



आराधना

A Publication of the Hindu Society of Greater Cincinnati

Devdham of North America

Website: www.cincinnati temple.com
Phone: 528-3714
Email: hindusociety@fuse.net

Magh/Phagun,
Vikram Samvat, 2063;
February 2007

Aradhana

Happy Mahashivratri



Shiva : Lord of Destruction

Sunder Kand Path is held on 3rd Sunday of the month at 10:30 A.M.
In month of Feb. there is a change details inside.

Shri Ganesh Atharvshirsha Path is held on every 4th Sunday of the month.

Balaji Abhishekam is held on every 4th Saturday of the month from 10:30AM.

Murugan Abhishekam Please see details inside.

Shiv Mahima Stotra is held on every Monday evening at 7:00 pm.

Shri Hanuman Chalisa is held on every Tuesday evening at 7:00 pm.

Vishnu Sahasranama Prayana is held on every Thursday at 7:00 pm.

Satya Narayan Puja will be held every month on Purnima (Full Moon-Day).

Navgrah Puja every first Saturday of a month at 4:30 P.M.

The Significance of Mahashivratri

The festival of Mahashivratri (literally means the 'Grand Night dedicated for the worship of Lord Shiva'). is looked upon with greatest reverence & respect by the devotees of Lord Shiva. This festival is celebrated every year on the 13/14th day in the Krishna Paksha (waning moon fortnight, just before the new moon) of the month of Phalgun. As per the English calendar this is somewhere around Feb or March.

This day and more so the night is dedicated by the devotees of Lord Shiva for his worship, practice of various austerities & meditation. All the Shiva Temples are fully decorated and there are hordes of devotees queuing up to get darshan of Lord & offer their obeisance's at the feet of Lord Shiva on this special day.

There are several stories which are associated with this special grand night of Lord Shiva:

1. Samudra Manthan Story:

During Samudra Manthan by the gods and demons, a highly toxic poison came out of the ocean. As per the advice of Lord Vishnu, gods approached Lord Shiva and prayed him to protect life by consuming this poison. Pleased with their prayers, out of compassion for living beings, Lord Shiva drank this poison and held it in his throat by binding it with a snake. The throat became blue due to the poison (Thus Lord Shiva is also known as Neelakantha) and Shiva remained unharmed. The wise men advised gods to keep Lord Shiva awake during the night. To keep him awake, the gods took turn performing various dances and playing music. A vigil was thus kept by the gods in contemplation of Shiva. As the day broke out, Shiva, pleased with their devotion blessed them all, and also said that whosoever worshipped & contemplated on him on this day shall be blessed with the fulfillment of his or her wishes. Since then, on this day and night - devotees fast, keep vigil, sing glories of Lord and meditate.

2. Manifested as a Jyotirlinga on this day:

On this day manifested the great & also the first ever effulgent (Jyotirmaya) form (Anala-skanda or a pillar of fire) of Lord Shiva in front of Lord Vishnu & Brahmaji.

The story goes that once both Vishnuji & Brahmaji, got infected by ego. The result was a clash between both these gods. In order to show their respective superiority they decided to fight it out. Lord Shiva decided to intervene so as to make them realise that there is something more to

Continue on Page: 11

Note: If you or someone you know, is not receiving ARADHANA, or if you need a change in address, please contact Mr. Mohan Chopra at 859-331-2416

Deadline for submission of articles and advertisements for the next issue is February 10th, 2007

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS AT THE TEMPLE

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2007

President:
Raj Bodalia 583-0184
V. President:
Rameshwar Dayal 489-5720
Secretary:
Siva Shivaganesan
Treasurer:
Amar Sharma 742-5725

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS:

Membership & Fundraising:

Anil Jindal 271-7171

Communications:

Meena Mehta : 574-6763
Aashish Shah: 942-8264

Puja Committee

Babba Chaudhary 984-6074

Property Management & Maintenance:

Prem Garg 232-5333

Cultural Activities:

Jyoti Desai 745-0876

Religious Education & Youth Activities:

Nandini Kallapuri

Long Range Planning:

Jitu Patel 459-8900

Youth Member:

Surabhi Sharma 807-5081

Priests:

Acharya Kailash Sharma 770-0705

Sri Debnath Sivachar 528-4831

Sri V. Thirumalachari 528-3957

Attorney:

Aronoff, Rosen & Hunt 241-0400

Temple Mgr.:

Laxmi Srivastava 474-0533

Accountant: Open

Editor: Meena Mehta 574-6763

email: minaash@hotmail.com

Sanskrit & Hindi Classes In The Temple

Every Friday - 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

If you need help to read GEETA or any of your favorite stotra .

Please Call. Aachary Kailash Sharma

Home 770-0705

Temple 528-3714

Email- kailashsharma@netzero.com

RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

Sundays 12:15 - 12:45 PM

First Sunday : Upanishads
Second Sunday : Children Program
Third Sunday : Sunder Kand Path
Fourth Sunday : Shri Ganesh
Fifth Sunday : Atharvshirsha Path
(Please Suggest)

Members of the community are invited to speak on topics related to Hindu religion, Philosophy, culture, reformation, Gurus, self-preservation, etc. If you would like to talk or like to suggest someone who may be interested, please call Babba Chaudhary at 513-984-6074

SPONSORS FOR SUNDAY PUJA

Devotees are requested to sit-in Sunday Pujas as well as bring Prasad and Lunch. You may wish to use this occasion to celebrate important events such as wedding anniversaries, birthdays, ishta devata puja, graduation, and other memorable days. Events can be hosted by individuals, families, groups of families or organizations. Please reserve your Sunday of choice ASAP by putting your name and phone-no in the calendar at the temple and calling Babba Chaudhary at (513) 984-6074

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

Monday - Friday : 9:00AM-12:00 Noon
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Saturday, Sunday
& US Holidays 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM

SPECIAL PROGRAM ON WEEKENDS

9:15 - 9:30 A.M. Suprabhatam
9:30 - 11:00 A.M. Daily puja of Temple Deity
11:00 - 11:30 A.M. Sponsored Puja

Important Notice:

Your Temple needs

1. Sponsors for flower \$50/week
2. Sponsors for Sunday puja
3. Your temple needs your support

**Please Donate Generously
for your Temple**

**Special Remembrances to our
Beloved Panditji B.C.Sharma on**

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2007 POOJA COMMITTEE &

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

MEMBERS

To participate in/ sponsor please contact a Pooja Committee chairperson & member.

Babba Chaudhary: 984-6074

K.C. Sharma(Priest) 528-4921

Sri. Debnath Sivachar(Priest) 528-4831

Sri. V. Thirumalachari (Priest) 523-3714

Seeking for new Puja Committee Members so
Please volunteer and
call Babba Chaudhary .

1. **Archana** performed during temple hours by sponsorship. No Archana on Sundays between 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
2. **Outside pujas** and other religious services will be conducted by appointment only. To **schedule** please contact Puja Committee chairperson at least one week in advance.
3. If you would like to bring **food and prasad** in the temple, Please contact Puja Committee chairperson or Meena Sondhi at 232-6454
4. Cancellations of puja should be done 3 days in advance or else the full fee for the puja will be charged

Temple Manager's Committees

Laxmi S. Srivastava- Temple Manager 474-0533

1. Office Manager
Mr. Mohan Chopra

2. I/C Swami Lectures
Vinay Kumar
Laxmi S. Srivastava
Devdas Mukerjee

3. Temple Data Base
Nandkumar Khemchandani
Mohan Chopra
Laxmi S. Srivastava

4. Anniversary & Birthday Data
Raj & Shakuntla Agarwal

5. E-mail Data
Pradeep Goyal
Nandkumar Khemchandani

6. Membership & Gift Shop
Yashpal Agarwal
A.C. Sekhar
Meena Sondhi

7. Computer Technical Support
Sreedhar Suvarana

8. Financial Data

Ramesh Sondhi
Raj Bodalia
Mohan Chopra
Laxmi S. Srivastava

9. I/C Temple Web site

Bharat Vala
Anand Narayana
Khush Karamchandani
Laxmi S. Srivastava

10. Consultants

V. Rao Bhamidipati
Prem Garg
Anil Jindal

11. I/C Temple Calendar K.C. Sharma (Priest)

Meena Mehta
Ashwin Mehta
Janak Dave

12. I/C Volunteer Services

Vijay Kumar
Laxmi S. Srivastava

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Important Events

February 2007

02/01/07	Thurs.	Magh Shukla 14
02/02/07	Fri.	Satya Narayan Pooja (Full Moon) Purnima
02/03/07	Sat.	Magh/Phalgun Krishna 1
02/10/07	Sat.	Shri Murugan Pooja
02/13/07	Tue.	Vijaya Ekadashi
02/15/07	Thurs.	Pradosh
02/16/07	Fri.	Mahashivratri Pooja Celebration
02/24/07	Sat.	Holashtak Begins

Puja Committee Announcement:

A group of dedicated devotees for each deity are nominated to

help puja committee to coordinate and celebrate different

puja activities. We need members for 2007 committee so, please call
Baba Chaudhury.

If you have any question or suggestion about temple activities, please
call Babba Chaudhury at 984-6074

To schedule a Puja or to rent a temple hall (lower level)
please contact Puja Committee Chairperson Babba Chaudhury
at 984-6074

ANNOUNCEMENT

Acharya Kailash and Jyoti Sharma got the blessing
from All Mighty God in form of a Baby Girl name,
SHRIYA on January 6th 2007.



RATES FOR PUJA & PRIEST SERVICES

SERVICE	IN	OUTSIDE
	TEMPLE	TEMPLE
Abhishekam (All Deities)	\$101.00	---
Aksharabhyas	\$51.00	\$101.00
Anna-Prashanam	\$51.00	\$101.00
Ashtotttharam (108) Archana	\$11.00	---
AyushyaHomam/B'day Celebration	\$51.00	\$101.00
Ground Breaking Ceremony	---	\$101.00
Griha Pravesha	---	\$101.00
Kalayana Uthsava (Lord Ram/ Sita)	\$101.00	- -
Kesh Khandan (Churakaran)	\$51.00	\$101.00
Nam-Karan	\$51.00	\$101.00
Navagraha Puja	\$51.00	\$101.00
Nischitartham (Engagement)	\$101.00	\$151.00
Nitya (1 Day) Kainkaryam (Seva)	\$101.00	---
Poolangi Seva (With Flowers)- (Only During Off Winter Season)	\$101.00	---
Sahasranama (1008) Archana	\$51.00	---
Sathyanarayana Puja	\$51.00	\$101.00
Seemantham	\$51.00	\$101.00
Devi Jagaran	\$75.00	\$101.00
Akhand Ramayan Paath	---	\$101.00
Shashti Poorthi (60th B'day Celeb.)	\$71.00	\$101.00
Anniversary celebration	\$101.00	\$151.00
Suprabhat Seva	\$21.00	---
Unjal (Swing) Seva	\$31.00	---
Upakarma (thread changing)	\$21.00	---
Upanayam/Brahmopadesham/ Thread Ceremony	\$151.00	\$251.00
Vahan Pooja	\$31.00	---
Yearly Shradham (Barkhi)	\$51.00	\$101.00
Wedding	\$251.00	\$351.00

SPECIAL PUJA RATE

1. Rates for Mata Ki Chauki performed at another temple will be 15% of the money collected at the temple or a minimum of \$ 501.00.
2. Pujas performed by priests outside the temple will be rated according to the number of pujas performed.

Rates are subject to change without notice. Rates for pujas not on the list and requiring less than 4 hours of priest's time will normally be \$51 if performed inside the temple and \$101 if performed outside of temple (e.g. at home). Rates of Pujas out of Greater Cincinnati will be \$100.00 more than the rates of outside puja within greater Cincinnati area.

Temple Rental: Lower Floor Only

	Full day	1/2 day
M-Th. (except holidays)	\$301	\$151
Fri., Sat & Holidays	\$501	\$351
<u>Sunday after 3PM only</u>		\$351

Note: For half day select one of the two.

8:00 AM - 2 PM **OR** 4PM - 11 PM

Temple rental applies to all private reservations for those events/pujas that are performed by private parties and not announced in the temple.

Security/ Cleaning deposit: \$151 required. This deposit will be forfeited if the basement hall bathrooms and kitchen area are not cleaned by the party renting the place.

NOTE: To schedule a Puja or to rent a temple hall (lower level) please contact puja Committee chairperson only.

Events at the Temple

Navgrah Puja

Every first Saturday of the Month
4 P.M. to 5:30 P.M.
Sponsors needed for Puja \$51.00
For Details please call Baba Chaudhury 984-6074, Devnathanji
528-4831, or Temple priest at 528-3714

Murugan Puja

Monthly Abhishekham 2nd Sat. 4.30 P.M. to 7.30 P.M.
Sponsors are needed for poojas (\$21) & abhishekams (\$101).
Please contact Sri Debnath Sivachar (528-4831)

Satya Narayan Puja

On Purnima (full moon day) at 6:30 P.M.
To sponsor puja, please call any of the following:
Babba Chaudhury 232-2343
Temple priests 528-3714
Sponsorship \$ 51.00

Sundar Kand Path

This month it starts at 9:30 A.M.
Aarti at 12:00 noon followed by lunch
For details, please call Babba Chaudhury at
984-6074 or the Priests at 528-3714

Shri Ganesh Puja & Shri Ganesh Atharvshirsha Path

Every 4th Sunday of the month

This puja is dedicated to each month's Sankashti Chaturthi to Lord Ganesh.

ABHISHEKAM/KALYANOTSAVAM FOR LORD SRI VENKATESWARA

On 4th Saturday of each month at 10:30 A.M. To sponsor please call any of the following:

Andn Kondu	481-4119
Bhavani Megeda	779-4582
Sudha Avasarala	573-6010
Padma Veluri	859-344-9211
Sri Debnath Sivachar	528-4831

CHESS-Children's Hindu Education And SatSang

Classes are held every Sunday from 11:00 AM at the Temple on Lower Level. Everyone should come by 10:50 A.M. The class starts at 11:00 A.M.

Schedule:

11:00 - 11:05 : Starting Prarthana (5min.)
11:05 - 11:15 : Surya Namaskar (10 min.)
11:15 - 11:30 : 2 shlokas with meaning (15 min.)
Before starting shlokas 1 min. meditation.
11:30 - 11:45 : Games (15 min.)
11:45 - 12:15 : Story and Snack time (30 min.)

Gita class is on 4th Sunday of each month.

Please enroll your child now for the year 2007. To get application form and general instruction call Nanddini Kallapur, Chairperson.

Vishnu Sahasranama Parayana

Vishnu Sahasranama Parayana (chanting) will now take place every Thursday at 7 pm in the temple. Please join us for the chanting.

For more information, please contact the priests at 528-3714

CALENDAR 2007

The New Calendar for the year 2007 is being put together by our team and it will be mailed out soon to HSGC patrons. Theme for this Calendar is "NavDurga Shakti and Her 9 Forms." Look forward to receive it in your mail around New Year's time.

Meena Mehta c.c.c.

Please Note:

February Sunderkand will be on second Sunday Feb 11th instead of third Sunday.

Upcoming Events

Shri Satya Narayan Puja

Friday , Feb. 2nd 2007 6:30 pm

Need Sponsors for Puja.

Sponsorship \$51.00

For details please call Bobba Choudhary (513) 984-6074 or

Temple 513-528-3714

MAHA SHIVARATRI PUJA CELEBRATION

On

Friday Feb. 16th, 2007 6:30 pm to 4 am (All Night)

Puja Program

First Puja

6:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Shivabhishek*

&

Puja Thali offering (Archana)**

7: 30 to 8:30

Shiv Mahimnah Path,

Bahjans & Children program

8:30 pm

Aarti Followed by Prasad (Dinner)

(Bhajans & Chanting will be continue up to next puja)

Second Puja

9:30pm to 10:30pm

Shivabhishek *

10:30pm to 11:30pm

Shiva Shahashranama Path,

Shiv Mahimnah Path & Bhajans

11:30pm

Aarti & Prasad

Third Puja

12:30am To 1:30 am

Shivabhishek *

1:30am to 2:00 am

Shiv Mahimnah Path Arti & Prasad

Fourth Puja

2:30am to 3:30am

Shivabhishek *

3:30am to 4:00am

Shiva Mahimnah Path, Arti & Prasad

We Need sponsors for each Abhishek Sponsorship

* Shivabhishek. \$101.00

** Puja Thali \$21.00 with Ganga Jal & Milk

Please sponsor one of the Abhishek for Lord Shiva on this auspicious day. **We also request devotees to bring very small amount of milk for offering due to big collection of milk**, which we cannot offer on same night. Please donate money or dry nuts instead of bringing milk. Thanks

For Details Please call Shri Janak Dave 859-371-9645, Shri Babba Choudhary (513) 984-6074.or Temple Priests 513-528-3714.

Some Important Dates:

Maha Shivratri Celebration	Feb. 16th
Akhand Ramayan Path	March 24th
Durga Ashtami Pooja	March 26th
Mahavir Jayanti Celebration	March 8th
Tamil New Year Celebration	April 15th
Shri Mahavir Jayanti Celebration	April 8th
Shri Vallabhacharya Jayanti Celebration	April 22nd
Temple's 10th Anniversary Celebration	May 20th
Graduation Havan	June 10th
Rath Yatra Celebration	July 22nd
Nand Mahotsava Celebration	Sept. 9th

More information and details to follow

Holika Dahan

(Burning of Holi fire)

On

March 3rd Saturday 2007

7:30pm

For details please call Babba Choudhary (513) 984-6074 or Temple 513-528-3714.

Holi Celebration

&

Cultural Program.

Will be on March 10th, 2007.

There will be cultural program. We are inviting participation in the program. First 20 participants by 15th of February will be accepted. Please email to jyotidesai1@yahoo.com

Thought of a Month

"Enjoy your life today b'coz yesterday had gone and

Tomorrow may never come..."

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Special Tribute To Our Beloved

Panditji Sri. B.C. Sharma



Pundit Shri Bhagwati Charan Sharma of Cincinnati, Ohio, passed away of heart failure at Bethesda North Hospital on December 24, 2006, at the age of 62.

Shri B.C. Sharma, known to his parishioners as "Punditji," was the beloved head priest of the Hindu Temple of Greater Cincinnati. Over the last eighteen years, he led the Hindu community, performing weekly services, weddings and many other auspicious ceremonies and celebrations. Punditji was born into a highly respected and educated family on January 23, 1944, in Hoshiarpur, Punjab, India. He was one of four children born to Shrimati Tarawati Sharma and the late Shri Balak Ram Sharma. He received his education in Hinduism and Sanskrit from his grandfather, the late Shri Lalji Ramji Shastri, a well-renowned Sanskrit scholar, who established the Sanatan Dharam Sanskrit Institute in 1890. It was at that institution where Pundit B.C. Sharma was a student, graduate and teacher.

From an early age, Punditji took an interest in religious rituals, scriptures and studies. His teaching career began in 1964 and continued for 20 years at Sanatan Dharam High School, where he rose to the position of Vice-Principal. During this time, he also obtained three Masters of Arts degrees in Hindi, Sanskrit and History. Aside from academics, he was an accomplished public speaker, singer and prolific writer. He was an active member of many religious organizations, and this sense of community spirit continued even after he emigrated abroad.

After serving as a priest for one year in London, England, he traveled to Sacramento, California to continue his religious work. In 1988, he came to Cincinnati to serve as head priest for a small, but growing, Indian community. With the help of his family and friends, and strong support of the community, he spread the light of Hinduism throughout Cincinnati. With his strong interest in academics, he also worked hard to complete his masters in education at Xavier University in Cincinnati. One of his primary achievements was helping to foster the growth and development of a larger new temple serving the religious needs of the growing Hindu community of southwestern Ohio. This temple will stand as an enduring memory of his devotion to our Hindu community.

Punditji's unique ability to explain and attract others allowed him to cross religious boundaries and teach Hinduism to everyone irrespective of religious background. He was a frequent speaker at various churches, universities and public gatherings. It was for this legacy of service that he was honored with the Kentucky Colonel award. He was a very honest, generous, confident yet humble individual. His selfless dedication and devotion to the entire Greater Cincinnati area was truly exemplary, and his loss would be felt by everyone.

Punditji leaves behind a very loving and supportive family, including his mother, Shrimati Tarawati Sharma; wife, Sudesh Sharma; son and daughter-in-law Pankaj and Kanan Sharma; daughter and son-in-law Lalita and Arsh Duggal, along with granddaughters Mohini and Neha; daughter and son-in-law Gopika and Robert Rouse, along with granddaughter Emma; and daughter Geetika Sharma. He also leaves behind his brothers Umesh and Shiv Charan Sharma and their families; sister and brother-in-law Chandra Kanta and Ravindra Nath Pathak and their family; and finally all the many lives he has touched and blessed. May Lord bless his Soul.....

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL ON THIS HAPPY OCCASION &
BRING HAPPINESS, LONG LIFE and PROSPERITY In Year
2007

Marriage Anniversaries (February)*

Mr. & Mrs. Jagdish & Kiran Bhatia
Mr. & Mrs. Rishi & Shikha Bhatnagar
Mr. & Mrs. Rajesh & Renu Gulati
Mr. & Mrs. Oormila & Gopi Lovilam
Mr. & Mrs. Shiva & Sailaja Kumar
Mr. & Mrs. Premanand & Suneethi Nayak
Mr. & Mrs. Sathya & Srilakshmi
Mr. & Mrs. Herbinder & Harpreet Pordal
Mr. & Mrs. Kavi & Rekha Sanker
Mr. & Mrs. Sudesh & Bhagwati Rani
Mr. & Mrs. Kailash & Jyoti Sharma
Mr. & Mrs. Amit & Juhi Shukla
Mr. & Mrs. Raman & Juhi Shukla
Mr. & Mrs. Sunil & Kalpana Srivastava
Mr. & Mrs. Som & Nalini Tandon
Mr. & Mrs. Devanshu & Toral Trivedi
Mr. & Mrs. Vijay & Savita Upadhyaya
Mr. & Mrs. Vardhan & Rupal Upadhyaya
Mr. & Mrs. Srinivasan & Savitha Venkataramani



Birthday Anniversaries (February)**

Mr. Pradeep Ambe	Mr. N Balasubramaniam
Mr. Arun Bhardwaj	Mr. Rakesh Bhatara
Ms. Neha Bhoomready	Ms. Kristina Bodalia
Mr. Aditya Chaudhury	Ms. Shreya Chopra
Mr. Rahul Choubey	Ms. Ashaali Divekar
Mr. Ajit Dixit	Ms. Lalita Duggal
Ms. Ruhi Gulati	Ms. Manju Gupta
Mr. Ram Jindal	Ms. Anshika Khare
Mr. Arya Kode	Felicia Kruse
Ms. Rita Kumar	Ms. Leenata Maddiwar
Mr. Sahik Naik	Mr. Kiran Nanavati
Mr. Amrit Narayan	Mr. Tarakad Natarajan T.V.N
Ms. Madhu Nawani	Ms. Mangala Nemade
Mr. Suresh Padya	Mr. Sanjeev Pathak
Mr. Sojanya Prasad	Mr. Sathvik Reddy
Mr. Sidharth Sharma	Mr. Sudesh Sharma
Ms. Surbhi Sharma	Mr. Amit Shukla
Ms. Jaya Srinivasan	Ms. Vinita Srivastava
Mr. Raghuram Tadepalli	Mr. P Vishwanathan

Wishing you all ,
"Many many Happy returns of the Day"

*(celebrated on the first Sunday of each month)

** (celebrated on second Sunday of each month in temple)

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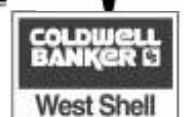


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life than the powers of an embodied beings. He manifested in the form of a huge pillar of fire (Anala-skanda) whose beginning and end could not be seen. Vishnuji & Brahmaji decided to check what this strange thing was. While Vishnuji, in the form of varaha (boar) went down towards patal-loka to see the end of this pillar, Brahmaji sitting on his swan went up. Even after years of travel they could not see the beginning or the end of this manifestation. Brahmaji saw a leaf falling off, and thought it fell down from the top of pillar of fire, and returned satisfied that he had seen the starting point. They came back, while Lord Vishnu accepted that he could not see the end, Brahmaji said that he had seen, which was a lie. Lord Shiva cursed Brahmaji that no will ever worship him. Then he too surrendered. This manifestation of Lord Shiva in the form of the first effulgent linga was on this special day of Mahashivratri, and thus all devotees pray to the effulgent linga (jyotirlinga) of Lord Shiva.

3. Day of Reunion of Shiva & Parvati:

King Daksha, opposed Sati's marriage with Shiva. At a yagna (holy sacrifice) the king ignored Shiva's presence and thereby insulted the latter publicly. Sati was so angered by this that she jumped into the sacrificial fire and ended her life. Lord Shiva unleashed his fury at the death of his wife by performing the violent dance, Tandava. He wiped out Daksha's kingdom, undertook rigorous penance and retired to the Himalayas. The Gods, who feared that the severity of Shiva's penance might bring an end to the world, revived Sati in the new avatar of Parvati. Shiva-Parvati married and this reunion is celebrated on Maha Shivaratri.

4. Story of Chitrabhanu:

In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, Bhishma, whilst resting on the bed of arrows and discoursing on Dharma, refers to the observance of Maha Shivaratri by King Chitrabhanu. The story goes as follows.

Once upon a time King Chitrabhanu of the Ikshvaku dynasty, who ruled over the whole of Jambudvipa, was observing a fast with his wife, it being the day of Mahashivratri. The sage Ashtavakra came on a visit to the court of the king.

The sage asked, "O king! why are you observing a fast today?"

King Chitrabhanu explained why. He had the gift of remembering the incidents of his previous birth. The king said to the sage: "In my past birth I was a hunter in Varanasi. My name was Suswara. My livelihood was to kill and sell birds and animals. One day I was roaming the forests in search of animals. I was overtaken by the darkness of night. Unable to return home, I climbed a tree for shelter. It happened to be a bel tree. I had shot a deer that day but I had no time to take it home. I bundled it up and tied it to a branch on the tree. As I was tormented by hunger and thirst, I kept awake throughout the night. I shed profuse tears when I thought of my poor wife and children who were starving and anxiously awaiting my return. To pass away the time that night I engaged myself in plucking the bel leaves and dropping them down onto the ground.

"The day dawned. I returned home and sold the deer. I bought some food for myself and for my family. I was about to break my fast when a stranger came to me, begging for food. I served him first and then took my food.

"At the time of death, I saw two messengers of Lord Shiva. They were sent down to conduct my soul to the abode of Lord Shiva. I learnt then for the first time of the great merit I had earned by the unconscious worship of Lord Shiva during the night of Shivaratri. They told me that there was a Lingam at the bottom of the tree. The leaves I dropped fell on the Lingam. My tears which I had shed out of pure sorrow for my family fell onto the Lingam and washed it. And I had fasted all day and all night. Thus did I unconsciously worship the Lord.

"I lived in the abode of the Lord and enjoyed divine bliss for long ages. I am now reborn as Chitrabhanu."

5. Story of Lubdhak:

Another legend. There once lived a tribal named Lubdhak, who was a devotee of Shiva. It was his usual practice to go into the forest to collect firewood. One day he wandered deeper than usual and night fell before he could come out. It was the night before the no moon night and the thin crescent moon offered no light. He was not able to find his way in the dark and soon got lost. A hungry tiger smelt him out and with a loud roar made his intentions clear. Lubdhak knew he could not outrun the tiger and so he climbed up a bel tree. In order to keep awake so that he would not fall down in his sleep he began to pluck the leaves from the bel tree and drop them one by one, each time chanting "Om Namah Shivaya", which means I bow down to Shiva. In this manner, he passed the night. Until dawn, he had dropped a thousand bel leaves. When he descended the tree in the morning, he saw a lingam, which he had missed in the dark. Unknowingly he had been dropping leaves on the lingam. This was the 14th night of the waxing moon of the month of Phalgun and came to be celebrated at Mahashivratri.

How to Celebrate?

The devotees of Lord Shiva should preferably do the following things on this day.

1. Observe fast on this day, taking only fruits & milk.
2. Perform elaborate puja of Lord Shiva, and perform Rudrabhisheka. Chant various hymns & bhajan of Lord Shiva.
3. Chant the mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' as many times as you can.
4. Practice Dhyana for longer periods than the usual routine.
5. Remain more introvert on this day contemplating about the truths of life.
6. for darshan of Lord Shiva where he is properly & regularly worshipped.
7. Try to get darshan & satsang of some learned Mahatmas. Offer sewa at Ashrams & Temples.

!!Om Namah Shivay!!

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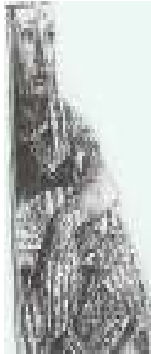
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