

Mahashivratri

Mahashivratri (also known as Shivaratri) is a Hindu festival dedicated to the god Shiva, who destroys the universe, one of the deities of the Hindu Trinity. The other two deities are Brahma and Vishnu (creator and preserver). Although every night is dedicated to Shiva, this one is particularly important as it is said that Shiva performs the cosmic dance from creation to destruction on this date. Many Hindus fast and all night prayers focus on Shiva, his shrines and statues.



- ① Sit down with the children and show them the series of pictures overleaf. You may wish to lay the sheets out either on a table or the floor, and then read the story.
- ② Ask the children the following questions and discuss them:-
What part of the story did you like?
Which picture did you like?
- ③ Go outside and pick some leaves with the children. Then take rubbings of the different leaves, or make a leaf picture with what they have found.

Mahashivratri



The legend surrounding the festival of Mahashivratri says that Lubdhaka, a poor tribal man and a devotee of Shiva, once went into the deep forests to collect firewood.

At nightfall, he became lost and could not find his way home.



**In the darkness, Lubdhaka
climbed a bel tree, and sought
safety and shelter in its
branches until dawn.**



All night, he could hear the growls of tigers and wild animals, and was too frightened to leave the tree.

In order to keep himself awake, he plucked one leaf at a time from the tree and then dropped it, while chanting the name of Shiva.



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By sunrise, he had dropped thousands of leaves on to a Shiva lingam, which he had not seen in the darkness. Lubdhaka's all-night worship pleased Shiva.



**By the grace of Shiva the tigers
and wild animals went away, and
Lubdhaka not only survived but
was rewarded with 'divine bliss'.**