

## Shiva the destroyer

I am Sita. I was born in Uganda under Idi Amin. Like all other Indian families we were expelled from that country when I was just a baby. My parents caught a dhow from Mombassa, cradling me in their arms as we crossed the Indian Ocean, stooping at Reunion, the Maldives... Made our way from Bombay to Bhubaneswar in Orissa and my father got a job at the zoo there. I had a happy childhood full of white tigers and elephants. I thought perhaps it was Ganesh the elephant god who was watching over me. Little did I know...

I met my husband Jazz and we made our way to America. It was there that I realized Shiva the destroyer might be at work(as Rudra). We arrived in New Orleans with our new baby who we called Shasta, and went to work as a cab driver even though he had an MBA from the university in Calcutta.

A few years later Katrina took our home and it began. In 2010 Jazz was fishing off the Louisiana coast when the oil well broke. The crew headed for newer cleaner waters only to be taken by a storm. I never saw my husband again.

Shiva was destroying I knew that. Still, Shasta and I moved to the west coast, where we thrived. Years passed. In the Seattle schools she got a scholarship to MIT and it seemed that all would go well. Then one summer, the fires started. From Alaska to northern California. The forests burned... Once again I lost our house and truly...I lost my hope.

In a moment of great sadness I visited the old park, and sat in the ashes. It was as low as I have been. Through the ashes I found a sprout reaching for the sky. I tried to focus on the new life. A car pulled up behind me. It was Shasta, home from school driving one of those Nissan Leafs. We stood in silence together.

"Mom there is a reason we worship the god of destruction,"she said.

"Shiva is the destroyer" she said. "but also the transformer. Bringer of change."