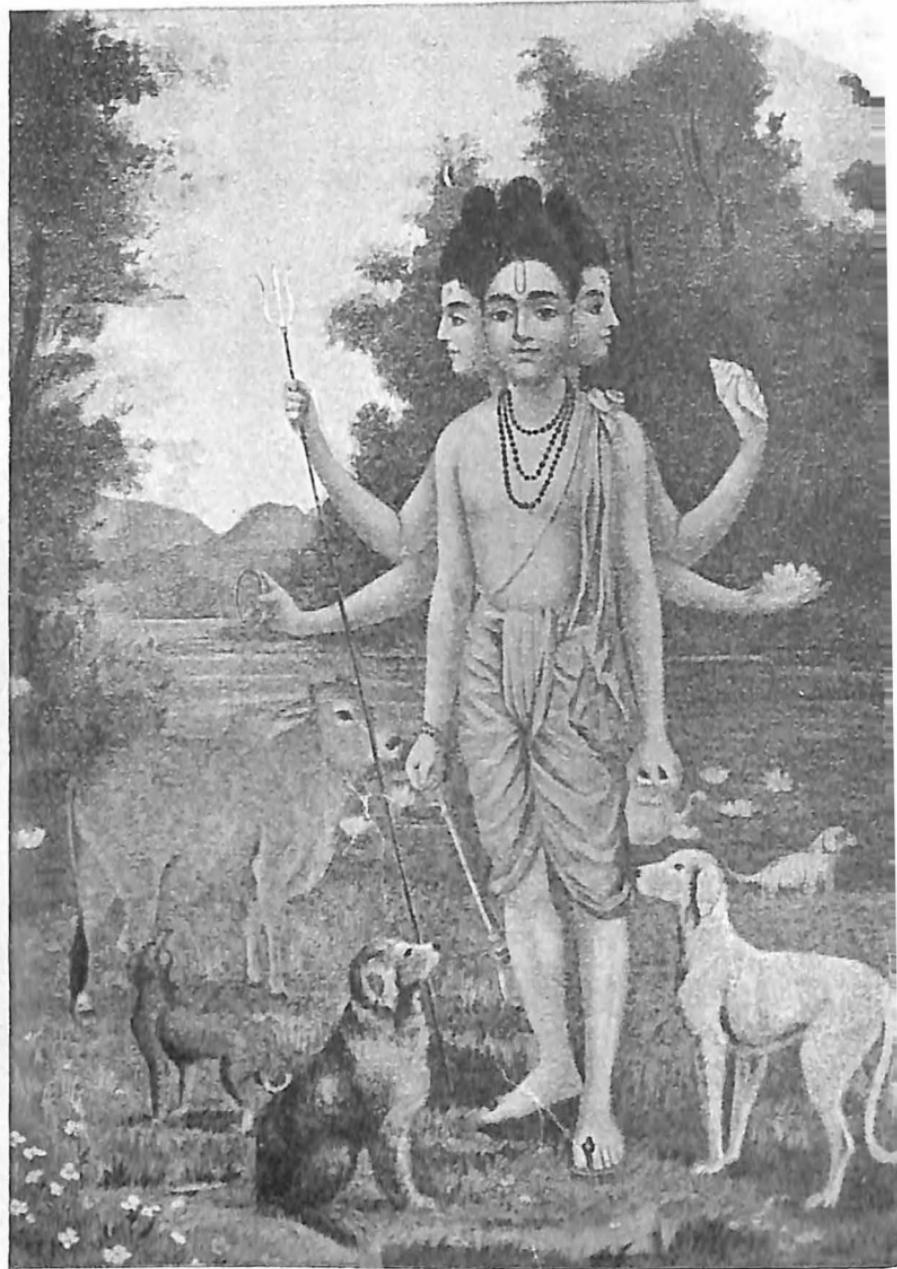




**INDIAN I
ADVA**

THE
HINDU GODS



DATTATRAYA.

Frontispiece

THE
HINDU GODS
AND HOW TO RECOGNISE THEM

BY

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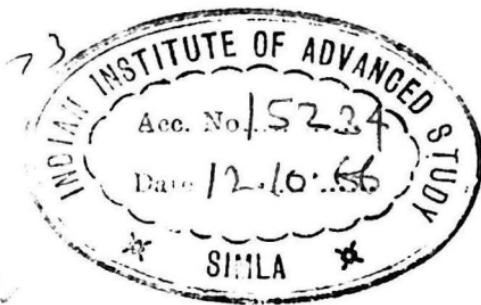


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To
MY FRIENDS
Mr. and Mrs. FAWCETT

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INTRODUCTION.

MY object in writing this little book is to supply a want, which, as I believe, is widely felt among Englishmen and other foreigners resident in India, namely, a simple little guide book, with whose help they will be able to tell at a glance to what god a temple is dedicated or what the little brass images on their own and their neighbours' drawing room tables represent. Learned books on the Hindu religion already exist. The first to appear was Moor's Hindu Pantheon, but its arrangement is such as to repel the ordinary reader. A very valuable book is Wilkins' Hindu Mythology. But that also is rather beyond the casual reader.

In the following pages I have tried to make the subject as simple as possible. I have also confined myself chiefly to the gods who are worshipped to-day, especially in the Deccan, and have postponed an examination of the Vedic gods to the last chapter. I have first given a brief account of the three chief gods who now hold sway and their families ; next I have given a few hints by which the reader may tell to which god a temple belongs and what an image represents. Then I have described the lesser gods and last of all the Vedic gods.

The pictures of Shiva and Dattatraya are reproduced with the courteous permission of the Ravivarma press. I have to thank my friend Mr. Dayagude for kindly correcting the proofs. I have also to thank the Honourable Mr. Mountford for very kindly drawing me several beautiful plates.

INTRODUCTION.

I sincerely trust that nothing in the ensuing pages will cause annoyance to my Indian readers. That I would assure them, is the last thing I would wish to do. I have endeavoured to omit everything likely, in my judgment, to hurt their feelings. If anything offensive still is to be found in my book, I trust they will pardon my unintentional error.

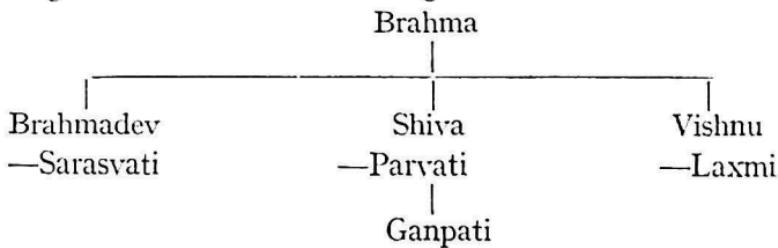
I would also express the hope that English readers will not approach the mythological stories in my book in a scoffing, unkind spirit. As a matter of fact their very quaintness is their patent of nobility. Ideas crystallize into symbols. Then the ideas change but the symbols remain. Hinduism was at least a thousand years old when Christ was born. It was three hundred years old when Rome was founded. It was seven hundred years old when Alexander crossed the Indus at Attock. If from its remote antiquity Hinduism has retained some fanciful legends, what wonder? On the other hand it can claim that during the three thousand years of its existence it has never persecuted any other faith.

To such a religion all honour !

CHAPTER I.

BRAHMADEV AND SHIVA.

BEFORE the creation of the world, so the Hindus believe, there brooded over the world a formless spirit called Brahma, that resembled to some extent the Logos or Word in the gospel according to Saint John. From this formless spirit was evolved the Hindu Triad. The word Triad suggests the Christian Trinity, and in their joint incarnation of Dattatraya (see frontispiece), to which I shall refer at a later stage of this book, the three gods are undoubtedly three in one. Still it may be affirmed generally that the Hindu Triad has very little in common with the Christian Trinity. The three Hindu gods have separate individualities and indeed separate wives and families. The following genealogical tree will shew this at a glance :—



The three gods Brahma dev, Shiva and Vishnu represent three forces—Brahma dev the creative force, Shiva the destructive force, Vishnu the force that preserves, the conservative force. The formless spirit is not worshipped at all. Brahma dev the creative spirit receives hardly any more worship than Brahma, having only one temple in all India, namely, at Pushkar, near Ajmer. But his wife Saravati is widely revered. She is the Hindu Minerva, the goddess of learning and of speech. She invented Sanskrit and the beautiful Devanagari script in which all Indian poetry is

written. She is also patroness of the arts and sciences. She is generally associated with the peacock and is as a rule depicted with four arms playing on a lute or zither.

The gods Shiva and Vishnu share the main worship of India. Shiva (see picture I) is usually portrayed with a coil of hair from which spouts a stream of water. The water is the Ganges river. Originally the Ganges flowed in heaven and had its source in the god Vishnu's foot. It found its way into Shiva's hair in this way. In Ayodhya or Oudh ruled a king called Sagar. He had no less than 60,000 sons and in his pride at this unusual family, he resolved to declare himself emperor of the Universe. To do this it was necessary to perform an Ashwamedha or horse sacrifice. The sacrificer had to send out an army and a sacrificial horse. The horse was set free to roam at will all over India for a year and wherever it roamed the army followed, levying tribute as it went. At the end of the year, if no king had dared to resist, the owner of the horse was entitled to sacrifice the horse and proclaim himself emperor of the world. Agreeably to this practice, king Sagar sent out his grandson Anshumat with a sacrificial horse and an army. Unhappily the god Vishnu was irritated at the pride of king Sagar and determined to humble it. He took the form of an old woman and sought a night's food and shelter in Anshumat's camp. The prince received the old woman kindly, only to learn next morning that in the night the old woman had mounted the sacrificial horse and had ridden off with it. The sacrifice was spoilt, so Anshumat after searching in vain for the old woman, returned sadly to Ayodhya and told what had happened to king Sagar. The king thinking that the old woman was the agent of some foreign power, sent out his sixty thousand sons to avenge the crime. The sons

traversed all India in vain. When they came to the sea, they could not find transport to carry them across. They, therefore, bored their way through the earth five times. On emerging for the fifth time, they saw their father's horse and the old woman who had stolen it. They rushed to seize it, but the god Vishnu resuming once more his divine shape, burnt them up. As the sons did not return, king Sagar sent Anshumat to look for them. The prince passed backwards and forwards through the tunnels, until he came to the spot where his uncles had been consumed. There he found their ashes and returning told his grandfather. The latter wished to perform the funeral rites of his sons ; but as the Ganges had not then come down to earth, he could not find enough fresh water in India for the purpose. He, therefore, formed the idea of praying to the gods to send him down the Ganges river. He died without receiving an answer to his prayers. But his descendants continued the prayers for several generations and at last Bhagiratha, the grandson of Anshumat, obtained the boon for which his forefathers had asked. But had the Ganges fallen upon the earth, it would have bored through the earth's surface and lost itself in Patala, where the snake people live. So Shiva caught it in his hair. When all the fury of the river had abated, he released it and king Bhagiratha performed the funeral ceremonies of the sixty thousand dead princes.

Round Shiva's neck is generally depicted a snake and round his waist a tiger skin. In a few portraits the god holds a black buck in his hand. Snake, tiger, black buck all belong to the same story. Once upon a time there were some rishis or anchorites, who lived at a place called Taragam and had by their austerities acquired such enormous merit, that it endangered the thrones of the gods. To remove

this peril, Vishnu turned himself into a beautiful young woman. Shiva took the form of a beautiful youth and the two gods went together to the hermitage of their enemies. Shiva made love to all the rishis' wives and Vishnu captured the hearts of all the rishis. In this way the rishis were soon robbed of a greater part of their merit. Disgusted at the trick played on them, they "pooled" what remained of their merit and from a magic fire produced a man-eating tiger and set it on Shiva. The latter was at the time dancing the Tandawa measure to amuse the rishis' wives. Without missing a single step, he seized the unhappy tiger and skinned it alive. Ever since he has worn the tiger's skin as a trophy. The rishis next created a cobra. But the god continuing his dance, picked it up and threw it round his neck, where, ever since, the cowed reptile has played the part of a muffler. Lastly the rishis created a black buck, but the god caught it by the hind legs and has held it out at arm's length ever since. The rishis were now in a bad way. They had lost all their merit and might have been sentenced to some fearful punishment for aspiring to the thrones of the gods. But Shiva and Vishnu were satisfied with their victory and left the rishis to meditate on their folly.

As a rule in pictures of Shiva a young lady is seated on Shiva's left side. She is his queen Parvati and was the daughter of Himalaya, the undisputed king of mountains. In a former existence she was Sati, Shiva's first wife, and daughter of a certain king Daksha. The king quarrelled with Shiva and Sati took her husband's part. Slighted one day by her father, to whose house she had gone uninvited, she burnt herself alive. It is because of this incident, that widows who burn themselves on their husbands' bodies

are called Satis or "suttees." When Sati was born again as Parvati, she retained her former love for Shiva. She did her best to win his favour, but the god who still mourned his dead queen, rejected her advances. Resolved to win the god's affection, she began to perform all kinds of austerities and penances to attain her object. The god remained obdurate. But Kamadev, the Hindu god of love, took pity on her and going close to Shiva shot one of his arrows into his heart. Shiva against his will was instantly fired with love for Parvati; still he vented his anger on Kamadev whom he burnt to ashes with the third eye, that looks out of his forehead and can be seen in the picture. In the end, however, Parvati became Shiva's queen and pleaded Kamadev's cause so well, that Shiva forgave him and brought him back to life.

Parvati bore to her husband a son called Ganpati. He is always shewn with an elephant's head. The tale runs that he did not always have it, but was the most beautiful baby ever seen. His mother Parvati was so proud of him, that she shewed him to every person whom she met. Unfortunately one of her friends said to her "Do not shew the child to Shani or Saturn, as he will do it some harm." Parvati, instead of following her friend's advice, was stung in her pride and wilfully neglected it. That very night she took her baby outside her palace and shewed it to the planet Saturn. Now that planet has the evil quality of destroying everything it looks at. Instantly the baby's head vanished, burnt up by the terrible gaze of the unlucky planet. Parvati in despair went to Brahma dev. Brahma dev had to tell her that he could not restore a head that no longer existed. He, however, advised her to look about for some man or beast that had committed some fault and twisting off his or

its head to plant it on her little boy's shoulders. The sorrowing mother searched all over the earth until she found an elephant, that had been so ill advised as to go to sleep facing north instead of east. This was but a small fault; still it gave Parvati her chance. She dexterously removed the beast's head and placed it on her son's shoulders. It took root there and so ever afterwards he has gone about with an elephant's head.

Ganpati had originally two tusks. Now he has only one. That is why he is often called Ekdanti or One-tuskered. He lost his second tusk in this way. One day Parasu Rama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, whom I shall again mention later, went to visit Shiva. The latter was having a siesta. Ganpati told the visitor that Shiva could not see him. Parasu Rama would take no refusal and tried to force his way into the great god's palace. A struggle ensued and Ganpati caught the visitor up in his trunk and flung him several feet away. Parasu Rama in a fury flung his axe at Ganpati. The latter could easily have jumped away. But he suddenly saw that the axe flung at him was the very one, which Shiva had given Parasu Rama. He would not avoid a blow from his father's axe, but awaited it with eyes downcast and hands reverently folded. The axe missed Ganpati's face, but cut off one of his tusks near the root.

Ganpati has two wives Siddhi and Riddhi, to whom he is devotedly attached. When he rides abroad, his favourite mount is a rat. His birthday is the fourth of the Hindu month called Bhadrapad, which includes part of August and part of September. This is a very popular day with the children. Their parents give them each an image of Ganpati, which they carry about and play with like dolls. Ganpati is said to have written the great epic the Maha-



SHIVA, PARVATI, GANPATI AND NANDI

To face p. 7.

bharata at the dictation of the rishi Vyasa. Because of this, Ganpati is the god of all fresh enterprises. Whoever wants to start a business, go on a voyage or to write a book, never fails to invoke the help of Ganpati.

At the feet of Shiva is generally shewn the sacred bull Nandi or Nandikeshwar. Whenever the god Shiva goes for a ride, he mounts Nandi. The latter is also the great god's chamberlain and chief musician ; and it is he who usually plays for Shiva, when the latter indulges in his favourite Tandawa dance. But Nandi has a great department of his own. He is the god of animals and it is to him and not to Shiva, Vishnu or Brahma dev that the animal kingdom is said to address its prayers.

Shiva is believed to reside in Kailas mountain, a great snow clad mountain in Thibet beyond the Himalaya range. It will be seen in the background of Shiva's picture. Other names for Shiva are Mahadev, Maheshwar, Sambh, Sadashiv and Shankar. Parvati is also called Devi, Ambika, Durga and Girija.

CHAPTER II.

VISHNU AND HIS INCARNATIONS.

THE third of the triad and (if his incarnations Rama and Krishna be considered) the greatest and most popular is Vishnu. As I have said he is the conservative force of the Triad. In pictures he is usually shewn, as sitting on a lotus placed upon the back of his great serpent Shesh(see Picture II). The snake's heads form a canopy over the crown of the god. The Hindus believe that Vishnu rests on this snake in the middle of the ocean and that wherever he happens to be, the ocean turns to milk. Vishnu's queen is Laxmi, who is the goddess of prosperity. Like Aphrodite she sprang from the sea, although in a different manner. The story runs that the gods were at one time mortal and the only way by which they could become immortal was by eating or drinking the ambrosia, which lay at the bottom of the ocean. In order to obtain it, Vishnu took the form of a gigantic tortoise and stood on the bottom of the sea. On his back the gods placed the great mountain Mandara. Next they made Vishnu's serpent, Shesh, coil itself round the mountain. Lastly they called to their help the demons, who were equally anxious to become immortal. The demons took the great snake by the head and the gods took it by the tail; and gods and demons worked the snake backwards and forwards and with it Mount Mandara so hard that they churned the ocean into foam. Up from the bottom of the sea came every thing that was there. Among other articles came the moon, the ambrosia jar and Laxmi. Vishnu fell in love with Laxmi and married her. Then he took the form of a beautiful woman and so attracted the attention of the demons, that they ran after her,

leaving the gods in the sole possession of the ambrosia jar. In this way the gods became immortal, while the demons remained subject to death as before.

Vishnu and Laxmi have never been blessed with any children. On the other hand Vishnu has nine times taken human form and descended on earth to rid it of evil beings, evil times or evil ways. His first incarnation was the Matsya or the Fish incarnation. The story runs that to preserve the progenitor of the human race, Manu (the Hindu Noah) from the deluge, Vishnu turned himself into a fish. One day Manu was bathing in the Cherivi river, when he heard a tiny fish complain to him that no other living thing was so unhappy as it was. It was the smallest fish in the river and all the other fish tried to devour it. If Manu would only take it out of the river, it would always be grateful to him. Manu lifted the little fish out of the river and put it in an earthen jar. But the fish grew at such a rate, that the jar was soon too small for it. Manu put it into a pond. But its tail and head were soon sticking out, high and dry. Manu again lifted it out of the water and threw it into the Ganges. But the Ganges even was too small for it. Manu carried it to the sea. Before it disappeared under water, the grateful fish warned Manu that a flood was coming and bade him build an ark. When the ark was ready, he should set out to sea and trust to the fish to save him. The flood came and overwhelmed the earth. But Manu and his ark rode the storm. At last the waves rose so high, that Manu thought that the ark could not possibly live. Just then his friend the fish appeared upon the surface with a great horn growing out of its head. At its command Manu cast a rope round its horn and the fish towed him safely to the Himalayas, where he moored

his vessel to a mountain peak until the waters abated. Thereafter Manu recreated the human race who had perished in the deluge.

Vishnu's second incarnation was the tortoise incarnation. Then, as I have said, he took the form of a tortoise, that the gods might put on his back Mandara mountain and churn the ocean.

Vishnu's third incarnation was that of a boar. The tale runs that there were once two demon brothers, originally doorkeepers in Vishnu's heaven. They were compelled by a curse to become demons for three lives. They were first born as Hiranyaksh and Hiranyakasipu and, as demons, were the natural enemies of the gods. Directly Hiranyaksh reached manhood, he dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea. Vishnu assumed the avatar or incarnation of a boar, plunged into the sea, slew Hiranyaksh and with his boar's tushes restored the earth to its former place.

Vishnu's fourth incarnation was a manlion (Narsinh). After the death of Hiranyaksh, his brother Hyranyakasipu carried on his brother's feud against the gods. But before declaring open war, he engaged in tremendous penances to win the god Shiva's favour. Shiva mollified by Hiranyakasipu's devotion, granted him the boon that he should be killed neither by day nor night, neither by man nor beast, neither inside nor outside a building, nor by anything animate or inanimate. Confiding in Shiva's promise, Hiranyakasipu conquered the world and defied the gods. To destroy him the gods took the following course of action. The divine sage Narada or Naradmuni visited Hiranyakasipu's palace, just as the latter's queen was about to give birth to a son.

Into the unborn son Narada managed to instil an unalterable devotion to Vishnu. At the same time he bestowed on him the gift of immortality. When born the boy was named Pralhad and after a few years his father handed him over to the care of a demon preceptor named Shandamark. But in a short time the pedagogue sent the prince royal back to the demon king, complaining that whenever his back was turned, Pralhad induced all his fellow pupils to join him in the worship of Vishnu.

His son's love for Vishnu, the slayer of Hiranyaksh, enraged Hiranyakasipu. He began to torture Pralhad in every conceivable way. He gave him poison, flung thunder bolts at his head, but all to no purpose because of the immortality conferred on him by Narada. At last Hiranyakasipu asked sarcastically "Where is this Vishnu whom you love so much?" "He is everywhere" answered the boy. "Is he in that pillar?" asked Hiranyakasipu pointing to a column in the palace hall. "Yes; he is" replied Pralhad. "Then why does he not dare to come out?" sneered the demon king. The words had no sooner left his lips than the pillar burst asunder and Vishnu in a form that was half lion, half man and therefore neither man nor beast, sprang out and seized Hiranyakasipu and carried him to the threshold, that was neither inside nor outside a building. There he tore him to pieces with his lion's claws that were neither animate nor inanimate. At the time of Hiranyakasipu's death, it was twilight and therefore neither day nor night. Thus Shiva's boon did not protect his worshipper.

Vishnu's fifth incarnation was a dwarf (Waman). Pralhad had a son called Bali, who instead of following in his father's footsteps became like his grandfather a sworn foe

of the gods. He also by worshipping Shiva, reached the sovereignty of the world and defied the celestials. Vishnu to destroy him, entered the womb of the wife of Kashyapa the rishi and was born as a tiny dwarf. In this guise he made his way to the palace of king Bali and craved a boon. King Bali asked what it should be. The dwarf replied that he wanted as much land as he could cover in three strides. The wicked king laughingly consented. Then Vishnu grew until he filled the whole horizon. The same day he covered in his first stride the earth. The second day he covered in his second stride the heavens ; and on the third day with his third stride he stamped King Bali into Hell.

Vishnu's sixth incarnation was Parasu Rama or Rama with the axe. Vishnu's enemy this time was Kartavirya, the king of the Haihyas who had been endowed by Dattatraya with a thousand arms and a golden chariot, which went wherever he wished. Elated by these gifts, Kartavirya began to oppress the rishis or holy sages and defy the gods. Vishnu, therefore, descended on earth to destroy him. The story of his birth is as follows. One Gachi, the incarnation of Indra, had a daughter Satyavati. An aged Brahman, named Richika, the descendant of Bhrigu, married her. For a long time they were childless. Then Richika made a dish of rice, barley and pulse mixed with butter and milk for his wife. If she ate it, he said, she would give birth to a boy, who would grow up a pious Brahman. Satyavati asked Richika to prepare a similar magic dish for her mother, who desired a son also. Richika did so and when he gave it to his wife, he said to her that her mother would after eating it conceive not a Brahman, but a warlike prince. When Richika had left the hermitage, Satyavati told her mother what Richika had said and

invited her to eat the dish prepared for her. For some reason the mother did not wish to have a martial son and begged Satyavati to give her her dish. Satyavati consented and mother and daughter exchanged dishes. When Richika returned and saw what they had done, he grew very angry with his wife and told her that as she had eaten her mother's dish, she would bear a warlike son while her mother would bear a peaceful Brahman. Satyavati, who was as averse from a warlike son as her mother, implored Richika's pardon and induced him to relent so far as to let her have a gentle Brahman for a son and to postpone the martial qualities to her grandson. She gave birth to Jamadagni, who in due time took a wife by name Renuka by whom he had five sons. The youngest was Rama, Vishnu's incarnation. The god Shiva gave him an axe or parasu and so he came to be known as Parasu Rama or Rama with the axe. This has been corrupted into the modern name Parashrama.

One day Renuka went to bathe. As she bathed she saw one prince Chitraratha, playing with his wife in the water. Renuka envied the wife her stalwart husband. She returned home and confessed her thoughts to her own husband. Although she had been guilty in thought only, Jamadagni resolved to put her to death. He ordered his four eldest sons one after the other to kill their mother. They refused. Jamadagni cursed them, so that they became idiots. At last he asked his youngest son Rama to kill his mother. The latter at once took up his axe and struck her head off. Jamadagni was so pleased that he told his son to ask for three boons. Rama asked for—

- (1) His mother's restoration to life.
- (2) His brothers' restoration to sanity.
- (3) Invincibility in battle and long life for himself.

Some time after this incident a certain king Kartavirya who had 100 arms came to Jamadagni's hermitage, where he was hospitably entertained by Jamadagni's wife. The ungrateful guest, however, repaid her hospitality by stealing the calf of a wonderful cow that Jamadagni possessed. This cow had the power to produce not only milk, but also any other food or dish that its owner wanted. The wife complained to Jamadagni, who in turn complained to his son Rama. The latter thereupon sought out Kartavirya and cutting off his hundred arms killed him. During the fight, however, Kartavirya's sons attacked Jamadagni's hermitage and killed Jamadagni. When Parasu Rama returned home and learnt of his father's death, he not only killed all Kartavirya's sons but also all the Kshatriyas or warriors then on earth.

The seventh incarnation of Vishnu was the hero Rama or Ramachandra* whose doings are related in the great Sanskrit epic the Ramayana. Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya, had three wives—Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. By Kaushalya he had a son Rama or Ramachandra, by Kaikeyi he had a son Bharata and by Sumitra he had two sons Laxman and Shatrughna. Rama was the eldest of the four princes and when Dasharatha grew old, he resolved to resign his throne to him. Unhappily Kaikeyi, instigated thereto by the malice of a humpbacked maid-servant Manthara, induced king Dasharatha to give the throne to his younger son Bharata. To prevent Rama from disputing this decree, the king exiled him into the forest for fourteen years. Rama obeyed his father's order and went into exile, accompanied by his wife

* For a full account of Ramachandra see "The Indian Heroes." (Oxford University Press.)

Sita and his younger brother Laxman. At Rama's departure king Dasharatha fell dead of grief. The ministers sent for Bharata, who was absent from the capital. When he reached it and heard that his brother had been disinherited and exiled, he followed Rama into the forest and begged him to take his inheritance. But Rama would not dishonour his father's word and to avoid further importunity journeyed as far south as Nasik on the banks of the Godavari, where he built a hut for himself and Sita and Laxman. Bharata then returned to Ayodhya, but would not assume the crown. He acted as Rama's regent and put Rama's sandals on the throne and standing behind it held the royal umbrella over them and fanned them with the royal horsetails, so that there should be no mistake as to his true office. One day as Rama, Laxman and Sita were sitting by the door of their cottage, a hideous rakshasi or demon woman called Surpanakha came up and falling in love with Rama asked him to marry her. At the same time, jealous of Sita, she rushed at her and tried to kill her. Laxman however cut off deftly her nose and ears with his sword and sent her howling to the court of her brother Ravan, king of Ceylon. When Ravan saw Surpanakha's state, he called to his help another demon called Maricha. Maricha turned himself into a beautiful stag with gold antlers and a shining skin and strayed close to the hermitage. Princess Sita on seeing the stag, felt a mad wish to have it and sent first Rama and then Laxman after it. They chased it and in the end killed it, but in their absence Ravan who was hovering above the hermitage in his aerial car alighted, seized Sita and carried her off to Lanka.

When Rama and Laxman returned they searched everywhere for the missing princess, but could not find her. At last Jatayu, the king of the vultures, who had tried as Rama's friend to save Sita and had been cut down by Ravan, told them what had happened. The two brothers went southwards. On the way they met a band of monkeys to whom Sita had thrown her scarf and jewellery, as she flew overhead. The monkeys, who were themselves exiles from the monkey kingdom of Kiskindha made, on hearing the princes' story, a treaty with them. By it the princes should help them to recover Kiskindha and they should help in the recovery of Sita. Agreeably to this treaty the monkeys helped by Rama and Laxman conquered Kiskindha and then crossing the Palk Straits besieged Lanka. Ravan finding himself hard pressed, challenged Rama to single combat. Rama accepted the challenge and killed Ravan, rescued Sita and took her and Laxman back with him to Ayodhya in the very aerial car, in which Ravan had carried her off. At Ayodhya Bharata handed back to Rama the kingdom, over which he had ruled as regent. Thereafter Rama ruled in great splendour for many years. When he died Ravan's aerial car once more descended and took Rama and his brothers to Vishnu's heaven.

The eighth incarnation was Krishna*, the most popular of all. He was the son of Vasudev, son of Shursena, king of the Yadavs and of Devaki a cousin of Kansa, king of Mathura. This Kansa was really the chief of the demons, who then oppressed the earth and it was to kill him and his allies that Vishnu took human form. Kansa came

* For a full account of Krishna's life, see book "Shri Krishna of Dwarka," (Tataporewala & Co.)

to know that Devaki's eighth child would kill him, so he threw her and her husband into prison and killed her first six children. Krishna her eighth child was Vishnu's incarnation. By his divine power he compelled the prison gates to open and commanded Vasudev his father to carry him out of Mathura across the Jamna to the camp of a cowherd called Nanda. There he and his elder brother Balarama, Devaki's seventh child, who had also contrived to escape, grew up as ordinary herdsmen's children. They played with the cattle, stole butter and milk and got into various forms of childish mischief. When Krishna and Balarama grew older, they developed heroic strength and courage and cleared the countryside of demons and monsters. Krishna's greatest fight was with the serpent Kaliya, a great sea serpent that had made its dwelling in a deep pool in the Jamna. At last they felt themselves strong enough to go to Mathura and kill king Kansa. After the death of their enemy Krishna remained some time at Mathura. Then he went to the sea coast of Kathiawar where he built Dwarka.

Krishna played a great part in the Mahabharata epic. It relates the struggle between the sons of Pandu and those of Dhritarashtra, two brothers who had both been kings of Hastinapura. Krishna took the side of the sons of Pandu and acted as Arjun's charioteer in the battle of Kurukshetra. It was mainly through Krishna's skill and advice that the sons of Pandu won the day.

Krishna's end was brought about by the conduct of his son Samb, who imprudently incurred the wrath of the terrible rishi Vishvamitra. Samb dressed himself up as a young married woman and asked Vishvamitra

whether his first child would be a boy or a girl. Vishvamitra who saw through the disguise, told his questioner that he would give birth to an iron club that would destroy his race. The prophecy came true. Samb found a club in his clothes, when he took them off to resume his male attire. To avert the calamity he had the clubhead ground to powder and the powder and the clubhandle thrown into the sea. But the powder germinated and from it grew reeds all along the seashore. A fish swallowed the handle. A fisherman caught the fish and finding the handle in its stomach sold it as a piece of iron to a hunter named Jara, who made it into an arrow head. One day the youth of Dwarka went with Balarama and Krishna on a pilgrimage to Prabhosa. There they got drunk and began to fight, killing each other first with their arrows and then with the reeds that had germinated from the powder. At last only Balarama and Krishna remained alive. Then Balarama died of grief. Krishna overcome with sorrow, went and sat alone under a gigantic tree. Just then Jara the hunter, who had been following a deer, saw Krishna and thinking him to be the deer that he had been tracking, shot him in the foot with the very arrow made by him out of the handle of Samb's club. Krishna died and shortly afterwards a tidal wave overwhelmed Dwarka.

Vishnu's ninth incarnation is Buddha, the founder of the Buddhist religion ; but, except in one or two small tracts on the borders of Nepaul, he is not now worshipped in India.

Vishnu's tenth incarnation is still to come. He will be called Kalki or Kalanki. At some remote date he will appear riding a white horse, drive the wicked from the world and restore the golden age.



शोकरीमं धन

VISHNU, LAXMI, BRAHMADEV AND THE SERPENT SHESHA.
To face p. 18.

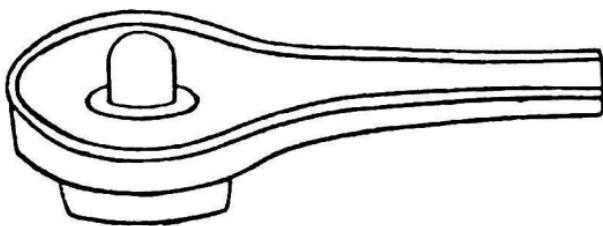
CHAPTER III.

HOW TO RECOGNISE THE GODS.

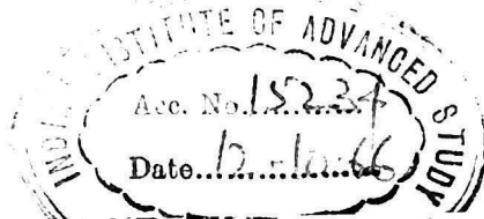
Now that we have read the stories told of the chief gods of the Hindus, it remains for us to apply our knowledge.

Let us first go to a temple. Brahma has, as I have said, only one temple in all India, so the temple we are going to is not likely to be his. Let us therefore rule him out. The temple will in all probability be either Shiva's or Vishnu's or one of Vishnu's incarnations.

The first thing to do is to look whether there is a bull in the courtyard or not. If there is, the temple belongs to Shiva. Always facing Shiva's temple is an image of his servant Nandi or Nandikeshwar. Next look inside the shrine and you will see a stone mark somewhat as under (see plate 1). Shiva never has an image in his



temple. There is an old legend that the sage Bhrigu, sent by other rishis to determine who was the greatest of the gods, was slighted both by Brahma and Shiva. He cursed the former that he should receive no worship at all and the other that he should never be honoured by an image. The stone mark shewn above





KRISHNA (AS FLUTE PLAYER). (Plate 2.)



KRISHNA IN CHILDHOOD. (*Plate 3.*)

is Shiva's mystic symbol and is known as the lingam or Pindi. Near the Pindi is usually a female image. That will be Parvati. Now suppose there is no bull in the courtyard ; then the god of the temple will not be Shiva, but most probably either Vishnu or one of his incarnations. The only incarnations that are honoured with temples are Rama and Krishna. The temple will thus be either Vishnu's or Rama's or Krishna's. The surest way to find out who of the three is the temple god, is to peep inside the shrine. If there is one male figure and one female figure, the temple will be Vishnu's. The male figure will be Vishnu, the female figure will be his single wife Laxmi. If there are two male figures and one female figure, the temple will be Rama's. On Rama's right is always his brother Laxman and on his left is his wife Sita. If there is one male figure flanked on each side by a female figure, the temple is Krishna's. The male figure is Krishna. The lady on his right is his chief queen Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhishmak ; the lady on his left is his second wife Satyabhama, the daughter of king Satrajit. If the temple is Vishnu's, the shrine will be faced by a small shrine of Garud, Vishnu's eagle. Garud was the son of king Kasyapa and queen Vinat and was given immortality by Vishnu, because he helped in recovering the ambrosia from the Snake people. Since then he has been Vishnu's faithful servant and carries him everywhere, just as the bull Nandi carries Shiva.

If the temple belongs to Rama, there will be an image of Maruti, the Commander-in-Chief of the monkey army that helped Rama to conquer Lanka.

But the temple may not belong either to Shiva,



GARUD. (*Plate 4.*)



VISHNU AND LAXMI. (*Plate 5.*)

Vishnu or any of the latter's incarnations. It may then, perhaps, belong to Maruti or to Ganpati or to some of the lesser gods. I shall deal with the lesser gods in a later chapter. But Maruti and Ganpati can be easily recognised, the former by his monkey form (see plate 6) and the latter by his elephant head.

Now let us leave the temples and come to brass images. Although Shiva's image is not to be found in any temple, brass images of him are quite common. The surest way to find out whether the image is Shiva's or not is to look at his hair. If the hair is done up in a coil, then it is Shiva. Inside the coil is, as I have said, imprisoned the Ganges river. Vishnu's image has always a crown.

Over his head is, as a rule, although not invariably, a snake with several heads and the god is seated with one leg folded under the other. Vishnu should have in his four hands a club, a lotus, a discus and his Panchajanya or war conch. Shiva has a trident, a *shankh* or war horn and an ascetic's pot. But these do not afford a safe guide owing to the ignorance of the image makers, who often confuse the articles that the gods hold in their hands. Vishnu's images are not as a rule added to one of Laxmi but they sometimes are (see plate 5). But images of Rama are usually flanked by Laxman, and Sita and those of Krishna by Rukmini and Satyabhama. Krishna, however, is also reproduced in images in a number of other ways. The most common image is that of Krishna playing on the flute (murlidhar or flute-player). He is holding the flute to his lips with both hands. (See plate 2.) Another common image is that of Krishna as a tiny boy. He is crawling along the ground on his knees and on one hand. In the other



MARUTI. (*Plate 6.*)

hand he holds a pot of butter which he has just stolen. (See plate 3.) Round his stomach is a rope, by which his mother has tied him getting into mischief. Hence his name Damodar (or tied by the stomach). A third common image shews Krishna fighting Kaliya the great snake of the Yamuna. The image is that of an athletic boy grappling with a serpent.

Maruti's and Ganpati's images require no further examination. They will be at once recognised.

Garud's image is that of a man with an eagle's face and with wings on his shoulders. (See plate 4.)

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER GODS.

Now let us suppose that all the tests given in the preceding chapter fail and that the god is neither Shiva, nor an incarnation of Vishnu nor Nandi, nor Maruti nor Ganpati nor Garud. I would then ask my reader to see

whether the image or idol has three heads
Datta- and six arms. If it has, then the god is

traya. Dattatraya. Dattatraya is not really a separate god, but the joint incarnation of Shiva, Brahma dev and Vishnu (see frontispiece). He was the son of the sage Atri. Atri was married to the virtuous Anasuya and the couple lived in a hermitage deep in the forest. After Ramachandra's exile, he, Sita and Laxman made their way to Atri's home, where the sage and his wife welcomed them. After seeing the sweetness and faithfulness of Sita, Anasuya offered her a boon. But Sita wanted nothing. Anasuya then gave her as a present some rare ointment, which bestowed beauty on all who used it. Sita and Ramachandra afterwards praised Anasuya's virtues so warmly, that the three great goddesses Parvati, Sarasvati and Laxmi grew jealous of her and sent their three husbands Shiva, Brahma dev and Vishnu to lead Anasuya astray. When the three gods came into the presence of her perfect virtue, all their evil thoughts vanished and they became babies, who crawled along Anasuya's floor. After some time the three goddesses went to look for their husbands and found instead three helpless infants, so like each other that they could not tell one from the other. Owning themselves beaten, they begged Anasuya to give them back

their husbands. Anasuya did so on condition that she should be permitted to bear a son, who should be the incarnation of all three. The condition was accepted and the gods recovered their former stature. In due course Anasuya gave birth to Dattatraya. It will be seen from the picture that he carries in his hands the trident, water-pot and warhorn of Shiva and the mace, discus and lotus of Vishnu. The central head has the sect mark (not the

caste mark as often incorrectly stated) of Vishnu



The other two figures have the Shivaite sect marks



which represent the moon. It is impossible to say which is Brahmaev and which Shiva. The four dogs stand for the four vedas or gospels. The cow in the background represents the earth. The six arms are supposed to stand for the six Shastras or sciences.

Dattatraya has a well known temple on the northern outskirts of Poona.

Suppose however that the god has not six arms and three heads, I would ask my readers to see if he has twelve arms and six heads. If **Kartik-swami.** he has, then he is Kartikeya or Kartikswami.

He is the generalissimo of the celestial armies. Several stories are related of his origin. The commonest one is that he was brought into the world to destroy a demon named Tarika, king of Tripura, who by his austerities threatened the thrones of Indra and other lesser gods. He has six heads, twelve eyes, arms and feet. He is always shewn as riding a peacock. Kartikswami has a fine temple on the top of Parvati hill near Poona.

Perhaps the reader will on asking a by-stander, be told that the temple before him is Vithoba's. If

Vithoba. that is so, the reader already knows all about him. According to Sir R. Bhandarkar,

Vithoba is simply a Canarese version of Vishnu. According to popular tradition Vithoba is simply he who stood upon a brick. But in either case Vithoba is Krishna. The principal seat of his worship is at Pandharpur on the banks of the Bhima river. Elsewhere I have told at length* why Krishna went there. The tale is shortly as follows. Krishna and his chief queen Rukmini quarrelled. Rukmini ran away to Pandharpur. Krishna followed and they were reconciled. They went together to the house of one Pundalik. This Pundalik had at one time been a very bad son, but he had repented and had become a model one. He was at the time looking after his parents. Unwilling to leave his parents' service even to welcome a god, he threw him a brick to stand on. Krishna, so far from being offended, stood on the brick and waited patiently until Pundalik came out to greet him. Then he bade him build a temple at Pandharpur. This is the most famous temple to Vithoba. Twice a year in Ashad (June-July) and Kartik (October-November), thousands of pilgrims go to Pandharpur from all parts of the Deccan. But there are other temples to Vithoba also. Vithoba's image is just the ordinary one of Krishna and is flanked by his two wives Rukmini and Satyabhama.

Just as Vithoba is another name for Krishna, so Bhairav or Bahiroba is another name for Shiva.

Bhairav. It means the terrible one and is an appellation for the god Shiva in his terrible aspect,

* See Tales of the Saints of Pandharpur.

e.g., when he is dancing the Tandawa measure wrapped in his tiger skin.

If the reader goes some twelve miles north of Poona to Alandi, he will be told there that Dnyandev **Dnyandev.** is the chief object of worship. Dnyandev, Nivratti, Sopana and Muktabai were the four children of one Vithoba, a Brahman of Apegaon. They were also incarnations respectively of Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma-dev and Laxmi. Vithoba was outcasted by the Alandi Brahmans for returning to the life of a householder, after he had taken the vows of an anchorite. When his sons grew up, the Alandi Brahmans refused to admit them into caste. Dnyandev, however, by his miracles, obtained a cancellation of this refusal. He eventually buried himself alive at Alandi, which has become sacred in consequence. It was also the scene of his most famous miracle. One Changdev tried to put him to shame by riding on a tiger. Dnyandev met the challenge by mounting a wall and making it run forward to meet the tiger. The wall is still piously preserved. Dnyandev's brother Sopana made Saswad below Purandar fort sacred by burying himself alive there, and Nivratti did the same to Trimbakeshwar close to Nasik. Muktabai vanished in a flash of lightning on the banks of the Tapti.

Perhaps my readers have when motoring along the Deccan roads, seen sometimes a ring of white-washed stones. If they have, then they have seen one of Vetal's temples. Vetal and his brother Mhasoba are not very respectable gods. No high caste Hindu will readily admit that he worships them. They are really ghost kings rather than gods; still Vetal's ring is to be

**Vetal and
Mhasoba.**

found outside most Deccan villages. The circle of stones that form the ring are Vetal's sowars or mounted guard. Just inside the circle is a larger stone called Bhangya Bawa, their jemadar or lieutenant. In the middle of the circle are two larger whitewashed stones. These are Vetal and Mhasoba. Twice every month on the full moon and the new moon, Vetal rides abroad in state and will grant any favour to any mortal who meets him and boldly asks for it. Vetal's chief day is Mahashivratri, the fourteenth day of the dark half of Magh (January-February). Sorcerers and wrestlers are his principal votaries, but high caste Hindus sometimes do him homage.

Mhasoba is sometimes worshipped alone. There is a small shrine to him on the right side of the Ganeshkind road, just beyond the Bhamburda cross roads. In a case tried by me as Judge of Poona, a murderer confessed to me that before her crime, she had invoked the aid of this particular Mhasoba.

The chief seat of Khandoba's worship is at Jejuri in the Poona district. The legend is that **Khandoba**, some Brahmans were attacked and their property carried off by a demon called Malla. The Brahmans prayed to Shiva and he took the form of a warrior named Khandoba and slew the demon. Before he died Malla became a convert to Shaivism, whereupon both he and Khandoba were absorbed into Shiva. Khandoba had two wives Mhalsa and Banai and two ministers Hegadi, a Dhangar, and Pradhan, a Vani. Images of these as well as of Khandoba and Malla are to be seen at Jejuri. I do not know any other temple to

Khandoba. But brass images of Khandoba—a warrior with a spear riding a horse—are common in Poona. The dog is sacred to Khandoba and young girls are dedicated to him as *murlis* or temple girls.

Besides the foregoing gods the sun, moon and planets are also worshipped. The early Hindus like the early Greeks and Romans do not appear to have divided time into weeks, but only into fortnights corresponding with the waxing and waning of the moon. The Romans borrowed the days of the week from the Jews and the Hindus borrowed them from Romanised Egypt. At any rate Roman and Hindu days of the week exactly correspond.

Sunday (*solis dies*) is Raviwar, the day of Ravi or the sun.

Monday (*lunae dies*) is Somwar, the day of Soma, the moon.

Tuesday (*Martis dies*) is Mangalwar, the day of Mangal or Mars.

Wednesday (*Mercurii dies*) is Budhwar, the day of Budh or Mercury.

Thursday (*Jovis dies*) is Brihaspatiwar, the day of Brihaspati or Jupiter.

Friday (*Veneris dies*) is Shukrawar, the day of Shukra or Venus.

Saturday (*Saturni dies*) is Shaniwar, the day of Shani or Saturn.

Ravi, the sun, is also called Aditi or Aditya and more commonly Surya. Temples to him are common. They can be recognised by the image of the sungod inside. He is always represented as a male figure in a chariot. In front of

Ravi.

him stands his charioteer Aruna, the brother of Garud, and the chariot is drawn by a gigantic horse with six heads. The sungod's enemy is Rahu. He was the only demon who did not run after Vishnu, when the latter took the form of a beautiful woman and cheated the demons out of their share of the ambrosia. Rahu drank a sip of the ambrosia ; but before he could swallow it, the sungod brought his act to the notice of Vishnu. Vishnu instantly cut his head off with his flaming discus. The head having sipped the ambrosia became immortal while the trunk remained mortal and rotted. The head pursues the sungod with malignant enmity, trying to swallow him. Every now and then it succeeds in doing so, but as Rahu's head has no trunk, the sun emerges from his throat. This is the explanation given of solar eclipses. Another story is that Rahu swallowed the ambrosia and became wholly immortal. Vishnu's discus when it cut Rahu in two, created two immortal beings. The head is Rahu and the trunk became Ketu. Rahu causes solar eclipses and Ketu, behaving in a similar manner to the moon, causes lunar eclipses.

Soma, the moon, is more commonly called Chandra. He, (the moon is masculine in India just as in Germany) was one of the articles that came out of the ocean when it was churned, just as Laxmi did. *Budh* or *Mercury* is said to be the child of Tara, the wife of Brihaspati, by Soma. Tara confessed to her husband her improper conduct and was at once reduced to ashes. Brahma dev afterwards raised her to life and induced Brihaspati to take her back as she had been purified by fire. The ocean from whom Soma had sprung was angry with him, be-

cause he had seduced Tara and drove him from heaven ; but Shiva at Parvati's intercession put Soma on his own forehead and in this way brought him back to heaven. Shiva's pictures often shew the moon in his hair and his sect mark stands for the crescent moon.

Brihaspati, or Jupiter, is said to be the preceptor of the gods.

Shukra or Venus is not a lady in Hindu mythology, but the son of the sage Bhrigu. He is blind of one eye. He was the preceptor of king Bali. When Vishnu took the form of a dwarf and went to Bali's court, Shukra saw through his disguise. He implored king Bali not to promise the dwarf anything. Bali, however, would not heed his advice and ordered his priest to pour out a libation of water to ratify his gift. Shukra contrived to enter the vessel of water and to stop the water from pouring out. Vishnu, however, met this device by putting a straw through the vessel which entered Shukra's eye. The pain was so acute, that Shukra fled from the vessel. The water fell, the gift was ratified and Bali was ruined.

Shani or Saturn is said to have a most evil influence. I have already described how his mere glance burnt off Ganpati's head. His influence on human affairs is most inauspicious. The Marathi phrase "Shani tyachya potat shirala" (Shani has entered his stomach) is equivalent to saying that a man has been utterly ruined.

CHAPTER V.

THE VEDIC DEITIES.

THE Vedic deities are not worshipped in modern India except in certain special ceremonies. They are, however, often referred to in poetry. A short account of them, is, therefore, necessary.

The chief of them is undoubtedly *Indra*. He is the god of the sky and above all of the rain. It was he who secured the lion's share of the articles that rose out of the ocean when it was churned. He took Airavata the elephant and he always rides on it, Rambha, the beautiful dancing girl, Uchaisrava, the snow white horse, and the Parijata tree that grants every wish to the owner. Indra is armed with a thunderbolt in his right hand and a bow in his left. He has however fallen on evil days and is no longer worshipped. The cause of his downfall is said to have been his attempt to carry off Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama. Gautama caught him in flagrant delict and cursed him so that he broke out into a thousand sores. He also cursed Ahalya, so that she turned into stone, and the moon (who had helped Indra), so that the moon's face became smeared with black marks. Eventually Ramachandra restored Ahalya to life by touching the stone into which she had turned, with his foot. Having done so, he induced Gautama to pardon her. Thereafter Indra asked Gautama to remit his punishment also. The sage changed the god's thousand sores into eyes, but as a punishment for his unworthy behaviour decreed that he should no longer receive any worship. The moon then asked for pardon, but he did not receive it; as in the opinion of Gautama he had acted

out of sheer malice. The result is that his face still has the black marks that Englishmen commonly refer to as the man in the moon. Indra's wife is Indrani or Sachi.

Vayu is the god of the winds. He is represented in pictures as a "white man riding upon a deer and carrying a white flag on his head." *The Maruts* are the storm gods and are the companions of Indra.

Parjanya, the god of the clouds. He is hardly distinguishable from Indra.

Ushas is the dawn goddess (*rododaktulos eos*).

The Aswins are the physicians of the gods. They appear to correspond with the Dioscuri, Macaulay's great twin brethren. They were the sons of the sun and *Sanjna*.

Varuna was certainly at one time lord of the sky (*ouranos*). But in the days of the epics he had become lord of the sea, a Hindu Neptune. Wilkins affirms that he is worshipped in seasons of drought and by fishermen when they cast their nets. I have never come across any instance of this.

Yama is the god of death and judges the dead, allotting them their rewards and punishments. In the story of Savitri and Satyavan in the Mahabharata, Yama is described as a giant in bloodred garments with a noose in his hand and a glittering crown on his head.

Visvakarma is the architect and builder of the gods, the Hindu Vulcan or Hephaistos.

Sura is the wine goddess. She, like Rambha, Airavata, Laxmi, etc., rose out of the ocean when it was churned.

Soma was the Vedic Bacchus. He was the juice of the Soma plant (*Asclepias acida*) deified.

Agni is the god of fire. In pictures he is shown as having three legs and seven arms. He rides a ram.

Kubera is the god of wealth. It was he who owned the aerial car in which Ravan carried off Sita. Kubera was lord of Lanka but Ravan having obtained the boon of invincibility from Brahma dev conquered it and with it Kubera's wonderful car. He also forced Kubera to become his treasurer. Upon Ravan's destruction of Rama-chandra the latter restored the car to Kubera.

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