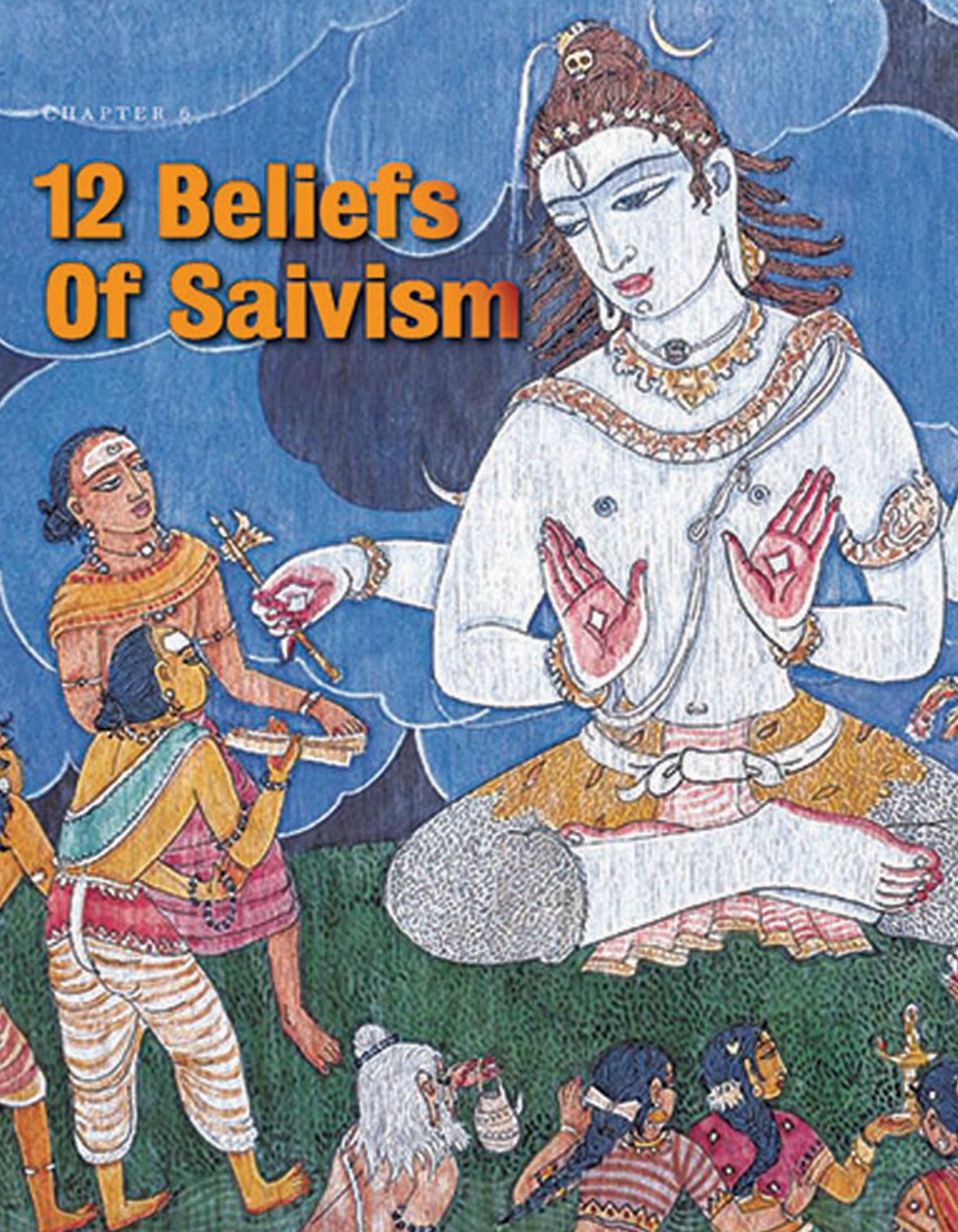
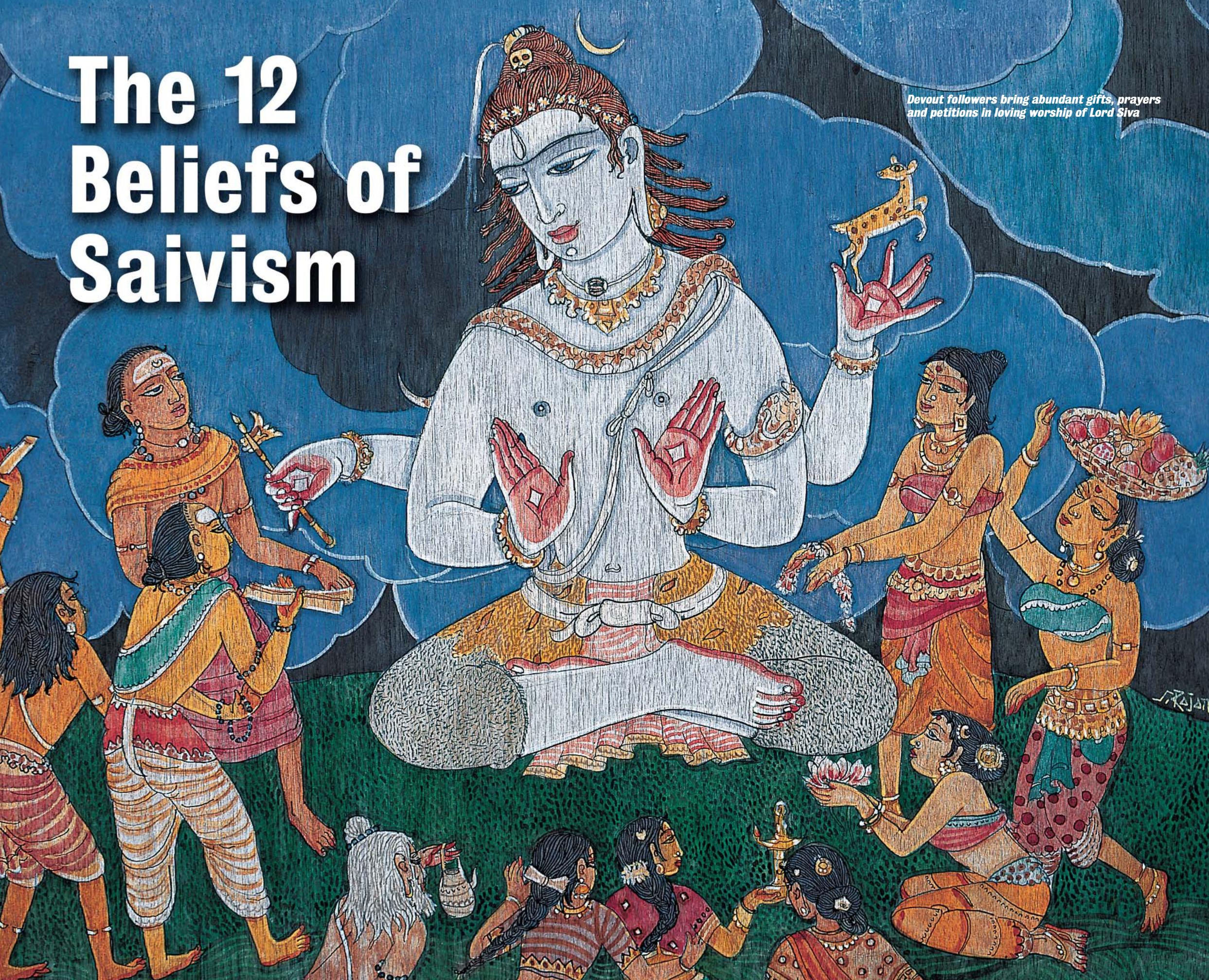


12 Beliefs Of Saivism



The 12 Beliefs of Saivism

Devout followers bring abundant gifts, prayers and petitions in loving worship of Lord Siva



INSIGHT

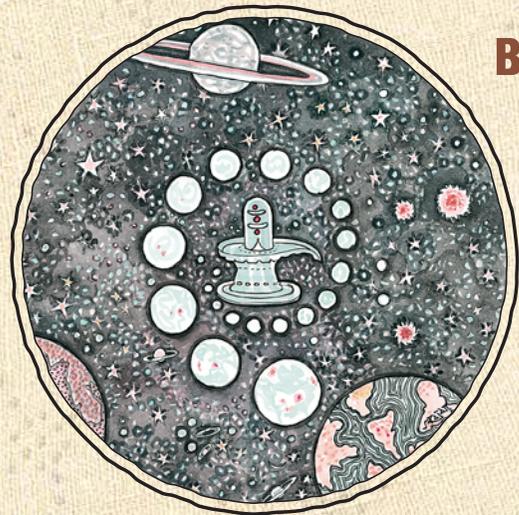
Saivite Creed: Twelve Potent Verses Expounding the Essence of Saivism

EVERY RELIGION HAS A CREED OF ONE form or another, an authoritative formulation of its beliefs. Historically, creeds have developed whenever religions migrate from their homelands. Until then, the beliefs are fully contained in the culture and taught to children as a natural part of growing up. A creed is the distillation of volumes of knowledge into a series of easy-to-remember beliefs. A creed is meant to summarize the explicit teachings or articles of faith, to imbed and thus protect and transmit the beliefs. Creeds give strength to individuals seeking to understand life and religion. Creeds also allow members of one faith to express, in elementary and consistent terms, their traditions to members of another.

Though the vast array of doctrines within Hinduism has not always been articulated in summary form, from ancient times unto today we have the well-known creedal mahavakya, "great sayings," of the Vedic Upanishads. Now, in this technological age in which village integrity is being replaced by worldwide mobility, the importance of a creed becomes apparent if religious identity is to be preserved. We need two kinds of strength—that which is found in diversity and individual freedom to inquire and that which derives from a union of minds in upholding the universal and shared principles of our faith.

Saivism is truly ageless, for it has no beginning. It is the precursor of the many-faceted religion now termed Hinduism. Scholars trace the roots of Siva worship back more than 8,000 years to the advanced Indus Valley civilization. But sacred writings tell us there never was a time when Saivism did not exist. Modern history records six main schools: Saiva Siddhanta, Pasupatism, Kashmir Saivism, Vira Saivism, Siddha Siddhanta and Siva Advaita. Saivism's grandeur and beauty are found in a practical culture, an enlightened view of man's place in the universe and a profound system of temple mysticism and yoga. It provides knowledge of man's evolution from God and back to God, of the soul's unfoldment and awakening guided by enlightened sages. Like all the sects, its majority are families, headed by hundreds of orders of swamis and sadhus who follow the fiery, world-renouncing path to moksha. The Vedas state, "By knowing Siva, who is hidden in all things, exceedingly fine, like film arising from clarified butter, the One embracer of the universe—by realizing God, one is released from all fetters."

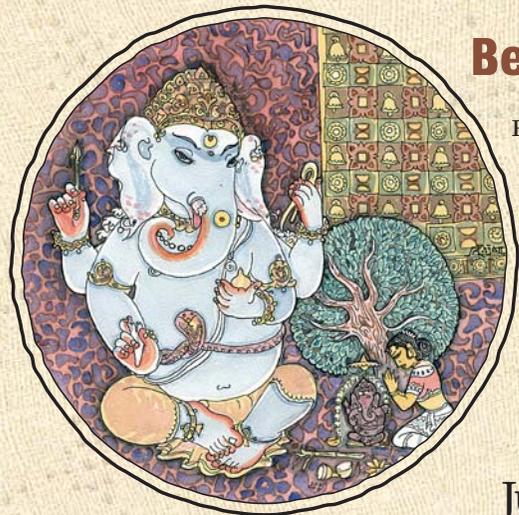
The twelve beliefs on the following pages embody the centuries-old central convictions of Saivism, especially as postulated in Saiva Siddhanta, one of the six schools of Saivism. They cover the basic beliefs about God, soul and world, evil and love and more. On the last page is a glossary of words used in the twelve beliefs.



Belief One

REGARDING GOD'S UNMANIFEST REALITY

Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose Absolute Being, Parasiva, transcends time, form and space. The yogi silently exclaims, "It is not this. It is not that." Yea, such an inscrutable God is God Siva. Aum.



Belief Four

REGARDING THE ELEPHANT-FACED DEITY

Siva's followers all believe in the Mahadeva Lord Ganesha, son of Siva-Shakti, to whom they must first supplicate before beginning any worship or task. His rule is compassionate. His law is just. Justice is His mind. Aum.

Belief Two

REGARDING GOD'S MANIFEST NATURE OF ALL-PERVADING LOVE

Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose immanent nature of love, Parashakti, is the substratum, primal substance or pure consciousness flowing through all form as energy, existence, knowledge and bliss. Aum.



Belief Five

REGARDING THE DEITY KARTTIKEYA

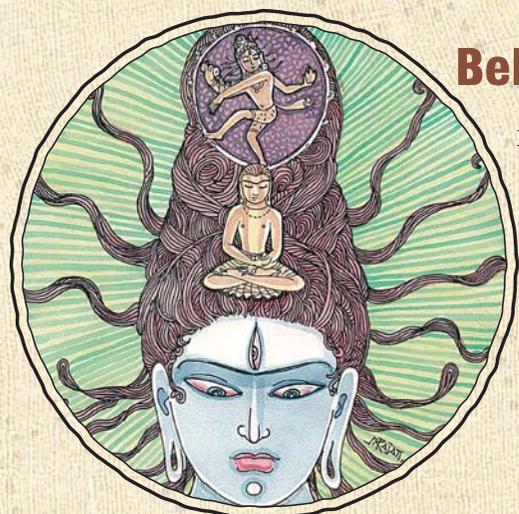
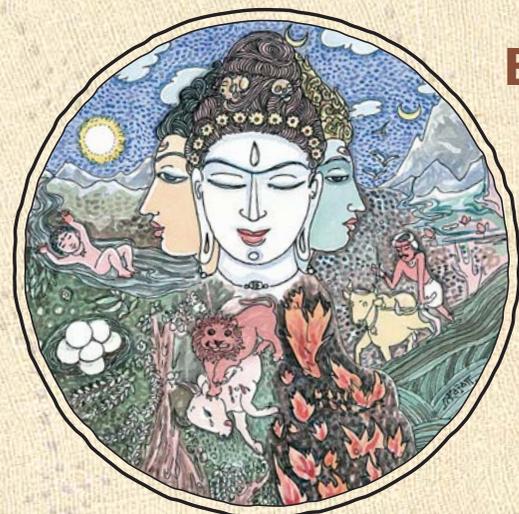
Siva's followers all believe in the Mahadeva Karttikeya, son of Siva-Shakti, whose vel of grace dissolves the bondages of ignorance. The yogi, locked in lotus, venerates Murugan. Thus restrained, his mind becomes calm. Aum.



Belief Three

REGARDING GOD AS PERSONAL LORD AND CREATOR OF ALL

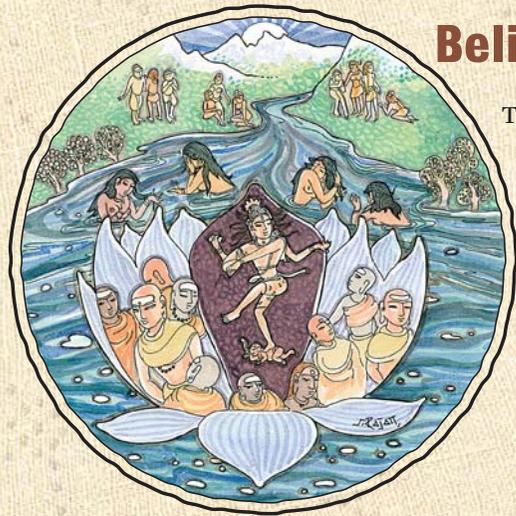
Siva's followers all believe that Lord Siva is God, whose immanent nature is the Primal Soul, Supreme Mahadeva, Paramesvara, author of Vedas and Agamas, the creator, preserver and destroyer of all that exists. Aum.



Belief Six

REGARDING THE SOUL'S CREATION AND IDENTITY WITH GOD

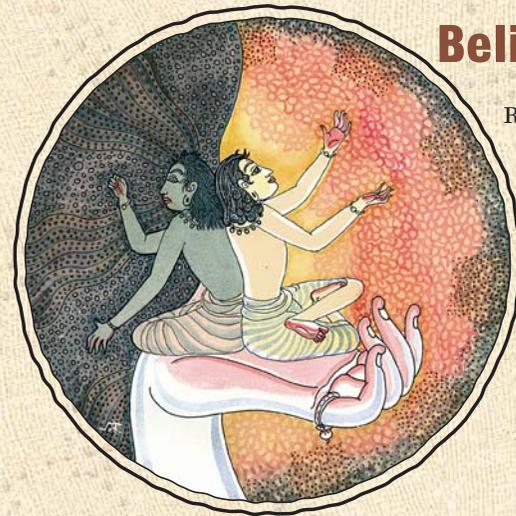
Siva's followers all believe that each soul is created by Lord Siva and is identical to Him, and that this identity will be fully realized by all souls when the bondage of anava, karma and maya is removed by His grace. Aum.



Belief Seven

THE GROSS, SUBTLE AND CAUSAL PLANES OF EXISTENCE

Siva's followers all believe in three worlds: the gross plane, where souls take on physical bodies; the subtle plane, where souls take on astral bodies; and the causal plane, where souls exist in their self-effulgent form. Aum.



Belief Ten

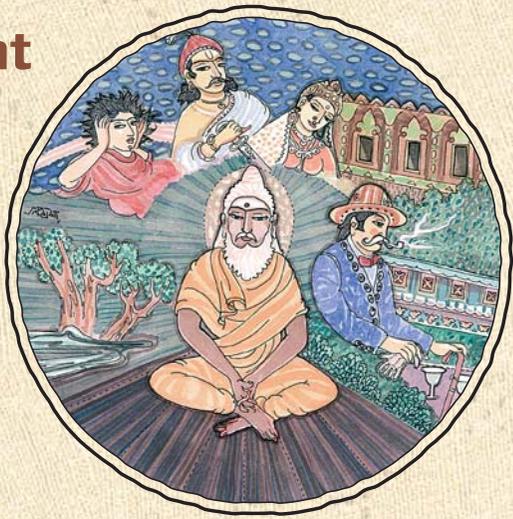
REGARDING THE GOODNESS OF ALL

Siva's followers all believe there is no intrinsic evil. Evil has no source, unless the source of evil's seeming be ignorance itself. They are truly compassionate, knowing that ultimately there is no good or bad. All is Siva's will. Aum.

Belief Eight

REGARDING KARMA, SAMSARA AND LIBERATION FROM REBIRTH

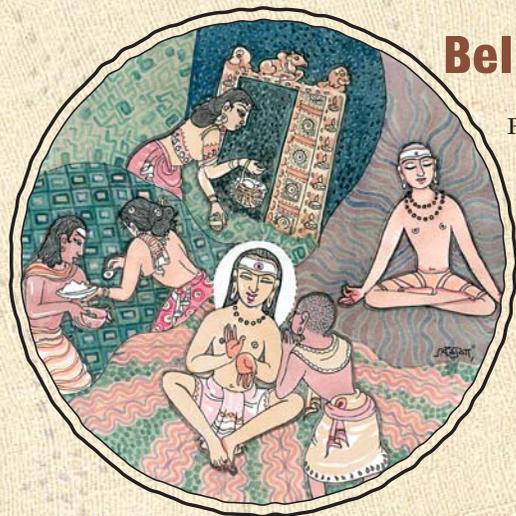
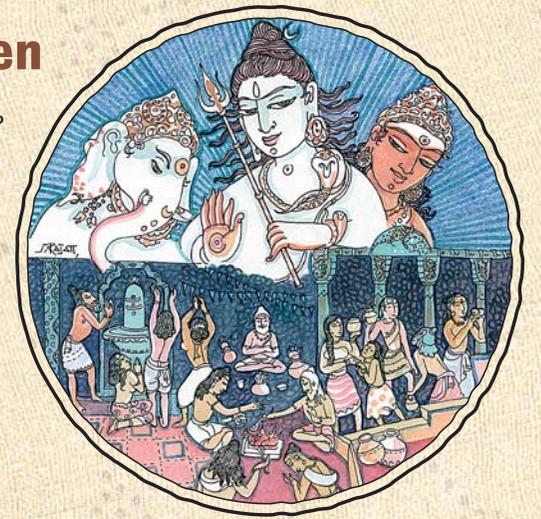
Siva's followers all believe in the law of karma—that one must reap the effects of all actions he has caused—and that each soul continues to reincarnate until all karmas are resolved and moksha, liberation, is attained. Aum.



Belief Eleven

REGARDING THE ESOTERIC PURPOSE OF TEMPLE WORSHIP

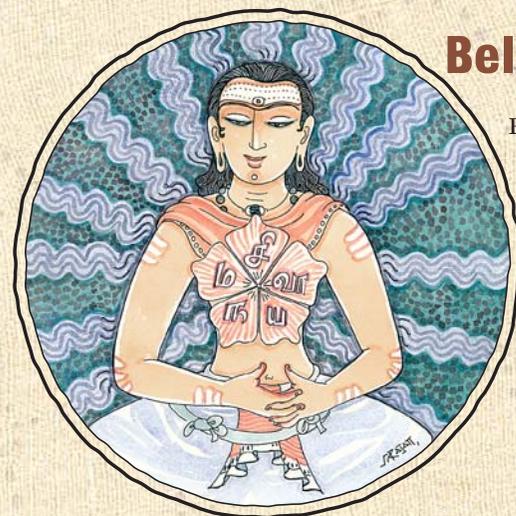
Siva's followers all believe that religion is the harmonious working together of the three worlds and that this harmony can be created through temple worship, wherein the beings of all three worlds can communicate. Aum.



Belief Nine

REGARDING THE FOUR MARGAS, STAGES OF INNER PROGRESS

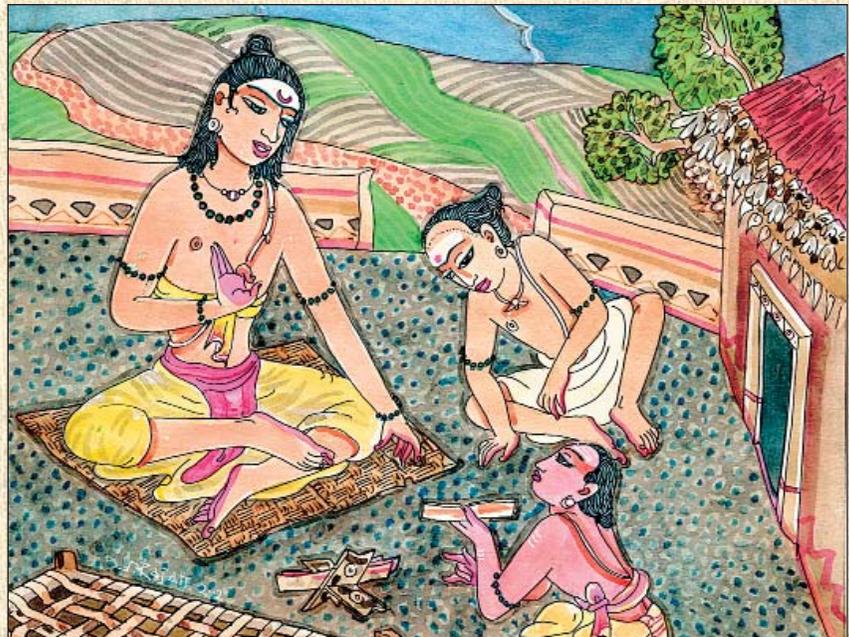
Siva's followers all believe that the performance of charya, virtuous living, kriya, temple worship, and yoga, leading to Parasiva through the grace of the living satguru, is absolutely necessary to bring forth jnana, wisdom. Aum.



Belief Twelve

REGARDING THE FIVE LETTERS

Siva's followers all believe in the Panchakshara Mantra, the five sacred syllables "Namasivaya," as Saivism's foremost and essential mantra. The secret of Namasivaya is to hear it from the right lips at the right time. Aum.



Vedas study: A father and his two sons chant Vedic mantras together outside their adobe dwelling during their daily practice sessions.

The Four Stages of Saivism

The path of enlightenment is divided naturally into four stages or padas: charya, virtue and selfless service; kriya, worshipful sadhanas; yoga, meditation under a guru's guidance; and jnana, the state of enlightened wisdom reached toward the path's end as a result of Self Realization through the Guru's grace. These four padas are quite similar to the four yogas of Vedanta: karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. However, there is one key difference. Whereas in Vedanta you can choose to follow just one of the yogas, in the Saiva Siddhanta school of Saivism we need to pass through all four stages, or padas.

Let's say the path of life is rocks across a shallow stream. Vedanta gives us four separate rock paths to choose from, one for each of the four yogas, all of which lead across the river. Saiva Siddhanta gives us one path for crossing the river which consists of four stones: charya, kriya, yoga and jnana.

The four stages are not alternative ways, but progressive, cumulative phases of a one path, much like the natural development of a butterfly from egg to caterpillar, from caterpillar to pupa, and then the final metamorphosis to butterfly. The four stages are what each human soul must pass through in many births to attain its final goal of moksha, freedom from rebirth. In the beginning stages, we suffer until we learn. Learning leads us to service; and selfless service is the beginning of spiritual striving. Service leads us to understanding. Understanding leads us to meditate deeply and without distractions. Finally meditation leads us to surrender in God. This is the straight and certain path, the San Marga, leading to Self Realization, the inmost purpose of life.

Charya Pada

Charya, literally "conduct," is the first stage of religiousness and the foundation for the next three stages. It is also called the dasa marga, meaning "path of servitude," for here the soul relates to God as servant to master. The disciplines of charya include humble service,

attending the temple, performing one's duty to community and family, honoring holy men, respecting elders, atoning for misdeeds and fulfilling the ten classical restraints called yamas which are: non-injury, truthfulness, nonstealing, divine conduct, patience, steadfastness, compassion, honesty, moderate appetite and purity. It is the stage of overcoming basic instinctive patterns such as the tendencies to become angry and hurtful. Right behavior and self-sacrificing service are never outgrown. The keynote of charya, or karma yoga, is seva, religious service given without the least thought of reward, which has the magical effect of softening the ego and bringing forth the soul's innate devotion.

Kriya Pada

Saivism demands deep devotion through bhakti yoga in the kriya pada, the softening of the intellect and unfolding love. In kriya, the second stage of religiousness, our sadhana, or regular spiritual discipline, which was mostly external in charya, is now also internal. Kriya, literally "action or rite," is a stirring of the soul in awareness of the Divine, overcoming the instinctive-intellectual mind. We now look upon the Deity image not just as carved stone, but as the living presence of the God. We perform ritual and puja not because we have to but

because we want to. We are drawn to the temple to satisfy our longing. We sing joyfully. We absorb and intuit the wisdom of the Vedas and Agamas. We perform pilgrimage and fulfill the sacraments. We practice diligently the ten classical observances called niyamas which are: remorse, contentment, giving, faith, worship of the Lord, scriptural listening, cognition, sacred vows, recitation and austerity. Our relationship with God in kriya is as a son to his parents.

Yoga Pada

Yoga, "union," is the process of uniting with God within oneself, a stage arrived at through perfecting charya and kriya. God is now like a friend to us. This system of inner discovery begins with asana—sitting quietly in yogic posture—and pranayama, breath control. Pratyahara, sense withdrawal, brings awareness into dharana, concentration, then into dhyana, meditation. Over the years, under ideal conditions, the kundalini fire of consciousness ascends to the higher chakras, burning the dross of ignorance and past karmas. Dhyana finally leads to enstasy—the contemplative experience of Satchidananda, God as energy-bliss, and ultimately to nirvikalpa samadhi, the experience of God as Parasiva, timeless, formless, spaceless. Truly a living satguru is needed as a steady guide to traverse this path. When yoga is practiced by one perfected in kriya, the Gods receive the yogi into their midst through his awakened, fiery kundalini, or cosmic energy within every individual.

Jnana Pada

Jnana is divine wisdom emanating from an enlightened being, a soul in its maturity, immersed in Sivaness, the blessed realization of God, while living out earthly karma. Jnana is the fruition of yoga and tapas, or intense spiritual discipline. Through yoga one bursts into the superconscious mind, experiencing bliss, all-knowingness and perfect silence. It is when the yogi's intellect is shattered that he soars into Parasiva and comes out a jnani, a knower. Each time he enters that unspeakable nirvikalpa samadhi, he returns to consciousness more and more the knower. He is the liberated one, the jivanmukta, the epitome of kaivalya—perfect freedom—far-seeing, filled with light, filled with love. One does not become a jnani simply by reading and understanding philosophy. The state of jnana lies in the realm of intuition, beyond the intellect.

Glossary

The following definitions are simple descriptions of words used in the twelve preceding beliefs.

Absolute Reality: The timeless, formless, spaceless, unchanging and transcendent God Siva—Parasiva. It is the Self God, the essence of man's soul.

Agama: An enormous collection of ancient Sanskrit scriptures. They are sruti, or, revealed scriptures and have equal authority to the Vedas. The major Hindu sects—Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism—each have their own Agamas. Agamas are the primary source for instructions on temple ritual and construction, philosophy and yoga.

anava: Individualizing veil of duality that enshrouds the soul. One of the three malas or bonds, along with karma and maya, that bind the soul. The effect of anava is to make us think we are separate and distinct from God. After many lifetimes, we finally break this veil of ignorance and realize the Truth—that we are one with God.

astral body: The subtle, nonphysical body in which the soul functions in the astral plane, or inner world also called Antarloka. The astral body includes the pranic sheath, the instinctive-intellectual sheath and the cognitive sheath. The pranic sheath is discarded at the death of the physical body.

causal plane: The highest or most subtle world of existence, Sivaloka.

charya: The first of the four stages we go through to realize God. The stage of good conduct where one learns to live according to dharma and serve selflessly.

Ganesh: "Lord of Categories." Ganesh is a Mahadeva, the beloved elephant-faced Deity honored by Hindus of every sect. He is the Lord of Obstacles, revered for His great wisdom and invoked first before any undertaking, for He knows all intricacies of each soul's karma and the perfect path of dharma that makes action successful.

grace: A gift from God given out of His love. Lord Siva's revealing grace is how souls awaken to their true, Divine nature.

gross plane: The physical world. See: three worlds

immanent: Indwelling; inherent and operating within. Relating to God, immanent means present in all things and throughout the universe, not aloof or distant.

inscrutable: That which cannot be analyzed or understood. Mysterious; beyond examining or defining.

intrinsic evil: Inherent, inborn badness or negativity. Hinduism holds that there is no intrinsic evil, and the real nature of man is his divine, soul nature, which is goodness.

jnana: The fourth of the four stages of religious development according to Saiva Siddhanta (and many other schools of Hindu philosophy). The mature state of the soul after God Realization.

karma: "Action," "deed." One of the most important principles in Hindu thought, karma refers to 1)-any act or deed; 2) the principle of cause and effect; 3) a consequence, which sooner or later returns upon the doer. What we sow, we shall reap in this or future lives. Selfish, hateful acts will bring suffering. Good actions will bring loving reactions. Karma is a neutral, self-perpetuating law of the inner cosmos, much as gravity is an law of the outer cosmos.

Karttikeya: Child of the Pleiades, from Kritika, "Pleiades." A son

of Siva. A great Mahadeva worshiped in all parts of India and the world. Also known as Murugan, Kumara, Skanda, Shanmukhanatha and Subramanya, He is the God who guides that part of evolution which is religion, the transformation of the instinctiveness into Divinity through the practice of yoga.

kriya pada: The stage of worship and devotion, second of four progressive stages to God Realization.

marga: "Path; way." From marg, "to seek."

maya: The world of form, created by God, of God, through His grace as an arena for the soul's evolution. One of the soul's three bonds which must be overcome to attain God Realization.

moksha: "Liberation." Release from the cycle of births and deaths, after karma has been resolved and God Realization attained.

Panchakshara Mantra: "Five-lettered chant." Namasivaya. The foremost mantra for Saivites. It means "Praise to Siva," and appears in Yajur Veda.

Paramesvara: Name of Lord Siva as the Supreme Mahadeva, origin of the universe. Siva as a person—who has a body, with head, arms and legs—who acts, wills, blesses, gives darsana, guides, creates, preserves, reabsorbs, obscures and enlightens.

Parashakti: "Supreme power; primal energy." God Siva as the energy and consciousness behind all creation.

Parasiva: The Supreme, Transcendent Siva, beyond time, form and space. The Self God—beyond the grasp of consciousness. It defies description and can only be understood through direct experience, God Realization.

Primal Soul: Siva, the uncreated, original, perfect God. The first soul, source of all other souls. See: Paramesvara.

Primal Substance: The subtle energy and form from which the manifest world in its infinite diversity is derived. See: Parashakti.

Pure Consciousness: See: Parashakti.

samsara: "Flow." The world, existence, fraught with change. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth; the total pattern of successive earthly lives experienced by a soul.

self-effulgent: Producing its own light; radiating light.

soul: The innermost part of us, created by Lord Siva. Called atman in Sanskrit. The soul never dies, but takes on one physical body after another until we know God. The essence or nucleus of the soul is eternally identical and at one with God Siva.

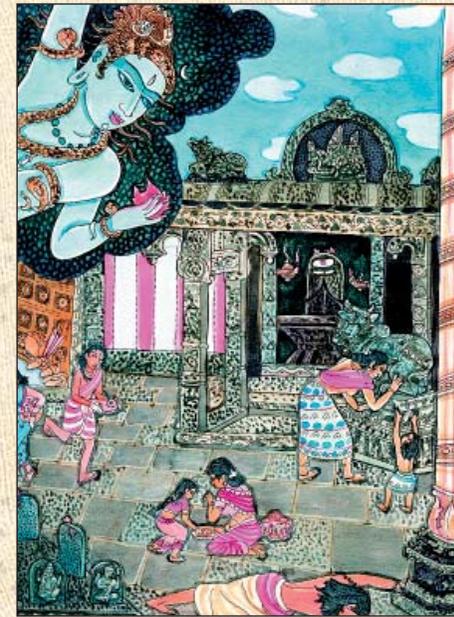
stratum: "Layer underneath." In philosophy, that which is "underneath," not visible, the substance or underlying force which is the foundation of any and all creation.

subtle plane: The unseen world of existence between our physical world and the world of the Gods, Antarloka. Souls between birth live here as devas. We can also enter this world while we sleep.

supplicate: To ask for humbly. To pray for earnestly.

three worlds: The three worlds of existence, the primary divisions of the cosmos. 1)-Bhuloka: "Earth world," the physical plane. 2) Antarloka: "Inner or in-between world," the subtle or astral plane where souls go during sleep and after death. 3) Sivaloka: "World of Siva," and of the Gods and highly evolved souls; the causal plane.

yoga: "Union." The many practices, such as meditation, breathing, japa, postures of the body, that are used by yogis to reach divine consciousness. Prominent among the many forms of yoga are hatha yoga (emphasizing bodily perfection in preparation for meditation), kriya yoga (emphasizing breath control), as well as karma yoga (selfless service) and bhakti yoga (devotional practices).



Temple worship: With Siva watching, devotees approach a temple traditionally with offerings of flowers, fruits and water