

Lockchhaar

Let's Kindle Childhood the Koshur Way!



The Jewel of Kashmiri Festivals is Here!

Aaye
Aaye

HERATH

Aaye

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Meet Lord Shiva !

3rd Eye

The Third Eye is a source of divine wisdom. Often shut to look inward, it allows for greater vision and clarity in discerning matters. We all possess this 'third eye' or wisdom; it just needs to be 'awakened' at the right time.

Ashes (Bhasam)

Shiva is called Vibhuti-Bhushan, 'one who adorns himself with ash'. This ash or bhasam is a reminder of the temporary nature of our physical world and the importance of spiritual attainment. It is an offering of oneself to Shiva.

Cobra Necklace

The Snake periodically sheds its skin so that it can grow a new one, symbolizing the death and rebirth that Shiva gives. It also shows Shiva's power over even the most dangerous creatures on the earth.

Trinity of Hindu gods (Tridev)

Brahma (the creator)

Vishnu (the preserver)

Shiva (the destroyer)



Nandi Bull

Nandi is his 'vahan' or vehicle. Bulls by nature are very diligent and tirelessly perform all their duties while being calm and stable. This teaches us to keep doing our 'karma' without expecting anything, and that Lord Shiva will be always there to bestow his grace upon us.

Neel Kanth

At the time of the 'samudra manthan', Shiva held the poison churned out from the ocean in his throat, causing it to turn blue. This story teaches us to not let bad or negative energies overpower us.

Moon on His Head

The Moon signifies peace. It means that whatever the situation, one's mind should always be kept calm. With a calm mind, the individual can face any kind of problem without getting jittery.

Animal Skin

Shiva dresses in animal skin, and has virtually nothing to his name. Yet, he rules the universe, teaching us that just because you have little does not mean you cannot live a powerful and productive life.

Meet Goddess Parvati !

Trinity of Hindu goddesses (Tridevi)

Saraswati

Lakshmi

Parvati

The name

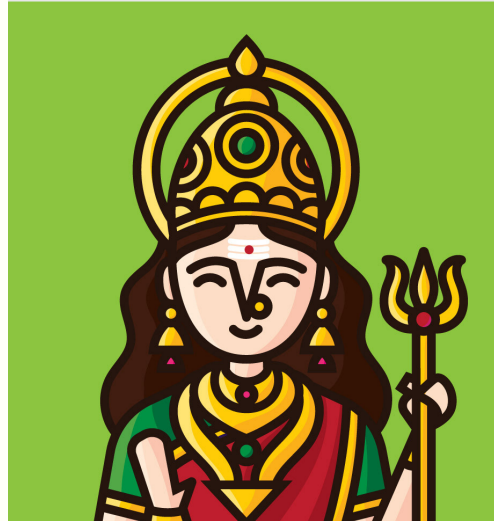
Parvati in Sanskrit means "daughter of the mountain". She was the daughter of King Himavat, king of the Himalaya and Queen Mena. She has 1000 different names recorded in Lalita Sahasranam.

Smile

The first thing that attracts you when you see an idol or statue of Goddess Parvati is her enchanting smile. That smile shows us that no matter how difficult a situation is you should always keep yourself calm and focused.

Multi-tasking

Her different arms symbolize her capability to juggle more than one thing at a time. While being a protector of human kind and deities alike, she is also a compassionate figure. This teaches us that one is capable of being both fierce and compassionate at the same time.



Mother

Parvati is the mother of Hindu Gods Ganesha, Kartikeya, and Ashokasundari. She created Lord Ganesha with clay and earth. She is the goddess mother, whose energy is responsible for the creation, safeguarding, and decimation of the universe.

Shiv-Shakti

In Shaivism, worshipping Shiva without goddess Parvati is viewed as pointless. Parvati is the divine energy of Shiva and vice versa. Without Shiva, there is no Shakti and without Shakti, there is no Shiva.

Different Avtaars

She transforms herself into many different avtaars depending on the situation, thus teaching us that one should be oneself but be ready to adapt new styles, manners or stances as per the situation.

Dawon

'Dawon' also known as Ghatokbahini Singha (a hybrid of a lion and a tiger) is her vaahan which represents taming fear and harnessing it to become your power.

Kashmiri Herath

- In Kashmiri Shivratri is known as Har- ratri or Herath meaning 'Shiva's night'.
- It marks the night of Lord Shiva's wedding to Goddess Parvati.
- Preparations for the special occasion get underway 23 days before the actual day.
- It includes: dusting the house, washing and cleaning the kitchen, bringing out 'herath-special' utensils, purchasing puja items, giving gifts to married daughters and also buying new clothes.



Vatuk puja

- When Kashmiri Pandits were driven out of the valley in the first half of the 15th century, a few families in the remote villages stayed back. It is speculated that these families started worshipping the Vatuk Bhairav for their protection. The custom was continued by others when they returned to the valley in the latter half of that century.

- Kashmiri Pandits worship Bhairav Vatuknath and hence the worship is called Vatuk puja.
- Bhairav as per Kashmir Shaivism is a being who through his siddhna has risen to a status just next to Lord Shiva
- As per Kashmir Shaivism philosophy the highest state a being can achieve through his siddhna is that of a Bhairav.
- Eight Bhairavs have achieved that status so far, for whom we have eight dedicated temples in Kashmir Srinagar.
- Bhairav Vatuknath is one of them who receives extensive worship on Shivratri.

- Before the start of the puja, two large vessels representing Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are embellished with flower garlands and filled with walnuts to the top.
- Then a definite number of small earthen pots are filled with water and nuts symbolizing the Ghanas and other deities.
- These pitchers and pots, collectively are called Vatuk.
- A red thread is tied around the mouths of these utensils and the symbol of ॐ is drawn on them.
- The ritual worship continues till late into the night and concludes with the singing of devotional hymns in praise of Lord Shiva and finally Aarti.



Herath Feast

- After a day of fasting, dinner is definitely the highlight on this particular day.
- Everyone enjoys delectable Kashmiri dishes.
- In most households, multiple vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes are prepared as part of a grand dinner spread.
- Some of the dishes cooked are Haak, Nadur, Mong Dal, Rogan Josh, Match, Gaad etc



Salaam!

- The day after Maha Shivaratri Puja is called salaam, a Persian word for greeting.
- It is a day of fun and feasting, a sort of Thanksgiving Day when family, friends and colleagues exchange greetings. The Singing bards and the poor would visit Hindu homes on this day and take their share of Shivaratri presents in cash or kind.



Herath Kharach

- This is another much-awaited and cherished custom of Herath.
- The day after the puja, children and young members of the family receive money from the head of the household.
- The excitement around this traditional practice is immense, and children wake up early to wish everyone 'Herath Poshte', and ask for their " Herath Kharach ".
- In the good old days, this money was used to buy new clothes and candy from the market.



Doone Mavas

- On this day all the flower-decked vessels are taken to a stream or river for immersion just as the images of Durga and Ganesha are immersed at the close of Durga Puja and Ganapati festivals.
- Before immersion, the vessels are emptied of the soaked walnuts and brought back home.
- On reaching home, the ladies would shut the main entrance of the house and not allow the head of the family to enter till he promised certain blessings and boons for all members of the family. The soaked walnuts and tumul chut (rice-cakes) are distributed as the main prasad (naveed) among family members, friends and close relatives.



Thuk Thuk (knock knock)
Kus Chu ?(Who is it)
Ram Broar (Ram the Cat ?)
Kya hyath ? (What have you brought us ?)
Anna hyath, Dhaana hyath, Samridhi hyath
(I have brought food, wealth and riches)

Haaran Gindun

- All family members would also indulge in a game played with sea shells (cowries). It is called "Haaran Gindun".



Shankracharya Temple

Also known as the **Jyeshtheshwara Temple**
It is on top of the Shankaracharya Hill on the Zabarwan Range in Srinagar

The temple may date to 200 BC as a Buddhist construction but the Hindu structure probably dates to the 9th century AD.



Illustration: Niyanta Muku Shah

Sikandar, the iconoclast, did not for some reason, destroy it. The Maharaja of Mysore came to Kashmir in 1925 and he made the electrical installations at the temple. The temple is used for regular worship and pilgrims visit the temple during the **Amarnath Yatra**.

It was visited by **Adi Shankara** and has ever since been associated with him; this is how the temple got the name **Shankaracharya**

Dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is at a height of 1,000 feet (300 m) above the valley floor and overlooks the city of Srinagar.

The temple rests on a solid rock, a 20-foot tall octagonal base

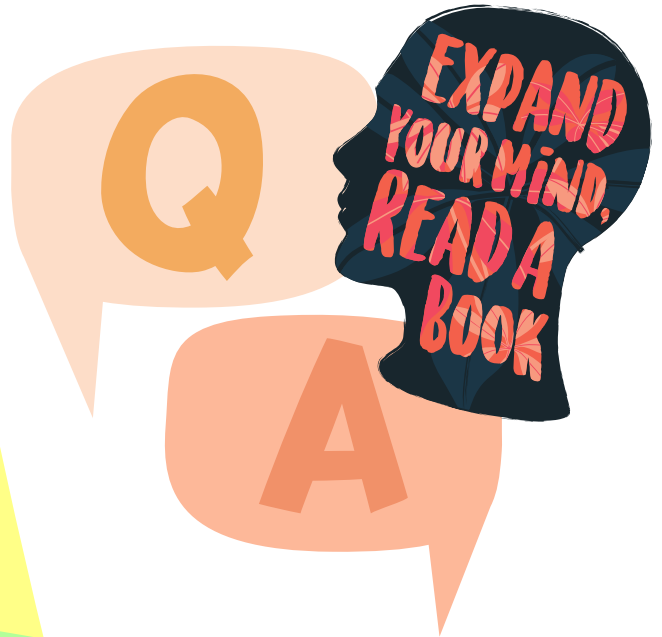
243 steps to climb the Temple



You Ask We Answer!

Why do we use Walnuts (Doon) as prashad on Herath ?

The walnut consists of four sections of equal dimension. The first quadrant represents the Rigveda, the second quadrant is Yajurveda, the third quadrant is Samaveda and the fourth quadrant is the Atharvaveda. All the four Vedas are equally important. The walnut is therefore, a symbol and the SEED theory of the Shiva in manifestation

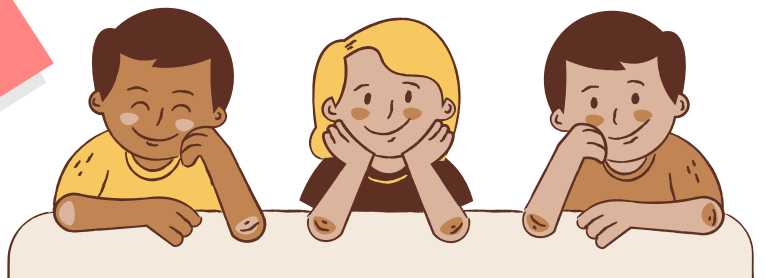


DID YOU KNOW!!

Herath is celebrated in winter (Feb- March) but a long long time ago, a Pathan governor of Kashmir prohibited Kashmiri Pandits from celebrating the Shivaratri festival in winter and ordered that the festival be celebrated during Aashaad (June - July). Helpless, the people obeyed, but to everyone's surprise it snowed in July that year! The miracle startled everyone, the Pathan ruler in particular. This untimely snowfall resulted in crop failure and famine, causing the people of the valley untold misery.

Why does Herath fall on different days every year ?

Kashmiri Herath is celebrated as per the lunisolar calendar. It falls in the last month of the calendar called Phalguna and is celebrated on the 13th night. It takes place just before the arrival of Spring



I AM A Koshur Kid

Meet our friends from different countries..



I love Kashmir for it's beauty and snowfall. My favourite Koshur food is monje and gogji which I love eating with rice.

**Myra Sapru, 8
Chennai ,India**



WE GET TO CELEBRATE OUR BIRTHDAY TWICE AND WE EAT WITH OUR HANDS :)

**Aariv 6 & Vahin Bindroo 8
Indiana, USA**



Being Kashmiri is about eating yummy bappo with razma zamodood and macch. We also have a secret language to talk in.

**Amelia Bhan, 8
Toronto Canada**



Koshur Bee Learn with me

Some of the things we used during Herath

Doon



Yonee is "sacred thread"



Aaris round rings made from dry paddy grass for use as base for keeping pots



Narwan



Pavitri

A holy ring made of dhurva grass which is worn on anamika (ring) finger during the ritual.



One Shiv linga placed in a plate to receive worship as sonipatloo



Tomul chott



Sander



Silver Varq used to decorate shiv pots



Athoor



Shankh



Kands (sugar cones) one for each member of family for immersion in Shivpot.



Ghanti

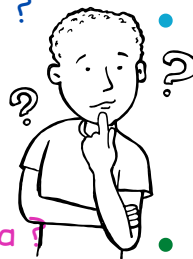


Fun This Month



QUIZ TIME!

- What is Shivratri called in Kashmiri ?
 - Navreh
 - Herath
 - Punn
- Where does lord Shiva live ?
 - Himalaya
 - Mount Everest
 - Mount Kailash
- What is the prasad on Shivratri ?
 - Tahar
 - Badaam
 - Doon
- What is the vaahan of lord Shiva ?
 - Bike
 - Mouse
 - Bull
- What is the dance called when Lord Shiva is angry ?
 - Kathak
 - Tandav
 - Disco Dance
- What Color is Shiva's throat ?
 - Red
 - Yellow
 - Blue
- Money received by kids on Herath is called?
 - Herath surprise
 - Herath kharach
 - Herath gift
- Herath is the biggest Kashmiri festival ?
 - True
 - False
- What is Parvati's vahaan ?
 - Dawon
 - Car
 - Peacock
- What game do we play on Herath ?
 - Haaran
 - Snakes & Ladder
 - Chess
- How many steps does Shankracharya temple have ?
 - 520
 - 243
 - 150
- What is Tomul-chot made of ?
 - Rice Flour
 - Play dough
 - Wheat Flour



Recycle Walnut (Doon) Shells and Make Some Crafts !



Walnut Shell Candles

Material:

Walnut

Wax (either beeswax, crayons or an old candle will work)

Wick

Steps:

Take the prasad walnuts and neatly break it in half.

Next, melt the wax.

If you are using crayons, simply peel the paper off, break into pieces, and melt slowly either in the microwave or on the stove stirring often.

Beeswax, or old candle wax, can be melted the same way.

Once the wax is melted, cut the wick into small pieces—about one inch long or so. Coat the wick in beeswax and allow to dry.

It dries very fast.

Stick the wax covered wick to the bottom of the walnut shell. Then simply pour the wax in the shell, almost all of the way.

And that it.

These little candles float in water (which is actually a pretty good idea, as the shell could eventually catch fire).

These candles are not really made to burn for long, they are just for fun and decoration. But they are very cute!



Want to feature your kid ? or for any feedback

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lockchaar@gmail.com or Lockchaar Page on

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