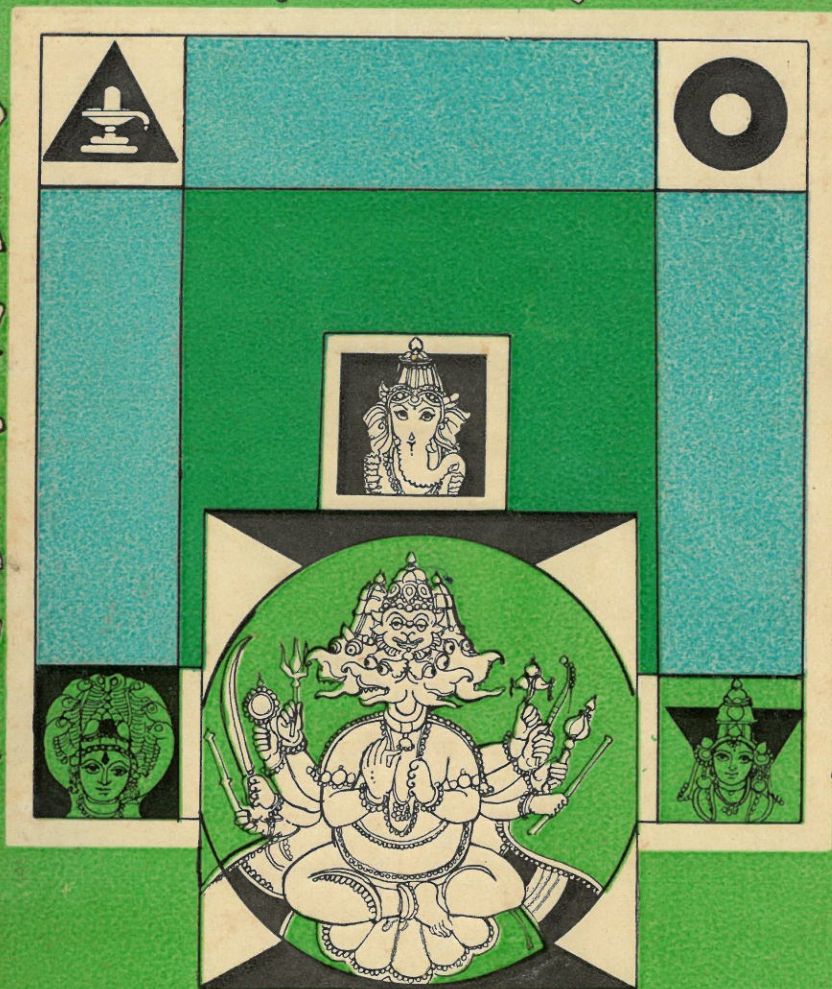




INDIAN ICONOGRAPHY

Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao

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Vidyalankara

Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao

Line drawings by the Author



IBH PRAKASHANA

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To

Dr. V. Parameshvara

with profound regards

PREFACE

This is a continuation of my previous book on the Icons and Images in Indian temples. The special interest of this book is attention to the 'Icono-graph' as basic to Indian Iconography. The canonical prescriptions have been examined here for their value to sculptors as well as to the worshippers.

The fifty illustrations contained in the Appendix have been taken from two old books (lithographs) compiled by the late Maharajah of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. One of them was kindly lent to me by my friend Prof. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao of the Mysore University and the other by the well-known sculptor Shri D. Vadiraj of Bangalore. I am grateful to both these art-enthusiasts for their help and courtesy.

S. K. Ramachandra Rao

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CHAPTER I

ICONS FOR WORSHIP

Polytheism is the characteristic feature of Hinduism. But no Hindu seriously believes in a multiplicity of Gods. He is aware that each of the many gods that he worships is merely an aspect of the One God, who is also the God of other religions. Sectarian strife is thus a non-issue with the Hindu population, which is divided into an almost infinite variety of sects, creeds, castes and cults. It is not merely a question of tolerance ; but a positive conviction that God is one, whatever the name or form in which He is conceived or invoked, underlies the religious life of a Hindu.

But the devotee revels in multiplying the images of the one God, who, he knows, is really beyond imagination and above all images. He invokes in a thousand names the One God whom speech cannot reach. He makes icons of the One God, who can never be adequately represented. And he houses in a temple the One God who envelops the entire universe and rises above it by 'ten inches'. The God that transacts with man intellectually and

emotionally is never mistaken for the God who is the abstract source of all existence, animate as well as inanimate.

The god that the devotee chooses to worship is an approach to the God who has need neither for worship, nor for the devotee. The god is worshipped for material gains, health, security, and happiness ; the God is also worshipped to cleanse the human constitution so that the light of God may shine through it. The latter worship, of course, is the highest form of worship. But it appeals but to a few ; the larger section of the population is content to seek from the gods this or that benefit.

When human beings are in need of gain or comfort, they invent gods according to their own needs, and temperaments. The group-mind then stylizes the forms as well as the rituals connected with these several gods who are but creatures of human need. This is the framework of polytheism. There are gods of diverse shapes, moods and modes of appearance ; they are specifically related to the variety of human needs.

The devotee knows that the image of a god is a mere artefact and toy, unless it is properly consecrated. And consecration involves the investment of the devotee's devotion and passion, and getting the devotee effectively related to the particular god invoked in the image. Rituals are naturally important for transforming an artefact into an

icon. The icon is meant to accommodate the rituals, so that human devotion can flower out in the light of God that is reflected through the icon.

Rituals are acts done by the devotee's body, speech and mind. The icon is seen and handled. But it is the first step. The icon must evolve into a verbal image, a concept. This is aided by descriptive hymns, mnemonic words strung into an articulated garland or repetition of power-laden epithets or god. God as a verbal concept (*mantra*) is subtler than the material icon (*murti*). But subtler still is the thought-complex (*yantra*) in which speech is transformed into essential ideas that ultimately merge in a 'point' (*bindu*), where God's presence is focussed.

Thus the icon by itself is incomplete ; it should be accompanied by its effective verbal counterpart (*mantra*) as well as the appropriate ideational representation (*yantra*). This is an important detail of Indian iconography that is often ignored by writers on the subject. The god suitable for worship is both iconic and graphic ; what binds the two aspects is the involvement of stylized articulation.

The craftsman whose job is to fashion icons to fulfil the needs of devotees must naturally be acquainted with the relevant *mantras* and *yantras*. But more importantly he must be familiar with the descriptive mantras, known as *dhyana-slokas*, which specify the posture, the mood, the number

of hands, the weapons, decorations and other formal details of the particular icon meant for worship. Many of these *mantras* are mnemonic in character. The training of the traditional sculptor necessarily included committing of these *dhyana-slokas* to memory, so that he would be ready to translate any stylized verbal image into an equally stylized icon in stone, metal or wood.

The ideal procedure is claimed to be this. When a sculptor is commissioned to fashion the icon of a particular deity for purposes of worship in a temple, he prepares himself elaborately and meticulously by rituals and regimen. He undertakes to give up the ordinary routine, eschew common company, and withdraw into a sort of serene isolation. He continuously contemplates on the *dhyana-sloka* of the deity (the image of which he is to fashion) so as to crystallize the image in his mind. He eats his food with this preoccupation, goes to sleep with this thought, and allows no distraction to interfere with this constant and intense contemplation. When the image in the mind is perfectly and enduringly formed, he takes up his tools and gets ready to translate this image into an icon. It is only then that the icon becomes worthy of worship.

The sculptor pours into his work not only the skills of the craft he has acquired, but his spiritual fervour in a sort of penance immediately before he

undertakes the work. During this period of preparation, he is so constantly absorbed in the descriptive hymn of the deity that he begins to see the deity alround him and all the time. He can vividly discern the form of the deity in the block of stone or wood that he has selected. He has only to free this form from the block by chopping off the unwanted and obscuring masses, and by chiselling the finer details. The form occurs to him as a revelation, and he is but an instrument in its hands to get itself materialized.

There are numerous texts in Sanskrit which incorporate such descriptive verses relating to several deities. The Tantrik manuals of Vajrayana Buddhist persuasion are especially replete with *dhyana-slokas*, for they are props for visualization during sessions of contemplation. They serve the purposes of the meditator as well as the icon-maker. And, true to the intent of the verses, the meditator or icon-maker tends oftentimes to identify himself with the form that he can readily and vividly project. There is a familiar saying that the devotee who is not a deity himself must never worship the deity ('na-sivo-bhutva Sivam pujayet'). This applies equally well to the icon-maker : unless he becomes one with the form of the deity, he can never fashion the form well enough.

This phenomenon explains why some icons exude a compelling power about them, even when

their aesthetic quality is not considerable. There are, on the contrary, icons which are very pretty are nevertheless spiritually flat. Icons acquire power to the extent their makers pour themselves into their handiwork. Texts insist that making of icons for worship must always follow a period of ritualistic preparation of the icon-maker as well as the material chosen for making the icon. Convention again insists that the icon-maker (*silpin*) must be ceremoniously honoured before the worship for the icon begins, for he is in a sense "the parent of the deity".

The custom of manufacturing icons for sale is also an old one. Even in the centuries before Christ, icons were being made as commercial propositions. Panini (5, 3, 96) mentions "prati-krti" in this sense; Patanjali, the great commentator on this remarkable grammarian, records that Mauryas (?) manufactured icons ('archa') only for procuring gold (*hiranya*) (*Mahabhashya*, 5, 3, 99). But the ancient grammarian also knew that all icons were not made for money (5, 3, 99). Some were not meant to be sold (*apanya*), but they served as a means of livelihood (*jivikarthe*). Some icons that were especially well-made and contained some power, were exhibited before the devotees, who made gifts to the owners of these icons. Sometimes, the priests carried such icons from door to

door, collecting fees from the householders for viewing them.

These were obviously small icons, possibly metallic ones, not designed for installation in a temple. The later expressions, used for these 'worshipful ones' (*archas*), viz. 'body' (*vapu, tanu, vigraha*) and 'form' (*rupa*) indicate that the icons were no longer regarded as just symbols or reflections (*pratima, bimba*), or representations (*pratika, pratikrti, sandrs'*), but as divinities in their own right. A mere look at them was believed to confer great benefits. The owners of such icons would also arrange to get copies made of them, of course for a consideration.

Mathura, which was situated on the trade routes of the country and was therefore a busy commercial metropolis, became the place where icon-makers also gathered. Traders and political agents, who belonged to different religious groups (Buddhists, Jains, the Bactrian *bhagavatas*, sun-worshippers, Saivas and the followers of folk cults) visited Mathura and dwelt there for protracted periods. Icon-makers carried on a flourishing business, catering to their religious needs. There was need to manufacture icons and ritualistic implements and utensils on mass basis.

Art, pressed for a commercial end, naturally departs from the traditional norm, and seeks to adapt to the prevalent fashion. The aesthetic qua-

lity also degenerates to an extent, when duplication becomes the frequent need. The craftsman involved in this enterprise can ill afford to devote his time for ritualistic preparations or for visualization of the *dhyana-sloka*; his motivations are different. The icons that he made thus were no longer 'spiritual products', but pieces conforming to a dull and stereotyped convention. A large number of icons that we find now in the country belong to this class of uninspired artefacts. And most of them are very faint and distant reflections of the relevant *dhyana-slokas*, because the acquaintance of the craftsman with the textual prescriptions was meagre or second-hand.

If the craftsman was clever, and the need of the patron unusual, the craftsman would evolve his own style of making an icon, entirely outside the framework of *dhyana-slokas*. And numerous minor divinities and folk-deities which became popular in course of time and in different parts of the country did not have *dhyana-slokas* any way; and the craftsman had to follow his own genius and inclination. The custom of making the icons altogether independent of the *dhyana-slokas* has continued to this day. The craftsmen do not feel the need to be guided by the canonical texts any more.

There is, however, a provision made in the texts that the icons should conform to the regional styles of dress and decoration (*Brihatsamhita*). It

is also laid down that the craftsman must bring into play his own taste and skill while making an icon, within the broad traditional framework. The *dhyana-sloka* specifies the number of hands and the nature of the weapons held in them; but it leaves the artist free to mould the hands, portray the weapons and invent the manner of the hands holding the weapons, in the way he chooses. The *dhyana-sloka* of a deity may indicate that the icon must be represented in a dancing posture; but it does specify what the precise posture should be like. The artist has to decide upon the postures depending on his own familiarity with dance-postures.

Simplistic stylization which obviated the necessity of *dhyana-slokas* is best illustrated in the images of Buddha and the Jina. While both Buddhist and Jaina icons conform in general to the traditional framework in which the classical deities were represented, there were some unique features about them. The icons of the Buddha and the Jinas are to be found only in two postures, sitting and standing. Seated icons of both persuasions are in the conventional lotus-posture (*padma-sana*). The Buddha images are shown either as engaged in contemplation (*dhyana*) or as teaching (or *chakra-pravartana* 'turning the wheel of dharma'), as offering comfort (*abhaya*), or as calling the earth below as witness for his own integrity



The Buddha in dhyana

(*bhumi-sparsa*). The position of the hands vary in these situations, while rest of the body remains rigidly alike. While standing, the Buddha is represented either as preaching (*vyakhyana*), or as on his begging round.

The images of Jinas are always shown as absorbed in contemplation (*dhyana*), whether seated (in *padmasana*) or standing in an upright posture known as *khadgasana* (or the position of a drawn sword). While seated, his hands are poised on his locked legs, the right palm over the left ; but while standing, his arms hang down on the sides.

The standing posture is commonly known as *kayotsarga*, or *pratima-yoga*, which expression actually refers to a practice undertaken by the Jain ascetic for heightening the rigour of his austerities (*tapo-vrddhi*) and for abandoning the effects of karma (*nirjarana*).

The images of Jinas are altogether nude (although some images of the white-robed sect are



Jina in Khadgasana



Tirthankara-a painting from
Sravanabelgola

shown wearing a strip of cloth covering the genitals), whereas the Buddha is invariably shown as wearing an upper cloth (*samghati*) in addition

to the normal under-robe. Neither the Buddha nor the Jina, however, is shown as wearing any ornaments whatever.

The differences among the Jina icons become important in view of the fact that twenty-four Jinas (*tirthankaras*) are recognized, the last of whom was Mahavira, contemporaneous with the Buddha. The simplistic stylization would represent all the



Parsvanatha-tirthankara

tirthankaras as exactly alike (with the exception of Parsvanatha, the twenty-third Jina, whose head is

shown as sheltered by a many-hooded serpent). But they are differentiated by the emblems appropriate to the Jinas (like bull for the first Jina, Vrshabhanatha, conch for the 22nd Nemi-natha, snake for the 23rd, Parsva-natha, and lion for the 24th, Mahavira), carved on the pedestal.

The Bahubali or Gommata images, which are usually huge monoliths (as the one in Sravana-belgola in Karnataka) are invariably free-standing, with no shelter over them. They are similar in posture to the standing Jina images, except of course for the emblems which are absent in the images of Gommata. On the other hand, the Gommata image is identified by the *madhavi*-creeper that gracefully entwines the legs, thighs and arms; ant-hills are also shown about the legs.

CHAPTER II

ICONO—GRAPHY

Icons are classified into four general categories : painted on canvas, paper, wall or pot (*chitraja*), moulded in clay or any other plastic material like sandal-paste and rice-flour (*lepaja*, *mrnmayi*, or *paishti*) ; cast in metal (*pakaja*, *lohaja*, *dhatuttha*,) ; and carved in stone, wood or precious stone (*sastrokirna* : *sailaja*, *daravi*, or *ratnaja*). Early icons were made in clay or carved in wood. And the images so prepared were covered by layers of paint, often bright and variegated. This was necessary to preserve the image for a length of time. Stone icons did not need this treatment, although instances of painted stone icons are not rare.

Painting is an early form of art that man mastered, and employed for religious ends. Besides the prehistoric cave-paintings, there are also the painted funerary jars, urns and pots which belong to a distant past. Iconographic elements may be traced even in these early paintings. But painted pots (*ghata*) and cloth or canvases (*pata*)

are worshipped in India from very early times. It is not strange, therefore, that drawing and painting are fundamental to iconography.

The icon (*pratima*) is actually described in the early texts as what is painted on a piece of cloth, on a wall, or on a vessel, clay or metallic ('pate, kudye, patre cha chitraja pratima smrta'). The expression was later extended to clay, stone or wooden icons, because painting (*lepa*) continued to be an important aspect of the icon installed for worship.

Several early texts on art and architecture (like *Vishnu-dharmottara*, *Chitra-lakshana* of Nagnajit which is available only in its Tibetan translation, *Silpa-ratna*, the 'pata-vidhana', section of *Arya-Manjusri-mula-kalpa* and *Hayasirsha-samhita*) contain detailed information about the painted icons. *Hayasirsha-samhita* even goes to the extent of insisting that Vishnu must be worshipped only in a painting on cloth or canvas ('patasthah pujaniyas tu devo Narayanah prabhuh'), for it is only in a painting that charm (*kanti*), ornaments (*bhushana*) and expressions (*bhava*) can vividly be portrayed (*sphutam*); Vishnu's presence in the painting is constant ('lepye chitre Harir nityam sannidhanam upaiti hi').

The *yantras* associated with icons, were always painted in bright colours, although this

custom was gradually given up. It survived only where Tantrik rituals were involved. The extensive use of colourful *mandalas* in the Sakta cults as well as in the Vajrayana aspect of Buddhism is well-known. When the Tantrik hold weakened, the *yantras* became mainly line-drawings, and as a rule were inscribed on metallic sheets or drawn on paper. The inner spaces of these diagrams were left unfilled so that the appropriate '*mantras*' (or seed-syllables, *bijaksharas*) could be written in them whenever desired.

Occasionally, the stone or metallic icon would be installed on such *yantras*, with the supposition that the icon would thus acquire greater power ; and the worship rituals would involve the articulation of the relevant *mantras*. The three (*pratima*, *yantra* and *mantra*) together constitute the theme of Indian iconography.

Iconography strictly means "drawing" or etching of an icon. It refers to a sculptural representation only by an extension of this meaning. The earlier practice was to draw in lines, sometimes filled with colours also, the image of the deity for purposes of meditation, adoration or worship. Before sculpture in stone or wood appeared, the practice was to draw in outline or sketch on the material. Paintings and drawings to serve an iconographic purpose were in the nature of natural evolutes.

There is a legend that Narayana, the great God, drew on earth (*Urvi*) with mango-juice the drawing of a charming feminine form, and infused life into it. Thus was the nymph 'Urvasi' born. Then Narayana composed texts on painting and iconography and handed them over to the celestial architect/sculptor Visvakarma. *Narada-silpa* classifies painting into 'those on the ground' (*bhaumika*), 'those on the walls' (murals, and frescoes, *bhitti*), and 'portraits' (*bhava-chitra*). The first two were stationary, while the last was meant to be portable.

Portraits and wall-paintings were involved in iconography, the former being regarded as 'mobile'



Dakshinamurthi (from Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum)

(*chala*) and the latter 'immobile' (*achala*). The wall-paintings were done in four stages. White-washing the surface of the wall (*dhauta*), mounting a coat of boiled rice on it (*ghattita*), drawing of the outline in charcoal (*lanchita*), and finally filling in the colours (*varna-ranjita*). The same procedure was followed when, instead of wall, cloth (*pata*) was employed as the medium. The manner in which portraits were prepared was slightly different. It was done in the following stages : initial outline drawing (*rekhapata*), modulating the light and shade, and finalising the sketch (*vastava*), arranging decorative details (*alankara*), and colouring (*varna*).

An old verse mentions that masters are attentive to drawing, experts to modulations, women to decorative details and common people to bright colours. The import of this verse is that outline sketches are regarded as possessing a relatively high artistic value. Differentiation of forms (*rupa-bheda*), accommodation of proportions (*pramana*), projection of feelings and aspects of beauty (*bhava-lavanya-yojana*), bringing out the resemblance (*sadrasya*) and putting the colours on (*varnika-bhanga*) are regarded as the 'six limbs' of drawing, according to Yashodhara's gloss on *Kama-sutra*. Among the six details that are here enumerated, it is the last one alone that makes

the sketch a painting ; the other five relate to drawing.



Shankaranarayana (from Padmanabhapuram Palace,
Trivandrum)

The importance of line-drawing is to be gleaned from numerous medieval treatises on painting like *Vishnu-dharmottara*, *Samarangana-sutra-dhara* (Bhoja), *Abhilashitartha-chintamani* (Somesvara), and *Hara-Vijaya* (Ratnakara). And the application of this outlook is to be found in the wall-paintings of Ajanta, Bagh, Badami,



Yoganarasimha (from Padmanabhapuram Palace,
Trivandrum)

Sittanavasal, Hampi Virupaksha temple, the Ane-gondi palace, Lepakshi Papanasa temple and Vardhamana temple, Tanjore Brihadisvara temple, Sravana-belogola Jaina-matha and Seebi-Nara-simha temple.

A strong iconographic style evolved from these wall-paintings in two principle divisions : the Jain style in Gujarat (principally in illustrated manuscripts) and the Tanjore style of painting

icons on pots and paper. It is the impetus provided by the Tanjore style that contributed to the iconographic development in Karnataka, especially under the patronage of the ruler of the erstwhile Mysore State, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (1794-1868). This king, who was himself an author of no mean merit, got many iconographic manuals written and also got them profusely illustrated.



Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, the author of the two texts *Sri-tattva-nidhi* is an encyclopaedic work in Sanskrit that he got compiled, and this work contains a profuse collection of iconographs. The

names of the artists who were responsible for such icono-graphic studies in the Mysore court have come down to us : Veeranna, Yellayya, Sundarayya, Tanjavur Kondayya, Nagunalli Narayappa and Alasingrayya.

Two of the icono-graphic collections by the king mentioned above are interesting in that they contain not only excellent drawings of the gods and goddesses but also portraits of well-known saints and pontiffs. The first of these books, *Devata-nama-kusuma-manjari*, (in two parts) written about 1859, contains 1,178 verses in Sanskrit, descriptive of several gods popularly worshipped in the South, and also minor deities (like Bali, Kartavirya, Manmatha and Vyasa) mentioned in older iconographic manuals.

The other book *Devata-dhyana-malika*, is a smaller one, containing only 236 verses in Sanskrit describing sixty icons. Both these books, the authorship of which is ascribed to the king himself, are profusely illustrated with remarkable line-drawings, slightly coloured. The artistic merit of the icono-graphs of the former book is decidedly superior, but the latter book contains some unusual representations of forgotten deities like Pratyangira, Simsumara, Nidra and Jvalajjihva. The icono-graphs are authoritative as they correctly accord in most cases with the classical descriptions contained in the manuals.

Illustrations which constitute the Appendix are reproduced from the block-prints of these two books.

CHAPTER III

THE FIVE GODS

Mention has already been made of polytheism being an essential characteristic of Hinduism, and thus being fundamental to Indian Iconography. Innumerable are the deities that receive worship from the Indian masses, from earliest of times to the present day. In fact, the number of deities that merit adoration is increasing over years. Besides the major gods and goddesses that have scriptural sanction and are of national status (like Vishnu, Siva, Ganesa, Durga, Hanuman), numerous heroes, saints and benefactors of regional significance are periodically accorded divine or semi-divine status; and people look upon them as incarnations or emanations with peculiarities of their own. Cultic and folk deities form the bulk of Indian polytheism.

Generally, however, five deities constitute the normal or core pantheon of Hinduism: Vishnu and Siva (both of whom have a Vedic background), Devi (the mother-goddess who goes back to a more remote past), Ganesha (the folk god of uni-

versal appeal in our country), and Surya (the solar divinity, whose cult has been popular all over the world at some time or other). The Sun (Surya) is often regarded as an aspect of Vishnu (Surya-narayana), and is represented by Fire (Agni), especially the sacrificial fire. Thus, in effect, there are four major divinities.

But the custom of pentadic worship (*panchopasana*) has gained currency in the country. It is difficult to ascertain when exactly this custom commenced, but we find it recommended in the *Puranas* and the *smṛti*-texts. Samkaracharya (early 7th cent.) is supposed to have been responsible for its prevalence. But we find nothing about it in any of his authentic works; and from what he says about worship, it appears unlikely that he encouraged this pentadic worship.

The custom is closely associated with the concept of monotheistic primacy of the deity of the devotee's choice (*ishtadevata*). The arrangement of the five gods on a common platform would signify their equal status. At the four corners and the centre of a square base (*vedi*) would be located the five deities. But a Saivite, for instance, would place Siva in the centre and the other four deities in the four corners. A Vaishnavite, on the other hand, would make Vishnu occupy the central position. There is thus a sectarian involvement in the arrangement of the five deities.



VISHNU



GANESA



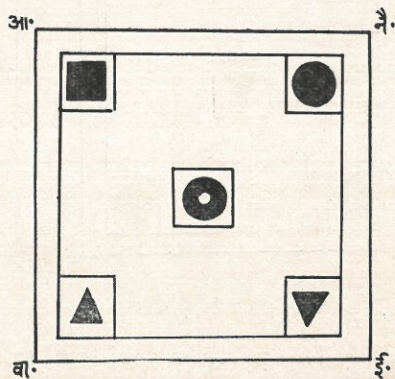
DEVI



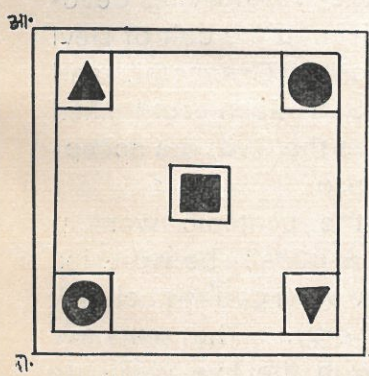
SURYA



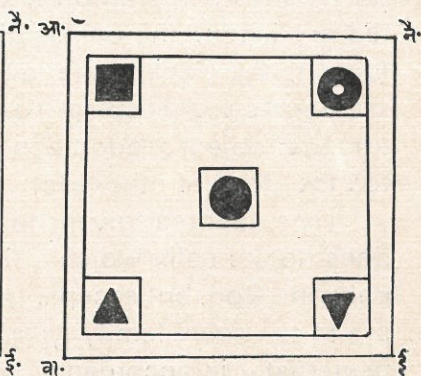
SIVA



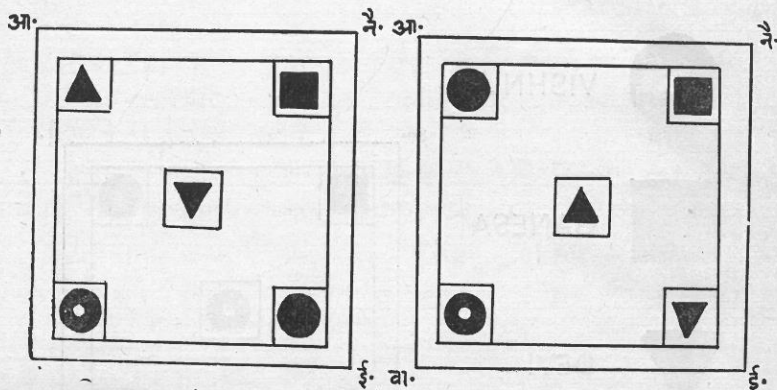
Vishnu - panchayatana



Ganesha - panchayatana



Surya - panchayatana



Devi - panchayatana

Shiva - panchayatana

The pre-supposition is that the central deity is in fact the only deity receiving worship, the other four being only aspects of this central deity. There is thus a monotheistic tendency even in the pentadic worship. There were, during the middle ages, five sects that had become important : the Saivites worshipping Siva, the Vaishnavites devoted to Vishnu, the Saktas given to the cult of Devi (Sakti), the Ganapatyas adoring Ganapathi, and the Sauras worshipping the Sun. Each sect looked upon its object of adoration as the God, but accepted the gods of other sects also.

The devotee given to the pentadic worship does not actually worship five gods ; he worships only one God, but accepts the other gods as belonging to the same family (*parivara*). The texts explain that, in accordance with the five elements that ultimately are the stuff of which the entire

universe is made, human beings are of five types : the earth type, the water type, the fire type, the air type, and the ether type. Although the elemental predominance is the distinguishing feature, no element can possibly do without the other. In due consideration of the elemental types ('pratyeka tattva-prachuryam vimrsya vidhi-purvakam'), the pentadic worship is instituted.

The association of the five elements with the five deities is variously given. However, the commonly accepted correspondances are : Ganapathi-earth ; Siva-water ; Devi-fire ; Surya-air ; and Vishnu-ether. There is another account where Siva corresponds to the earth element and Ganapati to water. They are represented by distinctive *yantras* in order ; square (*chaturasra*), crescent moon or hexagon (*shatkona*), triangle (*trikana*), circle (*vratta*) and dot (*bindu*).

The five deities are represented on the platform either by these geometrical designs, or by icons. More frequently, however, they are represented by five natural objects : Ganapati by a red stone (*rakta-prastara-khanda*), Siva by white quartz from rivers like Narmada (*bana-linga*), Devi by metallic stone (*dhatupatra* or *yantra*), Surya by crystal (*sphatika*), and Vishnu by ammonite from Gandaki river (*salagrama*).

The positions of the four deities with respect to the central deity are specified in the texts. The

deities being on the same platform, worship offered to the central (main) deity is shared by the other deities. Each deity has a *gayatri* formula of its own, and the sectarian worshipper will utter the *gayatri* of the central deity during worship.

1. Ganapati : 'Tat purushaya (or karataya)
vidmahe,
vakratundaya dhimahi,
tan no Dantih prachodayat'.
2. Siva : 'Tat purushaya vidmahe,
Mahadevaya dhimahi,
tan no Rudrah prachodayat'.
3. Devi : 'Tad ganga-gauchyaya vidmahe,
Girisutaya dhimahi,
tan no Gauri prachodayat'.
4. Surya : 'Tad bhaskaraya vidmahe,
Prabhakaraya dhimahi,
tan no Bhanuh prachodayat'.
5. Vishnu : 'Tat Keshavaya vidmahe
Narayanaya dhimahi
tan no Vishnuh prachodayat'.

The philosophical interpretation of the pentadic worship has been given in some texts. Ganapati, as the lord of the group of fourteen worlds, signifies the phenomenon of bondage, which obstructs the dawn of enlightenment (hence called Vighnesvara). Surya is the principle behind creation (from the root 'su' to produce). Vishnu

is responsible for the preservation of the created world, and Siva for its destruction. Devi is the principle of the power of wisdom (*jnana-sakti*) which liberates the devotee from phenomenal bondage. It is well-known that Ganapati is worshipped for worldly success, Surya for health, Vishnu for wealth, Siva for dispassion, and Devi for the liberating wisdom. Further, the five elements that are represented by the five deities are translated into the five constituents of the inner constitution of man : earth—ego (*ahamkara*), water—object awareness (*chitta*), fire—primary consciousness (*buddhi*), air—mind (*manas*), and ether—'the heart' (*hrdaya*, the seat of consciousness). Thus, this mode of worship is sought to be integrated into conceptual and symbolic framework.

Each of the five deities has many iconic forms in which it is worshipped. Examples are Rama, Krishna, Narasimha, Trivikrama and Hayagriva, (among the forms of Vishnu), Virabhadra, Bhairava, Dakshina-murti and Nataraja (among the forms of Siva), Kali, Tripura-sundari, Lakshmi, Mahishamardini and Kanya-Kumari (among the forms of Devi), Siddhi-Vinayaka, Heramba, Sakti-Ganapati and Haridra-Ganapati (among the forms of Ganapati).

Surya, however, does not appear in many forms. Usually he is represented as standing with

two hands holding lotus flowers, drawn in a chariot to which several horses are yoked and driven by Aruna ("the dawn"). He is often represented as the chief among the nine planets (*grahas*).



Surya (from Padmanabhapuram palace,
Trivandrum)

When the deity has iconic variants, there is usually a legend to justify the iconic details like the posture, number of hands, weapons and expressions. The *puranas*, some of which are sec-

tarian (like *Siva-purana* for Saivas, *Vishnu-purana* for Vaishnavas, *Markandeya-purana* for Saktas, *Mudgala-purana* for the Ganapatyas) contain these legends. And as part of the worship, these legendary accounts are read in order to crystallize the iconic form of the deity that is worshipped.

The pentadic worship is current among the followers of the Smṛti-texts (the Smartas), who owe allegiance to one or the other of the monastic institutions claiming to have been founded by the great Samkaracharya. The Vaishnavas or the Saktas, however, do not recognise this mode of worship, although they do honour and worship the other four deities (besides their own chosen deities viz. Vishnu or Devi), separately and on different occasions. Their daily worship is conducted exclusively to Vishnu or Devi.

Whether Saivas, or Vaishnavas, the Devi is invariably worshipped along with Siva or Vishnu. She becomes some form of Durga when associated with Siva, and of Lakshmi when associated with Vishnu. Ganapati is also commonly worshipped, though exclusive worshippers of Ganapati (the Ganapatyas) are extremely rare now. The sun is adored during the *sandhya*-ritual, but not in any iconic form except as one of the nine planets.

CHAPTER IV

ICONS FOR WORSHIP

Iconic differences are usually indicated by the posture (*bhangi*), the number of hands (*hasta*), weapons (*ayudha*), ornaments (*bhushana*), hand-gestures (*mudra*) and facial expressions (*bhava*). The postures can be seated, standing, reclining or mobile. Vishnu as Krishna is often shown as a child on all fours (*Bala-Krishna*), or as an infant lying on its back on a leaf of the banyan tree (*Vata-patra-sayin*). We find Ganapati also being represented as a child moving about on all fours, but rarely. No other deity is represented in this posture.

Seated and standing are common positions in which icons of all deities are represented. But there may be variations in these postures. While seated, the posture may be easy and relaxed (*Maharaja-lila*, e.g. Ganapati, and Para-vasudeva), alert lotus-like (*padmasana*, e.g. Mukambika, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Brahma, tirthankara and Buddha), riding an animal (*vahana*, e.g. Ganga on the alligator), in a Yogic stance (*yoga-patta*, e.g.

Yoga-Narasimha, Dakshinamurti and Sasta), or with one of the legs bent (*Kunchitapada*, e.g. Sadasiva, Samhara-Dakshinamurti, Lakshmi-Narayana, Lakshmi-Narasimha and Lalita).



Ganesa modelled after Bala-Krishna

While seated or standing, it is usual for the Vishnu and Siva images to be accompanied by their consorts in the same posture (Lakshmi and Parvati respectively). Rama with Sita, Siva with Gauri, Surya with Chhaya, Ganesa with Lakshmi, Narasimha with Lakshmi, Nataraja with Sivakami, are common examples. There are some gods who

have consorts on either side of them : Vishnu, for instance, with Bhu-devi (the goddess of earth) and Sri-devi (the goddess of wealth) ; Subramanya with Deva-Sena (personified army of gods) and Valli (a human spouse); Ganapati with Siddhi (success) and Buddhi (wisdom); and Krishna with Rukmini and Satyabhama.

If the god is alone, it is called 'kevala'. Several Vishnu and Siva icons answer to this descriptions :



Dakshinamurthy in the akunchita posture

Para-Vasudeva, Yoga-narasimha, Bala-Krishna, Venu-gopala, Kevala-Hayagriva, Srinivasa, Dhanyantari, Bhairava, Virabhadra, Bhikshatana,

Dhakshinamurti, Dattatreya, Sasta and Sarabhesvara. It is usual for Ganesa images to be represented alone, although in some forms (e.g. Sakti-Ganapati, Lakshmi-Ganapati and Uchchishta-Ganapati) he is shown with one, two or eight consorts. Bala-Subramanya is likewise a loner, but in some forms he has two consorts. Hanuman and Garuda are invariably single icons, and so is Sudarshana.

The standing posture involves the delineation of flexions or bends (*bhangi*). When the plumb-line passes through the navel (*nabhi*) from the tip of the crown (*sikhamani*) to a point between the two heels on the pedestal (*pitha*), it is 'sambhanga'; upright, symbolising perfect poise. This position is devoid of any bends, and the body is held erect, firm and even rigid. The images of the tirthankaras in the *kayotsarga* posture are excellent illustrations.

However, to heighten the aesthetic effect, bends are delicately introduced. If it is only a slight bend in both the upper and lower parts of the body, it is *abhanga*; if the bend is conspicuous and great it is *atibhanga*. If there are three bends noticeable (the plumb-line passes through one of the eye-pupils and descends to the middle of the chest, and then it passes through one side of the navel, right or left, and finally comes down to the heels) it is *tri-bhanga* (head, trunk and lower limbs). When the sweep of the curve in this posture is

imphasized ("like a tree caught in a storm"), it becomes *atibhanga*.

Feminine and dancing deities are shown in *abhanga* and *tribhanga* postures. The *atibhanga* tesa rare posture, especially in sculpture. But



Manjusri - a Vajrayana divinity

drawings of Vajrayana divinities in Tibet frequently employ this posture, the excessive flexion being suggestive of violent passion (*krodha*).

Vishnu is shown in the dance stance only as Krishna (Kaliya-Krishna, dancing on the hood of the dragon Kaliya, Navanita-Krishna, dancing with balls of butter in one hand or in both hands). A

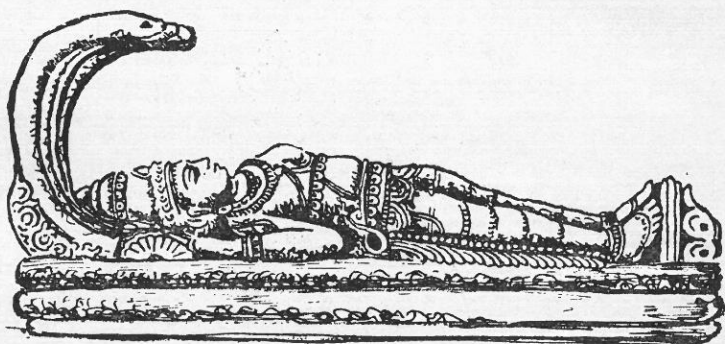
pillar in the temple atop the Tirumalai hills shows Narasimha dancing ; and this is altogether a rare depiction. Siva as Nataraja is a celebrated image.



An unusual pose of dancing
Narasimha on a pillar in the Tirumalai temple

But there are several variant postures in this, which are not so well known as the famous Tiruvalangadu icon. Ganapati and Sarasvati are also shown sometimes as dancing. Several Devis with Tantrik background, like Kali and Aparajita, are also shown in dancing postures, or in semidancing (*alidha*) postures.

Reclining is a posture that is almost exclusive to Vishnu. Ranganatha in Srirangam, Ananta-sayana in Trivandrum, and Seshasayana (terra-cotta in the 5th cent. temple at Bhitargaon and relief in stone from Deogarh, 6th cent.) are familiar examples.



Vishnu as Ranganatha

Rama is occasionally depicted in this posture, with Lakshmana sitting at his head and Hanuman standing at the feet as in the Vijayanagar panel. This panel may alternately be an illustration of the episode of Lakshmana fainting during the great war, and Rama deputing Hanuman to bring the *sanjivani* drug.

Mobile postures include Vishnu as Varaha rescuing the Earth, as Trivikrama measuring the upper regions, as Narasimha rushing out of the pillar to slay the demon, and as Venugopala playing the flute (in a standing posture) ; Siva as the conqueror

of the three realms (Tripurari), as the ascetic on his begging round (Bhikshatana), and as Virabhadra destroying Daksha's sacrifice ; and Devi as Durga setting out to kill the buffalo-demon, Mahisha, and as Tara shooting arrows.

For main worship, however, the seated and standing postures of the deities are preferred : it is usual, therefore, to find such postures in the sanctum of the temple (with some exceptions like Srirangam). Vishnu is usually represented as standing, and Sakti as seated, either on a seat (*pitha*) or on lion.

For seated figures, texts like *Ahimbudhnya-Samhita*, prescribe as many as eleven variant postures ; 'lotus' (*padma*), 'tortoise' (*kurma*), 'peacock' (*mayura*), 'cock' (*kukkuta*), 'lion' (*simha*), 'heroic' (*vira*), *svastika*, 'firm' (*bhadra*), 'free' (*mukta*), 'cowhead' (*go-mukha*), or in a tantrik diagram (*chakra*). Usually, however, the lotus-posture is employed by sculptors.

The seats on which the iconic representations are lodged also figure in various forms : circular (*padmasana*), rectangular (*simhasana*), triangular (*anantasana*), octagonal (*yogasana*) hexagonal (*vimalasana*) and so on. It is also customary to use detachable seats of different forms in different stages of the worship ritual like *simhasana* for bathing, *yogasana* for invocation, *anantasana* for

witnessing amusements, and *vimalasana* for receiving the offering made.

Speaking of the geometrical forms, we need to remember that all icons have their graphic representations (*yantras*) as well as verbalizations (*mantras*). During the worship, the *yantras* are prepared and employed, and *mantras* are chanted. The Devi is often worshipped in the 'Sri-chakra', either as a linear diagram (*rekha-yantra*) or as an aniconic image (*meru*). This is regarded as the most powerful of the *yantras*. It is also most intricate in its design, and the worship involves an elaborate ritual.

APPENDIX

(1) Fifty drawings (icono-graphs) have been reproduced from the two works already mentioned viz. Devata-nama-kusuma-manjari (DNKM) and Devata-dhyana-malika (DDM). Both the works (in Sanskrit) were authored by the celebrated monarch of Mysore, Krishnaraja-Wodeyar III (1794-1868), and block-printed in the Jagadamba-vilas litho-press of the Mysore Palace around 1859. The contents of the books have already been described.

The illustrations of divinities contained in the two books appear to be works of different artists, although the styles exhibit conformity to a general pattern. Drawings in the former book are, as mentioned, clearly superior in artistic quality, and are full page illustrations (unlike in the other book).

Material for iconic representations has been derived from various standard works like Bhavishyottara-purana, Lakshmi-vrata-kalpa, Devi-bhagavata, Sivarahasya, Sarada-puja-kalpa, Varaha-puja-kalpa, and Yadava-giri-mahatmya (mentioned in the former book). The author claims in a brief introductory passage in Kannada that he has gathered here the essential details of icono-graphic illustrations, after consulting all the puranas, itihisas and tantras; and that he has prepared the collection of iconic descriptions "for the benefit of the world" (lokopakarartham agi). There is no mention of the names of the artists who illustrated his work(sachitramagi).

Besides the well-known forms of the major divinities (Devi, Siva, Vishnu, Ganesa, Subrahmanya, Surya and the planets), river goddesses like Ganga and Kaveri, tree-spirits like Asvattha and Bilva, mountain-spirits, sacred weapons, thrones, the ocean, the guardians of the eight quarters, the celestial animals like kama-dhenu and Airavata, the seven sages and the 'long-lived ones' (Chira-jivis), the three great Acharyas and their prominent followers (like Vidyaranya and Raghavendra-swami), and saints contemporaneous with the author (the then pontiffs of Sringeri and Parakala-mutt) have also been treated in this work (DNKM).

The most interesting feature of these works is the fairly elaborate verbal descriptions of iconic versions, alongside faithful graphic delineations. It is obvious that the artists were not only conversant with traditional norms and styles in iconography, but were acquainted with textual injunctions regarding the poses, postures, weapons, number of arms and heads, situations, attendants and other details concerning individual icons. It is likely that the Agama experts and artists worked together in the production of these books.

The illustrations chosen here are representative of the iconographic art that evolved in South India, especially Tanjore, Trivandrum, Lepakshi, Hampi, Mysore. There are, however, regional variations and differences in decorative details.

1. GANAPATI



Ganapati, whose origin is undoubtedly folk, is a popular god all over the country. He is worshipped at the commencement of any enterprise, for warding off obstacles. He is also a guardian of villages.

His iconic representations are varied. As many as 51 forms are mentioned in the texts, but 16 of them are selected for worship. In Nepal, the five-headed Heramba, with 10 arms and riding a lion, is popular. For tantrik worship Sakti-Ganapati

(seated with a consort on his lap engaged in amorous embrace) is preferred.

The most popular representation, however, is the one shown here, seated in a comfortable posture (*maharajalila*), he is shown with four hands, carrying goad (*ankusa*), lasso (*pasa*), broken tusk (*danta*) and cake-bowl (*modaka-patra*). The elephantine head is prominent, with the trunk turned leftward, and ears broad and spread out. In the tantrik cults, the trunk is made to turn towards right and one of the hands or the trunk is made to carry a wine-jar (*kalasa*).

He is shown with one tusk, the other being broken and held in the right hand. The ears are winnow-like. The snake hangs on his body like the sacred-thread. One of the hands carries a lasso and the other a goad, both stylized.

He is always represented as being accompanied by a rat, which is his mount or emblem.

2. BRAHMA



One of the three popular gods of Hinduism (Vishnu and Siva being the other two), he is regarded as the creator of the world, and as the originator of the Vedic lore. He is the first of the wise sages, and the fount of righteousness. However, his worship has gone out of vogue, and temples to him in the entire country do not number more than ten !

His iconic representation as given in the texts is uniformly simple. Seated on a lotus (as he emerged from the navel-lotus of Vishnu), he has

four heads, representing the four Vedas, and four hands, carrying a rosary (*akshamala*), an ascetic's bowl (*kamandalu*), a sacrificial laddle (*sruk*) and a bow called *parivita*. In the accompanying icono-graph, however, he is shown carrying only the rosary and the water-jug ; the other two hands are in the assuring (*abhaya*) and boon-giving (*varada*) poses.

He is seen with a mythical bird, swan (*hamsa*), which is really a symbol of wisdom. The bird is described as his mount. In the painting here, there are two of these birds involved in the decorative framework.

3. MAHA-VISHNU



Vishnu ('the pervader') is the god of preservation and is identified with the Supreme Being. He is widely worshipped in the country, both in homes and in temples. There are numerous iconic representations of Vishnu including those of the ten celebrated incarnations (*avatars*).

Here he is shown in his 'para-vasudeva' aspect, abiding in his own glory, and sheltered by the seven-hooded serpent (*adishesha*), representing the twin principles of Time and Eternity. He carries in his hands the discus (*chakra*, symboli-

sing destruction) and conch (*samkha*, symbolizing creation). The other hands are in the assuring (*abhaya*) and boon-giving (*varada*) postures. In other iconic representations, however, these hands are made to carry the lotus (*padma*) and mace (*gada*), symbolizing the liberating wisdom and discipline, respectively.

In this aspect, Vishnu is shown always as seated comfortably (*lalitasana*). More usually, however, he is represented as seated on the coils of the serpent with the right leg hanging down.

4. LAKSHMI-NARAYANA



Vishnu along with the goddess of prosperity Lakshmi (or Sri) seated on his lap is Lakshmi-narayana. The two divinities, representing the twin principles of preservation (male) and plenty (female), are always together, and are inseparable.

His mount, Garuda, is also shown at his feet in a supplicant posture.

5. PARTHASARATHI



Vishnu in his role as Krishna the charioteer (*sarathi*) of Arjuna (Partha), the Pandava hero, is celebrated as the teacher of *Bhagavad gita*. This was a human incarnation of Vishnu, to secure success to the righteous Pandavas during the Mahabharata war. He is therefore represented with two arms only, one of them carrying the conch

(panchajanya), which is symbolic of the sacred exposition. The other hand is in the boon-giving (*varada*) posture, assuring the devotee that he will be protected.

The painting also shows Arjuna, holding the charioteer's whip (which should really be in the hands of Krishna) to show the supplicant's attitude. On the other side of Krishna is the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi, to suggest that the two-armed charioteer is in reality Vishnu.

The figures are accommodated within a chariot, to indicate the Mahabharata situation, in which the *Gita* was delivered.

6. HAYAGRIVA



Vishnu in his incarnation as the Horse-headed divinity (Haya-griva) is shown here with goddess Lakshmi seated on his lap.

The purpose of the incarnation was to kill the horse-headed demon, who was tormenting the worlds. But he became the patron-deity of knowledge in this incarnation, associated with the Dakshinamurti form of Siva. He is regarded as the personification of the Veda, engaged in recovering the lost Vedic lore. His mouth,

slightly open, is said to pour out the sacred sound *Om*. He is seated on the pure beams of the crescent moon, which suggests the elimination of darkness of ignorance (*avidya*).

His iconographic representation gives him, besides the usual weapons of Vishnu, viz., conch and discus, a rosary in the right hand, and book in the left. The right hand will also be in the teaching attitude (*vyakhyana-mudra*).

In sculptures, it is usual to show him alone and seated in the lotus posture. In the accompanying painting, however, he is accompanied by Lakshmi and seated on a throne, with the right leg hanging down.

7. VARAHA



Vishnu assumed the form of a terrible boar to destroy the demon Hiranyaksha, who had rolled the earth up and hid it under the deep sea. Vishnu, in this incarnation, dug up the Earth (Bhu) and restored it for mankind. He is shown in the early iconic representations in this act (Bhu-varaha). Once the earth was thus restored, he is benign and is engaged in bestowing prosperity.

The iconograph here represents Bhu-varaha,

8. KRISHNA AS GOPALA



Another incarnation of Vishnu, Krishna also is a popular god, worshipped all over the country. There are numerous temples to this god in every region and he is represented in several forms : as a baby on its back (Santana-krishna), as a child on all fours or dancing with a ball of butter in hand (Bala-krishna or Navanita-Krishna), as a boy killing

the dragon Kaliya (Kaliya-mardana), as a cowherd youth playing flute (Venu-gopala), as a teacher of Gita (Parthasarathi), and so on.

The most popular image is that of the flute-player surrounded by cows, cowherd boys and girls. Usually he is shown as having two arms only, both hands engaged in flute-playing. Occasionally, however, four hands are shown, two of them carrying conch and discus (to emphasize the incarnation idea of Vishnu).

In the illustration, Venu-gopala is shown with four arms, playing flute under a tree, leaning against a cow that is licking one of his feet. He is also called Govinda in this aspect. In sculptured representations, however, the tree and the cow are frequently omitted.

9. MADANA-GOPALA



This is a variant image of Krishna as Venugopala. The additional features here are the extra arms (ten in all) four of them carrying the weapons of Vishnu whose incarnation he is (conch, discus, lotus and mace), and four weapons peculiar to Manmatha (Madana, Eros), his son (the sugarcane bow, flower-arrows, a goad and a noose). In this composite form, he is known as Madana-gopala.

Here he is shown as entertaining the cowherd

10. RAMA



An incarnation of Vishnu, Rama is a popular deity, widely worshipped in the country both in houses and in temples. There are also community festivals with the worship of Rama as the central detail.

Rama is always represented as a human hero with two arms (although there are instances where four-armed Rama in the typical Vishnu style are to be found), holding a bow and an arrow. And invariably it is a group comprising of Rama, his spouse Sita, his brother Lakshmana, and their

famous attendant Hanuman. Sculptural representations of the group, especially in the sanctum of temples, are almost as a rule in the standing posture (with Hanuman occasionally kneeling down). It is only in paintings that they are seated.

Sometimes the painted group includes Rama's other brothers (Bharata and Satrughna) also, together with some sages (like Vasishtha) and generals of the monkey-army (like Jambavan, Angada and Sushena). The coronation scene (pattabhisheka) is a popular theme in the paintings of Rama.

11. LAKSHMI-NARASIMHA



The incarnation of Vishnu was assumed to kill Hiranyakasipu, the demon-king, and save his pious son Prahlada from the fury of the wicked father. The incarnation itself was appropriately ferocious. Many such iconic representations of Narasimha ('Man-Lion') are available. But the illustration here is of the benevolent (*saumya*) aspect, as he is accompanied by Lakshmi and as he assumes the *abhaya* and *varada* pastures of hands. Lakshmi is said to plead with the Lord to

have compassion for the devotees ; and the proximity of Lakshmi eliminates the ferocity that is natural to this incarnation.

He is also represented as seated on the coils of the seven-hooded serpent which spreads over his head like an umbrella ; Lakshmi will be seated on his lap.



12. VAMANA



This is another incarnation of Vishnu, assumed to suppress the troublesome glory of the righteous demon-king, Bali. He took the form of a young ascetic and begged of the monarch three strides of earth to build his retreat. When the boon was promised, he covered the entire earth with one stride, the entire sky with another, and when he had nowhere to put his foot for the third stride, the king offered his own head.

13. NARASIMHA



This is an unusual representation of Narasimha with five heads and ten hands. The hands carry sinister weapons like spear, cudgel, sword, mace, bow and the usual conch and discus. The general aspect is ferocious, although one of the hands is in the *dhyana* posture with a rosary tucked in.

The five heads as well as the crescent moon on top suggest the association of Narasimha image with that of Siva (who in his human aspect has five heads). The *dhyana-mantra* in fact mentions that here Narasimha is in the form of Rudra

(‘nrsimham Rudrarupinam’). But this is a composite figure of five forms of Narasimha ; Ugra-, Kruddha-, Vira-, Vilamba-, and Kopa-narasimhas. The Tantrik worship of Narasimha insists on the employment of five letters during all important ritual-sequences- ‘Om Um Om Na Mah’.

The five heads are named Narasimha, Pasupati, Bhutadhipati, Rudra and Khadga-ravana. The deity is worshipped to scare away goblins and fiends. The *dhyana-mantra* is ‘Om namas chanda-krodhya Rudraya turumurum bhuta-samaye tishtha, svaha’.

14. GANDA-BHERUNDA-NRSIMHA



A mythical animal (beast bird) known for its ferocity. It is usually represented as a double-headed bird (eagle or swan), as in the crest of the Mysore royal family. In sculpture, however, it occurs as having a human body shown in the act of rushing out, with two bird-heads, each picking up an elephant.

The background thought makes it a Saivite deity, either as belonging to the retinue of Siva

or as the mount of the goddess Vajresvari. But in the iconograph here, it is a composite form of Bherundesvara and Narasimha. In fact, the very form of Gandabherunda is in origin half-Siva and half-Vishnu. Siva, who assumed the Sarabha-form to vanquish the furious Narasimha form of Vishnu, was challenged by the Bherunda form of Vishnu ; during the combat, the two forms fused. It may be noted that the idea of Narasimha also involves the comprehension of Saivite and Vaishnavite elements.

The illustration reproduced here shows this composite aspect. In the main, it is Narasimha tearing open the bowels of the demon Hiranyakasipu. But there are eight heads, including the two-headed Sarabha (a form of Siva). The other heads are those of the horse, tiger, eagle (Garuda), monkey (Hanuman), boar and bear. To signify the bird-element, two wings are shown on either side. There are 32 hands, carrying terrible weapons, or engaged in holding the demon's body and tearing open his bowels.

15. MANMATHA



Also called Kama, he is the Indian Eros, the god of love. Son of Krishna, he is represented as riding a parrot, engaged in sending out darts of passion from his bow made out of a sugar-cane stalk. He has five arrows in his possession in the shape of five flowers : they represent five effects of passion ; drying up (*soshana*), deluding

(*mohana*), exciting (*sandipana*), burning (*tapana*) and intoxicating (*madana*).

His emblem is a flag with fish on it ; he is therefore called *Mina-ketana*. Sometimes, a swan serves as his mount. The legend makes him reduced to ashes by the anger of Siva when he tried to disturb his austerities so that he could fall in love with Parvati. Nevertheless he survived, only as body-less (*ananga*).

There is also a *gayatri* by which he is worshipped : "Kamadevaya vidmahe, Pushpabanaya dhimahi, tan no' nangah prachodayat". However, his iconic representation is rare ; and he is not counted among deities that receive wide-spread worship in the country.

16. MANMATHA



Another representation of Manmatha, but in a different stance. Here there is a more marked divinity about him, as he has eight arms and is seated under a celestial canopy. He is also more truly erotic here, with four damsels around him, happily yielding to his amorous play.

He is seated on a chariot drawn by four

birds: cuckoo, swan, parrot and stark. He holds in his free hands a lotus bud, a conch, a bunch of five flowers (for arrows) and a sugar-cane bow.

The four maidens are named Madhavi, Malati, Harinakshi and Madotkata.

His seed-syllable is *klim*.

17. SISUMARA



A rather unusual representation of Vishnu as a porpoise ('hog-fish', *sisuka*, *simsumara*, *sisumara*), a cetaceous mammal that characteristically plunges into the sea and leaps up. *Vishnu-purana* and *Bhagavata* describe this incarnation in the cosmic context, comprehending all that is on the earth, in the sea and in the heavens. In this incarnation, he supports the three worlds and accommodates all the gods and sages, planets and stars in his own body.

In the icono-graph, the upper half of the body

is the Vishnu : with conch and discus in two hands, the other two hands being in the *abhaya* and *varada* postures. The lower part of the body represents the porpoise, with segmented tail circling round the figure like an aura (*prabha* or *Kundala*). The segments represent the worlds strung together. And from the tail hang the nine planets that govern the destinies of the worlds and the beings in them.

This form of Vishnu is described as comprehending all the gods ('Vishnoh sarva-devata-mayam rupam'), and as representing the principle of time-space. The *dhyana-sloka* is :

'Namo Jyotirlokaya kalayanayananimisham
pataye mahapurushaya abhidhimahi'.

18. SUDARSANA



A personification of Vishnu's weapon, discus, he is worshipped in his own right as a divinity. Early iconic representation was as an 'ayudha-purusha' (weapon-deity). The discus has an independent status in the worship of Vishnu : it can by itself represent Vishnu. And it is usual for the iconic discus to contain on its obverse a figure of Narasimha (either in his ferocious aspect or in the *yoga*-posture). Hence the composite deity : Sudarsana-Narasimha. Narasimha here, will, however, carry discus in each of his four hands.

The human representation of Sudarsana involves a posture of movement (rushing out with a spear in hand), the head encircled by flames, and sixteen arms carrying war-weapons. The conch and discus will of course be prominent, to indicate the deity's Vaishnava affiliation.

An important detail would be the accommodation of the deity within a circle of a thousand flames and within two interlaced triangles. This is known as *Sudarsana-yantra*.

19. DHANVANTARI



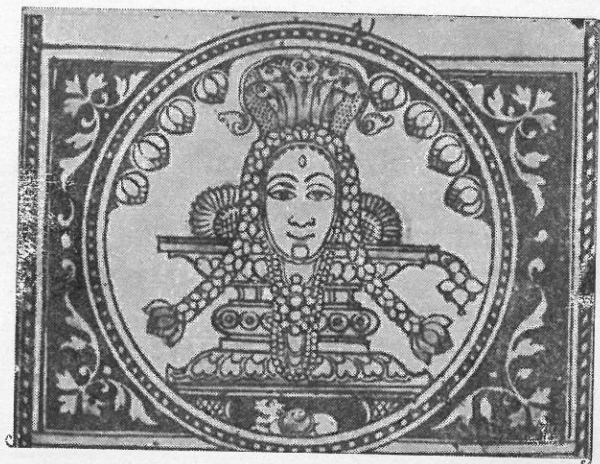
The patron-god of physicians and surgeons in India, he was regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu. His origin is in legend associated with the churning of the ocean by gods and demons: Dhanvantari emerged with a pot of ambrosia (*amṛta*) in his hand, to make the gods immortal and mankind free from diseases and sorrows. He seems to have

been in fact a historical personage, having learnt medicine from Kasiraja-Divodasa, and taught it to several sages of yore, including the famous Susruta.

As an incarnation of Vishnu, he is represented as having a dark-hued but lustrous body, as being four-armed, carrying besides the conch and discus (the usual emblems of Vishnu), a pot of ambrosia (signifying medicine) and a leech (*jaluka*, for blood-letting, signifying surgery). He is seated in the lotus-posture.

In the Tantrik lore his worship is included in the context of 'death-defying' (*mrtyun-jaya*) practices. His *mantra* is: 'Om namo bhagavate Dhanvantaraye amrta-kalasa-hastaya sarvamaya-vinasaya triloka-nathaya Vishnave svaha'.

20. SIVALINGA

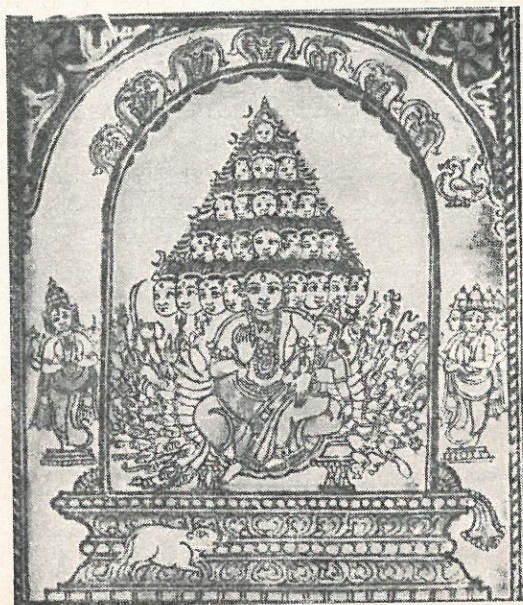


Siva is worshipped invariably in the form of an aniconic *linga*, which is a composite structure consisting of the upper erect stump (the *linga* proper ; signifying the male or Siva aspect), a spread-out container for it (called *yon*i or Gauripatta ; the female or Vishnu aspect), and a pedestal underneath (*pitha*, the neuter or Brahma aspect). Sometimes a human face is carved on the upper part of the *linga* ; more frequently a metal-mask in the form of a face covers this part. It is then called *mukha-linga*. It is also surmounted by the

stylized serpent-hoods, again a metal fixture, not structurally involved in the *linga*.

If the *linga* is the object of regular worship in the sanctum, there will be in the temples a processional image (in human form, and in metal) for occasional employment. In houses, however, small *lingas*, usually pebbles from the Narmada river-bed (called *bana-lingas*), are worshipped.

21. LINGODBHAVA



Siva's emblem is usually the aniconic *linga* ; but the myth relates that Siva emerged out of the *linga* to convince Brahma and Vishnu about his greatness. Brahma and Vishnu undertook to measure the extent of the *linga*. Brahma mounted the swan and flew in the sky to see the top of the *linga*, while Vishnu assumed the form of a boar

and dug into the earth to arrive at the base of the *linga*. They could not, however, arrive at the two ends of the *linga* which was in fact immeasurably huge. But Brahma lied that he had seen the top of the *linga*, and was cursed that he would miss the adoration of the people. Vishnu was rewarded for his honest confession of his inability by promise of continuous worship.

This story is the background for the *lingodbhava* image. The immensity of the *linga* and the appearance of Siva in it in all his glory (with multiple heads and myriad arms) dominate the iconograph. To the left are Brahma and his mount (swan), flying towards the top ; and to the right are Vishnu, and his incarnation (boar) digging into the bottom. Both Brahma and Vishnu are in the posture of supplication, thus affirming the superiority of Siva. The icono-graph has an obvious sectarian involvement.

22. SIVA FAMILY



Although Siva is almost invariably worshipped in the aniconic *linga*, his many human sportive forms (*lila-murtis*) receive adoration. One of the popular among these forms is the Siva group on mount Kailas, his home. Siva and his spouse Parvati were the lord of the mountain (Girisa) and

the offspring of the mountain (Girija) respectively. Here they are represented in this context.

They are accompanied by Ganesa (on the right) and Subrahmanya (on the left), who are regarded as the children of Siva and Parvati although their origin really was independent and folk. They have also assumed the roles of attendants (parsva-devatas). Here Siva's mount, the bull (Nandi), is represented at his feet.

23. HARA—GAURI



This is a very popular form of Siva, in his aspect of accommodating the male and female principles in an iconic unity. It is also called 'Ardha-nari' ('half-female') or 'Umardha' (half-Uma), or Umesa (Uma and Isa). The right half of the human representation is that of Siva with his characteristic weapon, trident (trisula) and the left

half is that of his spouse Parvati (or Gauri) with her emblem, the lotus. The distinction between them is brought out by several other details such as the ornaments, head-dress, garments, facial expressions and the bodily bends.

There seems to have been a tantrik cult around this form of Siva. The one-lettered *mantra* used in the magical rites to invoke this deity is both composite and complex : 'rkshmryaum'. The cult appears to have been prevalent as early as the second century A.D. It is said that the Greek sculptors of the Gandhara conceived of the iconic form, and that the Gupta sculptors developed it. But there are references to this form in *Brhatsamhita* and elaborate accounts in *Matsya* and *Skanda-Puranas*.

24. DAKSHINA-MURTI



A popular form of Siva in his iconic aspect, Dakshina-murti is worshipped as the lord of wisdom, and bestower of intelligence (*medha*). This icon has numerous variant forms, but the general posture is that of an ascetic in meditation seated under the sacred banyan tree (*vata*). It is usual to represent him as a teacher (with one of the hands in the gesture of exposition or *vyakhyana-mudra* and another hand carrying a

book), with sages as students around him (here Suka on his right and Vyasa to his left).

He is also an ascetic (*yogi*), and this is indicated by the rosary (akshamala) that he carries in one hand and the yoga-band (*yoga-patta*) which secures the crossed position of his legs. The other of the four hands carries the musical instrument Vina, to signify that he is the patron-deity of fine arts. Siva as the dancer (Nata-rajā) is a well-known form. And in all his forms he generally carries a little hand-drum (*damaru*).

His hair is matted, true to the ascetic ideal, and his gaze is withdrawn in deep contemplation ; he wears the tiger-skin as his lion-cloth ; serpents serve as ornaments for him. Sometimes he is represented in *Virasana*, with one of the legs hanging down and trampling on the demon of ignorance and delusion (apasmara-purusha). His mantra is : Om Aim namah Klim Sivaya Svaha.

25. HARI-HARA



Also called Sankara-Narayana, this is a syncretic form of Siva and Vishnu. It represents the fusion of sectarian interests. Several texts like *Hari-Vamsa*, *Matsya-Purana*, *Bhagavata* and *Naradiya-Purana* provide legends which explain the occasion for this composite form ; Vishnu had assumed a female form when Siva, the male, was

enchanted ; the union of the two produced this form.

There appears to have been a Hari-Hara cult prevalent in the country during the middle ages ; and iconographic specifications were spelt out during the period. The right half of the human form shows characteristic features of Siva (Hara), like matted locks of hair, (*jata*), third eye, serpent earring (*sarpa-kundala*), axe or trident, fair complexion, tiger-skin for garment, and garland of skulls, while the left half, representing Vishnu will have a crown (*kirita-mukuta*), leaf-ear-ring (*patra-kundala*) or mythical dragon ear-ring (*makara-kundala*), yellow silken garment (*pitambara*), garland of flowers, conch or discus, and dark complexion.

It is usual for two of the four hands to be in the *abhaya* (Siva-half) and *varada* (Vishnu-half) postures. However, the iconograph reproduced here shows all the four hands carrying the characteristic weapons of the two gods.

26. BHAIRAVA



A sportive form of Siva as 'terrible', this god is also considered as Siva's attendant (*kimkara*). He is undoubtedly folk in origin, and is widely worshipped in villages all over the country. Even the texts speak of many forms of Bhairava, all forms representing the tribal fury and vengeance (Ruru-, Chanda-, Krodha-, Unmatta-, Kapali-,

Bhishana-, and Samhara-Bhairavas). The form that has been stylized by Indian sculptors, however, is that of Kapali-Bhairava, also called Kala-Bhairava.

The illustration shows this form. Entirely nude, he has matted hair in long strands, and has a human skull (*kapala*) in hand with which he begs (he is thus called *bhikshatana-murti*). He holds in his hands the typical emblems of Siva (trident and hand-drum), and wears serpent-ornaments. The dog that accompanies him symbolizes Death or time (*kala*), but betrays the tribal association of the divinity.

He is also regarded as 'the guardian of the place' (*kshetrapala*), or the great protector of the tribe (*maha-sastr*). He is frequently worshipped in tantric cults, especially by alchemists (e. g. Svarnakarshana-bhairava).

27. SARABHA



A mythical animal, described as a terrible lion (*mahasimha*), dwelling on mountains, and having eight legs. Its eyes are always turned up and four legs in front are raised. It is said to kill the lions, (*Mahabharata*, 12, 117, 12), and therefore called the 'great beast' (*mahamrga*).

Siva is represented in this form (Sarabhesvara)

to represent a sectarian detail. When Vishnu as Narasimha (man-lion) battled with Hiranyakasipu, his anger mounted so high that it did not come down even after the slaughter of the demon. He began destroying the worlds in a fit of uncontrollable fury. It was in this crisis that the frightened gods persuaded Siva to assume this form so that Narasimha could be vanquished.

The form is both unique and terrible. The main detail is the lion's body with eight legs; but the body is crowned with a human torso with thirty-two hands carrying various weapons of warfare ; and the torso is surmounted by two lion-heads with three eyes, represented as flaming. The form also has two powerful wings (sarabha-saluva), thus representing a dual character (*beast-bird*). Sometimes, two tails are drawn.

The mantra is : Om namo ashtapadaya sahasrabahave dvisirase trinetraya dvipakshaya agnivar-naya m r g a-vihangarupaya vira-Sarabhesvaraya Om'.

28. 29. VIRABHADRA



A form of Siva, (also regarded as an attendant of Siva) assumed for destroying the sacrifice of Daksha. The legend has it that Daksha-prajapati, whose daughter Parvati (Dakshayani) married Siva, slighted Siva and ignored Parvati when she came uninvited to attend a sacrifice that he once performed. She felt humiliated and immolated herself in the sacrificial fire. Siva grew furious at this and assumed this terrible form (or sent his



fury-born son or attendant) and destroyed Daksha's sacrifice.

In iconography, he is represented as having numerous hands carrying terrible weapons, wearing ornaments of snakes, matted hair tied up in a high knot, donning the tiger's skin as loin-cloth, a garland of severed heads hanging round the neck, the three eyes in fury, and the bared fangs shown in the corners of the mouth. He flourishes a flat sword in his right hand, and is always seen in the 'rushing out' (*yanaka*) posture.

Sometimes he is represented as having ten heads, with flames rising around the heads. The figure of Daksha, in the posture of supplication is also shown near him. Sometimes his spouse Bhadra-Kali also is shown.

The *mantra* of Virabhadra is : 'Om haim Virabhadraya-atikruraya Rudrakopa-sambhavaya sarva-dushta-nibarhanaya Hum Phat svaha'.

30. SARASVATI



A very popular form of Sakti, worshipped all over the country, especially as the patron-deity of all learning and fine arts, her antiquity goes back to the Vedic hymns. She is there the goddess of the rivers as well as the goddess of speech. Her iconographic delineation is widespread,

although there are few temples solely dedicated to her. Although she is conventionally the spouse of Brahma, she is always adored as an independent divinity.

She is represented as a youthful woman with four arms, playing on Veena with two of them, and carrying a book and a rosary (or a noose, or a lotus-bud) in the other two hands. In sculpture, she assumes a lotus-posture, holds a pot of ambrosia in one of the hands and assumes a teaching gesture (*vyakhyana-mudra*) with another. In paintings, she is often represented as sitting with one of the legs dangling. Her mount is a swan or a peacock, which is usually shown near her.

There is a tantrik version of Sarasvati (*Sarada*) with different emblems. *Dharana-*, *Nakuli-*, *Bala-*, and *Para-Sarasvatis* are the popular tantrik forms. The mantra is 'Aim Klim Sauh Sauh Klim Aim'.

31. GAYATRI



A variant form of Sarasvati, but always regarded as an independent deity of Vedic learning, Gayatri is actually one of the Vedic metres, and has conventionally come to signify one of the hymns in that metre (*Rgveda*). The expression in the Vedic context refers to the man who recites this hymn. And the divinity has solar associations (Savitri).

It is uncertain when the idea of this feminine deity emerged. But she is considered as the 'mother of the Veda' (*Veda-mata*), probably suggesting that the Gayatri-hymn contains the seed of the entire Vedic literature.

Whatever the origin, the iconographic details have been fairly stylized. The figure accommodates the main characteristics of the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. She has four additional heads (standing for Brahma whose spouse she is regarded as, and signifying the four Vedas) and ten arms carrying the chief emblems of the three gods (conch and discus ; lotus and book ; battleaxe and skull-bowl) and of Sarasvati (noose and whip) ; the remaining two hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* gestures.

Lakshmi and Sarasvati are also shown in her company.

32. LAKSHMI



Conventionally regarded as the spouse of Vishnu, Lakshmi is the most celebrated goddess, being the patron-deity of wealth and prosperity. Her worship is universal in the country. Undoubtedly of Vedic origin, she was worshipped widely even during the early Buddhist period (*Sirima-devata*). All the sects in India have adapted this divinity.

Her iconographic representation also is ancient; we find specimens even in the Indus valley remains. She has all along been associated with the lotus flower (*kamala, padma*) ; she is seated on it, she holds the flowers in her hands, and she wears the garland of these flowers. She is in fact named after this flower.

Her image is fairly uniformly stylized and has eight variant forms. She is of charming appearance, seated on a completely opened lotus, with four arms, carrying lotus buds in two of them, the other two being in the *abhaya* and *varada* postures. She is richly bejewelled and elegantly decorated. She is in fact the goddess of beauty and charm.

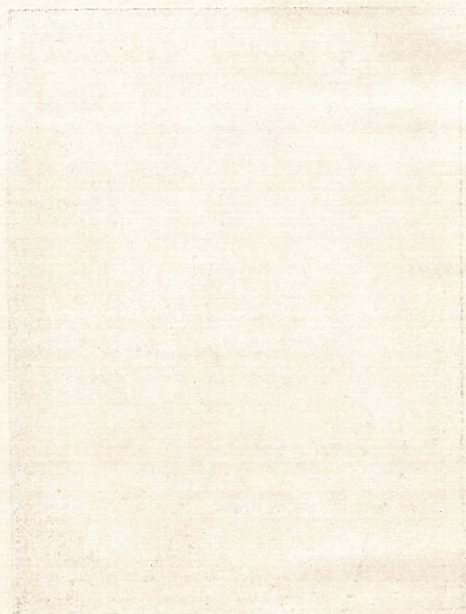
She is worshipped for domestic felicity and worldly prosperity. Her *Mantra* is: 'Om Srim Klim Mahalakshmi ehyehi sarva-saubhagyam me dehi svaha'.

33. MAHALAKSHMI



Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, occurs in eight forms (*ashta-lakshmi*), although iconographic variations are few. Mahalakshmi, however, is essentially a tantrik deity with only a distant association with Vishnu, her conventional consort. She is a *sakti*, having a folk background and tribal involvements. She is represented with a sword

in the right hand and a shield in the left ; her two other hands carry conch and discus (again weapons of warfare, and emblems of Vishnu) or lotus flowers (emphasizing her Lakshmi aspect).



34. DURGA



The most celebrated among goddesses, she has had her parallels all over the world. The ancient iconic and relief representations of the lion-riding goddess engaged in battle have been found in different parts of the world. In India, her worship dates back to a very distant past.

She is worshipped in the country in numerous

forms, with regional stylistic variations and tribal backgrounds. She is said to be the source from which all other male and female divinities emanate ; and she is thus called *Amma* (*ambika*), the Mother.



35. CHAMUNDA



A variant form of Durga, in her aspect of the destroyer of the demon Mahisha ('buffalo'); and so called 'Mahisha-Mardini'. The legends of her conquests over demons are given in *Devi-Bhagavata* and other *puranas*. She succeeded where all the other gods failed; she is a composite form of



Brahma, Vishnu and Siva ; and carries the weapons of all the gods.

She is usually depicted as eight-armed, riding on a lion, which attacks the buffalo-demon (Mahisha-asura) ; a trident or spear in the main right hand of the deity will be piercing the beast-demon. Her head is surrounded by tongues of flaming fire, signifying her destructive and purifying power. Her forehead is adorned by the third eye, which also represents fire and wisdom.

To indicate that she is the collective power of all the gods, sometimes numerous hands are shown. Frequently, she is seen as standing on a buffalo-

head, without her mount (the lion) being shown. In this form she is known as 'Vana-durga' (mahishottamanga-samstha).

There are benign (*satvik*) and ferocious (*rajasa*) forms of this goddess; and the worship also takes many forms.

36. RAJARAJESVARI (LALITA)



The aspect of sakti that has been the focus of esoteric attention for centuries. She is worshipped in an elaborate ritual involving the well-known 'Sri-Chakra'. She is imagined to be the central-most point (*bindu*) in this diagram, the whole of which is her palace or city. She is thus called 'Sri-chakra-raja-rajeshvari' ('the royal mistress of the

prince of the sacred diagram'). She is also called, 'Tripura-sundari' ('the beauty of the three realms'), the three realms being accommodated within this diagram.

While she is generally worshipped only in 'Sri-chakra', she has also a stylized iconographic form, which is highly symbolic. She is pictured as a charming damsel sitting on Siva (in the form of a corpse) as on a swingcot, the legs of which are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, and Isvara. She holds in her four hands a sugar-cane stick (symbol of mind), a bunch of five arrows (five sense-organs), a noose (passion) and a goad (indignation).

She is said to be represented by six seed-syllables; 'Sauh Klim Aim Srim Hrim Aim, Her gayatri is; 'Aim Tripuradevi Vidmahe, Klim Kamesvari cha dhimahi, Sauh tan-nah Klinnah prachodayat'.

37. MAHAKALI



An unusual form of Sakti, which incorporates the ten goddesses (*dasavidya*), she has ten hands, ten arms and ten legs. She carries the weapons like conch, discus, mace, sword, bow, arrow, spear, trident and *Khatvanga*; she also carries a severed head in one of her hands. She wears a garland of skulls.

There are other forms of Kali (like *Dakshina-Kali*) which are ferocious, nude and trampling on a corpse (*Siva*) in a crematorium. But *Mahakali* is benign, and is one of the three primal forms (the other two being *Maha-Lakshmi* and *Maha-sarasvati*).

38. JVALAJ-JIHVA



A unique form of Durga in her aspect of 'the flaming tongue'. The background legend speaks of the wicked demon Rakta-bijasura, who had a miraculous power of producing hosts of demons by every drop of blood that was shed from his body on the earth during combat. He thus became unchallenged and invincible; his menace to mankind became so oppressive that the Mother-goddess had to assume this form. She could lap up by her flaming tongue the blood that dropped from his body before it fell on the earth. Thus

deprived of reinforcement, the demon was killed in the confrontation.

She is rarely to be met with in sculpture ; even in painting, her representation is rare. She is shown here with her mount, the tiger. The texts describe her as of red complexion, three-eyed and four-armed, having serpents for her breast-band, wearing a garland of skulls, and riding on a tiger.

39. 40. FORMS OF SAKTI



41. VARAHI



The 'boar-faced' goddess regarded as a minor form of Devi, but with a strong tribal background, for she is met with all over the country in one form or another. She is especially worshipped in tantrik cults during black magic. She is also called 'Vartali'.

In the icono-graph here, she is pictured as eight-armed, carrying conch, discus, sword, goad, cudgel and shield ; her two main hands are in the *abhaya* and *varada* postures.

She is considered as the devoted attendant of

the Devi ('devi-chittanuserini'), and as dwelling in the grove of palm-trees. There is a variant form, known as *Svapna-varahi*, who is worshipped to ward off the ill-effects of bad dreams.

42. PRATYANGIRA



A well-known form of Sakti, popular among occult practitioners, especially of black magic. She is invoked to undo the effects of sorcery and witchcraft ('para-karma-vidhvamsini'). She has many variant forms, and she also figures in Sri-chakra worship.

She is imagined as terrible-looking, with fierce fangs and flaming eyes ; she wears dark garments or is entirely nude. She has a thousand heads

and is an invincible combatant, carrying a thousand weapons and delighting in drinking the blood of all the opponents.

In the icono-graph here she has a lion-face and is riding a lion. She has four arms, carrying the hand-drum-serpent, skull-bowl and a trident. The figure is described in the texts as designed 'to frighten the three worlds but to secure the welfare of the devotee against all evil mechanizations of magicians and sorcerers'. She is regarded as the beloved companion of the 'terrible' god Bhairava ('sakhim bhagavatah sri-Bhairavasya').

Her *mantra* is: 'ksham bhaksha jvalajihve karala-damshtre Pratyangire ksham hrim hrum phat'.

43. MANTRINI



The form of the Devi who is the personification of the esoteric practitioner (*mantrini*). She is dark in hue and is also called 'Syamala'. She is only two-armed ; and holds the musical instrument *vina* in one hand and a bowl filled with liquor in the other. She is shown in the act of teaching words and music to the 'sportive parrot' (*lila-suka*) which perches on her left soulder. She wears a crescent-moon on her crown. She is attractive and bejewelled.

44. KAVERI



River goddesses are frequently met with in sculptures and paintings. Sarasvati was originally a river-goddess (*nadi-devata*), although this aspect receded to the background in her later iconography. Ganga, Yamuna and Kaveri are among the more popular river-goddesses, who are worshipped with rituals.

Kaveri in the South is the life-giving river, and it is natural that it is worshipped in an iconic form. There are also legends concerning this 'river-goddess' in the *puranas* ('Kaveri-mahatmya'). Like Ganga, she is imagined as a charming maiden riding a crocodile and holding a pot of nectar in her hand.

There are several temples to this divinity along the course of the river in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. But the most famous is the one that is situated right on the banks of the pool where the river originates in Tala-Kaveri in Kodagu (Coorg) in Karnataka.

45. DATTATREYA



Dattatreya, who is a sage, is considered as the incarnation of the three gods Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in one. Son of Atri and Anasuya, to whom the three gods revealed themselves as three babies who fused into one, he is usually pictured as a three-headed divinity in the company of four dogs (symbolizing the four Vedas). He is wor-

shipped widely in South India, and especially in Maharashtra.

In the illustration reproduced here he is shown as a sage. Named Datta, he was the son of the sage Atri (and hence known as Atreya). He is represented as a teacher.

46. 47. SUBRAHMANYA



Subrahmanya (also called Skanda, Kumara-svami, Kartikeya, Senapati, Dandapani, and Sesa) is now a popular god in South India ; but once his worship was prevalent all over the country. Legends connect him with Siva as whose son he is regarded and also as a teacher of his own father (Guruguha). He is also associated with the thousand-hooded serpent (Adi-sesha), who is the



source of this world as Time, and who is the supporter of the world. Subrahmanya is linked with Krishna as his brother Balarama (Sankarshana).

His iconographic representations are various. He is shown as a young boy with two arms, holding a staff (*danda*) or spear (*sula*). He may be represented as a four-armed god with two consorts (Valli and Devasena). He is also pictured as six-headed (because he was nourished by six mothers) and twelve-armed, riding on a peacock. More usually, however, he is involved in the serpent motif.

48. HANUMAN



Like Ganesha, initially of folk and tribal character, he emerged as one of the most popular gods in the country. Although epics and legends associate him with the classical hero-god Rama (whose attendant he is), his worship is often as an independent divinity. He protects the villages, guards children from ailments, bestows courage and intelligence on devotees, and is the tutelary god of the wrestlers. He is also a patron of music.

His iconographic representations insist on his

monkey face, two armed human body, but with a prominent tail. Postures, however, vary. He is shown in an aspect of supplication carrying the mountain (which contained the remedial herb for Lakshmana) on his palm. An unusual representation makes him five-headed (*pancha-mukha*) and ten armed. The heads are those of monkey, eagle (Garuda), horse (Haya-griva), lion (Nara-simha) and boar (Varaha). It is thus a composite image.



49. GARUDA



Celebrated as the mount of Vishnu, Garuda (also called Vainateya and Garutman) is normally pictured as a human hero with a beaked nose, although the essential imagery is that of an eagle. Older Iconic representations are bird forms, with serpents caught in the beak and in the claws. Garuda is the classical enemy of the serpent clan.

He is also the bringer of ambrosia from heaven to benefit mankind. He is thus shown as a hero with two arms, carrying a pot of nectar (*amrta-kalasa*) in one hand, the other hand being in the *abhaya* posture. Serpents decorate his body, and spread-out wings are shown to indicate his prowess in flight.

Independent shrines to him are rare ; his worship is always subordinated to that of Vishnu. But he is regarded as the embodiment of the Vedic lore, and is honoured as such.

50. VYASA



Although a sage, Vyasa is usually honoured as an incarnation of Vishnu. He is the celebrated author of *Mahabharata* (which included *Bhagavad-gita*) and of the eighteen *puranas*. The arrangement of the Vedic lore is also ascribed to him ; he is, therefore, called Veda-Vyasa. He is also known as Krishna-Dvaipayana and Badrayana. He was

the son of the sage Parasara and the father of the sage Suka.

He is represented here as a teacher to the sages (two of whom are shown here). His right hand is in the 'exposition posture' (*vyakhyana-mudra*). His matted hair is stylized. He carries a monastic staff, signifying his renunciation.

While there are no temples to him, traditional scholars, especially ascetics (*samnyasins*), worship him at least once a year on the 'Vyasa-purnima' day.

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