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MAHA SHIVARATRI

Maha Shivaratri ([IAST](#): Mahāśivarātri) is a [Hindu festival](#) celebrated annually in honour of the god [Shiva](#). The name also refers to the night when Shiva performs the [heavenly dance](#).^{[4][5]} There is a *Shivaratri* in every luni-solar month of the [Hindu calendar](#), on the month's 13th night/14th day, but once a year in late winter (February/March, or [Phalguna](#) as per North Indian Hindu calendar while the same day is considered to fall in Maagha Maas Krishna Paksha as per South Indian Hindu calendar) and before the arrival of Summer, marks Maha Shivaratri which means "the Great Night of Shiva".^{[6][7]}

It is a major festival in [Hinduism](#), and this festival is solemn and marks a remembrance of "overcoming darkness and ignorance" in life and the world. It is observed by remembering Shiva and chanting prayers, [fasting](#), and meditating on ethics and virtues such as honesty, non-injury to others, charity, forgiveness, and the discovery of Shiva.^[7] The ardent devotees keep awake all night. Others visit one of the Shiva temples or go on pilgrimage to [Jyotirlingams](#). The festival originated in circa the [5th century CE](#).^[7] According to the [South Indian calendar](#), Maha Shivaratri is observed on Chaturdashi [Tithi](#) during Krishna [Paksha](#) in the month of [Magha](#), and in other parts of

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India, on 13/14 night of Krishna Paksha in Phalguna of [Hindu calendar](#), the [Gregorian](#) date however remaining the same.^[8]

In [Kashmir Shaivism](#), the festival is called **Har-ratri** or phonetically simpler **Haerath** or **Herath** by Shiva devotees of the Kashmir region.

DESCRIPTION

Story Subtitle or summary

Maha Shivaratri is an annual festival dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, and is particularly important in the [Shaivism](#) tradition of [Hinduism](#). Unlike most Hindu festivals which are celebrated during the day, the Maha Shivaratri is celebrated at night. Furthermore, unlike most Hindu

festivals which include expression of cultural revelry, the Maha Shivaratri is a solemn event notable for its introspective focus, fasting, [meditation](#) on Shiva, self study, social harmony and an all night vigil at Shiva temples.^[7]

The celebration includes maintaining a "[jaagaran](#)", an all-night vigil and prayers, because

Shaiva Hindus mark this night as "overcoming darkness and ignorance" in one's life and the world through [Shiva](#). Offerings of fruits, leaves, sweets and milk to Shiva are made, some perform all-day fasting with vedic or tantric worship of Shiva, and some perform meditative [Yoga](#).^[12] In Shiva temples, "[Om Namah Shivaya](#)", the sacred [mantra](#) of Shiva, is chanted through the day.^[13] Devotees praise Shiva

through the recitation of [Shiv Chalisa](#).^[14]
Maha Shivaratri is celebrated over three or ten days based on

the Hindu luni-solar calendar.^[6] Every lunar month, there is a Shivaratri (12 per year). The main festival is called Maha Shivaratri, or great

Shivaratri, which is held on 13th night (waning moon) and 14th day of the month [Phalguna](#). In the [Gregorian calendar](#), the day falls in either February or March.

HISTORY

The Maha Shivaratri is mentioned in several [Puranas](#), particularly the [Skanda Purana](#), [Linga Purana](#) and [Padma Purana](#). These medieval era Shaiva texts present different versions associated with this festival, & mention fasting, reverence for icons of [Shiva](#) such as the *Lingam*.^[7]

Different legends describe the significance of Maha Shivaratri. According to one legend in the Shaivism tradition, this is the night when Shiva performs the heavenly dance of creation, preservation and destruction.^{[4][5]} The chanting of hymns, the reading of Shiva scriptures and the chorus of devotees joins this cosmic dance and remembers Shiva's presence everywhere. According to another legend, this is the night when Shiva and Parvati got married.^{[4][15]} A different legend states that the offering to Shiva icons such as the linga is an annual occasion to get over past sins if any, to restart on a virtuous path and thereby reach [Mount Kailasha](#) and liberation.^[4]

The significance of dance tradition to this festival has historical roots. The Maha Shivaratri has served as a historic confluence of artists for annual dance festivals at major Hindu temples such as at [Konark](#), [Khajuraho](#), [Pattadakal](#), [Modhera](#) and [Chidambaram](#).^[16] This event is called *Natyanjali*, literally "worship through dance", at the Chidambaram temple which is famous for its sculpture depicting all dance mudras in the ancient Hindu text of performance arts called [Natya Shastra](#).^{[17][18]} Similarly, at Khajuraho Shiva temples, a major fair and dance festival on Maha Shivaratri, involving Shaiva pilgrims camped over miles around the temple complex, was documented by Alexander Cunningham in 1864.