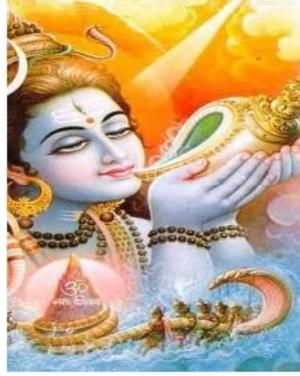


SHIVA RATRI



TAOSHOBUDDHA

Shiva Ratri



SRI RUDRASHTAKAM

**Namaa miisha mishaana-nirvaana rupam
vibhum vyaapakam brahma-veda-svaroopam
nijam nirgunam nirvikalpam niriham
chidaakaasha maakaasha-vaasam bhaje ham -1**

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I bow to the Ruler of the Universe, whose very form is Liberation,
the omnipotent and all-pervading Brahma, manifest as the Vedas.
I worship Shiva, shining in his own glory, without physical qualities,
Undifferentiated, desire less, all pervading sky of consciousness
and wearing the sky itself as His garment.

**niraakaara monkaara-moolam turiyam
giraa gnaana gotiita miisham giriisham
karaalam mahaa-kaala-kaalam krpaalam
gunaagaara samsara paaram nato ham -2**

I bow to the supreme Lord who is the formless source of 'OM'
The Self of All, transcending all conditions and states,
Beyond speech, understanding and sense perception,
Awe-full, but gracious, the ruler of Kailash,
Devourer of Death, the immortal abode of all virtues.

**tushaa raadri-sankaasha-gauram gabhiram
manobhuta-koti prabha sri sariram
sphuran mauli-kallolini-charu-ganga
lasad-bhaala-balendu kanthe bhujangaa -3**

I worship Shankara, whose form is white as the Himalyan snow,
Radiant with the beauty of countless Cupids,
Whose head sparkles with the Ganga
With crescent moon adorning his brow and snakes coiling his neck,

**chalatkundalam bhru sunetram visalam
prasannaa-nanam nila-kantham dayaalam
mrgadhisa charmaambaram mundamaalam
priyam sankaram sarvanaatham bhajaami -4**

The beloved Lord of All,
with shimmering pendants hanging from his ears,
Beautiful eyebrows and large eyes,

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Full of Mercy with a cheerful countenance and a blue speck on his throat.

**pracandam prakrstam pragalbham paresham
akhandam ajam bhaanukoti-prakaasam
trayah-shula-nirmulanam shula-paanim
bhaje ham bhavaani-patim bhaava-gamyam -5**

I worship Shankara, Bhavani's husband,
The fierce, exalted, luminous supreme Lord.
Indivisible, unborn and radiant with the glory of a million suns;
Who, holding a trident, tears out the root of the three-fold suffering,
And who is reached only through Love.

**kalaatitata-kalyaana-kalpanta-kaari
sadaa sajjanaa-nanda-daataa purarih
chidaananda-sandoha-mohaapahaari
prasida prasida prabho manmathaarih -6**

You who are without parts, ever blessed,
The cause of universal destruction at the end of each round of creation,
A source of perpetual delight to the pure of heart,
Slayer of the demon, Tripura, consciousness and bliss personified,
Dispeller of delusion...
Have mercy on me, foe of Lust.

**na yaavad umaanaatha-paadaaravindam
bhajantiha loke parevaa naraanam
na taavat-sukham shaanti-santaapa-naasham
prasida prabho sarva bhutaa-dhivaasam -7**

Oh Lord of Uma, so long as you are not worshipped
There is no happiness, peace or freedom from suffering
in this world or the next.
You who dwell in the hearts of all living beings,
and in whom all beings have their existence,
Have mercy on me, Lord.

**na janaami yogam japam naiva pujam
nato ham sadaa sarvadaa sambhu tubhyam
jaraa janma-duhkhaugha taatapya maanam
prabho paahi apan-namaamisha shambho -8**

I don't know yoga, prayer or rituals,
But everywhere and at every moment, I bow to you, Shambhu!
Protect me my Lord, miserable and afflicted as I am
with the sufferings of birth, old-age and death.

**rudrastakam idam proktam viprena haratosaye
ye pathanti nara bhaktya tesam sambhuh prasidati**

This eightfold hymn of praise was sung by the Brahman to please SHIVA.
Shambhu will be pleased with whoever heartfully recites it with devotion.

**karpooa gauram karunaavataaram samsaara saaram
bhujagendra haaram**

He is white like camphor and the very incarnation of mercy and compassion,
The only good thing in this world, wearing a king cobra as a garland

**sadaavasantam hridayaara vinde bhavam bhavaani
sahitam namaami**

It is always springtime in the lotus of His heart I bow down to Bhava
(Shiva), as well as to Bhavani (Parvati) who accompanies Him

Om Namah Shivah



SHIVARATRI



Shiva Ratri is one of the most auspicious Vratas or fasts for the devotees of Lord Shiva.

The Puranas explain the grand significance of this Vrata. Maha Shivaratri (Great Night of Shiva or Night of Shiva) is a festival celebrated every year on the 13th night or 14th day in the Krishna Paksha (waning moon) of the month of Magha (as per Shalivahana or Gujarati Vikrama) or Phalguna (as per Vikrama) in the Hindu calendar (that is, the night before and day of the new moon). The festival is principally celebrated by offerings of Bael (Bilva) leaves to the Lord Shiva, all day fasting and an all night long vigil. Cannabis is traditionally used as an offering for Lord Shiva and his followers.

History of shivaratri

Hindu Puranas mention the significance of the day. It is said when creation was complete, and when everything in the three worlds got reduced into Lord Shiva, in that darkness of nothing present, the mother Pārbati worshipped Lord Shiva in the Agamic way with great devotion. The Parameshwar pleased by her prayer blessed her. Pārbati then asked Lord

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Shiva which rituals pleased him the most. The Lord replied that the 13th night of the new moon, during the month of Magha, is his most favorite day. Pārbati mentioned these words to her friends, from whom the word spread over entire creation.

For the benefit of the entire creation She said that in future whoever worships the Lord on the Shiva Ratri day with devotion, they should be blessed and should be given the ultimate liberation. The **Pashupati** granted that showing way for all of us to get blessed easily.

When Brahma and Vishnu fought between themselves as 'who is the greatest', Lord Shiva appeared before them as a pillar of fire. They were not able to find the starting and end of that pillar. This day is Thiru-kkaar-thikai.

Then Brahma and Vishnu repented for their mistake and prayed to Lord Shiva to forgive their sin. They worshipped the Shiva lingam which is the form of the flame. In the night of Shiva Ratri Lord Shiva appeared before them and blessed them. Devotees pray to the God throughout the night of Shiva Ratri by performing Abisheka, chanting and other holy deeds.

There are many incidents told about the significance of this day. Once a hunter in a jungle after searching throughout the jungle was quite tired and could not get any animal. In the night a tiger started chasing him. To escape from that he climbed a tree. That was a Bilva tree. The tiger sat under the tree waiting for him to come down. The hunter who sat on a branch of the tree was quite tense and did not want to sleep. He was plucking the leaves and putting down in order not to fall asleep. Below the tree there was a Shiva lingam. The whole night went on like this. God was pleased with the Upavasa (hunger) and the Pooja the hunter and the tiger did even without knowledge. He is the peak of the grace. He gave the hunter and the tiger 'Moksha'.

In a Shiva temple on a Maha Shiva Ratri day the lamp kept in the altar was very dim. That time a mouse which came take its prey touched the flame. Due to the heat it moved its head immediately. In the process it kindled the lamp and the altar was illuminated well. Lord Shiva, pleased by this deed made the mouse Mahabali, the renowned demon king.

There are many anecdotes like this told in our Puranas. If we do the Vrata with pure devotion and love there can be no doubt about getting the Grace of the Almighty.

When is shivaratri observed

Skandha Parana describes about four Shiva Ratri.

1. The first one is **Nitya Shivaratri** (daily Shivaratri - every night).
2. The second one is the **Monthly Shivaratri** which is observed on the Krishna Paksh Chaturdasi (fourteenth moon-day on the moon's diminishing phase).
3. The third one is the **Magh Pratham Adi Shivaratri** which is observed for the thirteen days starting from Prathama titi in the month Magh and finally
4. On the Chaturdasi night the Shiva is worshiped throughout the night.

The fourth one is observed on the Magh month Krishna Paksh Chaturdasi. This is the one observed in a widespread manner. It is also called Maha Shivaratri.

The Bilva Tree

The **Skanda Purana** explains the origin of **Bilva tree**, 'One day while Parvati was resting some drops of sweat fell from her forehead on the mountain Mandara, from which grew the bel tree.

Girija lives on the root of the tree, Maheswari on its shoulder, Dukshayani on its branches, Parvati among its leaves, Katyayani in its fruit, Gaori in its flowers while in thorns the numerous Saktis find a home. It is also believed that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, also lives in the bel tree.'

The word bilva (**bel tree**) is usually used as bilva-patra (**leaf of bel**). It is a sacred tree having sacrificial importance. Leaves of this sacred tree are generally trifoliate. This trifoliate leaf is symbolic of Trikal (Brahma, Vishnu

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and Mahesh), Three eyes of lord Shiva, Trishakti (Volition, Action and Knowledge), three Lingas and three syllables of Omkar.

The bilva tree itself is so holy and auspicious that its worship or its significance is mentioned in many Puranas and other Scirputres at various instances. Here below is a narration of '**greatness of bilva**' under 22nd chapter in Vidyasvarasamhita of **Shivapurana**.

'The bilva is the symbol of lord Shiva. It is adored even by the gods. It is difficult to understand its greatness. It can only be known to a certain extent.

1. Whatever holy center there is in the world finds a place under the root of bilva.
2. He who worships Mahadeva in the form of Linga at the root of bilva becomes a purified soul. He shall certainly attain Shiva.
3. He who pours water over his head at the root of a bilva can be considered to have taken his bath in all sacred waters in the earth. Verily he is holy.
4. Seeing the water basin round the foot of the bilva tree full of water, Shiva becomes greatly pleased.
5. The man who worships the root of a bilva tree offering scents and flowers attains the region of Shiva his happiness increases, his family flourishes.
6. He who places a row of lighted lamps at the root of bilva tree with reverence becomes endowed with the knowledge of truth and merges into Shiva.
7. He who worships the bilva tree abounding in fresh tender sprouts becomes free from sins.
8. If a man piously feeds a devotee of Shiva at the root of a bilva tree he reaps the fruit thereof, ten million times more than in the usual course.
9. He who makes a gift of rice cooked in milk and ghee to a devotee of Shiva at the root of a bilva tree will never become poor.'

Way of observing Shivaratri

Getting up early in the morning one meditates on the Infinitely Auspicious, ornate with thousands of splendid garlands, Who is in the form of the holy symbol of Shiva (Maha Lingam). Bathing and staying clean the worship of Lord Shiva in the form of Shiva Lingam is done in the four quarters of the night (four equal time intervals of the night).

The lingam worship is explicitly mentioned for this Vratam as this is the time the God out of Its grace for the benefit of pashus appeared in a formless-form that is a symbol (lingam) from Its true nature of formlessness.)

Rituals of Maha Shivratri

Tripundra refers to the three horizontal stripes of holy ash applied to the forehead by worshippers of Lord Shiva. These stripes symbolize spiritual knowledge, purity and penance (spiritual practice of Yoga), so also they represent the three eyes of Lord Shiva.

Wearing a rosary made from the rudraksha seed of the rudraksha tree (said to have sprung from the tears of Lord Shiva) when worshipping Lord Shiva is ideal. A rudraksha seed is a mahogany-like color, sometimes black, and sometimes may have traces of sacred sandalwood powder, turmeric, kumkum, or holy ash if the rosary was used in worship ceremonies or anointed.

On Shivaratri, only cold water and bael leaves are offered to the Lingam. Other traditional offerings, such as bathing Him in milk and Panchamruta (milk, curd, ghee, sugar and honey (symbols of sustenance) one after the other respectively, or anointing it with vermilion (kumkum) or white consecrated rice (Akshata) (symbols of fertility, or creation), are done on this day, when Lord Shiva is worshipped as the deity of dissolution.

Chanting the Rudram is considered very auspicious.

Other Traditional Worship of Lord Shiva

Jyotirlinga

The twelve Jyotirlingas (lingams of light) are sacred shrines of Lord Shiva, and centres for his worship. They are known as Swayambhus, meaning the lingams sprung up by themselves at these places and temples were built there afterwards.

Temples are listed in the India tourist guides.

Mahashivaratri in Southern India

Mahashivaratri is celebrated widely in the temples all over Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Shiva is considered the Adi (first) Guru from whom the yogic tradition originates. According to tradition, the planetary positions on this night are such that there is a powerful natural upsurge of energy in the human system. It is said to be beneficial for one's physical and spiritual wellbeing to stay awake and aware throughout the night. On this day, artists from various fields such as music and dance perform the whole night.

Thrikkuratti Mahadeva Temple is one among 108 Sivalayas built by Lord Parasurama, situated in Mannar, also known as The Bell Metal Town, a major business town mid-way between Mavelikara and Tiruvalla, in Alappuzha District of Kerala state, India, on State Highway 6 (Kayamkulam – Thiruvalla Road). It is believed that the mammoth Thrikkuratti Mahadeva temple compound wall was built by Bhootangal of Lord Paramasiva in one night.

The unique festivities of Thrikkuratti temple (Sahasra Kalasam, Maikatti Puja and Sivarathri Nritham) attracts lots of pilgrims. The antique wooden carving of Thrikkuratti Mahadeva temple's Sricovil came to lime light recently through visual media, attracting lots of art lovers including foreigners. At a special Nada (gate) on the east side of the Thrikkuratti temple compound wall, other religious members, in particular, Muslims, present offerings on a daily basis. This practice is believed to be centuries old and this is considered to be a true embodiment of religious harmony. The Thrikkuratti Mahasivarathri Festival, only next to Aluva Sivarathri in terms of mass congregation, attracts thousands of devotees. The West Nada (Parvathi) will

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be open for ten minutes during Sivarathri Nritham on Sivarathri day only. All other days during the year it remains closed. The Srikovil of Thrikkuratti Mahavishnu temple is built based on North Indian architecture.

The Mahasivrathri festival at Thrikkuratti Mahadeva temple is different from other temples due to its unique festivities. Though the spectacular and colourful cultural programs are performed by renowned artists during these eleven days, the main emphasis is for Sahasrakalasabishekam, Sivarathri Nrutham, and Mahasivarathri Procession.

Sahasrakalasabishekam

This is a very special and rare puja conducted during 10 days of Mahasivarathri festival. It is well known that Lord Siva is abhishekapriya (lover of ablutions). Lord Parasurama and Kroshta Muni, during their worship of the Lord here, are believed to have bathed the deity with Sahasrakalasam or a thousand pots of holy water according to Vedic rites. Now during Mahasivarathri festival days the Head Priest (Thanthri) and his team perform this puja. It is a ten day function, each day an offering of 101 Kalasam or pots of holy water (100 being made of silver, while one is made of gold), surcharged with mantras recited by learned Brahmins seated on the Mukhamantapam. These are emptied on the deity, the golden pot Brahmakalasam being the last one.

A magnificent light is the indication or identity of Lord Shiva and the Shiva Lingam is considered to be the symbol of it. Hence, the formal worship on Maha Shivaratri consists of bathing the Shiva Lingam. Lord Shiva is said to be burning with the fire of austerity and so only those items are offered to Him that have a cooling effect. A cool water bath is believed to propitiate Him best. There is a belief among devotees that participation in Sahasrakalam and offering holy worship materials, will lead to blessings with prosperity and peaceful life. Hundreds of devotees thronging the shrine with chants of 'Namah Shivaya', 'Hara hara Mahadeva', and 'Sambho Mahadeva'. This year Mahasivarathiri is observed on 2nd March 2011 in all of South India's temples.

Sivarathri Nrutham Sivarathri Nrutham at Thrikkuratti temple, according to religious scholars, resembles the cosmic dance of Shiva, called 'Anandatandava,' meaning, 'the Dance of Bliss' symbolizing the cosmic cycles of creation and destruction, as well as the daily rhythm of birth and

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death. The dance is a pictorial allegory of the five principle manifestations of eternal energy - creation, destruction, preservation, salvation, and illusion.

The Priest keeps sheeveli vigraha (idol) fixed on decorated frame on his head. He makes seven rounds on Pradakshina Vazhi (holy walkway made of granite around Sanctum Santorum). When the fifth round is reached at the west nada (Parvathi nada), the door opens for just 10 minutes. This is an annual ceremony. Thousands of Pilgims rush to have a glance of this auspicious moment. At this time all the pradakshina vazhi will be lit with camphor and brass temple lamps by thousands of devotees who stay awake through the night while chanting "Nama Sivaya", "Hara Hara Mahadeva" and "Sambho Mahadeva". Older devotees sing "Hara sankara siva sankara duritham kala sivane". In this enlightened serene mood, the Priest performs Nrutham and runs the pradakshina vazhi towards the east nada. During the next two rounds he accepts "Valiya kanikka". The Sivarathri Nrutham is followed by the well-known magnificent display of fireworks.

Mahasivarathri Procession

On Sivarathri day evening a grand procession starts from Kadapra Kainikkara Temple. It includes, several decorated floats, Kaavadi Aaatam, Mayilattom, Amman Kudom, Thaiyyam, Vela Kali, Kuthiyotta Chuvadu, richly caparisoned elephants and folk art forms etc. attracts thousands of devotees and tourists. When the main procession reaches Market Junction, other mini processions from Kurattikkadu Mutharamman Temple, Kurattissery Kannamkavil Mutharamman Temple, Thrippavoor Mahavishnu Temple, Vishavarsherrickara Subrahmanya Swami temple and Alumoodu Sivaparvathy Temple joins and makes the procession quite livening. The marvellous as well as magical effect of the Sinakari melam and Panchavadyam, a combination of five percussion and wind instruments is to be felt and enjoyed. Among the varieties of festivals celebrated in Kerala, Thrikkuratti Sivarathri Procession is one of the most thunderous, spectacular and dazzling. It is an expression of popular fascination for sound and colour, and because of the pageantry, it appeals to all people including foreigners. Once the procession reaches the temple, Deeparadhana is followed by colourful display of fireworks.

Padanilam Parabrahma Temple

SivarathriPadanilam is a small town situated about 10 mi (16 km) from Mavelikkara and 9 mi (14 km) from Adoor, in the Alappuzha district of

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Kerala. The Padanilam Temple[4] is located in the heart of Padanilam. The distinguishing characteristic of the temple is that it has no compound walls and roof. The presiding deity of the temple is lord Parabrahma. This is one of the few temples in Kerala where a large number of festivals are being conducted. Among its festivals, Sivarathri is celebrated in a spectacular manner. Besides day to day rituals, there is a special kavadiyattam and Kettulsavam. The programs last until midnight of Sivarathri day. The Onattukara region, spread over Kayamkulam and Mavelikara, has come alive with the Sivarathri festival.

Steeped in history, legends and endearing tales of religious harmony, the temple saw thousands flocking to its premises to have a glimpse of the gigantic, colorful temple cars bearing equally huge effigies of bullock. Seventeen huge bullocks were brought to the 'padanilam' in energetic processions that were accompanied by thumping music and dancing devotees. Brought from the 13 provinces of Palamel, Edappon, Muthukatukara, Naduvilemuri, Thathammuna, Nedukulanjimuri, Ulavakad, Kidangayam, Pazhanjikonam, Pulimel, Edakunnam, Pattoor and Puthupallikunnam, the ritual of the bullocks paying homage to the temple deity is part of what is said to be one of the biggest such festivals in the state.