

= Shiva =

Shiva / शिव / ; Sanskrit : शिव , Tamil : சிவ meaning " The Auspicious " is one of the three major deities of Hinduism . He is the chief within Shaivism , one of the three most influential denominations in contemporary Hinduism . He is one of the five primary forms of God in the Smarta Tradition , and " the Destroyer " .

At the highest level , Shiva is regarded as formless , limitless , transcendent , and unchanging as well . Shiva also has many benevolent and fearsome depictions . In benevolent aspects , he is depicted as an omniscient Yogi who lives an ascetic life on Mount Kailash , as well as a householder with wife Parvati and his two children , Ganesha and Kartikeya , and in fierce aspects , he is often depicted slaying demons . Shiva is also regarded as the patron god of yoga , meditation , and arts .

The main iconographical attributes of Shiva are the third eye on his forehead , the snake Vasuki around his neck , the adorning crescent moon , the holy river Ganga flowing from his matted hair , the trishula as his weapon and the damaru as his musical instrument . Shiva is usually worshiped in the aniconic form of Lingam .

The worship of Shiva is a pan @-@ Hindu tradition , practiced widely across all of India , Nepal , Sri Lanka and parts of Pakistan .

= = Etymology and other names = =

The Sanskrit word " Shiva " (Devanagari : शिव , शिव) comes from the Shri Rudram Chamakam of the Taittiriya Shakha (TS 4 @.@ 5 , 4 @.@ 7) of the Krishna Yajurveda . The word means auspicious and it is used as an adjective only in the Rig Veda . In simple English transliteration it is written either as Shiva or Siva . The adjective शिव , is used as an attributive epithet for several Rigvedic deities , including Rudra . Other popular names associated with Shiva are Mahadeva , Mahesha , Maheshvara , Shankara , Shambhu , Rudra , Rishiksha (man of knowledge) , Hara , Trilochan , Devendra (chief of the gods) , Neelakanta , Subhankar and Trilokinatha (meaning Lord of the three realms) .

The Sanskrit word शैव 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 . It is used as an adjective to characterize certain beliefs and practices , such as Shaivism .

Some authors associate the name with the Tamil word शैवप्प meaning " red " , noting that Shiva is linked to the Sun (शैवान , " the Red one " , in Tamil) and that Rudra is also called Babhru (brown , or red) in the Rigveda .

Adi Shankara , in his interpretation of the name Shiva , the 27th and 600th name of Vishnu sahasranama , the thousand names of Vishnu interprets Shiva to have multiple meanings : " The Pure One " , or " the One who is not affected by three Gu?as of Prak?ti (Sattva , Rajas , and Tamas) " or " the One who purifies everyone by the very utterance of His name . " Chinmayananda Saraswati , in his translation of the Vishnu sahasranama , further elaborates on that verse : Shiva means " the One who is eternally pure " or " the One who can never have any contamination of the imperfection of Rajas and Tamas " .

Shiva 's role as the primary deity of Shaivism is reflected in his epithets Mah?deva (" Great god " ; mah? " Great " and deva " god ") , Mahe?vara (" Great Lord " ; mah? " great " and ??vara " lord ") , and Parame?vara (" Supreme Lord ") .

There are at least eight different versions of the Shiva Sahasranama , devotional hymns (stotras) listing many names of Shiva . The version appearing in Book 13 (Anu??sanaparvan) of the Mahabharata is considered the kernel of this tradition . Shiva also has Dasha @-@ Sahasranamas (10 @,@ 000 names) that are found in the Mahanyasa . The Shri Rudram Chamakam , also known as the ?atarudriya , is a devotional hymn to Shiva hailing him by many names .

= = Historical development and literature = =

Early prehistorical paintings at the Bhimbetka rock shelters , depict Shiva dancing , Shiva 's trident ,

and his mount Nandi but no other Vedic gods . The worship of Shiva is a pan @-@ Hindu tradition , practiced widely across all of India , Nepal and Sri Lanka .

= = = Assimilation of traditions = = =

The figure of Shiva as we know him today was built up over time , with the ideas of many regional sects being amalgamated into a single figure . How the persona of Shiva converged as a composite deity is not well documented . According to Vijay Nath :

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 . "

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

= = = Indus Valley origins = = =

Many Indus valley seals show animals but one seal that has attracted attention shows a figure , either horned or wearing a horned headdress and possibly ithyphallic figure seated in a posture reminiscent of the Lotus position and surrounded by animals was named by early excavators of Mohenjo @-@ daro Pashupati (lord of cattle) , an epithet of the later Hindu gods Shiva and Rudra .

Some academics like Gavin Flood and John Keay have expressed doubts about this claim . 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 . Writing in 1997 Doris Meth Srinivasan rejected Marshall 's package of proto @-@ Shiva features , including that of three heads . She interprets what John Marshall interpreted as facial as not human but more bovine , possibly a divine buffalo @-@ man .

Writing in 2002 , Gregory L. Possehl concluded that while it would be appropriate to recognize the figure as a deity , its association with the water buffalo , and its posture as one of ritual discipline , regarding it as a proto @-@ Shiva would " go too far . "

= = = Vedic origins = = =

Shiva 's rise to a major position in the pantheon was facilitated by his identification with a host of Vedic deities , including Rudra , Agni , Indra , Prajapati , Vayu , and others .

= = = Rudra = = =

Shiva as we know him today shares many features with the Vedic god Rudra , 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 .

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 . 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 .

The identification of Shiva with the older god Rudra is not universally accepted , as Axel Michaels explains :

Rudra is called " The Archer " (Sanskrit : ?arva) , and the arrow is an essential attribute of Rudra . This name appears in the Shiva Sahasranama , and R. K. Sharma notes that it is used as a name of Shiva often in later languages .

The word is derived from the Sanskrit root ?arv- , which means " to injure " or " to kill " , and Sharma uses that general sense in his interpretive translation of the name ?arva as " One who can kill the forces of darkness " . The names Dhanvin (" Bowman ") and B??ahasta (" Archer " , literally " Armed with arrows in his hands ") also refer to archery .

= = = = Agni = = = =

Rudra and Agni have a close relationship . 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 . 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 . " The interconnections between the two deities are complex , and according to Stella Kramrisch :

The fire myth of Rudra @-@ ?iva plays on the whole gamut of fire , valuing all its potentialities and phases , from conflagration to illumination .

In the ?atarudr?ya , some epithets of Rudra , such as Sasipañjara (" Of golden red hue as of flame ") and Tiva??mati (" Flaming bright ") , suggest a fusing of the two deities . Agni is said to be a bull , and Lord Shiva possesses a bull as his vehicle , Nandi . The horns of Agni , who is sometimes characterized as a bull , are mentioned . In medieval sculpture , both Agni and the form of Shiva known as Bhairava have flaming hair as a special feature .

= = = = Indra = = = =

According to Wendy Doniger , the Puranic Shiva is a continuation of the Vedic Indra . 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 ?iva is used to refer to Indra . (2 @.@ 20 @.@ 3 , 6 @.@ 45 @.@ 17 , and 8 @.@ 93 @.@ 3 .) Indra , like Shiva , is likened to a bull . In the Rig Veda , Rudra is the father of the Maruts , but he is never associated with their warlike exploits as is Indra .

The Vedic beliefs and practices of the pre @-@ classical era were closely related to the hypothesised Proto @-@ Indo @-@ European religion , and the Indo @-@ Iranian religion . According to Anthony , the Old Indic religion probably emerged among Indo @-@ European immigrants in the contact zone between the Zeravshan River (present @-@ day Uzbekistan) and (present @-@ day) Iran . It was " a syncretic mixture of old Central Asian and new Indo @-@ European elements " , which borrowed " distinctive religious beliefs and practices " from the Bactria ? Margiana Culture . At least 383 non @-@ Indo @-@ European words were borrowed from this culture , including the god Indra and the ritual drink Soma . According to Anthony ,

Many of the qualities of Indo @-@ Iranian god of might / victory , Verethraghna , were transferred to the adopted god Indra , who became the central deity of the developing Old Indic culture . Indra was the subject of 250 hymns , a quarter of the Rig Veda . He was associated more than any other deity with Soma , a stimulant drug (perhaps derived from Ephedra) probably borrowed from the BMAC religion . His rise to prominence was a peculiar trait of the Old Indic speakers .

= = = Later literature = = =

Rudra 's transformation from an ambiguously characterized deity to a supreme being began in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad (400 @-@ 200 BC) , which founded the tradition of Rudra @-@ Shiva worship . Here they are identified as the creators of the cosmos and liberators 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 , with references to Shaiva ascetics in Patanjali 's Mah?bh??ya and in the Mahabharata .

The Shaiva Puranas , particularly the Shiva Purana and the Linga Purana , discuss the various forms of Shiva and the cosmology associated with him . The Tantras , composed between the 8th and 11th centuries , regard themselves as Sruti . Among these the Shaiva Agamas , are said to have been revealed by Shiva himself and are foundational texts for Shaiva Siddhanta .

= = Position within Hinduism = =

= = = 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 . The tantric Shaiva tradition consists of the Kapalikas , Kashmir Shaivism and Shaiva Siddhanta . The Shiva Purana is one of the puranas , a genre of Hindu religious texts , dedicated to Shiva . Shaivism is widespread throughout India , Nepal , and Sri Lanka , mostly . Areas notable for the practice of Shaivism include parts of Southeast Asia , especially Malaysia , Singapore , and Indonesia . Indologist Axel Michaels suggests that Shaivism , like Vaishnavism , implies a unity which cannot be clearly found either in religious practice or in philosophical and esoteric doctrine . Furthermore , practice and doctrine must be kept separate .

= = = Panchayatana puja = = =

Panchayatana puja is the system of puja (worship) in the Smarta Tradition . It is said to have been introduced by Adi Shankara , the 8th century Hindu philosopher . It consists of the worship of five deities : Shiva , Vishnu , Devi , Surya and Ganesha . Depending on the tradition followed by Smarta households , one of these deities is kept in the center and the other four surround it . Worship is offered to all the deities . The five are represented by small murtis , or by five kinds of stones , or by five marks drawn on the floor .

= = = Trimurti = = =

The Trimurti is a concept in Hinduism in which the cosmic functions of creation , maintenance , and destruction are personified by the forms of Brahmā the creator , Vishnu the maintainer or preserver and Śhiva the destroyer or transformer . These three deities have been called " the Hindu triad " or the " Great Trinity " .

= = Attributes = =

Third eye : Shiva is often depicted with a third eye , with which he burned Desire (Kāma) to ashes , called " Tryambakam " (Sanskrit : त्र्यम्बकम्) , which occurs in many scriptural sources . 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 " . 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 " . These three mother @-@ goddesses who are collectively called the Ambikās . 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 . It has been mentioned that when Shiva loses his temper , his third eye opens which can reduce most things to ashes .

Crescent moon : Shiva bears on his head the crescent moon . The epithet Candrakēkhara (Sanskrit : चन्द्रकेशः " Having the moon as his crest " - candra

= " moon " ; kēkhara =

" crest , crown ") 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 . 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 . The crescent moon is shown on the side of the Lord 's head as an ornament . The waxing and waning phenomenon of the moon symbolizes the time cycle through which creation evolves from the beginning to the end .

Ashes : Shiva smears his body with ashes (bhasma) . The ashes are said to represent the end of all material existence . Some forms of Shiva , such as Bhairava , are associated with a very old Indian tradition of cremation @-@ ground asceticism that was practiced by some groups who were outside the fold of brahmanic orthodoxy . These practices associated with cremation grounds are also mentioned in the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism . One epithet for Shiva is " inhabitant of the cremation ground " (Sanskrit : ?ma??nav?sin , also spelled Shmashanavasin) , referring to this connection .

Matted hair : Shiva 's distinctive hair style is noted in the epithets Ja?in , " the one with matted hair " , and Kapardin , " endowed with matted hair " or " wearing his hair wound in a braid in a shell @-@ like (kaparda) fashion " . 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 .

Blue throat : The epithet N?laka?tha (Sanskrit ????? ? ? ; n?la = " blue " , ka?tha =

" throat ") . Since Shiva drank the Halahala poison churned up from the Samudra Manthan to eliminate its destructive capacity . Shocked by his act , Goddess Parvati strangled his neck and hence managed to stop it in his neck itself and 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 . (See Maha Shivaratri .)

Sacred Ganga : The epithet Gangadhara , " Bearer of the river Ganga " (Ganges) . The Ganga flows from the matted hair of Shiva . The Ga?g? (Ganga) , one of the major rivers of the country , is said to have made her abode in Shiva 's hair . The flow of the Ganga also represents the nectar of immortality .

Tiger skin : Shiva is often shown seated upon a tiger skin , an honour reserved for the most accomplished of Hindu ascetics , the Brahmarishis .

Serpents : Shiva is often shown garlanded with a snake .

Trident (Trishula) : Shiva 's particular weapon is the trident .

Drum : A small drum shaped like an hourglass is known as a damaru . This is one of the attributes of Shiva in his famous dancing representation known as Nataraja . A specific hand gesture (mudra) called ?amaru @-@ hasta (Sanskrit for " ?amaru @-@ hand ") is used to hold the drum . This drum is particularly used as an emblem by members of the K?p?lika sect .

Axe (Parashu) and Deer are held in Shiva 's hands in south Indian icons .

Nand? : Nand? , also known as " Nandin " , is the name of the bull that serves as Shiva 's mount (Sanskrit : v?hana) . Shiva 's association with cattle is reflected in his name Pa?upati , or Pashupati (Sanskrit : ?????) , translated by Sharma as " lord of cattle " and by Kramrisch as " lord of animals " , who notes that it is particularly used as an epithet of Rudra . " Rishabha " or the bull represents Dharma Devata (lord) . Lord Siva rides on the bull . This denotes that Lord Siva is the protector of Dharma , is an embodiment of Dharma or righteousness .

Mount Kail?sa : Mount Kailash in the Himalayas is his traditional abode . In Hindu mythology , Mount Kail?sa is conceived as resembling a Linga , representing the center of the universe .

Ga?a : The Ga?as 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 ga?a @-@ ??a or ga?a @-@ pati , " lord of the ga?as " .

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 .

= = Forms and depictions = =

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

= = Destroyer and Benefactor = =

In Yajurveda , two contrary sets of attributes for both malignant or terrific (Sanskrit : rudra) and benign or auspicious (Sanskrit : ?iva) forms can be found , leading Chakravarti to conclude that " all the basic elements which created the complex Rudra @-@ ?iva sect of later ages are to be found here " . In the Mahabharata , Shiva is depicted as " the standard of invincibility , might , and terror " , as well as a figure of honor , delight , and brilliance .

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 " . 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 " . R. K. Sharma follows this alternate etymology and translates the name as " terrible " . 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 commentorial tradition of not repeating an interpretation . Sharma translates the three as " one who captivates " , " one who consolidates " , and " one who destroys " . Kramrisch translates it as " the ravisher " . Another of Shiva 's fearsome forms is as K?la " time " and Mah?k?la " great time " , which ultimately destroys all things . The name K?la appears in the Shiva Sahasranama , where it is translated by Ram Karan Sharma as " (the Supreme Lord of) Time . " Bhairava " terrible " or " frightful " is a fierce form associated with annihilation .

In contrast , the name ?a?kara , " beneficent " or " conferring happiness " reflects his benign form . This name was adopted by the great Vedanta philosopher Adi Shankara (c . 788 @-@ 820) , who is also known as Shankaracharya . The name ?ambhu (Sanskrit : ?? ? ??) , " causing happiness " , also reflects this benign aspect .

= = Ascetic and Householder = =

Shiva is depicted as both an ascetic yogi and as a householder , roles which have been traditionally mutually exclusive in Hindu society . When depicted as a yogi , he may be shown sitting and meditating . His epithet Mah?yogi (" the great Yogi : Mah?

= " great " , Yogi =

" one who practices Yoga ") refers to his association with yoga . 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 . Shiva is also depicted as a corpse below Goddess Kali , it represents that Shiva is a corpse without Shakti . He remains inert . While Shiva is the static form , Mahakali or Shakti is the dynamic aspect without whom Shiva is powerless .

As a family man and householder , he has a wife , Parvati and two sons , Ganesha and Kartikeya . His epithet Um?pati (" The husband of Um? ") refers to this idea , and Sharma notes that two other variants of this name that mean the same thing , Um?k?nta and Um?dhava , also appear in the sahasranama . Um? in epic literature is known by many names , including the benign P?rvat? . She is identified with Devi , the Divine Mother ; Shakti (divine energy) as well as goddesses like Tripura Sundari , Durga , Kamakshi and Minakshi . The consorts of Shiva are the source of his creative energy . They represent the dynamic extension of Shiva onto this universe . 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 , Subrahmanyam , Shanmughan , Swaminathan and Murugan , and in Northern India by the names Skanda , Kumara , or Karttikeya .

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 Aiyannar - is born . Shiva is also mentioned in some scriptures to have had daughters like the serpent @-@ goddess Manasa and Ashokasundari . The demons Andhaka and Jalandhara and the god Mangala are considered children of Shiva .

= = = Nataraja = = =

The depiction of Shiva as Nataraja (Sanskrit : na?ar?ja , " Lord of Dance ") is popular . The names Nartaka (" dancer ") and Nityanarta (" eternal dancer ") appear in the Shiva Sahasranama . His association with dance and also with music is prominent in the Puranic period . In addition to the specific iconographic form known as Nataraja , various other types of dancing forms (Sanskrit : n?tyam?rti) are found in all parts of India , with many well @-@ defined varieties in Tamil Nadu in particular . 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 , Lord ?iva does it by the t???avan?tya. 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 . Lasya is regarded as the female counterpart of Tandava . The Tandava @-@ Lasya dances are associated with the destruction @-@ creation of the world .

= = = Dakshinamurthy = = =

Dak?i??m?rti) literally describes a form (m?rti) of Shiva facing south (dak?i?a) . This form represents Shiva in his aspect as a teacher of yoga , music , and wisdom and giving exposition on the shastras . This iconographic form for depicting Shiva in Indian art is mostly from Tamil Nadu . Elements of this motif can include Shiva seated upon a deer @-@ throne and surrounded by sages who are receiving his instruction .

= = = Ardhanarishvara = = =

An iconographic representation of Shiva called Ardhan?r??vara 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 " . According to legend , Lord Shiva is pleased by the difficult austerities performed by the goddess Parvati , grants her the left half of his body . This form of Shiva is quite similar to the Yin @-@ Yang philosophy of Eastern Asia , though Ardhan?r??vara appears to be more ancient .

= = = Tripurantaka = = =

Shiva is often depicted as an archer in the act of destroying the triple fortresses , Tripura , of the Asuras . Shiva 's name Tripur?ntaka , " ender of Tripura " , refers to this important story . In this aspect , Shiva is depicted with four arms wielding a bow and arrow , but different from the Pinakapani murti . He holds an axe and a deer on the upper pair of his arms . In the lower pair of the arms , he holds a bow and an arrow respectively . After destroying Tripura , Tripurantaka Shiva smeared his forehead with three strokes of Ashes . This has become a prominent symbol of Shiva and is practiced even today by Shaivites .

= = = Lingam = = =

Apart from anthropomorphic images of Shiva , the worship of Shiva in the form of a lingam , is also important . These are depicted in various forms . One common form is the shape of a vertical rounded column . Shiva means auspiciousness , and lingam means a sign or a symbol , so the Shivalinga is regarded as a " symbol of the great God of the universe who is all @-@ auspiciousness " . Shiva also means " one in whom the whole creation sleeps after dissolution " . Since , according to Hinduism , it is the same god that creates , sustains and withdraws the universe , the Shivalinga represents symbolically God Himself . Some scholars , such as Monier Monier @-@ Williams and Wendy Doniger , also view linga as a phallic symbol , although this interpretation is disputed by others , including Swami Vivekananda , Sivananda Saraswati , and S. N. Balagangadhara .

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 . 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 . Jyotirlinga means " The Radiant sign of The Almighty " . The Jyotirlingas are mentioned in the Shiva Purana .

= = = The five mantras = = =

Five is a sacred number for Shiva . One of his most important mantras has five syllables (nama? ?iv?ya) .

Shiva 's body is said to consist of five mantras , called the pañcabrahmans . As forms of God , each of these have their own names and distinct iconography :

Sadyoj?ta
V?madeva
Aghora
Tatpuru?a
?s?na

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 . 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 . The overall meaning of these associations is summarized by Stella Kramrisch :

Through these transcendent categories , ?iva , the ultimate reality , becomes the efficient and material cause of all that exists .

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 ?iva is of the character of the fivefold Brahman . (Pañcabrahma Upanishad 31)

= = = Other forms = = =

Shiva , like some other Hindu deities , is said to have several incarnations , known as Avatars . Although Puranic scriptures contain occasional references to " ansh " avatars of Shiva , the idea is not universally accepted in Saivism . The Linga Purana speaks of twenty @-@ eight forms of Shiva which are sometimes seen as avatars . According to the Svetasvatara Upanishad , he has four avatars .

In the Hanuman Chalisa , Hanuman is identified as the eleventh avatar of Shiva and this belief is universal . Hanuman is popularly known as ? Rudraavtaar ? ? Rudra ? being a name of ? Shiva ? . Rama ? the Vishnu avatar is considered by some to be the eleventh avatar of Rudra (Shiva) . Some traditions regard the sage Durvasa , the sage Agastya , the philosopher Adi Shankara and Ashwatthama as avatars of Shiva . Other forms of Shiva include Virabhadra and Sharabha .

= = Festivals = =

Maha Shivratri is a festival celebrated every year on the 13th day in the Krishna Paksha of the month of Phalguna in the Hindu calendar . This festival is of utmost importance to the devotees of Shiva . Mahashivaratri marks the night when Shiva performed the Tandava and it is the day that Shiva was married to Parvati . The holiday is often celebrated with special prayers and rituals offered up to Shiva , notably the Abhishek . This ritual , practiced throughout the night , is often performed every three hours with water , milk , yogurt , and honey . Bel (aegle marmelos) leaves are often offered up to the Hindu god , as it is considered necessary for a successful life . The offering of the leaves are considered so important that it is believed that someone who offers them without any intentions will be rewarded greatly .

= = Beyond Hinduism = =

Shiva is mentioned in Buddhist Tantra . Shiva as Upaya and Shakti as Prajna . In cosmologies of Buddhist tantra , Shiva is depicted as passive , with Shakti being his active counterpart .

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 . " 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 Avatar and Parasnath Avatar .

The worship of Shiva became popular in Central Asia through the Hephthalite Empire , 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 . In this depiction , Shiva is portrayed with a sacred halo and a sacred thread (" Yajnopavita ") . He is clad in tiger skin while his attendants are wearing Sogdian dress . A panel from Dandanwulike shows Shiva in His Trimurti form with Shakti kneeling on her right thigh . Another site in the Taklamakan Desert depicts him with four legs , seated cross @-@ legged on a cushioned seat supported by two bulls . It is also noted that Zoroastrian wind god Vayu @-@ Vata took on the iconographic appearance of Shiva .

In Indonesia , Shiva is also worshiped as Batara Guru . In the ancient times , all kingdoms were located on top of mountains . When he was young , before receiving his authority of power , his name was Sang Hyang Manikmaya . He is first of the children who hatched from the eggs laid by Manuk Patiaraja , wife of god Mulajadi na Bolon . This avatar is also worshiped in Malaysia . Shiva 's other form in Indonesian Hinduism is " Mahadewa " (Mahadeva) .

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 . The name is the Japanese equivalent of Mah?k?la , the Buddhist name for Shiva .