

SHIVA LINGAM

Shiva Lingam is the symbol used when worshipping Shiva

- Shiva (destroyer) forms part of the Hindu Trinity, and along with Brahma (Creator) and Vishnu (Preserver), making Brahman, the formless and ultimate.
- Brahman (not to be confused with Brahmin (Holy Sage)) is the Absolute reality – the unchanging, infinite and transcendent Divine Ground.
- The Shiva Lingam is the symbol of worship for Shiva. The meaning of Shiva Lingam is such: Shiva means auspicious and Lingam means sign or symbol. Hence, Shiva Lingam is 'a symbol of the great God of the Universe who is all-auspicious'.
- Shiva also means 'one in whom the whole creation sleeps after dissolution'. The Lingam also means 'a place where objects created get dissolved during the disintegration of the universe'. Hence, together Shiva Lingam represents God, in whom everything rests.
- It is the most prevalent icon of Shiva and is found in all Shiva temples.
- The Shiva Lingam is a rounded, elliptical iconic image set on a circular base (Peetham).
- Peetham represents Parashakti, the manifesting power of God.
- The Lingam is most commonly made from stone, either carved or naturally formed, e.g. Swayambhu, such as shaped by a flowing waters of a river.
- Other materials may be used to make a Shiva Lingam, including metals, precious gems, crystal, wood, earth or transitory materials such as ice.
- Transitory Lingams , however, may be made from 12 different materials: sand, rice, cooked food, river clay, cow dung, butter, Rudraksha seeds, ashes, sandalwood, Darbha grass, a flower garland or molasses.
- On the 14th day in the dark night of the month of Phalguna, Shiva first manifested himself as a Lingam. This day is celebrated as Mahashivratri – the Grand night of Shiva and is very auspicious.
- Devotees usually fast on Mahashivratri and the Lord is worshipped through the night.
- In Shiva temples, the Lingam is worshipped throughout the night through the pouring of milk through the Dhara Patra (a metal vessel) above the Lingam.
- The Linga is at once form and formlessness – the ultimate symbol of God.