox" and overview of conflicting attributes see: Flood (1996), p. 150.
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249. For *rud-* meaning "cry, howl" as a traditional etymology see: Kramrisch, p. 5.
250. Citation to M. Mayrhofer, *Concise Etymological Sanskrit Dictionary*, s.v. "rudra", is provided in: Kramrisch, p. 5.
251. Sharma 1996, p. 301.
252. Sharma 1996, p. 314.
253. Kramrisch, p. 474.
254. Sharma 1996, p. 280.
255. Apte, p. 727, left column.
256. Kramrisch, p. 481.
257. Flood (1996), p. 92.
258. Chakravarti 1986, pp. 28 (note 7), and p. 177.
259. For the contrast between ascetic and householder depictions, see: Flood (1996), pp. 150–151.
260. For Shiva's representation as a yogi, see: Chakravarti, p. 32.
261. For name Mahāyogi and associations with yoga, see, Chakravarti, pp. 23, 32, 150.
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263. For *Umāpati*, *Umākānta* and *Umādhava* as names in the Shiva Sahasranama literature, see: Sharma 1996, p. 278.
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275. For interpretation of the *naṭarāja* form see: Zimmer, pp. 151–157.
276. For names Nartaka (Sanskrit नर्तक) and Nityanarta (Sanskrit नित्यनर्त) as names of Shiva, see: [Sharma 1996](#), p. 289.
277. For prominence of these associations in puranic times, see: Chakravarti, p. 62.
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280. [Klostermaier, Klaus K.](#) "Shiva the Dancer". *Mythologies and Philosophies of Salvation in the Theistic Traditions of India*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press. p. 151.
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287. For description of the form as representing teaching functions, see: Kramrisch, p. 472.
288. For characterization of *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* as a mostly south Indian form, see: Chakravarti, p. 62.
289. For the deer-throne and the audience of sages as *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, see: Chakravarti, p. 155.
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291. For evolution of this story from early sources to the epic period, when it was used to enhance Shiva's increasing influence, see: Chakravarti, p.46.
292. For the *Tripurāntaka* form, see: Sivaramamurti (1976), pp. 34, 49.
293. Michaels, p. 216.
294. Flood (1996), p. 29.
295. Tattwananda, pp. 49–52.
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310. For distinct iconography, see Kramrisch, p. 185.
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312. For the epithets *pañcamukha* and *pañcavaktra*, both of which mean "five faces", as epithets of Śiva, see: Apte, p. 578, middle column.
313. For variation in attributions among texts, see: Kramrisch, p. 187.
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