

## Sri Shiva, Parvathi, Ganesha, Karthikeya, Lingam & Nandi

Shiva Parivar is comprised of Shiva, Parvathi, Ganesha and Kartikya accompanied by the divine bull Nandi and energy represented by Linga. Some temples have just Shiva some have the whole parivar and some just have tremendous devotion and pray to Linga only. Shiva is one of the basic trinity of gods that is the foundation of Hindu religion. Brahma Vishnu and Shiva form the trinity of forces. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Shiva is the destroyer and transformer and these functions continue the cycles of myriad lives and nature itself endlessly. It has many forms and shapes as seen in Vishveshwara, Jatadhari, Bhairav, Natraja, Rudra, Pashupati, Neel Kantha etc.

Shivratri is the night of the wedding of Shiva and Parvathi. It is celebrated with all night prayers, bhajans, and fasting. It ends the next day with an elaborate abhishekham and partaking of Prasad etc. Shiva is always accompanied by Parvathi or Shakti to gain its full spectrum of splendor. Lord Shiva is also thought to be the creator of Dance and the first 16 syllables of the Sanskrit language.

As we journey the many long years of Hindu religion and its innumerable beliefs some interesting facts become evident. History shows reference to Shiva as Rudra in Rig Veda the origins of which are believed to be from 1700 BC to 1100 BC. Artifacts support this from excavations done in the Indus Valley civilizations that thrived from 2000 BC to 1500 BC. Seals and pictorial evidence supports the worship of Shiva in the Pashupati form at this time.

Vedantic era was followed by Puranic teachings and extensive spread of Shaivism occurred with the help of various dynasties and teachings from Svestasvtara Upanishad from 400BC -200 BC. After the initial spread of Shiva, its glory was exponentially spread through India, Nepal and Sri Lanka to name a few countries. There are many Lingams spread across the Indian subcontinent as Shiva followers and especially Adi Shankara spread this faith to the masses at a critical time in the history of Hinduism.

Shiva is revered in many forms and worshipped by millions of Hindus all over the world. Lord Shiva has hundreds of names and many manifestations. Shiva has many distinctive features and attributes. Some characteristics that are unique to Lord Shiva are discussed

Tryambakam: The third eye which can destroy at a glance

Nilkantha : The blue throat from drinking a poison to save

the earth

Chandrashekhra: Moon adorns his crown

Bhairava: One with matted locks or braids

Gangadhara: Keeping playful Ganga (Holy River) from drowning the earth

Bhasma : One with ashes symbolic of destroyer

Tiger skin: Token of honor from Brahmashis

Damru: Drum for his dancing or Natraja stance

Nandi : The holy bull and his vehicle

Kailsahas: Someone that resides in Kailash Mountains.



Lord Shiva is sometimes projected as the destroyer but the true cosmic essence of this concept is quiet unique. Spring can only occur after falling of leaves and a period of dormancy during the winter. A goldsmith can melt old gold and create new ornaments from old destroyed jewelry. The same cycle of life and death continues at a universal level endlessly. Old scriptures also state that by one glance from his third eye Lord Shiva has the power to turn the world into ashes. Pradosh Vrata is another important way towards gaining some spiritual benefits. This is usually the thirteenth lunar day after the full moon. Monday generally is considered a day of devotion to Lord Shiva and many people will observe a fast (sacrifice of food etc) on this day traditionally. Some devotees consider things like forgiving, nonviolence, donating and silence also as important elements of the fasting process. Lord Shiva

is also offered bhel leaves as part of prayer rituals.

Lord Shiva is benevolent, loving and very easy to please. There are several stories and legends that show his extreme generosity and showers of blessings on his devotees. Lord Shiva on numerous occasions has also performed great acts of sacrifice to save the earth. At the time of creation of Earth a large amount of poison was an unfortunate byproduct, Lord Shiva swallowed the entire poison to save the earth. Lord Shiva is so forgiving and loving that he has granted boons and blessings to devotees who have performed even small potash.

At West Michigan Hindu temple Shiva Parivar will make it graceful presence this year. Shiva Parivar is at this time being created in Jaipur, Rajasthan India. Once completed it will start its journey via the sea to USA and will be installed during the second Prana Prathistha ceremony later this year.

