



*“Naagendra haaraaya thriloochanaaya bhasmaangadhaaraaya maheshwaraaya  
Nityaaya shudhdhaaya digambaraaya tasmai nakaaraaya namahshivaaya”!!!*

*Maha Sivaratri* is a festival celebrated every year on the 13th night/14th day in the *Krishna Paksha* (waning moon) of the month of *Phalguna* (February-March) in the Hindu calendar. This day is regarded as one of the auspicious day all over India. According to Hindu religious scripture this day is



considered as Lord *Shiva's* favourite day. So from that day *Maha Shivaratri* is celebrated all over India.



Legend days, it was on the auspicious night of *Shivaratri* that Lord *Shiva* performed the '*Tandava*', the dance of the primal creation, preservation and destruction. Another popular *Shivaratri* legend stated in *Linga Purana* states that it was on *Shivaratri* that Lord *Shiva*

manifested himself in the form of a *Linga*.

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## MAHA SHIVARATRI PUJA

*Maha Shivaratri puja* is associated with various traditions and customs. Devotees observe strict fast on this day, though many go on a diet of fruits and milk. Some do not consume even a drop of water. Especially, women observe fast



with a great religious feeling. While married women pray for the well being of their husband unmarried women pray for a husband like Lord *Shiva*, who is regarded as the ideal husband.

On this day, devotees wake up early and take a ritual bath, wear fresh, clean clothes and visit the nearest *Shiva* temple to worship the God. On *Shivaratri*, worship of Lord *Shiva* continues all through the day and night. Every three hours priests perform ritual *puja* of *Shivalinga*. Devotees circumambulate the *Shivalinga*, three or seven times, and then *Shivalinga* is



given a special bath with milk, yoghurt, honey, sandalwood paste and rose water. Puja, meditation and chanting of '*Om Namah Shivaya*' accompany the ritual bath. Following the bath, vermilion paste is applied on the *linga*. Thereafter, *Bilwa* leaves, which have to

be a stalk with three leaves, are kept on top of the *Shivalinga*. *Ber* or jujube

fruit is a special offering to the God on this day. Devotees also decorate the *linga* with flowers and garlands and offer incense sticks and fruit. Devotees stay awake and spent the night (*jagaran*) in Shiva temples by chanting '*Om Namah Shivaya*', singing hymns and verses in praise of Lord *Shankar* and lighting *Diyas* in the name of Lord *Shiva*. Devotees observing *vrat* on *Shivaratri* break it only the next morning by partaking *prasad* offered to Lord *Shiva*. But in some places devotees break their *brat* when *Mahadweepa* (big *Diya*) on the top the famous *Shiva* Temples of India gets lighted, after the completion of all *puja* rituals.

Since Lord Shiva is regarded as an ascetic god, *Maha Shivaratri* is very popular with ascetics. *Thandai*, a drink made with *bhang* (cannabis), almonds, and milk, is essentially drunk by the devotees on the day is said to have been very dear to Lord *Shiva*.



### MAHA SHIVARATRI IN ORISSA



In Orissa *Maha Shivaratri* is celebrated with a great religious fervour and devotion. Major centers of *Shivaratri* celebrations in Orissa are *Lingaraj Temple* and *Hattakeswar Temple* near *Atri*. Shiva temples located at *Mahendragiri*,

*Gupteswar*, *Kapilas*, *Bhubaneswar* and *Khiching* also draw a large of

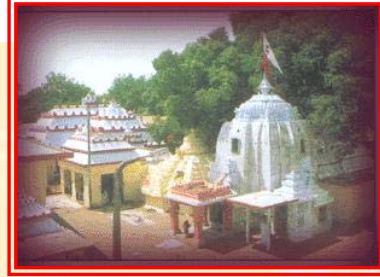
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devotees from across the State. In Orissa *Maha Shivaratri* is called as *Jagar* by many.

*Shivaratri* celebration at *Lokanath* Temple, Puri

is very famous. According to a legend popular in Orissa, long ago, Puri was a center of *Shiva* worship. It is believed that Lord *Ramachandra*



himself installed the *Lingam* in the *Lokanath* Temple. This *lingam* is kept submerged, in a vat of water for the whole year. It can only be seen on *Pankoddhar Ekadashee* or *Pankojjala Ekadashee*, three days before *Shivaratri*, when the water is removed from the vat. On that day, thousands of devotees come for a *darshan*. In some places big fairs are arranged where large varieties of goods and implements are bought and sold. Some places are also found with *Bhajan Sandhya* (Musical Night on *Shiva Vandana*).



*“Om Tryambhakam Yajamahe, Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam  
Urvarukamiva Bandhanan, Mrityor Mukshhiya Maamritat”!!!*