

EDUC

Manifestations of Shiva

EXHIBITION GUIDE

March 23–May 30, 1982



Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Frances and Armand Hammer Wing

Shiva, the Great God, is among the most mysterious and complex deities in the religions of mankind. Worshiped by hundreds of millions of Hindus, Shiva has been known in one form or another since the time of the most ancient civilization on the subcontinent of India. There is no one explanation as to who or what Shiva is: he is all-encompassing, the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe. His manifestations are many and often seemingly contradictory. Hymns and legends reveal various aspects of Shiva, as do the images adorning his temples and altars, those carried in religious processions, and those in paintings made for private devotion.

Shiva can be represented either in human form or symbolically, as a **linga**, an erect phallus. In human form he often has multiple arms that, like those of other Hindu gods, indicate his more-than-human power; the objects he holds identify his specific forms according to rules evolved during many centuries of artistic tradition. The works in this exhibition, created over a period of two thousand years, present Shiva in some of his different forms: he is the protector of devotees, the great **ascetic** or yogi, the king of dancers, the destroyer of demons, the benign teacher, the loving husband. In a horrific form, he roams the cremation ground permeated by guilt and bitter anger; in a gentle form, he tenderly holds the goddess on his lap. On a different level, Shiva is understood as the personification of time and death. In his ability to be manifested in forms that are in themselves distinct opposites, Shiva conveys the essential paradoxes of life on earth.

It is through his images that Hindus can most readily approach Shiva. By identifying with him they can find the ultimate freedom, that is, release from the effects of **karma** (which produce an endless cycle of death and rebirth) and attain oneness with the absolute.

This exhibition guide focuses on eight objects which you can view as you proceed from room to room through the exhibition. The objects are arranged in galleries according to the following subjects: lingas and temple sculpture; benign aspects; angry aspects; dynamic aspects; couples; divine attendants; saints and goddesses; and paintings in which one or several of Shiva's manifestations are represented. Marked wall labels indicate the objects discussed in this guide. Those terms in boldface type in the text are defined in the glossary which follows.

Glossary

Ascetic: in the Hindu religion, a holy man who wanders the earth in search of truth, sometimes teaching the life of solitude, contemplation, and self-discipline. Shiva is the greatest of all ascetics.

Bhairava: Shiva as his most fearsome aspect, an angry demon who wanders cremation grounds. Bhairava is a god of dread and terror.

Brahma: Hindu god of creation and sacrifice who is often shown with four heads. He is the father of Shiva.

Ganesa: elephant-headed son of Parvati; god of wisdom and art, remover of obstacles. Worshiped prior to a journey or a new undertaking. His vehicle and animal form is the rat.

Ganga: goddess of the Ganges River.

Karma: according to Hindu beliefs, the full effect of actions performed, in this life or in a former one, that determines one's present and future character and form.

Linga: representation of Shiva as a phallus. The linga can be represented either realistically or abstracted into a geometric form. Most temples dedicated to Shiva have the linga placed in the central chamber. The linga can also be depicted as a pillar, in which case it makes reference to the axis of the world.

Nandin: the bull, Shiva's vehicle. Usually in a separate shrine of a temple dedicated to Shiva, protecting the linga in the innermost chamber.

Nataraja: Shiva as king of dancers who conveys in his dance the concepts of creation, destruction, and liberation from ignorance and earthly constraint.

Parvati: gracious and benevolent wife of Shiva. Her vehicle and animal form is the lion. In her horrific aspects she is Durga or Kali.

Skanda: son of Shiva and Parvati. A warlike god, his vehicle and animal form is the peacock. Also known as Kumara and Karttikeya.

Vishnu: along with Brahma and Shiva, one of the three supreme Hindu gods. Vishnu is the preserver or protector of the cosmic system who works continuously for the world's welfare.

Yoga: a system of spiritual and physical exercises meant to still the mind so that one may attain union with the soul. A yogi is one who practices yoga, often teaching it to others.

Selected Bibliography

In addition to the exhibition catalogue *Manifestations of Shiva*, which is available in the Museum Shop, the following books may be consulted for more information about Indian art:

Dye, Joseph M., *Ways to Shiva: Life and Ritual in Hindu India*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1980.

Kramrisch, Stella, *The Presence of Shiva*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, *Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981 (paperback).

Pal, Pratapaditya, *The Sensuous Immortals: A Selection of Sculptures from the Pan-Asian Collection*, exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977.

Rowland, Benjamin, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist-Hindu-Jain*, rev. ed., Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1977.

1



Five-Faced Linga (Pancamukhalinga)

East Rajasthan

7th century

Sandstone

h: 29½ in. (74.9 cm.)

Collection Mr. and Mrs. James W.

Alsdorf, Chicago

In the center of most temples dedicated to the worship of Shiva is the **linga**, or "sign," of the god. The **linga** is a highly complex symbol. In the form of an erect phallus, it stands for creation as well as for sexual control; it is at the same time the pillar of the universe, or axis of the world, and a column of resplendent light. The simple postlike shape is often augmented sculpturally and symbolically with one, four, or five heads. Probably all four-headed **lingas** are meant to be understood as five-headed. Although only four heads are visible in our example, it is understood to have a fifth head at the top which indicates Shiva's transcendental reality; Shiva is understood to be omnipresent. In fact, each of the heads represents another aspect of Shiva, one of which is the fierce **Bhairava**. The piled-up, matted hair represents Shiva as an **ascetic**. The necklace marks the transition from abstract pillar to human face.

2



Shiva, the Lord Whose Half Is Woman
(Ardhanarishvara)

Chola dynasty, Tiruchchenampundi,
Tamil Nadu

Early 10th century

Granite

h: 51 in. (129.5 cm.)

Government Museum, Madras

Shiva is installed in most Shivaite temples in the abstract form of the **linga**; he is also represented in human form in relief sculptures set into niches in the temples' walls. This granite sculpture from a temple in South India shows the manifestation of Shiva as the Lord Whose Half Is Woman. The god who is both male and female is an expression not of duality but of divinity in which opposites are in union. The right side of the image is male, dressed in a short dhoti, the traditional uncut and unsewn garment worn by men in India from the most ancient times to the present day. The left side, the female half, wears more elaborate garments and jewelry. The figure, fashioned in the elegant curvaceous style of the Chola dynasty, holds a flower and leans against the bull **Nandin**, Shiva's animal vehicle.

3



Bhairava (God of Dread and Terror)

Hoysala dynasty, Krishnarajapet,
Karnataka

First quarter of the 12th century

Chloritic schist

h: 39 in. (99 cm.)

Directorate of Archaeology and
Museums, Government of Karnataka,
Mysore

Here, in an intricate, ornate style, Shiva is shown as **Bhairava**, his most fearful and gruesome aspect. During a dispute, Shiva cut off one of the five heads of his father, the god **Brahma**, committing not only patricide but an act ancient Hindus considered even more reprehensible—the killing of a Brahmin, a member of the priestly caste. As punishment, **Brahma's** skull stuck to Shiva's hand, attesting to his guilt, and he was made to roam as an outcast in cremation grounds for twelve years. At the end of this period he found release when he reached Varanasi (Benares), and the skull fell from his hand. In this manifestation, Shiva has terrible bulging eyes and fangs, serpents wreath his body, a garland of skulls adorns him, and the bowl-shaped skull of **Brahma** sticks to his left

hand. The dog, **Bhairava's** companion in his cremation-ground wanderings, intensifies the macabre mood of this image by sniffing at **Brahma's** severed head. **Bhairava** stands between a pair of pillars surmounted by an intricately decorated arch. He carries a trident and a drum, objects by which Shiva can be recognized. Skeletal figures playing musical instruments accompany him.

4



Shiva, King of Dancers (Nataraja)

Chola dynasty, Tamil Nadu

10th century

Bronze

h: 30 in. (76.2 cm.)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art,

Anonymous Gift

Of all the bronze images of divinities and saints cast during the Chola dynasty, when South Indian sculpture reached its peak of creativity, figures of Shiva as king of dancers, or **Nataraja**, are the most impressive. These images are conceptions of composure and movement, of dynamic grace, of an intricate balance between form and void. The delicate proportions of the figure suggest the ideal male form aspired to by the Hindu yogi—one of liteness and grace, flexibility and suppleness. Shiva's flamelike hair, decorated with leaves and flowers, spreads out behind him like a halo as he dances in ecstatic frenzy within the flaming arc of the universe. His multiple arms are extensions of his energy. The upper two arms are balanced but not symmetrical; the lower arms emphasize the thrust of the effortlessly raised leg and complement the flexed knee of the supporting leg. Underfoot lies a childlike figure, the personification of the demon of ignorance, who is stamped out by the enlightened Shiva. Shiva's dance is one of both creation and destruction. In his upper right hand is a drum, symbolizing the first beat of creation, while the flame in his upper left hand indicates the fire of destruction. The lower right hand is held in a gesture of reassurance and the lower left hand is pointed to his raised foot, indicating that by prostrating oneself at the foot of the god one can find release and salvation. This image conveys Hindu concepts of the cycle of creation and destruction, liberation from the bondage of ignorance, and true knowledge as ultimate freedom.

5



Shiva and Parvati Seated, Embracing
(Uma-Maheshvaramurti)

Late Western Chalukya dynasty,
Balligrama (modern Belgavi), Karnataka
12th century

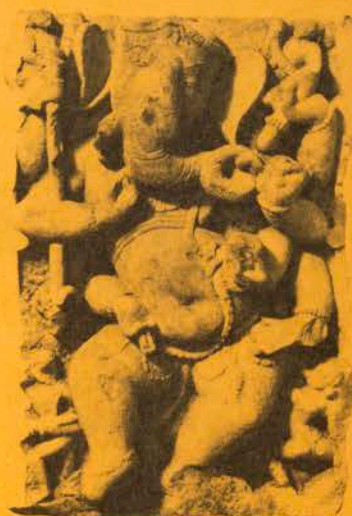
Chloritic schist

h: 55½ in. (141 cm.)

Government Museum, Shimoga,
Karnataka

In one of his most popular and enduring images, Shiva sits or stands in embrace with his wife and consort, the Great Goddess, called Uma or **Parvati**, daughter of the mountain, King Himalaya. In this sculpture, Shiva and **Parvati** sit upon a low throne set against a perforated panel. In a relaxed, casual mood, **Parvati** sits on Shiva's lap as he places his arm lovingly around her shoulders. A multitude of ornaments, scarves, and tassels adorn the divine pair. Shiva's bejeweled mass of matted locks includes a row of skulls, a reference to his fearful aspect as **Bhairava**. He holds an hour-glass-shaped drum. The bull **Nandin**, Shiva's vehicle (his head damaged), rests under his lord. An iguana, an animal associated with **Parvati**, peeks from under the elaborate lotus scroll supporting her foot. Below are figures of the couple's children: elephant-headed **Ganesha** dances on the left and trident-bearing **Skanda** rides his peacock on the right. Emaciated Bhringi, an ardent devotee of Shiva, dances excitedly next to **Nandin**.

6



Ganesha Dancing

Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty, Madhya
Pradesh

Late 9th–early 10th century

Sandstone

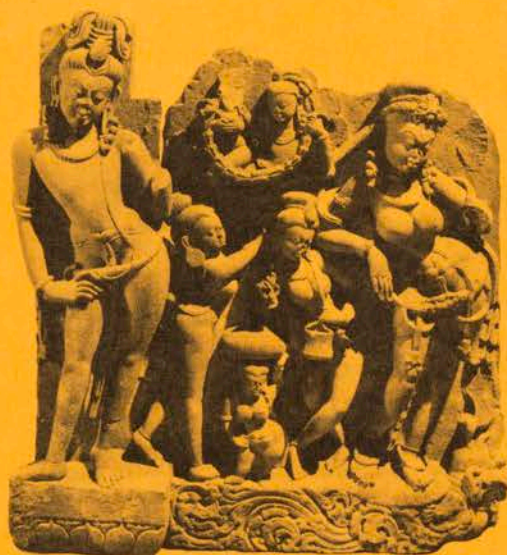
h: 23 in. (58.4 cm.)

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,
Richmond

Ganesha, the god with an elephant's head and a child's body, is one of the most popular and widely worshiped deities in India. His presence is auspicious: he removes obstacles and brings prosperity; however, he also creates obstacles. The story of his unusual form is related in ancient texts. **Parvati** was angry with Shiva for entering her house while she was bathing. One day, as she prepared for her bath, she applied a paste of cream, flour, essences, and oils to her skin, and fashioned a son from this substance as she scraped it off. She named the son **Ganesha** and placed him at the entrance to her chambers, telling him to deny access to all as she bathed. Soon Shiva appeared; not knowing who he was, the newly fashioned guard stopped him. Angered, Shiva cut off **Ganesha's** head. **Parvati** was inconsolable at the loss of her child, so Shiva asked his attendants to bring him the head of the first living being they could find. Coming upon an elephant, they cut off its head and attached it to the child's

body. **Ganesha** is potbellied not just because he loves sweets, but also because he holds the universe within himself. Here, he dances, filling the entire space with his eight arms. Like many other works from central India of this period, this image is carved in bold relief. Below the bright Indian sky, the background would have fallen into deep shadow, creating a contrasting backdrop for the animated, sculpted form.

7



The River Goddess Ganga
Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan
8th century
Sandstone
h: 28 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (71.4 cm.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
from the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek
Collection, Museum Associates Purchase

The Ganges River, or **Ganga**, is holy to Hindu followers; its waters are thought to wash away all earthly sins. The Ganges is frequently personified as a female goddess. According to legend, **Ganga** first flowed in heaven in waves of light. When she fell to earth, Shiva caught her in his long hair, softening the blow. This relief was meant to be part of a doorjamb of a temple entrance. Usually on the opposite jamb in Indian temples was a second river goddess, the personification of the Yamina River. (The mate to this relief is also owned by the Museum and is currently on view on the fourth floor of the Ahmanson Gallery.) By seeing **Ganga** at the entrance to a Hindu temple the worshiper is purified and blessed with a fruitful life. **Ganga** rides on the Makara, a mythical aquatic monster that looks up at her adoringly, its body turning into wavelike scrolls. The goddess is the largest female figure on the relief; she is followed by a retinue of beautiful females, a dvarapala (or door guardian), as well as by a pair of flying celestials holding a flowered garland. The depiction of beautiful females in varying postures shows the ideal image of feminine beauty in Hindu religious art. Round arching hips, domed, full breasts, calm oval face, and the strong curve of the body itself convey a feeling of elegance, ripeness, and sensuality. The carving of this relief is crisp and deep, causing the figures to project in bold relief. Both volume and linear grace create a feeling of exuberance and buoyancy, the linear rhythms like the rippling river surface.

8



The Holy Family in a Cave
Mandi school, painted by Sajnu or a
follower, Western Panjab Hills
c. 1810–20

Opaque watercolor on paper
12 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (30.7 x 26 cm.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

While in some of his images Shiva is interpreted as a cosmic force, in other representations he is pictured on a more familiar level—as a husband and father, and as an **ascetic**, a holy man who wanders about the land in search of truth. This painting shows Shiva with his family in their home in a cave on Mount Kailasa, the highest peak in the Himalayas; it also represents him as an **ascetic**, his beggar's pouch hanging from a branch overhead. Wrapped as a holy man in one animal skin, he sits upon another with his wife, **Parvati**, who is dressed in garments appropriate to a nineteenth-century princess. On her lap the bejeweled **Parvati** holds Shiva's son, the eternal child **Skanda** (also called Karttikeya and Kumara). Behind Shiva is

her elephant-headed son, **Ganesha**. The gods' animal vehicles, the bull Shiva rides upon, **Parvati's** tiger, Kumara's peacock, and Ganesha's rat, complete the domestic setting. Below, crowned gods on the left and a group of holy men and devotees on the right pay homage to Shiva with palms joined, affirming his supremacy. This lyrical scene, painted in an extremely refined and delicate style, is set among stark abstract shapes of the mountain that conform to the schematic way in which rocks have been rendered in Indian art from ancient times.

The text for this guide was adapted from the guide produced for *Manifestations of Shiva* by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Part of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Education Department's program in conjunction with *Manifestations of Shiva*, this guide was made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. *Manifestations of Shiva* was made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a Federal agency; the Atlantic Richfield Foundation; The Pew Memorial Trust; Air-India; and the Indo-U.S. Subcommittee on Education and Culture.

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Cover:
Shiva, King of Dancers (Nataraja)
Chola dynasty, Tamil Nadu
10th century
Bronze
h: 30 in. (76.2 cm.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Anonymous Gift

Manifestations of Shiva

RELATED EVENTS

Except where otherwise noted, all programs are free to members and included in the admission fee for the general public.

Shiva: The Nature and Image of a Universal God, a twelve-minute audio-visual orientation to *Manifestations of Shiva*, is shown continuously in the viewing room at the end of the exhibition.

Docent Gallery Talks: Tuesdays–Sundays at 1 p.m.
Meet at the entrance to the exhibition.

LECTURES

Sundays at 3 p.m. in the Leo S. Bing Theater

- March 21 "The Great Rock-Cut Shiva Temple of Elephanta"
Stella Kramrisch, Curator, Indian Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art
- April 4 "Visions of Terror and Bliss: Shiva in Indian Mythology and Iconology"
Bruce Long, Director, Blaisdell Institute for Advanced Study in World Culture and Religion, Claremont, California
- April 18 "Shiva Transformed: Shaivite Art in Mainland Southeast Asia"
Robert Brown, Assistant Curator, Indian Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
- May 2 "The Path of Love: Shiva Saints of South India"
Vidya Dehejia, Adjunct Associate Professor of Art History, Columbia University, New York
- May 16 "Shiva Smeared with Ashes: The Lord of Yoga and Death"
Gerald Larson, Professor of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

FILMS

Education films about art and life in India will be shown Fridays at 11 a.m. and Saturdays at 3:30 p.m. in the Bing Theater March 26 through May 29. No films will be screened April 24 or May 15.

Manifestations of Shiva, a 50-minute film produced by Malcolm Leigh especially for the exhibition, will be screened Tuesdays, March 30 and April 13, at 8 p.m. in the Bing Theater. Admission is free to all.

The Films of Satyajit Ray

Wednesdays and Thursdays, March 3–April 1, 8 p.m., Bing Theater. Admission: Members of the Museum, the American Film Institute, and students and senior citizens with I.D. \$2; General Public, \$4.

New Indian Cinema

The work of Indian filmmakers who have come into prominence since 1960. Fridays and Saturdays, April 2–May 1, 8 p.m., Bing Theater. Admission: Same prices as *The Films of Satyajit Ray*.

Films for Children

Two different programs of films made by Satyajit Ray for young people. Saturdays, March 13 and March 20, 2:30 p.m., Bing Theater. Admission: Same prices as *The Films of Satyajit Ray*.

PERFORMING ARTS

Indian Classical Dance

A program featuring Sunita Ramaswamy performing the dances Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi will be presented Sunday, March 28, at 2:30 p.m. in the Bing Theater.

Students of the Kalamandiram School, Westchester YMCA, will perform classical dances of India, Sunday, April 11, at 3 p.m., in the Bing Theater.

Sanjukta Panigrahi, India's leading exponent of Orissi classical dance style, will make her U.S. debut in two Museum performances: Sunday, April 18, and Wednesday, April 21. Both performances are at 8 p.m. in the Bing Theater. Admission: Members, \$6; General Public, \$7.50.

Classical Sitar Music performance by Harihar Rao and accompanists Sunday, April 25, 1:30 p.m., Bing Theater.

THE TRADITIONAL CRAFTS OF INDIA: The richness and diversity of Indian arts will be explored in a series of expert demonstrations given by members of Los Angeles' Indian community.

Rangoli, floor designs with colored rice flour; *Alpana*, pottery and floor decorations; and *Mendi*, designs for feet and hands in henna powder. Sunday, March 28, 1:30 p.m., Ahmanson Gallery Atrium

Dress of India

Sunday, April 25, 3 p.m., Ahmanson Gallery Atrium

Kantha: Indian Quiltmaking

Saturday, May 22, 1 p.m., Ahmanson Gallery Atrium

Musical Instruments of India

Sunday, May 23, 2 p.m., Ahmanson Gallery Atrium

BARRIER-FREE PROGRAMS

Programs for groups of disabled persons may be scheduled on Fridays, 10 a.m.–5 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m.–12 noon. For reservations, call 857-6130 or TTY 557-0098.

CLASSES

The Hindu Art of India

A survey of Indian art with special reference to Hinduism and Shiva. Six sessions

Saturdays, April 10–May 15

1–3 p.m.

Place: Leo S. Bing Theater

Instructor: Katherine Harper-Lorenzana

Tuition: Members, students, and senior

citizens with I.D. \$48

General Public \$57

Registration deadline: April 3

An Introduction to the Dance of India

A Lecture/Demonstration

The classical dances Bharata Natyam, Kathak, and Kathakali will be discussed and demonstrated by performers Anjali Ambegaokar, Medha Yodha, and Jan Zeitlin.

Saturday, May 22

2 p.m.

Place: Leo S. Bing Theater

Admission: Members \$2

General Public \$3

These Education Department programs are made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the California Arts Council, with additional assistance provided by Air-India.

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE MUSEUM

Membership benefits and privileges include:

Free admission to the Museum.

Invitations to special previews

Free monthly Members' Calendar

Discounts in the Museum Shop

Discounts for our film and education programs

Members' Travel Program and Art Rental Gallery privileges

Plus additional exclusive benefits for increased membership contributions.

Beyond these personal benefits, you enjoy a sense of pride and accomplishment in knowing you are helping to fund a major cultural center that will enrich the lives of generations of Southern Californians to come.

With government funding for the site reduced, your involvement is more important than ever. Join the Museum today and give the highest membership contribution you can.

Membership categories:

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For further information on membership categories and their benefits, call the Office of Development and Membership at (213) 837-6151.