

Shivaratri: The Night of Lord Shiva

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I came down to the earth from the cosmic world to enjoy the mundane life living with other beings on this colorful earth. I landed in the forest called Sleshmantak. I found many beautiful lives there; the plants and animals are gorgeous; among them I saw the lives of antelopes very interesting. I wanted to spend some time with these earthly lives. So I transformed myself into a stag with golden antlers and started grazing along with the herd of other stags. I found it enjoyable to live and play with animals in the most beautiful forest on earth.

Brahama, Vishnu and Parbati fly down to the earth to get me back to the cosmic world. When I am sure that those guys have already cornered me and I do not have a chance to escape from them I transform myself from a stag into an enormous brilliantly radiant Phallus called Lingam coming out of the thick mist in the Sleshmantak forest, and then thrust on the Brahma-yoni (cosmic female sex organ). In doing so, I wanted to demonstrate the process of creation of life on earth. This has happened on the night of the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Falgun (February–March) in the Nepal calendar. That is why Hindus all over the world celebrate this night as the night dedicated to me and called it Shivaratri deriving it from my name: Shiva.

Therefore, Hindus portray me as a part of Lingam (phallus) inserted into Brahma-yoni (universal vagina). In fact, Lingam is the male form and Brahma-yoni is the female form; Lingam is the cosmic process and Brahma-yoni is the universe. Combination of these two things creates life at a certain time. Therefore, I am a cosmic process, universe and time that are the three ingredients required for creating life on earth. As time passes, the cosmic process and universe come together to form a new life, and then the life matures and passes away. Thus, everyone is under the control of time but time is not under the control of anyone. Nothing is permanent except for the soul. I am the Super Soul called Shiva that denotes the cosmic process, universe and time.

I am the Super Soul. I am the god of gods. So, I am also called Mahadeva means a Super God. If you can understand me you will be free from all kinds of sufferings. Then, you will not need the sunlight or the moonlight for vision. You will see everything through your soul that emits eternal light for you to enjoy forever. You will not have any mental impurities at this stage of mind.

My name Shiva also means the soul in a body. Your material body is made of four physical elements such as earth (because it produces food), water, air and heat. If I do not dwell in your body it will not differ from a log that has no life. So, my presence in your body makes you a human. I am the soul an ever healthy, peaceful and invisible that has existed ever since the universe was created. I am everywhere at every time; I am omnipotent and omnipresent. I am in everyone's body but no one feels it, sees it and understands it. I am permanent, self-created and formless. I am the super element from which every life in this world is derived. I am non-destructive; I do not react to anything. However, I am neither the life nor the physical body.

The only way for you to understand me is through the persistent meditation. You will be in a position to understand me when you reach the state of egoless and when you become unattached to any worldly thing. Then you will never be needed to be reborn in this world of living beings; you will have inner knowledge of everything. Then, you merge with me: the Super Soul. This process is called Brahma-lean means merging with the universe.

When you understand me you will realize my presence and you will see me in different things with different nature. This is called getting insight in the mind. This state of mind will help you to understand me, and you will find me dwelling in all living beings. You ultimately understand me as Per-am Brahma: the source of all souls. At this state of mind, you will

understand that the world is only illusion; this knowledge is called Brahma-jnana. Thus, you become enlightened and become the part of me.

The two main hurdles to be free from the worldly cycle of birth and death are cravings for and contempt of worldly things. These two things will keep you attached to the material world and you will never be able to free from the entanglement of painful birth and death. Your soul will not be free even after hundreds of thousands of rebirths. The only way for you to be free from the vicious circle of birth and death is to get away from craving and contempt. These are the two main foes that will keep you in the endless earthly business. If you can remain aloof from them then you will be free from sufferings and can live in eternal tranquility.

Some people call me the god of dance. This is only the symbolic meaning of what I want to depict the world the stage where everyone plays a role for some time. This is how I teach the lesson of impermanence, and give a clue to my disciples that everything they have in the material world is changing and nothing remains forever. Every living being is a performer only. Therefore, some people think that I am the dance guru. However, I simply want to remind my disciples that they should not attach too much importance to the material world in which every human will live for a limited time only. If you understand this reality then you become enlightened.

You will find me everywhere in this huge universe if you can link your mind with soul. This you can do practicing meditation on a daily life. So, I prescribe meditation for all of you to practice at least three times a day: in the morning, at the daytime and in the evening to have the right knowledge of Super Soul. The practice of linking the mind with the soul burns down all mental impurities, and then you achieve the eternal purity. If you control your restless mind through the practice of meditation, and link it with the soul, you soon reach the stage of being non-reactive to anything, and ultimately the stage of self-realization.

I have eight forms in your material world. They are: 1) Bhava, 2) Serba, 3) Rudra, 4) Yugra, 5) Bhim, 6) Mahadev, 7) Ishan, and 8) Pashupati. The first five forms of mine represents five life-supporting elements such as earth, water, air, light and ether; the sixth and seventh depict the cosmic world, and the eighth symbolizes soul. Thus, I represent the whole Hindu universe on this earth.

Eighth form of mine: Pashupati is derived from Pashu-pass means freedom from animal instinct. I set free all human beings from the animal instinct; therefore, I am Pashupati. Some people wrongly believe that Pashupati means the lord of all animal beings directly translating the words such as 'Pashu' and 'pati'. 'Pashu' means animals and 'pati' means the lord. However, I am the lord of all living beings.

I have been dwelling in the name of Pashupati on the right bank of Bagmati River ever since I came to live a few moments of my earthly life in the form of a stag in the Sleshmantak forest.

In the form of Pashupati, I have six faces. You can see four faces on the stone column called Shiva-Lingam in the inner sanctum of the temple; they are facing four directions. The east face represents Vishnu, the south face represents Bhairava, the West face represents Som, and the north face represents Buddha. However, you cannot see the other two faces: one facing to the sky represents Yogesower or Ishan, and another facing to the earth represents Rudra.

Some people called me "Yogi" too. I formulated eight rules of Yoga-exercises. You reach the state of "samadhi" following these rules. "Samadhi" is the harmonious state of mind and body. At this state of mind, you will be able to watch the body and mind from the inner vision. If you strictly follow these Yoga-exercises, you develop Tantra that leads you to the universal knowledge known as Brahma-jnana. Some people called it Tantra-Yoga, and others called it Shiva-Yoga.

All my physical features and belongings are for you to understand me. The third eye on my forehead is depiction of the Divine Power for having the inner vision; so, it is also known as the

wisdom eye. My human form remains almost always nude to remind you that you cannot cover the Super Soul. The tiger skin I wear at my waist is to demonstrate the control of ferocious passion. The elephant skin I use as a bed is to symbolize the control of ego. The trident I carry is a weapon to kill ignorance, and to portray birth, life and death. I wear a half moon on my head, and I carry River Goddess Ganga in my wig to show how cool and clear my head is. I rub my body with ashes to remind you that the physical body is subject to ashes. Wearing the ornaments of live serpents, I want to show you my full control over anger and risk. The hand drum called 'damaru' shaped in an hourglass I play for signaling my approaching super soul and power.

I am the source of all Vedas. I taught Isower Gita transferring from one generation to another through word of mouth. I gave you three sources of knowledge. You gain knowledge from 1) external sources such as Vedas, from 2) internal sources such as thinking and enhancing knowledge by studying Vedas, and from 3) your own experiences.

I believe in the Hindu caste system that specializes the nature of work you do. However, I am not for strictly compartmentalizing these castes but for allowing everybody to switch from one caste to another depending upon the profession s/he adopts. For example, Sudras could be Brahmins if they would master over Vedas, and attained Brahma-jnana. However, the most conservative Hindus particularly Daksha Prajapati and his followers did not accept this principle. So, I along with my disciples fought a number of religious wars with Daksha Prajapati and his followers.

I reserve a day to bless you all human beings that line up at the entrance to my temple on the fourteenth day of dark fortnight of Falgun (February-March), the day and night you call Shivaratri. My attendants give me a special bath of honey, yogurt, milk and sugar syrup early in the morning on this day in preparation for receiving you all in my temple. Thereafter, they give me a massage with rapeseed oil; they dress me up, and decorate me with silver ornaments, and mark me with sandalwood paste. I do not need to eat as a Super Soul but my attendants offer me sweets and fruits in the name of Bal-Bhog offering. Then, they open the silver gate to the public.

Hundreds of thousands of human beings visit me starting early in the morning and ending at night on the day and night called Shivaratri. Some of you remain vigilant throughout this night to watch my appearance. All of you receive my blessing on this day and night but you will be emancipated from this material world only if you follow my teachings. Therefore, the best way of celebrating the day of mine called Shivaratri day is to understand me and follow my teachings rather than visiting me and making offerings to me.

Many of you have lost the path I have shown you. You indulge in smoking hashish in my name. I have never smoked hashish and do not prescribe anyone to smoke it. I spend most of time on meditation. So, if you practice meditation on this night dedicated to me and learn my teachings, I will be more than happy to bless you all.

Now, the nitty-gritty of how my devotees celebrate my day called Shivaratri. They celebrate Shivaratri keeping vigilant, and revering me the whole night. They visit the temples and shrines dedicated to me on this day and night elsewhere in Nepal. Hindu pilgrims coming from across the southern border en masse visit me at the Pashupati temple in Kathmandu.

Some ascetic people called sadhus arrive at Pashupati about four days before and leave four days after Shivaratri. During this period, they stay in the open area set aside for them. They pay homage to me. They sit at a bonfire called 'dhuni' and rub ashes on their naked bodies either to keep them warm and cozy during the chilly climate of Kathmandu at this time of a year, or to emulate me. The Nepalese Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) and Guthi Sansthan provide them with meals, hashish to smoke and firewood for making bonfires for about a week. Sadhus believe that I love to smoke hashish; so, the government not only allows sadhus to smoke hashish but also provides them with hashish for a week during the

Shivaratri days. Even some tourists join them to smoke hashish taking the advantage of the government permitting to smoke hashish to sadhus for a week of the Shivaratri days.

Some devotees keep awake the whole night on the Shivaratri night meditating and chanting different names of mine, usually sitting at the bonfire believing that this gives them the vision (darshan) of me. They believe that I appear from luminous Phallus in a human form and bless them on this night. So, apart from sadhus, common folks also make bonfires in the belief that they, too, will get to see me on this night. Teenagers collect firewood, any other wood or materials suitable for bonfire on this night. Others get peanuts, corn, potatoes and soybeans, and roast these food items on the bonfires and consume them as the blessings from me.

About two thousands years ago, Hindus began depicting me in the form of Phallus and human, and gave me various names to make it easier for common folks to understand me. Phallus represents creation. Devout Hindus believe that I appeared in a human form from a luminous Phallus called Lingam.

Some folks interpret the meaning of Pashupati as the lord of animals directly translating the two words such as 'pashu' and 'pati' that they believe derived from the word 'Pashupati'. The direct meaning of Pashu is animal, and of 'pati' is lord. However, Pashupati is made up of two words such as 'pashu' and 'pass'. People without wisdom or knowledge are like animals. Pass means enlighten, pashu-pass means enlightenment. Pashupati means the lord that disentangles or transfers you from darkness to light. So, the real meaning of Pashupati is freedom from darkness.

Many Hindu myths describe the origin of Lord Pashupati on the present site in Kathmandu. The myth closet to the truth may be about the origin of 'Joti lingam' means a luminous Phallus that has appeared in this area. Seepage of natural gas that occurs elsewhere in the Kathmandu Valley must have caused a natural illumination on this site at that time. Ever since, Nepalis have been worshipping me in this natural burner as Lord Pashupati.

According to the chronicles called Gopalraj Vamshavali compiled during the period of 1382-1395 A.D., Nepalis have began worshipping Lord Pashupati at the current site since the tenth century B.C. Licchavi King Supuspa Dev built the first temple to Lord Pashupati on this site. Since then, kings belonging to various dynasties in Nepal had either rebuilt or renovated this temple several times before bringing it into the current shape. Currently, it is a two-tiered Nepalese-styled temple decorated with meticulously carved silver doors, and with gold gilded brass roofs supported by struts decorated with carved figures of various divinities. The lord is in the inner sanctum in the form of a Phallus with six faces. This is one of the oldest Hindu temples in the world. King Ansu Verma adopted me as a state god, and saivism as the state religion.

Vajracharyas were the official priests of the temple until King Pratap Malla replaced them with the South Indian Hindu priests that continue to serve Lord Pashupati even today. A team of priests, storekeepers, and other supporting staff members attend me daily. PADT provides resources for all the services required. However, all the offerings made in cash and the fees paid for making various offerings go to the private purse of the priests.

Nepalis worship me at Pashupati placing a crown with an image of Lord Buddha on the Phallus twice a year: first on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of Kartik (Oct-Nov), and second on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of Magha (Jan-Feb). On the Shivaratri night, they worship me as Lord Matsyendranath: Karunamaya for Nepalese Buddhists.

Tantriks worship me at Pashupati as Lord Kirti-mukhi Bhairava, and Lord Unmat Bhairava, and offer me even animal sacrifice at the southern courtyard of the Pashupati temple on every full moon day. On this occasion, they connect the Bhairava with the southern face on the Phallus in the inner sanctum of the temple with cotton threads called 'pashuka' made of three different colored yarns that represent Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvore; and make offering of animal sacrifice to the Bhairava following the tantric rituals, directly connecting them with me in the inner sanctum. In addition, Nepalis worship me as Luku Mahadeo means hidden Mahadeo once a year and offer me non-vegetarian foods and alcoholic beverages during the Ghode jatra festival.

I am Lord Shiva for all Hindus, Lord Matsyendranath for Nepalese Buddhists and Lord Bhairava for Nepalese Tantriks. These are the symbols of religious harmony in Nepal.

The word "Shiva" stands for the universe, and for the super soul in the Hindu world. Hindus believe in the super soul from which other souls come into beings. After the completion of the life cycle of human beings, these souls move on to take the forms of other living beings before returning back to the super soul, and merge with it depending upon the deeds of humans and the merits they have accumulated over their lifetime. Thus, the super soul is in everything and everywhere. In other words, the super soul is the source of divine power, all living and non-living beings. So, I am formless and infinite, and represent the universe of the Hindu world.

I also represent the life cycle, and five life-supporting elements such as earth, water, fire, air and ether. The life cycle starts off from the creation of life from five life-supporting elements and, then the continuation of the life, and the completion of life that is death means separating the physical body from the soul. The physical dead body disintegrates into five elements such as four elements such as earth, air, heat, and water return to their original elementary forms, and the fifth element: the soul returns to me.

I am also called "Om" that represents the five elements of the process of a life cycle. "Om" has three sound elements that give sounds of vowels such as "A", "Ou", "Ma" and two physical elements such as a dot and a crescent. The first sound "A" represents birth, the second "Ou" continuation of life, the third "Ma" death, the fourth a "dot" represents disintegration of physical body into the original four elements, the fifth "crescent" represents the soul moving to the another physical body or returning to merge with me. Therefore, "Om" also stands for me, and denotes the universe in the Hindu world.

Hindus believe in me appearing as a luminous "Lingam". Although it is of a special form, Lingam is considered as a formless and an infinite object representing me as a universe. The base of Lingam represents "Ou". A set of lingam standing on the base of "Ou" is considered to be the "Om" that depicts a universe and me. Hindus worship me in such a set elsewhere in the Hindu world.

Hindus believe that I first created Lord Vishnu, the most beautiful divinity with a radiant head and four limbs holding four different things, and assigned him to create the cosmos, and a cosmic world. Thereafter, following my wish, Lord Vishnu gave birth to various stars, planets, cosmos and a cosmic world. After arduous job of giving births, Lord Vishnu rested on the cushion of plaited serpents floating on a cosmic ocean of the Hindu world. So, Hindus also called him Narayan, the name derived from the waters on which he floated in the cosmic world.

Seeing Lord Vishnu being tired of performing the job of creation, to relieve him from the burden of further creation, I gave birth to Lord Brahma with four faces, and placed him on the lotus grown out of the navel of Lord Vishnu laying on his back on the plait bed of seven

serpent deities and floating on the cosmic ocean of the Hindu world. I gave Lord Brahma four faces to enable him to see at all four directions simultaneously. I did so to expedite the birth of the Hindu world.

Lord Brahma with the power and authority I gave him began giving birth to one thing or another. He first gave birth to the five life-supporting elements such as earth, water, air, fire and ether. Then, he created mountains, hills, lands, rivers, and so on. Thereafter, he gave birth to holy men, and named them differently and assigned them with various duties. However, he found it was the never-ending process of creation. Therefore, he felt the need for a biological process of creation for sustaining life on earth. However, he could not think of how to do it. So, he began meditating on me for gaining knowledge of the process of creating a biological life on earth.

I appeared in a half male and a half female human form called Ardha-Naresvora in front of the meditating Lord Brahma. As soon as, Lord Brahma opened his eyes Ardha-Naresvora split into a male and a female human. Thus, Lord Brahma gained the knowledge from me of male and female of all sorts of creatures for the biological process of creation on earth.

Lord Brahma created numerous-life forms through the biological process on earth. As the biological process of creation went on, it became clear to Lord Brahma that there should be a life cycle rather than never-ending creation of lives by biological means. So, again Lord Brahma requested me for developing a process that would complete the life cycle of living beings on earth.

Following the request of Lord Brahma, I created another divine spirit called Lord Rudra to complete the life cycle of living beings developed by Lord Brahma. Thus, Lord Rudra becomes the symbol of completion of the life cycle of the living beings; in other words, Lord Rudra represented the death or the end of life.

Thus, I created three divine spirits representing birth, continuation of life, and death on earth. Lord Brahma became the symbol of birth; Lord Vishnu became the symbol of continuation of life on earth; and Lord Rudra became synonymous with death. Here, death should be understood as the completion of the life cycle, and as the splitting of the physical body into the spirit called a soul and a physical dead body called a corpse.

I gave birth to the multi-limbed Goddess Durga, and armed her hands with various sorts of weapons, and empowered her to finish off the different evil spirits appeared in the Hindu world. I also enabled Her to take different names and different forms at various times to eliminate evils called demons. Her main manifestations are nine different Goddesses Durgas called Nava Durga; so, she has eighteen limbs. She represents Nava Durga means nine goddesses representing nine numbers means a universe, as you don't have any number after nine. Zero is I: the soul of numbers. So, you can add to any one number of the nine numbers or combination of those numbers to make a new number, and ultimately a universe.

I created one abode called Kailash for myself, and another called Baikuntha for Lord Vishnu beyond the universe of the Hindu world, as the Hindu universe follows the life cycle, and one day it will come to an end, which means extinction of the universe of the current form. So, Kailash and Baikuntha are two eternal and permanent abodes in the cosmic world beyond the network of life cycle of the universe. No births and deaths occur in these two abodes. Therefore, Hindus tend to perform meritorious acts while on earth to enable their souls after death travel to Kailash or Baikuntha, and live there permanently.

I incarnated in different deities such as Mahankal, Kal-bhairava, and nine male forms of Nava Durga to eliminate evil spirits, and gave a peaceful life to my devotees in the Hindu world. In addition, many other forms of Bhairavas in different names are available in the Tantric world to serve the humanity.

Thus, I am the source of all living beings and non-livings too in the Hindu world. I am everywhere and in everything at all times. All Hindus come back to me after completing the life cycle on earth. So, the duty of humans is to complete the current life cycle as peacefully and meaningfully as possible so that I will be happy with all of them and embrace them again into my super soul.

I am omnipotent and omnipresent, and a super soul, a part of which is prevalent in all living beings. Everything in the universe including the cosmic objects such as stars, planets, so on, is a part of my super soul. Therefore, I am formless and limitless, represent the entire Hindu universe, and am the source of all sorts of power. I am the light in darkness. I am also past, present and future in one called tri-kal. I am "OUM", a three-alphabet sound, "O" represents Brahma, the creator, "U" represents Lord Vishnu, the preserver and "M" represents Lord Rudra, the destroyer. Thus, I also represent birth, continuation of life and death.

Now, I am telling you a little story how you could have the vision of mine even unknowingly making offerings to me. One day a hunter could not kill any animal for the whole day and was reluctant to go home with empty hands, as he had to feed his hungry family members, they would be waiting for him to bring something to eat. So, he went to a nearest water pond and took a shelter at a branch of a tree, as deer usually would come to drink water.

As the hunter anticipated, a deer came to drink water at the first quarter of the night. Seeing the deer coming to drink water, the hunter took his bow and an arrow and aimed at the deer. In doing so, his right hand pushed the water jar unintentionally dropping water and some leaves from the 'bel' tree on the lingam under the tree thus making an offering to me.

The deer was on alert as soon as he heard the sound of falling leaves and saw the hunter aiming at her. The deer asked the hunter the reason for killing her. The hunter explained to the deer that his family members were hungry at home so he wanted to kill her and feed his family members with the meat. To the surprise of the hunter, the deer expressed her willingness to be killed if her thin body would feed somebody and become useful, then, her life would be meaningful. However, she said that she had left her offspring behind, and she wanted to go back home, and leave them in care of her sister or husband. The hunter at first did not believe her. She explained to the hunter that she would not like to go to hell by deceiving him, as deceiving others means a great sin that she could not think of committing. Hearing such words of assurances of the deer, the hunter changed his mind and let the deer go home. This could happen, as the hunter got enlightened through the offerings unintentionally and unknowingly made to the lingam and developed compassion for the deer.

In the second quarter of night, the hunter saw another deer coming to drink water, he again unknowingly dropped water and some leaves on the lingam completing the second offering to the lingam under the tree while taking up his bow and arrow. The second deer also noticing the hunter, asked him his purpose of killing her. The hunter repeated his story to the second deer. The second deer also was glad to sacrifice her body for feeding others, which at one point of time would come to an end. However, she also left her young ones behind, so she wanted to go back home and leave her children in the care of her husband.

By this time, the hunter had developed empathy to deer because of the blessings he received from me after the first and second offerings made to the lingam. So, the hunter easily accepted her argument and let her go, too. The hunter himself began to think that even the animals were ready to sacrifice their lives for accumulating merits but he himself being a human was always engaged in killing and harming others. His mind was gradually getting cleaner and enlightening by virtue of unintentional offerings made to the lingam.

In the third quarter of the night, he saw a stag; he immediately took up his arms and aimed at him, too, again unintentionally dropping leaves and water on the lingam, thus, completing the third offering to the lingam. The stag also saw the hunter aiming at him. He also asked the hunter the reasons for killing him. The hunter gave him the same reasons, as he did to other two deer. The stag said to the hunter that if his body could feed the hungry family of the hunter, he could not think of doing any other more virtuous deeds than that. However, he also left his young ones behind, and would like to make sure that they were well taken care of.

The hunter said to the stag that he had already let two deer go but none of them had kept their words to return. They also had the same excuse he had. The hunter felt that the stag was also lying to him. However, the stag explained to the hunter if he were lying, all the merits he had accumulated so far would go astray. So, the stag said that on that Shivaratri night, he would not try to lie at all. Thus, the stag also got off from the hunter that remained surprised how these animals were so intelligent. The hunter had become a different person by this time, as he had already accumulated merits of the third offering to the lingam under the tree in which he was taking a shelter and understood the merits of doing something good to others.

Incidentally, the stag and the two deer were of the same family. All of them had promised the hunter to return. Everybody wanted to go back to the hunter to keep his/her words given to the hunter. Therefore, they wanted to leave offspring in the care of the neighbor and then the parents wanted to go to the hunter, however, the young deer also followed the parents.

At the last quarter of the night, the hunter saw a group of deer approaching to him; he became so happy that he kept his bow and arrows aside; in doing so, he also dropped a few leaves and water from the pot on the lingam again incidentally, thus, completing the fourth round of offerings to the lingam on that night. The deer were happy to be the victims of the hunter, and asked the hunter to make use of their lives. Even the animals were so honest and would like to make the best use of their lives, offering their bodies to the hunter. However, he regretted that he was engaged in killing others throughout his life and wasted his own life and lives of others, too. He promised to leave the profession of hunting from then onward and be engaged in the good deeds only.

I was so pleased with the enlightenment of the hunter and the deer, I personally appeared before them, and blessed them and freed them from the worldly lives. This indicates that no matter what crimes you have committed during the life time, it is never late to be good, and wash away the sins one by one doing meritorious deeds in the name of mine.

Pashupati Temple Becoming A Departmental Store

My Lord, on your day called Shivaratri, millions of devotees will visit your shrine called Pashupati temple at Gaushala in Kathmandu. In fact, some devotees have already started coming to Nepal from the neighboring countries and from various parts of Nepal. This time, Pashupati Area Development Committee (PADT) is allowing only the naked Babaji or Sadhus means ascetics to have bonfire around the Pashupati temple, other ascetics have to go to

other areas such as Kalmochan if they want to have bonfires. PADT did not allow the Sadhus to smoke hashish last year but this year PADT is willing to allow Sadhus smoke hashish if they would bring it with them; however, they would not be permitted to sell and let others smoke.

PADT has been providing the Sadhus with firewood for bonfires, food for eight days: four days before the Shivaratri and four days after, and then bus fares to return to their destinations in the past. Sadhus come in thousands. They stay around the temple warming their bodies on the bonfires. Every three year, Shivaratri becomes one month late, as we have one month more following the lunar calendar. We celebrate all religious and cultural festival following the lunar calendar. So, Sadhus might find not so cold in Shivaratri every year. However, they need to keep their naked body warm on the bonfires at night.

Hundreds of thousands of devotees come to Nepal to have the 'darshan' means vision of Lord Pashupati: another name of Lord Shiva to have the blessing from the lord, and for their wish met. About 50 years ago when the roads had not connected Kathmandu, devotees used to walk from the terai area to Kathmandu for four-five days before reaching Kathmandu for the 'darshan' of Lord Pashupati. They walked in one line giving the impression of moving ants.

After making offerings to Lord Pashupati in Kathmandu, devotees walked to Bhaktapur to have the 'darshan' of Lord Dattatraya, and his blessing. This is the only temple to Lord Dattatraya in Nepal. Even in South Asia, only a few temples to Lord Dattatraya are available. So, devotees did not miss to have the blessing of Lord Dattatraya in Bhaktapur. They believe that worshipping Lord Pashupati will complete without making offerings to Dattatraya. So, most of the Hindu pilgrims visited Dattatraya in Bhaktapur after visiting Lord Pashupati. Some of them spent a night in Bhaktapur. They brought with them food items and utensils to cook food on the way.

At that time, Sadhus used to walk completely naked in Bhaktapur. Some of the children used to follow them to see how they walked completely naked without shy and shame. Some of them stayed around the temple to Lord Dattatraya making bonfires for some days.

Now, busloads of devotees come from the south on large buses. Devotees don't have the problems of coming and going as in the past when they needed to walk to Kathmandu. If they want they can stay in lodges and hotels depending on their affordability in Kathmandu and even in Bhaktapur. Some devotees come equipped with a cooking gear and food items. Wherever, they stop they cook food. Some conservative Hindus don't eat food others cook. That might be one of the reasons for cooking food on the way. Another reason might be the cost of food, and choice of food. Some vegetarians might have difficulty to find a vegetarian restaurant in Kathmandu.

Shivaratri is the day on which Lord Shiva appeared in person to give 'darshan' to the devotees. People of the Hindu world keep vigil on this day and night anticipating Lord Shiva to appear. Children collect tolls from the drivers and even pedestrians to buy firewood to make bonfires on this night. In order to keep busy the whole night, children and even adults roast peanuts, corn, soybeans and so on, on the bonfires, and eat them as the blessings of Lord Shiva.

Lord Pashupati dwells in a two-tiered artistic Nepalese architectural temple. The temple is roofed in gold-gilded brass sheets. It has four large doors made up of silver sheets. At the center of the inner sanctum of the temple, a Shiva lingam means phallus stands. It has six faces. You can see four faces facing four directions but you cannot see the one facing to the

sky and another to the earth. It is called Lord Pashupati that has six faces to see simultaneously any directions without moving the head.

Devotees are off-limit to this phallus but they can see it standing at the door. On the Shivaratri day, all four doors are opened to devotees to stand and watch the phallus. On this day, devotees start off lining up to enter the temple and have the 'darshan' of Lord Pashupati early in the morning. On other days, only the western door is opened to devotees.

People belonging to the cow-eating religion are off-limit to the temple. They could watch the temple standing at the gate to the temple or from other bank of the Bagmati River. Even Hindus wearing belts made of cow skin are not allowed in to the temple. They need to take off such belts, and leave them outside the temple. Historically untouchable people have an access to the lord only after the people's movement of 2006. In Nepal, killing cow is punishable by a life imprisonment. Cow is the goddess of wealth for Hindus.

A large bronze statue of a bull called Nandi sits on a large pedestal facing to the western door of the temple. Nandi is the companion of Lord Shiva. When devotees enter the temple from the western gate; they see the large butt with two large testes of the Nandi.

Lord Shiva is the lover of animals. He wears serpents on his head, on his arms, and around his neck. He wears the tiger skin, and uses elephant skin for his bed. He keeps his body warm rubbing the whole body with ashes. He loves to sit on the snow-capped mountain and meditate all the time. So, anybody could imagine how he kept himself warm sitting on the snow in the Himalaya. He, however, is a divine and his divine spirit does not need any heat to warm up.

Lord Pashupati is one of the richest deities in Nepal. During the last two thousand years, many rulers of Nepal donated large plots of land for creating revenue to run the temple. However, these lands have been lost to the Guthi Sansthan the government had set up to run the temples and other religious and cultural festivals, or to the tenants after the selling of the lands owned by the temples.

Even losing the lands, Lord Pashupati has been a richest deity. Every day hundreds of devotees visit the temple and make offerings of cash, flowers and foodstuff. Any devotees can make special offering called puja to Lord Pashupati starting at the price of NPR 1,100 and ending at NPR 1.1 million. South Indian priests called Bhattas perform the special pujas, and attend the deity daily.

Recently, the South Indian priests have stopped performing special pujas according to the local media news. The priests claimed certain amount of the puja fees for themselves whereas the PADT has taken the whole amount and deposited it in its account to run its office following the regulations.

The priests are highly paid but they want certain share in the puja fees. So, in protest, they have not performed any special puja since the mid February of 2013. The special pujas will go ahead only after the PADT and the South Indian priests compromise on their respective stand. Previously, the priest used to pocket all the money the deity gets from the devotees. Recently, the PADT has put the priests on salaries, and collected all the monies offered to Lord Pashupati for its maintenance and development.

The government headed by Chairman of UCPN-Maoist Prachanda had replaced the South Indian priests with the Nepalese priests in 2009 for some days. However, the anti-national-minded leaders of NC such as Ram Chandra Poudel and Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat marched from the Naybanesvor to the temple to Lord Pashupati at Gaushala demanding to retain

South India priests. These NC guys called the Nepalese priest Maoists. So, you find the South Indian priests working at the temple to Lord Pashupati in Kathmandu. Any Nepalis with a bit of nationalistic feelings want to replace Indian priests with the Nepalese priests.

Some devotees have complained that the priests have made the temple to Lord Pashupati as a departmental store. You have to buy the blessings from the deity. You have the choice of prices to pay for the puja to perform. Depending on the price you pay, the priests set the priority of making offerings to the deity. Thus, you can buy the high price pujas or low price pujas.

February 22, 2017

Note: 1) The forest at Pashupati is called Sleshmantak
2) Lord Vishnu has four limbs to represent a human couple.