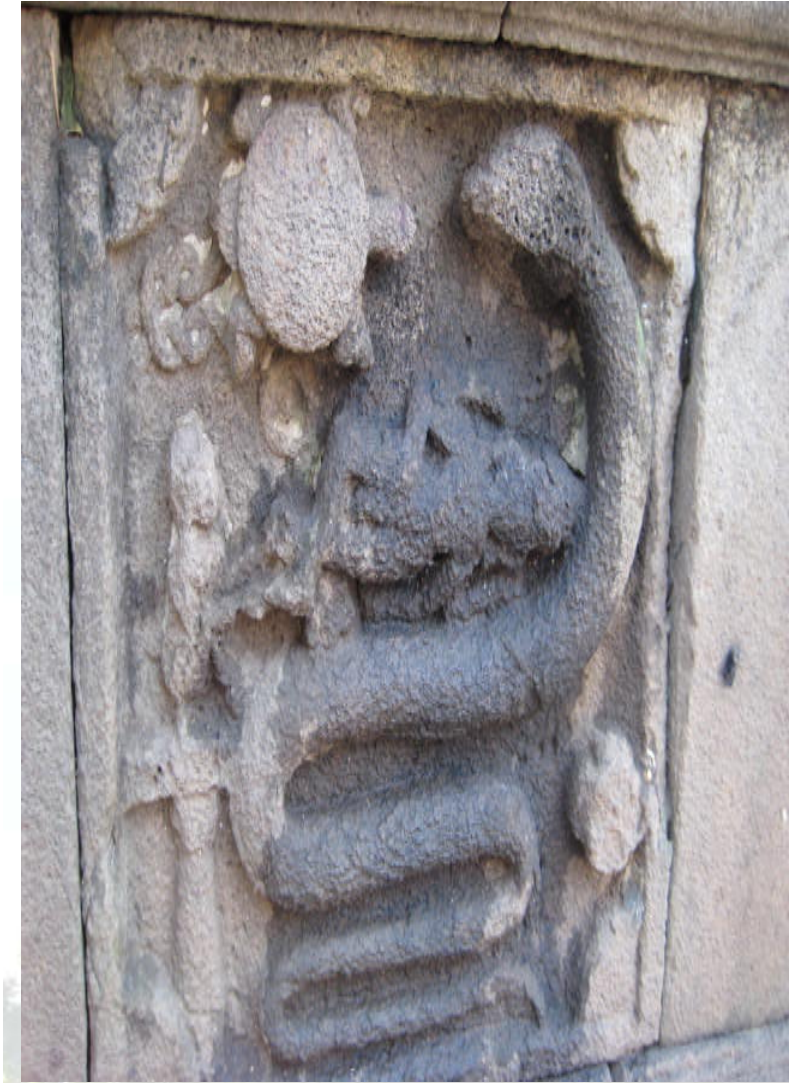


~~rudra~~

creator of the cosmos



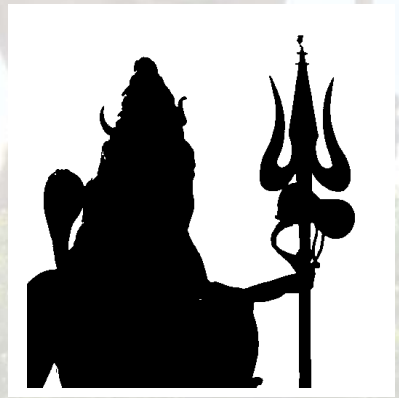
Bharat Bhushan



Vishnu on Adi Seshha on the Ocean of Infinite Energy –
Depiction on stone at Jyotirlinga Bhimashankar Temple in the
Western Ghats of Pune, Maharashtra. Photo: **Bharat Bhushan**

rudra

creator of the COSMOS



Bharat Bhushan

© **Harini**

*In memory of Harini
she came on a short journey, and made us happy...*

Cover Design and Cover Art: Pritvi Bharat

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*In gratitude to friends for creating magic and helping me –
Rajendra Shirvekar, Dr. Amar Supate and Venantius Joseph Pinto,
And my daughter, Pritvi, because of whom I have truly been blessed*

RUDRA – CREATOR OF THE COSMOS

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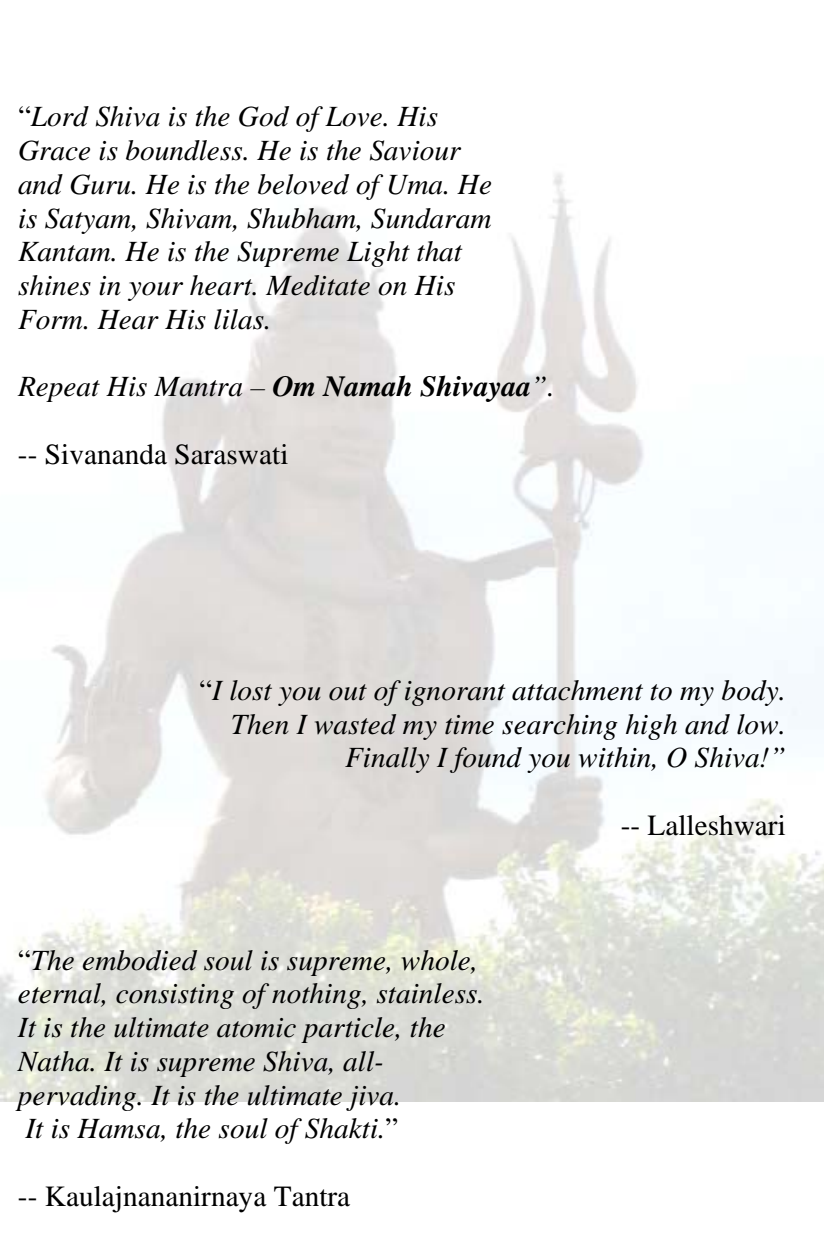
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“Lord Shiva is the God of Love. His Grace is boundless. He is the Saviour and Guru. He is the beloved of Uma. He is Satyam, Shivam, Shubham, Sundaram Kantam. He is the Supreme Light that shines in your heart. Meditate on His Form. Hear His lilas.

*Repeat His Mantra – **Om Namah Shivayaa**”.*

-- Sivananda Saraswati

*“I lost you out of ignorant attachment to my body.
Then I wasted my time searching high and low.
Finally I found you within, O Shiva!”*

-- Laleshwari

“The embodied soul is supreme, whole, eternal, consisting of nothing, stainless. It is the ultimate atomic particle, the Natha. It is supreme Shiva, all-pervading. It is the ultimate jiva. It is Hamsa, the soul of Shakti.”

-- Kaulajnananirnaya Tantra

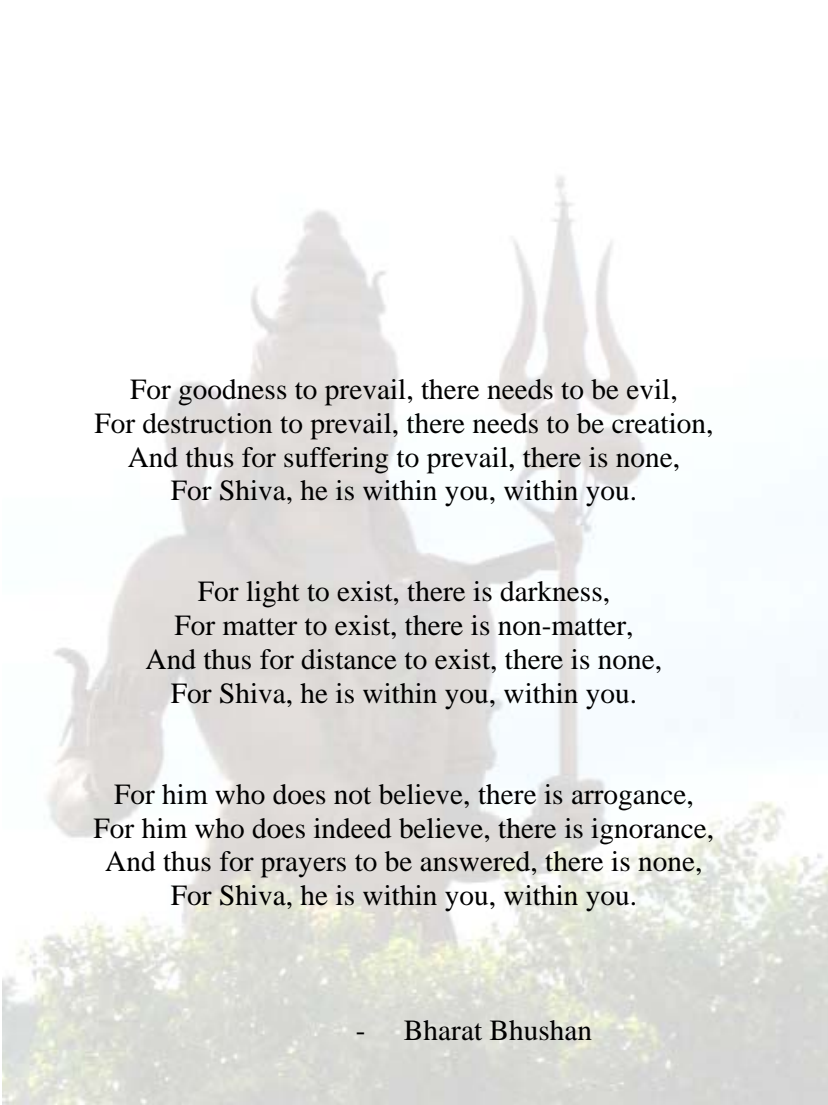


Of reason and knowledge

Reason can only travel the distance of existent knowledge. That which is not known, cannot be reasoned. Thereby, it cannot be wished away as irrational or superstition or mythology alone. That which is not known, has always been conveyed through a story, and usually with metaphors or aphorisms within these stories. For every ten scientists around the world who would scorn religion or the existence of God, nine of them would go home and beg the mercy of their own God. It is the one scientist who continues to question, without arrogance, who is correct.

“This is the gist of all worship; to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva. And if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste or creed or race or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.”

Swami Vivekananda in his excellent commentary on ‘Raja-Yoga’ recognises that those who believe their prayers to be answered by a supreme being, they are more culpable of ignorance rather than the doubting scientist. We are only receptacles of knowledge, and yet we do not know the vastness of understanding that we have. I ask you but not to believe, if you would not, but only to travel this journey, not with me, but with Shiva.



For goodness to prevail, there needs to be evil,
For destruction to prevail, there needs to be creation,
And thus for suffering to prevail, there is none,
For Shiva, he is within you, within you.

For light to exist, there is darkness,
For matter to exist, there is non-matter,
And thus for distance to exist, there is none,
For Shiva, he is within you, within you.

For him who does not believe, there is arrogance,
For him who does indeed believe, there is ignorance,
And thus for prayers to be answered, there is none,
For Shiva, he is within you, within you.

- Bharat Bhushan

RUDRA



creator of the cosmos

Bharat Bhushan

Harini

*in search of
ancient knowledge*



Shiva, in the Himalayas

I dream of Shiva, in the Himalayas. He calls me.

*He is the tall silvery-white mountain peak of the Himalayas.
He is the tallest peak, clad in the clouds, around him, covering him.
He stands tall, happy, with the clouds close to him, so close to him.*

I dream of Shiva, with his Naaga, around his neck.

*The Himalayan slopes twist and turn, below the peak, like a cobra.
The slopes seem to go away, and yet they return upon themselves.
They raise their head, and blessed they are, always, with Shiva.*

I dream of Shiva, with the crescent moon in his matted locks.

*He turns his head to show the crescent moon, and then hides it.
Above the clouds, hiding in the higher peaks, in the Himalayan night,
The crescent moon – seen in Shiva's locks, & suddenly cannot be seen.*

*I dream of Shiva, of the Himalayas, with the clouds touching him,
Parvati, the goddess of the clouds, resplendent in the high peaks,
She searches for Ganga and Chandra, not letting them through,
For she alone, moves from his matted locks to his heart.*

*I dream of Shiva, with the crescent moon hiding from the clouds,
Seen beautiful and bashful, the moment the clouds pass away,
Hiding and emerging, hiding and emerging, cautious.*

Waits for the clouds to move on, and shines high in the Himalayas.

I dream of Shiva, him with the Ganges in his locks,

*Not allowing her to escape free, retaining her deep within.
Divided up in twelve and more different ways, she emerges,
She is humbler in Shiva's victory and yet, victorious herself.*

*I dream of Shiva, he who resides in the tallest mountain peaks,
For I feel that he smiles at us, and waits for us to seek him.
He who is happy to stop the clouds and seek their rain upon him,
And then sponges up the waters within him, and makes the rivers wait.*

*I dream of Shiva, who fights the enormous strength of the waters,
He knows that these waters of the Ganges are proud of their strength.*

*He makes them tire themselves,
and makes the waters drench his matted locks,
To release the Ganges flow in such a manner
that she stays with him, always.*

*I dream of Shiva, he who sounds the damaru,
dama-dama-dama-dama,
Pinaka, the trishul, holds the damaru,
lest it escape to tell another story.*

*He who applies the cremation ground ash on himself,
and yet is handsome,
He brings the clouds - his sweetheart,
closer to him, in his love.*

I dream of Shiva, in the Himalayas. I call out to him.

Om namah shivaayaa.... Om

Shiva, the creator – an introduction
Who came first?
the emergence of the cosmos from – Maheshwara...

It is said that in this age of Kaliyuga, for one to listen to and understand the Shiv Puran, and to unravel the mysteries and marvels of Shiva, is to travel to the edge of the cosmos and back. This is an attempted interpretation of the concepts of creation as in the Shiv Puran, wherein it is as disclosed by the great Suta Romaharshana to the sages of the *Naimisharanya* forest, as told to him by his teacher, the great Maharishi Veda Vyasa, who learnt it from the divine Sage Narada, who learnt it from his father, Brahma. With the permission of the great Maharishi Sanatakumara, the story of the Shiv Puran was disclosed by Maharishi Veda Vyasa to his first five disciples. This interpretation is an attempt to convey an understanding of the concepts of creation as written in the Puranas and as unlike the common understanding from transcendent knowledge and the advances in science, especially astronomy, comparative religions and, quantum physics.

The concepts of puranic times were in consonance with the extent of knowledge that was prevalent or available or the semantics in use at that time. We have, as human beings, evolved in our use of the metaphor, our assumed understanding of god, our knowledge of energy and outer space, and the learnings about matter and non-matter. Humans have failed over these many tens of thousands of years to achieve a comprehensive understanding of godliness and its innate existence in humanity. We search for God in the heavens, and we communicate through temples and rituals, and yet, we fail to travel through the magical distances of mind, matter, space and the cosmos.

The Shiv Puran is comprised of about 24,000 *slokas* or verses within seven *samhitas* or chapters. These *samhitas* include the

(1) *Vidyeshwar Samhita*, (2) *Rudra Samhita*, (3) *Shatrudra Samhita*, (4) *Koti Rudra Samhita*, (5) *Uma Samhita*, (6) *Kailash Samhita* and (7) *Vayviya Samhita*. When first composed, by Shiva, the Puran is said to have comprised more than a hundred thousand *slokas* or verses, in twelve *samhitas* or chapters, and included the (8) *Vinayak Samhita*, (9) *Matri Samhita*, (10) *Ekadash-rudra Samhita*, (11) *Sahastra Koti Samhita* and (12) *Dharma Samhita*.

It is said that the Shiv Puran must be heard from the discourse of a Master, after an appropriate rendition to Shiva, and a prayer and offering to Ganesha. The listener is expected to be initiated in the magic of Shiva, and should earnestly want to learn.

The Shiv Puran introduces us to the sequence of the manifestation of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. And during the significant argument and fight between Vishnu and Brahma, the story later introduces us to the awesome aspect of the Shiva Linga. The journey of Vishnu as a boar and Brahma as a swan, in their years of quest to search for the beginning and the end of the Shiva Linga is tremendously depicted in the story, and has splendid metaphorical paradigms. The perspective of the Shiva Linga as an ego-buster between Brahma and Vishnu boggles the mind.

The aspect of Shiva, as the creator of the cosmos is dwelt upon in this book. The aspect of Brahma as the creator, of Vishnu as the preserver and that of Shiva as the destroyer much later to the events presented here. The manner in which Shiva would explain the difference between Shiva as the creator of the cosmos and that of Brahma as the creator after the cosmos has come into existence is the most significant of the *puranas* of this land of ours. There are several Creation stories, but this is certainly not any one of them. This is the very First of all.





Shiva, the first of the trinity *creator of the cosmos*

The trinity comprises Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the destroyer. If Brahma is the Creator, then who created Brahma? Vishnu created Brahma. If Vishnu created Brahma, then how come Brahma is the Creator? If Vishnu created Brahma, then who created Vishnu? Shiva did. Shiva is the creator? But, Shiva is the destroyer! So, how come the destroyer was the creator who created Vishnu, who in turn created the creator? Now, THAT is indeed a story. And it does come out from within another great story, - the great *Shiv Puran*.

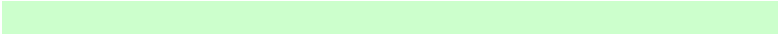
Brahma is said to have cast a wheel of light, plucking it from the sky, and thrown it upon the Planet Earth, and said, “*Where this wheel would fall, assemble there, to hear the wonderful story of Rudra, of Creation*”. This wheel of light is supposed to have fallen at Prayag.

Given to us by the greatest writer of all times, the great Maharishi Veda Vyasa, the *Shiv Puran*, is now known to us as a narrative by Suta Romaharshana, the great story-teller, one of the first disciples of the great Maharishi himself, when he presented his discourse to the sages assembled at the *Naimisharanya* forest, at Prayag, where the Ganges meets the Yamuna River. Upon being requested by the learned sage Shaunaka to disclose the story of Shiva, because so less was known about him at that time, the great Suta Romaharshana retold the *Shiv Puran*, as he had heard from his guru, the great Maharishi Veda Vyasa, who

had heard it from the Sage Narada, who had heard it from his own father, Brahma. *Thus, is the story told...*

For us to understand creation, we would need to understand about that point of time, just before creation. If the Cosmos exists, and the Universe exists, and the Solar System exists, then probably there was a moment in Time, when this did not exist. If it did not exist, then how did Matter, and so much of Matter that our mind cannot comprehend at all, how did this Matter get created? Did it take up considerable time to be created? Did it take millions and billions and trillions of our planet's years for this cosmos to be created, and then did it take more time for it to travel around the great void and for the various universes, galaxies and systems to settle in to where they are to be found today?


At first there was nothing. Not even distance, time or energy. There was NOTHING. And, out there, deep in this void of NOTHING, from another dimension that we would never be able to comprehend, or understand, recognise or accept, there was a tremendously awesome burst of energy. The blast that tore apart the void of NOTHING brought with it the aspect of light, energy, heat, fire and distance. This huge enormous vast ocean of energy that entered this void of NOTHING flowed through and through, covering tremendous trillion and millions more light years of distance. Perhaps we have not as yet discovered a unit to measure this distance, except to term it as 'infinity'. From this vast infinite ocean of energy came about the burst of a million stars and suns, each one brighter than the other, and along with them came the burst of energy that had the power to create.



This awesome burst of creative energy occupied vast dimensions of space. At present, our consciousness or schools of knowledge have not evolved to even recognise such a happening. Unable for us to comprehend at this moment of our collective understanding of science, religion or philosophies, this tremendous burst of creative energy converged within itself again and again, turning within itself, and concentrating its aspects within itself, layer by layer, to emerge, as SHIVA.

This cannot simply be written in mere words to explain to a reader. An understanding of this awesome aspect can only be written deep within the hidden pages of the mind. The aspects of the convergence of this creative energy cannot be understood by those who would not want to understand. To each non-believer, their own magic of comprehension, and to each, their own aspect of knowledge. Energy exists, and creation has happened. For evolution to happen there had to be creation, in the first place. Energy that covered huge swathes of space, and yet converged to emerge from within one form, was recognised as the power that brought about the dimensions of distance, movement, repetition and accuracy of time through the movement of heavenly bodies. This energy is SHIVA.

From deep within this creative energy, Shiva, began to give shape to matter, for even the stars and suns, were but only convergence points of the great infinite ocean of energy. To create matter, Shiva took upon himself to create space, or non-matter, as we know of it. This is the awesome paradox of Creation that current knowledge cannot perhaps define. For matter to exist, Shiva created non-matter. The space that was occupied by the millions of stars and suns was left empty by the withdrawal of the ocean of infinite energy. To create the huge

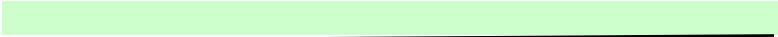


spheres of energy in the form of gases, fire and light was born the ability to create new energy from within itself. From inside these stars and suns, Shiva began to create matter, and thus created the planets and moons, the asteroids and comets.

It is thus said, that Shiva assumed the most gigantic size, and swallowed up huge amounts of energy and began to spew out from deep within him, the myriad planets, moons, asteroids, comets and smaller suns. These bodies of matter began to travel for over millions of years and finally found their locations in the cosmos. This story of ours about Shiva concerns our solar system, and our planet. The ancients have expressed their happiness and have instructed through the sacred books that we should appreciate that Shiva chose this planet to reside in, and to create life, as we know of it.

On this planet, Pritvi, as we know it, Shiva began to create the mountains, the waters, the oceans, the rivers, clouds and the land, and filled them up with animals and plants. These vast resources of energy that Shiva brought out of Surya to perfect his creation, came to be known as *Prakriti* (= nature). Having created matter, and subsequently, having created *Prakriti* on the planet, Pritvi, Shiva determined to establish creation of life in his own form. In order to achieve creation of *Purusha* (= human life), and to begin to procreate, Shiva enabled the manifestation of a female form from *Prakriti* or nature, and thus did Ambika, emerge from within him.

Having created Ambika, Shiva was however smitten by her and felt that it would be better if he were to retreat with her to an appropriate abode on *bhooloka* or Pritvi. He therefore suggested to himself that the task of creation, and further, the task of



preserving creation, should be done by two separate manifestations from within him. In the meantime, he did however retreat with Ambika and settle down at Kashi, and continued to enjoy his creation and his design of the female form of his own self. In order to bring forth the manifestations of the Creator and the Preserver, Shiva united with Ambika, and thereby was born a grown-up but small child.


The child, questions his purpose in the cosmos

The small child was worried. He did not know what was he to do, who was he, and why was he in existence. Confused, he asked of Shiva as to the purpose of his birth. Shiva replied, “O Child, you are none other than Vishnu. You are to be the receptacle of all knowledge and of all understanding of the purpose of life and energy in this cosmos. Please commit yourself to penance to understand your greater purpose of existence.” So saying, Shiva bestowed upon the Child Vishnu, the knowledge of the vedas through his breath. It is because of the manner of attaining knowledge of the vedas that it is said –

“Yasya nishvastiam vedah”

He, whose exhaled air are the vedas

The child sat down on the ocean of infinite energy, and meditated on Shiva, for twelve of his years, that are unlike those of ours. He could not as yet totally understand the manifestation of creative energy upon emerging from his meditation for such a



long period. The Child Vishnu could not understand the power of awesome infinite amounts of energy that converged in the aspect of Shiva. The child asked, “O Shiva, pray tell me, who am I, and what is the purpose of my existence.” He sought out Shiva but failed to achieve the vision of the cause of his manifestation. Very soon, a voice from the cosmos spoke out to him and asked him to continue the penance. The Child Vishnu continued with the penance and enabled the convergence of more and more energy into himself while searching for the understanding of the manifestation of Shiva upon this universe and the cosmos.

During this meditation and the convergence of the energy from within the Child Vishnu, various streams of water began to emerge and flow from his body upon the ocean of infinite energy. Upon seeing the streams and being pleased with the sight, the Child Vishnu went to lie down and sleep on the water itself. He is thus known as “*Narayana*” (= he who resides in water, i.e. *naara*). Pleased with the dedication of the Child Vishnu, Shiva, deep in his unity with Ambika, or *Prakriti*, at Kashi, spoke, “O Child, you who are none other than Vishnu, and you who had to wait thus, will soon be able to understand the purpose of your existence on this cosmos. Meditate again, upon Shiva, and your questions will be answered when they need to be.”

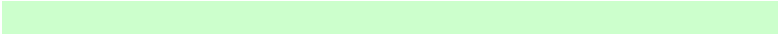
The now grown up Vishnu, sat down once again on the ocean of infinite energy, and meditated yet again on Shiva and waited for his questions to be answered. Vishnu sought out Shiva and asked him for guidance. Shiva, pleased with his dedication, visited him with his consort, Ambika, and said, “O Vishnu, child of the union of the *Purusha* (= human) with *Prakriti* (= nature), this is your abode, this very vast ocean of infinite energy. This is where

you will reside, resting upon one of my creations, and yet another manifestation of yourself, Adishesha, the naaga-serpent, multi-coiled, and multi-headed, who will arise from the world of the naagas, and give you the resting space that you will need.” And thus, did the manifestation of Adishesha take place.

Vishnu thanked Shiva for the manifestation of Adishesha, who is but Vishnu himself, for such is the magic and mystery of Shiva’s intent, and asked, “O Shiva, you are but providing me with many more questions to ask of you. Pray tell, who is this wonderful person with you? And, pray tell, who are you? Why did you bring me forth from the union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*? Also, do tell me what is the purpose of my existence? Why should I rest here on Adishesha, who is but a manifestation of me, and why should I stay here, on this ocean of infinite energy? Why can I not reside on *bhooloka* (= earth) where you seem to stay with many more responsibilities?”

Shiva, in a manner of answer to Vishnu’s enquiry about Ambika, and in response to Ambika’s request, assured Vishnu, “There will soon be answers to the manifestation of your energy, while you reside here resting on Adishesha, on this vast ocean of infinite energy. There is also very soon to be the manifestation of Garuda, your *vaahana* (= vehicle)”.

Continuing thus, Shiva informed Vishnu, “Thou, who are now the great Lord Preserver of the Universe, and O Adishesha, you who would be forever with Vishnu, wherever he may proceed on this cosmic ocean of infinite energy, in every manifestation and in every form, I am Shiva, in my form as *Purusha* (= human), and with me is energy in its most sacred form, for Ambika, as *Prakriti* (= nature), is only pure creative energy that has been

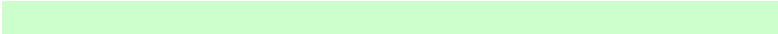


brought together to establish on earth, the very union of *Purusha* (of creation in my form) and *Prakriti* (of nature and environment). She would be with me, and I would be with her, and when we would cease to be, the very concept of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* would cease to exist on *bhooloka* (= the Planet Earth)”.

Shiva continued to explain to Vishnu, “I am both *Pati* and *Pasu*, I am *Siva* and *Jiva*. I am the supreme self, with pure consciousness of infinite energy. It is this consciousness that is derived from energy that began creation. It is with this energy that I enabled the energy of creation of matter. Upon the establishment of the very concept of matter from this vast ocean of infinite energy, were the millions of stars, suns and planets created in this cosmos.”

“I create matter, and then I enter into the very matter that I create. It is from within this matter, that I create life or objects without life. *Prakriti* is but my creation, and it is with my union with *Prakriti* that I am thereafter able to create further objects of life or objects without life. For, I am the source, I am the cause and therefore, I am the effect of creation. This has been my purpose, and this has been my endeavour, of creation of an endless cosmos, one without any beginning and one without any end.”

“The creation of the cosmos without any end unto itself is something that only I can enable. You, as Vishnu, have a different purpose. You will soon be able to manifest from within yourself, upon a moment of equanimity with yourself, when you will desire nothing, and when you will think upon nothing, and when you will dwell upon no object or goal or purpose, for it is

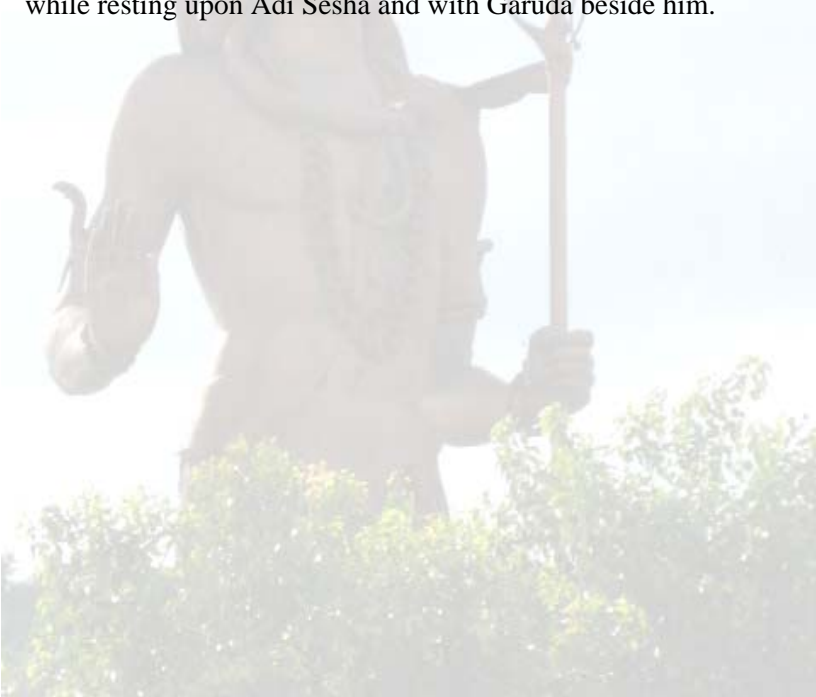


then that you will manifest an entirely different aspect and purpose from mine. The creation that I have enabled is eternal. They have no beginning or end. The planets, the moons, the suns and the stars, the concept of matter and non-matter, the concept of space and that of light and the concept of *Prakriti*, these are all creations that are eternal. They will always exist until I will desire their end.”

“There will emerge the manifestation of another purpose from deep within you. You will need to seek the answers to the purpose of that manifestation along with the answers to your question as to the purpose of your being. I do not seek that my creation should manifest from within me, for it is the other way around. I manifest myself in my entire creation. The very aspect of *Prakriti*, nature, on *bhooloka*, earth, is my creation, and I will proceed to reside within it. I will continue to reside at Kashi with Ambika, the Mother Nature, and will wait for your questions at a later moment.”

So saying, Shiva withdrew with Ambika. On the vast ocean of infinite energy, Vishnu resided on the great naaga-serpent, Adi Sesha, and contemplated upon all that Shiva explained. Thinking upon it, with the support of the silent patience of Adi Sesha and Garuda, Vishnu wondered upon the aspect of equanimity, of desiring nothing, and of thinking upon nothing. He was being engulfed by his own questions, of seeking answers to his doubts, of wanting to know his purpose and of his goals and responsibilities. He felt that he was forever troubled by his own thoughts that did not provide him with the space and emptiness to achieve the concept of ‘*nothing*’. Could he achieve equanimity?

So thinking, several years passed by for Vishnu, residing on Adi Sesha. Looking at Vishnu, and understanding the nature of perplexed thought swirling within him, Adi Sesha and Garuda waited in patience. Understanding his struggles, Shiva brought forth to Vishnu a gentle touch of calm, for it was but a gentle touch, like that of a feather, that brings forth the benevolence of Shiva that exists forever in Shiva, for Vishnu. At that touch, Vishnu relaxed. Very soon, he stopped wondering about his questions, stopped searching for answers and emptied himself from pondering about his purpose. In that point of emptiness, of achieving an aspect of nothingness, Vishnu reached equanimity, while resting upon Adi Sesha and with Garuda beside him.

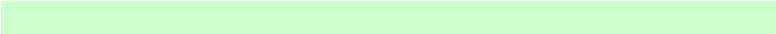


The emergence of Brahma on a lotus, from Vishnu's navel

At that moment of equanimity with himself, at the very moment of achieving an aspect of nothingness within his mind, and with all that was manifested upon the cosmos, when Vishnu rested on Adi Sesha on the ocean of infinite energy, there emerged from his navel, a lotus with a golden stalk that kept stretching away endlessly from him and climbing upwards. Vishnu, Adi Sesha and Garuda could not see inside the blue corolla of the flower. This thousand petal lotus, with its blue center, retained itself at the end of the golden stalk and provided a perfect setting for the emergence of the five-headed Brahma.

It is said that, many time-periods later, beyond our understanding, Brahma explained the phenomenon to his son Narada thus, *“I sat on the central pad of the Lotus, having emerged from within the bud when it opened up far higher than Adi Sesha or Vishnu or the ocean of infinite energy. All these aspects were what I learnt of much later. But when I sat there, in spite of my five heads, I could not see any other being or aspect, other than the Lotus flower. I called out for guidance. I tried to travel far and wide on the pad of the Lotus but failed to obtain any answers nor was I able to see anything.”*

For a hundred years of his time, Brahma traveled around the pad of the Lotus to seek answers. Not having succeeded, he entered inside the stalk-tube of the Lotus and traveled within it to see if there was any end or any point of exit. There was none. The stalk-tube seemed to stretch endlessly. Brahma returned to the pad of the flower and called out for answers to the purpose of his

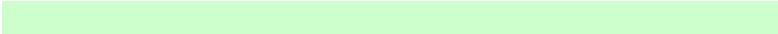


existence and to the meaning of having to stay confined to the flower. Upon asking thus, a voice guided him to commit to penance and to focus upon the infinite energy and thereby, the manifestation of Shiva. Brahma began his penance and focused upon Shiva and sought to absorb the understanding of the energy and its state of infinity and its power. He conducted this penance for twelve of his years that are much unlike that of Vishnu and that of Shiva and that of what we understand of time, as we know it.

Brahma came to know about the emergence of energy from the burst of a million suns, stars and planets and the convergence of that energy as Shiva. He understood that at first, there was nothing. He attempted to understand the magic and the mystery behind the concept of nothing. It was difficult for him to understand the very concept that there could be nothing, and then there was energy.

The longer that Brahma focused upon the understanding of Shiva, the more was that Brahma could understand about the emergence of energy subsequent to the existence of an entire void of nothing.

Brahma came to realise that while Shiva was the creator of the cosmos, there had to be an aspect of creation different from the creation of matter, of planets, of moons and comets and of space, and that there would need to be an understanding of the system of the cosmos that had been built up by Shiva. There seemed to be order in the manner in which the stars and the suns had emerged from the energy around it, by bringing all the energy within themselves, and creating space that had no matter.



This marvel of space that seemed to have nothing existing in it seemed to be more powerful than that of what had been created. Space had distance, and this very specific measurable distance that between the stars and suns and planets and moons had created bonds of energy between them, and thus, there was movement in the vastness of space.

Brahma realised the tremendously awesome aspects of Shiva, and began to marvel at the infinite understanding that would be needed to even begin to unravel the concept of the cosmos. Brahma further realised that Shiva had conceived of the concept of creating matter from energy and that he was residing in *bhooloka*, or Pritvi, or Earth. There would be need to understand the purpose of his own being and perhaps Shiva would be able to answer his questions and doubts and guide him.

Brahma let the very understanding envelope him entirely in turning in all his energy in committing to meditation upon the aspect of Shiva. However he tried, Brahma could not conceptualise the very form of Shiva, and thereby could not imbibe the manner of the creation of *purusha*.

Upon twelve years of his time, Brahma called out to seek his answers and sought the appearance of his creator. Hearing these questions, Vishnu understood the need for him to appear before Brahma, for after all, was he not the creator of Brahma? Determining thus, Vishnu appeared in his *Chaturbuja* form (= with his four hands), with his *sankha* (= conch), *chakra* (= discus) and *gada* (= mace), and sought to answer the questions of Brahma. This was not to be.

Brahma was enveloped by the very concept of Shiva, and by the aspects of his energy and manifestation, that he could not accept that Vishnu, who appeared before him, could be his creator. He denied the possibility that Vishnu could be his creator, for was he not in search of Shiva? And this *Chaturbuja* manifestation of Vishnu certainly could not be that of Shiva.

Vishnu sought to allay Brahma's doubts. He said, "O Brahma, it is I, Vishnu, who is your creator. It is from my navel that, this lotus flower upon which you reside, that this flower emerged. It is the stalk-tube of this flower that you traveled within to seek its origin and end. It is I who reside in this ocean of infinite energy, upon Adi Sesha, with Mahalaxmi. It is this Lotus Flower that is always with me, attached to my navel, and thus it was required upon me to manifest in a different form, for I continue to lie upon the Adi Sesha, even as I am in front of you to answer your questions. I am your creator, and I am to be your guide. There is none other than me from whom you may seek to answer your questions."

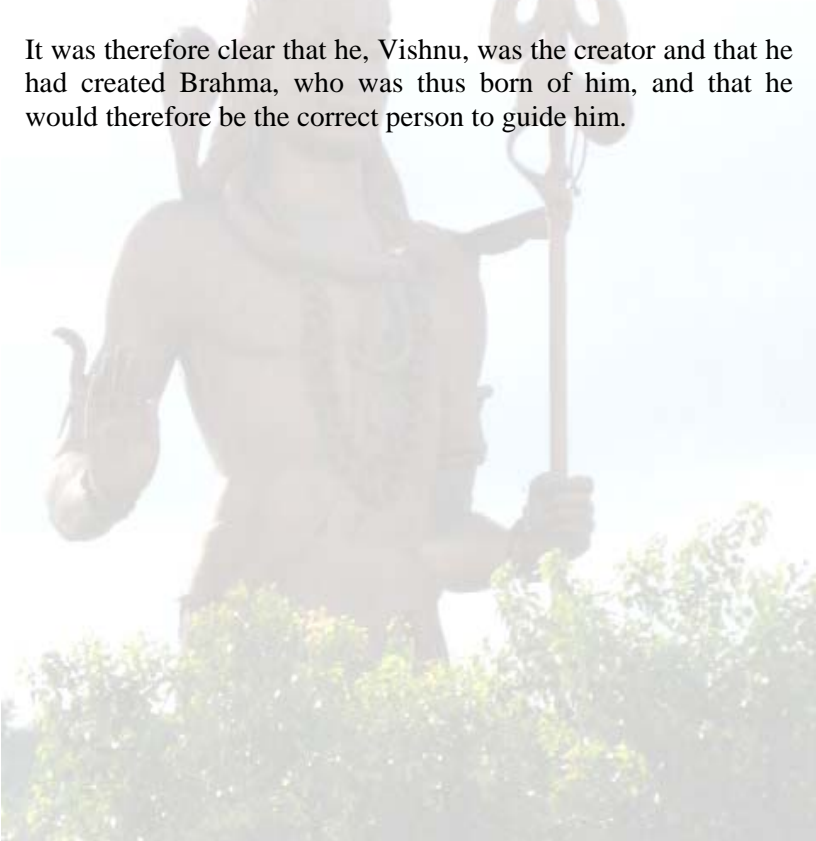
Brahma did not believe what Vishnu spoke of. Brahma had very clearly seen the manifestation of Shiva and yet Vishnu seemed to deny this aspect. Had he not seen clearly of the aspects of creation and that there would be need of creation of a very different aspect from that which had happened in the cosmos until then?

He said to Vishnu that he did not believe him, and that he did not accept Vishnu as his Creator. There had to be another creator, and he, Brahma, was self-born, and did not need to accept Vishnu as his creator.

rudra – creator of the cosmos

Angered, Vishnu was upset. He argued with Brahma and said that it was very apparent that he, Vishnu, had emerged far before the very concept of Brahma. For was it not he who had asked of Shiva that he should understand the purpose of his existence? It was in answer to this query that he had contemplated upon the very manifold aspects, and thereupon had witnessed the emergence of the Lotus stalk from his very own navel.

It was therefore clear that he, Vishnu, was the creator and that he had created Brahma, who was thus born of him, and that he would therefore be the correct person to guide him.



Brahma, Vishnu and the Shiva Linga

Brahma was absolutely certain of his perception that having meditated on the aspect of Shiva and of the tremendous aspects of creation, he could not just be a mere manifestation from Vishnu. He said to Vishnu once again that as far as he was concerned, he had seen for himself the wonderful panorama of creation, and had clothed himself in the awesome aspect of Shiva. He had not come across any perspective of Vishnu, and how could then he be born of Vishnu?

Vishnu attempted to convince Brahma, describing patiently once again, and said that it was from his womb that the golden stalk of the lotus had emerged. The stalk had stretched out endlessly and it had been Vishnu who had conveyed to Brahma to commit himself to meditation and to focus on the aspects of creation. Vishnu was Brahma's creator and he would be able to guide him on the aspects of his presence, of his creation and of his role in the cosmos and *bhooloka*. It was apparent, Vishnu told Brahma, that he was deluded by some parable that denied him the scope to understand Vishnu and the creation of the cosmos and he would need to emerge from the *maaya* that prevented him from understanding the aspect of Vishnu, his creator.

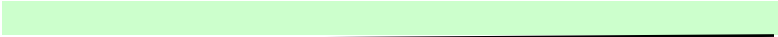
Brahma got upset and angry at Vishnu's persistence and very soon the argument escalated into a fight. Vishnu mounted his *vaahana* (= vehicle), Garuda, while Brahma created his *vaahana*, a white swan to ride upon in response. Vishnu and Brahma exchanged powerful *astras* (= powerful missile-like arrows, usually named after Shiva), arms and weaponry in their war against each other across the cosmos. It is said that it was during

this war that Vishnu used the *Maheswarastra*, while Brahma let loose the *Paasupatastra*. These *astras* emerged on the skies of the *bhooloka*, alongside the moon and ignited the sky with more light than the sun had provided. The *astras* began to emit huge swathes of flames across space and set the earth, moon and other planets ablaze.

And then suddenly, between Vishnu and Brahma, a column emerged through the ground, seemingly from nowhere, and of which the top or bottom could not be perceived. It was of the shape of a Shiva Linga, and had within it, more aspects of light, fire and energy than could be understood. The aspects of sunlight and fire of the two *astras* seemed very puny in scale in comparison. The Shiva Linga absorbed the *Maheswarastra* and the *Paasupatastra* within it and did not seem the worse for it.

Vishnu and Brahma ceased their war and gazed, in awe and amazement, upon the Shiva Linga. They could not identify the manifestation and wondered at its aspects of size, endlessness, and capacity to retain tremendous amounts of light, fire and energy, and its awesome persona of consuming the two most powerful *astras* within it, without any sufferance. Brahma and Vishnu explored it together and yet could not understand the manifestation. They decided to separate, and proceeded to seek the beginning and end of the Shiva Linga that was surrounded by a great void of non-matter.

Vishnu left Garuda and turned into a boar and traveled downwards to find the source of the Shiva Linga. Brahma turned himself into a Swan, and flew upwards to seek the end-point of the Shiva Linga. Both traveled faster than we can perceive or understand and traveled across greater distances than we can

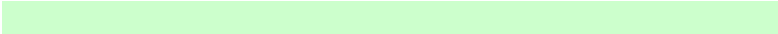


measure or imagine. And yet, the end or the beginning of the Shiva Linga was not to be found. Vishnu wondered at the aspect of the Shiva Linga, its ability to subsume the vastness of enormous quantum of light, fire and energy, and to exhibit endlessness, even from its own source, and understood the magnificence of Shiva. Having understood, Vishnu returned to the scene of the battle with Brahma.

Brahma continued to fly upwards, as a swan, and began to slow down, beginning to understand the futility of the search. Traces of a finer understanding of the phenomenon began to make him more puzzled, but he was determined not to give up. Several years passed on in this search. Shiva was watching this search and knew that Vishnu and Brahma had begun to wonder about the manifestation of the Shiva Linga and had also begun to realise their relative perspective in comparison to the unknown. Amused at the arrogance of Brahma and Vishnu, Shiva laughed.

It is rare that Maheshwara or Shiva laughs at anything. At that moment of laughter, the Ketaki flowers adorning his matted locks fell downwards for several years and began to drift along the Shiva Linga. After the many years of his search for the end-point of the Shiva Linga, Brahma saw the sudden aspect of life and movement within the void of non-matter around the column, when the Ketaki flowers kept coming down and falling over him. This rain of Ketaki flowers along the Shiva Linga and upon himself puzzled Brahma more than before, for there had to be a source from which they had begun to fall downwards.

Brahma in his form of the ever-flying swan, asked of the Ketaki flowers, “Pray wait a while, of you who is the best among flowers, the most scented with fragrance, the most bright among




all colours found on the petals of any flower, pray, do me a favour.” The Ketaki flowers replied, “O Brahma, why do you delay us so? What is it that you want from us, we who are but mere flowers and were just earlier in adornment? How can we be of any help to you?” Brahma asked in response, “O splendidly fragrant flowers, do tell me upon whom were you in adornment? Why do you fall along this tremendous endless column? Pray tell me of what aspect is this column?”

The Ketaki flowers replied, “O Brahma, thou are asking us as a friend, and that is why we would delay our endless fall in replying to you. We are not aware upon whom were we in adornment. We only know now that we have been falling endlessly alongside this column. What about you? Where do you go to?” Brahma replied, “I am in search of the end-point of this column. I am sure that when you had but begun your fall, you would have seen the beginning of this column. What is it? Where is it? How much further do I need to travel and fly upwards?”

“O Brahma, it is of no use for you to travel and fly upwards. We have been drifting downwards for several years of your own time, as you know of it, and we wonder as to how you would ever reach the end-point of this column” said the Ketaki flowers to Brahma. This information totally exasperated Brahma and he realised the futility of the search. He had however not known if Vishnu had been able to reach the beginning-point of the column. He would probably be waiting at the sight of their battle. Brahma would have to return and face defeat in front of Vishnu.

At that moment of realising the prospects of defeat in front of Vishnu, Brahma requested of the Ketaki flowers, “O friends, you

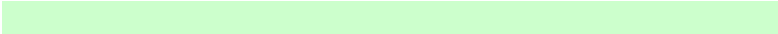


are but fellow travellers with me, in this movement alongside this tremendously endless column. I will accompany you and fly downwards. I have a request however, for Vishnu would meet us when we come where we had parted earlier in this quest. He will enjoy humiliating me for my failure. I need your help.” The Ketaki flowers replied, “O Brahma, we welcome you to come along with us in our journey. What do you want us to do? How can we be of any help to you?”

Brahma requested the Ketaki flowers, “O friends, Vishnu who is awaiting my return would ridicule me. Pray help me by telling him or agreeing with me when I tell him that I had reached the end-point of this column and that is where I met you all, and requested you to accompany me as my witnesses.” The flowers replied, “O Brahma, is that all? You are our friend, and we welcome you along with us in our journey. We will certainly help you in your predicament. We will speak to Vishnu and we will agree with you if you would tell him the story of your journey to the end-point and of our meeting up at that place.”

The Ketaki flowers joined Brahma in their descent along the column and after some years of travel met Vishnu, who seemed very tired, exasperated and disgusted with the entire range of developments. Vishnu, upon seeing Brahma, informed, “O Brahma, you who is of my creation, I had traveled downwards alongside this column, but could not find out where it began from. I traveled quite fast, and yet my journey took several years. This column seemed to stretch by itself across a great distance and I am sure there must be a much higher-level of explanation.”

Brahma was happy since Vishnu had failed and had admitted to his failure. He knew that this was his moment of victory, even if



it was to be achieved upon an utterance of falsehood. He told Vishnu, “You who claim to be my creator, and you who fight with me in spite of truth being on my side, I was able to reach the end-point of this column. I met these Ketaki flowers at the top of this column. They are my witness.” The Ketaki flowers conveyed their agreement to the words of Brahma and said, “O Vishnu, it is but true, that we met Brahma at the top of the end-point of this column.” Upon hearing this, Vishnu bowed down in salutation to Brahma and worshipped him.



Of *Aum*, Bhairava and Shiva

While Brahma enjoyed his moment of apparent victory, and Vishnu was humble in his defeat, they heard a loud sound that shattered the moment of complacency. The word seemed to resonate within itself and grew louder and louder, and conveyed the syllables of “Aa”, “Uo” and “aM”, coming together as one word, “AUM”. Realising the larger perspective of sound, matter, space and endlessness, both Brahma and Vishnu bowed down to the Shiva Linga and requested the manifestation to show itself, and to guide them as they had come to understand their ignorance.

In response, from the Shiva Linga, came about the manifestation of Shiva himself, who seemed to be larger than the mountains on *bhooloka*, larger than the distance to the moon, in such that the moon itself seemed to be finding a secure place in his matted locks. Pinaka, his *trishul* (= trident), with the *damaru* (= hand-held double-faced drum) tied to it, the four-handed Shiva, clad in his tiger and elephant skins, with the naaga-serpents around his neck and arms and waist, with ash spread liberally all over him, made his appearance. He seemed terribly angry, judging by the red fiery eyes that blazed out at them. They realised that the word ‘AUM’ was resonating loudly from Shiva and it seemed like it would envelop them in its power and consume them.

Shiva was indeed terribly angry upon realising the trickery and lies of Brahma and the Ketaki flowers and how they had made Vishnu bow down in salutation. In his anger, he did not seem to realise that both Brahma and Vishnu were bowing to him and requesting his blessings and guidance. It was the anger of Shiva,

in his manifestation as Rudra, and in that moment in time, as only Shiva would understand it, for even he is not able to control his own anger. Vishnu sought forgiveness of Shiva and said that it was their ego that prevented him from realising the awesome aspect of the Shiva Linga and it was indeed foolish of him to seek its beginning.

However, Shiva was intent on his anger upon Brahma and brought together all his fury, as Rudra, and in the culmination of the resonance of the word 'AUM', from his third eye, came about the emergence of the manifestation of Bhairava. The aspect of the fearsome appearance, Bhairava, the warrior spirit of Shiva, the destroyer, bowed down in front of Shiva and asked him for guidance. Shiva spoke out his instructions in his terrible anger, and said, "O Bhairava, you who have emerged from my third eye, in my anger, you will not desist from your objective. Brahma seems to deserve your worship with your sword. It is your job to destroy Brahma who has lied about me, and the Shiva Linga, and has been able to deceive my adornments, the Ketaki flowers."

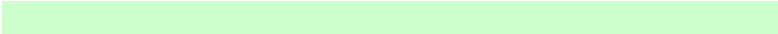
In response, Bhairava turned upon the now terrified and trembling Brahma, lifted his huge curved sword and severed the fifth head, the one that rested on the top of Brahma's head, above the four heads that could see the four directions of north, south, east and west. The fifth head flew away from Brahma. At this sudden and terrible development, Vishnu fearing for the future of his own creation, bowed down to Shiva and requested him to forgive Brahma, for was he not the creation of his own creation. Shiva's anger subsided at the request of Vishnu and he instructed Bhairava to stop in his destruction of Brahma. Bhairava

withdrew from the situation to be available to Shiva as and when he would be beckoned.

Shiva spoke to Vishnu, “You who have been kind to even one who has lied to you and humiliated you in spite of being your own creation, you will be the epitome of understanding, patience and acceptance. You will be sought upon by the creation that is to occur and it will be your job to preserve what has been created, as you have now sought my forgiveness to desist from destroying Brahma. This is a difficult virtue to have, O Vishnu, and therefore you will be worshipped by one and all in your own *roopa*, as you are, and as you would manifest in other aspects, from time to time, or as you would go about to achieve what is right and destroy what would be wrong.” Vishnu bowed to Shiva and was happy that Brahma was safe from the anger of Bhairava.

Shiva was as yet angry with Brahma and wished to punish him for his lies and deceit. He turned to Brahma and said, “O creation of my creation, you had been provided with an understanding of the manifestation of Shiva during your meditation on the Lotus flower. You had meditated upon the aspects for hundred years and you had understood that you would be required to dwell upon the vast panorama of creation. And yet, you could not recognise the Shiva Linga and you chose to argue and fight with the one who was your creator? How is it that with five heads and with all the energy that was focused during your meditation that you could not realise the truth?”

Shiva continued, “O Brahma, you have now lost your fifth head due to the sharp sword of Bhairava, the manifestation of my anger who could not be denied its quest. You have deceived Vishnu and you have also caused the Ketaki flowers to commit



to falsehood for you. This cannot be forgiven. He who has created you, asked for you to be forgiven. He is now elevated to the munificence that would be equal from his worshippers as would be bestowed upon me. As for you, I deny you the same perspective. You will not be worshipped, and there will be no temples built in homage to you.”

Brahma bowed in homage to Shiva and requested for him to be forgiven. Relenting once again, Shiva, the benevolent, said, “I understand that you are now repentant. As a result, you will be accorded the important position of the first god of the yagnas to be performed by your creation, and you will be the presiding diety. Whereas for the Ketaki flower that has deceived me, it will now cease to be my adornment. Anyone who desires to worship me will not dare to use the Ketaki flower in the prayers or offerings. And since the Ketaki flower had deceived Vishnu, it will be in his service and will be allowed to be one of the offerings at prayers to Vishnu.”

Humbled, Brahma and Vishnu requested Shiva to stay, and offered him a place to rest. Later, they conducted their prayers to Shiva and sought his blessings. At these first prayers to Shiva by Brahma and Vishnu, the occasion has been celebrated over thousands of years as the *Shivaratri*. Shiva blessed Brahma and Vishnu and said, “I am happy that you have worshipped me today. This day will be sacred forever and he who worships me on this day to my aspect of the Shiva Linga and offers salutations, will be dearer to me than my own creation. This place, where I have manifested as the Shiva Linga to Brahma and Vishnu, will be a place that would be dear to me, and this place would hence be known as Arunachala.”

rudra – creator of the cosmos

Shiva caused the endless Shiva Linga to come about in a finite form, and on that day of the first *Shivaratri*, he installed the Shiva Linga on the aspect of *Yoni*, and bestowed it for worship. Vyasa said of this to Suta who spoke thus about the story of the first creator, the creator of the cosmos.



Shankara – the manifestation of the *Ekalinga*

Abridged, from an essay by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

The linga in Shiva temples symbolises identification or sign through which you identify someone. The Divine is beyond, and hence is called *Ekalinga*.

What is *Ekalinga*? The Self, the *Atma*. The Self is beyond body, mind or intellect; it is beyond likes and dislikes. *Ekalinga* is the Lord of the Self.

The Shiva Shakti merges into the whole universe. Shiva has been associated with destruction, but transformation, new beginning for the better, can only happen when something is destroyed. Shiva is the factor of transformation. “*Sham*” means peace and good and “*kara*” means one who does good deeds. “*Shankara*” means one who gives peace and does good.

The whole of Creation is the dance or play of Shiva, the *tandav* or dance of one consciousness, one seed, which manifested into a million species in the world. The whole world moving in an auspicious rhythm of innocence and intelligence is Shiva. He, Mahadeva, is the permanent and eternal source of energy – the one and only eternal state of being.

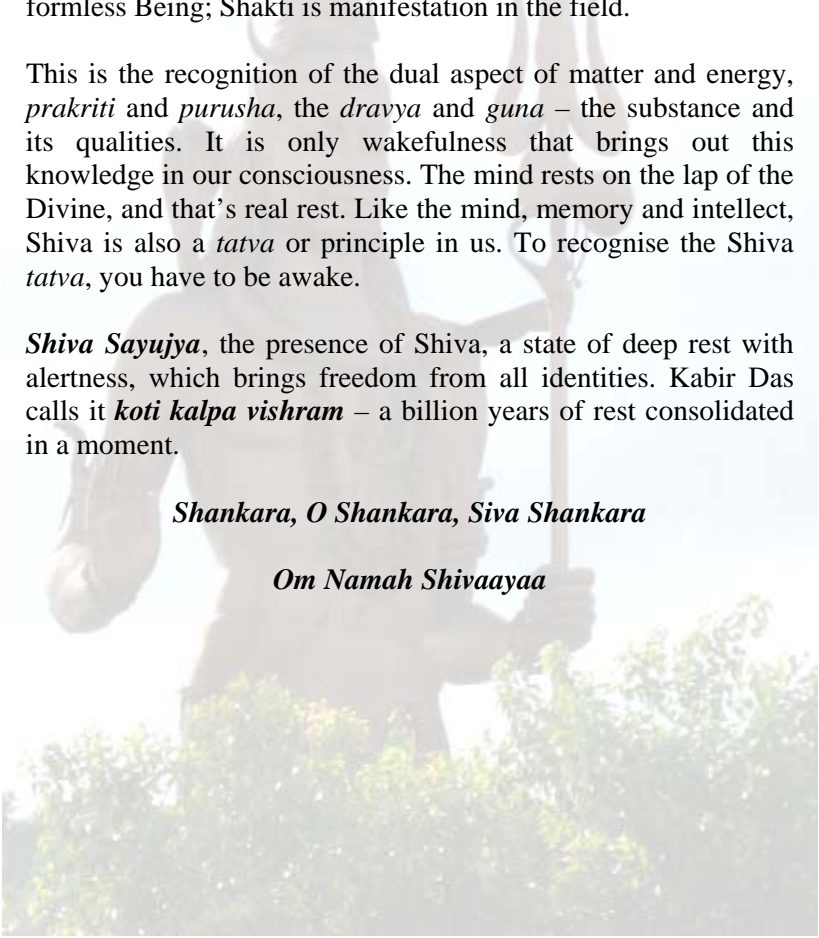
In the union of energy and nature, of Shiva and Shakti, the primordial and dynamic energy is wedded to the transcendental. Shiva is the silent witness and Shakti is *chitti* or *chidvilasa*, the energy that plays and displays in infinite space. Shiva is the formless Being; Shakti is manifestation in the field.

This is the recognition of the dual aspect of matter and energy, *prakriti* and *purusha*, the *dravya* and *guna* – the substance and its qualities. It is only wakefulness that brings out this knowledge in our consciousness. The mind rests on the lap of the Divine, and that's real rest. Like the mind, memory and intellect, Shiva is also a *tatva* or principle in us. To recognise the Shiva *tatva*, you have to be awake.

Shiva Sayujya, the presence of Shiva, a state of deep rest with alertness, which brings freedom from all identities. Kabir Das calls it ***koti kalpa vishram*** – a billion years of rest consolidated in a moment.

Shankara, O Shankara, Siva Shankara

Om Namah Shivaayaa



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About this book: Shiva as the Creator of the cosmos, and the manifestation of Vishnu, Adi Sesha, Garuda and Brahma. The battle between Vishnu and Brahma. The Shiva Linga. The rudra-roopa of Shiva. Bhairava. Vishnu, the Preserver and Brahma, the Creator. This is the story of Creation, and is the first of the stories of Creation.



The image of **Bhairava** at the Jyotirlinga Bhimashankara Temple at the Western Ghats of Pune, Maharashtra. Photo: **Bharat Bhushan**.

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The Jyotirlinga Bhimashankara Temple at the Western Ghats of Pune, Maharashtra.

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