

Newsletter Archives

The Forms of Shiva in Visual Arts

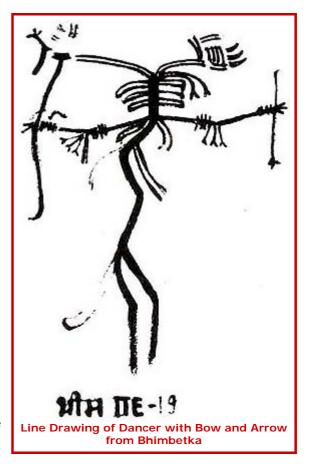
The Forms of Shiva in Visual Arts

Article of the Month - January 2006

Shiva's visual forms, along with perhaps some kind of worship cult, had begun appearing some 5000 years ago. This denotes not only his priority over other gods of India's religious hierarchy but also reveals the fact that his is the imagery and iconography that evolved over a period of five millennia - perhaps the longest period for an image, or worship tradition, to have evolved and sustained through. And, despite such long period, as often breeds complexities and uncompromising contradictions, Shiva's imagery reveals wondrous unity and unique growth perspective.

Shiva in Rock Shelter Drawings

The rock-shelter settler seems to have been the first to have visually realized Shiva. Living on animals - by hunting or by taming them, the cave dweller saw in Shiva the archer as well as the keeper of herds. The known anthropologist and archaeologist Dr. V. S. Wakankar has reported from Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh (cave II E-19 and III E-15) two figures - one, that of a bow and arrow bearing dancer, and the other, that of an awe-striking god who could be no other than the subsequent awful Rudra. The dancing figure has in its crown the motif of a deer, much the same as carries Shiva in one of his hands in his Nataraia manifestation. The earliest of the Bhimbetka murals date back to around 10,000 B. C., but Dr. Wakankar considers the drawings portraying the aforementioned two figures as subsequently added, sometime in between 3000 to 1900 B. C. Nonetheless these figures of Shiva as the archer and the great dancer, are his so far reported earliest manifestations.



Lord of Animals in the Indus Valley



Pashupati, the Lord of Animals Mohenjo Daro (Indus Valley), circa 2000 B.C.

The horned 'yogi' figure on the famous Indus terracotta seal recovered in excavation at Mohenjo-daro, was a development over Bhimbetka figures. Besides presenting a more evolved iconographic form, the Indus figure also revealed subtler meaning and wider dimensions. The figure has on its head buffalo/humped bull horns and around it an animalgoverned ambience. On its left, there is a lion and tiger, on its right, a wild buffalo and rhinoceros, and under its seat, deer. It indicates that the figure represented someone who is not only the patron of animals -Pashupati, but also a composite being with man and animal within him. In ancient Sanskrit, the term

'pashu' meant 'jeeva' - one that has life. Even the modern science defines 'man' as 'social animal'. Thus, 'Pashupati' stood for him who created and sustained all life. Obviously, the concept of someone who sustained and represented in his own being all life, emerged as early as Indus days, if not before. This 'someone' was subsequently identified as Rudra Shiva.

This horned-headed Pashupati/yogi is ithyphallic, that is, has a 'urdhvalinga' - upward erect phallus, which is one of his two more prominent aspects, the other one being the horned head. Significantly, excavations at Mohenjo-daro and various Harappan sites have revealed a number of phallus-like looking baked clay objects and some seals portraying humped bull.

In all probabilities, these 'linga' icons - easier to cast than an anthropomorphic image, were conceived to represent the 'urdhvalinga' of the ithyphallic deity



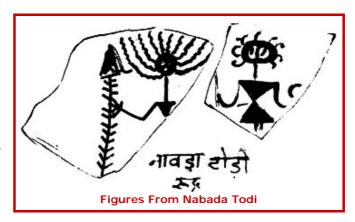
independently and thereby the ithyphallic deity himself, and not one of his aspects. There revealed in excavations of these sites also a number of ring-stones suggestive of 'yoni' - perhaps, a Mother-goddess-related cult. The 'linga' icons and ring-stones defined, in all probabilities, Indus man's vision of the male and female principles of fertility. In subsequent Shaivite tradition, 'linga' emerged not only as an aniconic symbol, which by its shape and meaning revealed Shiva's transcendental reality, but also had always associated with it 'yoni' as its base or 'pitha'. This 'urdhvalinga' aspect of the Indus figure, thus, connects it also to the Shaivite icons of the post-common era and ever after.

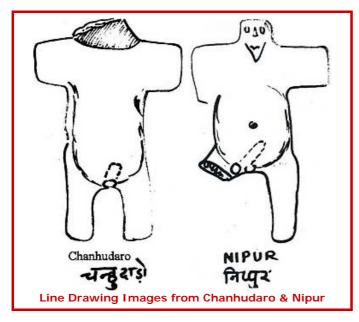


Similarly, the humped bull, whose icons were in great prevalence and perhaps in popular worship, might have represented the ithyphallic deity's animal aspect which defined his composite form. This humped bull, subsequently reduced to a subordinate position of Shiva's 'vahana' - vehicle and named Nandi, was always a sacred Shaivite icon and had many shrines devoted to it. Thus, besides his anthropomorphic representations, the Indus god -Shiva, also revealed in the aniconic symbol of 'linga' and the theriomorphic form of the humped bull.

Shiva in Other Pre-Historic Finds

These features corroborate with other pre-historic and anthropological finds. Nabada Todi excavations have revealed a ritual copper pot with two figures engraved on it. Both are 'urdhvakesin' - with prominently raised hair.





One of the figures has in its right hand a tall spear with a triangular blade surmounting it. Thus, the bow and arrow bearing deity is conceived also as carrying a trident-type weapon. Drawings portraying 'linga', humped bull, and anthropomorphic figures with 'urdhvalinga' are reported also from Nippur and Chanhudaro (Uttar Pradesh).

Thus, much before Rig-Vedic era, Shiva manifested formally by way of anthropomorphic representations, as aniconic 'linga' symbol, and as theriomorphic figure of bull.

Opinions differ as to whether Shiva had an Aryan or non-Aryan origin, or whether he was a Vedic god or otherwise, but there is absolute unanimity in regard to the fact that he had iconic presence much before the Vedas came into being. Even V. S. Wakankar, the great champion of Vedic supremacy always defying the Western angle in regard to Aryan influx over Indian subcontinent, does not deny it. He admits that many Vedic beliefs, that is, beliefs which had a Vedic character, had come to prevail amongst masses much before actual Vedas were composed. And, Shaivite cult was one such stream.

Shiva's Pre-Vedic Forms and The Vedic Vision of Shiva

As becomes obvious from above, some of Shiva's forms that yet prevail - Shiva, the dancer; Shiva, the archer; awe-striking Shiva; Shiva with deer; Shiva with trident-headed spear; 'urdhvakesin' Shiva; 'urdhvalinga' Shiva; Shiva, the Mahayogi; Shiva, the Pashupati; Shiva, the composite being; Shiva as 'linga'; Shiva and bull; and, 'linga' and 'yoni', are by and large pre-Vedic. The Rig-Veda, with its emphasis on the awe-striking aspect of the deity, identifies Shiva as Rudra and sometimes as Ishan, the archer. Though variously interpreted, and whether approved it or disapproved, the Rig-Veda twice alludes to 'Shishna-deva', phallic deity or phallus-worshipping people. In its 'Shatarudriya-strota', the Yajurveda assigns him various names. One such name is Shiva, and Rudra is referred to as one of its epithets. The Atharva-Veda perceives him as black-complexioned, riding a red horse

and shooting poison-tempered arrows.

The Shvetashvara Upanishada is, however, the first to allude to 'linga' as Shiva's aniconic symbol, and the Grahasutras to installing and worshipping his idols. They are the first to refer to him as Shiva and Shankara. As becomes obvious from numerous allusions in the Mahabharata, in epic days Shiva was a powerful deity and his idols and 'lingas' were in popular worship. In his Arthashashtra, Kautilya talks of Shiva-temples. The Arthashashtra is estimated to date sometime in between fourth to third century B. C., that is, by then Shiva had regular shrines, and various anthropomorphic idols representing his different aspects and various 'linga' icons for such shrines. The humped bull Nandi was yet one of the most sacred Shaivite symbols but was now no more his theriomorphic representation. It was now his vehicle.



Ancient coins, particularly those from Taxila and Ujjaini, and a Mathura relief, now in Government Museum, Lucknow, added further dimensions to his iconic visualization. It is in these artefacts that tree emerged in the Shaivite tradition and installing 'linga' under a tree came to be considered as more sacred.

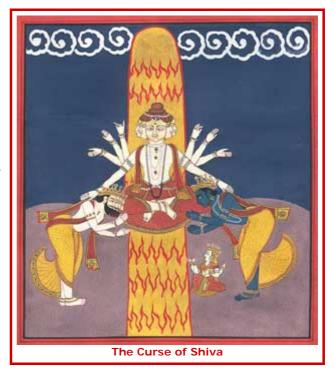
Linga

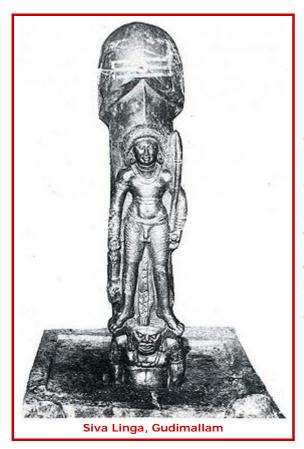


Shiva's Thousand Eyed Anthropomorphic Form Talagaon (Bilaspur)

Shiva as 'linga' - his aniconic unmanifest form, has thus a wider presence in Shaivite tradition than have his anthropomorphic forms. Besides 'shishna-deva', the Rig-veda talks of 'hiranya-vetasa' - the golden The 'hiranya-vetasa' pre-conceives subsequent 'Jyotirlinga' - the pillar of light, and also the pillar conceived by Linga Purana as consisting of thousands of clusters of flames. This pillar with thousands of clusters of flames manifests in subsequent 'Shahastralinga'- the 'linga' composed of a thousand 'lingas', as also in Shiva's thousand-eyed anthropomorphic form. The Atharva Veda speaks of the Lord as 'maha-skambha'- the great pillar. There also occurs in Vedic literature the term 'sthanu'post, the seed, the fire-seed - root of all created things.

Thus, by Vedic era itself, the tradition had begun perceiving the Lord as 'linga', the 'linga' as pillar, the pillar as the column of light, that is, as 'Jyotirlinga', and 'jyotirlinga' as the seed, the root of all things. The 'linga', much before the Common Era began, has been established as omnipotent, the basis of the entire universe and everything included in it. 'Lingodabhava' - 'linga' is the universe or it is in the 'linga' that the universe exists, perceives 'linga' with trans-cosmic dimensions - the column of light penetrating the netherworld, shooting across the empyrean, and pervading the entire earth.



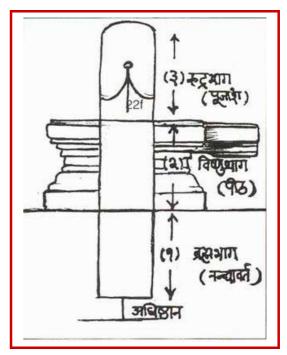


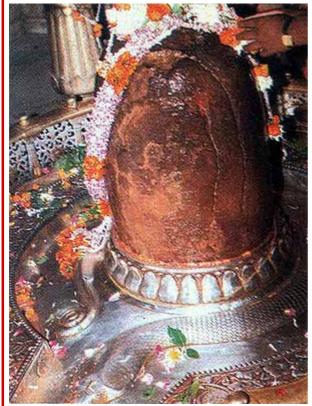
The aniconic 'linga' symbol preceded Shiva's regular anthropomorphic forms. In regular Shaivite tradition, it is actually in 'linga'-forms that the transition from the unmanifest to the manifest began, as the earliest reported anthropomorphic forms of Shiva appear as an aspect of 'linga' and not independently. The third century B. C. 'linga' icon from Gudimallam (Andhra Pradesh) is its earliest reported example. It has carved on its middle part the anthropomorphic form of Shiva. Many of the other early images are cast with 'linga' and not independently.

Forms of Linga

Technically 'linga' is an aniconic symbol but it not only has a number of Puranas - Linga Purana, Shiva Purana, and others, devoted to it, but also the Rupamandana and Uttarakamikamagama type canonical treatises prescribing its various formations and, thus, giving it more or less an iconic status. 'Linga' icons are either the columnar formations representing unmanifest 'jyotirlinga', or are Manushalingas, that is, a 'linga', which looked like a human organ. Being unmanifest, the 'jyotirlinga' is often beyond prescriptions, though conceived as combining in it Shiva's human as also columnar forms - blazing column of fire, a 'Jyotirlinga' is often represented in visual arts as the column of light containing within it Shiva's anthropomorphic form. Sukshma-linga and Akasha-linga are two other unmanifest 'linga' forms. Sukshma-linga pervades various 'chakras' inside the human body. Akasha-linga represents elements of Ether. The Chidambaram temple in South India has Akasha-linga as its enshrining deity.

It is different with Manushalinga. Various Puranas, the Shiva Purana in particular, have prescribed norms and standards for casting a Manushalinga. A Manushalinga has been conceived as having three parts. The lower one that is fitted into the female stone and is invariably square is known as the Brahmabhaga. Having become a part of the female stone, it is also known as 'pindika', 'Gauripatta', or 'pitha'. The middle part is known as the Vishnubhaga, and the upper-most as the Rudrabhaga.





Vigraha Linga from Mahakaleshwara Temple, Ujjain

Offerings to the Shiva-linga are made only over the Rudrabhaga. The Rudrabhaga is hence also known as Pujabhaga. A Manushalinga could be either a Vigraha Linga - a plain phallus symbol, or a Mukhalinga, that is, cast with the face of Shiva himself. The Vigraha Linga does not have Shiva's face but may be adorned with strings, wreaths or flower motifs or by other elements around it. Some subsidiary figures - yakshas, ganas etc., may also be carved around a Vigraha Linga.

Mukha-Linga Icons

Mukha-linga icons have very early beginning. In visual representations 'mukhalingas' are carved with faces numbering one to five and are accordingly named as Ekamukhalinga, Dvi-mukhalinga, Trimukhalinga, Chaturmukhalinga and Panchamukhalinga. It is often contended that Trimukhalinga is actually only the Chaturmukhalinga. Being on backside its fourth face remains invisible. The Sarvato Bhadra mukhalinga is a more evolved 'linga' icon. Like other 'linga' icons, Sarvato Bhadra also has the same vertical three sections but the figures carved on it are widely different. On its eastern side, it has the image of Surya, the Sun god; on it north, that



of Ganesh; on its west, that of Shiva and Parvati in Kalyana Sundara manifestation; and, on its south, that of Shiva and Nandi. The five faces on a Panchamukhalinga stand for Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha and Ishana, which are the five aspects of Shiva himself. The Rupamandana prescribes body colors for various faces of Chaturmukhalinga - white for the western; red for the northern; black in terrific mood for the southern; and, well-kindled fire-like bright for the eastern. In sculptures, such colors, however, do not sustain. Though cast invariably in relief - bold or shallow, the faces on 'mukhalingas' are carved following broad iconographic standards of Shiva's anthropomorphic images.

Anthropomorphic Forms of Shiva

Shiva's Forms That I conographic Features, Attributes and 'Mudras' Define

Shiva's regular iconography seems to have begun evolving from around fourth-third century B. C., though some of its features, as discussed before, are very early. As one beyond birth and death, Shiva has been conceived in visual arts as timeless youth, though sometimes with moustaches defining an advanced age and sometimes without them close to juvenescence. His 'jatamukuta' - matted and spirally coiffured hair must have emerged by Vedic era itself, replacing perhaps the bull-horn-crown of Indus figure and in pursuance to the model of Aryan sages.

Ravana's well known 'Shivatandava Stotra' - a work of Epic days alludes to Shiva's 'jatamukuta'. His age-worn early sculptures are of little aid to determine when evolved his third eye, but sculptures and terracotta figurines from fourth-fifth century onwards are found having a third eye on his forehead. It is both vertical and horizontal. His multi-headed and multi-armed icons could also be from around the same period. His images were conceived with normal one head but also with three, four and five. The number of arms also varied from normal two to ten. Influenced by various myths that Puranas wove around Shiva, there emerged the crescent and river Ganga in his 'jatamukuta', poison in neck,

elephant hide around shoulders, tiger skin around loins, and snakes over his entire figure.



Rescue of Saint Markandeya by Lord Shiva

Shiva's three heads stand for 'sat', 'raja', and 'tama' that is, virtue, vice and darkness, as also for 'ichchha', 'jnana' and 'kriya' - that is, desire, knowledge and act; four, for 'Tatapurusha', 'Vamadeva', 'Sadyojata', and 'Aghora'; and, fifth, for 'Ishan'. These are aspects of Shiva. His five heads are considered as representing also the earth, water, space or sky, wind, and fire or energy elements of cosmos. Shiva as both, Sadashiva and Ishan, has five heads and ten arms, and as Bhairava, one or three heads, and two, four or eight hands. Bhairava represents Shiva's form of dread and terror. Being Kalantaka or Kalarimurti - Vanquisher of death, Bhairava is also Mahakala, a form highly revered in Buddhism as well. As the legend has it, Death threw its noose on sage Markandeya when he was worshipping Shivalinga. Shiva emerged from the 'linga' and chastised Death.

Closely resembling to his Kalantaka manifestation is his Mratyunjaya form identified by the pot of nectar that Mratyunjaya carries in his hands.

In his four forms - Aghora, Pashupati, Kshetrapala and Bhairava, and sometimes in Gajasura Sanharak - elephant demon slayer, Shiva has two large teeth bursting out of his mouth. This form is known as 'Upadanshtra' or 'Bhimadanshtra'.



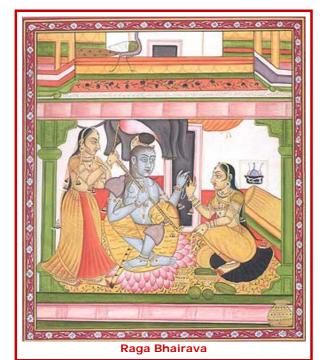


Shiva's five-headed Sadashiva and Ishan forms are distinguishable by the attributes that such images carry in their hands. Sadashiva images carry trident, axe, sword, disc, fire, serpent, bell, noose, goad, and hold one hand in 'abhaya'.

Images defining Ishan form carry trident, sword, bell, goad, skull, human head, shield, drum, and hold one hand in 'abhaya'.

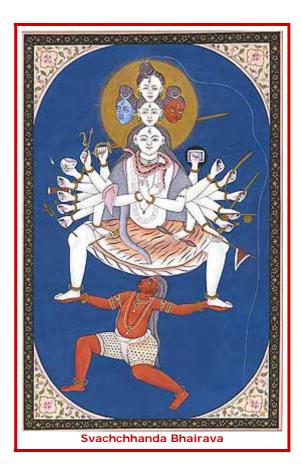


Basohli school
Western Panjab Hills
c. 1690
Opaque watercolor and applied beetle-wing
cases on paper
7 1/2 X 7 1/4 (19.1 X 18.4 cm)



Texts have identified sixty-four Bhairavas, though of them Raga Bhairava, personifying the first mode of the Indian classical music,

Svachchhanda Bhairava - Bhairava's composite form,





Bhairava in Extreme
Emaciation (Atiriktanga
Bhairava)
Ladol, Gujarat
Tenth-eleventh century
White Marble
Height 48 5/8" (123.5
cm)

Atiriktanga Bhairava are more significant.

Shiva's images of Aghora and Bhairava group carry skull-bowls, wear garlands of skulls or severed heads, besmear ashes of burnt human bodies and are usually 'urdhvakesin'- disorderedly unfurling locks of hair.

Shiva's Composite Forms

Ardhanarishvara, Harihara and Sharbhesha are Shiva's composite forms. In Ardhanarishvara, the right half is Shiva and the left half his consort Parvati - a form defining unity of male and female principles. In Harihara, Shiva is usually the left half and Vishnu the right, though sometimes this position changes vice verse.

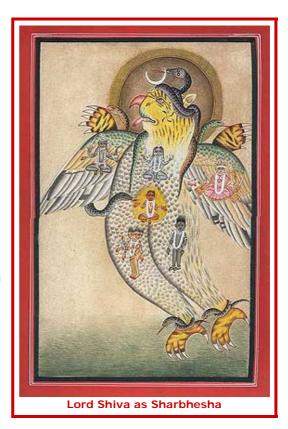




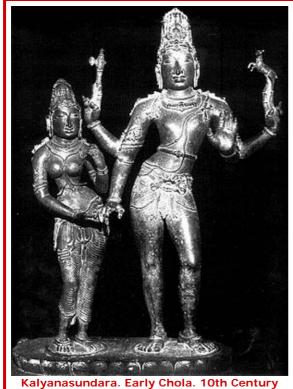
Ardhanarishvara forms emerged early around the beginning or even before the Common Era. Harihara forms are reported from fourth-fifth century onwards. Both in Ardhanarishvara and Harihara forms, sculptors have resorted to Shiva's usual iconography, though synthesizing it amicably with the other half. For balancing Shiva's half with his consort's feminine half, artists conceived Shiva either with normal two arms, or at the most with four, that is, in Ardhanarishvara form Shiva's half has just a single arm or two, but not more except rarely.

In Harihara form also he is usually four-armed, that is, his half has two arms.

In Sharbhesha, his composite form transcends human iconography. As Sharbhesha, he combines the forms of man, bird and lion. Vishnu was too proud of his Narsimha incarnation, which combined man and lion. To subdue Vishnu Shiva incarnated as Sharbhesha.



Forms Discovered in Mudras - Body Gestures

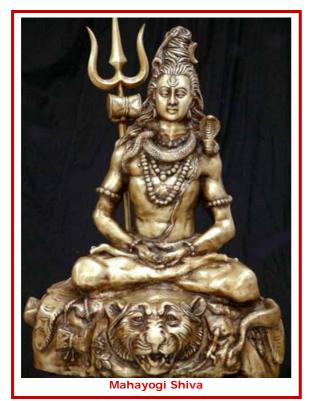


Kalyanasundara. Early Chola. 10th Century A.D. Ht. about 80 cms.

Indian iconometry has minutely classified various body positions and gestures - disposition of hands, look in the eyes, body movement and even sway of hands and legs, each of which revealed a particular emotional bearing. Some of Shiva's forms, though there resonate in them also a definite symbolism and meaning, are born of such 'mudras'. Shiva's Kalyana-Sundara form relates to his marriage with Parvati, which in visual arts just a simple gesture - Shiva extending his hand towards Parvati and Parvati reciprocating to his move, defines. Kalyana-Sundara images are usually well adorned.

Vrashavahana images - Shiva supporting himself on his vehicle Vrasha - bull, rarely have a bull behind. It is often in the position of arms and leaning figure that a Vrashavahana form is discovered.





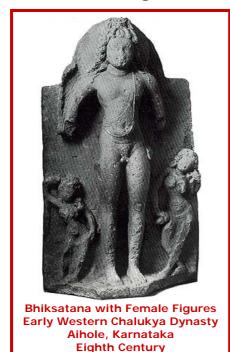
Yogeshvaramurti is a pure sitting posture resorted to when meditating.

Katyavalambitamurti - figure with one of its hands placed on waist, is again a 'mudra'-based form.

Seated in ease with one of his legs suspending below defines Sukhasanamurti - Lord sitting a absolute comfort; interpreting something with the gesture of knotted fingers, Vyakhyanamurti; and, the thoughtful demeanor, Chinamudramurti. Anugrahamurti - imparting grace, and forms imparting 'abhaya'- fearless, and 'varada'-benevolence, reveal in gestures of hands.



Shiva, The Ugra or Destroyer



Sandstone

Height 53 1/2" (136 cm)

Shaivite tradition, right since Indus days, realized in Shiva both, the destroyer and the sustainer, that is, his 'raudra-rupa' and 'saumyarupa'. Angered by the unethical conduct of Brahma, who according to some legends was his own father, Shiva cut off one of Brahma's five heads. For chastising him of his sin of 'Brahmahatva', the severed head converted into a begging bowl, rose from the ground, stuck to Shiva's palm and forced him to go begging for expiating his sin. Naked he moved. In Deodaravana, wives of sages doing penance there were infatuated by his youth and vigor but he declined their move. The form of this Bhikshatana Shiva the Great Beggar, is a transformation of his 'aghora' form. Naked and with a skull bowl stuck to his palm he walks with wives of sages represented as female figures, pursuing him.

Shiva slew the elephant demon Gaya for spreading darkness. This Gajasura Sanharamurti is like eight-armed Bhairava in a boisterous dance. Behind and above his head, he holds elephant hide and its trunk trails along the

ground near his feet. The eight-armed Tripurantaka, annihilator of three cities of demons, is a powerfully charged figure represented as shooting a mighty arrow towards three cities floating into the sky. He rides a cart but the energy that charges his entire being curves his figure into a mode of 'tandava' - the dance of dissolution. In Trailokyavijaya form, Shiva is a multi-armed figure dancing in great ecstasy.

Once sportive Parvati covered with her palms Shiva's eyes from behind. Irritated Shiva sweated, and out of it was born a blind boy -Andhaka. Shiva gave the boy to the childless demon chief who adopted him. Andhaka grew into a mighty demon and wished to obtain the most beautiful woman of the universe who was none else but his own mother Parvati. Finally, Shiva eliminated Andhaka. Shiva as Andhakasura Sanharaka has a form identical to Tripurantaka but instead of arrow he charges at Andhaka his trident, or spear. Under a boon, as soon as a drop of his blood fell on the earth, there grew out of it another Andhaka. Shiva hence created Yogeshvari who licked every drop of Andhaka's blood before it reached the earth. Andhakasura Sanharamurti images hence have representations of



Shiva Spearing the Demon Andhaka (Andhakasuravadhamurti) Madhya Pradesh Eighth century Sandstone Height 16" (40.6 cm)

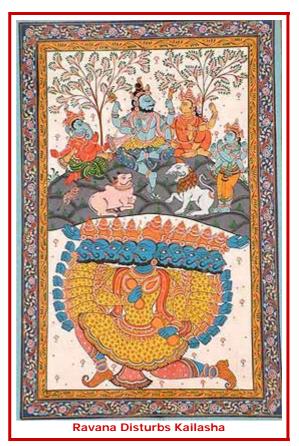
Yogeshvari also. Under some legends, Shiva created Saptamatrikas instead of Yogeshvari. Accordingly, Andhakasura Sanharamurti images are carved with Saptamatrikas also.

Maheshvara, Uma-Maheshvara and the Holy Family



In all gods Shiva alone is Maheshvara - the Great God. But, even Maheshvara seeks his accomplishment in Shakti, his consort. Hence, he is Maheshvara only with Uma. This Uma-Maheshvara is one of Shiva's earliest anthropomorphic forms.

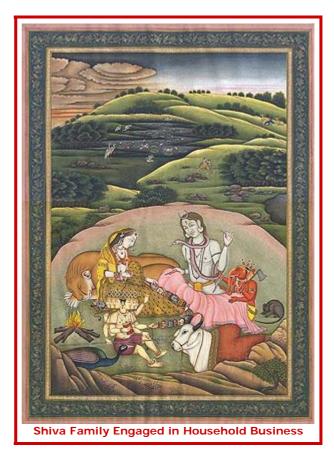
Uma-Maheshvara images are both, seated and standing. Sometimes Shiva and Uma are just proximate but sometimes he is represented as embracing her, and sometimes quite ecstatically. In some of such Uma-Maheshvara images Shiva is represented as playing on his 'vina'. The known Ravana Anugrahamurti is only a form of Uma-Maheshvara Murti. When on Mount Kailasha with Uma in his embrace, Shiva finds arrogant Ravana shaking the Mount, he chastises Ravana and redeems him of his false ego.





In some images in between Shiva and Uma there is Skanda, their eldest son, or a vacant space suggestive of his presence. Such forms are identified as Somaskandamurti.

In representations of Shiva's family - the Holy family, as it is known, which includes their sons and pets, Shiva is usually two-armed simple father journeying to and fro or doing household things.



Natesh, Dakshinamurti and other Forms



Shiva's earliest manifestation is as dancer. He danced to destroy - Tripura, elephant demon, Andhaka, or cosmos, and to sustain and delight - his consort, devotees and own self. In both forms, he is the 'Adiguru' - the first teacher of dance. Thus, arts visualize him as both, dancing to dissolve - 'tandava', and dancing to delight - 'lasya'. In 'lasya', energies are well composed and convert into intrinsic ecstasy, which glows the entire being and the body sprouts like lotus petals, slowly and beautifully. It composes the figure and does not render it boisterous.

It is different in 'tandava'. In 'tandava', energies burst from the entire figure throwing it into boisterous moves with flames emitting from the entire body. Now all that is inert is crushed under his feet and the entire ambience is charged with energy and fresh vigor. The South Indian sculptor has personified this inertness as Apasmarapurusha lying under Shiva's dancing figure. Here he is represented as raising his left leg. The North Indian artist has not been so particular about these features, though the depicted action is not any less powerful or boisterous. Flames of fire are represented as emitting from his palms, hair as floating into air and serpent as unfurling on either side.

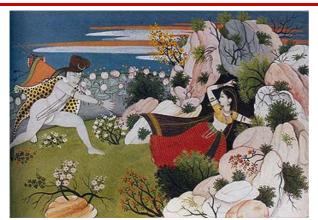




Broadly, Shiva's south facing figures are named as Dakshinamurti. Such nomenclature does not assign any particular iconography. But, some scholars treat the term differently, interpreting the term 'daksha' to mean expert and 'dakshinamurti' to mean one who is expert of some discipline. They associate Shiva mainly with four disciplines - 'yoga', music, 'jnana' or knowledge, and arts to include all things accomplished artistically. Accordingly, Shiva's images, depicting him as absorbed in 'yoga' or meditation, are defined as Yogadakshinamurti; carrying a 'vina', as Vinadhara-dakshinamurti; interpreting something by his knotted fingers, as Vyakhyana or Jnana-dakshinamurti; and, engaged in any act other than 'samhara' destruction, as Kala-dakshinamurti.

Nilakantha or Vishapaharanamurti defines the form of Shiva after he consumed deadly poison emerged from ocean churning. The latter carries an antelope and axe in upper hands, bowl of poison in lower right and rosary in left. Rosary suggests that the Timeless One makes time count itself on His fingers.





Siva Chasing Mohini Garhwal school Western Panjab Hills c. 1790 Opaque watercolor on paper 6 3/4 X 9 7/8" (17 X 25 cm)

Shiva, as Chandrashekhara, has a prominent crescent in his coiffure and as Gangadhara, the river Ganga emerging from it. Chandrashekhara images usually represent Shiva in majestic standing posture. Descent of Ganga is the theme of a number of sculptures and paintings. The other Shivarelated legend that figured in visual arts is his infatuation for Mohini that depicts him as chasing the beautiful nymph.

The ithyphallic figure of Lakulisha, the lord of staff, and Grahapati are considered as Shiva's incarnations. Lakulisha has an iconography exactly corresponding to that of ithyphallic form of Shiva.



Siva Chasing Mohini Garhwal school Western Panjab Hills c. 1790 Opaque watercolor on paper 6 3/4 X 9 7/8" (17 X 25 cm)

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This article by Nitin Kumar.

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