

~~rudra~~

the dancing destroyer



Bharat Bhushan



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the dancing destroyer



Bharat Bhushan

© **Harini**

*In memory of Harini (1987-1991)
she came on a short journey, and made us happy...*

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*In gratitude to friends and guides for encouraging me –
Shri Vijay Gokhaleji, Dr. Arvind Kumar Jha and Shri Durgesh N. Mujumdar*

RUDRA – THE DANCING DESTROYER

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Om

*the ananda roopa and the rudra roopa of Mahadeva
are but manifested deep within your mind
as the aspects of your intentions and actions
of your choosing and of your reactions*

*you may decide from deep within you
choose the ananda roopa and be blessed
and convey blessings to those whom you wish to fight
and forgive those who hurt you and distress you*

*choose the rudra roopa and dance the taandava
deep within you and within your mind
but, do not forget, for you hold in your hands,
on either side, the flame and the drum*

*you may ignite creation or destruction
for you dance within a circle of fire
and the Ganges will not be of any help
and you cannot allow the crescent moon to drop*

*realise that you may that Shiva is with you
accept that Shiva is deep within you
understand that Shiva never left you
and wait, for Shiva will show you the path*

***deep may be the hurt within you
deep may be the anger within you
deeper still, is Shiva within you, always,
reach deep within you, and seek him out***

*Mahadeva has not permitted you the rudrarroopa,
for it is his to render in his own manifestation,
and it is his the deep hurt that he may not bear,
it is from him, the destructive anger that springs forth,*

*and, it is this anger that is not permitted for you,
it is this manner of rendition that is not allowed,
stay the path, keep the faith, again and again,
for it is with each pain, that you gain audience,*

with Mrityunjaya, O Vaidyanatha, and await his moksha

Om namah shivaaya... Om



Jyotirlinga Bhimashankar Temple in the Western Ghats of Pune, Maharashtra.
Photo – Bharat Bhushan

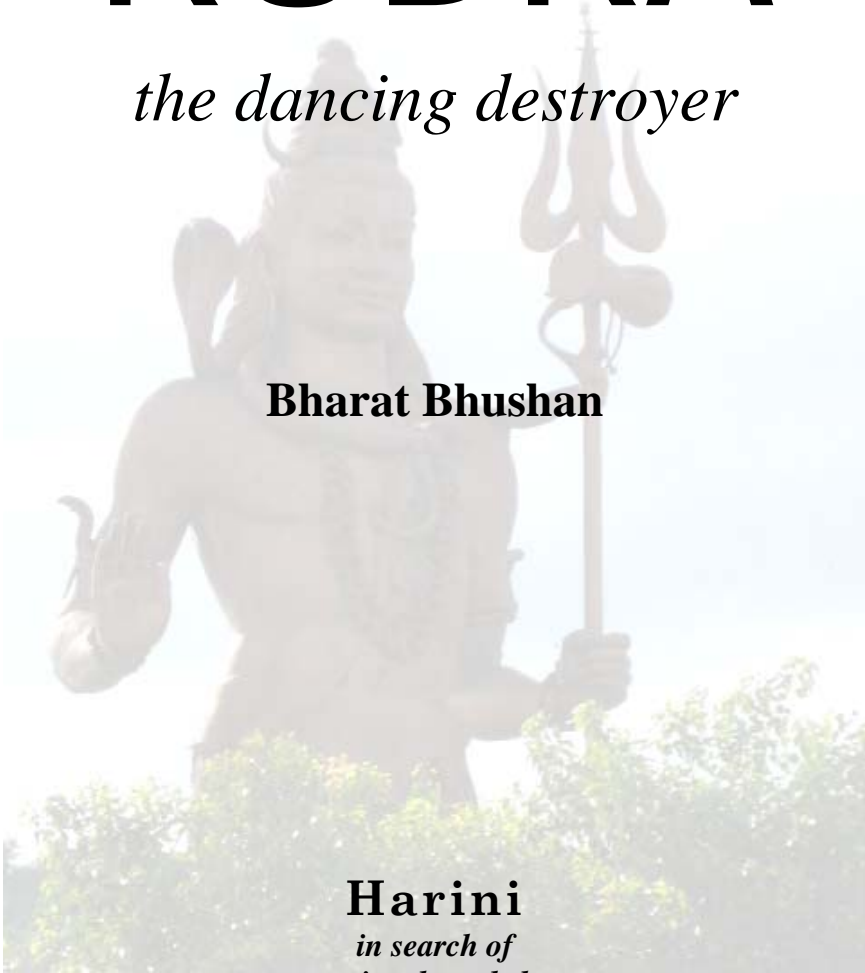
RUDRA

the dancing destroyer

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Harini

*in search of
ancient knowledge*





rudraroopa – an introduction
From Shiva to Bharata,
the knowledge of the dance of the destroyer

It is said that Bharata, also referred to often as Bharata Muni, was the author of the *Natya shastra*, the treatise on drama, dance and performance. The *shastra*, supposed to have actually been written down in its present form between 400 BC and 200 BC, was handed down to Bharata by Tanduvu, one of Shiva's attendants. With its genesis on formalising the *Taandava nritya* of the *rudraroopa* of Shiva, and extending it to create the framework for the genre of the various schools of dance in ancient India, the *natya shastra* of Bharata is more closely known to the classical dance form of *Bharatanatyam*.

Bharata conveys through his *Natya shastra* and from the knowledge received from Tanduvu that the performance of the *Taandava nritya* takes the performer into a trance and helps experience the ecstasy of the divine. The dance of the greatest of all yogis, Shiva, in his *rudraroopa*, with all his fiery emotions and in an uncontrolled manner, is the ultimate pinnacle of dance through which the dancer can invoke God and experience godliness. Bharata's *Natya shastra* also instructs about the art of depicting a stage-play or dance along with music and dance.

It is said that the *Natya shastra* was derived from the *Natya veda*, supposed to be the fifth veda, and contained nearly 36,000 verses or *shlokas*. The *Natya shastra* as we now know it, contains 6,000 *shlokas* attributed to Bharata's rendition and understanding of the *Natya veda* and the knowledge received from Shiva's attendant, Tanduvu. It is said that Shiva had himself blessed the sage with the name, Bharata, signifying – *bha* for *bhava* (mood), *ra* for *raaga* (melody) and *ta* for *taala* (rhythm). Bharata is supposed to have written the *Natya shastra* in response to other munis or sages asking him about the *Natya veda*, and is depicted in a dialogue form. The rendition also informs that Bharata accepts that his knowledge is due to the blessings of Brahma and that his own hundred sons would carry forward the knowledge of the *Taandava Nritya*, the dance of the destroyer, the depiction of the anger of Shiva, in his *rudraroopa*.



The anger of Rudra, the dancing destroyer

Rudra or Shiva or Mahadeva, the one of the trinity, the creator and destroyer of the cosmos has always represented the challenge to be understood from among the pantheon of gods. The destroyer is also the first to be sought in times of illnesses. The *Mahamryutunjaya Mantra* is the first to be thought of in times of distress, ill-health or sicknesses. What is this power?

He is also the ultimate dancer. His *Taandava* is an extremely complicated dance that cannot be bettered by the gods themselves, leave alone humans. And yet, Shiva performs this intricately and along with his *damaru* (drum) and *agni* (fire) and yet, this artistic rendition of dance at its finest expression, is supposed to be the dance of the destroyer when he is terribly angry. What does it mean?

He is the God who beheaded Ganesha, not knowing that he was his own son. He was so angry and obstinate that he did not think twice as to who could be guarding the door to his consort's domain. In spite of the fact that the young lad could defeat the gods and his own armies, he did not seek caution. And to remedy the situation, he killed an elephant and

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affixed the elephant-head to the body of his son to bring him back to life. What do we learn of this anger, remorse and power?

He blessed Bhagirath in taking the Ganges on his matted locks to control the power of the river. He could see through the pride of Ganga and allowed her to descend from the heavens before he unlocked his own strength and tied her up in his locks before permitting a slower and gentler flow from the Himalayas down the lands that are now known as Ganga-desh. What manner of strength did he possess? What manner of insight and capabilities?

The trinity of Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, respectively represent the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. At times, this responsibility is enlarged in the ancient books and knowledge as to also represent the power of creation, preservation or destruction of not only this world or planet, but also the solar system, and beyond it the universe and the entirety of the cosmos. How did the ancients even perceive and understand these concepts?

It is said that Shiva, the greatest yogi of all, actually meditates upon the *Sankarsana*, or *Ananta Sesa*, the multi-headed *Naaga* serpent, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself. *Sankarsana*, said to be the actual cause of Shiva's existence, is a convergence of the enormous concepts of

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Shiva and Vishnu within the unlimited yet finite distance of thought.
What manner of manifestation of meditation is this?

It is also believed that Shiva in his *rudraroopa*, came to be known as *Mahakaaleshwar*, the great Lord of Time, after killing the demon *Andhaka*. What manner of godliness is this that is supreme to the concept of time through its manifestation of anger and violence?

In a much more complex extension to Shiva's capacity to destroy one's ego, is the aspect of his anger. As the destroyer, he became fearsome in his anguish at the passing away of his consort, Sati, at her own father, Daksha's home. Shiva came to know about it and got angry as only he can be. It is in this anger, that Shiva was known to have performed the *Taandava*, the dance of the destroyer.

It is essential to know Sati or Uma to know the genesis of the anger of Shiva or Rudra, the dancing destroyer. It is said that Shiva's consort has always remained Parvati, though we know her from the many names of her births, rebirths, *roopas* and manifestations as Hymavati, Kali, Durga, Gauri, Uma, Lalita or Dakshayani. Two of her most powerful manifestations of 'Power' are as Durga (= the Goddess who is beyond all aspects and dimensions), and Kali (= the Goddess of destruction, and sometimes considered as more fearsome than Shiva himself). Parvati is

also considered as the consort of Shiva, in his action as the Creator, and thus she is known as Amba and Ambika (= the mother of the universe). And of course, Parvati is considered to be the epitome of beauty, and is thus also known as Lalita (= she who represents all aspects of beauty).

The story begins thus. The *Shiv Puran* informs us, that a girl named Sandhya manifested herself from the being of Brahma, who in turn was smitten by her. Shiva ridiculed the character of Brahma for such affection, for she was of Brahma's own creation, and thereby his own daughter. Amused, Shiva made fun of Brahma and his *manasaputras* (= 'sons of Brahma's soul'). Brahma tried to explain to Shiva that it was Kamadeva, the God of Love, who succeeded in bestowing infatuation within Brahma for Sandhya, though she was his daughter. He informed Shiva that Kamadeva was trying to test out the powers assigned to him by Brahma himself, and had let his five arrows of love find their targets in Brahma.

These five arrows, *Harshan*, *Rochan*, *Mohan*, *Shoshan* and *Maran*, made their impact on Brahma and Sandhya. The impact had resulted in forty-nine different types of thoughts that emerged from Brahma's mind on the particular occasion. Sandhya's mind had also exhibited similar flaws in the aspects of her own thoughts. Kamadeva felt that it was his victory but this saddened *Dharma*, one of the *manasaputras* of Brahma. He

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meditated upon Shiva who manifested himself but was very amused by the turn of events. He therefore made fun of Brahma and his *manasaputras* and questioned their character.

In the aspect of this torture by Shiva, and in the resultant sweating from the situation, Brahma created the *pitraganas*, while his son, Daksha, in his perspiration, created Rati, who was supposed to be the most beautiful woman. Brahma was also angry with Kamadeva, who had caused him to be ridiculed by Shiva. In his anger, Brahma cursed Kamadeva with the fate of being charred to death by the arrow of Shiva. Kamadeva repented and requested Brahma to also enable redemption from the curse. Brahma agreed and relented that Kamadeva would regain his physical body only when Shiva would be remarried.

Shiva in ridiculing the character of Brahma for his affection for Sandhya had caused him to feel ashamed. While Brahma did feel ashamed, he also became jealous of Shiva or Rudra for being incapable of infatuation because of his strict adherence to his discipline and a schedule of austerities and penance.

Brahma tried to get Shiva to also begin to be infatuated but was unsuccessful at trying to corrupt him. Brahma asked Vishnu for advice, and was told to desist, for Shiva was certainly beyond behavioral

emotions and affections. Brahma later instructed his son, Daksha, to procreate a girl child, Dakshayani, from the womb of Ashwinivirini, daughter of Virana or Panchajana. This girl child, Dakshayani, also Sati or Uma, practiced austerities to obtain Shiva as her consort and eventually succeeded. Shiva was free from attachments, but had the desire to procreate, and was happy with Sati and enjoyed a very happily married life for a long period of time.

Daksha, however, was not appreciative of his son-in-law and condemned him at every given opportunity. The time came when he organised a grand yagna at Kanakahala, near Gangadvara or Haridwara, on the banks of the Ganges, and invited everyone, including all devas and sages, except his own daughter Sati or Uma and her consort, Shiva. Uma was of the opinion that she did not need an invitation to go to her father's house and especially if there was to be an important yagna, she would have to be present, invited or not. Shiva did not agree with the idea of Uma visiting her father's house to attend the yagna, when she had not been invited, and especially of course, when the son-in-law was not invited.

Upon much insistence, Shiva permitted Uma to visit her father, Daksha's house and attend the yagna along with Nandi, his own *vaahana*. Sati went to her father's house on the occasion of the religious ceremony. Uma took a commitment from Nandi that he and Shiva's attendants

would behave properly at Daksha's house. Upon receiving their promise of good behaviour, Uma arrived at the site of the grand yagna along with Nandi and some of Shiva's attendants. The yagna was being solemnised by the greatest sages of all times, the saptarishis – Marichi, Atri, Anguiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasishta. The great sage, Dadichi, had left the yagna, protesting against the absence of Shiva, the greatest yogi, from amongst all present.

Daksha Prajapati began to condemn Uma's arrival in such an uninvited manner and claimed that it could only have been thus, because of Shiva's insistence. The Prajapati treated Nandi and Shiva's attendants with disrespect and made them feel unwelcome and continued to condemn Shiva to the Gods, including Brahma and Vishnu, who were present at the yagna, and the sages. Uma knew that Shiva was respected by the great sages present at the yagna, for she knew that they were devoted to her Lord. They included Agastya, Kashyapa, Atri, Vamadeva, Bhrigu, Vyasa, Bharadvaja, Gautama, Paila, Parashara, Garga, Bhargava, Kakubha, Sumantu, Trika, Kanka and Vaishampayana.

It was in front of such a gathering of gods and sages, that Daksha Prajapati, Uma's father, and son of Brahma, exclaimed that Uma's consort was not '*Shiva*', the benevolent, but '*Ashiva*', the gory one, and that he had been correct in not inviting the one who should never be

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invited to rituals of the righteous. Uma was unable to bear the criticism of Shiva, in front of the gods and sages, knowing fully well that he had advised her against the uninvited visit and that he had predicted that such a dishonour could befall her at her very father's house. Feeling insulted and dishonoured, Sati jumped into the sacrificial fire of the yagna and consigned herself to the flames and gave up her life.

Bound by their promise to Uma for good behaviour, Nandi returned to Shiva and informed him about the unfortunate turn of events. Shiva, in his manifestation of anger, as Rudra, pulled out hair from his matted locks and threw it against a mountain. The hair divided into two parts, and manifested itself as the warrior, Veerabhadra, and the aspect of the destroyer, Mahakali. Rudra instructed Veerabhadra and Mahakali to proceed to Daksha's house and destroy the yagna and kill everyone, including the gods and the sages. Mahakali and Veerabhadra assembled their armies that include the mightiest warriors. Veerabhadra's army included warriors from amongst the *Shivaganas*, such as *Vikrita*, *Visaka*, *Pariyatraka*, *Saravanahaka*, *Vikratanana*, *Jvalakesa*, *Dhiman*, *Dudrabha*, *Kapalisa*, *Kotikunda*, *Vistambha*, *Sannada*, *Pippala*, *Avesana*, *Chandrapara*, *Mahavesa*, *Dakini*, *Bhairava*, and *Pavataka*, among others. *Bhasitprabha*, *Bhanukampa* and *Shankukarana* marched at the head of the army with Veerabhadra, who was riding a huge bull, and was surrounded by lions.

Goddess Mahakali accompanied Veerabhadra with her armies, who also included all her nine incarnations, *Kaali, Katyayani, Isani, Chamunda, Mundamardini, Bhadrakaali, Bhadra, Tvarita* and *Vaisnavi*. While auspicious signs accompanied these armies, Daksha at his yagna site, began to experience inauspicious signs, and he sought out Vishnu's help to rescue him from the anger of Rudra. Vishnu explained to Daksha that it was beyond him and his powers to help, for he had dishonoured Shiva and caused the death of Uma. With the armies of Veerabhadra and Mahakali at the gates of Daksha's house, Vishnu explained that by saving Daksha, he would be committing the devas and sages to their deaths. It would be wiser to save the others, he explained.

The devas however did not agree for they felt that being Gods, they would certainly be victorious. They sided with Daksha against Veerabhadra and Mahakali. A fierce war ensued. Veerabhadra and Mahakali defeated the armies of the Gods, who now sought Brahma and Vishnu's help. Unable to refuse to help, Brahma and Vishnu fought along with the Gods, and against Veerabhadra and Mahakali. Vishnu fought against Veerabhadra while the Gods fought against his armies. In the midst of the war, a divine voice proclaimed that it was impossible for the Gods to win, since Veerabhadra was invincible. Upon hearing the divine proclamation, Vishnu and Brahma withdrew from the war and left

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the battlefield. Veerabhadra sought out Daksha and severed his head and threw it in the *agnikund* at the sacrificial fire of the yagna and waited to inform Rudra of the victory.

In spite of the *rudrarooopa* and the widespread knowledge of the anger of Shiva, as Rudra, the aspects of his amusement, consideration, benevolence, laughter and joy are also remarkable to his devotees. Upon being defeated by Veerabhadra and Mahakali, the deities and sages went to Brahma and informed him about the destruction of the yagna and the death of Daksha and the manner in which his head was severed. Being his own creation, Daksha was like a son to Brahma, and thereby, he was saddened at the turn of events. Brahma felt that it would be essential to bring Daksha back to life and also to complete the unfinished yagna.

Accompanied by the deities and the sages, Brahma proceeded to Vishnu to seek his help. Along with Vishnu and Brahma, the deities and the sages now proceeded to the Kailasa Parbat and conducted prayers to Shiva. Pleased with their obeisance, Shiva agreed to bring Daksha back to life and to help complete the unfinished yagna. Proceeding to Kanakhala, Daksha's yagna-site, with Veerabhadra, Shiva however burst out with laughter upon seeing the destruction and havoc.

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Not being able to restore Daksha to life with his head which had got destroyed in the yagna fire, Shiva joined the head of a goat to Daksha's body and brought him back to life. Daksha agreed to his mistake in demeaning Shiva and causing the death of his daughter, Uma, and requested Shiva to accept his prayers and devotion. Pleased with his change of behaviour, Shiva compensated Daksha for all the loss caused by the war and destruction.

The deities and sages conducted worship of Shiva in his praise and appreciated his consideration for Daksha and his rightful action to complete the unfinished yagna. Pleased by the appreciation, Shiva instructed Daksha that *“while the gyani is supreme among other beings, an action performed even by him, in ignorance or hatred or jealousy cannot liberate him from the bondages of this world”*. Rightful action and rightful thought, at all times, would be the path to accomplishment rather than rituals and worship even by a learned person.

This story of Shiva, in his *rudraroopa* is almost unique in its representation of his love for Uma, his understanding of family relationships despite being the all-powerful god, and then his revengeful anger, and later his benevolence in forgiving Daksha. It is also the perfect paradox, of Shiva, the lover, the family man, the conceiver of

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warriors and destroyers, while by himself, he is also considered as the Creator of the habitat, the planets and the cosmos.

The turn of events of Uma losing her life in the sacrificial fires at the yagna organised by Daksha, Brahma's son, is resplendent in the perspectives similar to human nature. The aspect of Shiva as the destroyer and being the source of all creation, though Brahma is recognised as the Creator is enormously representative of the Indian Subcontinent's most ancient Theory of Creation. There are several stories prior to Shiva's revenge over Daksha that narrate the genesis of Shiva as the Creator of the cosmos. Shiva is supposed to have created the Universe, the solar system of the Planet Earth and later the habitats that are found on this Planet of ours. These stories are in the form of the narration by Brahma to his son, the great sage Narada and are retold in the Shiv Puran.



Shiva, as one of the trinity

Brahma or Prajapati is the Creator. Vishnu is the Preserver. They are mentioned in the Vedas and are regarded as Vedic gods. Prajapati Brahma is joined by Vishnu as a contemporary peer only by the time the Puranas are written. And during this period, Vishnu is also recognised within the Puranas, and in their understanding of the Vedas, as the Lord of the Universe and gets to be known as the principal Vedic god. So, in all these happenings, where is Shiva?

There is a theory that he was not in the ancient and proper core of the Vedas. He was certainly within the sphere of knowledge, and was documented as an active God. What is most certainly presumed of Shiva is that he was a god of the local tribals and was their protector. He is known throughout the Indian subcontinent as a resident of the hill forests and is usually associated, as the great *Aranya Maheshwara*, with natural sources of water in the upper hills or of the water emerging from deep underground aquifers. He is known in the later descriptions in the *rigveda* as Rudra or Ishan. He is described at most times as wearing animal skins and as one who sought delight in destruction. It is pertinent to note that he was perhaps seen as the destroyer only by the ones who

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wrote the vedas, and not the tribals or the local hill-forest dwelling people of those times.

Shiva is also believed to have been the God of the pre-aryans within the hindukush regions of the Himalayas. This could also be representative in his anger of being excluded at Daksha's grand yagna, when he had been invited at an earlier one. Being the God of the local peoples before the arrival of the Indo-aryans, he naturally had the right to participate in the rituals and receive the offerings and respects.

Shiva is also supposed to have been critically referred to in the later vedic documents and *Puranas* as capable of destroying people close to him. The *rigveda* perhaps began to 'civilise' the animal-skin wearing destroyer-god and must have perhaps realised that it would not be wise to ignore his presence but would be more appropriate to induct him to the vedic pantheon of gods. There seemed to have been one problem, however. While Brahma was the Creator and Vishnu was the Preserver, Shiva was capable of being represented as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, all by himself. For was he not until then, a God existing outside the vedic group of gods?

It is the later versions of the *rigveda*, that Shiva begins to be recognised as one of the trinity, and with Brahma and Vishnu, is now also known as

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Mahesh, or Maha + Eshwar = Maheshwar, and the three Gods represent separately the Creation, Preservation and Destruction of the Cosmos. Shiva became one of the trinity and thereby no longer, a mendicant God of the local native hill-forest dwelling peoples. Was this induction required? Was this induction into the vedic pantheon a tragedy to the local native hill-forest dwelling peoples?

Ardent devotees of Shiva would certainly join issue with the theory. There are many other manifestations of Shiva and he is revered in very different manners. This diversity could be understood as Shiva being described as the '*Prana*' (= life force) and in the larger context of '*Satchitananda*' (= *sat* – exists, *chit* – the understanding of knowledge, *ananda* – the aspect of pleasure or contentment), in his role as the only creator, preserver and destroyer of the cosmos. At this point, worship of Shiva is understood to represent the spellbound aspects in the absoluteness of devotion, and finally, that is all that is supreme.

The possibility that Shiva was a later entrant to the Vedic pantheon, is not to make him any lesser or different or an import. He is Shiva, the ultimate manifestation of energy, of strength, of vigour, of art and of expression. At the same time, he is also the supreme manifestation of destruction, war, destroyer of evil and capable of uncontrolled anger.

So when does Shiva actually don the role of the destroyer? When does he actually fulfill this rather wrongful role of destroying the cosmos? And if he does do so, then who is left behind to record the destruction? For if the cosmos or this world is destroyed, every ten million years or so, who gets to know of this, and who would actually be able to document the destruction? This is of course, a rather uniquely cynical perspective of enquiry.

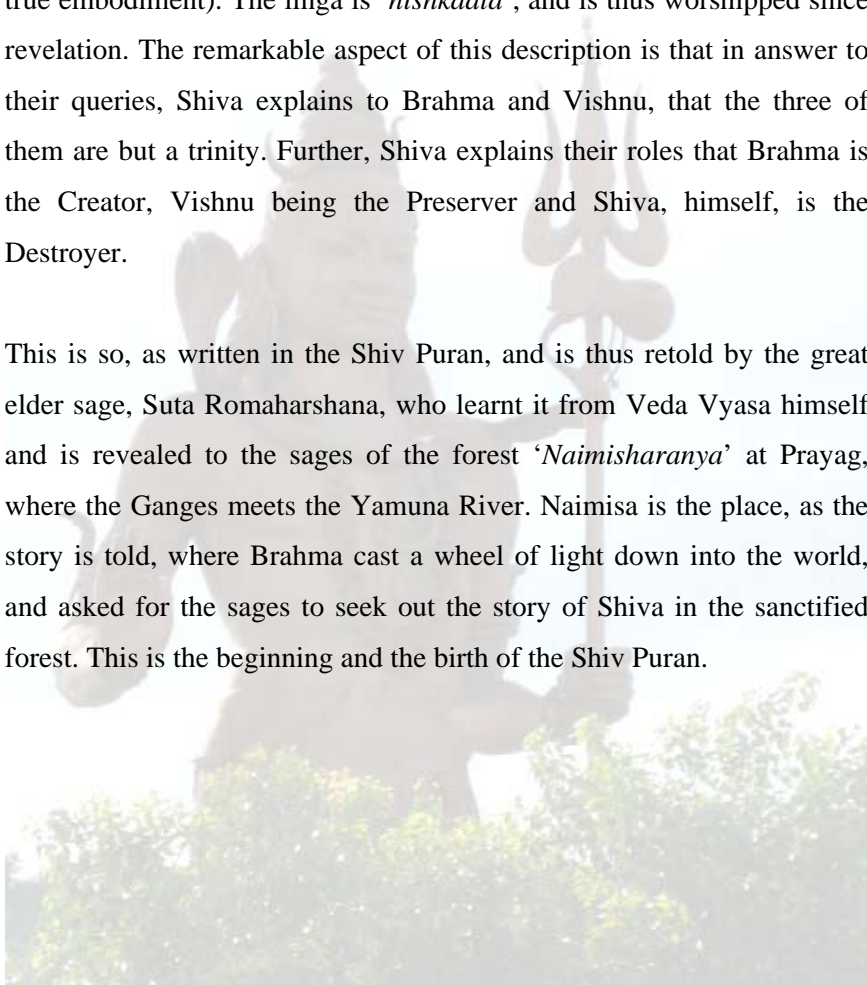
The aspect of different '*Yugas*' need to be understood at this point as understood in the books of ancient knowledge. The trinities, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, in their executive authority, create, sustain and destroy the Cosmos or Creation for every '*Kalpa*', which is the 'age of each Creation'. The trinities re-appear with the beginning of the next *Kalpa*, but being omnipresent; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva do not appear or disappear, for they are always there. Here, the aspect of 'being always there' is to represent their presence before even the 'beginning of time' and that they would continue to be present even after the very understanding of time ceases to exist.

It is thus written, that when time began, Lord Vishnu manifested himself in his great form. A lotus flower manifested by itself from his navel, and from the cells of the flower, Brahma was born. Later, without going into much detail here, as would befit another book, when Brahma and Vishnu

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were in debate over creation and the very existence of the cosmos, the first word ‘*Om*’ appeared, followed by Shiva as a shining *linga*. Shiva is known as ‘*nishkala*’ (= without name or form), as well as ‘*sakaala*’ (= in true embodiment). The *linga* is ‘*nishkaala*’, and is thus worshipped since revelation. The remarkable aspect of this description is that in answer to their queries, Shiva explains to Brahma and Vishnu, that the three of them are but a trinity. Further, Shiva explains their roles that Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu being the Preserver and Shiva, himself, is the Destroyer.

This is so, as written in the Shiv Puran, and is thus retold by the great elder sage, Suta Romaharshana, who learnt it from Veda Vyasa himself and is revealed to the sages of the forest ‘*Naimisharanya*’ at Prayag, where the Ganges meets the Yamuna River. Naimisa is the place, as the story is told, where Brahma cast a wheel of light down into the world, and asked for the sages to seek out the story of Shiva in the sanctified forest. This is the beginning and the birth of the Shiv Puran.



The sequence of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Creation

Along with the various other puranas, the Vishnu Puran and the Shiv Puran present the various details of the manifestation of Vishnu and Shiva respectively. The Shiv Puran, in its documentation of Shiva, also explains the transformation of Shiva from being ‘*aguna*’ (= one without any attribute) to being ‘*saguna*’, even before the birth of Vishnu. On the great sage Narada’s request, Brahma narrated to him about the divinity of Shiva.

He informs that with the final destruction or *mahapralaya*, nothing existed, except Shiva. From within himself, Shiva brought about the manifestation of nature and the world as we know it and this was then known as Ambika. After the brought-about manifestation of nature and the world, Shiva decided to reside in Kashi with Ambika, and the place came to be known as *Shivaloka*.

There are three manifestations of Parvati that bring forth the role of Shiva as the Creator of the Universe and of Life as we know of it on this Planet. The first manifestation, as Ambika, is as the ‘Mother’ of the Universe. In much more mundane human terms, the Goddess Parvati, as Ambika, is also the Goddess of the household and motherhood.

The second manifestation of Parvati to help Shiva in the creation of the Universe is as Tara, in the *roopa* of the Golden Embryo, the source of the Universe itself. Tara is not known to exist within the physical aspects of dimension that we recognise. She represents the great void of 'space' beyond our Planet.

The third manifestation of Parvati is as Vidya Chinnamasta in providing support to Shiva in his role of the Creator. This manifestation represents sustainability or sustenance upon the self. The World as we know it is dependent upon itself for its survival and through the living and non-living aspects on it, for its own sustenance. This Planet of ours would go through the cycle of creation and destruction over several millions of years, and Shiva would take upon himself the role of the Creator and the Destroyer with Parvati by his side.

Before the formation of the trinity, Shiva was the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. However, having now created the world and nature, and having further desired to reside with Ambika at Kashi, as the householder, the absence of a Creator was felt. If Shiva would 'retire', there would have to be a Creator in his place. Towards solving this absence, a child emanated from the energy of Shiva and Ambika. The child asked Shiva about the reason for his manifestation. The child was

Vishnu, after thus being named by Shiva, and was asked to practice austerities to attain various capabilities. Prior to the beginning of the austerities, and to help the child-Vishnu in this process, Shiva transferred the knowledge of the vedas through his breath. The Shiv Puran describes Shiva at this moment as –

“Yasya Nishvasitam Vedaaha”

Meaning – He whose exhaled air are the Vedas...

Strengthened by his knowledge of the Vedas, Vishnu practiced his austerities and penance for about twelve years. He desired for the second *darshana*, vision, of Shiva, but was not successful. A voice however instructed Vishnu to continue with his austerities and penance. In this second phase of his penance, the Shiv Puran describes, that streams of water emanated from his body and spread in various directions.

Being pleased with this creation of water, Vishnu went to sleep in the streams – “*naara*”, being the ethereal body of water. Due to this action, Vishnu is also known as “*Narayana* = one who resides in the water”. Subsequent to this contact and interaction with water, more than twenty-four elements emanated and manifested from Vishnu, and these included the three human qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, along with the five primary elements of nature, being sky (*aakash*), earth (*priti*), air

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(*vaayu*), water (*jal*) and fire (*agni*). Energy being common to the five primary elements of nature, and being permanent, is described as “without form”, as ‘*Sadasiva*’. Action by human elements convert of translate this energy from one form into another, in the three ‘*gunas*’ of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Thereafter, Brahma explained to the Sage Narada in the Shiv Puran, came the manifestation of the Lotus flower from Vishnu and the emergence of Brahma with four heads from within the flower. As mentioned earlier, during the debate between Vishnu and Brahma about who would be the Creator, came about the aspect of seniority. Even if Brahma would be the Creator, Vishnu would be the superior, since he had created Brahma. To conclude and terminate the debate, Shiva manifested before them as the *Shiva linga* and helped them understand the sequence and primary source of their creation and destroyed their ego.

Shiva challenged them to explore the outer limits of the Shiva Linga. Brahma transformed himself into a swan and Vishnu manifested himself as a boar, and they tried to reach the uppermost and lowermost reaches of the linga, but failed. Shiva reappeared before them and identified Brahma as the God of Creation, and thereby the concept of Creation begins.

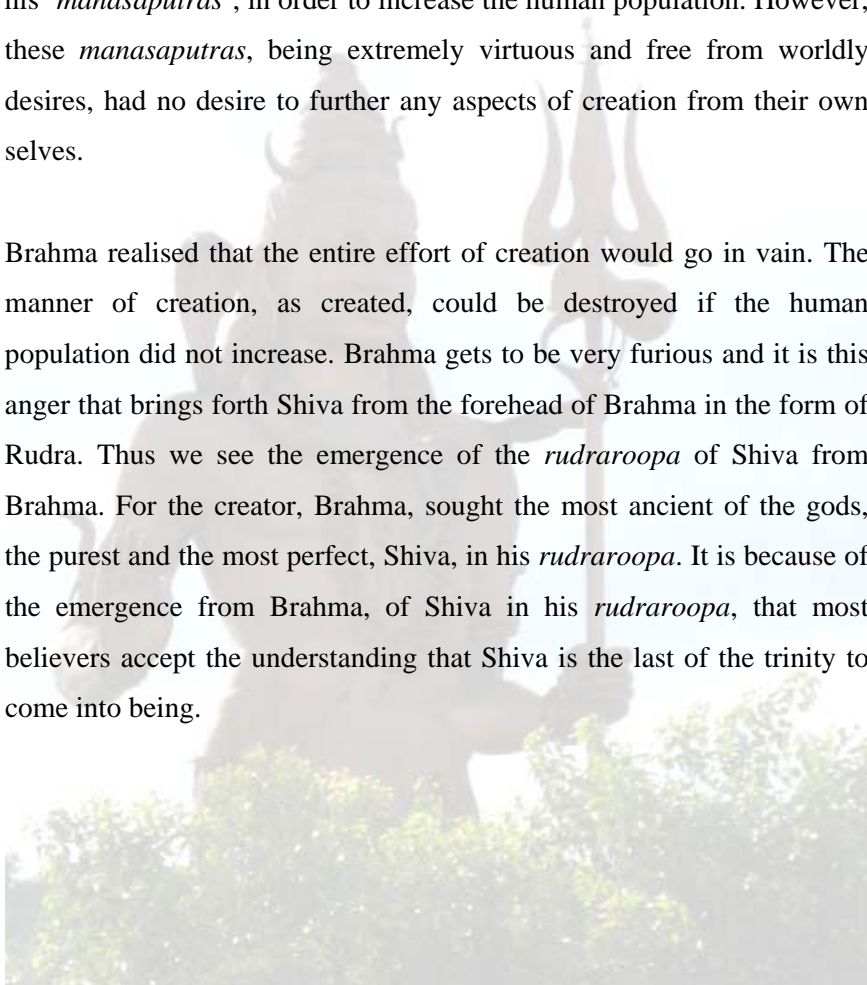
Brahma created water and later poured a palmful of water into the water body. This action helped in the manifestation of an egg that consisted of all the known twenty-four elements. The egg was of a very large size. Brahma was also puzzled by the manner of the subsequent actions to be determined and therefore conducted penance for twelve years. In answer, Vishnu appeared before Brahma. He requested Vishnu to bring the egg into Being and Consciousness. Vishnu entered the egg and thereby the Kailasa Mountain and the seven worlds came into existence.

To initiate further action on Creation, after the creation of the Kailasa Mountain, the seven worlds and the habitats within them, Brahma, from the aspect of the egg and its consciousness, created static living things, and these are meant to represent the first of the three *gunas*, the *Tamogun*. Later, Brahma created the animals, including the four-footed animals. Not being satisfied with these creations, Brahma returned to his penance. The austerities helped him create the deities, or Gods or devas, who represented the second of the three *gunas*, the *Satogun*. Feeling the need to create a transient *guna* between the *tamogun* and *satogun*, Brahma meditated further and conceptualised and created the human being, symbolising the transient or intervening aspect of the three *gunas*, the *Rajogun*.

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Along with the Shiv Puran, it is the Padma Puran that details the aspects of Creation at this point. Upon creating the moving and non-moving living beings and devas, in the three aspects of the *gunas*, Brahma creates his '*manasaputras*', in order to increase the human population. However, these *manasaputras*, being extremely virtuous and free from worldly desires, had no desire to further any aspects of creation from their own selves.

Brahma realised that the entire effort of creation would go in vain. The manner of creation, as created, could be destroyed if the human population did not increase. Brahma gets to be very furious and it is this anger that brings forth Shiva from the forehead of Brahma in the form of Rudra. Thus we see the emergence of the *rudraroopa* of Shiva from Brahma. For the creator, Brahma, sought the most ancient of the gods, the purest and the most perfect, Shiva, in his *rudraroopa*. It is because of the emergence from Brahma, of Shiva in his *rudraroopa*, that most believers accept the understanding that Shiva is the last of the trinity to come into being.



The *rudraroopa* of Shiva at the beginning of Creation

Shiva's *rudraroopa*, emerging from between the eyebrows of Brahma, comprised male and female halves of the body. This manifestation is also known as *ardhanarishwar* (= half-woman, half man). Upon Brahma's instructions, the two halves separated. Brahma requested Shiva in his *rudraroopa* to help him in the furthering of Creation. Shiva merely proceeded to create the hosts, *rudragana*, who resembled Rudra or Shiva himself. These *rudraganas* are supposed to have been eleven male entities from the male aspect of *rudraroopa* and several female entities from the female aspect. Brahma requested Shiva to further help in creating human mortals, but was refused. Shiva replied that it was he who liberated the mortals from their sorrows, and therefore, how could he place them in bondage? Shiva explained that it was Brahma's task to create the human mortals and saying thus, he proceeded to visit other places. Being thus born of Brahma's anger, the *rudraroopa* of Shiva thereby begets for him, the *inter-alia* name of Rudra.

The *rudraroopa* is believed to represent Shiva in all his anger, drawing in the vastness of the universe and cosmos to the proximity of those close to him. The *rudraroopa* is known in the *Shiv Puran* at some significant instances of the *Shiva katha*. Firstly, Daksha suffered with his life at having insulted Shiva and for making him angry. There is also the

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resultant fallout from Shiva's amusement at Brahma's character that later leads to the expression of the *rudraroopa* and the death of Kamadeva, the God of love or lust, who suffered, when Shiva was disturbed in his austerities, while Kamadeva was romancing his consort, Rati.

The story is thus. A boon given to Tarakasur, helped him gain strength and caused devastation among the Gods in heaven. Tarakasur began to reign in the heavens, and the Gods were driven away. They went to Brahma and sought his advice to get rid of Tarakasur. Brahma informed that Tarakasur could only be killed by a person who is born of the union of Shiva and Parvati. The Gods are happy but concerned that Shiva would not step away from his celibate state while in penance and practicing austerities. Meanwhile, upon Brahma's request, Tarakasur relinquished the heavens and permitted the Gods to return.

Having been given a task by Brahma, the Gods approached Kamadeva to arouse affection and love in Shiva, so that he would agree to marry Parvati. Indra informed Kamadeva that only a son born out of the union of Shiva and Parvati could kill Tarakasur. Kamadeva reached Kailasa Parbat with his wife, Rati, to carry out the instructions of the Gods. Shiva, in a deep state of meditation, did not get disturbed by the several attempts of Kamadeva. At a particular moment, Parvati, the daughter of King Himavan and Menaka, arrived with her companions, looking very

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beautiful. At the same moment, Shiva came out of his meditation and the state of trance that he had been in.

Kamadeva assumed that this would be the right moment and he struck Shiva with his *kamabana*, the arrow of love. The arrow left a very deep impact on Shiva, and he was smitten with the beauty of Parvati. In spite of the rising passion for Parvati, Shiva was puzzled by his sudden change of behaviour. He understood that this was an act of Kamadeva. Looking around, he saw Kamadeva in the vicinity with his bows and arrows in his hands and assumed his *rudraroopa*.

Understanding the change in Shiva, Kamadeva began to pray to the Gods to rescue him. Before he could do so, the third eye of Shiva opened up and the ray of anger directed at Kamadeva reduced him to ashes. Watching this act of violence arising out of the spontaneous anger of Shiva and his *rudraroopa*, Parvati was terrified. She rushed back to her house with her companions, while Rati, the wife of Kamadeva was left, weeping at the fate of Kamadeva.

The Gods came to Rati and consoled her by explaining that with the blessings of Shiva, Kamadeva would be alive once again. They conducted worship of Shiva and beseeched him to forgive Kamadeva, for it was not his fault that he had struck Mahadeva with his *kamabaana*. He

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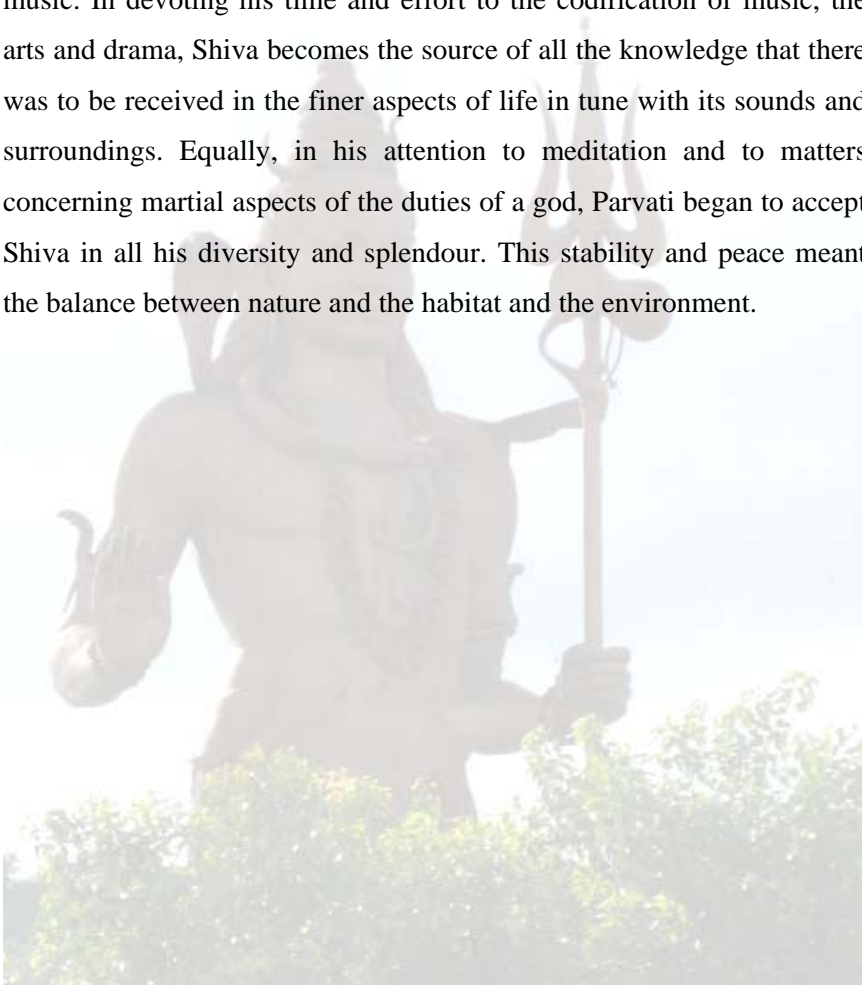
had done so merely on the instructions of the Gods. They informed Shiva that this was done in order that he may beget a son with Parvati, and that it was him who would be able to kill Tarakasur. They requested Shiva to bring Kamadeva back to life.

Shiva suggested a compromise, considering that Kamadeva did what he did for a greater purpose. He informed the Gods that Kamadeva would now be reborn as the son of Krishna and Rukmini at the end of the *dwapara yuga*. He would need to kill Shambar, a demon, and would later be able to marry Rati, who would be living in a city nearby. The Gods were not satisfied, for that would not help Rati to reunite with her husband for a long time. Shiva relented again and said that Kamadeva could become his *gana* until he is reborn as the son of Krishna and Rukmini. The Gods realised that Shiva had consented to the limits of his anger and fury but were still worried about the impact of the *rudraroupa* on the world.

The Gods went to Brahma and requested him to convince Shiva to make peace with himself and give up his anger. Brahma went to Shiva and pacified him and carried away his fury to the Sea. Brahma requested the Sea to retain the anger of Shiva until the final end of Creation, to which the Sea agreed.

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It is with the blessings of Parvati to Kubera, that Shiva chose to reside at Kailasa and became the complete householder, though sometimes too caught up with his meditation and his interpretation of the arts and music. In devoting his time and effort to the codification of music, the arts and drama, Shiva becomes the source of all the knowledge that there was to be received in the finer aspects of life in tune with its sounds and surroundings. Equally, in his attention to meditation and to matters concerning martial aspects of the duties of a god, Parvati began to accept Shiva in all his diversity and splendour. This stability and peace meant the balance between nature and the habitat and the environment.



Taandava, the dance of the destroyer, by Nataraja

Rudra, the God with the terrible anger, as Shiva, is also recognised as ‘kind and propitious’ in the *rigveda* with three hymns devoted to him. The late Vedic *Katha Aranyaka* and the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* mention Rudra as Shiva in various narrations. Also known as an expert archer, Rudra is regarded as the energy to kill the forces of darkness, and is thus also known as *Dhanavin* and *Bhanahasta* meaning *expert archer*, and the *one armed with arrows in his very hands*, respectively. At the same time, Shiva or Rudra is also recognised as a frightening personality and is sometimes referred to as *ghora* or ‘terrible’.

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, describes Shiva as –

“Rudra is truly one; for those who know do not admit the existence of a second, He alone rules all the worlds by His powers. He dwells as the inner Self of every living being. After having created all the worlds, He, their Protector, takes them back into Himself at the end of time.”

The anger of Rudra and in the manifestation of *Bhanahasta*, Shiva is often credited in the *rigveda* with the powers of transmitting the arrows of lightning in the skies. The destruction that could be caused by the

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lightning is fearsome and thereby people and their settlements often propitiate Shiva to bless them and spare them the destruction. In an amazing paradox, Shiva is at the same time, sought to bless children by sparing them from disease and is also referred to as *Vaidyanatha*, the best *physician of physicians*, and is known to possess the knowledge of more than a thousand medicines.

The amazing power of healing that is possessed by the God of the terrible anger and the one with the arrows manifested in his own hands is remarkably presented in Shiva being also known as *Vaidyanatha*, the God of Healing. Rudra is also recognised as *bhuvanasya pita*, the ‘father of the universe’ and *isanadasya bhuvanasya*, the ‘Lord of the Universe’ in the *rigveda*. It is however, the aspect and manifestation as *Nataraja* and the *Taandava nritya*, the dance of the destroyer, performed by Shiva that brings forth the complete presentation of Creation, Preservation and Destruction.

He who liberates people through his dance, in separating the illusion (= *maya*), through initiation (= *anugraha*) about creation, preservation and destruction, is *Nataraja* (= the king of actors or dancers who depict a story). The *Taandava Nritya* of *Nataraja* is the dance wherein the *naad* (= sound) permeates throughout every part of the dancer’s body.

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The *Nataraja roopa* is described as that of Shiva performing the *Taandava*, where Rudra is shown with four hands. The upper left hand is depicted as holding a flame, while the lower left hand points to *Muyalaka*, the demon, who is being crushed by Shiva's right foot. The act of holding the flame has been recognised as the symbolism in *Natya shastra* of depicting Destruction. The left foot is raised in what has now come to be recognised as a classic pose in the schools of dance-forms in India.

The upper right hand is depicted as holding a *damaru*, a hand-held two headed 'drum' that makes the sound “*dama dama dama*” by the two beads fastened to its narrow centre at the ends of leather chords. The *mudra* or 'hand gesture' of holding the *damaru* is known in the *Natya shastra* as the *damaru-hasta*, symbolising the sound of Creation. It is thus, that the opposite upper hands depict Destruction and Creation.

The lower right hand is in the classic dance pose of *abhayamudra*, to be 'without fear'. The depiction of *abhayamudra* is meant to convey that Shiva bestows protection from evil and ignorance for those on the path of *dharma*. While Shiva's matted locks are depicted in the beginning of the *Taandava* as being braided and bedecked with jewels, his hair-locks comes whirling open and around during the dance to also destroy the heavenly bodies. The *Taandava* of Rudra or Shiva is accompanied by the

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cobra and the Ganges in his matted locks along with a skull locked deep within. The *Nataraja roopa* is depicted as standing on a lotus pedestal within a circle of flames.

There is another form of the *Nataraja roopa*, wherein the posture is mirrored. This posture is indicative of the achievement of *moksha*, in continuation of the three basic *gunas* and the division of the Divine entity into five elements, - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Skies. At times, the snake dwelling in Shiva's hair during the *Taandava* is identified as *kundalini*, and is not meant to be aroused, for fear of cosmic annihilation.

Shiva in his *Nataraja roopa*, is known to have performed two forms of the *Taandava nritya*, the *Rudra Taandava*, and the *Ananda Taandava*. The *Rudra Taandava*, the dance of the destroyer, depicts the ferocious anger and violent aspect of Rudra, as the Creator and the Destroyer of the Universe. The *Ananda Taandava*, shows Rudra enjoying his Creation of the Universe. The name, *Taandava*, is believed to have come from Shiva's attendant, Tanduv, who is known to have helped Bharata Muni understand the *Taandava Nritya*. Bharata Muni is the author of the *Natya shastra*, the most ancient treatise on dance.

Tanduv is known to have written the earlier treatise on dance under the guidance of Shiva, and thereafter, instructed Bharata Muni about the

Angaharas and *Karanas*, the various modes and mudras of the *Taandava Nritya*. These aspects of dance as described in the *Natya shastra*, are interwoven in the modern renditions of dance in various forms, especially the *Bharatanatyam*. Shiva, as Nataraja, is known to have formalised the rendition of about 32 *Angaharas* and 108 *Karanas* in the *Taandava Nritya*. There is a separate chapter in the *Natya shastra*, named *Taandava Lakshanam*, as described by Bharata Muni, and it is these combinations of *Angaharas* and *Karanas* that are utilised during the various postures for depicting dance, fight or combat among others.

There is an interesting aspect to the codification of the *Taandava Nritya* in the *Natya Sastra*. It is said that, once, during the Krishna Avataar, Shiva missed Vishnu, and went to meet him. Shiva found Krishna dancing the *Raasa Leela* (= the dance of romance) with Radha and the other *gopis*. Disguised as a *gopi*, Shiva began to dance with Krishna and was soon immersed in the dance. Radha, on getting jealous and perplexed, confronted the *gopi*, and discovered Shiva. The *gopis* and Radha, worshipped Shiva in front of Krishna, who had known all along. It is interesting to note that the *Raasa Leela*, perhaps is not as intensively codified as the *Taandava Nritya*.

The mystery of *Apasmara* or *Muyalaka* or *Muyalakan*, as he is differently called, the dwarf-like demon, who is crushed by Shiva's right

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foot during the *Taandava* is quite unique in being restricted to his appearance only during the performance. *Apasmara*, meaning ‘victory over ignorance’, is also sometimes explained as indicative of epilepsy. The significance is not as yet properly understood. *Apasmara* is depicted with his own hand in *Anjali Mudra* in the *Taandava nritya*, when crushed by Shiva’s right foot.

It is said that *Muyalakan* or *Apasmara Purusha* was a dwarf monster, who was set upon Shiva by some rishis. Shiva had been wandering as a mendicant *bhikshatanar*, and was accompanied by Vishnu as Mohini along with *Adishesha*, the celestial multi-headed *Naaga* serpent. Upon being disturbed in their incantations, the rishis sent *Muyalakan*, who was crushed by Shiva, while dancing the *Taandava*, by placing his right foot on the dwarf’s back and breaking it and leaving him in pain.

The *Taandava nritya*, the dance of the destroyer, by Rudra is meant to be a dance-form to depict the five manifestations of energy, namely, *Shrishti* (creation), *Sthithi* (preservation), *Samhara* (destruction), *Tirobhava* (illusion) and *Anugraha* (benevolence or grace). There are supposed to be seven well-known and nine lesser-known forms of the *Taandava nritya*. The well-known forms include the *Ananda Taandava*, *Tripura Taandava*, *Sandhya Taandava*, *Sambara Taandava*, *Kalika Taandava*, *Uma Taandava* and the *Gauri Taandava*.

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The dance performed by Shiva in his grief over losing Sati in Daksha's yagna was the *Rudra Taandava*. It is said in the *Shivapradosha Stotra*, that Brahma, Vishnu, Saraswati, Laxmi and Indra play musical instruments and sing in praise of Shiva, when he dances the *Sandhya Taandava* for Parvati. The *Gauri Taandava* and the *Uma Taandava* are said to be the most fearsome, when Shiva dances at a cremation ground and assumes the form of *Bhairava* and is accompanied by Parvati.

The *Shiva Taandava Stotra*, supposed to be very powerful in its blessings, describes Shiva's power and beauty was sung by King of Lanka, Ravana. He beseeches Shiva's power as the destroyer and applies for the appreciation of Rudra, as being able to also be the destroyer of death. It was in answer to this prayer by Ravana, that Shiva granted him the blessings of invincibility. Ravana sought a simple boon, as he estimated, that since Shiva was a destroyer, he could grant him the wish to destroy 'death'. It is said in the Ramayana, that on one occasion when Ravana emerged from a bath in the Narmada River, and led a ceremonial procession, a golden shiva-linga was borne before him. He is supposed to have been one of the most devout devotees of Shiva.

The *Shiva Taandava Stotra*, describes Shiva, as he dances the *Taandava*, the dance of the destroyer, with the flow of the Ganges from this thick

‘forest-like’ matted hair, and with the snake as a garland around him, and the ‘*damaru*’ drum resonating as it only can, ‘*dama dama dama dama*’. The *stotra* further describes Shiva with his head carrying with him the ripples of the Ganges, and depicts the mighty river as having to traverse the deeper reaches of his matted locks. Shiva’s forehead is described with a very bright fire, with the crescent moon as a jewel on his head.

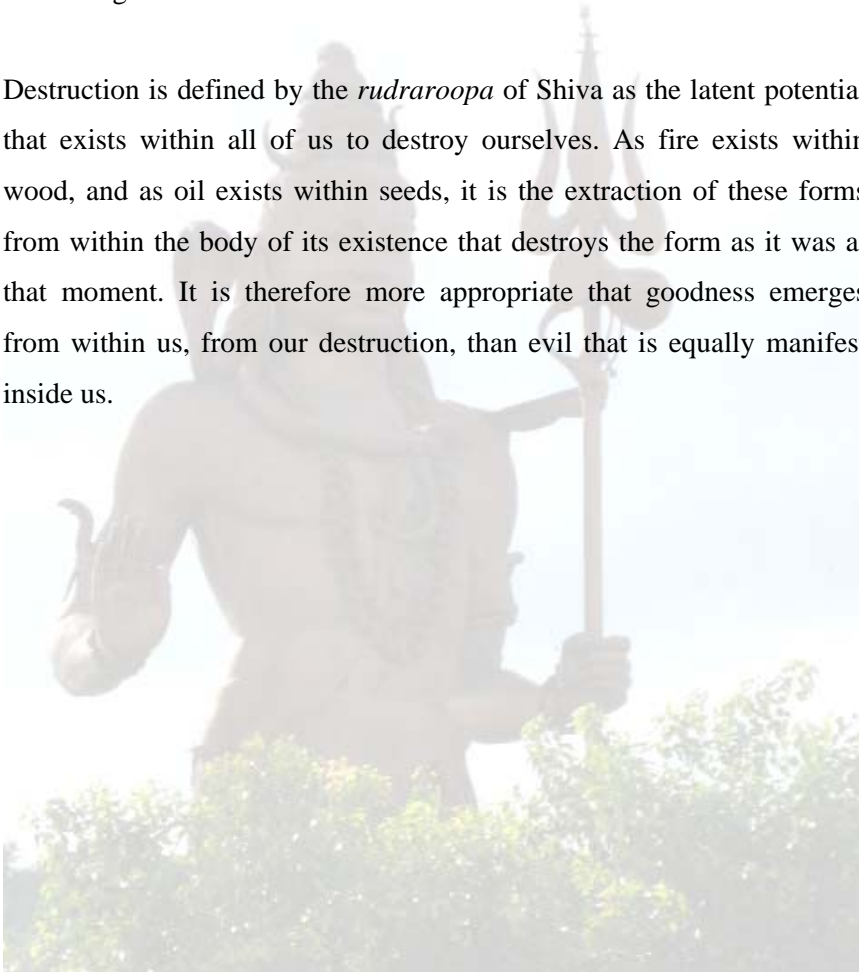
Interestingly, it is only the *Shiva Taandava stotra* that perhaps specifies that the upper garment of Shiva is that of ‘*madha-nigdha-sandhu*’, a huge intoxicated elephant. It is said that the sound of the *damaru*, depicts in its ethereal rhythm and quality, the creation of the cosmos, and marks the beginning of the emergence of phonetic words that could be used by humans, signifying the beginning of language and the spoken word.

It is said that the rhythmic sound of the ‘*damaru*’ at the point of the high-energy confluence of Shiva with Shakti, leads to an understanding of the creative energy of sound, and thereby when codified, helped in the development of language. Shiva is believed to sound the *damaru* in various combinations of sound over fourteen times, thereby the fourteen *Pratyahars*, during the *Taandava Nritya*, and releasing all the phonetic alphabets of human language.

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It is this aspect of human behaviour, of harnessing sound in the manner of speech that embodies the expression of energy from within the mind. Uniting this energy with godliness, in Shiva, directs the seeker to the hidden higher realms of consciousness.

Destruction is defined by the *rudraroopa* of Shiva as the latent potential that exists within all of us to destroy ourselves. As fire exists within wood, and as oil exists within seeds, it is the extraction of these forms from within the body of its existence that destroys the form as it was at that moment. It is therefore more appropriate that goodness emerges from within us, from our destruction, than evil that is equally manifest inside us.



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About this book: The rudraroopta of Siva, the creator of the cosmos, and the taandava nritya, the array in the puranas of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Parvati, Daksha, Bhairava and Mahakali is included in this book. The scope is awesome and enormous, and this book is but only a very small beginning.



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This photograph is of the magnificent idol of Lord Shiva at Haridwar. All credit is due to the creator of the idol. This photograph is only a messenger.

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