

Vishnu came and told the assembly that he, Brahma and Shiva were actually one and so no one should forget that and so peace returned to the three worlds.

Review Questions

Answer the following questions in your notebook.

1. Give two reasons why Sati jumped into the sacrificial fire and burnt herself to death.
2. How many daughters did Prajapati Daksh have? Whom were they married to?
3. Why didn't Shiva accept Sati as his wife after she took the form of Sita? Explain.
4. Can a god or goddess kill themselves? How then do you explain the concept of **Omnipresence** in Hinduism? Explain.
5. What kind of characters do you see in these gods compared to our character? Can they act as our example and role model? Why?



Goddess Sati committed suicide by jumping in the fire

Lesson 9 Sati or Shakti First Consort of Shiva

Shiva is the one god who has a regular family and in fact had to marry twice – since the first wife Sati or Shakti – **committed suicide** due to some peculiar circumstances.

The first time it was Sati – the daughter of **Prajapati Daksh**, a **psychic** son of Brahma and his wife **Prusuti** – who was the daughter of the first Manu, known as **Syambhu Manu** – or the one who created himself and was said to be Brahma himself, who split his body into two and the male part became **Syambhu Manu** and the female part **Shatrupa**. These two then populated the world on Brahma's command. Syambhu Manu and Shatrupa had three daughters and two sons – the youngest **Rasuti** was married to **Daksh**, as already mentioned. This couple had sixteen daughters, out of them thirteen were married to Dharm and one to Agni, one to Patris and the youngest Sati was married to **mahadev** (Shiva). Daksh did not very much like the idea of marrying his daughter to one who had such gross looks and who roamed around cremation ground and kept the oddest company. Still Sati had her heart set on mahadev and Brahma also encouraged Daksh to do so, as mahadev was one of the holy trinity!

Sati and mahadev lived happily in their abode at **Mt. Kailash**. Sati was not a quiet person and had a mind of her own and often did not listen to her husband (disobedient). She did what she herself wanted to, in spite of his telling her not to do so!

Once as they were riding around on **Nandi** the bull to see if the world was functioning as ordained. They came across two handsome youths walking around in the forest, looking miserable and extremely anxious. Seeing them Shiva bowed his head and folded his hands in a **namaskar** (wai) saying: "It seems Vishnu has taken Ram avatar already." Sati asked him what he meant by that because if one of the youths according to him was Vishnu himself, why is he despondent? "Because Ram's wife Sita has been carried away by **Ravan**, the **King of Lanka**, and Ram is searching for her in desperation" said Shiva.

"If that be so why Vishnu – who is Omniscient and knows the future, be so unhappy?" Mahadev just smiled – Sati was not satisfied and

decided to test the youths. She changed herself into a look-a-like of **Sita**, and stood in the path of **Ram** and **Laxman**. Laxman was puzzled but not Ram. He bowed and with folded hands asked Sati (in the garb of Sita): "*Mother, why are you alone in this dense forest, and where is Shiva?*" Thus proving to her husband who was just about to sit down for meditation. Still he asked her, "*What is the result of your research?*" She quickly told him a lie and said that she had actually believed him and did not really test the youths! Shiva knew the actual fact and told her: "*Now that you had taken the garb of Sita who is Lakshmi herself and is like a mother to me, I cannot accept you as my wife, therefore, your seat from now on is not on my left, but in front of me - as that is the place to a mother.*" Sati was shocked at this pronouncement, but could do nothing about it. She accepted her husband's decision, although she was heart broken.

One day while sitting she saw a lot of **vimans** (flying chariots, flying carpet) carrying gods and rishis and their wives dressed very well and in great excitement flying past overhead. She looked up and asked Shiva as to where all those people were going. Shiva had also got up from his meditation because of the noise, and inquired from one of his server as to the cause of such activity. The server informed him that Daksh has been given the title of **Prajapati** (progenitor of the human race) and he is celebrating this honor by holding a great **yagna** (sacrifice, feast) known as **Brishaspati Sava** at Kankhal near Haridwar. Sati was surprised that she and her husband had not been invited, but was very keen to go, as she felt that it was her father's house and she really didn't need an invitation! She said to Shiva: "*Your father-in-law (my father), has begun to perform a great yagna. We should also go there. We are his children. All the devtas and rishis are there with their wives. People are still going in that direction so it is evident that it is not yet over and I want to go there. I want to meet my mother and my sisters. I am very eager to go and see the yagna.*"

Shiva told her that if it was any other person he would have gone but Daksh purposely did not invite them because at the yagna known as **Brahma Satra** which was being performed by **Marichi** and other great sages. Sometime back, Daksh who had already been chosen for the title of Prajapati by Brahma came in with great pride, shining like the Sun in all its glory. Everyone got up but Shiva did not. This annoyed Daksh very much, as Daksh took it as an insult for not being honored by his own son-in-law, quite forgetting that Shiva was one of the holy trinity. So full of ego he was that from that day he refused to honor Shiva.

Sati was still keen to go and so she went. On reaching there her father did not welcome her at the gate where he stood welcoming all others. Only her mother and sisters came forward to embrace her. The rest were frightened of Daksh and kept quiet. Sati also saw that no one asked her the reason for her husband's absence. There was no offerings or portion (**havis, prasad**) for Shiva .

The insult to her in not recognizing her as a daughter of the house was bearable, but the insult to her husband, a god, was too much to her. She loved and honored him far too much and her anger towards her father was also too much for her. Shiva had forsaken her as a wife and she felt quite unwanted, so she in her rage jumped into the sacrificial fire and burnt herself to death.

There was great chaos at the yagna as soon as Shiva heard of it. He was furious and brought forth a terrible being named **Veerabhadea** and along with him and his own army of ghosts and spirits attacked the **yagshala** and played havoc with the assembly. He took the body of Sati on his shoulder and would not let it go. He started the **Rudra Tandava** (dance of destruction). With flaming eyes he in his wrath nearly destroyed the world. All the gods and the people cried out to Vishnu for help. Vishnu, realizing the gravity of the situation, hurled his **Sudharshan Chakra** and cut up Sati's body into **twelve** pieces; each piece fell down to the earth. Each place on which any part of the body fell became a holy shrine and is known as a **Shakti Peetha**.

Once the body was removed from Shiva's shoulder, he calmed down at the instance of Brahma and Vishnu and returned to Mt. Kailash leaving the people of the earth to return back to their routine and did not bother about them for a long time. Thus ended Shiva's first marriage in disaster.

After the terrible uprooting of the great yagna and the indifference of Shiva to the world it greatly upset the gods. The gods went to Brahma to seek his advice. Brahma accompanied them and convinced Shiva that he being a god himself was *nobleness and forgiveness personified*. Any **pooja** (worship) offered to any god was actually his. Shiva being **Bholenath** (naive person) forgave everyone and shed his aloofness from the worlds which was suffering due to his neglecting it.

The yagna of Daksh - which could not be left half way - was completed with dignity and honor. Daksh lost his pride and had to **wear a goat's head** from then on.