

Gods of India form a superhuman and mysterious race of mighty humanoid beings that were prayed to by the ancient Aryan and Vedic tribes of the Mid-East from around 3000 BC till modern times. They were recognized mainly in Hinduism. Hinduism is among the oldest and largest surviving religions in the world. The concept of God in India lies in the fact that God resides in the soul of every individual. The soul can not be separated from the divine God, the soul is immortal and so is God. God is the master of all creation and the destruction as well. He is the only one and many as well. God pervades in everything and everywhere, He is the colossal being and stays in the gigantic things as well as in the smallest particle of the world. Hinduism defines God as the being who is visible and at the same time invisible, He has a form and He is formless as well.

[Hinduism](#) is the connotation of impersonal origin, and as a Hindu religion is termed as `apauruseya`. The Hindu gods are the eternal deities appearing to be sovereign and different, but in reality are aspects of the same [Brahman](#), the supreme God. Indian Gods are the Hindu deities in a number of incarnations. Hindu religion has several Gods and Goddesses that are worshipped by the inhabitants of India. As per the Hindu belief, the God and Goddesses are living beings of a separate macrocosm. There exists a broader cosmos different from the visible one and the Hindus believe that the Gods are guiding each and every pace of human beings from their own world.

#### [Lord Brahma](#)

He is the God of Creation, an important parivara or family deity among the Hindus. He is seen with four heads representing four Vedas, which is also called the four `Yugas`. Seated on a lotus, Lord Brahma's `vahana` is the swan. It is believed that he was born from the naval of [Lord Vishnu](#) at the end of one cycle to start a fresh cycle. Myth has it that [Lord Shiva](#) cursed him that he would not be worshipped and it is evident from the fact that there are no temples to worship him.



#### **Lord Vishnu**

He is the God of maintenance, protection and sustenance among the Gods of India. He was instrumental in introducing the souls into the cycle of life by Brahma sustaining them. His complexion is the color of dark clouds and so is often known as `Nilameghashyamalan`. Being merciful, Vishnu is seen resting on the ocean on his bed of Adishesha (serpent with thousand heads), taking `avatar` for rescuing humans from evils. He has ten avatars or incarnations which are [Matsya avatar](#), [Kurma avatar](#) or [Turtle](#), [Varaha avatar](#) or [Boar](#), [Narashima avatar](#) or [Lion](#), [Vamana avatar](#) or the Dwarf incarnation, [Ravana avatar](#). Lord Vishnu's seventh incarnation is [Lord Rama](#) who is highly worshipped among the Gods of India. The eighth incarnation is [Lord Krishna](#) who is an important god in Hindu religion and the next is the [Buddha avatar](#). The [Kalki avatar](#) is the final and the tenth incarnation of Vishnu. The last incarnation is still to come with the end of the [Kali Yuga](#) or the present age of decline.

#### **Lord Shiva**

Lord Shiva is the God of destruction and is highly revered among the Gods of India. He is greatly worshipped in the form of `linga` or phallus that is built on a pedestal. Enormous energy of the creator is denoted by the `linga` which absorbs the creator Brahma, Vishnu and Gayatri Devi in its heart. All the energies assimilate into Shiva, who is known for His angry image and infinite knowledge always meditating. Destruction and creation all are blended into one power that is called Shiva, whose existence is incomplete without his consort

[Parvati](#).



#### [Lord Ganesha](#)

Lord Ganesha is one of the prime Gods of India who is worshipped at the commencement of any important action or venture, related with business or art. Known as Vigneshwara, he is known to remove all hindrances in the way. He is seen in the form of an elephant head in a human body, with four arms, a huge belly and a snake adorning it. Ganesha's `vahana` that he rides is a rat which represents subdued vanity, conch- sound that creates Akash. Laddu that he holds is `Sattva`, snakes refer to Shiva and control over passion and the hatchet alluring to the freedom from desires.

### Lord Jagannath

This God is the name given to describe a deity form of Krishna. He is considered merciful and the oldest and renowned Jagannath deity at [Puri](#) in [Orissa](#). The famous [Rath Yatra](#) or car festival is organized every year to mark Krishna's home coming in [Mathura](#). This acquires a huge dimension in Orissa where the wooden cart is pulled by thousands of pilgrims.

### Lord Hanuman

He is also known as Anjaneya and is among the most important Gods and Goddesses in the Indian epic [Ramayana](#). He assisted Rama in recovering [Sita](#) from the captivity of [Ravana](#) and was blessed with enormous energy and power by the Gods. Lots of myths are associated with him and he is highly worshipped in temples all over assuming the status of a deity among the other Gods of India.

### **Lord Indra**

Another most important God of India is Indra who is known as the king of the Gods and the ruler of the heavens. He is a great warrior and he is also regarded as the God of rain and thunder. Numerous stories are also associated with him, which also tells how he lost the heavens to the Demons. He is bedecked with conch, hook, rainbow, noose and Vajra.

Apart from various Gods, the people of India also worship a large number of Goddesses. The Goddesses are worshipped in almost all places in India. They are prayed in various forms in the country. Some of the major [Goddesses of India](#) includes Goddess Parvati, [Goddess Kali](#), [Goddess Durga](#), etc.

### **Goddess Parvati**

Goddess Parvati is the most widely worshipped Goddess in India who is the manifestation of Shakti and is the Female Creative Energy of the Universe. [Shakti](#) is also related to Prakriti, the 'material-nature' of Ishwara, which unites with Brahma, to give birth to everything around. Shiva, the Purusha or Male Productive Principle of the Universe, is believed to be in conjunction with the Prakriti, expressed in Parvati, which sustains the flow of life. Shiva is thus, the synthesis of the opposite principles of life, which portrays the totality of existence- the Creator and Destroyer; ascetic and erotic; spiritual and material.

### **Goddess Durga**

She is one of the shades of Parvati, and an expression of Shakti or Prakriti. Goddess Durga Universe's Kind Mother and she is also Destroyer of Evil. This Goddess holds the Trishul, sometimes the sword, in her different images. One of the hands of this Goddess is displayed in Varadaa-Mudra or in a stance of giving boon to her true devotees. In the state of [West Bengal](#), she is projected as an idol with ten arms. Each of the arms is carrying the weapons and articles, furnished to her by the other gods, for squelching the demon, [Mahishasura](#).



### Goddess Saraswati

Goddess Saraswati is the conferrer of wisdom and knowledge. The stringed musical instrument, called [Veena](#), and the book, which she holds in her hands, attests her as the celestial Mistress of all kinds of learning, be it the creative arts (music) and scientific research, talent and skills. This Goddess is greatly revered by the people of India and is regarded as the Vedas' Mother. Goddess Saraswati is the consort of Brahma and this identification gives colour to her image with greater meaning. She is the home of the creative intelligence of Brahma and is also famous as Vak Devi or the great Goddess of speech.

### Lord Agni

In India several natural objects are also worshipped and some of the natural objects are considered as the forms of Indian Gods and Goddesses. Lord Agni or Fire-god is a Hindu and Vedic Deva. This God is beneficent as well as destructive. Lord Agni the acceptor of sacrifice and the messenger of Gods. So all tributes made to him is distributed among other gods and goddesses. He enjoys immortality and perennial youth since fire is used everyday. Agni or fire

is fundamental to existence, being a constituent of the Panchamahabhutas or Five Great elements namely, earth or [Prithvi](#), Agni or Tejas i.e., fire, Jala (water) or Ap and Sky or Akasha.

### Lord of Wind

Pavan or Vayu, the god of wind or air, in Hinduism is mainly a deity which is worshipped. Similar to Agni, the God forms a part of the five tatvas or elements which are known as the Panchamahabhutas. In [Sanskrit language](#), the word Vayu is related to the Latin word `Vita`, which means life. Indeed, Vayu is Prana or vital life-force. Prana mobilizes the senses or Indriyas. Prana is manifestation of Brahma in union with Prakriti, is the generator of thoughts and other psychological activities. Breath is Gross Prana and Vital force is Subtle Prana. Vayu or Pavan-Deva is hence the God of life, depicted as the `Mukhya-Vayu` (the chief Vayu) or `Mukhya Prana` (the chief of Life).



### Lord Varuna

Furthermore, the people of India also worship the god of water and ocean called Lord Varuna. He is the source of water, which sustains life, the water in the rivers, sea and oceans, and even the rains that fall, and at times causes floods. Lord Varuna rides on [Makara](#), his mount, or a type of holy sea-creature. The ancient scriptures, however deliver a different data. In [Vedic religion](#), Varuna is considered as the god of the rain, sky, and of the ocean. He is also the creator of Law and of the underworld. His residence is the celestial sea, Rasa. [Rigveda](#) pictures him as the most prominent demon or [Asura](#), interested in social and ethics matters. It also celebrates him as the chief of the Gods. Varuna was the head of the Adityas or the solar deities. The [Atharva Veda](#) highlights Varuna as the strict maintainer of morality.

He is omniscient, catching liars in his snares. The stars are his thousand-eyed spies, keeping vigilance on every action of men. It is much later, that Varuna obtained his present status as the God of water.

### Lord Kartikeya

The origin of [Lord Kartikeya](#), the symbol of masculine might, has link with the desperation of Gods for the birth of the much-awaited son of Shiva, who could obliterate the ghastly demon, Taraka. Unfortunately, Shiva at that time was keen on asceticism. Parvati, his consort, was bleaded by the distressed gods, reeling under Taraka's assault. Parvati managed to procure the divine essence of Shiva in a seed, and handed it over to the gods. So fiery was this seed, that it burnt the fire-deity Agni, singed the wind-god Vayu, boiled the river-goddess Ganges and set alight the forest of reeds. After the conflagration got extinguished, the six forest nymphs known as Kritikas discovered a six-headed child under the embers within a lotus. They took care of the child and named him Kartikeya. On the sixth day of his life, the child let out a roaring war-cry, picked up his lance, attacked and killed Taraka. He turned out to be the invincible commander of the gods and earned them countless victories and a peacock is his mount. In North India this God is regarded as a bachelor and in South India Lord Kartikeya is having two consorts. The first one is Devasena, daughter of Indra, who enthusiastically eulogized him for his outstanding bravery.

Thus, the Gods of India from the ancient period form an integral part of the religious life of the Hindus. Apart from these well-known Gods and Goddesses, the people of India worship a large number of deities, the list of which goes on and on with the religious beliefs of the people of this country.

## Goddesses Of India

Goddesses of India are at an equal footing with their male counterparts, known by various names all over India.

## More on Goddesses Of India



- [Bhudevi](#)

- [Goddess Shashthi](#)

- [Goddess Mahalasa](#)

Goddesses of India are huge in number and are worshipped in all parts of India among the Hindu people. India has the largest population of the Hindus who worship male and female deities. Goddesses of India are those female deities who have gained prominence and are widely worshipped with great splendor and piety. The Hindu goddesses have got place in the ancient Hindu scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana and Rig Veda.

[Goddess Durga](#) is a form of Devi, the supreme goddess, having ten arms and each arm has a separate weapon and seated on a lion or a tiger. Durga in Sanskrit means fort or a palace, which is well protected and is inaccessible. Durga is the manifestation of the power that helps in preserving the moral order and virtue in the creation. She is like the mother who protects and nurtures her child or mankind, by destroying the evil forces of jealousy, selfishness, anger, ego and creating a peaceful environment for her child to live in. She is also known as [Parvati](#), Ambika, and Goddess Kali. Shown having ten hands she delivered the devas from the hands of [Mahishasura](#) the Demon. Durga is also known as Ambey Mata in the northern parts of India. [Navaratri](#) is celebrated all over the country celebrating her valor and prowess that helped [Lord Rama](#) to release his bride from his captivity.

Another important goddess of Hindus is the Goddess Kali who is the divine mother seen in a more violent form. She sent her `Shakti` to bestow peace to the gods after freeing them from demons called Shumbh and Nishumbh. Kali is the first of the ten Mahavidyas, acquiring the name Adya- the goddess, or the first born. She is the goddess of time and death, which is `Kala`, when [lord Shiva](#) and Gauri is united that destructive form is known as Mahakali or Mahakala. Kali is also the Kundalini energy that frees one from the fear of death.

[Goddess Saraswati](#) is the goddess of knowledge, music and all other creative forms. She is the goddess of speech, repository of [Lord Brahma](#)`s creative intelligence and Mother of the [Vedas](#). Saraswati`s `vahana` is the Swan, which is noted for its extraordinary capabilities for separating water out of milk, symbolizing the power to differentiate between the good and the bad.



[Goddess Lakshmi](#), the deity of wealth and prosperity is worshipped in all parts of India for prosperity and wealth. She is one of the extremely important goddesses of India and Hindu religion. She is [Lord Vishnu](#)'s consort, and they jointly fulfill the acts of perseverance and maintenance. Lakshmi took various forms and accompanied Vishnu in his incarnations or avatars. She is seen seated on a lotus, often seen holding the amrita kalasham or the pot of ambrosia and bilva fruit.

Apart from these major goddesses of [Hinduism](#), there are some other goddesses who are worshipped by the followers of Hinduism. Goddess Bhuvaneshwari is the primary force, which demonstrates herself as the phenomenal world. She dwells in the 'hearth chakra' and being a queen she looks for the welfare of her subjects. She is one of the ten Mahavidyas, who represent some divine incarnation or representation of the Divine Mother. Worship of the Bhuvaneshwari brings change in the emotions as well as in body chemistry.

Goddess Aditi is the great Hindu goddess, one among the greatest goddesses of India, who known as the woman clothed with the Sun. She is the Sun Goddess, Mother of all the lights of Heaven who gave birth to the twelve zodiacal spirits. The daughter of the Mountain and the better half of Shiva is goddess Parvati is another goddess of India. She forms a part of Shiva for which He is called 'Ardharaaushwar'. She is the Kali in her unmarried state, who is known by the names of Maya, Sati and so on. She is described as beautiful and magnificent in her disposition.

Moreover, Mahalakshmi is one of the Divine shades of Shakti. She is the Lokmata, the Provider of Health, wealth and happiness. Devi Lakshmi is Haripriya, being the consort of Hari or Vishnu or Vasudeva, residing at Vishnu's celestial abode, Vaikuntha. She is the Kamala, who ascended from the milk ocean, seated on the marvelous Lotus Flower or Padma, during the Churning of the milk-ocean for the Pot of Ambrosia or the Amrit Kumbh. She is thus the Jaladhija. She had been the companion of Vishnu, even in his Avtar forms.

The goddesses of India are numerous and have a great importance in the religious life. They are center of all Shaktis and seem to be enhancing the power of the Indian gods. The Hindu goddesses are not only worshipped in temples but annually worshipped in Mandapas which has become a major attraction for all. These religious festivals have become a part of the regular celebrations of the people as a means of relief from a mundane life. The goddesses are worshipped with great devotion and reverence as they are said to be the creators of the world, the conferrers of health, wealth and prosperity to the human beings.

## Sacred Animals in India

Sacred Animals in India have taken a special place in Hindu Mythology. Certain animals and plants, though causing trouble to people, are considered sacred and hence should not be destroyed.



Sacred animals in India are prevalent among the Hindus. A really good and pious Hindu would not dare to do certain actions forbidden by the sacred laws namely [Dharma Sastras](#) of Manu. His duty was to lay down rules for the different Hindu communities to follow and which no Hindu should transgress or sin. It has been laid down by this law giver to people that certain pests, like parrots, rabbits and so forth cause a good deal of loss to the ryots. Certain animals and plants, though causing trouble to people, are considered sacred and hence should not be destroyed.

It has been an acknowledged fact everywhere in the world that the lives of men are of graded importance. The Hindu law-giver, Manu had laid down that the life of a [Brahmin](#) is many times more precious than the life of a [Kshatriya](#) [Indian caste](#) or a Vaisya or a Sudra. The reason for this statement is that a really true Brahmin has nothing personal and everything he has and every action he does are for the benefit of humanity at large.

#### **Feeding crows and dogs before eating**

In typical Hindu families the daily meals for the members are prepared by the elderly lady e.g. the mother assisted by her daughters. Just as in typical Christian families, no one is allowed to eat till after grace, so in typical Hindu families no one is allowed to eat till after the prepared food is first offered to god. The chief male member of the family performs the pooja in which the food is offered to god. In some houses where pooja for the deity is not performed, the food prepared is offered to the deity kept in the house. After this mental offering, a handful of the food is taken and placed in the open courtyard of the house for the crows to feed on. Only thereafter, the inmates sit to take their meal, which, in the case of scrupulous old people, is taken only once during day and once during night throughout their lifetime. But when performing shraadh ceremonies, this custom is not followed. The ball of rice first offered to the manes of the dead relatives of the performers of the [shraadh](#) ceremony. They are not offered the shraadh preparation along with the manes for which the shraadh was specially designed and performed, and then placed in the courtyard of the house as an offering to the crows. Somehow, the Hindus have the belief that if the crows did not eat the food placed as a ball of rice offered to the manes, the relationship between them and the performer is not cordial and the incident perhaps foreboded evil. Anyhow there is the indication of the belief that the crows frequenting a particular house have some sort of relationship to the manes of the dead.



The other animal fed before taking the meals is the dog. This is done only at nights but not in day-time. The reason behind this can be mentioned as that crows are not available at nights but dogs are ready at hand.

From certain anecdotes current among the masses, it

appears that this unique custom had its origin from the fear that the food might have been poisoned by some one. While history tells us that in royal families one member was ready to kill another to grasp power and wealth. Thus it is no wonder that people entertained the fear of being poisoned by their enemies in those days when there were rival clans in deadly feud. The offering of bribes to poison and thus remove undesirable people from the path was the most common. Therefore the explanation can be given as that people made use of the domestic crows and dogs to test the presence of poison in the food they were to take and this is no compliment to them at all from a moral aspect of view.

Viewed from the bright side it can be explained that the custom as having originated from the noble view taken by the people in recognizing even the inferior animals.

### **Eatables not to be sold**

It is the belief with many of the Hindus that eatables should not be sold for money. If in any case someone does so, in that case he or she will have to remain for a time on certain levels of hell after his death. Further, the money obtained from sale of food, cakes and in fact of all eatables is considered an accumulation of sin and hence could not be conducive to the welfare and prosperity of the individual earning it.



The great woman saint of India, Auvaiyar, has distinctly stated that starving is perhaps preferable to food obtained from unloving hands. The beauty of home life and domestic bliss and happiness lies in the simple fact that the fare though poor is homely prepared and given by loving hands. The mother in case of children and wife in the case of the husband, usually provide that hand. There is a distinct difference between the loving spirit of the keeper of a hotel of public inn feeding the people and the mother at home.

Food taken from unloving hands builds up in the partaker the mental magnetism thereof. It eventually goes to destroy the finer feeling of love. In fact, if a man, though possessing a family of children, spends some years in a hotel, he runs the danger of losing his affectionate feelings towards his loved ones. Similarly one, though he may not have the requisite affection for the members of his family at first, may, in course of time, become much attached to them by the steady force of love manifested through homely meal prepared and given him by affectionate hands. Thus a seller of food, etc., cuts off a useful source for the manifestation of love in those frequenting him and hence stands condemned.

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### **Devi: The Great Goddess:**

"The Great Goddess, known in India as Devi (literally "goddess"), has many guises. She is "Ma" the gentle and approachable mother. As Jaganmata, or Mother of the universe, she assumes cosmic proportions, destroying evil and addressing herself to the creation and dissolution of

the worlds.

She is worshiped by thousands of names that often reflect local customs and legends. She is one and she is many. She is celebrated in songs and poems.

Devi is all-important in Hinduism, but there are also forms of female divinity in Buddhism and Jainism. Today millions of Hindu men and women conduct regular pujas to Devi through one of her many manifestations.

For some she is their primary deity while for others she is part of a greater pantheon. All Hindu goddesses may be viewed as different manifestations of Devi. In some forms she is benign and gentle, while in other forms she is dynamic and ferocious, but in all forms she is helpful to her devotees.

There are many approaches to looking at Devi chronological, religious, or by function. Here we have chosen to observe Devi through her six main functions, beginning with her most forceful and dynamic form and moving toward less potent forms.

Devi is first seen as cosmic force, where she destroys demonic forces that threaten world equilibrium, and creates, annihilates, and recreates the universe. Next, in her gentle, radiant dayini form, she is the gracious donor of boons, wealth, fortune, and success. As heroine and beloved, Devi comes down to earth and provides inspiring models for earthly women.

Devi is then seen as a local protector of villages, towns, and individual tribal peoples, where she is concerned only with local affairs. In her fifth aspect, Devi appears as semi-divine force, manifesting herself through fertility spirits, and other supernatural forms. Finally, she is also represented in woman saints, who are born on earth but endowed with deep spirituality and other-worldly powers."

"By you this universe is borne, By you this world is created, O Devi, by you it is protected." (Devi-Mahatmya).

Throughout India, devotees honour Devi in their temples and at wayside shrines. Flowers garland her image with brightness, the light of countless lamps illuminate her presence and the blood of thousands of animals stains the stones of her altars crimson.

The Goddess is older than time, yet time itself. She is formless, yet to be found in all forms. Her presence is in all things, yet she transcends all things. She is ever-changing, yet eternally changeless.

She is both the womb from which all life flows forth and the tomb to which all life returns. Devi the Shining One source of the life-giving powers of the universe, who is experienced by her ecstatic worshippers as the Primal Cause and Mother of the World.

Pre-dating the patriarchal Male Trinity by thousands of years, the Goddess was once worshipped throughout the ancient world. Now, only in India does her cult remain widespread and part of a vibrant, living tradition in



which her presence empowers and stirs the hearts of her devotees with adoration and devotion.

The veneration of Devi can be traced as far back as 20,000 BC. A bone image of the Great Mother was discovered at Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh dating back to that period. She was also revered at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus Valley from 2,500 BC.

Closely associated with the land itself, villagers in rural India paid tribute to the Earth Goddess, adorning branches of trees and placing shrines within them which carried her image. Smooth, oval-shaped stones also marked her sacred sites.

Women were her channels and it was through them her rituals were performed, rites for the dead and ceremonies to promote fertility and fruitfulness of the land.

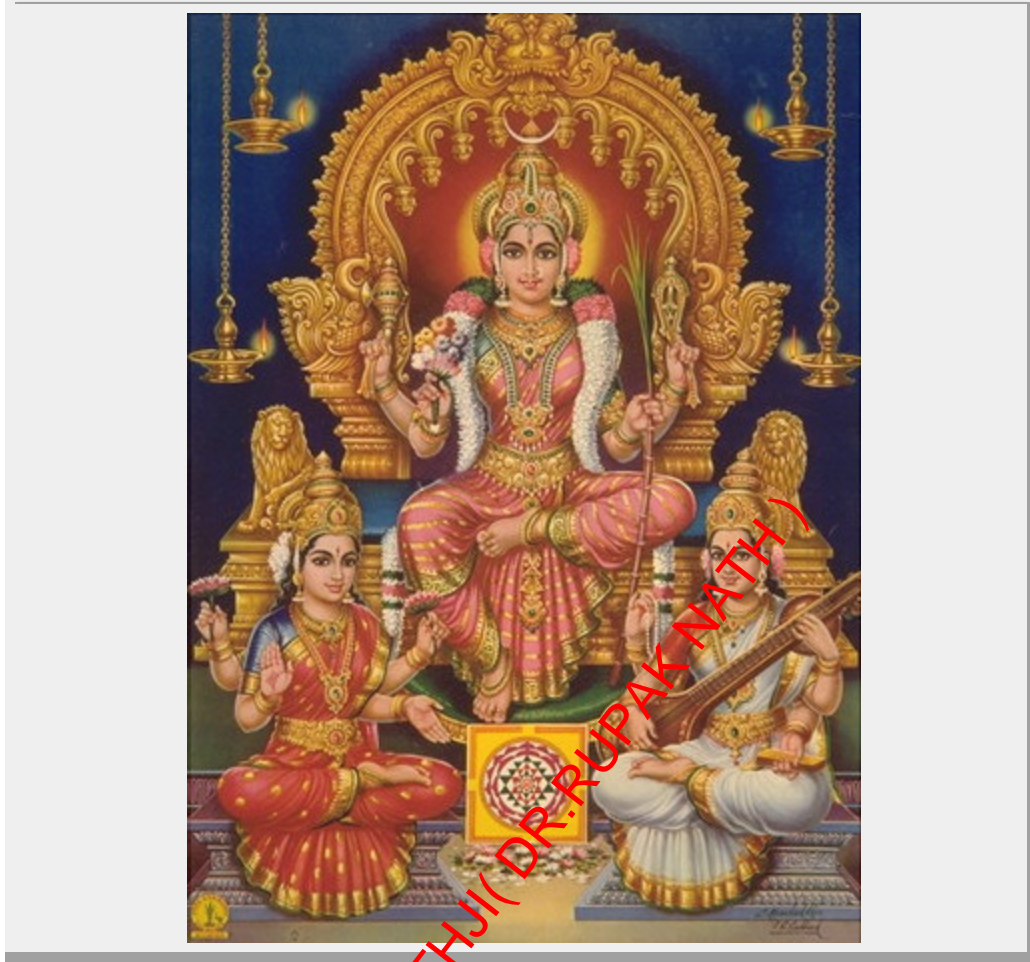
The Goddess became united in a Divine Marriage with the Gods of the Male Trinity: Sarasvati with Brahma, Lakshmi with Vishnu, and Parvati, Kali and Durga with Siva. Once given a priestly blessing, veneration of the Goddess as the God's consort was incorporated in the regular rituals. As Sakti, she became the powerful spiritual energy without which the God was unable to act.

#### Facets

The Goddess is multi-faceted, known by myriad names and personified in many forms. As well as responding to the names of Parvati, Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Sakti, she also manifests under the titles of Gauri, Uma, Sati, Aditi, Maya, Ganga, Prakriti, Gayatri, Tara, Minaksi, Mahadevi, Kundalini, Durga, Kali, Chamunda and in many other guises.

The great mountain peaks of the Himalayas Annapurna, Nanda Devi and Chomo-Lung-Ma (known to Westerners as the world's highest mountain, Everest) all testify to her divine presence.

Like the facets of a diamond, these varying forms of the Great Universal Energy that is Devi are merely reflections of the countless aspects that make the whole, the Absolute.



### **Creator and Preserver:**

Creator and Preserver

As Virgin and Mother, the Goddess is considered to be the very spring from which every kind of love flows into the world. From the vast ocean of her being the morphogenetic field that produces all forms the Goddess gives birth to all living things. The pouring forth of this love-energy from her timeless, formless source into the field of time constitutes a sacred mystery.

Representations of the Goddess as a crouching woman giving birth to the manifold forms of her creation can be found in Indian art. As the Sky-Goddess Aditi, she pervades all space and is mother to the Gods so revered by the Indo-Aryans.

Maya the Sanskrit word for "magic" and "illusion" describes her role as the originator of all material things, all that is perceptible to the senses.

Displaying the protective and maternal side of her nature, she revels in her multitudinous manifestations and joyfully embraces the bounty of her gifts. Sculptures adorning Hindu temples frequently depict the Virgin Goddess as a young, beautiful and voluptuous woman. Sometimes she stands on her own, at others she is paired with her God-consort.

As Earth Mother, she is also a deity closely associated with Nature and fertility. Images of her priestesses, the Yoginis and Saktas, often incorporate organic forms such as branches or vines, symbolising Nature in its most instinctive form, prolific and fruitful. Plants, leaves and flowers are commonly used in Indian medicine and, when they appear in portrayals of the Earth Mother they are considered to reflect the magical powers with which she is endowed.

Adorned with jewels and ornaments, she represents all that is precious. She alone is the eternal jewel whose brilliance encompasses and illuminates the universe.

One of the most ancient cults of the Goddess is that of Sarasvati, who is both worshipped as a sacred river of the same name and as the instigator and protectress of the spoken word, as well as all intellectual and artistic pursuits.

One of the most recent forms of her manifestation is that of Bharat Mata, Mother India, a militant aspect of the Goddess that is much concerned with the cause of Hindu nationalism.

Another manifestation is that of the beneficent Lakshmi, bringer of prosperity and abundance. During the autumn festival of Diwali, people all over the country light lamps in her honour to guide her into their homes.

The Goddess is also revered as Sati the pre-Vedic Virgin Bride who epitomises the loyal and virtuous wife who is faithful to her husband even unto death. This idea of wifely perfection is dear to the Indian way of thinking. Although in a metaphysical sense it means Sati is totally at one with her own true being, it is also an ethical concept.

Sadly, the idea of the "perfect wife" who is faithful unto death developed into the practice of suttee, in which a dutiful spouse was expected to accompany her husband to the world beyond through self-immolation voluntarily or otherwise in the flames of his funeral pyre.

In her aspect of the Great Mother, Devi's devotees believe the presence of the Goddess exists within all her creations. She is their Mother. She gives them life. She nurtures them through her physical manifestations and she is present in their times of need. Through her worship, too, her devotees can transcend the world of illusion and reach out to her true being.

### **Destroyer:**

As Devimahatma, Mahadevi or Durga (one of her most ancient titles), the eternally existent mother who nurtures and protects her offspring, the Goddess's influence swept across North India and was particularly popular in the regions of Bengal and Rajasthan.

Famous for her sakthi in battle, Durga the Unassailable used the strength of her will, her knowledge and force of action, to defeat the purveyors of evil and to vanquish the demonic forces upsetting the balance of the universe.

Riding on a lion or tiger, her multiple arms wielding auspicious weapons, she was Cosmic Energy personified. When her mission was fulfilled she returned to her mountain home, promising to nourish the earth and protect her worshippers, only returning should her divine force be needed again.

At the height of this great cosmic battle, Durga was aided by the awesome Kali, who burst from her forehead to devour or crush the army of demons. As Kali drank the seed-blood of her enemies, she rendered impotent the destructive phallic power of her assailants.

Kali represents the Crone aspect of the Triple Goddess. With her dishevelled hair and lolling blood-drenched tongue, she presents a fearsome figure.

As the active power of Time, her three eyes look to past, present and future. Her thin waist is encircled by a girdle of human hands, symbolising the accumulated deeds of karma. Around her neck hangs a rosary of fifty skulls, each one inscribed with a magic letter of the Sanskrit alphabet representing the sacred word, or mantra, which vibrates within the primordial creative energy of the universe.

The Goddess's four hands are also symbolic of her function: one wields a sword to cleave the threads of bondage, another grasps a severed head, representing the annihilation of the ego. Her two remaining hands are poised in gestures to dispel fear and inspire her devotees with spiritual strength.

Paintings and sculptures sometimes depict the fearsome Goddess standing on the inert body of her consort, Siva, awakening him into action with her sheer primordial power and energy.

As Smashanakali she resides in cremation grounds and her priestesses, the Dakinis or Skywalkers, undertake the role of Angels of Death.

Terrible though her aspect as Destroyer undoubtedly is, the mystical experience of the Goddess in this form can liberate the devotee from ego-consciousness and spiritually unite him with the Goddess in her oceanic formless state.

### **Symbolic representations:**

Abstract forms can also depict the Goddess in her various forms.

As Creator she is symbolised by a downward pointing triangle, the yoni, representative of female sexuality.

As Preserver, she takes the form of a straight line, and as Destroyer she is recognised in the form of the circle.

In her unmanifested state as the Source of all life, the Goddess is depicted simply as a dot, the bindu,



or seed-state of her being.

### **Durga, Parvathi & Shakti:**

The Indian system of beliefs refers to the female aspect of divinity as Shakti or the manifestation of energy. Parvati, the consort of Shiva or Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu are enshrined in temples and all over India. Some of these shrines are referred to as Shakti Peethams, (or the sites where the parts of Sati's body fell as in the legend of Daksha's yagna). Others are ancient shrines closely tied to local legends and beliefs.

Shakti, the mother Goddess, also known as Ambaa (mother), or Devi (Goddess) is considered to be the personification of Cosmic Energy in its dynamic form. It is believed that Shakti is the power and energy with which the Universe is created, preserved, destroyed and recreated (by the trinity of Hinduism Bhrahma, Vishnu and Shiva).

Shakti is worshipped in several forms. As Rajarajeswari or Kamakshi, she is the Universal mother. As Uma or Parvati, she is the gentle consort of Shiva. As Meenakshi - she is the queen of Shiva. As Durga, she rides the tiger, and bears weaponry. In the angry and terrifying form of Kaali, she destroys and devours all forms of evil. As Kaali, she is also the personification of time, her dark form being symbolic of future which is beyond our knowledge. Shakti is the mother of Skanda and Ganesha.

Shakthi Peethams are centers of Shakti worship, representing sites related to the legend of Daksha Yagna, Shiva and Sati his consort. Belief has it that Shiva performed the rudra tandava dance, carrying the dead body of his consort Sati. The Universe unable to bear the fury of the dance requested Vishnu to intervene, and Vishnu used his chakra to tear the body into several pieces, and

bring down the fury of Shiva's tandavam. The severed pieces of Sati's body are believed to have landed in several spots across the region, and these are referred to as Shakti Peethams.

Belief in Shakti or the feminine aspect of Divinity is an integral (and popular) element of the religious fabric of the entire subcontinent. Female guardian deities are revered in all parts of India. The Shakta Agama deals with the worship protocol adhered to in Devi temples. There is a shrine to Shakti, or the consort of Shiva in virtually all Saivite temples throughout the subcontinent.

Tantric practices involving chants, gestures and yantras (geometric shapes) also govern the worship of Shakti. Local forms of Shakti, not conforming to Agamic or Tantric rules are also widely prevalent throughout the region.

Goddess Durga [ Goddess of Shakti ] :

The deity has eight arms, and holds on the left trident, sword, snake and bell, and on the right, drum, shield, cup and water pot; she is seated in sukhasana posture on a double lotus throne and wears a garland of skulls. The torana at the back is similar to those shown on plates 10 and 33 with the addition of the conch shell (right) and wheel (left) symbols usually associated with Vishnu and often held by Durga. Just visible below her left knee, next to the lotus throne is the figure of a lion, (sometimes the mount of Durga).

Durga is a female deity whose relation with her closest male deity (Shiva) is sufficiently remote for her to be worshipped in her own right. It is likely that, not long after female deities appeared as shaktis of male deities, goddesses were elevated to the status of independent deities. It is not known which of them, in the earlier stages of this development, first achieved the further distinction of having a temple in which they were the main icon that would give undoubted evidence of final emancipation.

This may have taken place about the 7th or 8th century A.D. as the shakti of the Impersonal Absolute is referred to as Durga in the Narayana Upanishad and as being susceptible to worship for the acquisition of material gain in this world and spiritual advancement in the next.

Yet, in whatever form, Devi's magic still remains. As the Great Triple Goddess she is today widely worshipped throughout India.

To her followers, she is both the Energy which is life itself and the Source to whose depths all living things return.

At the time of Kali Yuga, or cosmic dissolution, her devotees believe the physically manifested universe will once again withdraw itself into the formless depths of the Goddess until a new gestation period commences and the cyclic rhythm of creation is once again set into motion.

"Who dares misery, love  
And hug the form of death,  
Dance in destruction's dance  
To him the Mother comes."  
-Rupnathji.

### **Devi - Goddess Lakshmi**

Goddess Lakshmi [ Goddess of Prosperity ] :

Lord Sri Narayana or Mahavishnu is known as the preserver. The beloved wife of Sri Narayana is Sri Lakshmi. Mother Lakshmi is always identified with the Lord, and hence they are known as Sri Lakshmi

Narayana. Mother Lakshmi is a mother of prosperity, peace and illumination. Without Her grace one can't have inner peace or perennial joy.

Lakshmi is commonly known as Goddess of wealth. Wealth is not only the money. Tradition and values of life is also wealth. Our family and progress is also wealth. Our belongings such as land, properties, animals, grains, etc as well as virtues like patience, persistence, purity etc in the form of a character are nothing but our wealth and so also glory or victory. Thus this eightfold Sri Lakshmi is known as Sri Ashta Lakshmi.

Mother Lakshmi is the source and provider of the following enumerated well-known sixteen types of wealth and many more. (1) Fame (2) Knowledge (3) Courage and Strength (4) Victory (5) Good Children (6) Valor (7) Gold and other gross properties (8) Grains in abundance (9) Happiness (10) Bliss (11) Intelligence (12) Beauty (13) Higher Aim, High Thinking and Higher Meditation too (14) Morality and Ethics (15) Good Health (16) Long Life. Let us glance upon the glory of mother Ashta Lakshmi's individual nature and forms.

Adi Lakshmi: Mother Lakshmi resides with Lord Narayana in the Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Narayana. She is known as Rama, means bringing happiness to the mankind. She is also known as Indira (who holds lotus or purity in the hands or heart.) Divine Mother's this form is normally seen serving Sri Narayana. Lord Narayana is omnipresent. Adi Lakshmi or Rama Lakshmi serves Sri Narayana is symbolic of her serving the whole creation. Though Sri Narayana is attended by innumerable devotees, still she personally loves to serve the Lord. Actually mother Adi Lakshmi and Narayana are not two different entities but one only. Many a place we see her form sitting in the lap of Sri Narayana.

Dhanya Lakshmi: Dhanya means grains. This includes all kind of purified food containing all essential vitamins, minerals, protein, calcium, carbohydrate and so on. With the grace of mother Dhanya Lakshmi one gets all essential nutrients grains, fruits, vegetables and other foods.

Dhairya Lakshmi: This form of mother Lakshmi grants the boon of infinite courage and strength. Those, who are in tune with infinite inner power are always bound to have victory. Those who worship mother Dhairya Lakshmi they live and lead a life with tremendous patience and inner stability.

Gaja Lakshmi: In the holy book of Srimead Bhagavata the story of the churning of the ocean by Gods and demons is explained in detail. Another, the Sage Vyasa writes that Lakshmi came out of the ocean during the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan). So she is known as a daughter of the ocean. She came out of the ocean sitting on a full-bloomed lotus and also having lotus flowers in both hands with two elephants by her sides, holding a beautiful vessel filled with milk and pouring it over Sri Lakshmi. Many a time we see Sri Lakshmi standing in the lotus and elephants are pouring nectar over her. During the festival of the lamps or the Deepavali along with Sri Lakshmi the Ganapathi or the Elephant God also gets worshipped; that signifies the protection from evils as well as abundant grace and blessings for additional prosperities!

Santan Lakshmi: In the family life, the children are the greatest treasure. Those who worship this particular form of Sri Lakshmi, known as a Santan Lakshmi, are bestowed with the grace of mother Lakshmi and have wealth in the form of desirable children with good health & long life.

Vijay Lakshmi: Vijay is victory. Vijay is to get success in all undertakings and all different facets of life. Some are strong physically but weak mentally while others are economically rich but poor in their attitude and cannot exert any influence. Vijay is to have all encompassing victory. Vijay is to rejoice glory of our real nature - Vijay is to conquer the lower nature. Vijay is the victory in external and internal wars and of course eternal wars! Hence those, with grace of mother Vijay Lakshmi, have victory everywhere, at all time, in all conditions. Victory to Vijay Lakshmi!!

Dhana Lakshmi: Dhana is wealth. But as per Rigved's Purush Shukta Dhana is not only a wealth in coins and currency. Even Sun and moon, fire and stars, rains and nature, oceans and mountains,

rivers and streams, all these are our wealth, so are the progeny, our inner will power, our character and our virtues. With the grace of mother Dhana Lakshmi we will get all these in abundance.

Vidya Lakshmi: Vidya is education. Education is not mere studies to receive the degrees and diplomas certificates from the educational institutes or universities. Serenity, Regularity, Absence of Vanity, Sincerity, Simplicity, Veracity, Equanimity, Fixity, Non-irritability, Adaptability Humility, Tenacity, Integrity, Nobility, Magnanimity, Charity, Generosity and Purity are the eighteen "itis" that only can give immortality.

Education, which cannot give peace to the soul or cannot give the knowledge of the Self and the inner satisfaction, is not education. Education, which cannot wipe the tears of others, known or unknown, is not education. Education is the understanding the situation and silence or art of living and leading the life that can make the life, the Life Divine, where the ultimate Goal of the life is the God-Realization.

Such Education can come only through discrimination and dispassion. One can have abundant amount of money, but if he does not know how to make good use of it, it will work to his disadvantage. If an alcoholic or a drug addict gets a big sum of money, it will only hasten his downward journey to destruction. Vidya Lakshmi is the understanding and the knowledge to mold the ordinary life into the Divine Life. A life of Service, a life of feeling for a fellow being, a life of charity and generosity, a life of purity, a life for seeking a soul within the soul and a life with an ultimate aim of the realization of the ABSOLUTE is the only real education, which can come only with the grace of Vidya Lakshmi.

Thus all these eightfold Sri Lakshmi is ultimately one single power only. That is Adishakti.

The perennial and unchangeable, ever lasting, eternal truth or the absolute is this Supreme blessedness, the mother Adishakti. She is the origin. She is the light. She is the power, the wisdom and the strength. She is the Supreme Joy, peace, bliss and illumination.

Year after year we have seen the lamps being lit for Diwali, the birth day and the wedding day of Goddess Lakshmi. In the dark night the glowing flames herald the advent of longer nights-the early days of an Indian winter.

The essence of this light is Shri Lakshmi arising, at the beginning of time, out of the waters at the churning of the Milky Ocean by gods and demons for a thousand years. Regarded as the goddess of love, beauty and prosperity, Lakshmi, Kamla or Padma (Sanskrit words for lotus), the beloved consort of Vishnu, along with the dearly loved pot-bellied, elephant headed, auspicious god of the Hindu theology, Sri Ganesha, is a presiding deity of the festival of lights. They are worshipped in every household so that the year may be full of prosperity. Throughout the night a lamp is kept burning before her image so that she may continue to dwell in the house and bestow upon it the wealth of life.

May Mother Adishakti's and Sri Ashta Lakshmi's grace be ever upon us all, to receive her divine grace for being befitting servant of the mankind in her cosmic kingdom. Om Shanti.





### **Goddess Saraswati [ Goddess of Knowledge and Rivers ] :**

Goddess Saraswati (Sarasvati) is the wife (consort) of Lord Brahma and possesses the powers of speech, wisdom and learning. She has four hands representing four aspects of human personality in learning; mind, intellect, alertness and ego.

She is said to have invented Sanskrit, language of the Brahmins, of scriptures and of scholarship, and one account says that it was she who discovered soma or amrita in the Himalayas and brought it to the other gods.

She is goddess of all the creative arts and in particular of poetry and music, learning and science. She is represented as a graceful woman with white skin, wearing a crescent moon on her brow; she rides a swan or peacock, or is seated on a lotus flower.

She has sacred scriptures in one hand and a lotus (a symbol of true knowledge) in the second. With her other two hands she plays the music of love and life on the violin (veena).

She is dressed in white (sign of purity) and rides on a white goose (swan).

Saraswati is one of the important goddesses in the Vedas. Vedic literature consistently associates her, even equates her, with the goddess of speech, poetry, music, and culture in general. In classical and medieval Hinduism Saraswati is primarily a goddess of poetic inspiration and learning. She becomes associated with the creator god Brahma as his wife. In this role she is creative sound, which leads to reality a peculiar and distinctive human dimension. She becomes identified with the dimension of reality that is best described as coherent intelligibility. Saraswati to this day is worshiped throughout

India and on her special day is worshiped by school children as the patron goddess of learning.

As early as the Vedas Saraswati is consistently identified with Vagdevi, the goddess of speech. It is not at all clear what intrinsic connection between Saraswati and Vagdevi led to this association. Perhaps the centrality of sacred speech in Vedic cult and the importance of Vedic rituals being performed on the banks of the Saraswati River led to the identification of the two goddesses. In any case, Saraswati increasingly becomes a goddess associated with speech, learning, culture, and wisdom; most post-Vedic references to her do not even hint that at one time she was identified with a river.

According to Brahma-vaivarta-purana and the Devi-bhagavata-purana, Krishna, who is identified with absolute reality {brahman}, divides himself into male and female, purusa and prakrti, spirit and matter, in order to proceed with creation. His female half takes on five forms or five sash's, dynamic powers, one of which is Saraswati.

Her specific creative function in relation to the other saktis is to pervade reality with insight, knowledge, and learning. In relation to prakrti she is said to be purely sattvic, spiritual. These same texts also describe Saraswati's origin from the tip of Krishna's sakti's tongue. Suddenly, they say, a lovely girl appears dressed in yellow clothes, adorned with jewels, and carrying a book and a vina (lute). Saraswati is also often said to have her origin in and to reside in the mouths or on the tongues of the god Brahma (Brahma has four or five heads) That is, when Brahma undertakes the creation of the world through creative speech, the goddess Saraswati is born in his mouths. Saraswati is also said to have had her origin from the god Vishnu.

Far more characteristic of the later Saraswati is her association with speech. Even in the Rg-veda she is called impeller of true and sweet speech and awakener of happy and noble thoughts (6.61.9). Such epithets as Vagdevi (goddess of speech), Jihvagravasi (dwelling in the front of the tongue), Kavijihvagravasi (she who dwells on the tongues of poets), Sabdavasini (she who dwells in sound), Vagisa (mistress of speech), and Mahavani (possessing great speech)" are often used for Saraswati. Her mythological identification with the tongues of Brahma, Krishna, and Vishnu also underlines her identification with speech or creative sound.

Saraswati is also identified with thought and intellect. Not only is she speech in the form of coherent sound, she is that which underlies or makes speech possible, namely, intelligence and thought. This association is indicated in such epithets for her as Smrtisakti (the power of memory), Jnanasakti (the power of knowledge), Buddhisaktisvarupini (whose form is the power of intellect), Kalpanasakti (who is the power of forming ideas), and Pratibha (intelligence, or she who is intelligence) As thought and intellect, Saraswati is thus identified with the distinctive ability that distinguishes human beings as special, reasoning. She represents the peculiar human ability to think, which is precisely the ability that has permitted human beings to create and imagine their innumerable cultural products, from cooking pots to philosophic systems.

Saraswati's association with science, learning, and knowledge further reinforces her nature as the goddess of speech and thought. She is called, for example, Vedagarbha (the womb or source of the Vedas or knowledge), Sarvavidyasvarupini (whose form is all the sciences), Sarvasastravasini (who dwells in all books), Granthakarini (who causes books to be made), and many other such names. As mind, intellect, and thought, she inspires the arts and sciences. She is also the accumulated products of human thought. She is the sum of the human intellectual tradition as preserved in the sciences. As the great goddess who bears culture, or who embodies culture, she is sometimes associated with the Brahmans, whose special duty is to preserve culture. She is manifest and especially revered in schools and wherever education takes place.

Saraswati is also said to underlie, inspire, or embody the arts. She is said to provide inspiration to poets and to be present wherever artistic excellence is evident. Poets often praise her assistance or ask for her help. She is said to be associated with the Gandharvas, a supernatural race that excels at dancing," and she is often associated with music, both instrumental and vocal. In short, Saraswati is manifest wherever human culture exists. Inspiring and embodying both the arts and sciences in human culture, she represents the greatness of human civilization in all its richness and diversity.

Beyond Saraswati's associations with culture, which dominate her character, are certain cosmic associations or certain tendencies and epithets that suggest her primordial, absolute nature. Such names as the following identify Saraswati as a great, universal goddess whose functions extend to the creation of the worlds: Jagannata (mother of the world), Saktirupini (whose form is power or sakti), and Visvarupa (containing all forms within her). It is fairly easy to imagine how Saraswati's character as the inspiration and embodiment of culture might lead to her assuming such cosmic characteristics. As the reality that permits human beings to achieve dominion over all other creatures, that permits or inspires the beauty and grace manifest in the arts, that has enabled human beings to achieve an almost godlike nature in the physical world sits masters and molders, this goddess of culture comes to be extolled or equated with the highest powers of the cosmos.

The predominant themes in Saraswati's appearance are purity and transcendence. She is almost always said to be pure white like snow, the moon, or the kunda flower or to shine brilliantly and whitely like innumerable moons ~ Her garments are said to be fiery in their purity, or they are described as whiter and she is sometimes said to be smeared with sandalwood pasted Sarisvati's gloaming white body and garments express well her purity and transcendence, and these themes are in keeping with her typical association with the sattva guna, the pure, spiritual thread of prakrti. Saraswati is rarely described as having fearsome aspects and is usually portrayed as calm and peaceful.

These qualities are conveyed in the serene, white images of her in Hindu art. Saraswati's transcendent nature, which removes her from the impurities of the natural world and its rhythms of growth and fertility, is also suggested in her vehicle, the swan. The swan is a symbol of spiritual transcendence and perfection in Hinduism. Spiritual masters and heroes are sometimes called supreme swans (paramahansa) in that they have completely transcended the limitations and imperfections of the phenomenal world. Saraswati, astride her swan, suggests a dimension of human existence that rises over the physical, natural world. Her realm is one of beauty, perfect, and grace; it is a realm created by artistic inspiration, philosophic insight, and accumulated knowledge, which have enabled human beings to so refine their natural world that they have been able to transcend its limitations. Saraswati astride her swan beckons human beings to continued cultural creation and civilized perfection.

Saraswati is also typically shown seated on a lotus. Like the swan, the lotus seat of the goddess suggests her transcendence of the physical world. She floats above the muddy imperfections of the physical world, unsullied, pure, beautiful. Although rooted in the mud (like man rooted in the physical world), the lotus perfects itself in a blossom that has transcended the mud. Saraswati inspires people to live in such a way that they may transcend their physical limitations through the ongoing creation of culture.

The benefits to be derived from the worship of Saraswati, of the blessings that she is expected to bestow on her devotees, usually relate to the themes that we have noted as central to her character. She gives eloquence, wisdom, poetic inspiration, and artistic skill" She removes speech defects and dumbness and grants charming speech and a musical voiced" Although she is sometimes said to grant wealth, long life, worldly enjoyments, and final salvation, she is primarily the goddess of wisdom and learning and specializes in promoting success among philosophers, scholars, and artists, who are her special devotees.

Throughout India today Saraswati's special puja is celebrated in early spring. On this day images of the goddess are established in schools and universities, and special cultural programs take place. This is also the day when books, pens, musical instruments and gurus are formally worshiped.



## Ganesh

Ganesh, also known as Vinayaka (the prominent leader), is the elephant-headed Hindu god of wisdom, literature and worldly success.

Ganesh is a propitious god, promising success, prosperity, and peace and he is invoked before any sort of venture. It is his responsibility to decide between success and failure, to remove obstacles or create them as necessary.

Ganapati is not only the God of Beginnings, he is the defacto God of Learning and Wisdom, as befits his elephant head. The better attributes of the elephant are that it lives long, forgets nothing and it is brave, loyal, kind, strong and gentle.

An explanation to his missing tusk is that Ganapati is considered to have taken down the Mahabharatha at the dictation of its composer, the poet-saint Vyasa. He broke off one of his tusks to write it with, in honor of the great epic he was privileged to set down.

Ganapathi laid a condition that he will quit his assistance once he found that the flow of vyasa's dictation is broken. Vyasa laid a counter condition that Ganapathi would not write down anything that he did not fully comprehend so that he can get some breathing time when Ganapathi comprehends the versus.

The symbol of Aum represents the elephant head and the trunk of Ganesh. It is noteworthy to mention the fact that the Tamil symbol for Aum does look very similar to the Ganapati head indeed.

Ganesha is depicted with having four arms. These symbolize him as the universal ruler establishing four categories of beings -- firstly those who can live only in water, secondly those who can live in water and earth, thirdly those who can live only on earth and lastly those who can fly in the air. Moreover it is also Ganesha who instituted the four castes and four Vedas.

The vehicle of Ganesha is a rat or mouse. As rats generally succeed in gnawing their way through every obstruction, the rat symbolizes this god's nature of destorying every obstacle.

As the Lord of Obstacles and the personification of those qualities which surmount all difficulties, Ganesha is often honored at the outset of any project or venture and consequently has become particularly popular with businessmen and students. He is the typical lord of success in life and its accompaniments of good living, prosperity and peace. In all ceremonies, Ganesha is first invoked. He is revered by all Hindus and Budhists, whether followers of Shiva, Vishnu or Budha.

Ganesha represents the unity of the Small Being, the rat with the Great Being, the elephant. It is the blending of the microcosm with macrocosm, of drop of water with the ocean and of individual soul with divinity

The Mudgala Purana gives eight Inner Avatars of Ganapati. These avatars can be understood to symbolize abstract qualities which triumph over similar personifications of evil and weakness. The Purana explicitly states that the stories are to be meditated upon for their inner meaning, which will be revealed according to the inner development of each individual and are not meant to be understood as literal narratives.

The first of these is Vakratunda (twisted trunk) an embodiment of the Absolute Impersonal aspect of Godhood called Brahman in the form of Ganesha. He defeated a demon called Matsaryasura, 'Envy-Jealousy', born amazingly from the fact that Indra, king of the gods, was absent-minded and lost control of his faculties of mind! This lapse in awareness resulted in this impossibly powerful demon coming into being, and he defeated all, as there is nothing that envy cannot overpower in the long run. Only the pure abstract form of god, hence without qualities that can be overcome by Envy, could beat him. The myth is of course an allegory on the yogic belief that in the end all the qualities of the mind have to be transcended for liberation.

The next incarnation was in the form of Ekadanta (single tusked) who defeated the demon Madasura. This is purely an allegorical story as Madasura gained power by meditating on the famous Shakti mantra, 'Hrim', revealing its essentially tantrik source. The form of Ekadanta has been interpreted to mean Eka, 'one', but also creative power of matter, Maya and Danta stands for 'truth'. Ekadanta is thus the Supreme Truth that wields Maya. Madasura was let off with the admonition that he could benefit from all the demonic desires manifest in the universe, but he could not harass those with pure intentions and actions, an obvious statement of the fact that evil can enter only when it is invited in.

The next was Mahodara who vanquished Mohasura, the demon of Delusion and Confusion. As Lambhodara, the Essence of Sattva, he defeats Krodhasura (Anger). As Vikata (Intelligence) he defeats Kamasura (Lust). Vignaraja (Lord of Obstacles) defeated the demon Mamasura (Possessiveness). It is a not so subtle attempt to convey that the major roadblock to spiritual evolution is the desire to possess. Dhumravarna, the destructive power of Brahman, overcame the demon Abhimanasura (Attachment, Pride).

All these demons are known as the Inner Enemies, and represent the qualities that one needs to get rid of, as one grows in the spiritual life. They are in a real sense obstacles, and Ganapati is the best qualified to remove obstacles from any life.

Each one of these qualities are part of the Shadow, a vital aspect of our personas, providing great energy if they are controlled, but wreaking disaster if they are allowed to become dominant in the psyche. They are to be subdued not destroyed, for in the famous words of Jung, "How can I cast a Shadow if I am not substantial?" The more you develop as a human being, the more the potential for

these qualities to manifest and drag you down is enhanced. But recognizing that they are within you and refusing to let them take charge is the way forward. It is not surprising that the mere sight of Ganapati, Awareness, renders these demons impotent and powerless. Once they are recognized and acknowledged for what they are, they lose their influence instantly.

### **Skanda, the supreme commander!**

Skanda is regarded as the supreme commander of the Gods and the destroyer of evil forces. He is also regarded as the epitome of knowledge. He is revered as an infant, as a child - (Balasubramanian), as a handsome and romantic prince (Valli Manavaalan - Azhagan Murugan), as an invincible warrior - ruler, and also as a mature renunciate. There is a wealth of literature centered around Murugan.

Skanda is regarded as the son of Shiva and Parvati and hence the brother of Ganesha. There is a shrine to Skanda in all Saivite temples in Tamilnadu, and likewise there are shrines to Shiva and Parvati in all temples dedicated to Skanda.

Valli - the daughter of a tribal ruler and Deivayanai or Devasena, the daughter of Indra the King of Devas are the consorts of Skanda. Skanda is also revered as the nephew of Vishnu and is referred to as Maal Marugan. The rich mythology surrounding Skanda hence revolves around all of the above mentioned manifestations of Divinity.

Skanda is one of the most revered forms of Divinity in the southern state of Tamilnadu. Skanda is known as Murugan - the God of the Tamils, and as Subramanyan, Balasubramanian, Saravanan, Kumaran, Guhan, Shanmukhan or Aarumugan (the six faced one), Velayudhan and Kartikeyan. The name Murugan is synonymous with the language Tamil and the concept of beauty Azhagu.

This legend narrates the story of the destruction of Kaama by Shiva and the birth of Skanda.

Sati, the consort of Shiva immolated herself at the site of the Daksha Yagna, which was later destroyed by Shiva. Sati was reborn as Uma, or Parvati the daughter of the mountain king Himavaan (the Himalayas). Shiva withdrew himself from the universe and engaged himself in yogic meditation in the Himalayas.

In the meanwhile, the demon Surapadma ravaged the earth and tormented its beings. It was realized by the gods that only the son born of Shiva and Parvati could lead the gods to victory over Tarakaasuran, Surapadman and their demon companions. They plotted with Kaama, the lord of desire, to shoot a flower arrow at Shiva, as he sat in meditation, so as to make him fall in love with Parvati. When Kaama aimed his arrow at Shiva, he opened his third eye and burned him to ashes instantly. Upon hearing the pleas of Kama's wife Rati, he brought back Kama to life, in flesh and blood for her sake, and in a formless state for others.

Siva married Parvathi thereafter. At the request of Parvathi for a son, Siva opened his third eye and the sparks of the fiery seed of Shiva were unbearable; even the fire God Agni could not bear them; this fire was then transported by the river Ganga into the Sara Vana forest, where Sara Vana Bhava was born. He was raised by the six Kartika damsels.

Parvati combined these six babies into one with six faces, ie. Shanmukha. Skanda or Kartikeya the supreme general of the devas, led the army of the devas to victory against the demons. The six sites at which Kartikeya sojourned while leading his armies against Surapadman are Tiruttanikai, Swamimalai, Tiruvavinankudi (Palani), Pazhamudirsolai, Tirupparamkunram and Tiruchendur. All these sites have ancient temples glorified by the tamil poems of Tirumurugaatruppadai of the Sangam period (prior to the 3rd century CE).

Tirukkurukkai, in Tamilnadu near Thanjavur, enshrines Kaamari Murthy, the destroyer of Kaama, in the Veeratteswarar temple which is one of the 8 Veeratta stalas celebrating Shiva as the destroyer of evil.

### The Story of Skanda's marriage with Valli

Legend has it that the ghat region of Tamilnadu was ruled by Nambirajan, the king of the Kuravas or the hill tribes. Nambirajan worshipped Siva, praying for a daughter; his prayers were answered and it was revealed to him that he would discover a baby in the nearby woods and that she would be his daughter.

Accordingly the kurava king discovered 'Vallinayaki' in the woods and brought her up as his own.

Valli grew up to be a beautiful maiden and Subramanya - son of Siva and Parvati sought her hand in marriage. Their courtship is full of very interesting stories which form the basis of many and folk and classical performing arts in Tamilnadu.

Murugan assumed the form of an old bangle seller, and sold bangles to Valli, in return for a local delicacy of honey soaked corn flour. A conversation ensued between the two, which was interrupted by the arrival of Valli's brothers, a valiant lot who were highly possessive and protective of their sister. Flustered by their sudden appearance, and unwilling to indulge in battle, Skanda manifested himself as a Vengai maram (a stump of which is still seen in the Temple at Velimalai in Southern Tamilnadu).

Skanda appeared again, in the guise of an old tribal king and sought her hand in marriage. The brothers materialized again, and Skanda transformed himself into an old ascetic from the Himalayas, and they left the spot.

Upset by the ongoing hindrance, Skanda sought the help of his brother Vinayaka - the remover of obstacles, who appeared on the spot as a wild elephant. The scared Valli, embraced Skanda and promised to offer him anything in return for protection from the wild beast. Skanda sought her hand in marriage, and Valli consented gladly, realizing that her suitor was none other than Murugan, whom she and her tribe held in great regard.

Valli married Murugan and the marriage was celebrated in great splendor by Nambirajan, the king of kuravas.

There are several temples to Murugan all over the state of Tamilnadu (as in Palani, Tiruchendur etc.) and prominent shrines in Siva temples (as in Sikkal and Vaideeswaran Koyil) and at least one shrine in all Saivite temples throughout the state.

Prominent shrines to Skanda in the neighboring southern states include Haripad and Udayanapuram in Kerala, Subrahmanya in Karnataka and the modern Skandagiri temple in Secundrabad - Andhra Pradesh.

Skanda - also known as Murugan, Kartikeya, Subramanya is one of the most revered deities in the southern state of Tamilnadu. Of the multitude of temples dedicated to Skanda, the 6 most important ones are the Aaru Padai Veedu shrines, where it is believed that Skanda the commander of the Gods, sojourned during his battle with the demon Soorapadman. These shrines have been revered in 2000 year old Tamil poetry of the Sangam age.

Skanda rides a peacock called Paravani- surely the perfect vehicle for a cosmic dandy. His preferred weapon is the Vela or spear hence the popular name Velayudhan - he whose weapon is a spear. He is called Yuddharanga or the wisdom of war too. He is represented with six heads and twelve hands. He is popularly known as Subramanium too which is a common south Indian name.

Tiru Aavinankudi(Palani) near Madurai enshrines Dhandayutapani in a hill temple.

Tirupparamkunram near Madurai enshrines Subramanya celebrating his marriage with Devasena the daughter of Indra. The shrine to Siva here has been revered by the Tevaram hymns of the Nayanmars.

Pazhamudircholai near Alagar Koyil near Madurai is a simple shrine on the Pazhamudircholai hill enshrining Skanda.

Swamimalai in the Chola Kingdom enshrines Swaminathan in a temple built on an artificial mound accessed through a flight of 60 steps symbolizing the 60 years that constitute the cycle of years in the Indian calendar.

Tiruchendur enshrines Subramanyar and Senthilandavar in a vast temple with a lofty gopuram visible for miles, on the shores of the ocean in Southern Tamilnadu.

Tiruttani near Tirupati and Chennai enshrines Subramanya in a hill temple accessed through a flight of 365 steps. It is to be remembered that while the sixty steps of Swamimalai symbolize the sixty years of Indian calendar, the 365 steps of Thiruthani symbolizes the 365 days of an year.

### **Ayyapan, the Celibate God**

Ayyapan, the Celibate God of Kerala, is host to every religious trend and practice the Hindu faith ever manifested in its entire history. His temple is unique in India, in that there is no distinction of caste or religion in determining who can enter it.

Non-Hindus are equally welcome. It might be more instructive to talk about the Legend and History of Ayyappan, as the mythic story always has a deeper resonance as well as more significant spiritual truth in India.

#### **The Legend and History of Ayyappan**

The legend and history are intermingled in the genesis of Ayyappan. It is believed that Ayyappan was born as progeny of the union of Vishnu and Shiva. Vishnu appeared as Mohini, the beautiful enchantress - the alluring damsel appearing at the time of the churning of the Ocean Of Milk to entice the asuras and divide the nectar (Amrita) among the Devas themselves. Shiva succumbed to the beauty of Mohini and Ayyappan was born out of this union. Hence the name Hari Hara Putra - Hari (Vishnu), Hara (Shiva), Putra (son). Ayyappan is regarded as the third son of Shiva, the other two being Ganesha and Muruga.

According to another legend, the asura Bhasmasura obtained a boon from Lord Shiva. Accordingly, whoever Bhasmasura touched on the head with his hand would be turned into ashes. To test the efficacy of this boon, Bhasmasura tried to touch the head of Shiva himself. The frightened Shiva sought help from Vishnu. In order to distract Bhasmasura, Vishnu appeared as the seductress Mohini in front of Bhasmasura. Bhasmasura lost control of his senses and asked Mohini to be his consort. Mohini agreed to his request on condition that he should promise her by touching his forehead that he would not take another wife. Bhasmasura readily agreed to this condition and promised her by touching on his forehead. Immediately, the boon given to him by Shiva became effective and Bhasmasura was reduced to a heap of ashes. In the meanwhile, Shiva was himself enticed by the charm and beauty of Mohini and as a result of their union, Ayyappan was born on the auspicious day of Makara Sankranti, when the star Uttara was on the ascension.



The child was abandoned on the banks of the Pampa River. Meanwhile, King Rajasekhara of Panthalarn in Kerala, who belonged to the Pandya dynasty of South India, was hunting in the forest. He heard the cry of the child and afterwards found him lying on the banks of the river, with a radiant face and a golden bell tied around his neck. The King, who had no child of his own, took him to the palace and brought him up as his own son. He was named Manikanda because of the gold bell found around his neck.

Soon after this incident, the Queen conceived and gave birth to a son. Both sons grew up in the palace as brothers. When the time came to decide on the heir apparent, the Queen favoured her own son and the King nominated Manikanda as the Prince (Yuvaraja). The Queen conspired with the Chief Minister and thought out a plan to get rid of Manikanda.

She feigned sickness and prevailed upon the palace physician to prescribe a medicine which included the milk of a tigress. Manikanda was assigned to the task of fetching the tigress milk and was sent out to the forest. The intention was to get him killed by wild animals in the process.

The King advised Manikanda to take along a coconut of tri-netrom (three eyed coconut) to represent Shiva in order to protect him and some food items to sustain him till his return, in a cloth bundle known as irumudi which was to be carried upon his head.

During his wanderings in the forest of Sabari, the battle between Mahishi and Ayyappan took place at the bank of Azhutha. Ayyappan killed Mahishi and threw the dead body into a nearby place called Kallidurnkunnu. Mahishi's soul emerged and was redeemed from a curse sustained from her previous life when she was known as Leela. She requested Ayyappan to marry her and take her as his consort. As Manikandan was to be a Brahmachari (celibate ascetic), he refused her request, but he agreed to give her a place as his Shakti on Sabari Hill. This place is now known as Malikapurathamma shrine.

Manikanda returned to the palace, using Devendra the king of Devas, to take the form of a ferocious tigress and riding on it accompanied by a fleet of tigresses. The King and the Queen were amazed and they realized that Manikanda was an avatar, a human incarnation of Shiva, and prayed for his mercy.

The king wished to have an abode made in his memory. Accordingly, a sanctum was built to install an idol made of panchaloha (an alloy of five metals), climbing 18 steps to reach the sanctum. These 18 steps to represent 5 indriyas, 8 ragas, 3 gunas, vidya and avidya.

Ayyappan also advised the king of the nature of the austerities to be observed before the pilgrimage to this temple. On the day of consecration and installation of the idol, amidst the sound of saranam chanting and conches, pipes and drums, Ayyappan was transformed into a stroke of lightning and got absorbed in the idol of Dharma Sastha. This was his birthday, the auspicious day of Makara Sankrathi.

The birth and mission of Ayyappa or Dharma Sastha are mentioned in the Vedas and Puranas. But the details of His life and works are found only in legends orally handed down from generation to generation. These legends vary considerably in their descriptive parts. The variations are in accordance with the tastes, preferences and beliefs of the people of a particular locality or state. So, in order to have a concrete idea of the Incarnation and mission of Dharma Sastha, the Vedas, Puranas and legends have to be carefully studied and assimilated.

Lord Ayyappa teaches us the sacred principle of brotherhood to remain happy and peaceful. We go in herds to His sacred shrine and He is pleased. Truth, fidelity, devotion and hard work are His ways to kill evil. With these virtues He subdued Mahishi, the incarnation of all sin and evil. His teachings transcend time and help to solve the riddles of human misery.

#### SABARIMALA

The Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala in the Pathanamthitta District of Kerala state is a famous pilgrim centre. For many centuries, Sabarimala has been an important pilgrim centre attracting lakhs of devotees from all over India, especially from the southern States.

The presiding deity is Lord Ayyappa known as Dharma Sastha. This well-known pilgrim centre is in the rugged terrains of the Western Ghats, Sahyadri and it is inaccessible except by foot. Pilgrims have to negotiate long stretches of the thick forests and tall mountains infested with all sorts of wild animals. Pilgrims to Sabarimala cannot be undertaken at all seasons because it requires long preparations and fixed timings. The 5 km stretch from Pamba to the shrine can only be reached by trekking. The main pilgrimage season is November to January.

The annual Makara Vilakku Pooja is being conducted in the month of January between 12th and 14th; the last day of the celebration being MAKARA SANKRANTHI (vernal equinox) Day. Mandala Pooja extends to 41 days prior to Makara Sankranti Day.

January 14, every year, synchronizing with the day of Sankramom (crossing of the sun from Dhakshinayana to the Uttarayana) is the most important festival day of the temple. On this day, lakhs of pilgrims flock to the shrine for worship. Here they see the Makara Vilakku, the appearance of a spontaneous phenomenon of strange light in the distance indicating the presence of God, and return ennobled and strengthened in spirit.

Situated not far from the Sabarimala temple, there is a shrine in the name of Vavar, a Muslim of great valour. Vavar was said to be a close associate of Sri Ayyappa. It is a rare feature of the pilgrimage to Sabarimala that the Hindu pilgrims offer worship at this shrine of Vavar also during their trip, indicating the communal harmony that prevailed in Kerala for ages. During the entire pilgrimage, all distinction of caste and class are forgotten.

A devotee who wishes to perform the pilgrimage should undergo forty-one day's penance consisting of strict celibacy, morning and evening ablutions, growing of beard and daily prayers. Saranamvili or the call of dedication and refuge in Lord Ayyappa is an essential part of the daily worship. The 3 austerities prescribed for devotees are Austerity of body (Purity, uprightness, continence and non violence), Austerity of mind (Tranquility, gentleness, silence, self control and purity of thought), and Austerity of speech (speech that causes no annoyance to others, truthful, pleasant and beneficial and recitation of scriptures).

Vegetarianism has been prescribed during the 41 days vritharn to help achieve the above austerities. Brahmacharya (continence) will help convert the physical energy to spiritual energy. Self surrender leads to self realization. The self that surrenders is the ego and the self that realizes is God. The carrying of irrunudi on the head and chanting of saranammantrain is a total surrender to God.

## **Sri Hanuman**

Sri Hanuman was born of Anjani from Pavana, the wind-god. He was named Hanuman after the name of the city of Hanumpur over which his maternal uncle Parti Surya ruled. Hanuman's body was strong as a stone. So Anjani named him Vajranga. He is also known by the names "Mahavir" or mightiest hero (because he exhibited several heroic feats), Balibima and Maruti.

He is one of the seven Chiranjivis. He was a learned scholar who knew the nine Vyakaranas. He learnt the Sastras from the sun-god. He was the wisest of the wise, strongest of the strong and bravest of the brave. He was the Sakti of Rudra. He who meditates on him and repeats his name attains power, strength, glory, prosperity and success in life. He is worshipped by all sects of Hindus.

He was the chosen messenger, warrior and devotee of Sri Rama. Rama was his all in all. He lived to serve Rama. He lived in Rama. He lived for Rama.

One tradition states that he is actually an emanation of Shiva, being his Eleventh Rudra. He is a Tantrik favorite too. In the popular imagination he is best known as Sankat Mochan, the destroyer of

danger and trouble and he is much called upon to save the faithful from ghosts and spells and other things that go bump in the night.

He was born at the most auspicious hour of the morning of the 8th of the Lunar month, Chaitra, at 4 o'clock on the most blessed day, Tuesday. His birth took place in unusual conditions. His mother was an apsara named Punjikasthala and his father was the God of the Wind, Vayu.

Hanuman established himself as the right hand man of Sugriva, the king's brother, and it was his advice to flee that saved that unfortunate prince when his brother, King Vali, attempted to kill him. Rama helped Sugriva in removing his brother from the throne and the Vaanara armies set out in search of the kidnapped Sita.

In this endeavor, Hanuman is clearly the best hope of success for he has been everywhere and knows all lands. Rama entrusts him with his signet ring so that Sita would have no doubts about his credentials.

In Lanka, Hanuman exhibited his immense strength and extraordinary powers. He destroyed the beautiful grove which was a pleasure resort of Ravana. He uprooted many trees and killed many Rakshasas. Ravana was very much infuriated at this. He sent Jambumali to fight against Sri Hanuman who took the trunk of a tree and hurled it against Jambumali and killed him.

Ravana sent his son Aksha to fight against Hanuman. He was also killed. Then he sent Indrajit. Hanuman threw a great tree upon Indrajit. Indrajit fell down senseless on the ground. After some time Indrajit recovered his consciousness. He threw the noose of Brahma on Hanuman. Hanuman allowed himself to be bound by the noose. He wanted to honour Brahma. Indrajit ordered the Rakshasas to carry the monkey to his father's court. Even a hundred Rakshasas were not able to lift Hanuman.

Hanuman made himself as light as possible. The Rakshasas then lifted him up. When they placed him over their shoulders he suddenly became heavy and crushed them to death. Then Hanuman asked the Rakshasas to remove the rope. They removed the rope and Hanuman proceeded to the council hall of Ravana.

Ravana said, "O mischievous monkey, what will you say in your defence? I will put you to death." Hanuman laughed and said, "O wicked Ravana, give back Sita to Lord Rama and ask his pardon; otherwise you will be ruined and the whole of Lanka will be destroyed." These words of Hanuman made Ravana very furious. He asked the Rakshasas to cut off the head of Hanuman.

Vibhishana intervened and said, "O brother, it is not lawful and righteous to kill a messenger. You can inflict some punishment only."

Ravana consented. He wanted to deprive Hanuman of his tail and make him ugly. He ordered the Rakshasas to wrap Hanuman's tail with cloths soaked in oil and ghee. Hanuman extended his tail to such length and size that all the cloths in Lanka would not cover it. Then he reduced his tail of his own accord. The Rakshasas wrapped the tail with cloths soaked in oil and ghee and lighted the cloths. Hanuman expanded his body to an enormous size and began to jump from place to place. The whole of Lanka caught on fire. All the palatial buildings were burnt down to ashes.

Hanuman then jumped into the sea in order to cool and refresh himself. A drop of his perspiration fell into the mouth of a great fish which gave birth to a mighty hero named Makara Dhvaja. Makara Dhvaja is considered the son of Hanuman. Thereupon Hanuman went to the Asoka grove and told Sita all that he had done.

Then he crossed the sea through the air and came to the place where his army was placed. He told them all that had happened. Thereupon they all marched quickly to carry the good news to Sri Rama and Sugriva. They reached the city of Kishkindha. Hanuman gave Sita's ring to Lord Rama. Sri Rama

rejoiced heartily. He praised Hanuman and embraced him saying, "O mighty hero I cannot repay your debt."

When all the brothers and sons of Ravana were killed, Ravana sent for his brother Ahi Ravana who was the king of the nether world. Ahi Ravana came to Lanka. Ravana asked his help to fight against Sri Rama and Lakshmana.

Ahi Ravana consented to help his brother. At the dead of night he assumed the form of Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana and an ally and devotee of Sri Rama. He reached the place where Rama and Lakshmana were sleeping. Hanuman was keeping watch. He thought that it was Vibhishana who was coming. Therefore he allowed him to enter the camp. Ahi Ravana quietly took the two brothers upon his shoulders and repaired to his kingdom.

When the day dawned, Hanuman found out that Sri Rama and Lakshmana were missing. He found out that Ahi Ravana had carried them to his kingdom. At once he proceeded to the nether world and received information that Ahi Ravana had made arrangements to kill the two brothers in sacrifice. Hanuman assumed a tiny form, entered his kingdom. When Ahi Ravana was about to sacrifice the two brothers, Hanuman appeared in his own form and killed Ahi Ravana. He installed Makara Dhvaja, his own son on the throne, took the brothers on his shoulders and brought them to Lanka.

Hanuman killed many heroes in the great war. Dhumar, Vajra, Roshat, Ankhan and several other great warriors were killed by him.

When the great war was over, Vibhishana was installed on the throne of Lanka. The time of banishment was about to be over. Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Sri Hanuman sat in the Pushpaka Vimana or aeroplane and reached Ayodhya in time.

The coronation ceremony of Lord Rama was celebrated with great eclat and pomp. Sita gave Hanuman a necklace of pearls of rare quality. Hanuman received it with great respect and began to break the pearls with his teeth. Sita and other ministers who were sitting in the council hall were quite astonished at this queer act of Hanuman.

Sita asked Hanuman, "O mighty hero, what are you doing? Why do you break the pearls?" Sri Hanuman said, "O venerable mother, it is the most valuable necklace indeed as it has come to me through thy holy hand. But I want to find out whether any of the pearls contain my beloved Lord Rama. I do not keep a thing devoid of him. I do not find him in any of the pearls." Sita asked, "Tell me whether you keep Lord Rama with you." Sri Hanuman immediately tore open his heart and showed it to Sri Rama, Sita and others. They all found Lord Rama accompanied by Sita in the heart of Sri Hanuman.

Lord Rama rejoiced heartily. He came down the throne and embraced Hanuman and blessed him. Sri Hanuman passed the rest of his life in the company of the Lord.

When Sri Rama ascended to his supreme abode, Sri Hanuman also wished to follow him. But the Lord asked him to remain in this world as his representative and attend all the assemblies of men where discourses on his deeds were held and heard, and help his devotees in cultivating devotion.

Hanuman has been blessed by Rama as "chiranjivi" meaning of it is that he will live for ever. Hence it is believed that Hanuman still lives in manasrover, Himalayas and there were some instances in which the devotees had personally seen him and taken photographs of him. It is believed that whenever the story of Ramayana is recited, Hanuman listens.

O mighty Hanuman, untiring and devoted Sevak of Sri Rama, joy of Anjana, king of Brahmacharins, show us the secrets of Brahmacharya and the ways to attain purity in thought, word and deed. May India have such heroes and Brahmacharins ever more!

Where Hanuman is, there are Sri Rama and Sri Sita and wherever Sri Rama and Sri Sita are praised and their deeds recited, there Hanuman is.

Hanuman ranks first amongst the heroes of the world. His heroic deeds, wonderful exploits and marvellous feats of strength and bravery cannot be adequately described. His sense of duty was extremely laudable. He had great skill in all military tactics and methods of warfare. His crossing the sea of thirty miles in one leap and lifting the crest of a mountain in the palm of the hand, his carrying of the brothers on his shoulders from the nether world to Lanka are all astounding, superhuman feats which baffle human description.

He conquered innumerable difficulties which cropped up in his way through his courage, patience and undaunted spirit. He made untiring search to find Sita. At the time of danger he exhibited marvellous courage and presence of mind. He was steady and firm in his actions. He was always successful in his attempts. Failure was not known to him. He gave up his life in the service of the Lord. He had not a tinge of selfishness in his actions. All his actions were offerings unto Lord Rama. No one reached the peak in Dasya Bhava like Sri Hanuman. He was a rare jewel among devotees, the supreme head among Pundits, the king among celibates and the commander among heroes and warriors.

Glory to Hanuman, the blessed devotee of Lord Rama. Glory, glory to Sri Anjaneya, the mighty hero, undaunted warrior and learned Brahmacharin, the like of whom the world has not yet seen and will not see in time to come.

May his blessings be upon all in the universe.

## **History and Antiquity of Shiva and Shaivism**

Shiva was worshipped in the ancient times in various parts of not only the Indian subcontinent but elsewhere also. We have reasons to believe that He was worshipped with different names in Europe, Africa and Central Asia. Some believe that there is a strong affinity between Shiva and the Greek god Dionysus. Some aspects of Shiva are also ascribed to the Buddha in the Vajrayana sects of Buddhism. In ancient India Shiva was a popular deity, who was worshipped both in the north and the south and both by the Vedic and non-Vedic people. The Pasupathi seal, discovered from Mohenjodaro, gives us reason to believe that the seated yogi depicted in the seal might have been a form of Shiva. Shiva was also associated with various fertility and sacrificial cults in ancient India. The ancient Vedic people worshipped Him originally as Rudra and later identified Him as Shiva, one of the Trimurthis or the gods of

Hindu trinity. There is also a deep connection between Shiva and the the ancient tradition of yoga. He is also described in the religious literature available to us as the source of all art forms including dance and music.

The early Vedic people both feared and worshipped Rudra. Siva became more popular during the later Vedic or Puranic period, mainly due to the popular devotional movements initiated by his most devoted followers from Southern India and the tantric cults which aimed to seek liberation through physical and sexual means. The Svetasvatara Upanishad, reflected the growing sentiment among peope, by identifying Shiva as the Brahman, or the Supreme Self. Various Shaiva sects emerged on the scene, having their own sets of rules and rituals for the worship of Shiva and for attaining liberation. Popular among them were the Pasupata and Adi Saiva sects. Lakulisa is credited with the revival of Saivism around 1st century AD. Among the rulers, the Kushanas and the Barasivas and some Gupta kings were responsible for patronzing the worship of Shiva and construction of temples in his name. In the south the Nayanars were responsible for spreading Shaivism among the rural masses. On the literary front, Sri Shankaracharya played an important role in reviving the ancient philosophy of monism (Advaita), while Abhinava Gupta contributed to the growing popularity of the Trika tradition in Kashmir region, which became popular as Kashmir Shaivism. Emergence of Agama shastras, a separate body of literature entrily devoted to Shaivism, and the resurgence of several Tantric and Shakti cults also established Shiva as the most prominent deity of ancient Hindu pantheon.

# The Hindu Trinity

The Hindu Trinity comprises of the three cardinal divinities of Hinduism, namely Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Siva the destroyer. They represent the three important aspects of our existence, namely creation, preservation and destruction. Brahma creates the worlds and the beings. He is the creative intelligence of the manifest worlds. Saraswathi, the goddess of learning is his consort. He is generally shown with four heads standing for the four yugas and the four quarters of the universe. Hamsa, the swan, is his vehicle. He is known by several other names such as Vistakarma, Pitamaha, Lokesa, Nabhija and so on.

Vishnu is the preserver. He is the solar God, the very sun, who brings sunshine into the worlds and lives of every one and assists the survival of every being. Blue in color, he is referred with many names and attributes by his devotees. Some of his popular names include, Mahavishnu, Narayana, Anantasayana, Chakradhari, Srinivasa, Padmanabha, Varadaraja, Panduranga, Venkatesa and so on. Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth is his consort. He rides Garuda, the big bird. The mace (gada) and the fiery disc (chakra) are his weapons with which he destroys evil and protects the weak and the good. He is also credited with many incarnations, the most important among them being 10 in number. He incarnates on earth from time to time to restore order and destroy evil. Nine of his principal incarnations have already taken place, which include the incarnations of Rama, Krishna and the Buddha. The

incarnation of Kalki, the tenth and the last one in this cycle of creation, is yet to come.

Lord Siva is the third god of Hindu trinity. He is the destroyer of the worlds. He in fact destroys all that is evil and unwanted in order to enable the divinity to enter the world and replace the ordinary human consciousness characterized by evil passions and animal instincts. Siva is known by many names. His most popular names include, Rudra, Jatadhara, Shankara, Iswara, Maheswara, Pasupathinath, Nilakanteswara, Dakshinamurthy and so on. He dwells among the snow clad Himalayan mountains and rules his world known as Kailas. He is prone to fits of anger and sometimes hurts those who annoy Him. He spends most of his time in deep meditation. He possesses the third eye, the eye of wisdom. Undoubtedly he is one of the most popular and powerful gods of Hinduism and inspires people to indulge in acts of courage, devotion and spiritual wisdom.

## **Lesser Known Aspects of Lord Shiva**

Unlike in Vaishnavism, there is no concept of incarnations in Shaivism. God being the supreme controller of all actions and manifestations and indweller of all beings, the followers of Saivism do not see the need for a separate incarnation by God to set things right in the mortal worlds. However Siva has many aspects and manifestations. These are essentially the various forms assumed by Lord Siva at different times to perform certain acts or manifest certain states of consciousness. Following are some of the lesser known aspects of Lord Shiva.



## **Ardhanariswara**

In this aspect Siva is shown as a combination of both male and female attributes. One half of him is depicted as male and the other as female. Symbolically they represent the male and female or the: yin and yang principles of the universe. From the perspective of life and creation, they represent God (Purusha) and Nature (Prakriti). From the ritual perspective they represent Siva and Parvathi. From a tantric perspective they represent the blissful state of perfect union between a male and female. Ardhanariswara is an iconic representation of Sivalingam in more expressive and explicit form.:

## **Mrityunjaya**

Literally translated as "victor over death", Shiva worshipped in this aspect as the conqueror of death and equated with Yama, the Vedic god of death. The particular legend associated with this aspect is mentioned in reference to the sage Markandeya, who was fated to die at the age of sixteen. On account of the sage's worship and devotion to Shiva, the lord vanquished Yama to liberate his devotee from death. People worship Shiva in this aspect seeking protection from death and diseases. The famous mantra, known as Mahamrityunjaya mantram, is uttered on occasions by people, invoking Lord Shiva for his protection from physical and mortal harm. There are temples built in honor of Mrityunjaya, such as the temple of Thirupainyeeli, near Tiruchirappalli, and at a shrine in Thirukadaiyur, near Chidambaram.

## **Astamurti**

Lord Shiva is known by many names. The Bhagavata Purana, for example, mentions eleven other names of Rudra, namely Manyu, Manu, Mahinasa, Mahān, Śiva, Rtadhvaja, Ugraretā, Bhava, Kāla, Vāmadeva and Dhrtavrata. Many names from the Bhagavata Purana appear in the Astamurti ascription. Astamurti, means eight forms. The name alludes to the eight principal aspects or attributes of Lord Shiva. Associating Hindu gods with their attributes or describing their: eight or nine aspects is a popular practice in Hinduism. For example goddess Lakshmi has eight aspects, while Durga has nine aspects. These aspects are mentioned in reference to Shiva in various scriptures, including the Vedas. These eight aspects are as mentioned below.

- Bhava - Existence,
- Sarva - The Archer,
- Rudra - Lord of Weeping – The Malevolent,
- Pasupati - Herdsman,
- Ugra - The Fearsome,
- Mahan, i.e. Mahadeva – The Supreme,
- Bhima - The Tremendous,
- Isana - The Directional ruler.

The Lingapurana describes these aspects in the following manner.

- **Sarva** - Wife: Vikeshi; Son: Angaraka, i.e. planet Mars; The lord of all and the entity pervading the universe.
- **Bhava** - Wife: Uma; son: Shukra, i.e. planet Venus; envelops the 7 world-spheres; protects the universe, infuses life in the universe.

- **Pashupati** - Wife: Svaha; son: Shanmukha; envelops the universe; protects all life-forms, is manifest as fire.
- **Ishana** - Wife: Shiva; son: Manojava; the substance of living and non-living forms; confers all wishes, is manifest as air.
- **Bhima** - Wives: 10 directions; Son: Sarga; envelops the universe; basis of all manifestations in the universe, is manifest as space and as the sun.
- **Rudra** - Wife: Suvarchala; Son: Shanishchara, i.e. Saturn; gives liberation and pleasures; cause of devotion in devotees, present as the nature of all pleasant things, is manifest as the sun.
- **Mahadeva** - Wife: Rohini; Son: Budha, i.e. Mercury; bearer of offerings to gods and ancestors, is manifest as the moon.
- **Ugra** - Wife: Diksha; Son: Samtara; manifests as the ritualist.

## • **Shiva Lingam - Symbolism and Significance**

- Siva is worshipped both in his anthropomorphic form and his symbolic form, which is Sivalinga, depicted in sometimes as a simple column or more prominently as a column jutting out of a round base. The column stands symbolically for male reproductive organ and the base for the female reproductive organ. the lingam as a whole symbolizes the union between Purusha and Prakriti as the basis of all creation and manifestation. The columns are usually cylindrical and polished, but not necessarily in all cases. Sometimes we come across Siva lingas that are irregularly shaped or shaped like a cone. The sivalingas are usually made of stone. But worship of lingams made of crystals and glass is not

uncommon. The Sivalinga of Amarntath temple is formed out of naturally formed ice stalagmite inside a cave.

- The word lingam has several meanings in Sanskrit. One popular meaning is subtle as in case of linga sarira (subtle body). Another important meaning is male reproductive organ. In Sanskrit grammar it is also used to describe the gender. Symbolically, sivalingam also represents the union between energy and consciousness of God. In many temples of Siva, he is worshipped in the form of Sivalinga only. The most prominent among them are known as Jyotirlingas or effulgent lingas which are considered to be 12, spread in various parts of India. The lingas are either man made or self-formed, that is formed on their own due to natural or divine activity. The latter are known as Svayambhu or self-created.
- The antiquity of Sivaligam probably dates back to the Indus valley period and may be rooted in ancient fertility cults. Several phallic symbols and round stones were unearthed during the excavations at Indus valley sites, suggesting the possibility of fertility rites and worship of mother goddess and father god.. According to some scholars, the sacrificial post (yupa stambha), mentioned in the Atharvaveda, is probably one of the earliest descriptions of God as a cylindrical object of infinite proportions.
- The Puranas describe in detail the significance of Sivalinam. They identify it as the source of the Universe and Siva Himself as the Supreme Lord of all. According to Skanda Purana, it personifies both the limitless sky and the all bearing earth, into which all things merge at the end of time. According to Linga Purana, the

lingam is the highest of all, which is devoid of qualities and stands above the senses.

- The lingam is worshipped differently by different sects of Saivism. According to the Shaiva Siddhanta, a prominent sect of Saivism, the linga should be worshipped as Sada Shiva, having five faces and ten arms, the five faces representing his five aspects. Veera Saivism distinguishes the individual soul (anga) from the Shiva (linga). At the time of creation both are separated from each other and at the end of creation or during liberation of individual souls, they are reunited again. the liberation of the individual soul said to happen through six stages of progressive disentanglement from the bonds of egoism, karma and ignorance. The sect also identifies three forms in which Shiva can be approached, namely personal form (ishtalinga), thought or mental form (bhava linga) and real or universal form (prana linga).
- There is a great deal of controversy as to what Sivalingam actually refers to. Some European scholars, like Monier Williams, because of their lack of understanding, described it as a phallic symbol. It is important to remember that Saivism is not a mere sexual cult. Many sects of Saivism emphasize the importance of asceticism, celibacy and austerity as the preconditions for attaining liberation. The Shivalingam may represent the male reproductive organ in a limited sense or spiritual sense, but such association in no way grants liberty to any follower of Siva to indulge in rites and rituals involving sex.
- Speaking of the mistaken identity of Sivalinga with phallus, Swami Sivananda commented, "This is not only a serious mistake, but

also a grave blunder. In the post-Vedic period, the Linga became symbolical of the generative power of the Lord Siva. Linga is the differentiating mark. It is certainly not the sex-mark. You will find in the Linga Purana: Pradhanam prakritir yadahur-lingamuttamam; Gandhavarnarasairhinam sabda-sparsadivarjitam—The foremost Linga which is primary and is devoid of smell, colour, taste, hearing, touch, etc., is spoken of as Prakriti (Nature). " (The Worship of Siva Linga. Lord Siva and His Worship. by Sivananda, Swami (1996).The Divine Life Trust Society. )

- A similar sentiment is echoed by Christopher Isherwood in the following words, "It has been claimed by some foreign scholars that the linga and its surrounding basin are sexual symbols, representing the male and the female organs respectively. Well — anything can be regarded as a symbol of anything; that much is obvious. There are people who have chosen to see sexual symbolism in the spire and the font of a Christian church. But Christians do not recognize this symbolism; and even the most hostile critics of Christianity cannot pretend that it is a sex-cult. The same is true of the cult of Shiva. It does not even seem probable that the linga was sexual in its origin. For we find, in the history both of Hinduism and Buddhism, that poor devotees were accustomed to dedicate to God a model of a temple or tope (a dome-shaped monument) in imitation of wealthy devotees who dedicated full-sized buildings. So the linga may well have begun as a monument in miniature....One of the greatest causes of misunderstanding of Hinduism by foreign scholars is perhaps a

subconsciously respected tradition that God must be one sex only, or at least only one sex at a time." (Isherwood, Christopher. "Early days at Dakshineswar". Ramakrishna and his disciples. pp. 48.)

## • **Shiva and Vishnu**

- A Saivite is a devotee of Lord Siva. A Vaishnavite is a devotee Of Lord Vishnu. Upasana means worship or sitting near God. Upasaka is one who does Upasana. Upasana or Aradhana leads to realisation of God. A bigoted Virasaivite entertains hatred towards Lord Vishnu, Vaishnavites and Puranas which treat of Vishnu. He never enters a Vishnu temple. He never drinks water from a Vaishnavite. He never takes food with a Vaishnavite. He never repeats the name of Hari. He speaks ill of Lord Hari, Vaishnavites and Vishnu Purana. He thinks that Lord Siva is superior to Lord Vishnu. He never reads Vishnu Purana. Is this not the height of folly? Is this not extreme ignorance? He has not understood the true nature of Lord Siva. He has no idea of true religion. He is a fanatic, a bigot, a man of little understanding, a narrow sectarian, with a very small constricted heart. He is like a frog in the well which has no idea of the vast ocean.
- A bigoted Vira Vaishnavite entertains hatred towards Lord Siva, Saivites and Siva Puranas which treat of Lord Siva. He never enters a Siva temple. He never makes friendship with a Saivite. He never drinks water from the hands of a Saivite. He also behaves exactly like the Virasaivite. The lot of this man is also highly deplorable.

- There is a temple in Sankaranarayanar Koil in the Tirunelveli district (Tamilnadu), where the idol has one half of it depicted as Siva and the other half as Vishnu. The inner significance of this is that Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu are one. Sri Sankaracharya also has said in very clear terms that Siva and Vishnu are the one all-pervading Soul.
- On one occasion, a Virasaivite entered the temple in Sankaranarayanar Koil to worship the Lord. He offered incense. He plugged the nostrils of Vishnu with the cotton as the fumes were entering His nose also. After that a Vira Vaishnavite entered the temple and he also offered incense. He plugged the nostrils of Siva as the fumes were entering His nose also. Such is the bigotry and narrow-mindedness of sectarians. A devotee should have a large, broad heart. He must see his tutelary deity in all aspects of the Lord and in all forms. He can have intense love for his Ishtam in the beginning, to intensify his devotion for that particular deity (Prema-nishtha), but he should have equal devotion to the other forms of the Lord also.
- Siva and Vishnu are one and the same entity. They are essentially one and the same. They are the names given to the different aspects of the all-pervading Supreme Soul or the Absolute. 'Sivasya hridayam vishnur-vishnoscha hridayam sivah—Vishnu is the heart of Siva and likewise Siva is the heart of Vishnu'.
- The sectarian worship is of recent origin. The Saiva Siddhanta of Kantacharya is only five hundred years old. The Vaishnava cults of Madhva and Sri Ramanuja are only six hundred and seven



hundred years old respectively. There was no sectarian worship before seven hundred years.

- Brahma represents the creative aspect; Vishnu, the preservative aspect; and Siva, the destructive aspect of Paramatman. This is just like your wearing different garbs on different occasions. When you do the function of a judge, you put on one kind of dress. At home you wear another kind of dress. When you do worship in the temple, you wear another kind of dress. You exhibit different kinds of temperament on different occasions. Even so, the Lord does the function of creation when He is associated with Rajas, and He is called Brahma. He preserves the world when He is associated with Sattva Guna, and He is called Vishnu. He destroys the world when He is associated with Tamo-Guna, and He is called Siva or Rudra.
- Brahma, Vishnu and Siva have been correlated to the three Avasthas or states of consciousness. During the waking state, Sattva predominates. During the dream state Rajas predominates and during the deep sleep state Tamas predominates. Hence Vishnu, Brahma and Siva are the Murtis of Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti states of consciousness respectively. The Turiya or the fourth state is Para Brahman. The Turiya state is immediately next to the deep sleep state. Worship of Siva will lead quickly to the attainment of the fourth state.
- Vishnu Purana glorifies Vishnu and in some places gives a lower position to Siva. Siva Purana glorifies Siva and gives a lower status to Vishnu. Devi Bhagavata glorifies Devi and gives a lower status to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. This is only to instil and intensify

devotion for the respective deity in the hearts of the devotees. In reality, no deity is superior to another. You must understand the heart of the writer.

- May you all realise the oneness of Siva and Vishnu! May you all be endowed with pure subtle intellect and proper understanding!

## • **The Symbolism of Snakes in Saivism**

- Snakes were worshipped in ancient India long before Vedic religion emerged as the dominant religion on the Gangetic valley. People believed in the possibility of protecting themselves from poisonous snakes through magic and incantation and those who believed to possess magical powers over them were respected and sought after. People invoked divinities seekign protection against the serpents of the underworld which were believed to be responsible for death and disease.
- Lord Siva is depicted in many images like the one above as wearing a garland of snakes around his neck. There is a deep symbolism hidden behind this.
- Lord Siva is know as Pasupathinath, the lord of all creatures. Being a lord of the animals he has complete control on their behavior. Since a snake is one of the most feared and dangerous animals in the world, the garland of snakes around the neck firmly establishes this fact even the snakes fear Him and remain under his control.
- The snake stands for all the evil and demonical nature in the world. By wearing the snake around his neck, Lord Siva gives us the assurance that no evil can touch us or destroy us once we

surrender to him, seek his protection and worship him with deep devotion.

- The snake also stands for the power of kundalini, which is described as a coiled serpent lying dormant in the muladhara chakra of all human beings and descends upwards when one starts ones spiritual journey and becomes increasingly divine oriented. The snake around the neck of Siva conveys the meaning that in him the kundalini not only has arisen fully but is also actively involved in the divine activity by keeping an eye on all the devotees who approach Siva with their individual problems.
- The snake also stands for all passions and desires. By wearing the snakes around his neck, Lord Siva conveys the message to all his devotees that He has overcome all desires and is in full control of Prakriti, or maya and its various machinations.

### • **Who is Lord Siva ?**

- Siva or Shiva is one the gods of Hindu Trinity. He is worshipped by millions of Hindus all over the world. He is known as the destroyer of the worlds in His aspect of Rudra. He personifies anger, passion as well as compassion. He subdues all our passions and transforms the human body so as to make it divine. The human body devoid of Siva is Sava or a dead body.
- Parvathi is His consort while Ganga, His second consort adorns his head. Parvathi is his better half. Parvathi literally means parva+thi, the one who occupies the one half. Ganga is the divine consciousness he bears and then allows it to flow into human or

earth consciousness. The bull Nandi is his vehicle. It symbolizes ignorance, passion and animality.

- Lord Vinayaka and Kumaraswamy are his two children, who are gods of great powers in their own right. Lord Siva symbolizes innocence, purity, charity, spiritual wisdom, inner harmony and greater good.
- If He is worshipped sincerely he is bound to response and free us from the bondage or Pasa. He transforms the Pasu (animal qualities) in us. And He is the Lord of All (Pasu Pathi).

### • **Names of Shiva**

- The Sanskrit word Shiva means auspicious, pure, kind and gracious. In English it is written both as Siva and Shiva. Ancient Hindu scholars such as Shankaracharya i interpreted the name variously as the "Pure One", or "One who is not affected by the Gunas of Prakrti (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas)" or "One who purifies everyone when His name is uttered." According to swami Chinmayananda, Shiva means "One who is eternally pure" or "One who can never have any contamination of the imperfection of Rajas and Tamas". [11] .The name Shiva, in one interpretation, is speculated to have derived from the Dravidian or Tamil word Siva, meaning "to be red." As the principal deity of Shaivism Shiva is known by such epithets as Mahādeva ("Great God"- mahā = Great + deva = God), Maheśvara ("Great Lord" - mahā = Great + īśvara = Lord), and Parameśvara ("Supreme Lord"). His followers worship Him by uttering his 108 or 1008 names. There are at least eight different lists of the Shiva Sahasranama, devotional hymns (stotras) listing his many names. The list taken

from the Book 13 (Anuśāsanaparvan) of the Mahabharata is considered to be the standard version. List of Shiva's 10000 names (dasa-dahasranama) is the Mahanyasa. Satarudriyam, popularly known as liturgy to Shiva (Shri Rudram Chamakam), is also used to extol the greatness of Shiva during his ritual worship.

### • **Worship of Siva**

- Lord Siva is worshipped in His Saguna aspect in the form of Sivalingam. Generally Sivabhaktas do Panchayatana Puja. In this Puja, Lord Siva, Ganesa, Parvati, Suryanarayana and Saligram are duly worshipped.
- Get the Panchayatana Murtis on an auspicious day. Install them with great faith in your own house. Conduct special prayers, Archana, Puja, Abhisheka, and feeding of Brahmins, Mahatmas and the poor on a grand scale. Install the deity in a separate room. Worship the Lord daily with all sincerity and faith. You will have all wealth, peace of mind, attainment of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha also. You will lead a prosperous life and enter the Immortal abode of Siva-Sayujya, on death.
- Collect plenty of Bael or Bilva leaves for Lord Siva's worship. Get ready Dhupa, Dipa, camphor, sandal-sticks, fresh water, plenty of flowers, food offerings to the Lord, a seat to sit upon, a bell, conch and other things required for the Puja before you begin the worship. Get up in the early morning before sunrise. Wash your face. Take bath. Wear silk dress separately kept for Puja purposes. Decorate the Puja room nicely. Enter the room chanting Lord's names, glorifying Him, repeating Hymns in His praise and prostrating before the Lord. Wash your feet before entering the

room. Sit in a comfortable posture and commence your worship. You have to first of all do Sankalpa for beginning the Puja in the prescribed method. You should then do Kalasa (water vessel), Sankha (conch), Atma (self) and Pitha (Lord's seat) Puja in their order. You should then offer Shodasopachara Puja to the Lord and then repeat Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, Rudrapatha, Purushasukta, Gayatri, and do Abhisheka with pure water, milk, sugarcane juice, ghee and other articles according to your capacity or with pure water alone. Rudrabhisheka is highly beneficial. If you do Rudra Japa and Abhisheka, all your worries and agonies will disappear and you will attain the highest beatitude of human existence by the grace of Lord Visvanath. Rudra is a great purifier. There is invisible hidden power in Rudra and Purushasukta. There is a wonderful inspiration in the recitation of Rudra. Start the worship and realise its glory and splendour for yourself.

- After Abhisheka, decorate the Lord nicely with sandal paste and flowers. Then do Archana repeating His names, 'Om Sivaya Namah', 'Om Mahesvaraya Namah', etc. Do daily 108 or 1008 Archanas if possible. After Archana, do Arati with different kinds of lights—single Arati, Triple Arati, Pancha Arati and Karpura Arati. Ring bells, cymbals, conch, etc., during Arati. Offer sacred Prasad or Naivedya to the Lord.
- After Arati is over, sing the praises of the Lord like Mahimna Stotra, Panchakshara Stotra, etc., waving the Chamara. In the end repeat the prayers 'Kayena vachah', 'Atma tvam Girija matih', and 'Kara-charana-kritam'. Offer everything to the Lord. Feel that you are a mere instrument in His hands. Do everything for obtaining

the divine grace only. Develop Nimitta Bhava. Serve the Bhaktas. The Lord is much pleased with the service of His devotees. Distribute the Prasad among the Bhaktas in the end. Take the Prasad with great faith. The glory of Bhagavan's Prasad is indescribable. Vibhuti is taken as Prasad and applied to the forehead.

- When you advance in Saguna worship with external objects of worship, you can begin Manasa Puja. You will have Darsana of the Lord and final emancipation.
- Have special Pujas on Mondays and Pradosha (thirteenth day of every fortnight—Trayodasi) days. These days and Sivaratri (in the month of February-March) are very sacred for Lord Siva. Celebrate the Sivaratri on a grand scale. Fast the whole day. Have Trikala Puja, special Abhisheka, Ekadasa-rudra-japa, Sahasrarchana, vigil in the night, study of hymns of Lord Siva, Sivapurana, hearing discourses on the Lilas of Lord Siva. After Puja on the next day break your fast with Abhisheka water. Offer sacred food offerings and partake of the Divine Prasad. You will have great mental peace, and spiritual advancement. Never miss this opportunity. Daily worship is a sure remedy for all ills. You will never suffer from poverty. Take my word and begin the Puja right from this day onwards.
- **Siva Manasa Puja**
- Manasa Puja is mental worship. Manasa Puja is more powerful and effective than the external worship with flowers, sandals, etc. You will have more concentration when you do Manasa Puja.

- Mentally enthrone the Lord on a Simhasana, set with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, etc. Offer Him a seat. Offer Arghya, Madhuparka and various sorts of flowers, clothes, etc. Apply sandal paste to His forehead and body. Burn incense and Agarbatti (scented sticks). Wave lights. Burn camphor and do Arati. Offer various kinds of fruits, sweetmeats, Payasa, coconut and Mahanaivedyam. Do Shodasa-upachara or the sixteen kinds of offerings in worship.

- **Panchakshara Mantra Writing**

- Write down in a fine note book 'Om Namah Sivaya' for half an hour or more. You will have more concentration by taking recourse to this Sadhana. Write the Mantra in ink clearly. When you write the Mantra observe Moura. You may write the Mantra in any language. Give up looking hither and thither. Repeat the Mantra mentally also when you write the Mantra. Write the whole Mantra at once. When the Mantra notebook is completed, keep it in a box in your meditation room. Be regular in your practice.
- Keep a small notebook in your pocket and write Mantra when you get leisure in the office. Have three things in your pocket, viz., the Gita, Mantra notebook and a Japa Mala or rosary. You will be immensely benefited.

- **Siva Jnanam**

- Japa and meditation of the sacred names of Lord Siva will free you from all sins and lead you to the attainment of Siva Jnanam or eternal bliss and immortality. Siva-nama is the very soul of all Mantras.
- Lord Siva has manifested in the world in sixty different aspects. Vrishabharudha, Hari-hara, Nataraja, Bhairava, Dakshinamurti,



Ardhanarisvara, Bhikshatana, Somasekharamurti, Urdhvanatana, Kalasamhara, Jalandhara, Surasamhara, Lingodbhava are His forms.

- Siva means that which is eternally happy or auspicious, Paramamangala. Om and Siva are one. Mandukya Upanishad says: 'Santam Sivam Advaitam'. Even an outcaste can meditate on the name of Lord Siva.
- Siva manifests in the Gayatri Mantra, Agni and in the Sun. When you repeat Gayatri and when you worship the Agni and the Sun, you should meditate on Lord Siva.
- Japa of Panchakshara and meditation of Lord Siva should be particularly done in the Pradosha Kala or just before the sunset. The Pradosha on the thirteenth Tithi after a full moon or a new moon day, is known as the Mahapradosha. The Devas visit Siva temples for the worship of the Lord at this period. You can worship the Devas also if you visit temples during Mahapradosha. Devotees of Lord Siva observe full fast on Mahapradosha days.
- A devotee of Lord Siva should apply Vibhuti to his forehead and body. He should wear a Rudrakshamala. He should worship the Sivalinga with leaves of the Bilva tree. He should do Japa and meditation of the Panchakshara 'Om Namah Sivaya'. Lord Siva is propitiated by everyone of these actions. Vibhuti or Bhasma is very sacred. It is worn by Lord Siva Himself. The bead of a Rudrakshamala represents the third eye on the forehead of Lord Siva. Bilva leaves are regarded to be one of the five abodes of Lakshmi or the Goddess of wealth.

- It is Siva only who causes bondage and Mukti for the Jivas. It is Siva who makes the Jivas realise their essential Divine Nature. Siva made Maya as the body, senses and the Universe and thrust the Jivas into the Maya. He created the idea of egoism, 'I'-ness in them. He bound them in Karma and made them experience pleasure and pain according to the nature of their Karmas, virtuous actions or vicious deeds. This is the stage of bondage of the Jivas.
- Gradually it is Siva only who releases them from the fetters of egoism, Karma and Maya and makes them shine as Siva. This is the state of Moksha or freedom. It is only through the grace of Lord Siva, they attain the state of final emancipation.
- The Jivas have no independence, when they are under the influence of the three impurities, i.e., Anava, Karma and Maya. They are endowed with a little knowledge (Alpajnana).
- The Jiva must first know his nature and his relationship with Lord Siva in order to attain His grace. Life or Prana is in the body. Lord Siva is within the Prana. He is the Prana of Pranas, and yet He is distinct from the Pranas and body. If there is no Prana in the body, the body becomes a corpse. It cannot perform any action. Siva is the support for this body, Prana and Jiva. The Jiva cannot do any action without Siva. It is Siva who illumines the intellect. Just as the eye cannot see without the light of the sun, although it is endowed with the power to see, so also the intellect cannot function without the light of Lord Siva.

- The four Sadhanas, viz., Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana are the four steps to attain Salvation. They are like the bud, flower, unripe fruit and ripe fruit.
- Lord Siva gradually frees the individual souls from egoism, Karma and Maya. The Jivas gradually become disgusted with the sensual pleasures. They become balanced in pleasure and pain. Through the grace of the Lord they understand that Karma is the cause for births and deaths. They begin to do actions for the Lord, serve the devotees of the Lord and attain purity of mind. They understand that the soul or Siva is distinct from the body, senses and mind and is beyond the reach of mind and speech. They get initiation into the significance of 'Om Naman Sivaya', the Panchakshara Mantra and meditate on Siva.
- They practise Siva Yoga. Their hearts melt. Seer, sight and seen vanish. All the activities of senses, mind and intellect cease. They bathe Lord Siva with the stream of Divine Love that is generated in their heart and offer their heart as flower unto the Lord.
- They hear the sound 'Chilambosai' and march forward through the path of the sound and behold the vision of Nataraja in the Chidakasa and are immersed in the ocean of Sivananda. They become one with the Lord, just as camphor melts in the fire.
- **Worship of Siva Linga**
- The popular belief is that the Siva Lingam represents the phallus or the virile organ, the emblem of the generative power or principle in nature. This is not only a serious mistake, but also a grave blunder. In the post-Vedic period, the Linga became symbolical of the generative power of the Lord Siva. Linga is the

differentiating mark. It is certainly not the sex-mark. You will find in the Linga Purana: Pradhanam prakritir yadahur-lingamuttamam; Gandhavarnarasairhinam sabda-sparsadivarjitam—The foremost Linga which is primary and is devoid of smell, colour, taste, hearing, touch, etc., is spoken of as Prakriti (Nature).

- Linga means 'mark', in Sanskrit. It is a symbol which points to an inference. When you see a big flood in a river, you infer that there had been heavy rains the previous day. When you see smoke, you infer that there is fire. This vast world of countless forms is a Linga of the Omnipotent Lord. The Siva Linga is a symbol of Lord Siva. When you look at the Linga, your mind is at once elevated and you begin to think of the Lord.
- Lord Siva is really formless. He has no form of his own and yet all forms are His forms. All forms are pervaded by Lord Siva. Every form is the form or Linga of Lord Siva.
- There is a mysterious power or indescribable Sakti in the Linga, to induce concentration of the mind. Just as the mind is focussed easily in crystal-gazing, so also the mind attains one-pointedness, when it looks at the Linga. That is the reason why the ancient Rishis and the seers of India have prescribed Linga for being installed in the temples of Lord Siva.
- Siva Linga speaks to you in the unmistakable language of silence: "I am one without a second, I am formless". Pure, pious souls only can understand this language. A curious passionate, impure foreigner of little understanding or intelligence says sarcastically: "Oh, the Hindus worship the phallus or sex organ. They are

ignorant people. They have no philosophy”. When a foreigner tries to learn Tamil or Hindustani language, he first tries to pick up some vulgar words. This is his curiosity nature. Even so, the curious foreigner tries to find out some defects in the worship of symbol. Linga is only the outward symbol of the formless being, Lord Siva, who is the indivisible, all-pervading, eternal, auspicious, ever-pure, immortal essence of this vast universe, who is the undying Soul seated in the chambers of your heart, who is your Indweller, innermost Self or Atman, and who is identical with the Supreme Brahman.

- A Siva Linga consists of three parts, the lowest of which is the Brahma-Pitha, the middle one, the Vishnu-Pitha and the uppermost one, the Siva-Pitha.
- Some are Svayambhu-lingas, some are Narmadesvaras. There are twelve Jyotirlingas and five Pancha Bhuta Lingas in India. The twelve Jyotir-lingas are: Kedarnath, Kasi Visvanath, Somanath, Baijnath, Ramesvar, Ghrusnesvar, Bhimasankar, Mahakala, Mallikarjuna, Amalesvar, Nagesvar and Tryambakesvar. The five Pancha Bhuta Lingas are: Kalahastisvar, Jambukesvar, Arunachalesvar, Ekambaresvar of Kanjivaram and Nataraja of Chidambaram. The temple of Lord Mahalinga at Tiruvidaimarudur known also as Madhyarjuna is regarded as the great Siva temple of South India.
- Spatikalinga is also a symbol of Lord Siva. This is prescribed for Aradhana or worship of Lord Siva. It is made up of quartz. It has no colour of its own, but takes on the colour of the substances which come in contact with it. It represents the Nirguna Brahman

or the attributeless Supreme Self or formless and attributeless Siva.

- For a sincere devotee, the Linga is not a block of stone. It is all radiant Tejas or Chaitanya. The Linga talks to him, makes him shed profuse tears, produces horripilation and melting of heart, raises him above body-consciousness and helps to commune with the Lord and attain Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Lord Rama worshipped the Siva Linga at Ramesvar. Ravana, the learned scholar, worshipped the golden Linga. What a lot of mystic Sakti there should be in the Linga!
- May you all attain the formless Siva through the worship of the Linga, the symbol of Lord Siva which helps concentration of mind and which serves as a prop for the mind to lean upon in the beginning for the neophytes!
- **Siva Linga is Chinmaya**
- The light of consciousness manifesting out of Sadasiva is, in reality, the Sivalinga. From Him all the moving and unmoving creations take their origin. He is the Linga or cause of everything. In Him, the whole world merges itself finally. The Siva Purana says: "Pitham Ambamayam Sarvam Sivalingascha Chinmayam." The support or Pitham of all is Prakriti or Parvati, and Linga is Chinmaya Purusha, the effulgent light which is self-luminous. Union of Prakriti or Parvati, and Purusha or Sivalinga is the cause of the world. In Sanatkumara-samhita of the Siva Purana, Lord Siva says: "O Parvati, daughter of mountain, there is none dearer to Me than the man who worships Me in the Linga, knowing that

Linga is the root-cause of everything and knowing the world to be Linga-maya or Chaitanya-maya.”

- The Linga is like an egg. It represents the Brahmanda (cosmic egg). Whatever that is contained in the Brahmanda is in the Linga. The whole world is the form of Lord Siva. The world is a Linga. Linga also is the form of Lord Siva.
- Linga signifies that the creation is effected by the union of Prakriti and Purusha. It means Laya, Jnana, Vyapya, Prakasa, Arathaprakasa, Samarthyā and the symbol which denotes the above meaning. Linga means the place of dissolution for the world and all beings. It signifies also Satya, Jnana and Ananta—Truth, knowledge and Infinity. It indicates that Lord Siva is endowed with all-pervading and self-luminous nature. Linga is a symbol which makes us understand the various kinds of Artha which are indicated above. There are six Lingas, viz., Anda Linga, Pinda Linga, Sadasiva Linga, Atma Linga, Jnana Linga and Siva Linga. These Lingas are taken to mean the characteristics by which the Anda (the Universe), Pinda (the body), Sadasiva, etc., are to be recognised and understood.
- The union of Linga with Yoni is a representation of the Eternal Union between the static and the dynamic aspects of the Absolute Reality. This represents the Eternal Spiritual Communion of the paternal and the maternal principles from which all the phenomenal diversities have originated. This is an eternal communion of the Changeless Being and the Dynamic Power or Sakti from which all changes flow.

- Further, the lower sexual propensities in the aspirants are eradicated by this sublime conception. The spiritualisation and divinisation of Linga and Yoni, helps the aspirants to free themselves from sexual thoughts. All base thoughts gradually vanish by entertaining this lofty idea. All sexual relations in this world are spiritualised as the manifestations of the ultimate Creative Principle, of the eternal Self-enjoyment and Self-multiplication of Lord Siva in and through His Power or Sakti.
- The union of Linga with Yoni symbolises the creation of this universe by Lord Siva in conjunction with His Sakti or Power.
- The so-called educated men of the modern age have no spiritual insight and philosophical penetration. Hence, they criticise the union of Linga with Yoni as immoral and obscene, owing to their extreme ignorance and lack of enquiry, deep thinking and Satsanga or association with sages. This is highly deplorable and lamentable indeed! May Lord grant wisdom to these poor ignorant souls!
- **Way to Attain Lord Siva**
- Tirumular's Tirumantram is a poetical work, said to be composed in the course of three thousand years. It deals with the practical and theoretical aspects of Saiva religion and philosophy. The treatment of Pati (Lord Siva), Pasu (the individual soul) and Pasa (attachment) in the old method, is found in this book. The following is Tirumular's exposition in his Tirumantram.
- God alone is the Guru or the spiritual teacher. He shows Siva or Sat. Sat-Guru is Ambalam or Chidakasa Siva. You will have to search the Guru in your own heart. Knowledge, devotion, purity



and Siddhis are obtained through the grace of the Guru. The grace descends in virtuous aspirants who have purity, dispassion, etc.

- The thirsting aspirant should get help from Guru Param. Guru Param imparts spiritual instructions to the aspirant. Then Suddha Guru confers upon him Divine Grace. When the aspirant obtains the Divine Grace, he gets several powers, purity, the power to know the Mantras, higher Siddhis, etc. Then the Sat-Guru reveals himself in the Chidakasa, breaks the three bonds, viz., Anava (egoism), Karma (action) and Maya (illusion) and helps him to enter the illimitable domain of Moksha or supreme abode of eternal bliss. Siva Guru presents himself later on and manifests Sat, Asat and Sadasat. When the Jiva attains this final knowledge, he becomes Siva himself. The Guru who presents himself in the earlier and later stages, is Siva himself.
- The devotee attains the grace of the Lord when he meditates on Him in the chambers of his heart, in the space between the two eyebrows and in the head. The holy feet of the Lord are highly eulogised. Tirumular says: "The holy feet of my Lord are Mantra, beauty and truth."
- Jneya or that which is to be known, is Siva Ananda which is a product of Siva and His grace, Sakti. The Jnata (knower) is the individual soul or Jiva. He knows Siva by abiding in Siva Ananda and obtains Jnana or knowledge.
- Moksha is the attainment of Siva Ananda. He who attains Moksha will attain supreme knowledge of Siva. He who gets established in Siva Ananda will attain knowledge and Moksha (the final emancipation). The Jiva who knows Siva Ananda dwells for ever in

it. He attains Siva and Sakti in Siva Ananda. He is endowed with true knowledge which is really union of Siva and Sakti. Lord Siva shows the path which leads on to Moksha, to the aspirant who is endowed with dispassion, non-attachment, renunciation, who praises Him always and performs regular worship.

- The devotee of Lord Siva gets strength to resist the temptations of the world and of Indra, through his Tapas or austerity. He does not care at all for the celestial pleasures offered by Indra. He is quite contented with the supreme bliss attained through union with Lord Siva.
- When the Sadhaka does rigorous austerities and practises concentration, he attains several powers. Indra and other Devas get terribly afraid that they will lose their position. Hence, they put several obstacles on his path and tempt him in a variety of ways by offering celestial car, damsels and various sorts of celestial pleasures. But the firm Sadhaka stands adamant. He never yields and marches direct to the goal, viz., Siva-Pada or the Immortal seat of eternal Bliss. He who yields gets a downfall. Visvamitra had a downfall.
- Sage Tirumular says: "Abandon pride of learning. Introspect. Look within. You will be firmly established in Siva. Nothing will shake you. You will be freed from the trammels of births and deaths."
- Saiva Siddhanta teaches Advaita only. It is Siva Advaita.

- **Greatness of the Prasad**

- Prasad is that which gives peace. During Kirtan, worship, Puja, Havan and Arati, Badam, Kismis, milk, sweets, fruits are offered to the Lord. Puja is done by Bael leaves, flowers, Tulsi, Vibhuti, and

these are given as Prasad, from the Lord. They are charged with mysterious powers by the chanting of Mantras during Puja and Havan.

- Prasad is a great purifier. Prasad is a panacea. Prasad is a spiritual elixir. Prasad is the Grace of the Lord. Prasad is an embodiment of Sakti. Prasad is divinity in manifestation. Many sincere aspirants get wonderful experiences from Prasad alone. Many incurable diseases are cured. Prasad energises, vivifies, invigorates and infuses devotion. It should be taken with great faith.
- Live for a week in Brindavan, Pandharpur or Banares. You will realise the glory and miraculous effects of Prasad. Prasad bestows good health, long life, peace and prosperity on all. Glory to Prasad, the bestower of peace and bliss. Glory to the Lord of the Prasad. Giver of immortality and undying happiness.
- Vibhuti is the Prasad of Lord Siva, to be applied on the forehead. A small portion can be taken in.
- Kumkum is the Prasad of Sri Devi or Sakti, to be applied at the space between the eyebrows (Ajna or Bhrumadhya).
- Tulsi is the Prasad of Lord Vishnu, Rama or Krishna, not to be taken in. Badam, Kismis, sweets, fruits, etc., are to be taken in.
- All these Prasads are given on all important religious functions.
- **Benefit of Pilgrimage**
- You will find a description of Oertel's treatment in books on medicine, for certain cardiac affections (heart-troubles). The patient is asked to climb up hills slowly. So, the Kailasa trip, besides the spiritual benefit, removes many kinds of minor heart-troubles. The heart is invigorated and strengthened. The whole

cardiac-vascular, nervous, pulmonary, alimentary, integumentary systems are thoroughly overhauled and purified. There is no necessity for Kuhne's steam bath. You perspire profusely during the march. The whole body is filled with fresh, oxygenated blood. The gentle breeze blowing from the tall pine trees all over, surcharged with natural oil of pine, disinfects the lungs and a consumptive is cured of phthisis when he returns. The excessive fat is reduced. A Kailas trip is the best treatment for reduction of obesity in corpulent persons. Many kinds of stomach troubles, uric acid troubles and various sorts of skin diseases are cured. You will not get any disease for a period of 12 years, as you are charged with new electrons, new atoms, new cells, new molecules and new nuclei with renovated protoplasm. This is no Arthavada (glorification). You get two birds by throwing one stone. The Kailas trip brings spiritual blessings and good health. Hail! Hail to Sambhu, the Lord Siva who dwells in Kailas with His Sakti, Parvati, who gives Mukti to His devotees and who is known by the different names, Nara, Sadasiva, Mahadeva, Nataraja, Sankara, etc.

- The goal of life is God-realisation which only can free us from the miseries of Samsara, the wheel of birth and death. The performance of the daily obligatory rites, Nitya-Naimittika Karmas, Yatras, etc., unselfishly, leads to the acquisition of virtue. This leads to the destruction of sin, which in turn results in the purification of the mind. This purification of the mind leads to the comprehension of the true nature of Samsara or relative existence, its false and worthless nature. From this results Vairagya

(renunciation), which arouses a desire for liberation. From this desire results a vigilant search for its means. From it comes the renunciation of all actions. Thence, the practice of Yoga, which leads to a habitual tendency of the mind to settle in the Atman or Brahman. This results in the knowledge of the meaning of such Sruti passages as 'Tat Tvam Asi', which destroys the Avidya (ignorance), thus leading to the establishment in one's own self. Thus you see that Yatra like Kailas trip is a Parampara Sadhana for God-realisation, as it causes Chitta Suddhi and Nididhyasana. Dhyana is a direct Sadhana. Householders who are shut up in the world amidst various sorts of cares and anxieties, find a great relief in a Yatra. Their minds get quite refreshed by a Yatra. Further, during the travel they come across Sadhus and Sannyasins. They can have good Satsanga. They can clear their doubts. They can get various sorts of help from them in spiritual Sadhana. That is the main object of Yatra.

- Let me bring to your memory, once more, the last word of the Vedas, Upanishads - 'Tat Tvam Asi', my dear readers. Om Tat Sat, Om Santi, Peace be unto all beings.

### • **Benefits of Parikrama**

- Parikrama is the devout perambulation or Pradakshina around a sacred and holy spot. This is either a mountain peak, a sacred Tirtha, a place of pilgrimage or an entire area regarded as holy and sanctified by tradition. This practice of making a circuit is ordinarily done at any time, and especially undertaken by devotees en masse at particular periods during the year.

- When done on a smaller scale within a small ambit as round a Murti installed in a shrine, round the sacred Tulsi plant or Pipal tree, the perambulation is in common parlance termed 'Pradakshina.' A Parikrama also doubtless constitutes Pradakshina, but by convention, it is come to refer mainly to big circuit.
- More difficult forms of Parikrama are in vogue. Additional measures involving greater physical exertion and strain are combined with Parikrama. Some lay themselves fully stretched upon the ground and roll along over the entire route. Some others proceed slowly prostrating full length at every three or ten steps; still others walk step by step, placing one foot in close proximity to the other and cover the whole distance of Parikrama; and others do the circuit themselves gyrating in a continuous Atma-Pradakshina. All these difficult features are adopted by devotees at times as special penance, or in accordance with some vow previously made, or as spontaneous expression of their zeal or fervour. Your mental attitude and motive will bestow on you the highest, maximum spiritual good.
- Undaunted Yatris in the icy Himalayas do the difficult Parikrama of Mount Kailas and even longer circuit of Lake Manasarovar. Other Yatris complete a round of entire Uttarakhand, in doing the Kedar-Badri-Yatra by going via one route and returning via another, after circling the Chardham.
- Far off in the South, pious devotees make Pradakshina of the holy Arunachala at Tiruvannamalai. Rama Bhaktas and Krishna Premis

go round Chitrakuta Parvata, Ayodhya, Brij, Brindavan, Govardhana and Badrinath.

- The deep significance of Parikrama lies in the fact that the devotee considers not the physical aspect of the place, hill or Tirtha, but the spiritual power it symbolises and the Divine Presence that is manifested and felt through it. Through the Lord's revelation in the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita, you will understand how much special places are saturated with the Divine Presence. By the fervent attitude of faith and veneration, you make yourself fully receptive to the inflow of the spiritual vibrations of the holy place. These powerful spiritual currents enter and purify all the sheaths, gross and subtle, destroying bad Vasanas and Samskaras. Tamas and Rajas are reduced. The concentrated influence of Sattva awakens the dormant spiritual tendencies. By Parikrama, the devotee drinks deep the Divine atmosphere pervading the place and comes out of this spiritual path steeped in Sattvic vibrations. This is the inner working and significance of doing Parikrama.
- Being a great purifier, it is enjoined on all devotees as a method of penance or Tapascharya by wise tradition and convention. It is an act of great spiritual benefit and religious merit too. The devotee takes bath, wears clean clothes, smears Tilak or sacred ash and wears Tulsi or Rudraksha Mala and starts with God's name on his lips. On the Parikrama route, you gain valuable Satsanga by meeting Sadhus and Sannyasins living there. Your sins are destroyed by taking bath in sacred rivers (on big Parikramas) or ponds and Kunds. You are elevated and blessed by Darsana of many holy shrines situated on the way. You develop patience and

endurance putting up with various discomforts in the sun or rain or cold. Difficult Parikramas mean giving up many dear articles to which the mind is attached. You have your mind freed from all thoughts and you are absorbed in the one idea of the Divine presence. A devoutly conducted Parikrama constitutes in one single act a triple Sadhana elevating your body, mind and spirit. The spiritual vibrations of the holy places of pilgrimage and shrines purify your base Asuric Vrittis and fill you with Sattva and purity. You need not go in for Satsanga. Mahapurushas come to you of their own accord. They are always in search of real and sincere Sadhakas. Therefore, they also remain in holy places like Badri, Kedar, Kailas, Hardwar, Brindavan, Mathura, etc.

- Blessed indeed are those who take part in Parikrama, because they will soon attain peace, bliss and immortality! Glory to Lord Rama, the Lord of Ayodhya! Glory to Krishna the Indweller of all hearts, whose special seat is Brindavan! Glory to Bhaktas! May their blessings be upon you all!

- **Real Flower and Arati**

- The tower of a temple represents Brahma. Balipitha represents the navel or Manipura Chakra. Nandi represents Ajna Chakra. Dhvajastambha represents Sushumna Nadi which runs from Muladhara to Brahma.
- Dig-devata dwells in the ears, Vayu in the skin, Sun in the eyes, Varuna in the tongue, Asvins in the nose, Vishnu in the feet, Indra in the hands, Agni in the speech, Prajapati in the generative organ, Yama in the anus, Sutratman in the Prana, Hiranyagarbha in Antahkarana, Chandra in mind, Brahma in the intellect, Rudra in



egoism, Siva in Chitta, Sarasvati in the end of the tongue, Parvati in Anahata Chakra, Lakshmi in Manipura Chakra, Ganesa in Muladhara and Satchidananda Brahman in Brahmarandhra at the crown of the head.

- Satya, Ahimsa, Tapas, mercy, love, self-restraint, contentment, forgiveness, Jnana, equal vision, peace are the real flowers of Puja. All the Nadas are the waters for Abhisheka. The virtuous actions are the offering of incense. Vedanta is Pitambar. Jnana and Yoga are the Kundalas. Tapas and meditation are the lights. Japa is Chamara. Anahata is the music. Kirtan is umbrella. Pranayama is the fan.
- Tattvas are the attendants of the Lord. nana-Sakti is the Devi. Agama is the commander. The eight Siddhis are the door-keepers of the Lord. Turiya is the Plasma. Veda is the bull or Nandi. Kalyana Gunas represent the Trident in the hand. Panchakshara is the holy thread. Suddha Jiva is the ornament. The Vrittis are the Pujopakaranas. The Panchabhutas and the five Tanmatras are the Rudrakshamalas of Lord Siva. Tiger skin represents Ahankara.
- Kriya-Sakti and virtuous actions are Dhupa or incense for the Lord. Chit-Sakti which produces knowledge is also Dhupa. Offering of the ego and the mind at the lotus-feet of the Lord is real Naivedya. Just as camphor melts and becomes one with the fire, so also the mind of a sage melts and the individual soul gets merged in the Supreme Soul. This is real Karpura Arati.

### **Brahma Sutras and the Acharyas**

Those who wish to study the philosophy of Vedanta should study the Ten Classical Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. All Acharyas have commented on Brahma Sutras. This is a great

authority for every philosophical school in India. If any Acharya wishes to establish his own cult or sect or school of thought, he will have to write a commentary of his own on Brahma Sutras. Then only it will be recognised.

The five great Acharyas—Sri Sankara, the exponent of Kevala Adwaita or uncompromising monism; Sri Ramanuja, the exponent of Visishtadwaita or qualified monism; Sri Nimbarka, the exponent of Bhedabheda Vada; Sri Madhva, the exponent of strict dualism or Dwaita Vada; and Sri Vallabha, the exponent of Suddhadwaita Vada or pure monism—agree that Brahman is the cause of this world and that knowledge of Brahman leads to Moksha or the final emancipation, which is the goal of life. They also emphatically declare that Brahman can be known only through the scriptures and not through mere reasoning. But they differ amongst themselves as to the nature of this Brahman, the state of the soul in the state of final emancipation, the means of attaining It and Its causality with reference to this universe.

### Sankara

According to Sri Sankara there is one Absolute Brahman Who is Satchidananda, Who is of an absolutely homogeneous nature. The appearance of this world is due to *Maya*—the illusory power of Brahman—which is neither *Sat* nor *Asat*. This world is unreal. This world is a *Vivarta* or apparent modification through *Maya*. Brahman is the only Reality. The individual soul has limited himself through *Avidya* and identification with the body and other vehicles. Through his selfish actions he enjoys the fruits of his actions. He becomes the actor and enjoyer. He regards himself as atomic and as an agent on account of *Avidya* or the limiting *Antahkarana*. The individual soul becomes identical with Brahman when his *Avidya* is destroyed. In reality Jiva is all-pervading and identical with Brahman. *Ishvara* or *Saguna Brahman* is a product of *Maya*. Worship of *Ishvara* leads to *Krama Mukti*. The pious devotees (the knowers of *Saguna Brahman*) go to *Brahma Loka* and attain final release through highest knowledge. They do not return to this world. They attain the *Nirguna Brahman* at the end of the cycle. Knowledge of *Nirguna Brahman* is the only means of liberation. The knowers of *Nirguna Brahman* attain immediate final release or *Sadyomukti*. They need not go by the path of Gods or the *Devayana*. They merge themselves in *Para Brahman*. They do not go to any *Loka* or world. Sri Sankara's Brahman is *Nirvisesha*. Brahman (Impersonal Absolute) without attributes.

### Ramanuja

According to Sri Ramanuja Brahman is with attributes (*Savishesha*). He is endowed with all auspicious qualities. He is not merely intelligence itself, but intelligence is also his chief attribute. He contains within Himself whatever exists. World and individual souls are essential real constituents of Brahman's nature. Matter (*Achit*) and soul (*Chit*) form the body of the Lord, Lord Narayana, who is the Inner Ruler (*Antaryamin*). Matter and souls are called modes of Him (*Prakara*). The individual souls will never be entirely resolved in Brahman. According to Ramanuja Brahman is not absolutely one and homogeneous. The individual souls undergo a state of *Sankocha* (contraction) during *Pralaya*. They expand (*Vikasa*) during creation. Sri Ramanuja's Brahman is a Personal God with attributes. The individual soul of Ramanuja is really individual. It will remain a personality for ever. The soul remains in *Vaikuntha* for ever in a state of bliss and enjoys the divine *Aishvarya* of Lord Narayana. *Bhakti* is the chief means to

final emancipation and not Jnana. Sri Ramanuja follows in his Bhashya the authority of Bodhayana.

### **Nimbarka**

According to Sri Nimbarkacharya Brahman is considered as both the efficient and material cause of the world. Brahman is both Nirguna and Saguna. The universe is not unreal or illusory but is a true manifestation or *Parinama* of Brahman. (Sri Ramanuja also holds this view. He says, "Just as milk is transformed into curd, so also Brahman has transformed Himself as this universe.") This world is identical with and at the same time different from Brahman, just as the wave or bubble is the same and at the same time different from water. The individual souls are parts of the Supreme Self. They are controlled by the Supreme Being. The final salvation lies in realising the true nature of one's own soul. This can be achieved by Bhakti (devotion). The individuality of the finite self (*Jivatma*) is not dissolved even in the state of final emancipation. Sri Ramanuja also holds that the Jiva assumes the divine body of Sri Narayana with four hands and enjoys in Vaikuntha the divine Aishwarya of the Lord.

### **Vallabha**

The philosophy of Sri Vallabhacharya is *Suddha-Advaita* or pure monism, because he does not admit Maya like Sankara, and believes that the whole world of matter and souls is real and is only a subtle form of God. Those who bring Maya for the explanation of the world are not pure Advaitins, because they admit a second to Brahman. Vallabha holds that Brahman can create the world without any connection with such a principle as Maya, but Sankara traces the universe to Brahman through the power of Maya. Hence the philosophy of Vallabha is called pure monism or Suddhadvaita.

Vallabha says that the entire universe is real and is subtly Brahman. The individual souls and the world are, in essence, one with Brahman. Jiva, Kala (time) and Prakriti or Maya are eternal existences, but they have not separate existence apart from Brahman.

Vallabha's religion is a religion addressed to the worship of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. It was derived chiefly, like the system of Chaitanya, from the Vaishnava philosophy propounded by Ramanuja. It is centred round the conception of a personal and beneficent God who is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Lord Krishna is the highest Brahman. His body consists of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. He is called Purushottama.

Vallabha's followers worship Bala-Krishna (Krishna as a lad). They have *Vatsalya-Bhava* (the attitude which regards God as a child). Vallabha lays great stress on *Pushti* (grace) and Bhakti (devotion). *Maha-Pushti* is the highest grace or *Anugraha* which helps the aspirants to attain God-realisation.

### **Madhva**

Madhva makes an absolute distinction between God, and animate and inanimate objects. God is the only independent Reality. The animate and inanimate objects are dependent realities.

Madhva's Vedanta is the doctrine of absolute differences. It is an *Atyantabheda-Darsana*. He insists on five great distinctions (*Pancha-Bheda*), viz., (i) the distinction between God and the individual soul, (ii) the distinction between God and matter, (iii) the distinction between the individual soul and matter, (iv) the distinction between one soul and another, and (v) the distinction between one material thing and another. Madhva's philosophy is a philosophy of distinction.

In Madhva's system of philosophy, Hari or Vishnu is the Supreme Being. The world is real. Difference is true. All the Jivas are dependent on Hari, the Lord. There are grades of superiority and inferiority among the individual souls. Liberation is the individual soul's enjoyment of its innate bliss. This is Moksha or the final emancipation. *Bhakti*, or devotion, without faults, is the means of attaining Moksha. Perception, inference and the scriptures are the three *Pramanas*, or ways of knowledge. Hari is knowable only through the Vedas. Worship of Lord Krishna as taught in the Bhagavata Purana is the centre of his religion. This is the quintessence of Madhva's teachings.

### Reconciliation

You may ask why do such great realised souls hold different views, why have they started different cults or systems. The highest philosophy of Sri Sankara which bespeaks the identity of the individual and Supreme Soul cannot be understood by the vast majority of persons. Therefore Sri Madhva and Sri Ramanuja started their Bhakti cult. The different schools are different rungs in the ladder of Yoga. The student must place his foot step by step and finally reach the highest peak of perfection—the *Kevaladwaita* realisation of Sri Sankara. As temperaments are different, different schools are also necessary to suit the taste, capacity and stage of evolution of the aspirant. Therefore all schools and cults are necessary. They have got their own place and scope.

The views of various Acharyas are all true in respect of the particular aspect of Brahman dealt with by them, each in his own way. Sankara has taken Brahman in His transcendental aspect, while Sri Ramanuja has taken Him chiefly in His immanent aspect. People were following blindly the rituals during the time of Sri Sankara. When he was preparing his commentary he had in view the purpose of combating the baneful effects which blind ritualism produced. He never condemned selfless service or Nishkama Karma Yoga. He condemned the performance of rituals with selfish motives.

### Conclusion

Sankara Bhashya is the oldest of all commentaries. It upholds Suddha Para Brahman or the Supreme Self of the Upanishads as something superior to other divine beings. It propounds a very bold philosophy and declares emphatically that the individual soul is identical with the Supreme Self. Sankara's philosophical view accurately represents the meaning of Badarayana. His explanations only faithfully render the intended meaning of Sri Vyasa. This is beyond doubt and dispute.

Students of Kevaladwaita School of Philosophy should study the Sareeraka Bhashya of Sri Sankara which is profound, subtle and unique. It is an authority which leads to the right

understanding of the Brahma Sutras. The best thinkers of India, Greece, Germany, England and America belong to this school. It occupies a high rank in books on philosophy. Advaita philosophy is the most sublime and the grandest philosophy of the Hindus.

You can understand the Brahma Sutras if you have a knowledge of the twelve classical Upanishads. You can understand the second chapter if you have a knowledge of Sankhya, Nyaya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vaiseshika Darshan and Buddhistic school too. All these schools are refuted here by Sri Sankara. Sri Sankara's commentary is the best commentary. Dr. Thibut has translated this commentary. "Brahma Sutras" is one of the books of Prasthanatraya. This is an authoritative book on Hindu Philosophy. The work consists of 4 *Adhyayas* (chapters), 16 *Padas* (sections), 223 *Adhikaranas* (topics), and 564 *Sutras* (aphorisms). The first chapter (*Samanvayadhyaya*) unifies Brahman, the second (*Avirohadhyaya*) refutes other philosophies, the third (*Sadhanadhyaya*) deals with practice (Sadhana) to attain Brahman and the fourth (*Phaladhyaya*) treats of fruits of Self-realisation. Each chapter contains four Padas. Each Pada contains Adhikaranas. Each Adhikarana has a separate question to discuss. The first five Adhikaranas of the first chapter are very very important.

Glory to Sri Vyasa Bhagavan, son of Parasara, the mighty sage, a Chiranjivi who has written all Puranas and also divided the Vedas. May his blessings be upon you all!

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Shiva means auspicious, pure, kind and gracious. In English it is written both as Siva and Shiva. Ancient Hindu scholars such as Shankaracharya interpreted the name variously as the "Pure One", or "One who is not affected by the Gunas of Prakrti (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas)" or "One who purifies everyone when His name is uttered." The Hindu tradition which recognizes Lord Shiva as the highest supreme Brahman is known in English as Shaivism or Saivism. It is one of the oldest traditions of Hinduism, whose antiquity probably dates back to pre Rigvedic period and rooted in the fertility cults of prehistoric world. Apart from Shaivism, Shiva is also worshipped in the sects of both Tantrism and Shaktism.

According to swami Chinmayananda, Shiva means "One who is eternally pure" or "One who can never have any contamination of the imperfection of Rajas and Tamas".[11] .The name Shiva, in one

interpretation, is speculated to have derived from the Dravidian or Tamil word Siva, meaning "to be red." As the principal deity of Shaivism Shiva is known by such epithets as Mahādeva ("Great God"- mahā = Great + deva = God), Maheśvara ("Great Lord" - mahā = Great + īśvara = Lord), and Parameśvara ("Supreme Lord").

His followers worship Him by uttering his 108 or 1008 names. There are at least eight different lists of the Shiva Sahasranama, devotional hymns (stotras) listing his many names. The list taken from the Book 13 (Anuśāsanaparvan) of the Mahabharata is considered to be the standard version. List of Shiva's 10000 names ( dasa-dahasranama) is the Mahanyasa. Satarudriyam, popularly known as liturgy to Shiva (Shri Rudram Chamakam), is also used to extol the greatness of Shiva during his ritual worhsip. the leaves of bilva tree are used in his worship as they are considered to be his favorite.

Mahavidyas or Great Wisdoms are aspects of Ten Devis in Hindu mythology. These Mahavidya Goddesses are also called Dasa Mahavidyas or Wisdom Goddesses. The range of these Mahavidya Goddesses covers the whole range of feminine divinity, encircling horrific goddesses at one end, to the astonishing beautiful Devis at the other. The term Mahavidya comes from the root of maha (great) and vidya (revelation, expression, knowledge, wisdom). In the Tantric tradition.

The Mahavidya Goddesses are identified as the following -

Kali Bhuvaneshvari Bhairavi

Tara Tripura Sundari Dhumavati

## Chhinnamasta Bagalamukhi Matangi

### Kamatmika

The Mahabhagavata-purana and Brhaddharma-purana provide a slightly varied list of the Mahavidyas, namely Kali, Tara, Bhuvaneshvari, Chhinnamasta, Bagala, Kamala, Dumavati, Sodasi, Matangi, and Bhairavi. The Guhyatiguyha - tantra associates the Mahavidya Goddesses with the ten avatars of Vishnu, and states that the goddesses are the source from which the avatars of Vishnu arose.

All ten forms of the Mahavidya Goddesses, whether gentle or terrifying, are worshiped as the universal Mother. The evolution of the Mahavidya Goddesses in Hindu mythology is related to a game event between Shiva and Parvati. Once during a game of dice, things went out of hand between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva lost the game, and Parvati asked for the crescent moon, which ornaments his hair, as payment. When he refused, she was enraged. The game that had started in jest turned into a serious matter with an infuriated Shiva threatening to walk out on Parvati. No amount of cajoling by Parvati could overturn matters. Left with no choice, Parvati multiplied herself into ten different forms for each of the ten directions thus blocking the way of Shiva.

Each of the Parvati's manifested forms made Shiva realize the essential truths and made him aware of the eternal nature of their shared love. Shiva was spiritually awakened after seeing this sight. Thus the Mahavidya Goddesses or the Great Goddesses of Wisdom were born. Indeed in the process of spiritual learning, the Mahavidya Goddesses are the muse who guides and inspires

the mortal beings. Mahavidya Goddesses are the highest priestess who unfolds the inner truths.

Another popular story related to the Mahavidya Goddesses that is told in several Puranas, involves an argument between Shiva and Sati or the Dakshayani, an earlier incarnation of Parvati. When Shiva and Sati were wed, Sati's father Daksha condemned the match and organized a great sacrifice to which he invited everyone except for the newlywed couple. Sati, annoyed, insisted on attending the sacrifice, which Shiva forbade until Sati transformed herself into a terrible appearance and multiplied into the ten Mahavidyas, thus she subdued Shiva's resistance and attended the sacrifice.

The Dasa Mahavidya Goddesses are strongly associated with death, violence, ritual pollution, and despised marginal social roles. The worship of these goddesses suggests that the devotee experiences an inspirational and liberating spirituality in all that is prohibited by recognized social orders. Mahavidya Goddesses stretches one's consciousness beyond the conventional, to break away from accepted social norms, roles, and potential.

Each of the Mahavidya Goddesses inspires living one's life according to rules of purity and pollution, detesting caste and class. Atma in Dasa Mahavidya Goddesses is called as Mother with 10 different names with 10 types of major dimensions. Shiva being in Yoga Nidra appears with his energy like a Beautiful Mother (Nature). When a person's illusion surrenders to the Mother by any one of the Dasa Mahavidya Goddesses, he will realize that she is none other than Shiva. Shiva externally appears as Mother but internal is Lord Shiva. This is the secret meaning of all Maha Vidyas. It is also important to understand



that one who follows these Dasa Mahavidya Goddesses should understand the mind beyond the mundane.

Saiva Agamas

Introduction of Saiva Agamas

The Saiva Agamas are some of the earliest books in the Sanskrit language on Saiva religion and philosophy, written over a period of several centuries before the Christian era.

The Vedas have always been a source of fascinating study for orientalist of the West. Innumerable are the translations and critical studies; papers and books written on the Vedas, Upanishads and the Advaita philosophy of Sankara. ( It is now recognised that the Vedas as they are available today are only the compilation of Vyasa of a later day and that their original forms are not available. Vyasa is known as Veda Vyasa; Vyasa- 'compiler')

Agamas, though they constitute an equally large body of ancient Sanskrit source material for a different concept of the same advaita philosophy of Vedanta, have not been studied by any orientalist; indeed they have not been studied at all or in depth even by any Indian scholar except perhaps Dr.Surendranata Das Gupta ( Oct 1885- Dec 1952) of Calcutta,even under the great grantha script.

List of the 28 Sivagamas, its existence and number of slokas.

The list below are the name of the Agama - its origin from the body of Sadasiva - No. of slokas - Rishis to whom it was revealed

Revealed by the Sadyojata Mukha. The following 5 agamas were revealed to Kausika Rishi, who then taught to three celestial who propagate it on earth

1-Kamikam -Feet-100,000 billion-Pranava, Trikala,Hara

2-Yogajam -Shin -100,000 -Sudhakya,Bhasma,Vibhu

3-Chintyam -Toes -300,000 or 1000 -Sudipta,Gopati,Ambika

4-Karanam -Ankle -10 million or 40million -Karana, Sarva,Prajapathi

5-Ajitham -Knees -100,000 or 10,000 -Susicha, Siva, Achyuta

Revealed by the Vamadeva Mukha. The following 5 agamas were revealed to Kasyapa Rishi, who then taught to three celestial who propagate it on earth

6-Diptam -Thighs -100,000 -Isa,Trimurti, Hutasana

7-Sukshmam -Genitive organ -10 million -Sukshma, Vaisravana,Prabhanca

8-Sahasram -Hip -1 million millions -Kala, Bhima, Dharma

9-Amsumad -Back -500,000 -Amsu, Ugra, Ravi

10 -Suprabhedam -Navel -30 millions -Dasesa, Ganesa, Sasi

Revealed by the Aghora Mukha. The following 5 agamas were revealed to Bharadvaja Rishi, who then taught to two celestial who propagate it on earth

11-Vijayam -Stomach -120 millions -Anadirudra, Parameswara

12-Nisvasam -Heart -10 million -Dasarna, Sailasambhava

13-Svayambhuvam -Nipple -15 million -Nidhana, Padmasambhava

14-Agneyam -Eye -30,000 -Vyoma, Hutasana

15-Viram -Neck -100,000 -Tejas, Prajapati

Revealed by the Tatpuruṣa Mukha. The following 5 agamas were revealed to Gautama Rishi, who then taught to two celestial who propagate it on earth

16-Rauravam -Ears -80,000 million -Brahmanesa, Nandikesvara

17-Makutam -Crown -100,000 -Siva, Mahadeva

18-Vimalam -Arms -300,000 -Sarvamatra, Virabatra

19-Chandrajnanam -Chest -30 millions -Ananta, Brhaspati

20-Mukhabimbam -Face -100,000 -Prasanta, Dadhichi

Revealed by the Isana Mukha. The following 8 agamas were revealed to Agastya Rishi, who then taught to two celestial who propagate it on earth

21-Prodgitam -Tongue -300,000 -Sulin, Kavacha

22-Lalitham -Cheeks -8000 -Alayesa, Rudra Bhairava

23-Siddham -Forehead -15 millions -Bindu, Chandesvara

24-Santanam -Kundala ( ear rings) -6000 -Sivanishta, Samsapayana

25-Sarvoktham -Sacred thread -200,000 -Samadeva, Nrusimha

26-Parameswara -Garland -1,200,000 -Sridevi, Usanas

27-Kiranam -Ornaments -50 millions -Devatarksya, Samvartana

28-Vathulam -Garment -100,000 -Siva, Mahakala

The Agamas had existed mostly in South India, in the Tamil Nadu in palm leaf manuscript book form in the homes of Sivacharyas who had been entrusted with the duty of organizing and performing pooja in Siva temples for over two and a half millennium.

All the agama manuscript are available only in the granta script, one which had been invented by the Tamil people for writing their Sanskrit scriptures, more than 1500 years ago.

These Agamas are not available in the North. Dr Das Gupta has stated "...no agama manuscript of any importance is found even in Varanasi, the greatest centre of Hindu religion, Sanskrit studies and culture."

Agamas had the greatest revival in the days of the Chola Emperors of Tamil Nadu from 9th Century. This was the period immediately after Sankara. The Smarthas who adopted the philosophy of Sankara somehow deemed the agamas to be 'alien' to themselves just because Sankara did not deal with them.

The Agamas very strictly laid down that only the Sivacharya class, the Siva Brahmins, were competent to enter the main sanctum or garbha graham and perform the worship in the Siva temples and that the Brahmins as such ( i.e the smartha Brahmin) shall not enter the sanctum, touch the Sivalinga or perform the worship.

A parallel in the domination of the Sanskrit influence of Sanskrit may be noticed in Vaishnavism in the work of Ramanuja; a great acharya who gave his whole life to the establishment of Vaishnavism as a separate and independent cult in Tamil Nadu. He called his philosophy, Vasisthadvaita.

But it is only the Saiva religion that held up the torch of Tamil culture by producing its own original basic scriptures in Tamil, without recourse to Sanskrit through Meykandar in the 12th century. A distinctive Saiva Advaita philosophy began to take shape from the days of Thirumoolar and Karaikal Ammaiyar. This was given a fresh life and a new direction in the Tamil language by the Saiva Nayanas such as Saint Sambanthar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavasagar

In the period of these saints, the essence of agamas flourished into temple building and temple worship from 9th to 13th century. Although the agama study and practice in Sanskrit was now revived, the whole Saiva cult of this period was Tamil based. The philosophy of Sankara was Sanskrit based and couldn't combine itself into the new revival in Tamil Nadu in the Tamil language. The greatest exponent of this revival, Saint Thirugnanasambanthar, was though the Saiva himself a Brahmin.

It should be remembered that the Smarthis had the greatest authority over the Brahmins who were in consequence called Smarthas but they had no authority over the Saiva Siddhantins. This is also a reason for the neglect of agamic studies in the past.

Smartism (or Smarta Sampradaya, Smarta Tradition, as it is termed in Sanskrit) is a denomination of the Hindu religion. The term Smarta refers to adherents who follow the Vedas and Shastras. They mainly follow the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Adi Shankara. But there have been instances when they have advocated or followed other philosophies.

The Velalar, otherwise called the Saivas, who were themselves the followers of the agamas, evolved their own philosophic doctrines from the 12th century and called their philosophy also the (Suddha) Advaita philosophy. All their original writing in this Saiva philosophy was in Tamil. The Saiva school emphasized temple worship which was not the creed of the Sankara advaitins.

The Saivas now took the line of least resistance by limiting themselves to their new Tamil text alone, ignoring all Sanskrit, unfortunately including the Agamas also. All these attitude caused the agamas to fade deeper. The agamas though written in Sanskrit were considered to highlight the Tamil (often called Dravidians) culture and so the Aryans dominated north would not recognise this Dravida culture.

The Sivacharyas also are to be blamed with regard to this. They 'crossed' the Vedic or Smartha Brahmin in all matters and tried to climb in the ladder of caste by calling themselves Brahmins, although the Smartha Brahmins refused to recognize their brahminhood. Inter marriage among them is prohibited to this day.

But the agamas declare that the Sivacharyas is far superior to the (mere) Brahmin since he is the Siva Brahmin. Siva diksha is the exclusive privilege of the Saivas including the Sivacharyas. Generally the Smarta Brahmin is not qualified for Siva Diksha.

Occasionally in the modern day the smarta Brahmin comes forward to cook 'food offering' for the Sivalinga enshrined in Siva temples ( a service which according to agamas has to be done by the pachaka section of Sivacharyas); in such case he is given the first diksha – samaya diksha which makes him a Saiva and then allowed to cook the food.

Thus keeping the Agamas as their own privileged preserve; the Sivacharyas have kept the wider studies of the Saivagamas within them. The agamas in consequence came to perish. However there are a few Sivacharyas who know the agams thoroughly and who have the agama texts at their finger tips.

The Vedas were the preserve of the elite Aryans and never came down to the level of common man, nor did their thoughts and rites reached the common man. But on the other hand, Agamas concerned themselves with all society, with common man and his needs both social and spiritual.

General assumption that agamas only deal with temple and temple worship rituals is wrong. The agamas deals with four parts, Saryai, Kriyai, Yoga and Njanam. Here Kriya deals with temple construction and rituals and Njana deals with the highest philosophy that is none other than Saiva Siddhantham.

The emphasis on the kriya part in the newly rising cult of Saivism in the era of Chola Emperors and because of the separate evolution of the Njana part independently in Tamil language, the agamas had come to be called a mere ritualistic code ( which is wrong) by the pro Tamil culture.

The publication of Raurava Agama, Ajitha agama, Kalottara 1(sloka from Sata Ratna Sangraha) and Mrgendra agama in recent years by French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry under Dr Filliozat and Professor N.R Bhat had brought the agamas again in focus.

As far Saivism is concerned, it is considered as originated from the South and not from the North. The Saivism of the Tamilians, was the growth of an unbroken tradition probably from the prehistoric past and this had three elements fused into it.

These are an external worship of images as the manifest abode of God, both in shrines, throughout the land and in devotees own home; symbolism and the inward meditation and realization.

These 3 elements are; worship of images in the temples was "parartha pooja" for all mankind, for the welfare of the entire society and worship in homes was for individual and his family. Temple worship is done by a dedicated group of Sivachariyars for the welfare of community and worship at home is done by a person who had an initiation under a competent guru such as Vishesha Diksha for Sivapooja.

Second element is symbolism; the idol worshipped is not God; it is just a symbol intended to remind people of God and to direct their minds and hearts through the seen symbol to the Unseen One Beyond or Supreme.

The third element is meditation. What cannot be perceived by the senses externally, may be realized in the heart, with of course His own grace. Without constant concentration and meditation, external worship alone will not result in realization.

It is only this internal worship or atma pooja that lends meaning to external worship. These three are not separate compartments but basically one harmonious integrated whole in the ritual of worship.

## 1. The Vedas and The Agamas



The following agamic passages may be seen to affirm the origin of the Agamas from the Vedas:

"The Siddhanta consists of the essence of the Vedas" (Suprabhedagama)...this tantra is of the essence of Veda', this siddhanta knowledge which is the significance of Vedanta is supremely good" – Sivadvaita of Srikantha by S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri 1972; page 3.

"It has been suggested that the agamic systems were developed out of the Brahmanas in the same way as the Upanishads, though at a much later stage and that some of the Upanishads like Svetasvatara which address the Supreme Being by a sectarian title and not as Para Brahman, long time ago, probably grew up under the shadow of the Agamas" – P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar.

"The agamic cult which was that of the generality of the people and Vedic cult which was of only the priestly classes, officiating for themselves or for others. They existed and grew up side by side from the earliest times." – Quote from Sivadvaita of Sastri

Perasiriyar, (13th Century A.D.) a commentator on the Tamil book Tolkappiyam, referring to the subject matter of the scriptures, mentions the Vedas and the Agamas separately, thereby implying that their contents are different and that they stand for two different bodies of doctrines.

Swami Prajnanananda, quoted by Sir John Woodroffe, has clearly established that the agamic texts, as we know them today, had for the most part preceded Buddhism, and only the agamic cult had been able gradually to swallow up Buddhism on the Indian sub-continent and ultimately to banish it altogether from the Indian soil. It was not Upanishadic philosophy but the Agamic cult that was responsible for this. This is a very important observation deserving the careful attention of all scholars.

The four parts of the Agamas are likened to the four parts of Vedas – namely the mantra part or stotras comparable to Sariya of the agamas; the Brahmanas dealing with rituals comparable

to kriya; the Aranyaka part to Yoga and the Upanishad or philosophy part equivalent to Njanapada of the agamas.

Exponents of the Agamas would go further and say that the Supreme of Saivism, Siva, is mentioned in the Vedic terms such as the following:

Isa vasyam idam sarvam

Yah parah sa mahesvarah

Sarve vai Rudrah.

Ambika pataye Umapataye

Yo vai Rudras sa Bhagavan Bhurbhuvas suvah

Tasmai namas tasmai tva jushtam

niyurajmi yasmai namas tat Sivah

Haraya Rudraya Sarvaya Sivaya

Bhavaya Maha Devaya Ugraya

All the names mentioned in the last lines are the specific mantra names of Siva.

The Bharga Sabda in the Gayatri mantra ( Bhargo dhevasya dhimahi ) is considered to refer to Siva. Besides, the introduction of Sri Uma in Kenoupanishad clearly explains the Saiva Siddhanta doctrine that ignorance can be dispelled only with the bestowal of Siva's Grace which is personified as Sakthi or Uma.

The Kaivalyopanishad, one of the early Upanishads, claimed by many to be of the Advaitic or Vedanta school, has the following lines ( sloka 7 ):

Tam Aadi madhyanta vihinam Ekam Vibhum

Chidanandam Arupam Adbhutam

Uma sahayam Paramesvaram Prabhum

Trilochanam Nilakantham Prasaantam

Here the description of Siva in so many words, as the consort of Uma, Parameswara, the Three eyed, the Blue Throated are the significant as pointing to the Supreme Being as Siva.

In the Devi ashtottra namas used by different Sivacharyas in temple worship today, one of the following names is "Aum Agamarupinyai Namah"; meaning that Devi is of the form of the Agamas. Siva and Sakthi are not separate and so this term is also significant.

Nama 290 in Lalitha Sahasranamam: "Sakalagama sandhoha sukthi samputa mauktika" meaning, "She wears the pearl in the nose ring enclosed in a shell composed of all the agamas"

## 2. Age of the Agamas

St. Thirumular mentions nine agamas by name, we may assume that the more important agamas were written long time before him. Even some later day Buddhist scriptures call themselves as agamas – Ekottaragama, Madhyamagama etc. Sakhya dynasty of Kapilavasthu in which great Siddharta was born were worshippers of Siva. The city is considered to be in the state of Nepal which continues to be a Saiva state to this day.

We may not be sure that the present versions of the agama are those which existed at that ancient past. As sruthis, they were

handed down by word of mouth from master to disciple, through several centuries, before they came to be written down on palm leaf.

Naturally many changes would have taken place into texts, both consciously and unconsciously, as times changed and as needs and aims of society underwent considerable change. Hence it is possible the original texts became elastic and new ideas were incorporated into the texts.

Dr. Surendranath Gupta says " The date of the Agamas cannot be definitely fixed. It maybe suggested that the earliest of them were written some time in the second or third century A.D. and these must have been continued till the thirteenth or fourteenth century"

Some Jain writings of a much later date were called the Jinagama. There were also the Sakthagammas, in praise of Sakthi, Vaikhanasa and Pancharatra are the agamas of two Vaishnava schools. The numbers of Saivagammas is very large and most of them preceeded the books of the other schools in point of time.

From the remote past, from the very early days when the agamas were just written, there existed only Saivagammas. The term agama signified only the Saivagama. The agamas of the other schools of Hinduism were not written at that time.

The Vedas are called Apaurusheya, not made by man. The Vedas are considered to have born from the four faces of Brahman. But this has to be understood as signifying that the Vedas were revealed to enlightened spiritual seekers who taught them to their disciples and were being continuously handed down from master to disciples and hence the name Sruthi until they were written down at a later stage on palm leaf.

The Agamas were revealed from the 5 faces of Lord Siva. – Eesanam, Tatpurusham, Aghoram, Vamadevam and Satyojatham. The Agamas did not come into existence

simultaneously, but did certainly have a gradual evolution even in the pre-B.C and in the first millenium A.D.

Many of the Saivagamas had been quite ancient, besides some of the Agama systems are referred to by Badarayana and so those systems at least must have been earlier than the compilations of Brahma Sutras. The Brahma sutras, also known as Vedanta Sutras, constitute the Nyaya prasthana, the logical starting point of the Vedanta philosophy (Nyāya = logic/order). No study of Vedanta is considered complete without a close examination of the Prasthana Traya, the texts that stand as the three starting points. The Brahma Sutras are attributed to Badarayana.

The compilations of these sutras is considered to have taken place earlier than the Buddha and Mahavira. All these naturally certify to the antiquity of the early Agamas.

Parimelalahar of the 13th Century, the great commentator of kural and an ardent Vaishnavite, interpreting the phrase Engutattan occurring in a verse of the Kural, he lists the eight attributes of Siva and says that these are taken from the Saivagamas and there are no such attributes to Vishnu in any Vaishnava books.

The age of the agamas is based solely on theories by various scholars. The exact period of the agama's origin is yet to be identified. The excavations of Mohenjodaro Harappa gives evidences that practices of Saivism existed few centuries before the Christian era and the agamas would have certainly existed before the said period which goes beyond time.

### 3. The term AGAMA

Several explanations have been offered for the term agama. One of it that because it existed from God, it is called the Agama, that which came (from God), a-gama.

Another is that the three letters a-ga-ma respectively denote pati, pasu and pasam; and that the agamas deals with these three entities and their relationship, and hence this name.

A Sanskrit verse gives an interesting meaning for the three syllables a, ga, and ma:

Agatam Siva valtrenhyah gatan ca girija mukhe

Matam ca Siva bhaktanam agamam cheti katyate

“ The agamas originated from the faces of Lord Siva, fell on the ears of Parasakti and spread in the world as the Matha ( Religion ), of the Siva bhaktas”, the agamas are mostly in the form of instructions from Siva to Sakthi. They take their name from the first letters, of the words agatam (originated), gatan (fell) and matam (religion) as mentioned in this sloka.

Although the special scriptures of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism are generally known as agamas; this term has, however, come to have a specialised significance in later days. Only the Saivagamas are referred to as the agamas; the Vaishnava agamas are mostly referred to as Samhitas and the Sakta agamas are mostly referred to as the Tantras.

#### 4. The number of the Agamas

The agamas are said to be infinite in number. The aspects of Siva are five in number – Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha and Isana. Each of these has five faces and from these twenty five faces were revealed numberless agamas, according to one tradition.

One tradition says that Sadasiva revealed the four agamas to Garuda, Vama, Bhutatantra and Bairava from the four faces and the well known 28 agamas from the fifth face Isanam.

The 28 Saiva agamas are said to have been revealed from all the five faces of Siva, the first four taught five agamas each, while the last, Isanam gave rise to eight. The first ten agamas were taught by Sadasiva to the Vidyasvaras, so they are called the Sivabheda agamas ( Saiva or God-taught).

The remaining 18 were taught to 36 Rudras beginning from Anadirudra, and hence these were called the Rudrabheda agamas ( Raudric or man-realized ). The first ten were taught again in turn to three celestial beings each, which the other eighteen were taught to two each, thus making a total of 66 celestials ( 30+36 ) who learned the agamas.

Ananthesvara taught the agamas to Srikanda Rudra, who in turn taught them to the sages. The sages initiated the disciples into the mysteries of the agamas and thus the books came to have value among the mortals. The Kamikagama shows all the 28 agamas in serial order, their origin, the number of verses therein, the organ of Siva which they represent and persons to whom they were revealed.

## 5. Content of the Agamas

Sadasiva revealed to spiritually advanced souls, the agamas, which embodied the path of such salvation to the mortals who are caught up in the cycle of births and deaths. The four paths towards this end have been developed by Tamil Siddhanta sastra writers in the evolutionary order of Sariya, Kriya , Yoga and Jnanam.

Jnana is the part of philosophy of the agamas ( Saiva Siddhanta ), while the other three may be taken as dealing with sadhana or

practice. Of the agamas that is available in print today, only Suprabheda, Mrgendra and the Kirana contain all four parts.

From the volume of writing under each head, it can be clearly seen that the emphasis of the agamas was equally on the jnana and kriya parts, that is both the philosophical and the ritualistic aspects.

Among the 28 Sivagamas, the first 10 are called Sivabheda and the next 18 are called Rudrabheda. The Sivabheda agamas are 5 each from 2 faces; Sadyojata and Vamadeva while Rudrabheda agama are 5 from each face of Aghora, 5 from face of Tatpurusha, and 8 from face of Isanam.

There are 5 kinds of Guru Shisya relationship in Rudrabheda. The relationship between Sadasiva and Anadhirudra is Param; relationship between Anadhirudrar and Parameswarar is Maham; relationship between Parameswarar and Devas is Divyam; relationship between Devas and Rishis is Divyadivyam and relationship between Rishis and people is Adivyam

The Jnana Part

The Jnana pada is the part dealing with the metaphysical basis of the agama system. It provides the philosophical truths underlying the system and expounds the origin, the rationale and the goal. The Supreme is one and All is He, SIVA. The emphasis of Vedanta on the soul and mind is now shifted so as to encompass a larger part of man or rather the complete man.

This is of course because of Agamic teaching embraces the complex personality of man, his emotions and heart, and his will as well. This is the knowledge of Jnana pada.

The Yoga Part



The agamas were not the first to speak of the Yoga pada nor even Patanjali. Vedic writers would say that the yoga path is as old as the Vedas. They would claim that the Yajnas, sacrifices, were themselves a sort of yoga practice where the vedic seer tried to unite himself with the particular celestial who was invoked.

The agamic yoga part goes beyond the Patanjali's raja yoga and lays down an inner discipline. The aim of yoga is of course Jnana. Hence this yoga seeks to purify, elevate and equip the disciple for a life which will explain the Truths realised through Jnana.

It is usual in the modern day to speak of raja yoga, bhakthi yoga, karma yoga and jnana yoga in treating of religious practices. Different sects evolve their own terminology and this terminology cannot be expected to be there in the same form in Saiva Siddhanta.

The Yoga pada however seems to be a scantiest or 'minor' part in the agamas. Only the Suprabhoga, the Kirana and the Mrgendra texts are available on this pada.

Patanjali's raja yoga takes one through eight steps and these are known as the Ashtanga yoga. These eight steps –Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. It is only a course of spiritual discipline leading to a higher purpose, only steps leading to an altogether higher goal. The last three steps are said to comprise the true raja yoga. Dharana is concentration; helps to perfect mind control. Dhyana is meditation which helps the uninterrupted flow of thought to the object of devotion. This finally leads to state of Samadhi where the mind initially functions in the contemplation, but finally it ceases to exist. The initial state here confers siddhis or powers on the practiser of yoga but he is not to be lured by them. He ignores these and goes to the higher state of Samadhi which is the mystic union.

Yoga is union, the union of the conscious individual self with the Universal Self. The term yoga is used in common term as a form of personal discipline: this yoga is just a means towards the attainment of higher purpose. In the religious language it is the union of the mind at the feet of the Master.

This eight fold ashtanga yoga is taken as a step to a higher yoga in Saiva Siddhanta which seeks a spiritual union beyond the mental discipline and it is called the Prasaadaa Yoga, one which confers supreme realisation. It is a process of spiritual evolution where the souls goes through a sixteen fold process of inward perception withdrawing the spirit from all outward activities and rising higher and higher in the realisation of the Self inwardly and finally attaining non-dual union with it.

The Praasadaa yoga is a sort of training for the power of the Sushumna Nadi called Kundalini Sakthi, which is like a coiled serpent and for taking it through sixteen stages called kalas, bindu, ardhachandra, nirodhi, nadam, nadantam, sakthi, vyapini, vyomarupai, anantai, anata, anasritai, samanai and unmanai. Beyond unmana is the brahma randra, the dvadasanta centre. The aspirant in his yogic practice, takes the Sakthi to each stage and there, has the corresponding vision. This process is the Shodasakala Praashadaa yoga, this last stage is the merger or union.

The Kriya Part

This pada considers not the individual man alone but considers man in the society. It has a concern and involvement in the community around. The temple is an outward expression of this concern. The Kriya aspect so far as temple paratha worship is concerned is in three divisions – i. Prathisthanam that is from clearing the ground for examining its suitability for temple construction, to consecration; ii. Pratishtha to Utsavantham that is from consecration to the conduct of all types of festivals and

iii. Prayascitta kriyas – kriya rites combined with other purificatory rituals.

The Kriya part is generally the largest part in all the available agamas. This part is concerned with worship, both individual and temple worship. All the aspects of worship are elaborately described here. The details of temple construction for example; details which are given here are far beyond what an excellent modern architect can dream of.

Other allied subjects dealt with here are sculpture, iconography, construction of temple car or Theer, geology, horticulture, astronomy, town planning, home science, water supply, health and hygiene, food and many others. In short we may say, no area of human activity of the period about 2000 years back has been left out.

Agamas speak of 64 kinds of Siva forms ( Asthastha forms) and in brief 25 Maheswara muhurtam are as per Karana agama for worship.

### The Sariyai Part

The seeker after TRUTH, the Siddhantin, has to equip himself intellectually for the philosophy of Jnana Pada. The spiritual effort is augmented and supported by the many kriyas, temple worship and festivals. For these efforts an external aid both in himself and in the environment is essential. This is the code of personal conduct and discipline, the way of behaviour or functioning and this is Sariyai.

The Sariya part is not a difficult one nor it is very complicated either for understanding or for following. It is a sort of rigid preparation, intended to purify and equip the Sadhaka in body, mind and spirit, a personal training or discipline.

The path marked out for him is the Godward path, because as a Sadhaka, he practises the means for attaining oneness with Siva. He has in a limited sense to begin with, to lead others. Society

looks up to him and by his personal life, affiliations, behaviour and progress and attainments, he sets the model.

The Sariya part deals with daily observance and the personal discipline of the worshippers. The Suprabhedagama deals elaborately with this. The purificatory ceremonies for the individual from the time of his birth, the deekshas ( initiation ), the ultimate funeral rites and similar other ceremonies are described here.

6. Agamas quoted by Samayacharyars and Sekkilar in Periyapuranam

The Thevaram hymns of Saint Sambanthar, Appar and Sundarar make several references to the Agamas.

Saint Sambanthar says " Lord Siva revealed the Veda, the Vedanta and the Agama" – 3;23;6

Saint Appar says " Daksha no doubt performed his Yajna as laid down by the Vedas; but he should have done it in the manner laid down in the Agamas ( which automatically will give importance to Lord Siva) and that implied as the reason for the destruction of the Yajna by Lord Siva through Veerabatra." – 4;65;6

Saint Manikkavasagar says " Lord Siva disclosed the agamas from the Mahendra Hill out of his five faces" 2;20

Saint Sekkilar makes many references to the agama in Periyapuranam:

"The agamas were revealed by Lord Siva, temples are built according to the rules laid down in the agamas. Siva puja is performed according to the agamas and he is please with such worship"

In Saint Kannappar's story, the Sivagochariyar, the saintly priest arrives at the temple, bringing flowers and water as laid down in the agama -784

The traitor Muthanathan, bent upon killing the saintly ruler Meyporul, says to the Queen, " I have brought here a rare agama revealed by your Master, not to be found anywhere on earth" – 478

Saint Pusalar built the temple mentally and laid the foundation according to the agamic rules – 4181

Narrating the greatness of the city of Kanchipuram, Sekkilar says that Umadevi worshipped Siva in this place; in this context he specifically mentions several times that Umadevi performed Sivapuja as laid down in the agamas. –1132, 1133, 1134, 1136, 1141, 1142

## 7. Relevance of the Agamas

Rules were laid down for the building of the temples and for the installation of images therein. Temples had been growing in importance since the days of the Saiva Samayacharyas. It is well known that most temples follow the Kamika or the Karana agama for practices of day to day worship, while the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram follows Makutagama; the Thiruvengadu temple follows three agamas, Kamika, Makuta and Karana agamas, Thirueengoimalai follows Vatulagama; Thirunallam temple follows Karana agama and Sukshuma agama; Thirunallar temple follows Makudagama.

The Makutagama seem to occupy a unique place among the agamas. It is quoted as the authority in temples where Lord Nadaraja is said to perform one of His Cosmic dances, In such shrines His Ardha Darisanam ( Thiruvathirai ) festival is considered to be of special significance. They have special dance halls called Pancha sabha which is Kanakasabha ( Gold-

Chidambaram ); Rajata sabha ( Silver – Madurai ); Tambira sabha ( Copper- Thirunelveli); Ratna sabha ( Ruby-Thiruvalangadu) and Chitra sabha ( Art –Thirukkuttralam).

It has been asked, "If Siva created the soul, then is not the soul different from Siva?" For our answer let us look at nature. When a tree "creates" a fruit, that fruit is not a "something else." It is not different from the tree. The Western idea of creation is a flash of lightening and the world appears as an entity different from the Creator. The truth is more like the example of the tree, though that analogy is only a partial analogy and does not explain how the soul merges with the Absolute. All of creation is the manifestation of Siva's own Being, like the fruit is the natural manifestation of the tree. Thus souls and the world are Siva. My beloved Gurudeva, Yogaswami of Columbuturai, said some wonderful things about this. He said, "It will not be an overstatement if I say that man is God." He also said, "Nothing exists except the Lord. Everything is His action. Nothing exists apart from God. It is like the waves and the ocean." This is my belief, too.

People who hold to the belief in an eternal Hell where souls burn forever for their sins will have attitudes of a more or less fearful nature. But for those who believe that God created the soul with form and with a superconscious intelligence and that the two will ultimately merge in non-dualistic union, religion has meaning. They want to convert others to it and have the power to do so as a boon from Lord Siva, God of all the realms.

God Siva created the soul. How did he do this? Was it like a potter shaping clay into a pot? Was it like a carpenter creating a house out of lumber? It was more like the tree. In order to create another tree, the tree sends out its branches and the fruit grows on the branches and the seed grows within the fruit. The fruit drops off and the seed sprouts and a shoot comes out; that shoot becomes a twig, then a sapling, then a small tree, and then a large tree. Finally, the tree is fully matured and sends out its fruits and begins the process all over again. In a similar way Lord Siva has created individual souls. Saint Tirumular assures us of this in one of his many statements about Siva the Creator: Of yore He created the

worlds seven,Of yore He created celestials countless,Of yore He created souls without number,Of yore He created all-Himself,As Primal Param, uncreated.TANTRA TWO VERSE 446

We must understand the difference between the Self-God, Parasivam, and the soul. Many people think that the Self is something that you get. You pursue it and after a while you get it, like you get something in the world. But the Self is not separated from you by even the tiniest amount. You cannot go someplace and get it and bring it back. The formless, transcendent Self is never separate from you. It is closer than your heartbeat. God Siva is called the Primal Soul because He is the perfect form, the original soul who then created individual souls. The individual soul has a beginning, and it has an end, merging with God. It has form as well. All form has a beginning and an end. The Absolute Self, Parasivam, is formless, timeless, endless and beginningless. All things are in the Self, and the Self is in all things. Many people think of the Self as an object to be sought. You start here and you go there, and you get the Self. You pursue it today; and if you don't get it today, you try again tomorrow. It's different than that. It comes from within you more as a becoming of your whole being than something that you pursue and get. And yet you seem to pursue it, and seem to get it. It is very difficult to explain.

The individual soul is different. The soul has a form. The soul is form, a very refined and subtle form, to be sure, but still a form and form obeys the laws of form. The soul has a beginning in Lord Siva and an end in union with Him. The purpose of life is to know God, your very Self. This is the end of all religions, of all religious effort. This is why we say that religion is this process of lifting ourselves up, attuning our minds to the laws of life so that we become stronger and more mature beings. We become higher beings, living in the higher chakras, and we come closer and closer to God. God doesn't come closer to us. How will God come any closer? He is closer to you right now than your own thoughts. He is nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet.

I shall explain the soul in yet another way for I see a questioning look in some of your faces. Man has five bodies, each more subtle

than the last. Visualize the soul of man as a lightbulb and his various bodies or sheaths as colored fabrics covering the pure white light. The physical body is the outermost body. Next comes the pranic body, then the physical body's subtle duplicate, the astral body. Then there is the mental or intellectual body in which one can travel instantaneously anywhere. Then comes the body of the soul, which I term the actinodic body. This is the body that evolves from birth to birth, that reincarnates into new outer sheaths and does not die when the physical body returns its elements to the earth. This body eventually evolves as the actinic body, the body of light, the Golden Body of the soul. This soul body in its final evolution is the most perfect form, the prototype of human form. Once physical births have ceased, this soul body still continues to evolve in subtle realms of existence. This effulgent, actinic body of the illumined soul, even after Nirvakalpa Samadhi, God-Realization, continues to evolve in the inner worlds until the final merger with Siva.

I like to say, "God, God, God." There is one God only, but man's comprehension of That is helped by consciously exploring the three aspects of the one Divine Being: the Absolute, Pure Consciousness or the Self flowing through all form, and the Creator of all that is.

Lord Siva is the Absolute Self, Parasivam, the timeless, formless, spaceless Reality beyond the mind, beyond all form, beyond our subtlest understanding. Parasivam can only be experienced to be known, and then it cannot be explained. Lord Siva is pure consciousness, the substratum, or Primal Substance of all that exists. He is the Energy within all existence. He is Satchidananda, or Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, the Self that flows through all form. Lord Siva is the Primal Soul, Mahesvara, the Original and most perfect Being. He is the Source and the Creator, having never been created. He is the Lord of all beings. He created all souls out of Himself, and He is ever creating, preserving and destroying forms in an endless Divine Dance. When I was nine years old, I was taught that Lord Siva is God-God the Creator, God the Preserver, and God the Destroyer. To this day I know and believe that Siva is all of these, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. These are the final conclusions of Saivism, the Sanatana Dharma. The Upanishads state it in this way: He is the one God, the Creator. He enters into all wombs. The



One Absolute Eternal Existence, Together with His inscrutable maya, Appears as the Divine Lord, and Personal God Endowed with manifest forms. With His Divine Sakti He holds dominion Over all the worlds. At the time of the Creation And Dissolution of the Universe He alone exists. Our Lord is One without a second. With His Divine Sakti He reigns over all the worlds. Within man He dwells, And within all other beings. He projects the universe, He maintains it, And He withdraws it into Himself. He is the Origin and the Support Of all the Gods; He is Lord to all. He sees all and knows all. Thou doth pervade the universe, Thou art consciousness itself, Thou art Creator of Time, Thou art the Primal Being.

Whether He manifests existence out of Himself or withdraws it entirely into His Being, existence is all of Himself, all is of Siva, the Auspicious One. Existence is indeed eternal, yet manifesting and dissolving in natural cycles of time and space. When the scriptures speak of the world or the soul as being eternal, we must understand that it is not any particular part of the world or any single soul that exists forever. Rather it is the existence of that which we call world. When this world ends, worlds and worlds will continue their existence in other parts of this universe. And when a great soul merges forever into Siva, there will be other souls working their way through their karma toward moksha. Similarly, there are always pine trees on the mountain tops. They have been there for millions of years. But those are not the same trees. In this sense we can say that world and soul are eternal, and this is to me the most profound understanding of these references in scripture.

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**\*What They say about Hinduism**

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**\*Sivananda Lahari**

**\*Soundarya Lahari**

**\*Ananda Lahari**

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\*Siva-kesaadi-padaanta-varnana

\*Sree Vishnu-paadaadi-kesanta

\*Uma-Maheswara Stotram

\*Tripurasundari Vedapada Stotram

\*Tripurasundari Manasapooja

\*Tripurasundari Ashtakam

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\*Mantra-Matruka-Pushpamaala

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**\*Eka Sloki**

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**\*Upadesa (Sadhna) Panchakam**

**\*Sata Sloki**

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**\*Care For Hypertension**

**\*Cure For Hypertension**

**\*Care For Heart Diseases**

**\*Cure For Heart Diseases**

**\*Care For Diabetes**

**\*Care For Cancer**

**\*Cure For Cancer**

**\*Care For Infection**

**\*Cure For Infection**

**\*Care For Vertigo**

**\*Cure For Vertigo**

**\*Care For Schizophrenia**

**\*Cure For Anger**

**\*Care For Anger**

**\*Cure For Hernia**

**\*Care For Hernia**

**\*Cure For Autism**

**\*Care For Autism**

**\*Care For Addiction**

**\*Cure For Addiction**

**\*Cure For Memory Problems**

**\*Cure For Anxiety**

**\*Care For Arthritis**

**\*Cure For Arthritis**

**\*Care For Ageing**

**\*Cure For Ageing**

**\*Care For Skin Problems**

**\*Cure For Skin Problems**

**\*Care For Memory Problems**

**\*Cure For Schizophrenia**

**\*Cure For Insomnia**

**\*Cure For Depression**

**\*Care For Depression**

**\*Care For Pulmonary Disease**

**\*Care For Bipolar Disorder**

**\*Cure For Bipolar Disorder**

**\*Care For Low Self Esteem**

**\*Cure For Low Self Esteem**

**\*Cure For Migraine**

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- \*Cure For Hypothyroidism**
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**\*Cure For Food Allergies**

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**\*Cure For Long Sight**

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**\*Cure For Dandruff**

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**\*Care For Digestive Disorders**

**\*Care For Sinusitis**

**\*Cure For Sinusitis**

**\*Care For Thyroid Problems**

**\*Menopause**

**\*Cure For Nephrotic Syndrome**

**\*Care For Epilepsy**

**\*Cure For Epilepsy**

**\*Care For Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)**

**\*Cure For Digestive Issues**

**\*Care For Nephrotic Syndrome**

**\*Care for Insomnia**

**\*Cure For Autoimmune Disorders**

**\*Care For Autoimmune Disorders**

**\*Cure For Tinnitus**

**\*Care For Urinary Problems**

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**\*Meditation**

**\*Deeper truths**

**\*Enlightenment 101**

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**\*Amazing Science**

**\*Vedic Mathematics**

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**\*Moon Calendar 2010-2040**

**\*Eclipse**

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**\*Founder of Hinduism**

**\*Vrat - Resolution**

**\*Mind Power**

**\*Mantras-Sacred Fire**

**\*Shanti Mantras**

**\*Cows are Sacred**

**\*From Scriptures**

**\*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna**

**\*God can be seen**

**\*Guru**

**\*Silent Teachings & Satsang**

**\*Touched by God**

**\*Caste System**

**\*Untouchables**

**\*Duties**

**\*Yuga Dharmaa**

**\*Doing Good**

**\*Virtue**

**\*Virtue, Wealth & Pleasure**

**\*Gurukul**

**\*Ashramas**

**\*Sannyasa - Renunciation**

**\*Kamagita**

**\*Wheel of Life**

**\*Maya-Shakti-Prakriti**

**\*Durga Saptashati**

**\*Creation**

**\*Dissolution**

**\*Wisdom versus knowledge**

**\*Divine Wealth**

**\*Motherhood**

**\*Women**

**\*Marriage**

**\*Alluring Adornment**

**\*God**

**\*Nature of Reality**

**\*That Thou Art**

**\*Sanatan Ved Dharma**

**\*Destiny & Exertion**

**\*Soul & its Destiny**

**\*The Real and the Apparent Man**

**\*Death & Life**

**\*Bhishma**

**\*Immortality**

**\*Egoism**

**\*Resurrection**

**\*Reincarnation**

**\*Heaven & Hell**

**\*Emancipation**

**\*Gayatri**

**\*Meditation**

**\*Meditation Q & A**

**\*Direct Path**

**\*Miscellaneous Q & A**

**\*Jesus versus Churchianity**

**\*Empty Chamber**

**\*Adhyatma-Self-Spiritual Science**

**\*Self-Realisation**

**\*Self - Atma**

**\*Jnani - Self-realised**

**\*Who am I?**

**\*Sanat-sujata**

**\*Vidura-Niti**

**\*Chanakya niti**

**\*Kautilya Arthasastra**

**\*Worship**

**\*Self-enquiry**

**\*Highest object of knowledge**

**\*The Highest Refuge of All things**

**\*Sankhya versus Yoga**

**\*Yoga**

**\*Jnana Yoga**

**\*Raja Yoga**

**\*Bhakti - Surrender**

**\*Bhakti Yoga**

**\*Karma Yoga**

**\*Japa**

**\*Music**



**\*Consciousness-the three states**

**\*Freedom & Bondage**

**\*Morality**

**\*Overcoming Difficulties**

**\*Forgiveness versus Might - Anger**

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**\*Renunciation & Abandonment**

**\*Truth**

**\*Truth versus Falsehood**

**\*Happiness**

**\*Self-restraint**

**\*Senses - self-discipline**

**\*Ignorance**

**\*Anahata Nada**

**\*What Religion Is**

**\*Karma & Destiny**

**\*Sin**

**\*Sinner**

**\*Drunkard**

**\*Conscience**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Mind**

**\*Miracles & Visions**

**\*Riddles**

**\*Celibacy**

**\*Thought, Speech & Deed**

**\*Upanishads**

**\*Gita for Children**

**\*Gita**

**\*Preyas & Sreyas**

**\*Pravritti - Nivritti**

**\*Acts versus Knowledge**

**\*Conduct**

**\*Kali Yuga**

**\*Tantra**

**\*Kundalini**

**\*Direct Perception versus Scriptures**

**\*Faith**

**\*Atheist**

**\*Righteousness**

**\*Highest Good**

**\*Mother, Father & Teacher**

**\*Eldest Brother**

**\*Friendship**

**\*Self-interest**

**\*kingcraft**

**\*Chastisements**

**\*Thanks Giving**

**\*Ethics**

**\*Good and Evil**

**\*Vices**

**\*Malevolent & Wicked**

**\*Nature of Man**

**\*Culture and Civilization**

**\*Kosas-sheaths**

**\*Good and Pure**

**\*Sattwa, Rajas & Tamas**

**\*East-West-North-South**

**\*Stories - Episodes**

**\*Procrastination**

**\*Gifts**

**\*Fasting (Religious)**

**\*Tirtha**

**\*Sacred Waters - Ganga**

**\*Tilak**

**\*Ideal behind the idol**

**\*Rituals**

**\*Hinduism & Sri Ramakrishna**

**\*Funerals**

**\*Tarpana**

**\*Aarati**

**\*Flowers - Incense - Lamps**

**\*Prasad**

**\*Sacraments - Samskaras**

**\*Sacred Thread**

**\*Food**

**\*Your Constitution**

**\*Trees have Life**

**\*Prana-Vyana-Samana**

**\*Krishna**

**\*Ganapati - Gopalnanda**

**\*Brahma - Sutras**

**\*Temples**

**\*Sun - Surya**

**\*Makar sankranti**

**\*Vasant Panchami**

**\*Siva**

**\*Nataraj**

**\*Holi - Festival**

**\*Ramayana**

**\*Hanuman**

**\*Raksha Bandhan**

**\*Krishna Janmashtami**

**\*Deepavali**

**\*Adhik Maas**

**\*Kaaba a Hindu Temple?**

**\*Islam-stagnant**

**\*Buddhism**

**\*Buddhism in China--Japan-Korea**

**\*Religions in brief**

**\*Inter-religious Attitude**

**\*Books**

**\*Hindu Scriptures**

**\*Philosophy**

**\*Schools of Vedanta**

**\*Hindu Secrets**

**Q & A**

**\*Dasnami Sampradaya**

**\*Dharma**

**\*Speech - Science**

**\*Abusive Speech**

**\*Appreciations**

**\*Food Charts**

**\*Drama - Shakuntala**

**\*Vishnu Sahasranama**

**\*Moon Calendar 2013**

**\*Moon Calendar 2015**

**\*Moon Calendar 2017**

**\*Moon Calendar 2019**

**\*Moon Calendar 2021**

**\*Vedic Maths India**

**\*CSS2**

**\*The Primal Revelation at the Heart of Civilization**

**\*Krishna Worship: One of Humanity's Most Ancient Traditions**

**\*The Great Blue Spirit Nagi Tanka Skan Skan**

**\*The Lion of Time**

**\*Contacting Vedic Empire Productions**

**\*Rakhi Bond of Love Saves the Life of Alexander**

**\*Ancient Pompeii's Lakshmi Statuette**

**\*Hindu Radio-Breaking the Sound Barrier**

**\*Philippines- A Golden Heritage**

**\*Gympie Gold inlaid Quartz**

**\*Ancient Hindu Mariners and Australian Gold**

**\*Lets Connect on Facebook**

**\*Why is Prayag-an ancient center of Hinduism now called Allahabad?**

**\*Have Mosques ever been built atop non-Islamic Holy Sites?**



**\*The Blue God of Judaism**

**\*Greek Othrys and the Vedic Adri Montains**

**\*HINDU CIVILIZATIONS OF AUSTRONESIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA**

**\*Vedic Brahma and Apache Kuterastan**

**\*Phoenician Alphabet, Adopted by the Greeks**

**\*The Phoenician Creation Story**

**\*India-Homeland of the Phoenicians**

**\*Evidence Linking Ancient Troy and Central America**

**\*Rig Veda and the Phoenicians**

**\*Fly Me to the Moon God**

**\*Walk the Sacred Forests of Shiva**

**\*Updated: Vedic Roots of India's Moon Mission**

**\*Roots of Orissa's 'Christian' Problem**

**\*Ancient Orissa's Links with Rome, Japan, China, Africa and SE Asia**

**\*The Stanzas of Dzyan**

**\*The Blue-ness of God in Biblical tradition**

**\*The Sanskrit Dialect Known as English**

**\*Caitanya's Bhakti Movement Empowers India & Humanity**

**\*Bangalore's Shiva Cave Temple**

**\*Assaulting Orissa and India's Development**

**\*The Truth Behind Holy Amarnath in Kashmir**

**\*Tantra Mantra Yantra Vigyan Journal**

**•Yogic Meditation**

**•Kundalini Vigyan**

**•Tantra Alchemy**

**•Tantrik Hypnotism**

**•Advanced Palmistry**

**•Third Eye Activation**

**•Soul- A Joy For Ever**

**•Health Wealth And Prosperity**

**•Secrets of Shaktipaat**

**•Practicals of Hypnotism**

**•Meanings of Devotion**

- The Universal Nymphs
- Mahavidya Sadhan
- Guru Diksha
- Diksha Guru
- Siddha And Siddhi
- Srimad Gita
- Bhakti Kirtan
- Jyotish And Kaal Chakra
- Muladhar To Sahasrar Parikraman
- Palmistry Science & Finger Secrets
- Siva Stavan
- Omkar Brahma To Kundalini
- Social Success : Tantra Secrets
- Samadhi Siddhi
- Top Secret Mantra Rahasya
- Unpublished Spiritual Sadhana Samagra
- Sarva Prakar Dikshaayen

•Sarva Deva Shatkam

•Lakshmi Siddhi

•Amrit Darshan

•Maha Tantram

•Tantra Rahasya

•Top Hypnotism Techniques & Sootras

•Secret TantrikHypnotism

•Alternate Hastrekha Shastra

•Sadhana Prakar

•Bheirav Shastra

•Atma Chintan

•Paramatma Rahasya

•Yogi Rupnathji

•Siddhastan Mahatya

•Bajrang Bali Siddhi

•Matangi Tantra

•Tantrik kriya Vidhi

- Ayeshwarya Prapti Sadhana
- Siddha Yogi
- Amrit Pan
- Tantrik Guru Upasana
- Guru Stotra
- Sadhana Vidhi
- Sadhana Evam Siddhi
- Durlabh Prayog
- Jyotish Muhurat
- Sarva Siddhi
- Tantra Vidhi
- Bhuvaneshwari Siddhi
- Lakshmi Secrets
- Hansa To Paramahamsa
- Universal Life
- Apsara Siddhi
- Secrets of Shodashi Tripur Sundari

- Mahakali Siddhi
- Baglamukhi Siddhi
- Brahmapanishad
- Gayatripanishad
- Sandhya Kriya
- Siddhashram Parampara
- Total Diksha Sanskar Vidhi
- Yagya Vidhan Sangraha
- Dhanvarshini Prayog
- Narayan Rahasya
- Tatva Nirupan Sutra
- Guru Shishya Rahasya
- Siddha Vidhi
- Diksha kaal
- Gurudev Bhajana
- Tantra Siddhi Sadhana
- Urvashi Darshan

- Swarna Akarshan
- Tara Sadhana
- Shiv Kripa Sutra
- Jagdamba Sadhana Vidhi
- Tantra Practicals
- Fate and Predetermined Destiny
- Is Divination for Real?
- How Divination Works
- Changing Destiny and Karma
- So You Want to Learn Fortunetelling
- Developing Psychic Powers
- Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) and Intuition
- Which Method Is Right for You?
- Know Your Audience
- What You Need to Explain
- How to Ask Good Questions
- Predicting with Accuracy

- **Holding On to Your Energy**
- **Trust Your Instinct and Read the Signs**
- **A Meaningful Coincidence**
- **Miracles and Superstitions**
- **Letting It Happen**
- **Take Action!**
- **Don't Go Overboard!**
- **In Tune with the Rhythms of Life**
- **Cycles of Time and Space**
- **Repeating Mistakes**
- **The Days of the Week**
- **Phases of the Moon**
- **Why the Future Didn't Come True**
- **Light the Candles**
- **Relaxing Tunes**
- **Relying on Feng Shui**
- **The Guidance of Angels**



- **Symbols and Talismans**
- **History and Allure**
- **The Cards and What They Mean**
- **Shuffling the Tarot**
- **The Spreads**
- **Tarot Timing**
- **Look into My Crystal Ball**
- **Get Ready for a Reading**
- **Let the Divination Begin**
- **Special Crystals**
- **Easy Casting**
- **The Seven Chakras**
- **The Energy of I Ching**
- **Three Coins**
- **The Lines of Yin and Yang**
- **Throwing for Practice**
- **Interpreting the Hexagrams**

- Reading the Secrets
- Buy or Make Your Own
- The Runic Alphabet
- Interpreting the Symbols
- Casting Runes
- Introducing Palm Reading
- Seven Hand Shapes
- At Your Fingertips
- The Major Lines
- Clues in Other Lines
- Reading Hand Mounts
- The Basics of Numerology
- Life Path Number
- Karma Number
- Soul Number
- Identity Number
- Spiritual Force Number

- Numbers for Everyday Life
- Astrology 101
- How It Came About
- The Twelve Houses
- Your Sun Sign: Aries to Pisces
- Four Basic Elements
- The Question of Interpretation
- Everyday Dreams
- Fear or Anxiety Dreams
- Dreams of Desire
- Prophecy Dreams
- Remembering Dreams
- The Practice of Reading Tealeaves
- A Little History
- Brew, Serve, and See!
- A Spot of Tea
- Taking Note of the Details

- Common Tealeaf Symbols
- The Father of Psychometry
- Clues to the Past, Present, and Future
- Tuning In to the Energy
- Do You Have the Touch?
- Psychometric Divination
- Exercising Your Skills
- Mediums and Séances
- In Touch with the Spirit World
- Divination Tool or Parlor Game?
- Conducting a Ouija Session
- Automatic Writing
- Write It Yourself
- Destiny, Karma, and the Tarot
- Gateways to Love
- You Can Turn to I Ching
- Runes and the Way of Your Love

- **Discerning Feelings with Tarot**
- **Should I Take That Job?**
- **The Threat of Job Loss**
- **A Good Day for a Presentation**
- **Dealing with Colleagues**
- **When It's Time to Take a Break**
- **Street ("Gypsy") Psychics**
- **Psychic Phone Lines**
- **Cyber Psychics**
- **Psychic Readings by E-mail**
- **Psychic Advice from Friends**
- **Self-Discovery and Visualization**
- **It's about Making Choices**
- **Meditation on the Tarot**
- **Make It True**
- **Wishing on a Star**
- **Top 10 Divination Methods You Will Learn in This Book**

- The Basics of Divination
- Divining with Confidence
- Omens and Signs in Everyday Life
- Timing Is Everything
- Setting the Mood
- The Tarot
- See the Future Inside a Crystal
- I Ching, the Chinese Oracle
- The Ancient Magick of Runes
- The Future Is in Your Hands
- What the Numbers Hold in Store
- Astrology: Secrets of the Sun Signs
- Divining Dreams
- The Truth in Tealeaves
- Divination with Psychometry
- Communicating with the Unknown
- Divining Love

- **The Future of Your Career**
- **Finding a Professional Psychic**
- **Changing Your Future**
- **What Is Astrology?**
- **Sun Signs: Aries to Virgo**
- **Sun Signs: Libra to Pisces**
- **Understanding the Planets**
- **Planets in the Signs**
- **Reading a Birth Chart**
- **Signs and Children**
- **Aspects**
- **Conjunctions: 0 Degrees**
- **Squares: 90 Degrees**
- **Sextiles and Trines: 60 and 120 Degrees**
- **Oppositions: 180 Degrees**
- **Love Compatibility: Fire**
- **Love Compatibility: Air**

- **Love Compatibility: Water**
- **Love Compatibility: Earth**
- **Mercury and Venus Charts**
- **Uranus Charts**
- **Pluto Charts**
- **Neptune Charts**
- **Saturn Charts**
- **Jupiter Charts**
- **Moon Charts**
- **Yoga Today - Hinduism**
- **Kundalini Yoga - What is Kundalini Yoga**
- **Eight Human Talents - Chakras**
- **Harness the Energies of Your Chakras - Great Sex**
- **Solar Plexus Chakra - Reclaiming Your Center - Opening Your Solar Plex...**
- **Yoga**
- **Yoga over Time**
- **Patanjali and the Yoga Sutras**



- **Raja Yoga: Mental and Spiritual Development**
- **Jnana Yoga: The Way to God Through Knowledge**
- **Bhakti Yoga: The Path to God Through Love**
- **Karma Yoga: The Way to God Through Work**
- **Yoga Today**
- \* **Past Life Regression**
- \* **Accurate Psychic Mediums**
- \* **Psychic Readings**
- \* **Psychic Advice Mediums**
- \* **Saturn: Your Responsibilities, Karma - Astrology**
- **Past Life Memory - I Was An English Housekeeper**
- **Past Life Memories - I Remember Living France**
- **Two Deaths Recalled - Past Life Memories**
- **Past Life Memories - I Remember Living in Egypt as Cleopatra**
- **Karma - What is Karma or Kamma in Buddhism**
- **What Is Karma? - About the Karmic Law of Cause & Effect**
- **Karma - Hinduism**

•Karma as the Ethical Center - Buddhism

•Owning Your Actions - Self-Esteem

•What Is Karma?

•How Does Karma Affect Me?

•Is My Family Affected?

•How Do I Balance?

•Pinpoint the Issue

•Exercise: Achieving Growth

•Karma Yoga

•Law of Cause and Effect

•Past Life Karma

•Karma Good

•Hinduism

•Basic Tenets of Hinduism

•What is Dharma?

•POLL: Does God Exist?

•Karma - Hinduism

- **What Is Karma? - Past Life Experience**
- **Karma - What is Karma or Kamma in Buddhism**
- **Owning Your Actions - Self-Esteem**
- **Central Concepts of Hinduism: Karma and Samsara - Hinduism**
- **Hinduism for Beginners**
- **Glossary of Hindu Terms**
- **Hindu Baby Name Finder**
- **Hindu Festivals Calendar 2012-2050**
- **Top 10 Hindu Deities**
- **Gods & Goddesses**
- **Gurus & Saints**
- **Scriptures & Epics**
- **Festivals & Holidays**
- **Temples & Societies**
- **Arts & Culture**
- **Matrimonial & Wedding**
- **Ayurveda & Healthcare**

- Yoga & Meditation
- Vedic Astrology
- hinduism
- dharma
- sacred hindu texts
- bhagavad-gita
- glossary of hindu terms
- What is Hinduism?
- Who is a Hindu?
- How is Hinduism Unique?
- When and Where did Hinduism Originate?
- What are the Basic Beliefs of Hinduism?
- What are the Main Hindu Scriptures?
- What are the Major Hindu Gods and Goddesses?
- How To Be an Ideal Hindu
- Hinduism
- Judaism Beliefs

- Christianity Beliefs
- Hindu Gods Ganesha
- Hindu
- The Vedas: World's Oldest Spiritual Teachings
- All About the Upanishads (Vedanta)
- The Itihasas or Histories: Ancient Hindu Scriptures
- Bhagavad-Gita
- Bhagavad Gita For Busy People
- Learn a Verse from the Bhagavad Gita
- The Mahabharata: Summary
- The Ramayana: Summary
- What is Dharma?
- What is Karma?
- What is Om?
- What is Namaste?
- The 5 Principles & 10 Commandments
- Common Myths About Hinduism

•Reincarnation, Heaven and Hell

•Brahman: The Concept of God

•The Hindu Concept of Time

•The Four Ages of Man

\*Lord Siva

\*Significance of Siva

\*The Trident and the Snakes

\*The Ganges

\*Siva and his family

\*Symbolism

\*Siva and His Titles

\*Siva and Tantra

\*Aspects of Lord Siva

\*Siva Murthy

\*Siva As Nataraja

\*Dakshinamurthy

\*Siva Pariwar

**\*Famous Saints of Saivism**

**\*Samkara and Shankara**

**\*Shankara, the destroyer**

**\*Siva and the NayanMars**

**\*Namo Naraayana**

**\*Significance of Narayana**

**\*Symbols of Vishnu**

**\*Garuda and Adishesha**

**\*The Ideal King and Ideal Man**

**\*Lord Krishna**

**\*Concept of Avatars**

**\*Matsya & Kurma**

**\*Varaha Avatar**

**\*Narashima Avatar**

**\*Vamana & Parusurama**

**\*Rama & Krishna**

**\*Buddha & Kalki**

**\*Mother of Universe**

**\*Devi: The Great Goddess**

**\*Devi, The Creator**

**\*Parvati, Durga & Sakthi**

**\*Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth**

**\*Saraswati, Vidya Devi**

**\*Beloved Gods**

**\*Ganesh**

**\*Skanda**

**\*Aiyappa**

**\*Anjaneya**

**•History and Antiquity**

**•Appar**

**•Lord Shiva in Literature**

**•Basava**

**•Basavanna**

**•Daskhinamurthy - the World Teacher**



•The Lias and Legends of Shiva

•Devotees of Lord Shiva

•Shaiva Festivals

•The Trinity

•How to Meditate?

•Kashmir Shaivism

•Kaula Tradition

•Lesser Known Aspects

•Shiva Lingam - Symbolism

•Manickavasagar

•The Nataraja

•The Nayanar Saints

•Secrets of Panchakshara

•Lingashtakam

•Saints of Saivism

•The Saiva Siddhanta

•Tirujnana Sambandhar

- Shakti Yoga
- The Meaning of Shamkara
- Saivism and Tantricism
- Shiva and Vishnu
- Siva Tattva
- Siva and his Snakes
- Sundaramurthy
- The Svetasvatara Upanishad
- Symbolism in Shaivism
- Tirumular
- The Trident
- Tripurantaka Legend
- Shiva and Rudra
- Vira Shaivism
- Who is Lord Shiva?
- How to Worship
- \*Siva Glory

**\*Siva Tatva**

**\*Siddhanta Philosophy**

**\*Philosophy of Symbols**

**\*Siva Tandava**

**\*Siva Sakthi**

**\*Tripura Rahasya**

**\*Siva Lilas**

**\*The Upanishads**

**•Aghora**

**•Vaishnavism**

**•Nath Siddhas**

**•Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma**

**•Aham Brahmasmi**

**•Ayam Atma Brahma**

**•Ekam Evadvitiam Brahma**

**•Tat Tvam Asi**

**•Prajnaman Brahman**

•Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya

•Mahavakyas

•Mahavidya Goddesses

•Theory Of Creation

•Hindu Gods

•Hindu Goddesses

•Shraadh

•Yajna

•Havan

•Gotra

•Aarti

•Agnihotra

•Devadasis

•Ishvara In Hinduism

•Devi

•Grihya Sutras

•Dvija

•Hiranyagarbha

•Brahman

•Cremation

•Puja

•Janmotsava

•Shradh

•Anteshti Kriya

•Homa

•Hindu Vrata

•Days of the Week

•Ahalya

•Kachwaha

•Jyotirlinga

•Brahmin Castes in India

•Panchangam

•Ashta Dikpalas

•Astomi

- Brahmaloka
- Sannyasi
- Samakara
- Hindu Sacred Places
- Origin of Hinduism
- Hindu Religious Texts
- Hindu religious leaders
- Marudeva
- Sarvesvara
- Lokas
- Papa
- Maharudra Swahaakaar Yagna
- Conch Shell
- Punarjanam
- Aghori
- Heaven
- Parting with money after sunset

•Shraavana

•Sashtanga

•Kshama

•Agrasya

•Sanskaras

•Libation

•Kerari

•Kusha

•Maharajas

•Chandrayana

•Bhagat

•Jiva

•Devarshis

•Months of Hindu Calendar

•Varna System in Ancient India

•Purohitas

•Hindu Rituals

- Pancharatra
- Gorakhnathis
- Citta
- Ramanandi Sampraday
- Omkaara
- Cult of Draupadi in South India
- Development of Hinduism
- Shaktism
- Places of Worship
- Mantra
- Hindu Iconography
- Teachings of Hinduism
- Kalpa Sutras
- Saura
- Goddess Tara in Hinduism
- Vaikhanasa
- Matangi System



•Basvi System

•Hypnotism

•Aghor Upasana

•Soundarya Siddhi

•Doorlav Tantra Siddhi

•Himalayer Siddha

•Himalayer Sadhak

•Importance of Diksha Sanskar

•Jagat Saar

•Importance of Guru

\*Kailasa Temple

\*To Heaven by Heaven

\*Spiritual friendship

\*Bodhisattva Vow

\*O night, o sweet

\*Potuit Decuit Ergo Fecit

\*Argala Stotra

**\*Mysticism and magic**

**\*Namavali**

**\*Chinnamasta's 108 names**

**\*Work as Temple Elephant**

**\*Psalm 19**

**\*Ayat al Kursi - the Verse of the Throne**

**\*Battle with the Angel**

**\*Love Her, Mind**

**\*Mount up with birds**

**\*Six-winged**

**\*God's Answer to Job**

**\*What would you like done with me?**

**\*Red Coral**

**\*Tere Ishq nachaiya**

**\*14 Maheshvara sutras**

**\*It is more than possible**

**\*Tell and still it is hidden**

**\*How to tell**

**\*Kun fa ya Kun!**

**\*Hafiz**

**\*St. Francis of Assisi**

**\*Brihadeeswarar Temple**

**\*Through the Pain**

**\*Varalakshmi Vratam**

**\*Mystic and mystification**

**\*Kumkum, Bindu and Sindur**

**\*Ravana's love**

**\*Struggle and Contemplation**

**\*Glory of Night**

**!Tantra Shastra**

**!Nadi Astrology**

**!Live Effects of Stars**

**!Tarot School**

**!Today's Fortune**

**|Ayushya Yoga**

**|Astro-Yogas**

**|Predictions by Vedic Astrology**

**|Jupiter in the house Uranus**

**|Totake (Remedies)**

**|Mysterious Death**

**|Use of Gem Stones**

**|Moon is Best Remedies**

**|Vedic Marriage**

**|Career by Rashi**

**|Diseases by rashi**

**|SIGNIFICANCE OF STARS**

**|Chalisa Chanting**

**|Sundar Kand**

**|Graha Mantra Chanting**

**|Meaning of Your Name**

**|Birth in Ashwini Nakshtra**

!Birth in Bharani Nakshtra

!Birth in Kritika Nakshtra

!Birth in Rohini Nakshtra

!Birth in Mrigshira Nakshtra

!Birth in Adra Nakshtra

!Birth in Punarvasu Nakshtra

!Birth in Pukshya Nakshtra

!Birth in Ashleka Nakshtra

!Birth in Magha Nakshtra

!Birth in Poorvaphalguni Nakshtra

!Birth in Uttraphalguni Nakshtra

!Birth in Hasta Nakshtra

!Birth in Chitra Nakshtra

!Birth in Swati Nakshtra

!Birth in Bishakha Nakshtra

!Birth in Anuradha Nakshtra

!Birth in Jyeshtha Nakshtra

**|Birth in Moola Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Poorvashadha Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Uttraashadha Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Shravan Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Dhanishtha Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Shatbhikha Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Poorvabhadrapada**

**|Birth in Uttrabhadrapada**

**|Birth in Revati Nakshtra**

**|Birth in Pieces Sign**

**|Birth in Aquarius Sign**

**|Birth in Capricorn Sign**

**|Birth in Sagittarius Sign**

**|Birth in Scorpio Sign**

**|Birth in Libra Sign**

**|Birth in Virgo Sign**

**|Birth in Leo Sign**

**|Birth in Cancer Sign**

**|Birth in Gemini Sign**

**|Birth in Taurus Sign**

**|Birth in Aries Sign**

**|Illness Removing**

**|How win a Lottery?**

**|Dreams in Astrology**

**|The Ritual Fire Offering**

**|Durga-Saptashati**

**|Yavacharya not a Greek Astrologer**

**|Codes of Rigveda**

**|Yoga Siddhi**

**|Meaning Astra & Astrology**

**|Shakti in Rigveda**

**|Cosmic Vibration**

**|Vedic Agni & Illa**

**|Under standing Tantric Mantras**

**!The Great Tantra Challenge**

**!SECRETS OF THE SAPPHIRE**

**!House to House**

**!The Houses and Signs**

**!Encycloepadia of Astrology**

**!Questions and Answers**

**!Lagna**

**!About Astrology**

**!Vedic astrology**

**!Grahas (planets)**

**!Rasis (signs)**

**!Bhavas (houses)**

**!Chakras (charts)**

**!Varga chakras (divisional charts)**

**!Nakshatras (constellations)**

**!Ayanamsa**

**!Dasa Systems**



**|Characteristics of Rasis**

**|Indications of Rasis**

**|Characteristics of Planets**

**|Planetary Dignities**

**|Planetary Relationships**

**|Lagnas (ascendants)**

**|Use of Special Lagnas**

**|Upagrahas (sub-planets)**

**|Vargas (divisional charts)**

**|Divisional Chart Significations**

**|Insights on Divisional Charts**

**|Using Divisional Charts**

**|Varga Grouping and Amsabala**

**|Significations of Houses**

**|30 Days Lesson of Astrology**

**|A Controversy**

**|Karakas (significators)**

!Arudhas (risen ones)

!Use of Arudha Lagna

!Use of Bhava Arudhas

!Meaning of Arudha

!Use of Graha Arudhas

!Graha Drishti

!Rasi Drishti

!Graha Drishti vs Rasi Drishti

!Argala (Intervention)

!Virodhargala (Obstruction)

!Use of Argala

!Yogas (special combinations)

!Ashtakavarga (eight-sourced strengths)

!Different Strengths

!Shadbala and Astakavarga Bala

!Sahas (sensitive points)

!Functional Nature

**|Baadhakas**

**|Analyzing Charts**

**|Marakas (Killers)**

**|Vimsottari dasa**

**|Vimsottari Dasa Variations**

**|Ashtottari dasa**

**|Kalachakra dasa**

**|Narayana dasa**

**|Lagna Kendradi Rasi dasa**

**|Sudasa**

**|Drigdasa**

**|Niryana Shoola Dasa**

**|Shoola dasa**

**|Sudarsana Chakra dasa**

**|Moola dasa**

**|Transits and natal references**

**|Transits and ashtakavargas**

!Timing with Sodhya Pindas

!Murthis (Forms/Idols)

!Rasi Gochara Vedha

!Taras (Stars)

!Special Nakshatras/Taras

!Sarvatobhadra Chakra

!Casting Annual Charts

!Casting Monthly Charts

!Casting Sixty-hour Charts

!Judgment of charts

!Compressed dasas

!Impact of birthtime error

!Re-interpreted Significations

!Using Birthcharts

!Prasna (horary astrology)

!Progressions (taught by Manu)

!Diseases Rectifications

**|Who can use Vedic Astrology ?**

**|Penumbral Eclipse**

**|Peregrine**

**|Periodical Lunation**

**|Phase. (Obs.)**

**|Phenomenon**

**|Philosophy**

**|Philosopher's Stone**

**|Barren and fruitful**

**|Benefic and Malefic**

**|Stars in first House**

**|Stars in second house**

**|Stars in third house**

**|Stars in fourth house**

**|Stars in fifth house**

**|Stars in sixth house**

**|Stars in seventh house**

**|Stars in earth house**

**|Stars in ninth house**

**|Stars in tenth house**

**|Stars in eleventh house**

**|Stars in twelfth house**

**|Sun in 12 Houses**

**|Moon 12 Signs**

**|Mars in 12 Signs**

**|Mercury in 12 Signs**

**|Jupiter in 12 Signs**

**|Venus in 12 Signs**

**|Saturn in 12 Signs**

**|Rahu in 12 signs**

**|Ketu in 12 signs**

**|Pluto in 12 signs**

**|Uranus in 12 signs**

**|Neptune in 12 signs.**

" Just Try and See

" Past Life

" Sadhana of the Sun

" Boost Your Brains

" Santaan Prapti Mangala Sadhana

" Narayan Kalp Sadhana

" Jwalamalini Sadhana

" Parad Ganpati Sadhana

" Sadhanas for Marriage

" Are Houses Haunted

" Paarad Ganpati Sadhana

" Akshay Paatra Sadhana

" Dharmaraaj Siddhi Sadhana

" Sadhana of Sun and Saturn

" Chhinmasta Sadhana

"Sadhana for Protection of Health

"Shree Siddheshwari Sadhana

**"Worship of Shiva (Shivaraatri)**

**"108 Divine names " from January**

**"Riddance from Evil Spirits**

**"Panchanguli Sadhana**

**"Aakarshan Sadhana**

**"Megha Saraswati Sadhana**

**"Kaamdev Rati Prayog**

**"Mahamrityunjay Sadhana**

**"Mahalakshmi Poojan"**

**"Lakshmi Sadhanas of great Rishis and Tantriks"**

**"How to celebrate Diwali"**

**"The Right Way to perform Sadhana"**

**"Diksha for affliction of MARS"**

**"Shraadh Pitra Santushti Sadhana"**

**"Guru Poornnima Sadhana"**

**"Gopal Prayog for Children"**

**"Solar Eclipse Sadhana"**



"Lunar Eclipse Sadhana"

"Uchhisht Ganpati Sadhana"

"Guru Worship "

"Sadhanas using Moti Shankh"

"Swadhishtthan Chakra Sadhana"

"Quick Acting Bheirav Sadhanas"

"Sadhana of planet Moon"

"Miraculous Hanuman Sadhanas"

"Sadhana to Rid Addiction"

"Planet Shukra (venus) Sadhana"

"Lama Holi Sadhnas"

"Planet Shani (saturn) Sadhana"

"Durga Sadhana"

"Vaidyanath Sadhana"

"Some Simple Yantra Sadhanas"

"Amazing Mantras for new Millenium"

"Sadhna to get Mental Peace"

**"Kanakdhara Sadhna"**

**"Another Mahakali Sadhna"**

**"Mahaganpati Sadhna"**

**"Kartikeya Sadhna"**

**"Sabar Lakshmi Sadhnas on Diwali"**

**"Simple Shree Yantra Sadhna"**

**"Sadhna to banish diseases"**

**" Face To Face With Divine Yogi "**

**" Enlightened Beauty "**

**" Gaayatri Sadhana "**

**" Gurutatva Sadhana "**

**" Garbhashth Cheitanya Sadhana "**

**" Priya Vallabha Kinnari Sadhana "**

**" Even You Can See Your Aura "**

**" Telepathy "**

**" Happy New Year "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Mahakali - The Saviour "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Bhuvaneshwari - Bestower of Absolute Power "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Baglamukhi - The Victory Giver "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Tara - The Provider "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Dhoomavati - The Terrifier "**

**" The Mahavidya Sadhanas : Kamala - The Wealth Giver "**

**" Jyeshthha Laxmi Sadhana "**

**" Anang Sadhana for Perfect Health & Vigour "**

**" Propitiating The Ancestors "**

**" Sadhana for Blissful Married Life "**

**" Kriya Yog Sadhana "**

**" Atma Chetna Sadhana "**

**"Treasured Eruditions of Ancient India"**

**" A Simple Practice To Get Rid Of Diseases "**

**"Some Simple Miraculous Charms"**

**"Mahakali Sadhna"**

**"Shree Yantra Diksha Sadhna"**

**Famous Tantra Books Written By Dr.Rupnathji(Dr.Rupak Nath) are given here as follows:-**

- 1. Matsya Sukt Tantra**
- 2. Kul Sukt Tantra**
- 3. Kaam Raj Tantra**
- 4. Shivagam Tantra**
- 5. Uddish Tantra**
- 6. Kuluddish Tantra**
- 7. Virbhadrodish Tantra**
- 8. Bhoot Damar Tantra**
- 9. Damar Tantra**
- 10. Yaksh Damar Tantra**
- 11. Kul Sharvashy Tantra**
- 12. Kalika Kul Sharvashy Tantra**
- 13. Kul Chooramani Tantra**
- 14. Divya Tantra**
- 15. Kul Saar Tantra**

16. Kulavarand Tantra

17. Kulamitr Tantra

18. Kulavati Tantra

19. Kali Kulavaan Tantra

20. Kul Prakash Tantra

21. Vashisht Tantra

22. Siddh Saraswat Tantra

23. Yogini Hriday Tantra

24. Karli Hriday Tantra

25. Matri Karno Tantra

26. Yogini Jaalpoorak Tantra

27. Lakshmi Kulavaran Tantra

28. Taaravaran Tantra

29. Chandra Pith Tantra

30. Meru Tantra

31. Chatu sati Tantra

32. Tatvya Bodh Tantra

33. Mahograh Tantra
34. Swachand Saar Sangrah Tantra
35. Taara Pradeep Tantra
36. Sanket Chandra Uday Tantra
37. Shastra Trish Tatvak Tantra
38. Lakshya Nirnay Tantra
39. Tripura Narva Tantra
40. Vishnu Dharmotar Tantra
41. Mantra Paran Tantra
42. Vaishnavamitr Tantra
43. Maan Solaahs Tantra
44. Pooja pradeep Tantra
45. Bhakti Manjari Tantra
46. Bhuvaneshwari Tantra
47. Parijaad Tantra
48. Prayogsaar Tantra
49. Kaamrat Tantra

50. Kriya Saar Tantra
51. Agam Deepika Tantra
52. Bhav Choodamani Tantra
53. Tantra Choodamani Tantra
54. Brihast Shrikram Tantra
55. Shrikram Shidant Shekar Tantra
56. Shidant Shekar Tantra
57. Ganeshavi Mashchani Tantra
58. Mantra Mookavali Tantra
59. Tatva Kaumadi Tantra
60. Tantra Kaumadi Tantra
61. Mantra Tantra Prakash Tantra
62. Ramacharan Chandrika Tantra
63. Sharada Tilak Tantra
64. Gyan Varn Tantra
65. Saar Samuchay Tantra
66. Kalp Droom Tantra

67. Gyan Maala Tantra

68. Pooras Charan Chandrika Tantra

69. Agamoktar Tantra

70. Tatv Saar Tantra

71. Saar Sangrah Tantra

72. Dev Prakashini Tantra

73. Tantranav Tantra

74. Karam deepika Tantra

75. Paara Rahasya Tantra

76. Shyama Rahasya Tantra

77. Tantra Ratna

78. Tantra Pradeep

79. Taara Vilas

80. Vishwa Matrika Tantra

81. Prapanch Saar Tantra

82. Tantra Saar

83. Ratnavali Tantra.



**\*Some Important Sanskrit Tantra books(Grantha) Written By  
Dr.Rupnathji(Dr.Rupak Nath) are also given below:-**

- 1. Kali Kitab**
- 2. Theth Karini Tantra**
- 3. Uttar Tantra**
- 4. Neel Tantra**
- 5. Veer Tantra**
- 6. Kumari Tantra**
- 7. Kali Tantra**
- 8. Narayani Tantra**
- 9. Tarani Tantra**
- 10. Bala Tantra**
- 11. Matrika Tantra**
- 12. Sant Kumar Tantra**
- 13. Samayachar Tantra**
- 14. Bhairav Tantra**
- 15. Bhairavi Tantra**

16. Tripura Tantra
17. Vamkishwar Tantra
18. Kutkuteshwar Tantra
19. Vishudh Deveshwar Tantra
20. Sammohan Tantra
21. Gopiniay Tantra
22. Brihaddautami Tantra
23. Bhoot Bhairav Tantra
24. Chamunda Tantra
25. Pingla Tantra
26. Parahi Tantra
27. Mund Mala Tantra
28. Yogini Tantra
29. Malini Vijay Tantra
30. Swachand Bhairav Tantra
31. Maha Tantra
32. Shakti Tantra

33. Chintamani Tantra
34. Unmat Bhairav Tantra
35. Trilok Saar Tantra
36. Vishwa Saar Tantra
37. Tantra Mrit
38. Maha Khetkarini Tantra
39. Baraviy Tantra
40. Todal Tantra
41. Malani Tantra
42. Lalita Tantra
43. Shri Shakti Tantra
44. Raj Rajeshwari Tantra
45. Maha Maheshwari Tantra
46. Gavakshy Tantra
47. Gandharv Tantra
48. Trilok Mohan Tantra
49. Hans Paar Maheshwar Tantra

**50. Hans Maheshwar Tantra**

**51. Kaamdhenu Tantra**

**52. Varn Vilas Tantra**

**53. Maya Tantra**

**54. Mantra Raj**

**55. Kuvichka Tantra**

**56. Vigyan Lalitka Tantra**

**57. Lingagam Tantra**

**58. Kalotarr Tantra**

**59. Brahm Yamal Tantra**

**60. Aadi Yamal Tantra**

**61. Rudra Yamal Tantra**

**62. Brihdhamal Tantra**

**63. Siddh Yamal Tantra**

**64. Kalp Sutrah Tantra.etc.**

# For other Important Books By Great Scholar Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji See other Websites.]

**Avadhuta Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji of India is a most divine Guru, possessing unique spiritual powers. He was, and still is, famous throughout India as an extraordinary saint. He always revelled in His own joy, identifying Himself with the entire universe. He is completely detached from all his actions and lived frugally. He is a divinely intoxicated yogi and is a born Siddha ('Perfect Master'). After wandering across the length and breadth of India on foot.**

**A Siddha Guru is a spiritual teacher, a master, whose identification with the supreme Self is uninterrupted. The unique and rare quality of a Siddha Guru is his or her capacity to awaken the spiritual energy, kundalini, in seekers through shaktipat.**

**Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji is a Siddha Guru who walked the path of yoga under the guidance of his Guru. Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji received the power and authority of the Siddha Yoga lineage from his guru before he passed away in 1985. He teaches the Siddhas' message that the experience of divine consciousness is attainable in this human body. Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji constantly points us back inside ourselves, where this state is both possible and accessible.**

**As a Siddha Guru, he carries out his mission of awakening seekers to their own potential for enlightenment by bestowing**

**shaktipat. Through his teachings and his writings and through Siddha Yoga teaching and learning events and study tools, he guides students on this mystical journey toward God, helping them move beyond their own limitations and reach the goal. Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji expresses a great love and reverence for children as the holders of our future and has written books and songs expressly for them.**

**His teachings are made available for seekers of all ages, around the world, through the work of the Rupnathji Foundation. In his Siddha Yoga Message for the year 1995, Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji describes the essence of her vision for all human beings:**

**Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji, one of the most revered Siddha Gurus of the modern era, is a janma siddha—one born with the full realization of his own divine nature. From an early age, Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji spontaneously manifested his mastery of atma jnana—knowledge of the Self.**

**Born in the North-East Indian state of Assam, Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji, as a young man, traveled on foot throughout India. As his reputation as an enlightened master and miraculous healer spread, crowds of seekers were drawn to his wisdom and blessings. Eventually, by the mid-1990s, he settled in the village of Cachar in the state of Assam. Out of honor and respect his devotees began to call him Siddha Rupnathji, a title that means 'the Magical Guru; the venerable one; the great one.' He always directed people to turn within and meditate.**

**Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji also undertook many philanthropic works. Over the next decade, he transformed the village by educating the villagers; feeding, clothing, and schooling the children; and providing for the building of roads and local facilities.**

**In 1996, Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji asked Swami Juktananda, one of his main disciples, who was later to become his successor, to settle nearby in Bikrampur Village. Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji is known as Baba, so the devotees began to affectionately refer to Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji as Yogi Baba, which is Hindi for 'Sadhu Baba.'**

**Maha Yogi Paramahansa Dr.Rupnathji's core teaching is:**

**The Heart is the hub of all sacred places. Go there and roam.**

**This foundational Siddhi Yoga teaching has guided generations of students on the Siddhi Yoga path.**

**In truth, the gift of life must always be recognized and never be taken for granted. Why is life so precious? In Siddha Yoga philosophy, we recognize that in this human life we have a rare opportunity. We can transform an ordinary perception of this universe into an extraordinary vision. To be on this planet and to behold the universe from the divine perspective is a sign of an illumined heart. To put this vision to best use in the best way possible is a human being's highest duty.**

**Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr.Rupak Nath) is a Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi since his birth. He is the master of ashta siddhis, radiant light of Yoga knowledge, salvator for mortal beings on earth and capable of giving them the divine experiences, master of masters, immortal. His birth was predicted thousands of years ago in Nadi Grantha."A Yogi is greater than an Ascetic, greater than an Empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, in all circumstances be a Yogi and to be a Yogi search for a Real Satguru by mercy of whom a soul engaging itself with sincere endeavor in making further progress being washed of all contaminations in due course of time, ultimately attains the supreme goal i.e. SALVATION."Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji(Dr.Rupak Nath)'s life is surrounded with**

numerous stories about miraculous deeds he has performed. There is no doubt that Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) is highly realized yogi who has acquired many Siddhis and has the miraculous powers on his disposal, which he used discriminately only for the propagation of Dharma. Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) commanded respect for yogis at every place he has visited, and his ways to make this happen is very unconventional, unpredictable and incredibly powerful. Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) is as alive God amongst people, who knows the past and future and who is able to bless and punish, both things which he frequently used to do. Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) is highly spiritual person, and for him there is no difference between mighty Kings and simple people, as well as between gold and stones. Since young age Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) has been famous for performance of different miracles and there exist lot of stories connected with his childhood, which is impossible to mention in this short space. The life of Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji (Dr. Rupak Nath) is full of so many different miracles he has performed, that it is impossible to mention all of them in this short article, for a separate book would be required to mention all of them.

Siddha Yogi Rupnathji has Vak siddhi meaning whatever he says has the power of turning into reality. Vak means speech or voice, so Vak Siddhi literally means accomplishing a pure ability to use words. Attaining mastery of it, Siddha Yogi Rupnathji gains the ability to make changes to the physical material universe. Vak siddhi depends upon pure intentions. Vak siddhi means whatever one speaks turn to be true. Yes, God only gives power to those who have pure intentions and the feelings of harmlessness to everyone. Practicing Satya will bring one naturally to Vak Siddhi. "The word is a force; it is the intent. That is why our



intention manifests through the word no matter what language we speak.” The vak siddhi gave Rupnathji the power to make whatever he say or think turn out to be true. In other words, Siddha Yogi Rupnathji got the power to accomplish things by mere thought. This is also known as psychic speech. Using ‘Saraswathi siddhi’ (the siddhi by which the essence of great scriptures becomes known to him) along with ‘Vak siddhi’ (the siddhi of superlative communication) Siddha Yogi Rupnathji can cast a strong impression in the minds of people as regards imparting knowledge and virtue to them. People who hear the words or read material written by the Siddha Yogi Rupnathji proficient in this siddhi become mesmerized and willfully compelled to follow his instructions or directions. Siddha Yogi Rupnathji is so impelled and charmed by the vivacity and clarity of the words that they immediately consent from within to abide by his advice. Knowledge and truth flow seamlessly and effortlessly from the mouth of Siddha Yogi Rupnathji like the clear waters of a free flowing river. There is great impact on people when he uses this siddhi. Using this siddhi, Siddha Yogi Rupnathji can turn a non-believer of God into a believer, a worldly man into one spiritually minded (if possible in the recipient's karma). With his words, he can turn an evil and dishonorable person into one who adopts the principles and tenets of ‘Dharma’ (righteousness). It is not possible for people to find fault or go against the teachings of such a Yogi, for his words are a reflection of ‘Saraswathi’ (The goddess of knowledge) and backed by the absolute truth of Brahman (Almighty). Siddha Yogi Rupnathji possesses the ability to bestow the eight siddhis and the [[nava nidhi]] (nine types of wealth).

He is the master of ashta siddhis, radiant light of Yoga knowledge, salvator for mortal beings on earth and capable of giving them the divine experiences, master of masters, immortal. His birth was predicted thousands of years ago in Nadi Grantha. Siddha Yogi Rupnathji has Vak siddhi meaning whatever he says

**has the power of turning into reality. Tantra Siddha Maha Yogi Shastrishree Rupnathji(Dr.Rupak Nath)'s life is surrounded with numerous stories about miraculous deeds he has performed.**

DR. RUPAK NATHJI (DR. RUPAK NATH)