

Introduction

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 of

god. God as a verbal concept (*mantra*) is subtler than the material icon (*mūrti*). 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 *dhyāna-śloka*s, 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 *dhyāna-śloka*s 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 con-

templates on the *dhyāna-śloka* 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 around 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 Tāntrik manuals of Vajrayāna Buddhist persuasion are especially replete with *dhyāna-śloka*, 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 ('nā-śivo-bhūtvā Śivam pūjayet'). 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 (*śilpin*) 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. Pāṇini (5, 3, 96) mentions "pratikṛti" in this sense; Patañjali, the great commentator on this remarkable grammarian, records that Mauryas (?) manufactured icons ('archā) only for procuring gold (*hiraṇya*) (*Mahābhāṣya*, 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 (*jīvikārthe*). 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' (*rūpa*) indicate that the icons were no longer regarded as just symbols or reflections (*pratimā* *bimbā*), or representations (*pratika*, *pratikṛti*, *sandṛś*), 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.

Mathurā, which was situated on the trade routes of the country and 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 *bhāgavatas*, sun-worshippers, Śaivas and the followers of folk cults) visited Mathurā and dwelt there for protracted periods. Icons-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 quality also degenerates to an extent, when duplication becomes the frequent need. The craftsman involved in this enterprises can ill afford to devote his time for ritualistic preparations or for visualization of the *dhyāna-śloka*; 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 *dhyāna-śloka*s, 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 *dhyāna-śloka*s. And numerous minor divinities and folk-deities which became popular in course of time and in different parts of the country did not have *dhyāna-śloka*s any way; and the craftsman had to follow his own genius and inclination. The custom of making the icons altogether independent of the *dhyāna-śloka*s 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 (*Bṛhatsamhitā*). 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 *dhyāna-śloka* 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 *dhyāna-śloka* 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 *dhyāna-śloka* 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 (*padmāsana*). The Buddha images are shown either, as engaged in contemplation (*dhyāna*) or as teaching (or *cakra-pravartana* 'turning the wheel of dharma'), as offering comfort (*abhaya*), or as calling the earth below as witness for his own integrity (*bhūmi-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 (*vyākhyāna*), or as on his begging round.

The images of Jinas are always shown as absorbed in contemplation (*dhyāna*), whether seated (in *padmāsana*) or standing in an upright posture known as *khaḍgāsana* (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 *pratimā-yōga*, which expression actually refers to a practice undertaken by the Jain ascetic for heightening the rigour of his austerities (*tapovṛddhi*) and for abandoning the effects of karma (*nirjarāṇa*).

The images of Jinas are altogether nude (although some images of the white-robed sect are shown wearing a strip of cloth covering the genitals), whereas the Buddha is invariably shown

as wearing an upper cloth (*saṃghāṭi*) 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 (*tīrthaṅkaras*) are recognized, the last of whom was Mahāvira, contemporaneous with the Buddha. The simplistic stylization would represent all the tirthankaras as exactly alike (with the exception of Pārśvanātha, 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, Vṛṣabhanātha, conch for the 22nd Nemi-nātha, snake for the 23rd, Pārśvanātha and lion for the 24th, Mahāvira), carved on the pedestal.

The Bāhubali or Gommaṭa images, which are usually huge monoliths (as the one in Śravaṇa-beḷgoḷa 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 Gommatas. On the other hand, the Gommaṭa image is identified by the *mādhavī*-creeper that gracefully entwines the legs, thighs and arms; ant-hills are also shown about the legs.

Icons are classified into four general categories: painted on canvas, paper, wall or pot (*citraja*), moulded in clay or any other plastic material like sandal-paste and rice-flour (*lepaja*, *mṛṇmayī* or *paṣṭī*); cast in metal (*pākaja*, *lohaja*, *dhātūttha*); and carved in stone, wood or precious stone (*śastrotkirṇa*: *śailaja*, *dāravī*, 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 (*ghaṭa*) and cloth or canvases (*paṭa*) are worshipped in India from very early times. It is not strange, therefore, that drawing and painting are fundamental to iconography.

The icon (*pratimā*) 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 ca citraja pratima smṛta'). 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 *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, *Citra-lakṣaṇa* of Nagnajit which is available only in its Tibetan translation, *Śilpa-ratna*, the 'paṭa-vidhāna', section of *Ārya-Maṇjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* and *Hayaśirṣa-saṃhitā*) contain detailed information about the painted icons. *Hayaśirṣa-saṃhitā* even goes to the extent of insisting that Viṣṇu must be worshipped only in a painting on cloth or canvas ('paṭasthaḥ pūjanīyas tu devo Nārāyaṇaḥ prabhuh'), for it is only in a painting that charm (*kānti*), ornaments (*bhūṣaṇa*) and expressions (*bhūṣaṇa*) and expressions (*bhāva*) can vividly be portrayed (*sphuṭam*); Viṣṇu's

presence in the painting is constant ('lepye citre Harir nityam sannidhānam 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 *maṇḍalas* in the Śākta cults as well as in the Vajrayāna aspect of Buddhism is well-known. When the Tāntrik 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, *bijākṣaras*) 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 (*pratimā*, *yantra* and *mantra*) together constitute the theme of Indian iconography.

Iconography strictly means "drawing" or etching of an icon. It refers to a sculptural representing only by an extension of this meaning. The earlier practice was to draw in lines, sometime 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 Nārāyaṇa, the great God, drew on earth (*Urvī*) with mango-juice the drawing of a charming feminine form, and infused life into it. Thus was the nymph 'Urvaśī'

born. Then Nārāyaṇa composed them over to the celestial architect/sculptor Viśvakarmā. *Nārada-śilpa* classifies painting into 'those on the ground' (*bhaumika*), 'those on the walls' (murals, and frescoes, *bhitti*), and 'portraits' (*bhāva-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' (*cala*) and the latter 'immobile' (*acala*). The wall-paintings were done in four stages. White-washing the surface of the wall (*dhauta*), mounting a coat of boiled rice on it (*ghaṭṭita*) drawing of the outline in charcoal (*lāñchita*), and finally filling in the colours (*varṇa-rañjita*). The same procedure was followed when, instead of wall, cloth (*paṭa*) 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 (*rekḥāpāta*), modulating the light and shade, and finalising the sketch (*vāstava*), arranging decorative details (*alaṅkāra*), and colouring (*varṇa*).

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 (*rūpabheda*), accommodation of proportions (*pramāṇa*), projection of feelings and aspects of beauty (*bhāva-lāvaṇya-yojanā*) bringing out the resemblance (*sādrśya*) and putting the colours on (*varṇikā-bhaṅga*) and regarded as the 'six limbs' of drawing, according to Yaśodhara's gloss on *Kāma-sūtra*. Among the six details that are enumer-

ated, it is the last one alone that makes the sketch a painting; the other five relate to drawing.

The importance of line-drawing is to be gleaned from numerous medieval treatises on painting like *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtra-dhāra* (Bhoja), *Abhilaṣitārtha-cintāmaṇi* (Someśvara), and *Hara-Vijaya* (Ratnākara). And the application of this outlook is to be found in the wall paintings of Ajaṇṭā, Bāgh, Badāmi, Sittanavāśal, Hampi Virūpākṣa temple, the Anegondi palace, Lepākṣi Pāpānaśa temple and Vardhamāna temple, Tanjore Brīhadiśvara temple, Śravaṇabēla Jaina-maṭha and Seebi-Narasimha 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, Kriṣṇarāja 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. *Śrī-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 iconographic studies in the Mysore court have come down to us: Veeraṇṇa, Yellayya, Sundarayya, Tañjāvūr Koṇḍayya, Nagūnalli Nāraṇappa and Aḷasingrayya.

Two of the iconographic 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, *Devatā-nāma-kusuma-maṇjarī*, (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, Kārtavīrya, Manmatha and Vyāsa) mentioned in older iconographic manuals.

The other book *Devatā-dhyāna-mālikā*, is a smaller one, containing only 236 verses in Sanskrit describing sixty icons. Both these books, authorship of which is ascribed to the King himself, are profusely illustrated with remarkable line-drawing, slightly coloured. The artistic merit of the iconographs of the former book is decidedly superior, but the latter book contains some unusual representations of forgotten deities like Pratyāṅgirā, Śimśumāra, Nidrā and Jvalajjihvā. The iconographs are authoritative as they correctly accord in most cases with the classical descriptions contained in the manuals.

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 Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Durgā, Hanumān), 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: Viṣṇu and Śiva (both of whom have a Vedic background), Devī (the mother-goddess who goes back to a more remote past), Gaṇeśa (the folk god of universal appeal in our country), and Sūrya (the solar divinity, whose cult has been popular all over the world at some time or other). The sun (Sūrya) is often regarded as an aspect of Viṣṇu (Sūrya-nārāyaṇa), and is represented by Fire (Agni), especially the sacrificial fire. Thus, in effect, there are four major divinities.

But the custom of pentadic worship (*pañcopāsanā*) has gained currency in the country. It is difficult to ascertain when exactly this custom commenced, but we find it recommended in the *Purāṇas* and the *smṛti*-texts. Śaṅkarāchārya (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 (*iṣṭadevatā*). 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 (*vedī*) would be located the five deities. But a Śaivite, for instance, would place Śiva in the centre and the other four deities in the four corners. A Vaiṣṇavite, on the other hand, would make Viṣṇu occupy the central position. There is thus a sectarian involvement in the arrangement of the five deities.

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 Śaivites worshipping Śiva, the Vaiṣṇavites devoted to Viṣṇu, the Śāktas given to the cult of Devī (Śakti), the Gāṇapatyas adoring Gaṇapati, and the Sauṛas 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 (*parivāra*). 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 correspondences are: Gaṇapati-earth; Śiva-water; Devī-fire; Sūrya-air; and Viṣṇu-ether. There is another account where Śiva corresponds to the earth element and Gaṇapati to water. They are represented by distinctive *yantras* in order; square (*caturasra*), crescent moon or hexagon (*ṣaṭkoṇa*), triangle (*trikoṇa*), circle (*vr̥tta*) 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: Gaṇapati by a red stone (*rakta-prastara-khaṇḍa*), Śiva by white quartz from rivers like Narmada (*bāṇa-liṅga*), Devī by metallic stone (*dhātupatra* or *yantra*), Sūrya by crystal (*sphaṭika*), and Viṣṇu by ammonite from Gaṇḍaki river (*śālagrāma*).

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 *gāyatrī* formula of its own, and the sectarian worshipper will utter the *gāyatrī* of the central deity during worship.

The philosophical interpretation of the pentadic worship has been given in some texts. Gaṇapati, as the lord of the group of fourteen worlds, signifies the phenomenon of bondage, which obstructs the dawn of enlightenment (hence called Vighneśvara), Sūrya is the principle behind creation (from the root 'su' to produce). Viṣṇu is responsible, for the preservation of the created world, and Śiva for its destruction. Devī is the principle of the power of wisdom (*jñāna-śakti*) which liberates the devotee from phenomenal bondage. It is well-known that Gaṇapati is worshipped for worldly success, Sūrya for health, Viṣṇu for wealth, Śiva for dispassion, and Devī for 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 (*ahaṁkāra*), water—object awareness (*citta*), fire—primary

consciousness (*buddhi*), air—mind (*manas*), and ether—'the heart' (*hṛdaya*, 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 Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Narasimha, Trivikrama and Hayagrīva, (among the forms of Viṣṇu), Vīrabhadra, Bhairava, Dakṣiṇā-mūrti and Naṭarāja (among the forms of Śiva), Kālī, Tripurā-sundarī, Lakṣmī, Mahiṣamardīnī and Kanyā-Kumārī (among the forms of Devī), Siddhi-Vināyaka, Heramba, Śakti-Gaṇapati and Haridrā-Gaṇapati (among the forms of Gaṇapati).

Sūrya, 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*).

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 *purāṇas*, some of which are sectarian (like Śiva-purāṇa for Śaivas, *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* for Vaiṣṇavas, *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa* for Śāktas, *Mudgala-purāṇa* for the Gāṇapatyas) 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 Smārtas), who owe allegiances to one or the other of the monastic institutions claiming to have been founded by the great Śaṁkarācārya. The

Vaiṣṇavas or the Śāktas, however, do not recognise this mode of worship, although they do honour and worship the other four deities (besides their own chosen deities viz. Viṣṇu or Devī), separately and on different occasions. Their daily worship is conducted exclusively to Viṣṇu or Devī.

Whether Śaivas, or Vaiṣṇavas, the Devī is invariably worshipped along with Śiva or Viṣṇu. She becomes some form of Durgā when associated with Śiva, and of Lakṣmī when associated with Viṣṇu. Gaṇapati is also commonly worshipped, though exclusive worshippers of Gaṇapati (the Gāṇapatyas) are extremely rare now. The sun is adored during the *sandyā*-ritual, but not in any iconic form except as one of the nine planets.

Iconic differences are usually indicated by the posture (*bhaṅgī*), the number of hands (*hasta*), weapons (*āyudha*), ornaments (*bhūṣaṇa*), hand-gestures (*mudrā*) and facial expressions (*bhāva*). The postures can be seated, standing, reclining or mobile. Viṣṇu as Kṛṣṇa is often shown as a child on all fours (*Bāla-Kṛṣṇa*), or as an infant lying on its back on a leaf of the banyan tree (*Vaṭa-patra-śāyin*). We find Gaṇapati 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 (*Mahārāja-līlā*, e.g. Gaṇapati, and Para-vāsudeva), alert lotus-like (*padmāsana*, e.g. Mūkāmbikā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Brahmā, tīrthankara and Buddha), riding an animal (*vāhana*, e.g. Gaṅga on the alligator), in a Yogic

stance (*yoga-paṭṭa*, e.g. Yogā-Narasimha, Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Śāstā), or with one of the legs bent (*Kuñchitapāda*, e.g. Sadāśiva, Samhāra-Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Lakṣmī-Narasimha and Lalitā).

While seated or standing, it is usual for the Viṣṇu and Śiva images to be accompanied by their consorts in the same posture (Lakṣmī and Pārvatī respectively). Rāma with Sita, Śiva with Gaurī, Sūrya with Chāyā, Gaṇeśa with Lakṣmī, Narasimha with Lakṣmī, Naṭarāja with Śivakāmi, are common examples. There are some gods who have consorts on either side of them : Viṣṇu, for instance, with Bhū-devī (the goddess of earth) and Śrī-devī (the goddess of wealth); Subrahmaṇya with Deva-Senā (personified army of gods) and Vallī (a human spouse); Gaṇapati with Siddhi (success) and Buddhi (wisdom); and Kṛṣṇa with Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā.

If the god is alone, it is called 'kevala'. Several Viṣṇu and Śiva icons answer to this descriptions: Para-Vāsudeva, Yogā-narasimha, Bāla-Kṛṣṇa, Veṇu-gopāla, Kevala-Hayagrīva, Śrīnivāsa, Dhanvantari, Bhairava, Virabhadra, Bhikṣātana, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Dattātreya, Śāstā and Śarabheśvara. It is usual for Gaṇeśa images to be represented alone, although in some forms (e.g. Śakti-Gaṇapati, Lakṣmī-Gaṇapati and Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati) he is shown with one, two or eight consorts. Bāla-Subrahmaṇya is likewise a longer, but in some forms he has two consorts. Hanumān and Garuḍa are invariably single icons, and so is Śudarśana.

The standing posture involves the delineating of flexions or bends (*bhaṅgī*). When the plumb-line passes through the navel (*nābhi*) from the tip

of the crown (*śikhāmaṇi*) to a point between the two heels on the pedestal (*pīṭha*), it is 'samabhaṅga'; 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 *kāyotsarga* 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 *abhaṅga*; if the bend is conspicuous and great it is *atibhaṅga*. 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-bhaṅga* (head, trunk and lower limbs). When the sweep of the curve in this posture is emphasized ("like a tree caught in a storm"), it becomes *atibhaṅga*.

Feminine and dancing deities are shown in *abhaṅga* and *tribhaṅga* postures. The *atibhaṅga* is a rare posture, especially in sculpture. But drawings of Vajrayāna divinities in Tibet frequently employ this posture, the excessive flexion being suggestive of violent passion (*krodha*).

Viṣṇu is shown in the dance stance only as Kṛṣṇa (Kāliya-Kṛṣṇa, dancing on the hood of the dragon Kaliya, Navanīta-Kṛṣṇa, dancing with balls of butter in one hand or in both hands). A pillar in the temple stop the Tirumalai hills shows Narasimha dancing; and this is altogether a rare depiction. Śiva as Natarāja is a celebrated image. But there are several variant postures in this, which are not so well known as the famous Tiruvālaṅgādu icon.

Gaṇapati and Sarasvatī are also shown sometimes as dancing. Several Devis with Tāntrik background, like Kālī and Aparājītā, are also shown in dancing postures, or in semidancing (*ālīḍha*) postures.

Reclining is a posture that is almost exclusive to Viṣṇu-Raṅganātha in Śrīraṅgam, Ananta-śayana in Trivandrum, and Śeṣaśayana (terracotta in the 5th cent. temple at Bhitargaon and relief in stone from Deogarh, 6th cent.) are familiar examples. Rāma is occasionally depicted in this posture, with Lakṣmaṇa sitting at this head and Hanumān standing at the feet as in the Vijayanagar panel. This panel may alternately be an illustration of the episode of Lakṣmaṇa fainting during the great war, and Rāma deputing Hanumān to bring the *sañjīvani* drug.

Mobile postures include Viṣṇu as Varāha rescuing the Earth, as Trivikrama measuring the upper regions, as Narasimha rushing out of the pillar to slay the demon, and as Veṅugopāla playing the flute (in a standing posture); Śiva as the conqueror of the three realms (Tripurāri), as the ascetic on his begging round (Bhikṣātana), and as Virabhadra destroying Dakṣa's sacrifice; and Devī as Durgā setting out to kill the buffalo-demon, Mahiṣa, and as Tārā 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 Śrīraṅgam). Viṣṇu is usually represented as standing, and Sakti as seated, either on a seat (*pīṭha*) or on lion.

For seated figures, texts like

Ahīrbudhnya-Samhitā, prescribe as many as eleven variant postures; 'lotus' (*padma*), 'tortoise' (*kūrma*), 'peacock' (*mayūra*), 'cock' (*kukkuṭa*), 'lion' (*simha*), 'heroic' (*vīra*), *svastika*, 'firm' (*bhadra*), 'free' (*mukta*), 'cowhead' (*gomukha*), 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 (*padmāsana*), rectangular (*simhāsana*), triangular (*anantāsana*) and so on. It is also customary to use detachable seats of different forms in different stages of the worship ritual like *simhāsana* for bathing, *yogāsana* for invocation, *anantāsana* for witnessing amusements, and *vimalāsana* 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 'Śrī-cakra', either as a linear diagram (*rekḥā-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.

The present publication, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Iconography*, is intended to focus attention on the traditional details concerning images and their worship. The details given in these volumes are taken entirely from the traditional texts of Āgama and Śilpa-śāstra, like *Bṛhatsamhitā*, *Mānasāra*, *Kāśyapa-śilpa*, *Īśāna-śiva-guru-deva-paddhati*, *Śilpa-ratna*, *Pādma-samhitā*, *Hayasīrṣa-samhitā*,

Vaikhānasāgama and *Rūpa-maṇḍana*. The entries include not only the gods and goddesses of popular so-called Hinduism, but also the divinities of Jaina (both Digambara and Śvetāmbara divisions) and Buddhist (Māhāyāna) religions. The deities worshipped in Nepal and Tibet are also included. *Sādhana-mālā* has been used for descriptions of Buddhist deities, and *Rūpa-maṇḍana* for Jaina deities. Most of the entries are illustrated by line-drawings of images in temples, monasteries, basadis and in museums. Topics of peripheral interest (like temple-construction, image-making worship rituals and Āgama divisions) have also been included here.

The volumes follow the Sanskrit alphabetical order (*akārādi*) to facilitate translation into Indian languages. The first volume begins with the words beginning with vowels in Sanskrit alphabet. Followed with mute consonants and the rest of the consonants in the subsequent volumes.

Among various and synonymous names of the deities, the better known ones have been selected for entry, while cross-references also have been indicated. Wherever necessary, background stories for particular iconographical representations have been given.

Many of the illustrations in the volumes have been reproduced with the kind courtesy of the Director, All-India Handicrafts and Design Development Centre (Government of India), Bangalore, and with the cooperation of the design artists of the centre Sri Appukuttan Achary, Sri M.S. Raman and Sri. K.V. Bhandari. The volumes also contain my own drawings of icons in temples and museums.

The volumes were first published by the Kalpatharu Research Academy,

Bangalore about fifteen years ago, and I am grateful to the Director of the Academy, Daivajna K.N. Somayaji for permission to reprint the volumes.

I am grateful to my friends Shri Naresh Gupta and Shri Sunil Gupta of the Indian Books Centre for having brought out these volumes in their revised form.

Bangalore,
September, 2002

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