



# Proposal to Encode ‘Shiva Linga’ Symbols in Unicode

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## 1 Introduction

This is a proposal to encode two symbols associated with Hinduism in Unicode. The characters are proposed for inclusion in the block ‘Miscellaneous Symbols and Pictographs’ (U+1F300). Basic details of the characters are as follows (the code points are unassigned):

glyph	code point	character name
	U+1F9xx	SHIVA LINGA
	U+1F9xx	SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI

## 2 Background

In the proposal “Emoji Additions” (L2/14-174), authored by Mark Davis and Peter Edberg, five ‘religious symbols and structures’ among symbols of other categories were proposed for inclusion as part of the Emoji collection in Unicode. Shervin Afshar and Roozbeh Pournader proposed related symbols in “Emoji and Symbol Additions – Religious Symbols and Structures” (L2/14-235). These characters were approved for inclusion in the standard by the UTC in January 2015. They consist of the generic PRAYER BEADS; the MENO-RAH WITH NINE BRANCHES and SYNAGOGUE for Judaism; and the KAABA and MOSQUE for Islam. These five characters complement other religious symbols already encoded in Unicode: several crosses and a CHURCH for Christianity; the STAR OF DAVID for Judaism; STAR AND CRESCENT for Islam; the WHEEL OF DHARMA for Buddhism; ADI SHAKTI for Sikhism; SHINTO SHRINE for Shinto; YIN YANG for Taoism, etc. Unicode also contains *svastika* symbols in the Tibetan block, which are auspicious signs used by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. Davis and Edberg did not propose any symbols for Hinduism, but noted that the sacred syllable OM is encoded in various Indic script blocks. They also noted that there are no symbols for Jainism, Baha’i, and Zoroastrian symbols, but did not propose specific characters for encoding.

There are several symbols related to Hinduism that are recognizable to the one billion Hindus around the world. These symbols should be encoded in Unicode so that Hindus may represent important motifs of their traditions on par with adherents of other religions. The syllable OM is certainly a universal symbol of Hinduism, but its representation differs across scripts. Different forms of OM are used in Devanagari, Gujarati, Sharada, Tamil, Tibetan, and Tirhuta. There is also a Jain OM that will soon be included in the Devanagari block. Apart from the spread of the Devanagari and Tibetan forms of OM to areas outside of South Asia, other script-specific OM symbols are not readily recognized beyond the linguistic communities associated with particular scripts. On the other hand, usage and recognition of the SHIVA LINGA and the SHIVA LINGA AND SHAKTI YONI transcend linguistic, communitarian, and geographical boundaries within the Hindu communion. Encoding SHIVA LINGA and SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI in Unicode will provide distinctive Hindu symbols that are universally recognized and revered by Hindus.

### 3 Description

The SHIVA LINGA is an abstract representation of the Hindu deity Shiva, who is a primary manifestation of the Supreme Being. The Sanskrit term *liṅga* has many meanings, but generally refers to a ‘mark’ or ‘sign’. The *śiva liṅga* specifically represents the primordial masculine creative energy.

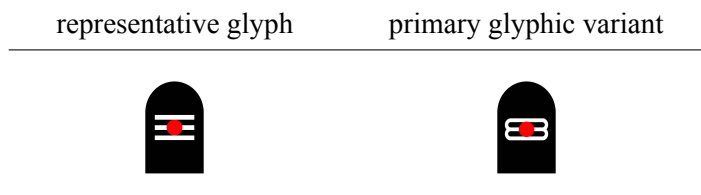
The *śiva liṅga* may be depicted alone or as resting upon a base. This base represents the *yoni*, or the primordial feminine creative energy known as Shakti (*śakti*) or the goddess who is manifested in her various forms as Parvati, Durga, Kali, Uma, etc. The joint depiction of *liṅga* and *yoni*, as embodied within the SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI symbol, represents spiritual unity and the generative essence of the universe.

The figures that accompany this document show usage of the SHIVA LINGA and SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI symbols in statuary form, in drawings and paintings, and in artistic works. They also show these symbols used in anthropomorphic depictions of Shiva and Shakti, as well as in the performance of rituals associated with worship of the two. Both symbols are also used on maps that show religious sites in India, particularly temples of the *dvādaśa jyotirlinga* “twelve radiant *liṅga*-s of Shiva”.

The origins of the SHIVA LINGA are not known. Some scholars suggest that *liṅga*-like symbols may have been used for worship in the Indus Valley culture dating back to the first millenium BCE. Regardless of its history, the SHIVA LINGA has remained an important symbol in Hinduism for more than two millenia. Encoding the SHIVA LINGA and SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI in Unicode will enable usage of these central symbols of Hindu iconography in the digital age.

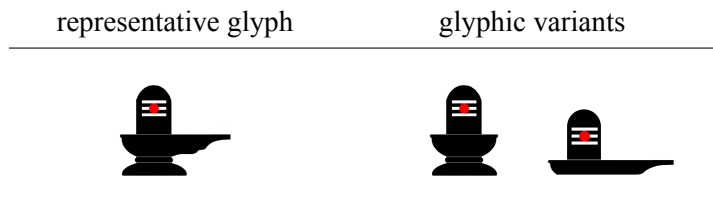
#### 3.1 SHIVA LINGA

The SHIVA LINGA is a vertical column with a rounded crown. It is usually black. Three horizontal white stripes are painted upon the side facing the observer. A red dot is positioned at the center of the middle stripe. These features are universal in representations of the SHIVA LINGA. The primary variant is produced by joining the three stripes at the ends with curved strokes. Representative and variant glyphs are shown below:



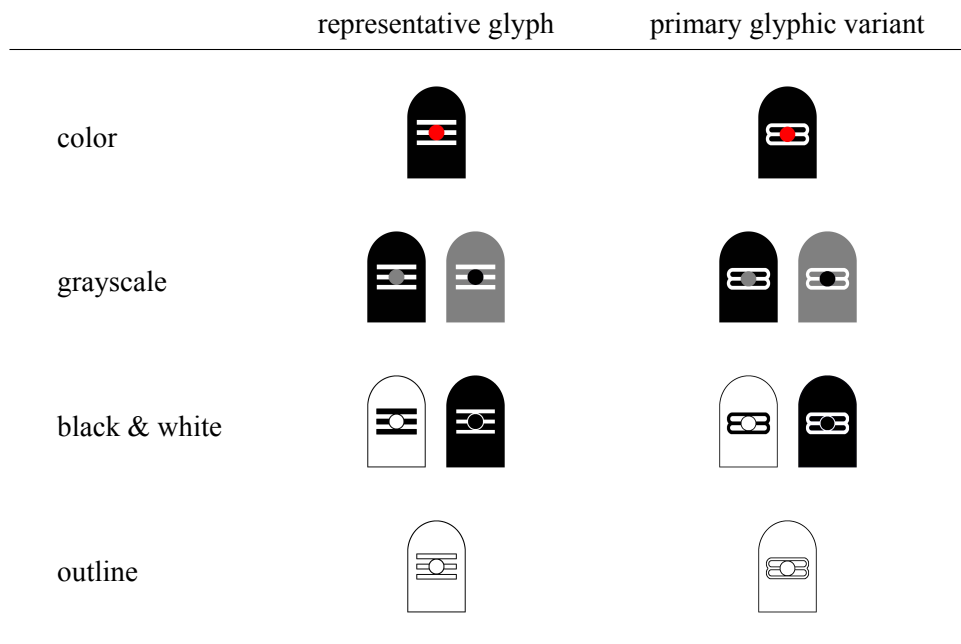
### 3.2 SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI

The SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI is depicted by placing the SHIVA LINGA upon a base that represents the *yoni* essence of Shakti. The representative glyph for SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI is an abstract silhouette that shows the general shape of the symbol. The stripes and dot upon the *linga* are oriented towards the observer, while the *yoni* base is shown in profile oriented eastward. A variant form shows a rounded base, as if the *yoni* were oriented towards the observer.



## 4 Display Variants

Shown below are representations of the SHIVA LINGA in different display modes. The SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI may be displayed similarly in different modes.



## 5 Character Data

**Character Properties** Properties in the format of `UnicodeData.txt`:

```
1F9xx;SHIVA LINGA;So;0;ON;;;;;N;;;;;
1F9xx;SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI;So;0;ON;;;;;N;;;;;
```

**Linebreaking** Linebreaking properties in the format of LineBreak.txt:

```
1F9xx..1F9xx;ID      # So      [2] SHIVA LINGA..SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI
```

**Names List** Names list information in the format of NamesList.txt:

```
@      Hindu symbols
1F9xx  SHIVA LINGA
      * representation of the Hindu deity Shiva
1F9xx  SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI
      * representation of the union of Shiva and Shakti
      = linga and yoni
```

## 6 References

Afshar, Shervin; Roozbeh Pournader. 2014. "Emoji and Symbol Additions – Religious Symbols and Structures" (L2/14-235). <http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2014/14235-relig-sym.pdf>

Davis, Mark; Peter Edberg. 2014. "Emoji Additions" (L2/14-174). <http://www.unicode.org/L2/L2014/14174r-emoji-additions.pdf>

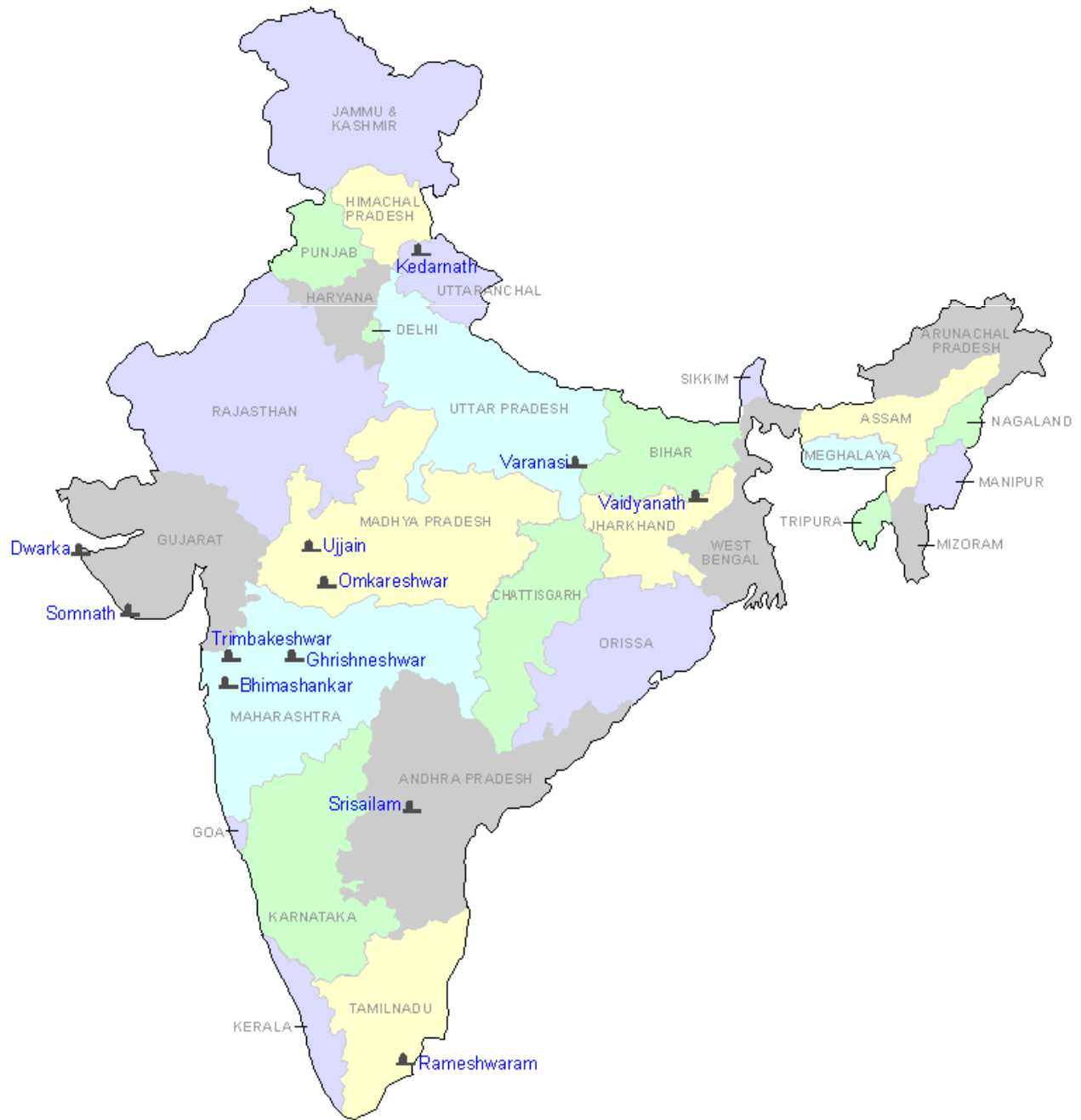


Figure 1: A map of India showing the location of the twelve *jyotirlinga*-s. The locations are marked with a simplified form of the SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI symbol.



Figure 2: A map of India showing the location of the twelve *jyotirlinga*-s. The locations are marked with a simplified form of the SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI symbol.

## 12 Jyotirlinga Shrines



Figure 3: A map of India showing the location of the twelve *jyotirlinga*-s. The locations are marked with the SHIVA LINGA WITH SHAKTI YONI symbol.



Figure 4: Statuary forms of the *liṅga* and *yoni*.





Figure 5: Statuary forms of the *linga* and *yoni*.



Figure 6: Statuary forms of the *linga* and *yoni*.

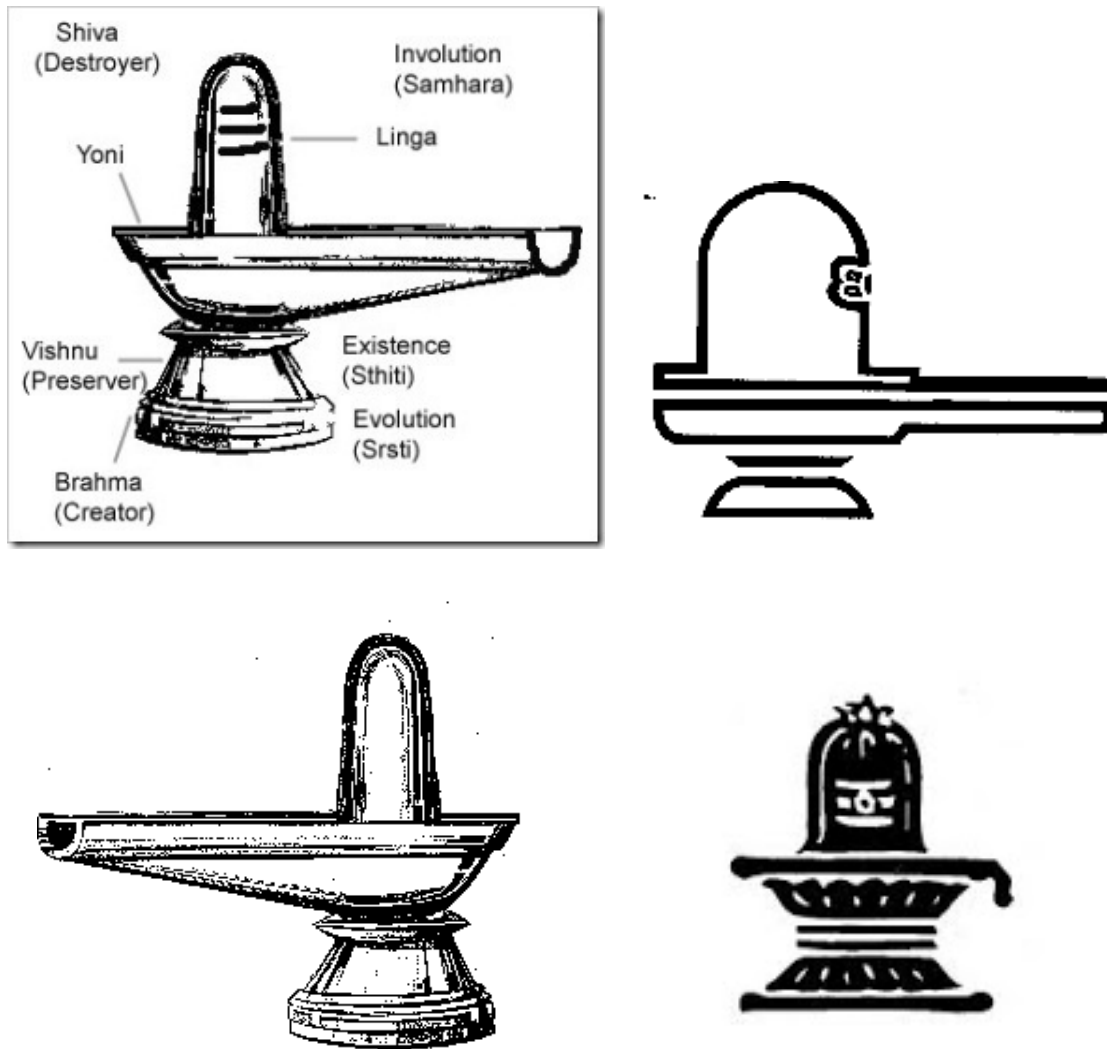


Figure 7: Drawings of the *linga* and *yoni*.

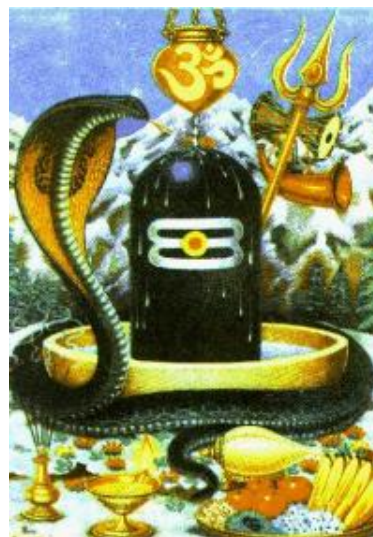
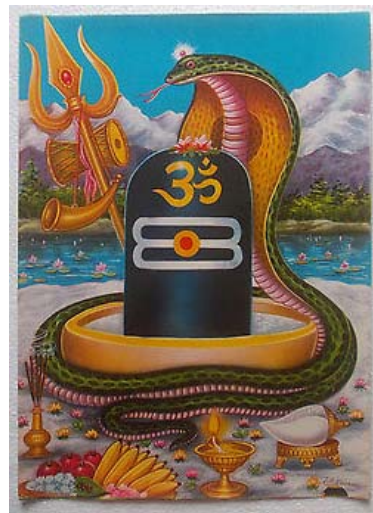
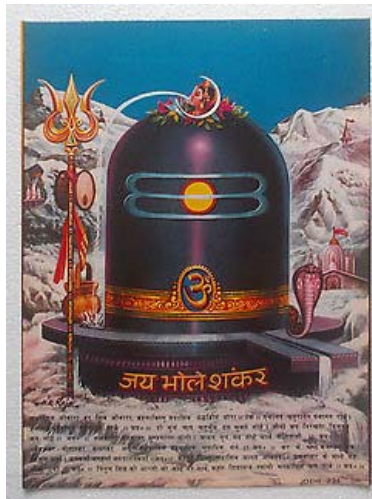
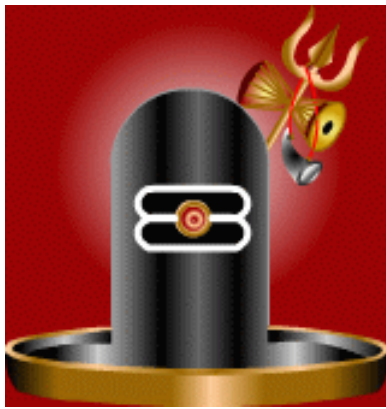


Figure 8: Paintings of the Shiva *linga*.

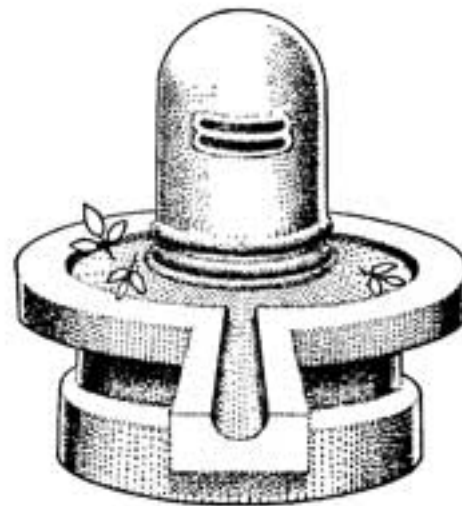
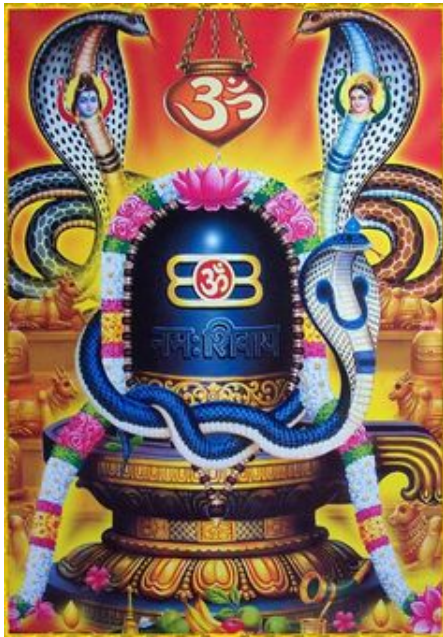
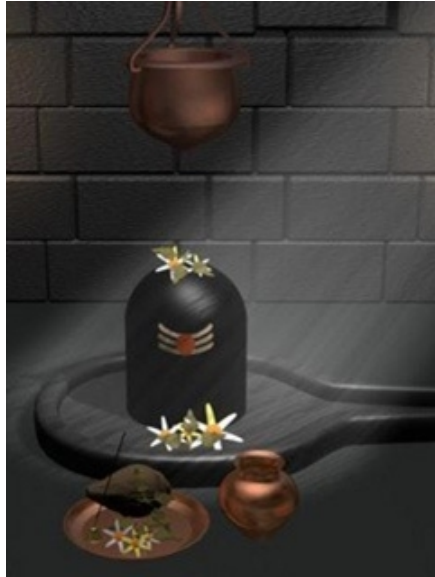


Figure 9: Paintings of the *linga* and *yoni*.

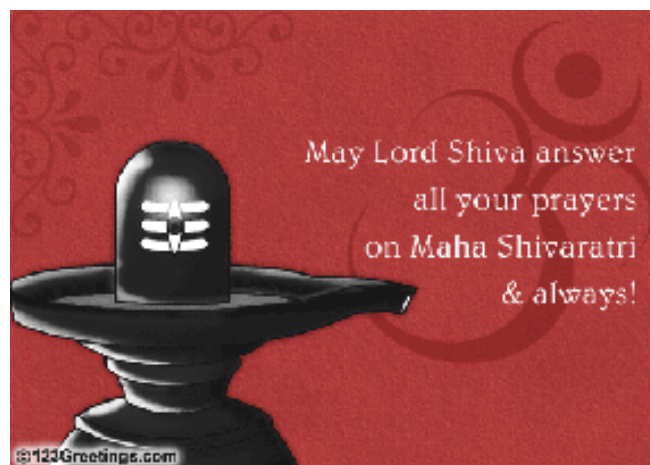


Figure 10: Paintings of the *linga* and *yoni*.

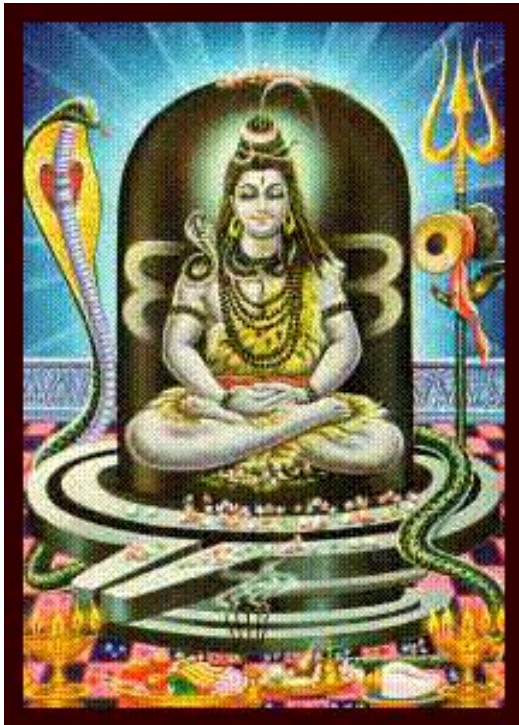


Figure 11: Depictions of Shiva with *linga*.

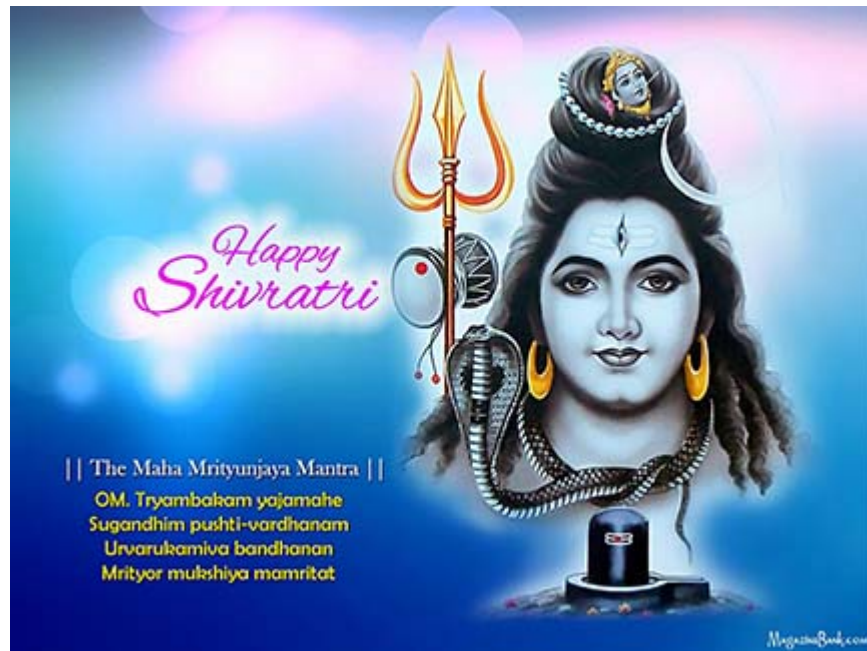


Figure 12: Artistic works containing representations of the *linga* and *yoni*.





Figure 13: Artistic works containing representations of the *linga* and *yoni*.