

It is Shiva, a god who is simultaneously destructive and creative, who wonderfully demonstrates the provision in Hinduism for letting us mere egocentric humans feel more comfortable by thinking about he many facets of the spiritual with anthropomorphic imagery. All such related thoughts help us obtain increased, yet slight, knowledge of the Great It; the Incomprehensible; Controller of the Universe; Creator of Life; who is beyond anthropomorphic imagery.

There are many images of Shiva. If there are gods and goddesses, then Shiva can be thought of as the Supreme Deity, controller of all, whom you can reverentially approach for assistance. In undertaking a new endeavor, He can be the one to turn to for a blessing. In the logic of opposites that is part of Hinduism, if there is maleness, there must also be femaleness. Thus, Shiva has a wife who may be called Parvati. Our very creation depends upon the uniting of two members of the opposite sex.

My favorite image of Shiva is that of Lord of the Animals, sometimes shown with the image of a deer springing from His hand. What a wonderful Lord who creates not only us, but all other creatures of the earth who are our brothers and sisters in creation! Is it not the ultimate reality for all of us mere mortals to consider ourselves as wondrous miracles among the endless and countless miracles that characterize all of creation!

The image of Shiva Nataraja in southern India depicts a dancing Shiva beating out the endless cycles of time with a tribal drum. The

cosmic halo around Shiva is related to the fact that there will be total destruction and the end of a cycle, but a fresh cycle with new creation will inevitably follow. An old house must be destroyed in order for a new one to be created in its place. There are, of necessity, eternal cycles of destruction and creation, and All forever changes.

Shiva Nataraja dances on a demon with one hand pointing downward toward the body. This conveys the message of there being a moral order in the world, with the sinful ultimately being destroyed.

It is probably safe to say the most common image of Shiva throughout India is that of the *linga*, male principle, conjoined with *yoni*, the female principle. This one gets right to the heart of demonstrating what creation is all about. It is creation linked to endless miracles that is our ultimate reason for reverence and humility.

Vishnu, the Preserver, is the third manifestation of the Hindu triad. Because any human endeavor depends first on the preservation of the body, there is an obvious need for a deity like Vishnu.

So there is Brahma the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver, all of whom can be found in the ancient rocks of Grand Canyon National Park. ☺

\*The author, a retired MU geography professor, was born in India (see right) to a Scottish father and an Australian mother. He has worked as a U.S. park ranger at Wupatki National Monument, which isn't far from the Grand Canyon.

## Noble's Endeavors

A young boy huddles next to his older sister on a crowded ship leaving Bombay. Each cabin has only two bunks to accommodate 10 people. The troop transport ship is filled with 3000 Italian prisoners of World War II on their way to captivity in New Zealand. After the prisoners are dropped off, the 12-year-old-Bill and his 18-year-old sister, Dorothy, are headed the opposite direction: toward freedom, or at least what is called "the land of freedom." They are sailing to America.

Young Bill Noble is neither a refugee nor an immigrant. He has anything but freedom on his seasick mind. Having grown up in a strict British boarding school in the Nilgiri Hills, he could hardly fathom the concept of freedom even if he tried. Bill is probably conjuring up images of the jungles and paddy fields where he used to play to avoid looking at the angry faces all around him. He might be remembering the scent of curry at his parents' house in order to forget the salty stench of unbathed captives, a smell that cannot be remedied by opening the portholes because they are five decks down and the edge of a wild typhoon threatens to flood the ship.

Bill's sister has something else on her mind as she presses her face against the closed porthole to watch destroyer escorts disappear from sight in the thrashing waves. Dorothy prefers not to remember her life in India; instead she dreams of the freedom she can't wait to encounter at the American university she will attend. It is a freedom Bill will experience six years later in 1950, and he will stay in academia from then on. ✨