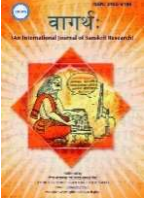




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ŚIVA in Sanskrit Literature

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Śiva is a unique deity in Hindu pantheon. He is imbued with a variety of opposite qualities, he terrific and re-assuring, repulsive and beautiful, wrathful and easy to please, a celibate and an epicure. He is an ascetic and fell under the charm of *Pārvatī* – the mountain girl. He is ubiquitous and he lives in the burial grounds. He burnt *Kāma* – the god of love and also he remains ever united with his beloved *Umā* in the form of *Ardhanārīśvara*. The Wonderful thing about Śiva is that he loves human beings like a father. He laughs at their follies. An arrogant *Rāvaṇa* raised the *Kailāsa* Mountain to challenge him. The mountain started shaking and the terrified *Umā*, Śiva's consort, hugged Him out of fear. This pleased Śiva. But when the mountain was actual raised by the defiant *Rāvaṇa* above the ground and its shakings became rather inconvenient, Śiva just pressed it with his thumb and the *Rāvaṇa* was crushed under its pressure. But then Śiva was pleased with his shrieks and became his mentor.

Śiva is thus the God for the people – the masses. No other deity from Hindu mythology is extolled, revered and represented in innumerable folktales as Śiva is. He is the most unorthodox of all gods. He transgresses all norms. In fact, Śiva is the Supreme Reality, where all contradictions rest and meltdown in harmony. *Kālidāsa* has spelled out the harmony of the opposites in Him, to quote the poet's own words –

“The God Śiva, who has eight forms, kindled the sacred fire, which is one of his own forms and offered oblations in that fire blazing with proffered timber. Even though He is the creator of the fruits of all sorts of penances, He was performing penance with some indescribable desire within Him.” (*Kumārasambhavam*, I.57)

Śiva carries opposite binaries – He is beautiful and ugly at the same time, He is fierce and compassionate. There are descriptions of his long-matted hair and nakedness. Then there are descriptions of his decorations and beauty- crescent moon adorns his forehead, and through his locks flows the river *Gangā*.

The integration of contradictory elements in Śiva's form is extensively visualized in the XVI chapter of *Suklayajurveda*, known as *Śatarudrī*. The opposites get fused in Him –

नमो ह्रस्वाय च वामनाय च नमो
बृहते च वर्षीयसे च नमो
वृद्धाय च सवृद्धे च नमोज्ज्याय च प्रथमाय च ॥
नमो ज्येष्ठाय च कनिष्ठाय च नमः
पूर्वजाय च चापरजाय च नमो
मध्यमाय चाप्रगल्भाय च नमो जघन्याय च बुध्याय च ॥

Homage to the short, and to the dwarf homage;
Homage to the great and to the adult homage;
Homage to the one who is grown up and to the one who is growing homage;
Homage to the one who is foremost and to the one who is first

Homage to the eldest and to the youngest
Homage to the first born and to the last born
Homage to the middle most and to the immature
Homage to the one who is despised and to the one who has sunk.
(Yajurveda, XVI.30,32)

Through Śiva, *Kālidāsa* envisages an aesthetic principle which make all opposites melt in the beauty of harmony.

Describing Śiva as a bride-groom on the occasion of his marriage with Umā, the poets says –

“The funeral ashes on his body became white unguent, his skull was transformed into beautiful crest and his elephant hide became silken garment with marks of *gorocanā* on the fringes. The eye which was on the flat bone of his forehead with a tawny pupil set inside became the *tilaka* mark made by *haritāla*. The serpent Lords coiling around various parts of his body just made small adjustments to form ornaments and the luster of the gems of their hoods was already there as it was before. And why should Hara need a crest jewel, when the infant moon was already on his head ever emitting luster- shining brightly even in the day without the dark spot? (*Kumārasambhavam*, VII.32-35)

Śiva is also the God who is not only venerated; he is equally loved and laughed at. Poets have applied their muse to reveal the extra-ordinary nature of Śiva with a human face. *Yogeśvara* describes the enigma of Śiva’s servant *Bhr̥ṅgin*, in the following manner -

If he is naked what need then has he of the bow?
If armed with bow then why the holy ashes?
If smeared with ashes what needs he with a woman?
Or if with her, then how can he hate Love?
Poor Bhr̥ṅgin, seeing these his master’s contradictions
Has worried his body till there is nothing left
But the hard bones,
Knotted with tough sinew.
(*Yogeśvara*, Q. in *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*- 103)

The genesis of Śaivite concepts

The roots of Śaivite concepts are supposed to lie in phallic worship which was in practice amongst the aborigines in India. Śiva must have emerged out of phallus. Cosmologically the phallus is connected to the primordial pillar, which forms the axis of the universe. The practice of phallic worship existed in early Indo-Aryans. It is correlated to the principle of fertility, and it goes back to *Mesopotamian* period. Phallic worship was prevalent in all ancient civilizations. There are phallic representations in ancient Abyssinia, Somalia and Egypt. The tribes in Africa especially in Kenya and Tanganyika have long cultivated traditions of phallic worship.

The myths about Śiva assuming the form of a *Kirāta* point out to his early association with the tribes of Vindhya region. Śiva resides in mountains, with his body covered with ashes (*citābhasma*) gathered from funeral pyres, wears tiger’s skin or elephant’s hide, is fond of putting on snakes. The *gaṇas* or followers of Śiva are also said to be possessing obnoxious characters forming a retinue of outlandish beings. They may be exaggerated representations of the ethnic others. The macabre practice of Śiva to wearing a human skull.

Śaivite concepts are discernible in the Indus Valley civilization, with the concept of Śiva as *Paśupati*. Amongst the *Upaniṣads* – *Śvetāśvatara*, *Jābāla*, *Atharvaśiras* and *Atharvaśikhā* propound Śaiva *siddhānta*.

The concept of *Liṅga* was further developed at the ontological level, and *Liṅga* represented the highest level of perfection with two of its aspects the male and the female. They were also termed as *nāda* and *bindu*.

Śaiva Schools

Śaivism developed through *Āgamas* and *Vedas* and one of its philosophical systems is *Śaivādvaita*. Then came several sects of Śiva worship – most prominent amongst these are four – *Siddhāntamārgins*, the *Pāśupatas*, the *Mahāvratadharas* and the *Kāpālikas*. The *Paśupata* system is based on five principles of *Kārya*, *Kāraṇa*, *Yoga*, *Vidhi* and *Duḥkḥānta*. The *Pāśupata* Śaivism as described in the *Mahābhārata* decries caste system *Mahāvratadharas* and the *Kāpālikas* carried the practice of *Śivopāsana* to extremes with difficult vows. Besides several other schools of Śaivism sprung up later on. The *sarvadarśanasamgraha* of *Mādhavācārya* gives the details of five amongst these *Paśupata*, *Śaiva*, *Pratyabhijñā*, *Raseśvara* and *Aulūkyā*. Some of these schools imbibed the practice of human sacrifice. *Jarāsandha* used to sacrifice the war prisoners to Lord Śiva., (MB *Sabhā*. 21.98)

Philosophically, 26 categories are accepted in Śaiva *Siddhānta*. Of these, 24 are already discussed in *Sāṃkhya* philosophy and added to them are two Śiva and Śakti.

Forms of Śiva

Guru *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* is Śiva’s silent form. In the form of *Liṅga*, he is placed in the centre of a circular base, which represents female generative organ. This is suggestive of the union of Śiva and Śakti. Śakti is creative energy and is always conceived in female form. The *Śivaliṅga* is also envisioned as a column of light and is called the *Jyotirlinga*.

Many *Purāṇas* including the *Śivapurāṇa* relate the stories about the primordial *Jyotirlinga*. *Brhmā* and *Viṣṇu* were quarrelling as to who is greater amongst the two, when they saw a column of light rising from the ground. *Brahmā* in the form of a swan and *Viṣṇu* in the form of a boar went far above and down to seeking its upper and lower limits which both of them could not reach. Śiva revealed before them in the form of the divine *Liṅga*. The other story described how the wandering Śiva in naked was seen by the wives of the sages who became infatuated by the sight and overcome with lust they followed the mendicant wherever he went. The enraged sages cursed Śiva to make his phallus fall on the ground. But the phallus started growing and assuming infinite proportions when dropped on the ground causing the entire universe to tremble. Śiva could forgive the sages only on condition that they will worship him in the form of the *Liṅga*.

There was a stage when the cult of phallic worship synthesized with the idea of the cosmic pillar. *Atharvaveda* presents the bridges between the two. On one hand there is a hymn on *Skambha* (the pillar) in it, on the other it extols Rudra.

Śiva and Vedic Rudra

There was a period of reluctance to admit Śiva in Vedic pantheon. The worshippers of phallus are decried in *Rgveda*.

There are legends about Śiva being initially neglected. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* describes his formidable characters. (1.7.3.1, II.6.2.7). R.C. Hazra refers to an episode of sages cursed by Gautama to become *Vedabāhya* and extolling Śiva (Studies in *Upapurāṇas*, Vol II 161n. (Calcutta, 1963)). *Dakṣa* – the *prajāpati* – did not invite him in the sacrificial ceremony he organized. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* says that Śiva remained behind when other gods left for heaven.

The invocation of Rudra through one hundred names in *Śatarūdrī* (the 16th chapter of *Yajurveda*) accompanying 425 oblations is an attempt to bring Śiva in *vedic* pantheon. Rudra is said to be the complete form of Agni, and he is the deity who brings rains and storm. But the invocations in the *Śatarūdrī* take into account the terrific and repulsive characteristics of Rudra and then also correlate them with the sober aspects, providing ample ground for establishing Rudra as Śiva. The fierce figure of *Rudra* culminates here into a gentle and auspicious form, which is Śiva. The seer says –

‘With that auspicious and tranquil form of yours,
Sinless and shining
O mountain-hunter Rudra!
Behold us.

Original text is as follows-

या ते रुद्र शिवा तनूरघोराऽपापकाशिनी।
तया नस्तन्वा शन्तमयागरशन्ताभि चाकशीहि।

Śuklayajurveda, XVI.2

The traces of *Rudra* as a wrathful god are very much here, but he is requested to shun violence, and the characteristics of Śiva get assimilated in him. He is called *Nīlagrīva* (having a violet neck) and *vilohita* (of red hue) (*Śuklayajurveda*, XVI.7-8). The names such as *Bhava*, *Śarva*, *Paśupai*, *Śitikantha*, *Kapardin*, *Giriśa* as well as *Ugra* and *Bhīma* are attributed to *Rudra*, for which Śiva is better known (*Śuklayajurveda*, XVI.28,29, 40,48,56). There are places where *Rudra* and Śiva appear to be finally merged with each other. Viz.:

नमः शम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च
नमः शङ्कराय च मयस्कराय च
नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च । *Śuklayajurveda*, XVI.41

The famous *Mahāmṛtyuñjaya* mantra that occurs in *Śuklayajurveda* III.60 and the passages accompanying it are also suffused with the idea of *Rudra* as Śiva treating *Rudra* and Śiva at par

एतत्ते रुद्रावसं तेन परो मूजवतोऽतीहि।
अवततधन्वा पिनाकावसः कृत्तिवासा अहिर्ः सन्नः शिवोऽतीहि ॥
Śuklayajurveda, III.61

In contrast the denigration of Śiva in certain quarters, there are attempts in the *Atharvaveda* to provide an honorable place to Śiva. On the other hand, the initial reluctance to admit him in the orthodoxy of the gods and a tendency to treat Śiva as an outsider can be detected in several *paurāṇic ākhyānas* related to

Śiva. Śiva is associated with *vrātyas* – who are treated as the outcasts by the priests in *vedic* period. And he is also glorified as a *vrātya* and the chief of *vrātyas* in *Śuklayajurveda*. The Book XV of the *Atharvaveda* also extols *vrātyas*. The Brahman is conceived as a *vrātya* and Rudra is said to be the *vrātya* only (*eka-vrātya*). In this way The *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* mark a period of acceptability and successive glorification of Śiva.

It is however the *Śvetāśvaratara Upaniṣad*, which gave a reasoning and philosophy for accepting Śiva as the Supreme Reality, who creates the Universe, and also oversees its dissolution.

एको हि रुद्रो न द्वितीयाय तस्थुर्य त ईशनीभिः।
प्रत्यङ् जनांस्तिष्ठति सञ्चुकोचान्तराले संसृज्य विश्वं भवनानि
गोपाः॥ *Śvetāśvaratara Up.* 3.2

It repeats the maxim *na tasya pratimā asti* (there is no image for Him) and establishes Śiva as the ultimate essence (*Ibid.* IV.19). Then follows a long eulogy to Śiva.

अजात इत्येवं कश्चिद् भीरुः प्रपद्यते।
यत्ते दक्षिणं मुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम्॥
मा नस्तोके तनये मा न आयुषि मा नो गोषु मा नो
अश्वेषु रीरिषः।
वीरान्मा नो रुद्र भामितो वधीर्हविष्मन्तः सदमित्त्वा
हवामहे॥ *Ibid* IV.21-22
भावग्राह्यमनीडाख्यं भावाभावकरं शिवम्।
कलासर्गकरं देवं ये विदुस्ते जहुस्तनुम्॥ *Ibid*, V.14

The initial reluctance to admit Śiva in the fold of *Vedic* pantheon continued in some form or the other in the later period as well when Śiva was already been given a place in the trinity of great gods along with *Brahmā* and *Viṣṇu*. The fifth canto of *Kumārasambhava* of *Kālidāsa* presents a debate between Śiva disguised as a *brahmacārin* and *Pārvatī*. The former, after ascertaining the purpose of her penance condemns Śiva. His arguments are – Śiva is given to inauspicious things, he wears elephant hide dripping with drops of blood, he lives in cemetery ground, he besmears himself with funeral ashes, rides on an old bull. He then concludes by saying – ‘What is there in Śiva? He is ugly and uncouth because of his three eyes, the source of his birth is unknown, and his nakedness shows how rich he is! There is not a slightest trace in Śiva of whatever that is sought in a prospective bride groom! Now two things have become deplorable by their desire to unite with that Śiva – the shining crescent of the moon and you – the moon light for the eyes of the world. Therefore, turn your mind from this unseemly desire. What a disparity is there between him of that type and you of auspicious qualities! Wise men do not expect the honour of a sacrificial post for a spear of cemetery!’

Parvatī is extremely disturbed at such inappropriate remarks, and she gives a very strong refutation of all the statements made by the celibate in the following words – ‘you do not know Śiva in his true nature, therefore you are talking this way. Men of

lesser intelligence are zealous of the extra-ordinary and inscrutable motives of the great. An auspicious thing is sought by one who seeks to counteract adverse circumstances, or by one who longs for prosperity. What has one, who has no desire, and is the refuse of the world, to do with the impulses of the self-marred by expectations? Śiva may be miser, but he is the source of all prosperity, he may be living in the cemetery, but he is the Lord of the three worlds. He appears frightful, but he is known to be auspicious. Actually no one knows Him in true nature. He is a cosmic form, one cannot comprehend his character. The funeral ashes having acquired the contact of his body attain the capacity to purify. So that, when they drop down when he is dancing, the gods put them on their heads. Indra riding on his elephant, toes both the feet of him who rides on his bull and is reduced to penury'. *Pārvaṭī* concludes her arguments by saying that the celibate has told too much, but at least one thing he said is right- how can one know the source of birth of the one who is the source of the self-born? She added that she does not want to enter into any further arguments, let Śiva be what he is, her heart is completely absorbed in the *bhāva* for him, such are the ways of love that the defects (of the beloved) do not matter there.

Tamil traditions

In Tamil traditions, Śiva is connected to *Himālyas*, his wife is the daughter of the mountain Śivas lived in *Śivapur* located in modern *horkot* (now in Pakistan) [1]. The Tamil word *chivan* (*shivan*) means red, so does *chembhu* (*shambhu*). The *Śilappadikāram*, one of the earliest Tamil classics, is full of references to the worship of Śiva and Śiva temples. On their way to Madura, *Kovalan* and *Kaṇṇakī*, meet as *brahmaṇa* who is well-versed in Vedas. He advises them to chant two great *vedic* mantras, one of them is *pañcākṣaramatra* (*namaḥ Śivāya*) for the worship of Śiva [2]. The couple also sees a goddess – the female form of Śiva. She was bedecked by the moon in her coiffure, had an un-winking eye in her forehead, a throat darkened by poison and was wearing the serpent *Vāsuki* as girdle as well as elephants hide. With her foot pressing the corpse of a demon she was also holding a trident (*Śilappadikāram*, XII.51-64 p. 183-84).

Names of Śiva – *Āśvalāyana Grhyasūtra* mentions the following names of Śiva - other names *Hara*, *Mr̥ḍa*, *Śiva*, *Bhīma* and *Śaṅkara*. *Amarakośa* the first authentic work in Sanskrit lexicography enumerates the following 48 names of Śiva – *Śambhu*, *Īśa*, *Paśupati*, *Śiva*, *Śūlin*, *Maheśvara*, *Īśvara*, *Śarva*, *Īśāna*, *Śaṅkara*, *Candraśekhara*, *Bhūteśa*, *Khaṇḍaparaśu*, *Girīśa*, *Giriśa*, *Mr̥ḍa*, *Mr̥tyuñjaya*, *Kṛttivāsāh*, *Pinākin*, *Pramathādhīpa*, *Ugra*, *Kapardin*, *Śrīkaṇṭha*, *Śitikantha*, *Kapālabhṛt*, *Vāmadeva*, *Mahādeva*, *Virūpākṣa*, *Trilocana*, *Kṛṣṇanuretaḥ*, *Sarvajña*, *Dhūrjati*, *Nīllohita*, *Hara*, *Smarahara*, *Bharga*, *Tryambka*, *Tripurāntaka*, *Gaṅgādhara*, *Andharipu*, *Kratudhvansin*, *Vṛṣadhva*, *Vyomakeśa*, *Bhava*, *Bhīma*, *Sthānu*, *Rudra* and *Umāpati*.

Śiva is called *Śambhu* for being all happiness or for providing happiness. He is *Īśa*, *Īśvara* and *Īśāna* for being the Lord. He is *Paśupati* and *Bhūteśa* as he being the master of all beings. The most prevalent names *Śiva* and *Śaṅkara* signify his

benevolence. He is *Śūlin* as he holds a spear. He is *Maheśvara* for being the Chief of all gods. He is *Śarva* for being violent (A variant reading for *Śarva* is *Sarva* meaning the be all); He is called *Candraśekhara* for holding the crescent moon on his locks; He is *Khaṇḍaparaśu* because he bears a particular type of spontoon as weapon. He is called *Girīśa* and *Giriśa* for making the mountain his abode. He is *Mr̥ḍa* for imparting happiness. As he transcends death, therefore he is *Mr̥tyuñjaya*. He is *Kṛttivāsāh* for wearing elephants' hide. *Pināka* is the name of his bow, making him *Pinākin*. *Pramathas* are the *gaṇas* of Śiva and to them he is *Pramathādhīpa*. *Ugra* means fierce. *Kaparda* is matted locks; Śiva is *Kapardin* due to them. The name *Dhūrjati* also bears the same sense. *Śrī* means beauty. The neck of Śiva is beautiful, therefore he is *Śrīkaṇṭha*. *Śiti* means black. His neck was blackened as he drank and poison and kept it stuck there, therefore Śiva became *Śitikantha*. *Kapāla* is the pot made of skull. Śiva is *Kapālabhṛt* for holding a *Kapāla*. He is *Vāmadeva* as he violets or transgresses all norms. He is greatest god, so he is *Mahādeva*. He has eyes is uneven number (three), so he is *Virūpākṣa*. The term *Trilocana* would also normally mean the same, but there are several special connotations in *Trilocana* – *locana* also means knowledge. As Śiva has knowledge of all the three worlds, all the three Vedas, and all three forms of time and the three *guṇas* or qualities (*Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*), therefore he is *Trilocana*. As he placed his *retas* (semen) in fire or his semen is like fire, so he is *Kṛṣṇanuretaḥ*. The term *Sarvajña* denotes his omniscience. He is blue in his neck and otherwise red through the luster of his skin, so he is *Nīllohita*. He is *Hara* as he removes the sin, *Smarahara* as he destroyed *Smara* or *Kāmadeva*. He is *Bharga* for burning the evil of passion. *Tryambka* means *Trilocana* as above (In Vedic usage, *Tryambaka* is spelled as *Triyambaka*. *Kālidāsa* has used the term *Triyambaka* instead of *Tryambaka* to emphasize over the Vedic associate of Śiva). It also means a god having three mothers – the sky, the earth and waters. Śiva had destroyed three cities by shooting one arrow, so he is called *Tripurāntaka*. He is *Gaṅgādhara* for bearing the *Gaṅgā* on his head. He is *Andharipu* being enemy of the demon *Andha* or *Andhaka*. He had annihilated the whole ritual of *Dakṣa*'s sacrifice, so he is *Kratudhvansin*. He is *Vṛṣadhva* for having the symbol of the bull on his banner. He is *Vyomakeśa* as his hair touches the sky. He is *Bhava* as he generates the cosmos. *Bhīma* is terrible. *Sthānu* is *immovable*. *Rudra* is the one who makes others weep. Śiva being the Lord of *Umā*, Therefore, he is *Umāpati*.

There are many other epithets. A peculiar synonym for Śiva is *Kālañjara* which is a term in Tantra and Yoga. Śiva is a very well known as *Naṭarāja*. *Kālidāsa* has used the term *Devadeva* (the God of Gods) for Śiva (*Kumārasambhavam*, I.52) [3]

Śiva literally means auspicious. As *Mahādeva* and *Maheśvara*. He is the Supreme Lord. He is *Paśupati* for being the Lord of *paśus* (all creatures- in *Śaivism* the limited consciousness). He is Supreme Dancer as the *Naṭarāja*.

In *Atharvaveda* *Bhava* and *Śarva* are mentioned as different deities. The terms *Bhūtapati* and *Paśupati* have been used for them (*Atharva*. XI.2.1). they protect the southern and the western regions respectively. *Ugra* protects the northern,

Maheśvara the upper and *Īśāna* the middle regions. *Bhava* is supposed to protect the *vrātyas* also.

Śiva is also mentioned along with *Viṣṇu* in *Tripiṭakas* – Buddhist scriptures, *Dīghanikāya*, *Jātakas*. *Pāṇini* is familiar with *Rudra*, *Bhava* and *Śarva*. But the names *Śiva* and *Śaṅkara* are conspicuous by their absence in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

Śiva as a Yogin

In the tradition of *Śilpaśāstra*, the iconography of *Śiva* envisages him as *mahāyogin*. He is depicted as meditating in utter solitude on the mount *Kālāśa*. *Kālidāsa* has portrayed the *Śiva*'s most sublime image as a *yogin* in the following words –

“At this moment (when *Kāmadeva* was approaching to disturb his penance), *Śiva* heard the songs of celestial nymphs, but he set himself upon concentrating his mind upon himself. Obstacles do not impede the mind's concentration in case of those who are Lords of their own souls.... And then *Kāma*, whose body was doomed to fall now, saw Him – the self-restrained *Triyambaka*, seated on the alter below the *Devadāru* tree covered with tiger's skin. With his upper body erect and steady due of *pariyāṅka* posture, he was sitting completely still and at ease; his both shoulders had dropped down, both his upturned palms rested on his lap, so that a lotus seemed to be blooming on his lap. His matted locks were bound by a serpent. A *Roasary* of *akṣa* beads was hanging on his ear. He has put on the antelope skin tied with a knot, which has turned especially blue due to the contact of the colour of his neck. The pupils of his eyes were fixed and fierce, they were radiating a little. His eyebrows had become still, his eye lashes did not flicker and with his eyes the rays of which had gone downwards, he had fixed his gaze on the tip of his nose. He was like a cloud, having ceased to spill the showers, like a lake without ripples, as he had controlled his inner winds; he looked like a lamp the glow of which is un-flickering in a place where wind does not blow. Making their way from the eye in his forehead, the glows of light were emerging from his head and through them he was obscuring the glow of the crescent moon – more delicate than the fiber of the lotus. Restraining his mind's activities which have nine outlets, curbing it in his own heart through concentration, he who is known to the knower of the Vedas as eternal immutable, was seeing the self within his own self.” (*Kumārasaṁbhavam*, III.44-50)

Śiva as a householder

Ambikā is described as the sister of *Rudra* in *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*. (II.5). *Umā*, *Haimavatī* or *Pāravatī* is introduced for the first time as the wife of *Śiva* in *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and *Kena Upaniṣad*. In *Purāṇas* as well as in Sanskrit poetry [4] *Śiva* is viewed as a family man – with his wife *Umā* or *Pavati* and two sons – *Kārtikeya* and *Gaṇeśa*, and his devotee, body-guard and vehicle – *Nandin*. *Pramathas* are the members of his assembly. They are called *pramathas* as they can crush the enemies. The bow of *Śiva* has two names – *Pināka* and *Ajagava*. *Pināka* literally means the protector. *Ajagava* has been given several interpretations. *Aja* is goat and *gava* means piercer. The arrow shot from *Śiva*'s bow pierced the goat, therefore the name *Ajagava*. Otherwise *Viṣṇu* is also called *Aja*.

Śiva's anger

Śiva's anger is quickly aroused, but he is equally easy to be pleased. *Kālisāsa* has described his anger in most extra-ordinary terms –

Śiva who loves his devotees, was just going to accept the rosary of lotuses when the god of flower-bow (*Kāmadeva*) adjusted an unfailing shaft named *sammohana* (bewitching) on his bow. His calmness disturbed a little, like the ocean at moon-rise, *Śiva* directed all his (three eyes) on the face of *Umā* with her lips red like the *bimba* fruit. The odd eyed one controlled the agitation of his senses by the might of his self control, and looking for the cause of this disturbed state of his mind, directed his eyes towards the end of the directions. Then he saw *Kāma* – the self-born one, resting his fist on the corner of his right eye, his shoulders bent, his left foot contracted and about to shoot the arrow placed on his beautiful bow fully bent. It was difficult to see the face of *Śiva*, as his eye brow was wrinkled and his anger was enhanced due to the disturbance in his penance. From his third eye there shot up, all of a sudden, a flame of fire with its rays ablaze. By the time the gods would cry from heaven – “O Lord, please draw back your anger! Draw back your anger!”- the fire born from the eye of *Bhava* burnt *Madana* who remained in the ashes only.” (*Kumārasaṁbhavam*, III. 65-72)

Śiva as Cosmic Dancer

As cosmic dancer, He is encircled by flames, has four arms and is dancing in ecstasy, with his left leg raised and crossing the lower body, and the right one crushing a dwarf – a symbol of *apasmāra* – or destructive negligence.

The *ḍamarū* in his hands signifies universal energy. In other hands he holds some other weapon. The third hand is raised in *abhaya mudrā* – conveying solace and protection. The fourth hand is slanted down in *gajamudrā* - a signal to the devotees to approach the spiritual guru and seek his grace. His face always remains placid indicating inner peace.

Yogeśvara has described this extra-ordinary dance of *Śiva* –

Gaurdians of quarters, move aside!

Clouds quit the sky!

Sink down on earth, to the underworld,

And mountains! Sink to earth

Remove your heaven, *Brahma*;

My *Śambhu* must have room to dance”

Such is *Nandin*'s heralding

And may it prove your aid.

(*Yogeśvara*, *Subhāṣitaratnaśa-74*, tr Daniel HH Ingalls)

Original text is as follows-

भो भो दिक्पतयः प्रयात परतः खं मुञ्चताम्भोमुचः।

पातालं व्रज मेदिनि प्रविशत क्षोणीतलं क्षमाभूतः।

ब्रह्मन्नुन्नय दूरमात्मसदनं देवस्य मे नृत्यतः

शम्भोः सङ्कटमेतदित्यवतु वः प्रोत्सारणा नन्दिनः॥

सुरको. 74

Śiva as Time

Śiva is also called *Mahākāla* – the cosmic time. In the *Saṃtīkapaṭṭan* of the *Mahābhārata*, *Aśvatthāma*, in a fit of rage to seek revenge approaches the camp of the *Pāṇḍavas* in night. He is accompanied with *Kṛpācārya* and *Kṛtavarma*. As they reach the entrance they are confronted with a dreadful apparition. He is *Mahākāla*. From the whole description of this Being, we can only adjust Him as Śiva – the God OF Time. A daring *Aśvatthāma* hurled his weapons on Him, and He devours them one by one. Then *Aśvatthāma* stops attacking Him and starts a prayer to Śiva. When the dreadful figure is about to attack and finish him, he submits himself to Him with a surrender. Śiva says – I have been protecting *Pāṇḍavas* because of *Kṛṣṇa*. I have honored *kṛṣṇa* by protecting them. Now they are assailed by Time.

The concept of three or trinity

Śiva is a member of the trinity of gods. They are responsible for creation, preservation and destruction. In fact, they belong to the One and the Same Ultimate Reality. *Kālidāsa* says -

एकैव मूर्तिर्बिम्बिदै त्रिधा सा सामान्यमेषां प्रथमावर्तत्वम्।
विष्णोर्हरस्तस्य हरिः कदाचित् वेधास्तयोस्तावपि धातुराद्यौ॥

Kumārsambhavam, VII.44

(There was only one form, which divided itself into three; there is no difference of hierarchy between them. Sometimes Hara precedes *Viṣṇu*, some other times it is *Viṣṇu* who precedes Hara, and sometimes *Brahmā* comes before both of these and some other times both of them come before *Brahmā*.)

Śiva is also related to a number of concepts involving several trinities. *Vasukalpa* a very eminent poet describes the correlations of these trinities in the following way -

Whose handiwork is the triple world?
Whose poetry the Vedas three
Who destroyed the triple citadel?
And on whose head is garlanded the triple flowering Ganges
Who bears three blazing eyes as if to see?
Therein His triple world:
To Him, enveloped in matter's triple strand
And bearing the trident weapon
Belongs all victory.

(*Vasukalpa*, SRK-30, tr. Daniel H.H. Ingalls)

Original text is as follows-

शिल्पं त्रीणि जगन्ति यस्य, कविता यस्य त्रिवेदी, गिरो
यश्चक्रे त्रिपुरव्ययं त्रिपथगा यन्मूर्ध्नि माल्यायते।
त्रीन् लोकानिव वीक्षितुं वहति यो विस्फूर्ज्जणां त्रयं
त्रैगुण्यपरिच्छदो विजयते देवस्त्रिशूलायुधः॥

Cosmic View of Śiva

Śiva pervades the universe through his eight forms – the *Aṣṭamūrtis*. *Kālidāsa* has portrayed this form of Śiva -

The water which is the first creation of the creator,

The fire – which carries the oblations duly offered,
The priest – who performs the sacrifice
The Sun and the Moon both regulating time,
The space that pervades the cosmos,
The earth which is the source of all seeds
The wind which enlivened every being,
These are the eight forms of *Īśvara* – all visible
Approached with devotion
May he protect you all with these forms?

He is also viewed as an Ultimate transcending the mundane. The poets like *Kālidāsa* and *Bāna* have viewed Śiva from the eye of a *vedāntin* -

In scriptures they call him the Only One *Puruṣa*
Pervading and transcending this earth and heaven
In whom the epithet *Īśvara* is really meaningful
He lives within and the ascetics seek Him within through the
control of their senses
He is easily available through devotion
May Śiva the immovable God, bring final bliss to you.

Engrained in the unique *Aiśvarya*
Yet source of profuse rewards for the devotees
He himself wears only hide of antelope.
He has come mingled with his beloved
Yet he is far above the ascetics
He bears this universe through His eight forms
But suffers no pride in Himself
May Śiva dispel the darkness from out sight

Praise be to *Śambhu*, beautified
By the cowries moon touching his lofty head,
Like to the foundation pillar of the city
That is universe.
(*Bāna*, SRK-48, tr. by Daniel H H Ingalls)

Original text is as follows-

नमस्तुङ्गशिरश्चुम्बिचन्द्रचामरचारवे
त्रैलोक्यनगरारम्भमूलस्तम्भाय शम्भवे॥

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