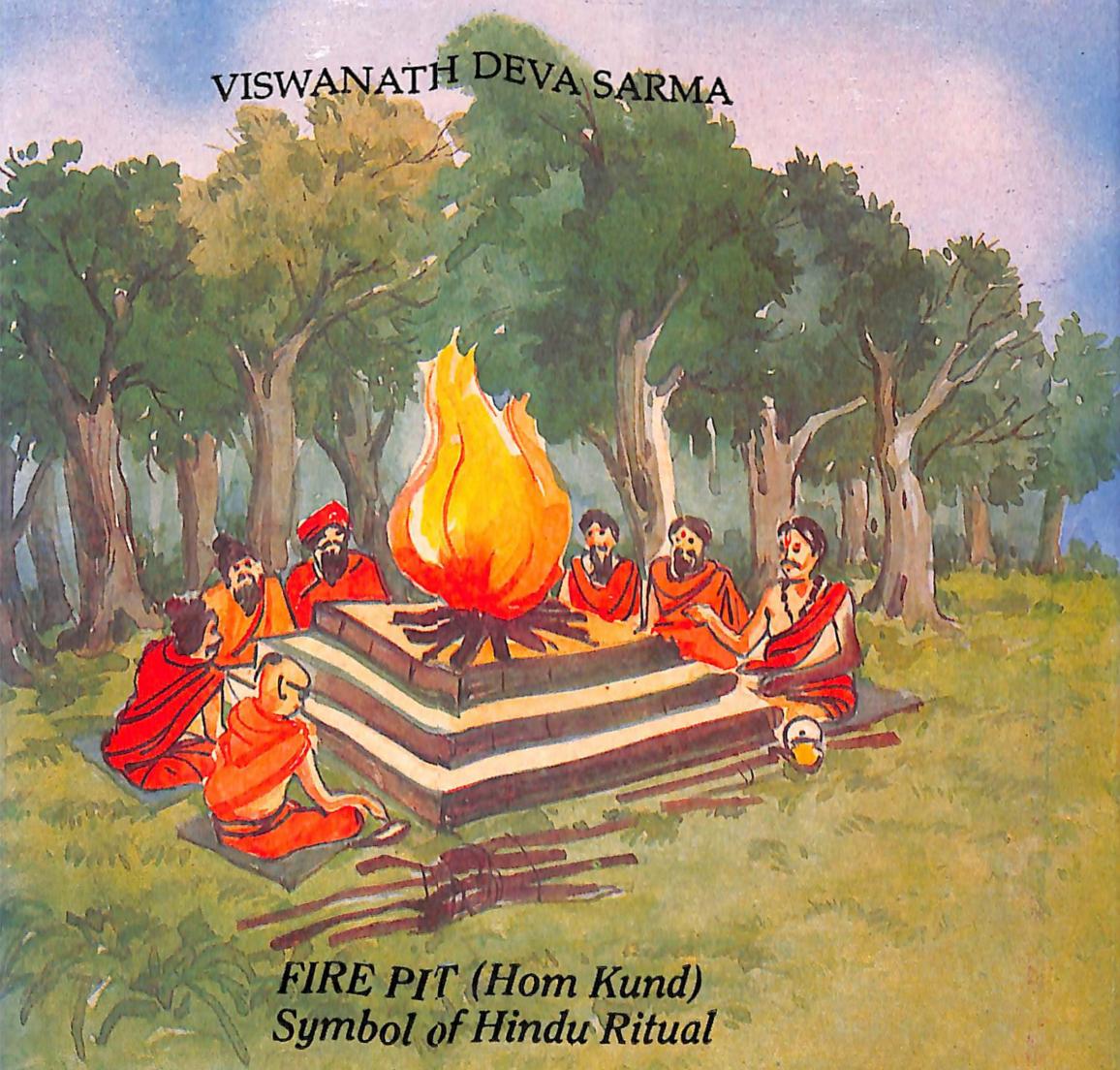


THE HINDU RITUALS

VISWANATH DEVA SARMA



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KNOWLEDGE OF HINDU RITUALS
IS ESSENTIAL TO KNOW HINDUISM



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Presented to

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Founder of
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P R E F A C E

A Hindu ritual is an art of expression of Sanatana Dharma.

Dharma is derived from "Dhri" (meaning to hold or bind). It is the inner virtue of love, tolerance and other ethical human behaviour that bind men together in a society in high civilisation and culture.

Dharma of fire is to burn and that of water is to flow. It is the same truth everywhere and everytime. Therefore, Dharma of man either in India or elsewhere abroad should be the same. The eternal and unchangeable human virtues are Sanatana Dharma.

Dharma is said to be religion in English. Dharma is, however, distinct from religion. Religion is derived from the latin Religio which means obligations, bond, reverence, etc. Just as there are diverse languages, thoughts and faiths, similarly, men formed into different Sampradayas or sections into groups or into a religion with dogmatic beliefs and dispersions and framed rules and rituals that suit them. Since there is no appropriate word for Dharma in English, the word religion to express Dharma, is used in this book as a compromise for popular understanding.

Emerged from Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism grew into distinct religion.. In this book, in the Introduction - II there is an attempt to draw out their beliefs in brief that may help a comparative study in them. Since they emerge from Sanatana Dharma there is affinity in their culture which reveals unity in diversity.

In course of time Sanatana Dharma, grew different Sampradayas or section. They follow different culture and rituals which are known as Hinduism and Hindu culture. The Hindu rituals follow Vedic disciplines. They are levers in the ladder of civilisation and culture to rise in the attempt for spiritual progress, perfection and peace in steps with time and in tune with nature.

Time is dynamic. The Sun and the Moon move in the space since unknown time, make days and nights, seasons and years, and help to measure time as well as help in revealing cosmic laws and cosmic evolution in life and nature. Since nature is expressive by time, the ideas of nature in consonance with the ideas of time help in selection of auspicious moments for rituals.

Among the different Sampradayas or the sections of the Hindus there are too many rituals all through the year. Some of the rituals are highly rich in philosophy and their mystic practices and processes are beyond comprehension of the average. Some of them are unquestionably based on the truths of philosophy and facts of science. There are rituals in groups or in community, traditional, or individual worship or puja. In this book only a few puja, Brata or ceremony as ritual have been treated helpful to have a glimpse into the art and activities of the Hindu rituals. They are purposive behaviour and effective in life when the auspicious time, the processes and performances and Mantra are in synthesis.

This book is a compilation of several articles on different Hindu rituals with Tantra, Mantra and timing which were published in different journals in India and abroad. It is hoped that this book will meet curiosities of those who missed them but are eager to know them. Further materials regarding time, the Signs, and Naksatra are available in my book Astrology and Jyotirvidya (Fundamental Principles).

I am grateful to Sri Arun Kumar Lahiri and Sri Manoj Kumar Lahiri of Astro Research Bureau, 17 Brindaban Mallick 1st Lane, Calcutta 700 009, for their emphatic insistence in compiling this book and every assistance in getting the book printed.

Calcutta 1992,

Viswanath Deva Sarma

INTRODUCTION - I

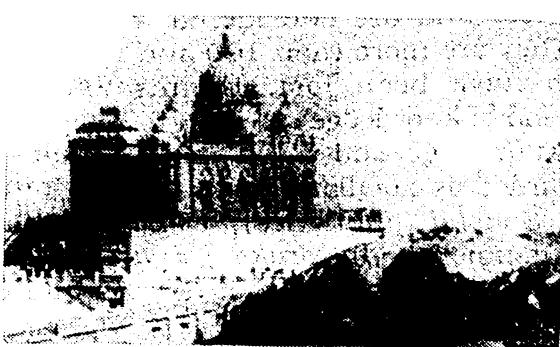
The land of Sanatan Dharma

Down the slopes of the Himalayas, the abode of snows, further down the slopes of the Vindhya are the ends of the peninsula. The placid waters of the sea of Arab bordering the west and the rough waters of the sea of Bengal bordering the east meet here and roll into the Indian Ocean.

You stand at the farthest point of the cape facing the ocean. You see the waves of the ocean with waters of the seas come in rolls and rush and thrust the coast bursting into terrific roars and rumblings sprinkling foam and waters like dusts high up all around you. You feel that you are alone. The waves roll back and again they come, again the same deafening sound and again they roll back.

As the roll recede; you hear, if you have ears to hear, the sound rising from the deepest bosom of the ocean, the primordial and perennial **NĀDA** (Sound)-'AUM' (I am the creator, I am the sustainer, I am the destroyer to create a new one).....'AUM' ...

It is the sacred land whose history is obscure. Early geography also changed into dales and vales, rivers and land with wonderful fertility and different soil and climes. It is **BHARAT**, the land of *Sāntana Dharma*, and now the land is popularly known as India.



Rock temple in Indian Ocean (Swami Vivekananda)

The Vedas

During thousands of years of growth in civilisation the intellectuals and the philosophers of the land who were sages and seers unveiled the esoteric workings of nature, the mystery that underlie the entire creation, the cosmic evolution with all the objects of nature and creatures minutest or largest. Their studies and teachings descended as *Sruti* (by hearing) from adepts to disciples.

Later on Srutis were compiled and recorded as the *Vedas* (knowledge) in several parts. The *Vedas* are comprehensive knowledge of human life and nature in all aspects.

Divisions of the Vedas

Rishi Vyās divided the *Sruti* into *Samhitā* (collections) and gave one to each of his disciples : *Rig Veda* to Paila, *Sām Veda* to Jaimini, *Yajur Veda* to Baisampāyana and *Atharva Veda* to Sumanta.

Samhitā are collections of hymns, prayers, incantations, benedictions, sacrificial formulas and litanies.

Further divisions of the *Vedas* are —

Brāhmaṇas. They are prose texts containing theological matters specially observations on sacrifices, practical and mystical significance of the separate sacrificial rites and ceremonies.

Aranyā ka. They are forest texts about meditations of forest hermits and ascetics on God, the world and people.

Upanisad. Derived from the Sanskrit root *SAD* 'to sit' with prefixes *UPA* and *NI* which means sitting at the feet of the master respectfully and listening to him. They are hidden mysteries about life and nature and are given to those who are capable to understand them and are considered worthy of continuing the culture. They are more than 100 and many of them are speculated to have been lost. *Upanisads* are considered as *Vedā nīta* (end of knowledge).

Vedāṅga. *Ved* means knowledge and *anga* means limbs. Therefore, *Vedāṅga* is regarded as ancillary works divided into six sections, viz., (1) *Sikshā* (phonetics); (2) *Chhanda* (Prosody); (3) *Vyākāran* (grammar); (4) *Nirukta* (Etymology) ; (5) *Jyotirvidyā* (knowledge to visualise life and nature) ; and (6) *Kalpa* (Vedic rituals).

Kalpa deals with domestic rituals of daily and family life from birth to death. They are regarded as *Sam skāra* (reformation). Among them the important rituals are -

Bibāha or marriage and *Saptapadi* - a ceremony in taking oath before God in all forms and persons present accepting the responsibilities of household duties and performing social ethics entrusted to the couple and in taking seven steps by the couple for activities in spirit and mind.

Pumsaban (rite) aiming to have a progeny as one may choose since father and mother are creators, so they can create any good or bad progeny as they may choose depending on their knowledge of life and nature.

Nāmakarān (naming the child). Name or the sound that expresses the ideals and behaviour of the life.

Annaprāsana a ceremony in giving rice or solid food to the baby.

Upanayana a ceremony in giving 9 holy threads as symbols for culture of material and spiritual visions.

Gṛha Prabes - entry into home.

Srādh (Sraddhā) is to show respects with offerings to the departed soul, etc.

Texts of the Vedas

1. *Rig Veda Samhīta* is the knowledge of Gods and goddesses by songs in their praise.
2. *Sāmveda Samhīta* is the knowledge of music. They may be *Udātta* (loud) ; *Anudātta* (middle) and *Svarita* (low). Music has charm to captivate mind and, therefore, superior to all other knowledge.
3. *Yajurveda Samhīta* is the knowledge of the sacrificial formulas and they are two -
 - (i) *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* of which *Taitteriya* and *Mātrāyani Samhīta* are important.
 - (ii) *Śveta Yajurveda Samhīta* which is *Vajasanayi Samhīta*.
4. *Atharva Veda Samhīta* are remedial formulas and magic formulas. (magic means activities of the *Magi* or wise men).
5. *Smṛti*. They are the law books of the Hindus. *Manu Smṛiti* and *Yajnavalka Smṛiti* deals with religion, morality, politics, economics and law.
6. *Purān*. Mythological accounts and stories.

The main stems of the Vedas

1. The essence of all things is one Supreme Energy which pervades in every aspect of the universe, is an impersonal, immaterial, unborn and undying force. It is *Brahman*.

2. Individual souls are the eternal parts of the universe and they are termed *Ātman* (Soul). The apparent separateness between the universe and individual *Ātman* is *Māyā* (*Bhedabuddhi*, to believe unreal as real).
3. All the objects of nature are the manifestations of the Supreme Energy. They are *prakti* (Pra= going forth, + kṛ = action + ti = iti) Continuous evolution in them is the immutable law.
4. The effect of the fickle nature when in contact, within and without, incite our pains and pleasures, precisely, either with problems or opportunities as experiences in life.
5. Only through realisation or reabsorption of oneself into *Brahman* can one become free from the sensations of pains pleasures or fears and anxieties or even rebirth.
6. Activities are the incidence of life. Every person acts according to his soul, mind and the senses and produces his destiny as fortune or misfortune. For there cannot be result without action in the past. Thus each, life receives many experiences birth after birth and gradually shakes off illusions (*Māyā*) of separateness and proceeds towards self-purifications and perfection.

TANTRA

The Vedic knowledge is extended to *Tantra* (Tan = to spread + tra = to save) ; *Śāstra* (that which governs). *Tantra* are treatises (not scriptures) which spreads Vedic *Jnāna*.

Tantra Sastra deals with the Vedic disciplines regarding the mode of life and rituals that are to be followed in *Kalyuga* (modern age). *Tantra Sastra* prescribes processes and performances, activities to follow for a happy life on material world. *Mantra*, *Japa*, *Puja*, *Yajna*, *Yoga* are the practices of spiritual culture in the Hindu rituals according to *Tantra*.

The expositions of disciplines of *Tantra* by *Siva* is *Agam* and those of *Sakti* is *Nigam*.

Tantra cannot be learnt from books only. For *Tantra*, particularly in *Yoga* there is need for a *Guru* as teacher.

MANTRA

Mantra is a *Śakti* (Power) in the form of Sound.

In *Mantra*, *Maṇa* (mind) — *tra/ traṇa* means that which when treated gives relief to mind. *Mantra* is, therefore, a

thought movement (*Manan*) expressed in sound or speech (*Bāk*).

Manana is the creative power within. *Spandana* (vibration) is the vital cause of *Manan* (action of the mind) which manifests in sound (articulate or inarticulate). Manifestations are not possible unless *Sabda* (sound) exists in subtle (*suksma*) form. The sound is *Sabda Brahman*. Therefore, the entire universe is *Sabda Brahman*.

As it is in outer space, waves of sound are produced by movements of the air, so in the space within waves of sound are produced according to the movements of the vital air (*prāna-vāyu*) in the process of inhalation and exhalation.

The action of the mind strikes the *prāna-vāyu* and creates the sound. The sound first appears at *Mulādhāra* (at the bottom of the spine in the body, *Mul + ādhāra*). From *Muladhara* sound rises through the spine towards the cerebrum, *Sahasrār*, for realisation.

In this journey where consciousness and mind meet at *Samādhīsthāna* while rising, if the mind is not strong enough or if the determination is not potentially powerful, the sound does not reach consciousness and is lost on its way and there is no realisation. Realisation either strong or weak depends on the force of power of the mind.

A Mantra is composed of certain letters arranged in definite sequence of sound of which letters are representative signs. Mantra is the potent compelling force-word power in *Dhvani* (sound, unlettered) and *Varna* (lettered) and is thus effective in producing desired results.

All *Aksaras* (imperishable sounds) alphabets are *Yantra* (instrument of *Aksara*) and they are *Brahman*.

When Mantra is released and unites with consciousness of the person the union attains *Mantra Chaitanya*. Then the Mantra becomes effective. It turns into *Sakti*.

Tantrik Mantra is *Beeja Mantra* and so named because it is seed of fruit and it is the quintessence of Mantra. Tantriks explain that in the two lips, one is *Siva* and the other is *Sakti*, the utterance is the mithun of the two and the resultant child comes out and the *Beeja Mantra* works.

Mantra is *Saguna Brahman* which exists in the body of every individual (*Jivātmān*). Thus creative power (*Devi/Sakti*) created by letters manifests in effective results.

Mantra Siddhi means whatever the *Sādhaka* (worshipper) desires, he gets. Any set of words is not a *Mantra*. It may be a prayer or a hymn. Only that is *Mantra* in which *Devata* is revealed his or her particular aspect since *Mantra* and *Devata* are one.

Since *Mantra* is a *Sakti* (power) it is not to be used without direction or guidance of a practiced adept.

JAPA

Japa is repetition of, chanting of any holy name or any *Mantra* recommended by any *Guru* or any traditional cult. Repetition of the *Mantra* as *Japa* put impression in the mind with name and form or ideal of the *Mantra*. *Japa* guards intrusion of ill thoughts in mind.

PUJA BIDHI

(Rules for worship)

Puja (*Pu* = *Pusti/nourishment* + *Ja* = *Janam/birth*) literally, means activities for birth of nourishment to mind. Precisely, *Puja* means activities of a healthy mind.

Almost every Hindu home, rich or poor, provides a seat for *Devata* in any cosy corner in the home suitable for meditation. Here the daily *Puja* of any chosen deity is done individually by the inmates and usually before commencing the day's activities or at any convenient leisure hour that suits meditation and service before the deity. In absence of any deity, the Sun is the symbol of God. Alternatively, a pot with water and a twig with five leaves of mango tree or any other fruit (food) bearing tree is soaked in the pot (creative source and the five senses in Life) and a dot mark of *Sindur* (vermilion) on the pot (Symbol of virtuous duty) is the symbol of God. There may be three such dots side by side. The first represents the Sun (symbol of the Energy), the second represents the Moon (Symbol of mind) and the third represents *Siva-Sakti* (Maya).

The usual practice is to concentrate on name and form (*Nāma* and *Rupa*) of the *Devata* as visualised. It is impossible to visualise anything without any name and form. Try to realise the presence of *Devata* there within and without. Then the *Sādhaka* (the devotee) bows in deep obeisance at the feet of the *Devata* (or *Devi*) and seek for power to do his duty and prays for peace.

On special occasion the Puja is done with special offerings to devata with ten or sixteen *Upacāras*, viz., *Āsana* (seat of the image) *Ābhāna* (welcome) ; *Pāddya* (water for washing the feet); *Arghya* (unboiled rice, flower, sandel paste); *Durbā* (a specie of grass distinct from ordinary grass); *Ācmana* (water for sipping); *Madhuparka* (honey, milk, curd); *Snāna* (water for bathing); *Vasana* (cloth); *Puspa* (flower); *Dhupa* (incense); *Dipa* (lamp) ; *Naivedya* (offerings of food); and *Namaskāra* (bowing before the deity) and prayers..

Articles for the offerings vary according to *Pūjā* and the Devata, viz., *Tulsi* leaf for *Viṣṇu*, *Bael* leaf for *Śiva Pūjā*, etc.

For Kali Puja or Durga Puja, a team of trained priests are required who have knowledge of the formalities of the rituals, knowledge of the Vedas, knowledge of time and nature, Mantra and Tantrik Yantra. It is difficult for ordinary people to follow the course in details. The details are, therefore, excluded here. The details are, however, available in Mantra Sastra and Puja Bidhi. Their translations are also available in different languages.

YAJNA

Yajna and *Hom* are done with a purpose aimed at. Usually it is done either to seek the blessings of any *devatā* or *Graha* (*Sakti*) or for reclamation of the sufferings of destiny.

The Sun evaporates water from the earth and retains the vapour as clouds in the sky that are different in shapes and sizes, indistinct or dense. Again in course of time the clouds melt into rains on the earth. Similarly, the result of activities of a person remain unseen in the folds of destiny and must appear in life, sooner or later as a result of actions in life as experiences in showering fortunes and misfortunes, heavenly blessings or curses. Every action, physical or mental, has its result. It is absurd to think that something has come out of nothing. All activities in the form of sound (Akṣara, the imperishable) await time (destiny) for expression.

In a life, 'destiny' is inevitable and unchangeable. The physical form in a life, father, mother, the tendency or behaviour in life is moulded by destiny. They cannot be changed in this life. Activities for modifications or attempts for prosperity by freewill may be effective in the subsequent period in life or in the next.

For a Yajna a firepit is prepared. Pieces of wood or log of bael, Sandel or specified wood is put in the pit. The fire is lit with *Mantra* of *Agni*, the lord of Fire is meditated on 3 *Na dis*, , *Susumnā*, *Idā*, and *Pingalā*. The offerings are given to *Agni* (Fire). Then the clarified butter (Ghee) is poured with wooden spoon into the fire with *Mantra* beginning with AUM and ending with *SVĀHĀ*. The vapour or the clouds with imperishable *Akshara* or *Mantra* ultimately descends with divine blessings.

There are elaborate divisions of the rituals in Yajna. The simplest Yajna requires at least four principal priests. They are *Hotā* (Rig Vedic priests) to recite from Rig Veda with offerings and oblations. The *Udgātā* (Sam Veda Priests) chants psalms at the ritual from Sam Veda. The *Adhvaryu* for manual work such as preparing the alter (*Vedi*) placing the logs of wood in particular position following Yajurveda. The Brahman Atharvan priest is a general superintendent to keep watch over the entire arrangements and facing the south for protection (since South is the haunt of death and destruction), make corrections and instruct the details of the sacrifice (Yajna).

THE ICON (*Pratimā*)

The Icon means a symbol of God. Icon is a distinct part of *Brahman* and a specific manifestation or behaviour of God or the Supreme Being (the Energy).

The ideas of God on stones, wood , metal or any model with clay that are produced by the sculptors or moulder according to *Shilpasāstra* following the ideas in *Āsana*, *Mudrā*, *Bhanga* or revelations as perceived or visualised by any *Sādhaka* (worshipper) are Icons or *Pratimā*. Similar attempts are also seen by painters, printers or artists on board, paper, cloth or any other material. Such productions are imagery images of God, yet a sacred image.

Symbolic representations of God by Sculptors or artists descended through centuries in culture and in course of time has undergone modifications in shape and form by the producers under the influence of social or racial cult. For instance, some people (tribal) worship Ganes with five heads (meaning five powers), popular form is the head of an elephant.

The icon in ritual is a symbolical representation of a thing symbolised. The icon helps perspective of any distinctive

power or behaviour suitable for realisation and concentration for meditation.

In course of time the old ideas of Gods and Goddesses are given attractive human form for popular or commercial use or exhibits as works of art. Such works of art in iconography are common sight in architectural works, temples, palaces, caves and walls. The art is now extended to popular use in decoration.

Symbolical representations are rare. They are highly intellectual or product of superior and advance knowledge. The icon of Nataraj (representation of Cosmic Power in action); a bull representing virtuous activities (bull is responsible for milk in cow and a help in agriculture that sustains life) ; a snake in coil (a creature with power to coil) representing concentration that is necessary for meditation are a few examples. Tantrik *Sā dhakas* (devotees) offer their divine service to the spirit in the life (not the form). They use Yantra (instrument).

The Yantra is a diagram with mystic symbols, geometrically drawn in lines and curves on metal, paper or any other suitable substance which is worshipped in the same manner as in any image (*Pratimā*) or icon. As different Mantra is prescribed for different worship, so there are different Yantra and various designs in them. These are given by the adepts to the disciples personally and their uses are taught, designs are explained for effective results.

In the ritual Icon is not a must. *Sā dhakas* put more importance on *Mantra* and *Yantra*.

YOGA

Yoga is derived from the word *Yuj* which in spiritual sense means the processes by which a man is united with conscious communion and merge into divine spirit. According to the Vedas the individual life and God are same. So there can be no union. It is *Māyā* for which life and God appear separate. Therefore, Yoga (the meeting of) may be taken as a process of realisation. True realisation means mind is absorbed into *Brahman*. *Samadhi* or ecstasy. Thus, Yoga means union of soul and mind.

Yoga and its processes and culture are distinct from the performances and processes in Rituals. Any body can do Puja or ritual as he may wish as a devotee. He can worship and pray

before God (*Devatā* or *Devī*) without the help of a priest. But only such a person who has competency (*Adhikār*) or genuine urge can attempt Yoga. Any mistake in the attempt in the Yoga may result physical disorder or disease. Therefore, Yoga should not be attempted by reading books only. There is need for a competent and experienced Guru as teacher.

Man is endowed with intellect, devotion, feeling and physical activities. When all of them associate help realisation. That is to say, absorption of mind and matter with primordial power from where they are born and appear gradually in material manifestation. It is just like that of a pinch of salt dropped into water of a sea gets dissolved and becomes one with it the feeling of separateness disappears. The goal of all different processes and activities in Yoga lead to the same end; Realisation, of oneness with God or the divine power, ecstasy.

Yoga Sastra is a separate Sastra in Tantra. There are seven processes and practices in the *Sādhanā* of Yoga. Initially, they are *Sat Karma* (benevolent works) ; *Āsana* (sitting postures) ; *Mudrā* (ritual gestures) ; *Pratyāhāra* (withdrawal) ; *Prāṇayama* (control of breath) ; *Dhyāna* (meditation) ; *Samādhi* (realisation). Some Yogis add to these more injunctions as chastity, temperance, *Ahimsā* (non-violence) ; religious observance, charity and devotion to God, etc. These are prerequisites in all Yoga. They aim *Cittasuddhi* (cleansing the mind).

According to Tantra the aim and object of Yoga, initially, is *Satcakrabheda* (piercing the six *Cakra*). At the bottom of the spine, *Mulādhāra*, is *Kundalini Śakti*. The power here is coiled like a serpent (*Kundali*) as if in sleep. When it is awokened by the spark of the mind or *Mantra*, the compelling force, it goes up through the spine towards consciousness. This portion of the spine is *NĀDI* or the conduit force from *Kundalini*.

On the entire spine from *Mulādhāra* to cerebrum there are six (according to some more than six) *Cakras* (knots) each appearing as lotus with petals. Above *Mulādhāra* the six centres (*Cakra*) are *Svādhisthāna*, *Manipura*, *Anāhata*, *Visuddha*, *Ajñā* *Cakra*. The seventh region is the upper brain, the highest centre of manifestation of conscious in the body. The *Cakras* of *Sakti* are vital forces and they are centres of *Prāṇasakti* manifested by *Pranavāyu* in the living body. The

Cakras are not perceptible to gross senses ; they are Yogi's power to observe beyond the senses (*Atindriya*). The Cakras each resembling lotus are placed one above the other at small distance in between them connected by the chains of Nari ; *Susumna*. (central), *Idā* (On the left) and *Pingalā* (on the right) and the Three Nari meet at the end of *Gangā*, *Jamundā* and *Saraswati* (popular names).

At Kundali it is the sound, in the body ,it is pure consciousness. Kundali is the cosmic energy in the body and thus it is the cause of manifestation of Sakti.

The petals of Cakra vary being 4, 6, 10, 12, 16 and 2 commencing from Muladhara and ending to *Ajñā* Cakra. They are 50 in all letters of alphabets. The petals in each Cakra vary in number. The number of petals in any Cakra is determined by the number and position of the *Nadis* or Yoga nerves around that Cakra. The term *Nādi* comes from *Nād* which means motion.

There are several kinds of Yoga. In ritual or Puja Hatha Yoga and Dhyana Yoga are common.

Hatha Yoga attempts creative and sustaining Sakti of the whole body uniting with Consciousness, since perfect body and mind function to gain Samadhi.

Dhyana Yoga attempts meditation. Dhyana Yoga is three kinds, viz., *Sthula*, *Jyotir* and *Suksma*. In the first form Devata is brought before the mind by Devata's *Nama* and *Rupa*. *Jyotirdhyana* is infusion of fire (energy) and life into the form between the eyebrows. In *Suksma* Dhyana the meditation is on Kundalini. In this process in Dhyana Yoga Samadhi is attained.

There are several other kinds of Yoga, Viz., *Jnana* yoga, *Mantra* Yoga, *Kriya* Yoga, *Kundalini* Yōga, etc. Each Yoga is distinct in purpose and manifestations. There are also Yoga in creating fire by chanting *Mantra*, turning the body heavy or light and many other startling miracles which are uncommon and out of social interest. They cannot be explained in a book. They need practical course of training by the Guru.

SALVATION

The focal point or the end of all the Hindu Rituals is to achieve perfection in life, emancipation or *Mukti* from the bondage of *Māyā*, precisely, salvation from distress in life. The rituals, *Pujā*, are the disciplines in life for attainments.

There are persons in different places and time who are endowed with powers to cross the limits of senses and ascend the highest spiritual plane of perfection in realisation of consciousness at times. Records about some of them are available in many books.

They all agree that beyond the limits of senses in the stage of ecstasy (*Samādhi*) there is no experience. A flash of light overtakes and all senses are lost and mind remains in trance and the flash of light envelops the body with a cool shower from an unknown fountain flows from the cerebrum downwards through the spine giving a feeling of inexplicable joy. Nobody knows from where it comes and again vanishes with uncertain duration. But it is certain that this state of ecstasy is not personal acquisition. This is regarded as revelation of God in a life.

There are some persons who are incarnation of God or people believe them a superman or God. *Tāntriks* say that to know God through the senses, to have complete realisation of God in life, is same as to become God. Some of them preached their revelations or established a religion. There are also missionaries who preached and served people with their own mission they wished. Most of them are *Sannyasi* who have renounced all possessions and follow the path of salvation. They have realised that all things are *Brahman*. There is no *Puja* or ritual activities for them. The *Sannyasi* do not follow ritual or any *Puja*.

CONCLUSION

Ritual is an art of religion. The art is the material expression of ideas intellectually held and essentially felt. The art is concerned with expression of those ideas and feelings which is specifically called religious. It is a way by which religious truths are presented and made intelligible in material form and symbols to mind.

The first design of the ritual is to secure that mind shall have a good object. The best object is its lord - when mind knows an object that process consists in the projection from mind ray which goes out to the object, takes its form and ideas in it and return to models of mind itself into the form of the

object. That image is formulated by what is called *Dhyāna*. The ritual helps the *Dhyāna* of the forms of God or spirit.

Thus we find that supernatural power, mystic and imagery ideas of God and divine services passed through different stages of evolution through various forms of worship and also different types of rituals and practice in different places.

In the Hindu rituals inspite of diversities one thing is common that they follow the basic ideas of the Vedas and in prayer and performances according to Tantra.

The materials in the Introduction-I are small peepholes to view the vast arena of Sanatana Dharma of Vedic culture in Hinduism for progress towards advance knowledge and creative living.

Calcutta , 1992

Viswanath Deva Sarma

INTRODUCTION - II

Here is an attempt to narrate the spiritual path in nutshell in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism collected from different sources.

HINDUISM (Sanatana Dharma) is the world's oldest religion the beginning of which is yet unknown. It predates recorded history. There is no founder of this religion. The Vedas are the scriptures of the Hindus. The Vedas are records of the greatest wisdom of human experiences and the knowledge is extended to *Tantra, Mantra, Jyotis* (knowledge of life and nature by time and space).

Rituals are disciplines in religion. They help progress towards a higher civilisation and perfection in life.

The Hindus worship Supreme Reality called by many names. They accept all genuine spiritual paths from pure monism to theistic dualism. They say all souls ultimately realise the truth. Each soul is free to find its way whether by devotion, asurity, meditation or selfless service. Importance is placed on temple worship, scriptures and the Guru-disciple tradition. Rituals, festivals, pilgrimages, chanting holy hymns, home worship are dynamic practices.

Rituals are expressions of ideas and feelings of the mind for transformation and purification embodying truth as they are in scriptures. Love, non-violence, good conduct and the disciplines of Hinduism that unite people in a society for civilisation are the common spiritual paths of the Hindus.

Among the Hindus, precisely, people in Sanatana Dharma, there are three main denominations : Saiva, Sakta and Vaisnabas. There are others in smaller number.

Saivism : The primary goal of Saivism is *Moksha, Mukti*, realisation of one's identity with God *Siva* in perfect union and non-differentiation and thus gaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death. This is also called *Nirbikalpa Samādhi* and this may be attained in this life.

A secondary goal is *Sabikalpa Samādhi* or experience God *Siva* as *Sat-cit-ānanda* or Pure Consciousness - the soul's final destiny to merge with God *Siva*.

The path for Saivites is divided into four progressive stages of belief and practice, called *Chariā, Kriyā, Yoga* and *Jnāna*. The soul evolves through *Karma* and reincarnation

from the instinctive, intellectual sphere into virtuous and moral living, then into temple worship and devotion, followed by *Yoga* and its meditative disciplines. Union comes through the grace of *Sat-Guru* and culminates in its maturity in the state of *Jñāna* or wisdom.

Saktism : The primary goal of Saktism is *moksha*, defined as complete identification with creative energy.

A secondary goal for the *Saktas* is to perform good work selflessly, so that one may go, after death, to heaven and thereafter enjoy a good birth on the earth for heaven is a transitory state for the *Sakta*. God is both formless, Absolute (*Siva*) and the manifest Divine (*Sakti*, *Durgā*, *Kāli*) but stress is given to the feminine manifest since creation is feminine energy.

The ritual paractices in *Saktism* are similar to those in *Śaivism*, though there is perhaps more emphasis in *Saktism* and God's power as opposed to Being, on *Mantras*, *Yantras* and on embracing apparent opposites male/female, absolute/relative, pleasure/pain, cause/effect, and mind/body. A minor section undertakes *Tantrik* practices, consciously using the world of form to transmit and eventually transcend that world, the dynamic force behind cosmic evolution.

Vaisnavism : The primary goal of the Vaisnavites, is termed

Videha Mukti, defined as liberation - attainable only after death, when the self realises blissful union with God's body as part of Him and yet maintains its pure individual personality. Lord *Viṣṇu* is God - all pervasive consciousness and the soul of the universe, distinct from the world and form the *Jīva* which constitutes His body.

A secondary goal, the experience of God's grace, can be reached while yet embodied through taking refuge in God's unbounded love.

Orthodox *Vaisnāvites* believe that religion is the performance of *bhakti*, *Sādhanā* that man can communicate with and receive the grace of Lord *Viṣṇu* who manifests through the temple deity or idol. The path of *Karma Yoga* and *Jñāna Yoga* leads to *Bhakti Yoga*. Through chanting of the holy names of Lord *Viṣṇu*'s incarnations and total self-surrender to him, liberation is attained.

All the Hindus (Sanātanes) believe that :

1. All pervasive Supreme Being is both immanent and transcendent both Creator and Unmanifest Reality.

2. The universe undergoes cycles of creation, preservation and modification.
3. All souls are evolving towards union with God and ultimately find *Moksha*, salvation, spiritual knowledge and liberation from cycles of birth and rebirth.
4. Each individual creates his or her destiny by thought, work and deed. They are the cause and effect and a single soul is not free from destiny.
5. The Soul reincarnates evolving through many births until all *Karma* has been resolved.
6. Divine blessings exist in unseen inner-world and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments as well as personal devotional activities create a communion with the *Devatas* and God.
7. No particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others but there are genuine religious paths to facets of God's love and light, deserving tolerance and understanding.
8. All life is sacred to be loved and revered and in the practice of *Ahimsa*.
9. Spirituality is awakened by *Sat-Guru* and is essential to know the transcendental Absolute, as personal discipline, good conduct, purification, self enquiry and meditation.

In Hinduism the goal is one but there are many spiritual paths from which one may choose.

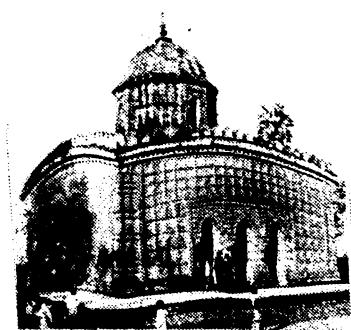
Buddhism and Jainism have a common foundation and they emerged from Vedic Dharma. The general principle they follow as their base are common with Hinduism.



A temple of Siva



A temple of Kali



A temple of Radhakrishna

BUDDHISM : Buddhism began in India about 500 B.C. Gautam Siddhartha or Buddha - the Enlightened one is the founder of Buddhism. The major scriptures are the *Tripiṭaka*, *Angutaranikaya*, *Dhammapada*, *Sutta-Nipatta*, *Samyutta-Nikaya*. There are also many others.

Buddhists are divided into two main sects - *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna*.

The goal of life is *Nirvāna* (Salvation). To that end Buddha's essential teachings are contained in Four Noble Truths, Viz.

1. The Noble Truth ; suffering life is painful. Being born is pain, growing old is pain, sickness is pain, the union with what we dislike is pain, separation from what we like is pain in obtaining what we desire is pain. This is the essential nature of life.
2. The Noble Truth of the Cause of Pain : It is the force of desire that leads to rebirth and further suffering accompanied by delight and passion.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Pain : the complete cessation of desire, the forsaking relinquishing and detaching ourselves from desires and craving that will automatically end the round of pleasure or pain, the wheel of birth and rebirth.
4. The Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the creation of ideals : there is Noble eight-fold path, namely, Right livelihood, Right meditation, Right belief, Right thought, Right speech, Right action, Right effort, Right aim.

The primary goal of Buddhism is described as *Nirvāna*, defined as the end of change. The *Taravāda* tradition describes the indescribable as "peace and tranquility", while *Mahāyāna* tradition views it as "emptiness" and the unchanging essence of the Buddha and "ultimate Reality". It is synonymous with release from the bond of desire, ego, suffering, rebirth. *Nirvāna* is not the state of annihilation, but the peace and reality. Buddhism has no Creator-God and thus no union with Him.

Buddhism takes its followers through progressive stages, termed, "*Dhyāna*", "*Sampatti*" and "*Samādhi*". "*Dhyāna*" is meditation which leads to moral and intellectual purification and to detachment with pure consciousness. The *Sampattis* or further *Dhyāna* leads to a state which is the perfect solitude. This leads further to *Samādhi*, the attainment of supernatural consciousness and, finally, to *Nirvāna*. Many

Buddhists specially in China and Japan understand the ultimate destiny and goal to be a heaven of bliss where one can enjoy eternity and *Bodhisattva* .

Buddhists believe that,

1. The Supreme is completely transcendent and can be described as *Sunya*, a void or state of non-being.
2. In the Four Noble Truths (i) sufferings exists; (ii) desire is the cause of sufferings ; (iii) sufferings may be ended by annihilation of desire ; (iv) to end desire one must follow the Eight-fold Path.
3. The life's aim is to end suffering through the annihilation of individual existence and absorption into *Nirvāna*, the Real.
4. The "middle path" is living moderately, avoiding extremes of luxury and asceticism.
5. The greatness of self giving love and compassion towards all creatures that live, for these contain merit exceeding the giving of offerings to the Gods.
6. Man's true nature is divine and eternal, yet his individuality is subject to change that effects all forms and is, therefore, transient, dissolving at liberation into *Nirvāna*.
7. *Dharma* (the way), *Karma* (cause and effect), Reincarnation, the *Sangam* (brotherhood of seekers) and the passage on the earth is an opportunity to end the cycle of birth and death.



A temple of the Buddhists

JAINISM : In 599 B.C. Jainism was founded by Nattaputta Vardhamana known as *Mahāvīra* (Great Hero), in India. The Jain scriptures teach great reverence for all forms of life, strict code of Vegetarianism, asceticism, non-violence even in self-defence and opposition to war.

Jain is derived from the Sanskrit 'Jina', the conquerer and implies conquest over bondage imposed by the phenomenal world. Jainism thrives for the realisation of the highest perfection of man which in its purity is free from all pains and bondages of birth and death.

There are two sects, the *Digāmbara* sect holds that a saint should own nothing, not even cloths, thus practice is wearing of a loin cloth. They believe that salvation in this birth is not possible for the women. The *Svetāmbaras* disagree.

Jainism does not consider it necessary to recognise a God or any being higher than the perfect man. Souls are beginningless and endless, eternally individual. It classes souls into three broad categories : (1) Those that not evolved ; (2) Those in the process of evolution, and (3) Those that are liberated, free from rebirth.

Jainism has strong monastic/ascetic leanings even for householders. Its supreme ideal is *Ahimsā*, equal kindness and reverence for life. It is about all a religion of love and compassion.

The primary goal of the Jains is to become a *Paramātman*, perfected soul. This is accomplished when all the layers of *Karma* which is viewed as a substance are removed leading the soul rise to the ceiling of the universe where beyond God and all current transmigration of the souls abides forever in the solitary bliss of *Mokṣa*.

In Jainism *Mokṣa* is defined as liberation, self unity, pure aloneness and endless calm, freedom from action and desires, freedom from *Karma* and rebirth. When it is reached man has fulfilled his destiny as the man-God. For the Jains there is no Creator God and therefore, no communication with Him. The nature of the soul is consciousness, power, bliss and omniscience.

The soul passes through various stages of spiritual development, called *Gunastaka* progressive manifestation of the soul's innate faculties of knowledge and power.

Souls attain better births according to the amount of personal *Karma* they are able to eliminate during life.

Between births Soul dwells in one of the seven hells, the sixteen heavens or fourteen celestial regions. Jainism places great stress on *Ahimsā*, asceticism. *Yoga* monasticism as the

means for attainments. Temple Pujas are performed to the Twenty four Tirthankars or spiritual preceptors.

The Jains believe that-

1. All life is sacred and one must cease injury to sentient creatures, large and small, and that even unintentional killing creates *Karma*.
2. God is neither creator, Father nor friend. Human conceptions of Him are limited. All that say of Him is He is.
3. Each man's soul is eternal and individual and that each must conquer himself by his own effort and subordinate the world to the heavenly in order to attain *Mokṣa* or release.
4. Conquest of oneself can only be achieved in ascetic discipline and strict religious observance and that non-ascetics and women will have their salvation in another life.
5. Principle governing the success in life is *Karma*, actions, good or bad, that bind us and *Karma* may be absolved by purification, penance and austerity.
6. Agma and Siddhantas are sacred scriptures that guide man's moral and spiritual life.
7. Three jewels are - (1) Right knowledge ; (2) Right faith ; (3) Right conduct.
8. The principal lineage of the 24 Tirthankars of whom the ascetic sage *Mahāvīra* was the last. They should be revered and worshipped above all else.
9. Ultimate goal of *Mokṣa* is eternal release from *Sansār*, the wheel of birth and death and concomitant attainment of Supreme knowledge.



A temple of the Jains

प्रियो श्री ४१०३४

SIKHISM : Sikhism began in India by Guru Nanak. Sikhs are mostly the people of the Punjab or the Punjabi sects. Besides Khalsa, there are Ram Raiyas in Utter Pradesh in India. The *Adi Granth* is the major scripture revered as the Guru of the faith.

The Moslems began their invasion of India about 1300 years ago. As a result of the Islam struggles with the Hindus and their culture, leaders sought a reconciliation between the two faiths, a middle path that embrace the both. Sikhism or Sikh meaning disciples, united Hindu Bhakti and Sufi mysticism.

Sikhism began as a peaceful religion and patiently bore much persecution from the Moslems, but with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, self preservation forced a strong militarism aimed at protecting the faith and way of life against severe oppositions. Sikhism stresses the importance of devotion, intense faith in the Guru, reputation of God's name as a means of salvation. In Sikhism there is no worship of idols. It respects brotherhood of all men and ejects caste differences.

There have been no Gurus in the Sikh tradition since Guru Gobind Singh, whose last instructions to followers were to honour and cherish the teaching of the ten Gurus as embodied in the scripture *Adi Granth*.

The goals of Sikhism lies in *Moksha* which is release from attachment and union with God. It is described as that of a lover with the beloved one attaining trascendence, egolessness or enduring bliss or *Ananda*. It is the fulfilment of individuality in which man freed of all limitations becomes coextensive, cooperant with God. In Sikhism, *Moksha* means release and surrender into God's love. Man is not God but is fulfilled in unitary mystical consciousness with Him. God is the personal Lord and Creator.

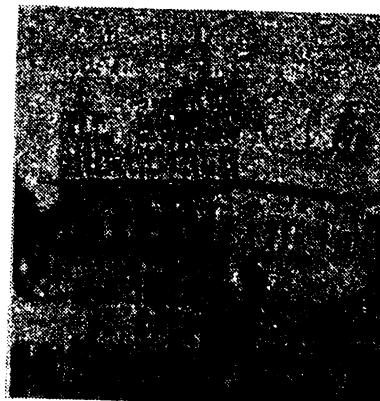
To lead man to the goal of *Moksha*, Sikhism follows a path of 'Japa' and hymns, thoughts of the Holy names or *Sat Nama*, the soul is cleansed of its impurities. The ego is conquered and the wondering mind becomes still. This leads to superconsciousness and stillness. From here one enters into the divine light and thus attains the state of divine bliss. Once the goal is attained, it leads the devotees to awareness of the good of others. The highest goal can be realised only by God's grace and this is obtained exclusively by following *Sat Guru* or *Sant* or *Saints* since there are no living Gurus. They

repeat Holy names of the lord guided by *Ādi Granth*, the scriptures and the sole repository of spiritual authority.

For Sikhs, there is no deity worship, no symbol of divinity.

Sikhs believe that :

1. God is sovereign one, the omnipotent, immortal and personal creator, a Being beyond time who is called **Sat Nām** for his name is Truth.
2. Man grows spiritually by living truthfully, serving selflessly, and by repetition of Holy names and Guru Nanak's prayer, *Japaji*.
3. In salvation that consists of understanding the Divine Truth and that man's surest path lies in faith, love, purity and devotion.
4. In the spiritual and ethical authority of the *Ādi Granth* as God's revelation.
5. To know God, the Guru is essential as the guide who himself is absorbed in the love of the Reality and is able to awaken the soul to its true and divine nature.
6. In the line of 10 Sikh Gurus, Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amardas. Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind. Guru Har Rai. Guru Teg Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh - all are teachers of Sikh.
7. This world is *Māya*, a vain transitory illusion. Only God is true since all others are always in modifications.
8. Ways of life should be natural. They are opposed to fasting, vegetarianism, pilgrimage, caste, idolatory, celibacy and asceticism.



A Gurudwara for the Sikhs

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction II, here are brief statements about Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma), Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, their philosophy and culture.

Many Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs join rituals and religious gatherings of the Hindus. The Hindus also observe Buddha Purnima, Mahavira Jayanti, Vaisakhi. “Hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist Lamas have been cultivating Yoga with Tantra. Culture of Naba Graha are equally popular in many of them. The texts may help the readers to study comparative thoughts in them and relation of each section with the Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism for advance civilisation and culture.

Calcutta , 1992.

Viswanath Deva Sarma

CONTENTS

NABA-GRAHA PUJA.	27
WORSHIP OF TREES AND PLANTS.	31
<u>Time of Ritual</u>	
1. SARASWATI PUJA	January 33
2. SIVA-RATRI	... February 44
3. GANESH CATURTHI	... July 51
4. JHULAN and DOL	... August & March 56
5. DURGA PUJA	... September 64
6. KALI PUJA and DIWALI	... October 76

INVOCATION

Let us hear, O Lord, what is decent and blissful.
Let us see what is graceful and beneficial.
Let us concentrate all our senses on prayers unto Thee,
and O Lord, let our lives be spent in being of service to Thee
and all the world through Thee.

Rig. 1.89.9

NABA GRAHA PUJA

Naba Graha means nine Graha. Graha (from *Grahanam*, taken) means a symbol taken to represent the ideas of a power in nature. Graha is also used to denote a planet that helps to measure time. *Puja* (Pu = *pusti/nourishment* + Ja = *Janam/birth*) literally means activities for birth of nourishment to mind. Precisely, Puja means activities of a healthy mind.

Time is an idea. Events occurring in proper succession are expressive by the idea of time. The rising or setting of the Sun or the Moon are expressive of an idea in nature. As a matter of fact, the Sun or the Moon, does not rise or set. Rotation of the Earth upon its axis and its continuous drift round the elliptical orbit causes days and nights, seasons and years and is expressive of the relentless changes in nature. Standing on the surface of the Earth, seemingly flat and motionless, it appears that the Sun, the Moon and other celestial bodies are continuously moving in the space at varying speed round the Earth in regular course. The solar system operates with such precision that it is possible to set permanent law in dividing the time mathematically. Time expresses nature or we may say, nature is expressive by time.

The Sun, the Moon, the Mercury, the Venus, the Mars, the Jupiter and the Saturn are 7 celestial bodies in the space. Each represents a Graha. Rahu and Ketu are imaginary Graha on either side of the 7 Graha. In total, nine or Naba Graha. They all appear dynamic and their continuous movements correspond to changes in all objects of nature, even in human life and its activities in pains and pleasures.

Each Graha represents a *Sakti* (power in nature). Sakti is imperceptible but we can visualise the *Sakti* and know it from the corresponding modifications in nature and life. It is same as looking at a building one can visualise (depending on the power of vision) the *Sakti* (merit and mind) of the person who schemed and planned the building.

Sakti, since it is imperceptible, is represented by a symbol, a planet, similar to the ideas of the Graha. The 9 Graha or 9 *Sakti*, by their movements and modifications reveal the cosmic evolution, unveil the esoteric workings of nature and furnish clues to unravel the mysteries that underlie human

activities and behaviour, its past, present, future and destiny. They are elaborately explained and systematically treated in *Jyotirvidyā*.

The vital force of life is expressive by the Sun as a Symbol (Graha). It is *Atman* or Soul in life. It represents consciousness.

Mind is also a Sakti between the Soul and the body ; precisely, Energy and Matter. Mind surrounds the body, both within and without. The Moon is the symbol of mind. The Moon (*Mana*) is dynamic and it is always moving within the orbit of the Sun, expressive of ceaseless fluctuations and modifications in mind. The changefulness of mind, once bright and again gloomy is symbolised by the Moon and the distance of the Moon from the Sun.

The union of Soul and mind is *Samādhi*. That is to say. the meeting place of the Graha Sun and Moon is *Samādhishtān*. This is the place of ecstasy (inexplicable sensational experience). During ecstasy there is no realisation. Realisation comes within the sphere of mind and the five ancillary powers of mind and five senses are operative and expressive.

The ancillary powers of mind are intelligence (*Bodh/Budh*), Desire (*Sukra*) Action (*Man gal*), Behaviour (*Bṛhaspati*) and Destiny (*Sani*) - the result of actions. Thus the union of *Ātman* and *Mana* produces *Intelligence* which leads to *Desire*, the Desire tends to *Action*, actions manifests through *Behaviour* (*Ācarana*), finally terminates in the fold of *Destiny* (*Bhāgya* or *Bhoga*). Perceived or imperceived, this order, *Intelligence-Desire-Action-Behaviour (Ācarana)* *Destiny (Sani)* follows consecutively in every action, physical or mental.

A close study of the presentation of the planets in the celestial sphere will corroborate the fact that this order is not drawn arbitrarily. They are facts in nature. By distance from the Sun, Budh (the Mercury), Sukra (the Venus), Mangal (the Mars), Brahaspati (the Jupiter) and Sani (the Saturn) are the planets in the celestial sphere.

Rahu and Ketu are *Aksēpani* and *Bikṣēpani* Sakti. They are the Ascending and Descending nodes of mind respectively. They are hidden forces in nature in life that are the effect of social and surrounding experiences in past births and continue till they are absolved. To explain the force an

example of a rubber ball may be mentioned. If the rubber ball is pressed within a fist it is reduced in shape and size. As the pressure is released the ball regains its former shape and size. Similarly, in time, nature exerting the force of Rahu in a life may hide the life's luminosity, may reveal abnormalities in behaviour but cleanses within. Ketu is opposite to Rahu. Ketu is a formidable Sakti. It has in it behaviour of a serpent that remains coiled but can take its frightening form. It has in it *Yogic Sakti*.

The nine powers of *Naba Graha*, represent Reality as a whole in life and Nature. *Naba Graha* is, therefore, worshipped as a God with all His powers and manifestations in life. The nine integrated powers, in a word, is the Cosmic Power.

The Hindu Brahmins use the nine powers symbolised by the nine sacred threads (holy threads hung on the body) as symbol of one who knows the nine powers and controls misuse of the powers but attempts perfection in life with the powers of *Naba Graha*.

There is no formality of performance of any usual ritual for *Naba Graha Puja*. The *Sādhaka* (worshipper) regard the Sun as the symbol of God or the supreme Power, *Brahman*, and concentrate on *Japa* (prayer) and meditation of the ultimate inner power of the Sun with *Gāyatri Mantra* :

Aum, bhur bhuvaḥ Svah; tat sabitur varanyam, Bhargo devasya, dhimahi ; dhīyayonah, Prachodayat, Aum.

Purport : Aum (Lord of Creation, sustenance and modifications)

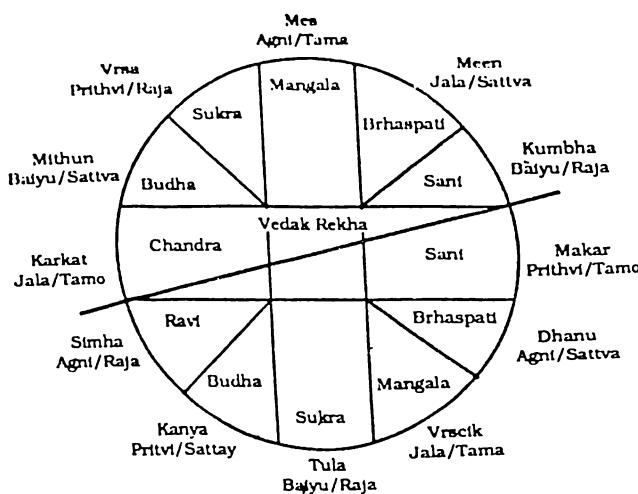
Past, present, future (or three *lokas*) that adore the Sun, the ultimate Soul or Atman of all things, which is the ultimate conscious intelligence, I am concentrating meditation on it. Aum.

Puja of *Naba Graha* is the activities of mind for perfection in life. It is a *Dhyāna Yoga* in the ritual. In every ritual or *Puja*, remembering the *Naba Graha*, meditation and concentration with *Japa* of *Gayatri Mantra* is a must in the beginning and the end. Regular *Puja* of *Naba Graha* with *Gayatri Mantra* is a simple way to keep mind clean from environmental pollution, free from accumulation of dirts and dusts in mind. *Naba Graha Puja* or *Gayatri Mantra Japa* is perhaps the earliest of all Hindu rituals.

INFRA STRUCTURE OF TIME AND NATURE

Divisions in space

Kārana (Causes) : Bāiyu, Agni, Jala Prithvi
 Guna (Attributes) : Sattva, Raja, Tama.



Kālacakra

In the wheel of time the intersecting line is called *Vedak Rekha* or *Pratisāmya Rekha*—the line of equal division between the subjective and the objective world.

The Planets from the sun by distance	Budha	Sukra	Mangala	Bṛhaṣpati	Sani
The signs from Karkata (clockwise)	Mithuna	Vṛṣa	Meṣa	Mina	Kumbha
The signs from Simha (anti-clockwise)	Kanyā	Tulā	Vṛścik	Dhanuh	Makara
The Ruling Planet of the Sign	Mercury	Venus	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn
Ideas	Bodha intelligence	Kāmāna desire	Kriya action	Acārana behaviour	Adhikarana termination results

WORSHIP OF TREES AND PLANTS

Since unknown time untraceable in history, the Hindus worship some trees and plants as the living form of God. Trees give shade against the Sun, shelter against the showers, remove pollution in the atmosphere. Trees give us leaves, flowers and fruits to meet various needs. Those trees that are beneficial to human life are seen in use in the rituals.

For all their services the trees and the plants do not ask for anything in return. For their sustenance they suck water below the surface of the Earth and bask in the Sun for vitality.

Bael, coconut, plantain, sandal for perfume and remedial purpose, mango and such other trees that are locally available are selected for the purpose. Tulsi is a common plant in several species each helps to cure specific disease also protects against many diseases. They are kept in home with reverence and the inmates, every morning and evening, bow in obeisance before Tulsi.

On the day of the ritual, selected as auspicious, the leaves (*patati-iti-patra*) of Mango (*Amrita-phala*) tree are hung at the entrance indicative of *Prasād* (thing that delight) and food after the ritual. A stem of plantain tree, and a coconut (fruit) are kept at each side of the entrance of the house is a symbol of ritual and distribution of *Prasad*.

Panca-batti - or five kinds of trees are often seen near many temples, Asrams and Maths (abode of Sannyasi). Those trees are planted together and grown in the same place. They are Bata, Aswathwa, Bael, Dhatri/Amloki and Asok. The shade of *Panca-batti* is a help for health and concentration during meditation. Hindus tender *Puja* symbolising *Pancabatti* as God with five powers.

The practice of worship of trees and plants are mostly seen in rural areas. Ladies in a group take the leading part. The ritual is in the form of a *Brata* (vow ; a venture with a vow). The devotees remain fasting since sunrise. Fasting means *Anāhar* (meaning not taking food till the object *Ahār* or *Aharana* or the prayer is achieved).

They clean the ground under the selected tree. The ladies after taking bath and wearing new cloth assemble under the tree. No priest is required. No Mantra is chanted. The devotees offer the tree *Sindur* (the symbol of welfare), *Dhup*

(incense for purification of the air around with attractive smell, *Dipa* (light) and chant hymns in praise of God in the tree and bow with deep reverence expressing gratitudes and prayer for fulfilment of the desire.

In *Brata* the devotees and the *Devata* in the cover of the tree are present face to face and the devotion and prayer bereft of formalities rise from the deepest bosom of the heart in silent vibration and in divine commune receive the blessings of the boon that follow in the life. Such sincere *Brata* worships are perhaps the best form of art in Hindu religion.

The culture is still being continued in many major ritual where priests are engaged for the purpose. Durga Puja begins after *Nabapatrika Puja*.



Bratacharini (Lady worshippers in a group
on their way to perform *Brata*
under a tree.



SARASWATI

(Goddess of Wisdom)

*Yajnam Bastu dhibasu
Bajerviba jinabati*

Let our purifying, powerful knowledge Veda Mantra bring the power of dominating over this world.

*Pabakah Nah Saaswati
Chodayatri Srinutanam
Chetanti Samatinam
Yainam dadhe Saraswati*

Let our truth seeing inspired by the wise people and wisdom giving sayings of the Veda protect our society

*Maho Arna Saraswati
Pratachetyati Ketuna
Dhio Bitswa Birajati*

Let our sayings of the Vedas by wisdom create ocean of Vedic language and enlighten the intelligence of everyone.

Rg. Vedas

Saraswati is the Goddess of Wisdom (Prajna)

The Hindus believe in one all pervasive Supreme Being, *Brahman*, who is both immanent and transcendent, manifested and unmanifested Reality. The Hindus also believe in many Gods Goddesses, each representing a perspective view of Reality by name and form.

Saraswati is dynamic creative power. Every creation is modification. Creation is the feminine virtue. Saraswati is a Goddess.

In the Vedas Saraswati is the Goddess of Knowledge (*Jnāna*) and expression by speech (*Bāk Devi*). Saraswati from *Sarasa* is the ageless wisdom of the saints and sages in spiritual realm. In all devine services it has been a practice to pay homage or worship Goddess Sraswati first because knowledge comes first in all activities.

Wisdom, the inner attribute

Wisdom or knowledge concerns objects of nature that have name and form. There cannot be any knowledge of a thing which has no name and form. The objects of nature that we perceive are in continuous modifications expressive by time. The modifications are the result of actions within for without action there cannot be any modification. Modifications prove existence of *Śakti* (power) in an object. *Śakti* is imperceptible. We draw logical conclusion of the existence of *Śakti* from the action in the object of nature. For all its complexities human knowledge is limited within the perspective of objects of nature as seen through the medium of time and space/senses. We cannot have any knowledge of *Ātma* or Soul which is static but when dynamic it is manifestation of creative virtue or union of male and female virtue revealing *Śakti*; pervading the entire universe in diverse manifestations. *Śakti* is the manifestation of wisdom concerning objects of nature with the help of inner attributes which are the sources of knowledge.

Source of knowledge

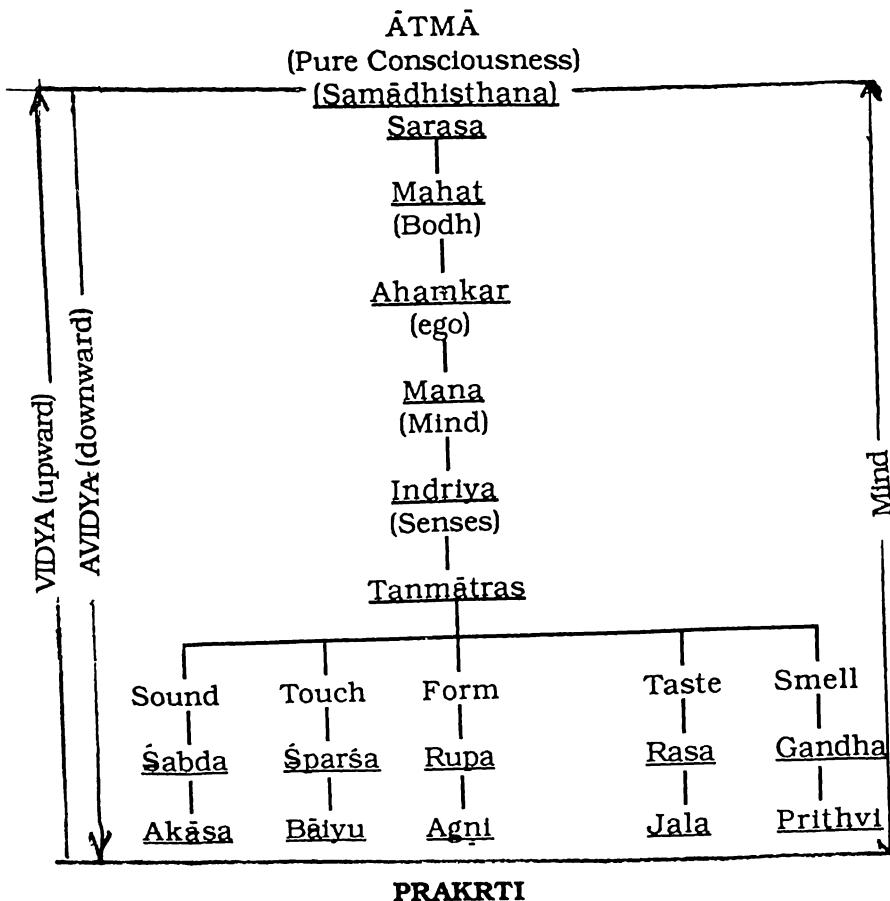
Most of us are unconscious of the fact as we often pass our days by that the five Causes of Nature - Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth (concentration of materials) are the sources of our knowledge of the world around us. The Causes are related to our five senses. An object, because of the Cause reach our sense, strike our mind and mind in union with the Soul (consciousness) gives us knowledge of the object and responds according to its attribute. Thus, knowledge is the first in the order of manifestation of the Supreme Energy and the end of mind. The consciousness derived from the five senses are thus correlated with the five Causes of Nature, in the following order.

Causes	:	Space	Air	Fire	Water	Earth
Senses	:	Ear	Skin	Eyes	Tongue	Nose
Attributes	:	Sound	Touch	Form/ colour	Taste	Smell

Attributes and actions (*Guna* and *Karma*) are inseparably the same. Each is the counterpart of the other. Fire, for instance, is the Cause of Nature. Fire is the heat. Its action is to give form (it changes the form of anything that is brought to its contact ; precisely, it gives expression to a new form). It is the law of nature. In material stage Fire gives new form to physical objects; in subtler stage it is the power of mind or ego and in the extreme subtle stage it is power of mutation or pure knowledge that alone has the power to burn the impurities in life and bring a reformation that sets from within. All through the three stages the attribute of Fire is essentially an idea of expression. Similarly, in all cases. Attributes and Actions are inseparably the same.

Mind and matter (*Prakrti*)

Mind is not a gross matter. It conceives matter and has tendency towards material things. Matter is a degraded condition of mind. The process of modification begins when mind descends from *Samādhishthān* (in the following sketch). (*Samādhishthān* is *Sarasa*, also known as *Rasa*, *Nārāyana*, *Spandana* (vibration) and it is the first in the order of expression in the process.



In mythology Sraswati is the consort of Brahma - the lord of creatures. *Praja pati* or *Bāk* (sound of speech) or *Agni* (that which expresses) which is the source of creations and expressions, in all three categories - physical, mental and subtle. Perceived or imperceived, *Rasa*, *Spandana* or *Bāk* is the root of every creation at the bottom of every thought. It follows, therefore, that every action or incident in silent talks has its first occurrence in mind. Sensation (vibration) is the first in the order of creation.

Sound is the result of vibration of *Spandana*. Rising from the bottom of the spine ascending to its top, the *Spandana*, the sensation, meets consciousness at *Sarasa* where instant touch and release creates knowledge according to attributes and memory. Human life is thus endowed with distinctive power of Saraswati to carry and convey thoughts and experiences

which have made human beings greater to dominate over the globe and probe into mysteries of the spiritual world.

Brahman and *Ātman* or Life and Reality are identical. The articulate words indicate life in manifestation, the inarticulate word is the unmanifested one. The unstruct sound has no end because it has no beginning.

Mind functions in time and is moving. At super consciousness or ecstasy the journey of mind or movement comes to an end, there is no action but only experience.

When not in *Samādhi* mind is in action and, therefore, seldom stays at one point. It is also in action when one is in sleep. It ascends to consciousness and again descends to associate material things. The different stages are marked in the above sketch as the planes of mind to suit explanation. Objects become intelligible on the plane of *Mahat*-the intelligence or the intuition of visualisation. It is *Bodh* or *Buddhi* - the faculty of determination of 'this is this' or 'that is that'. The determination immediately takes up with it *Ahamkāra* - the function of ego (*Abhimāna*, that motivates). Finally, mind manifests through the senses by its action or actions expose the mind.

Precisely, from *Sarasa* down to *Indriyas* (senses), it is realm of mind. As the perceptions ascend higher up towards *Vidyā* or wisdom over the planes of mind it scourges the ideas of *Ahamkāra*, *Buddhi* and touches consciousness. Again in descending it takes up *Avidyā* - the ideas from experiences, ego and associate matters outside and consider the unrealities as real knowing that human experiences are limited within the perspective of individual knowledge.

It thus follows that in all usual activities, in every thought, mind (objects of mind) ascends and reaches consciousness or *Ātma* at *Samādhishthāna* and again descends to matters (material things) or *Prakṛti*. Thus instant contact and release, union and separation of the Soul and Mind is in constant action, the duration of which is impossible to measure by any instrument. It is *Nimes*, the joining and separation of the upper and lower eyelids imperceived.

Concentration of mind is an attempt to hold mind at *Sarasa* where knowledge takes revelation. There is no action at *Samādhishthāna* and it is hard to keep mind in concentration by any effort. Truth appears, in *Turiya* state when everything is silent. Man does not come to this comprehension by own effort.

Icon of Saraswati

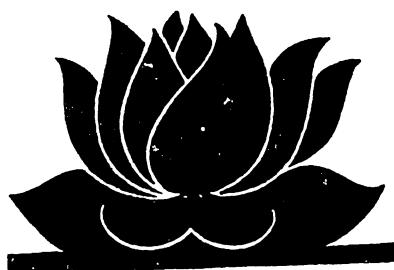
It has been a very great ingenuity of human skill in producing the icon of Saraswati representing the mystic ideas of the Vedic philosophers in Jyotirvidya (metaphysical branch), esoteric workings of nature and master conception in expression in perspective. It is a product of integrated knowledge in applied philosophy in Jyotirvidya.

Gods and Goddesses are not human beings. So in the icon in form and figure, gestures and eyelashes, signs and symbols, they are depicted in a way to represent the ideas of either male or female and not the true form of human being. Icon is an expression of the ideas.

The entire image of Saraswati is milk white. White is the colour of Venus (*Sukra Graha*). Sukra is derived from *Śuchi* representing purity and virtues.

Devi Saraswati is seated on a white lotus with *Veenā* (string instrument) in her right hand and books in her left hand. *Veenā* represents audible sound and books represent letters (inaudible sound). *Aksara* (indestructive) for sound heard or unheard are basic means in the order of creation. Sound is the instrument of knowledge. The articulate word indicates life in manifestation, the inarticulate word represents life in unmanifested state. The audible is one belongs to such octaves as are either high or too low for the human ear to respond. They may be heard by person who have sharp audiences. They could be picked up by an instrument that is very sensitive. Struck sound is perishable. It has an end.. The unstruck sound *Anāhata Sabda* has no beginning. Sound is the result of vibration. Spandana sets mind to action.

Lotus is a sacred symbol of primordial creation. Lotus has its root very deep in water and is unseen. Lotus is the symbol of *Kundalini Sakti*, the hidden power that is concealed within every human body.



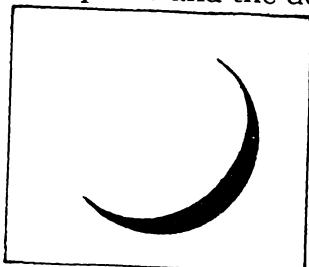
In the words of Henrich Zimmer, artist, "Rising from the depth of water and expanding its petals on surface the lotus is the most beautiful evidence offered to the eye of self engendering fertility of the bottom. Through its appearance it gives proof of the life supporting power of the all-nourishing abyss."

'Bāhana' (carrier of Saraswati is a white swan by her side. The Swan, *Hansa* (Han + sa) represents 'Ajapā' (in Yoga Sastra, the natural breathing of *Puraka* and *Recaka*, the power that can separate milk from water, the real from the unreal).

Saraswati wears a cloth (*Sāree*), yellow in colour with orange tint in consonance with ideas in nature represented by *Bṛhaspati Graha* (expression) and has gold ornaments decorating her body. Some devotees prefer white Saree.

The icon of Saraswati changed in different ages in the hands of different artists and sculptors in different countries. Round the place of worship or service the surface is beautifully decorated with folk art (*Ālpanā*) in white as a means of captivating mind inciting aesthetic senses and concentration in the divinity. Decoration in colours are avoided, they distract attention from the ideas of Saraswati.

The icon of Saraswati is different in different scriptures (*Purāṇa*). In *Bṛihṛti Purāṇa* Saraswati is three eyed (one on the forehead) and the phase of the Moon (*tithi*) is *Māghī-Sūklā-Pancami* ; as the Moon is seen on the fifth *Tithi* in the sky in the bright half of the month of *Māgha* (Jany-Feby). She is carrying *Sudhā* (nectar), the book (*Vidyā*), the *Mālā* (Rosary) in her four hands. In *Kalikā Purāṇa* Saraswati has *Veenā* expressive *Nāda* (Primordial sound) and *Kamandulu* (water pot) with sacred *Rasa* in her four hands. Thus there are dozens of representations according to imaginations of the philosophers and the devotees.



The crescent is indicative of Maghi-Sukla-Pancami Tithi as it is seen in the sky and as on the head-dress of Saraswati (icon) . The crescent in the sky indicates the time of Saraswati Puja.

Tantrik Symbol of Saraswati

Tantra is an extension of the Vedic thoughts and culture. Tantriks do not use any icon. They use the symbol of three foot prints in three steps - left, right, left ; as they are common in a walk. The foot marks are symbols that represent progress over the modifications of time ; past, present, future, behind the earth on the earth and beyond the earth. They are significant in meaning progress upwards ; from the material

to spiritual ; from *Avidyā* to *Vidya* or progress towards spiritual plane of *Samādhi* where mind meets consciousness. Such symbol is regarded as *Jantra* (instrument). It is a substitute for Icon.



Symbol of Saraswati
Saraswati Yantra

Timing the occasion

Nature is expressive by time. The movement of the seven celestial bodies, viz., the Sun, the Moon, the Mercury, the Venus, the Mars, the Jupiter and the Saturn are means to measure time. The rising of the Sun or the Moon as are seen from the surface of the Earth denote day and night respectively. As a matter of fact, the Sun and the Moon do not rise or set. The movements represent cosmic evolution and evolution within and without and they are reciprocal and they are expressive through mind and activities. The five senses and the five Causes (*Kāraṇa* of Nature ... Space, Air, Fire Water and Earth) and three attributes (*Guna*) - Sattva, Raja and Tama or expression, existence and modifications are inter related and reciprocal. Thus time helps to know Nature and regulate activities.

The seven celestial bodies in the space and the powers of nature within are represented by the Sun for Soul, the Moon for mind, the Mercury for intelligence, the Venus for desire, the Jupiter for expression, the Saturn for destiny. Each of them is a *Graha* (by symbol). The Sun is continuously moving on its yearly trek over the zodiac belt and the Moon is whirling around the earth. They are means to follow the evolution. Since the objects of nature are in continuous evolution, man's experiences of sorrows and joys are produced from his relation with the objects of nature Main's effort for creation of a

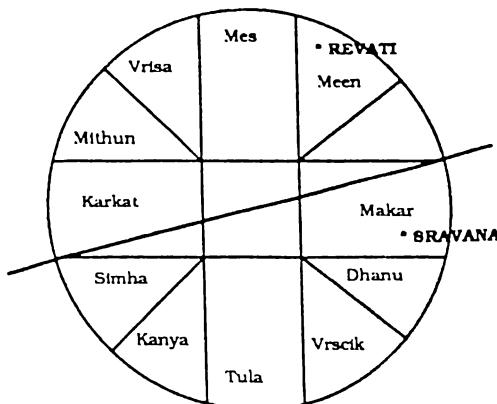
destiny that is peaceful and happy yields immunity from the sufferances of worldly experiences arising out of *Avidyā*.

Since the cosmic power is unseen the Vedic philosophers proceeded from the things known to things unknown. In order to follow the cosmic evolution the world of nature is divided by 4 Causes (space or Akasa being without limitation is eliminated) and the 3 attributes of Nature (Guna) into 12 division (4 x 3). By name, the divisions are Mesa, Vrisa, Mithun, Karkat, Simha, Kanya, Tula, Vriscik, Dhanus, Makar, Kumbha and Meen each is called a Rasi (cluster of stars).

Beginning from *Mes* each *Rāśi* (Sign) represent the consecutive month of the year. The entire zodiac is further subdivided by 27 *Nakṣatra* (star) known by different names. When a Graha passes over a Nakṣatra the ideas of the Nakṣatra in synthesis are revealed in nature. Time unfolds the power in cosmos.

In the month of *Māgha* (Jany-Feby) when Ravi is in Makara in *Śravāna* Naksatra ; Candra in *Revati* (star of Śani) Nakṣatra in the division of Meen represented by *Bṛhaspati*, it is suitable time to turn to ritual of Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge. Tithi is the distance of the Moon from the Sun expressing the power and activities of Mind.

The Kalacakra
(the Zodiac)
Maghi-Sukla-
Pancami



Delineating the idea -

Makara Rāśi is Prithvi Rasi (concentration ; material and psychic)

Śravana Nakṣatra is the Nakṣatra of Saraswati (Goddess of knowledge and wisdom)

Revati Naksatra represents progress or development.

Pancami Tithi is expressive of *Nāga Śakti*; *Yoga Śakti* in synthesis of ideas by time and in consonance with nature :

Ravi in *S'avana*; *Candra* in *Revati* and *Pancami Tithi*.

It is conducive to turn towards progress in *Vidya*, knowledge, or concentrate or meditate for wisdom .

Beeja Mantra

Beeja means seed that grows in a tree and gives fruits after proper care and treatment. 'Mantra' sound that gives relief to mind. Every *Beeja Mantra* is a potential power aimed at effecting distinctive object. It is a *Padārtha*. The sound 'Rām' leads to the person or the object known by 'Rām'. The sound does not mean anything else. But the sound XYZ is not a *Padārtha* because it does not lead the mind to any objective focal point.

Beeja Mantra of *Sraswati* is *AING*. It is *Padārtha*, concentration over *AING* sound stirs the senses, creates sensation within and leads the mind to the sound, articulate and inarticulate, both manifest and unmanifest, in *Nāma Rupa*. Sound creates vibration effective on mind and matter to realities of life since mind and matter are reciprocal. Both are like the mirror and the object before the mirror. Vibration from *Beeja Mantra* is not mechanical, it is active, living, and effective by cosmic force.

Puja and Prasad

Pujā (the service) is done by *Brahmin* Priest. He consecrates the icon, the places around the icon (*Pratimā*) the cloth, food, water and other articles of gift by the devotees, the *Upācāra* according to the rules of *Puja*. The priest mentions *Sankalpa* (if he represents anybody else for the *Puja*), invites the Goddess to appear and receive the offerings. The devotees in chorus chant the hymns recited by the priest.

The end is *Ārati* (A + Rati) means union with the Goddess amidst melodious sounds of drum, bell, conch, in certain manner and sound. At the end of the service and ritualistic performances, food *Prasād* (which delights) is distributed.

And, with the end of the ritual the Icon (*Pratimā*) is immersed in water.

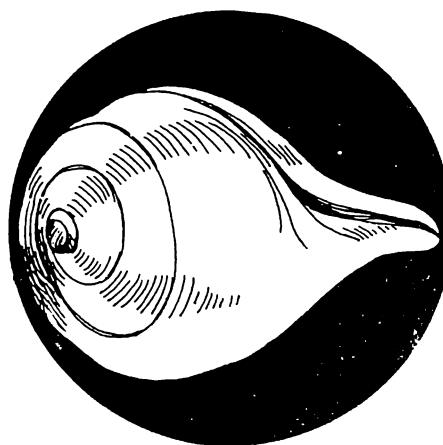
The Tantriks have no priests, no caste prejudice, do not care decorations, offerings. They concentrate on *Beeja Mantra* before the symbol (*Yantra*).

Utilitarian end

Since Saraswati is the Goddess of learnings, groups of people organise cultural functions of drama, dance, music, recitations, exhibition of materials of arts which are attractive and cultural performance. The Hindus of different parts of the country and abroad differ in their face, dress and language but they are common in the ritual and ceremony on the occasion of Saraswati Puja and in chanting Vedic hymns. The ceremony keeps the bewildering conglomeration of people speaking hundreds of languages together. This is an ideal example of unity in diversity.

Significance of Saraswati Puja.

Man is dominant on the earth for his urge to know and phenomenal ability to utilise his knowledge, Saraswati Puja means activities of a healthy mind and creative living and perfection in life which are essential in every life and society.



Sankha

*The sound of Sankha announces auspicious creation
(product of water and air)*



SIVA - RATRI (Mind in meditation)

Siva is the Godhead of the Hindus

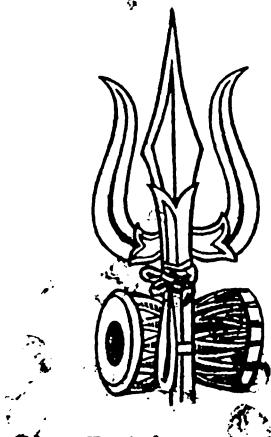
The Himalayas, the abode of the snow, is a holy land of the Hindus. In mythology, in these mountain Munis and Rishis lived. Here in mount Kailash lived Siva Mahadev with His spouse Parvati.

A section of the Hindus, the followers of Siva is Saivaits. To them Siva is God. Popular belief is Siva the foremost and superior Devata, a Yogi, God in human form.

The goal of Saivism

Primary goal of Saivism is *Moksha* or *Mukti*, salvation. Feeling of oneness with Siva gains liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. It is termed *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* and this may be attained in this life. The followers believe in four progressive stages, viz., *Charyā*, *Kṛtyā*, *Yoga* and *Jnana*, and their practices. The soul evolves through *Karma* and reincarnation from the intellectual sphere into various moral

living, then into temple worship and devotion. Yoga and meditative disciplines. In its maturity it turns into *Jnāna* or wisdom and *Mukti*:



Trident with three forks representing the three, - *Jnana*, *Jnyata* and *Jnyeya* wisdom, the knower and the subject of knowledge respectively. The small drum is *Damaru* representing Sound.

Siva Ratri

Siva Ratri is a 'brata' means a vow to get a desired result for a particular purpose. Siva Ratri differs from Siva Puja.

Ratri means night, time for the ritual. When life stand on the cross roads with problems knowing not which way to go, in the darkness of disillusionment, Siva is like a beckon light to get solution by way of wisdom. Brata is similar to Yoga in disciplines and a way to get united with Siva. Being pleased, Siva grants peace and happiness in life, prosperity to the poor cures incurable diseases, the unmarried girls get good husband and the childless get child.

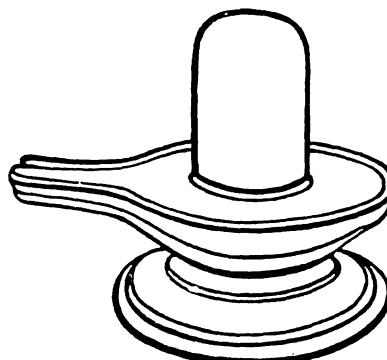
Siva Ratri is observed by all sections of the Hindus, male and female, irrespective of caste, either in home or in a temple of Siva. It is done during the night auspicious for the performance of the ritual practice.

In the Brata no priest is required. Only the devotee and God. The devotee concentrates all his or her attention towards Siva (God) and offer gifts and prays according to the disciplines of Brata.

The symbol of Siva-linga (the icon)

The Siva linga is a popular symbolical image which is traditionally worshipped by the devotees during the Siva-ratri. There are also temples with Siva linga where service is a daily programme and a service to Siva is a special programme on Siva-ratri.

In Siva-Linga the male organ is in union with the female organ though it is called *Siva Linga*. They represent *Purus* and *Prakrti* in union, energy and matter, the creators of the entire reality of the universe or representation of God. In all creations, physical, mental or subtle or psychic, the basic thought is union of *Purus* and *Prakrti* the same energy static and dynamic revealing Reality. The basic thought in *Siva Linga* is highly philosophical. The male organ represents Agni (energy) and the female organ represents Rasa (Water) and they both are expressions of creations or the union is the action in the revelations of life. The creations are ultimate revelations of God. *Siva-Linga* is the symbol of God in perspective form.



*General view of the sanctum sanctorum of a Siva shrine,
showing the linga.*

The icon of Siva

The icon or image of Siva either on stone or picture is a very common sight where the Hindus live. Siva is in Yoga-Dhyana or in meditation. On the forehead there is a Bindu or a dot at the centre of the forehead. The dot is the symbol of the Supreme Energy. Instead of dot there may be a third eye representing wisdom. The forehead represents *Kapala* or *Adrista* (unseen destiny) in popular expression, the *Bhaga* that gives (Bhoga or experiences in life). The Moon in the image represents mind. The crescent represents the last part of the wanning mind (mind in the XIV phase, *Caturdasi*, the last phase before the New Moon) when it gradually glides to unseen and appears merged or lost somewhere.

Mind (the Moon) again grows after the turn. Total extinction of mind would mean death (*laya*) of mind. There cannot be any action after *laya* (lost) or death. *Laya* means lost for ever. If we pour a bottle of water into a river, the water

is lost because that water we cannot get back, we can however, refill the bottle with the river water.

However, the image evokes the ideas that mind is nearing *Samādhi* or ecstasy. The eyes of Siva is *Yoga-netra*, slightly open since vision is drawn within for introspection.

In sanskrit serpent is named *Nāga*. In *Nāga*, 'ga' means 'gati' 'gamana' or motion. *A-ga* means no go or no motion. (*Na* + *A* + *ga* = *Nāga*) means that this creature can go where it is not usually possible to go. Mind has similar attributes and power. That is to say, in a flash it can go to any region where, it is believed, not possible to go easily or usually.



THIS IS WRONG

Hooded snake represents attempt to bite ; fears ; about to defend or attack. It has long been in use probably through ignorance of the designers.

THIS IS RIGHT

Snake without hood but in coil represents condition of Yoga, coiled and drawn inward for communion. The crescent here represents Moon on Krisna Caturdasi (XIV) Tithi

The symbolical representation of the Siva-ratri as in the picture is equally popular. The snake is also called *Manasā* (*Mana* + *śa*), meaning power of mind. As a matter of fact there exists great similarities in attributes of mind and behaviour of serpent.

A study of the behaviour of serpent reveals that it can keep itself in the form of a coil or *Kundali* and can flank when desired. It moves in a zig zag way. It squeezes its body and can creep in secretly or without notice and also can remain hidden in a small hole which is inconceivably smaller than the size of its body and can sustain prolonged fast.

It is dangerous when a serpent attacks. The sight of a snake shakes the nerves. In the same way it is also an extremely nervous creature, a timid one. It is blind (most of the serpents are blind) but hears or follows by its eyes. Therefore, another name of snake is *Cakṣu-srābā* (*chakṣu* means eyes ; *Srābā* means hearing). Mind has also similar attributes. Hence serpent is associated to express behaviour of mind.

Popular practice

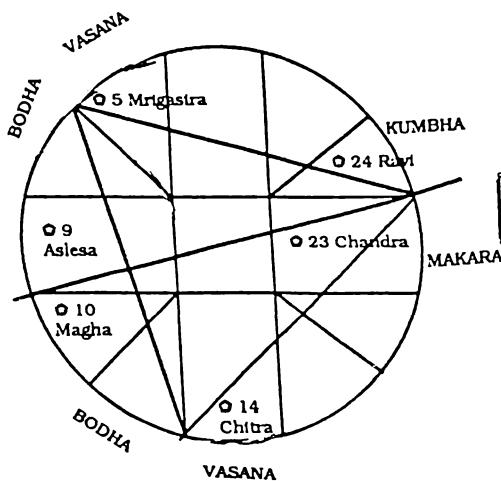
On the auspicious time of *Siva Rātri* the devotee remains fasting since the Sunrise. With the fall of night of *Siva-rātri* the devotee after taking bath and changing to fresh new cloth begins the brata before the *Siva Linga*. The devotee pours bael leaf (three leaves on a twig) on *Siva Linga*. The water represents. *Rasa* - the condition essential for creation. Bael (fruit) is well known for its power of inner cleansing. The leaf or *Patra* (*patati-iti-patra*) is symbol of felling or cleansing within for purification of mind and in doing so the devotee turns and drop the front portion of the leaf in submission to the Devata on the top of *Linga* as token of cleansing or dropping the evil or beastly attributes (*Guṇa*) from within or the tendencies of mind, viz., anger, greed, envy, etc.

The entire period of the night is divided into 4 parts usually and in each period the practice is repeated. The devotee chants hymns in praise of *Siva* and meditates *Siva* in *Yoga Dhyāna*. In devotion the devotee concentrates union with *Siva* and in inarticulate sound chants *Sivam*. The devotee remains awake and continues the prayer till the end of the night or till the devotee feels the prayer is fulfilled. The idea to remain without taking food and water (*Upabāsa*) is to force the resolution till the food (food for the prayer or the purpose) prayed for is received (in mind).

After the end of the *Brata* the devotee distributes *Prasād* (food that gives delight to mind) as may be wished in pleasures of blessings of *Siva*.

Timing the ritual

The Jyotirvids believe that three conditions link the three points at three angles of a triangle and they are essential to effect any result of action or incident. The points are *Devatā*, *Indriya* and *Bisaya*, meaning the supreme energy, the senses and the object (material). In every action or incident, it is ever the same condition. In the sketch of a Kalacakra the triangle or the trine is shown below each at a distance of 9 *Naksatras* (the related power of nature) expressive by *Naksatra* to each other.



Tithi being the distance between the Moon and the Sun or Mind and Soul is indicative of spiritual power a *Deva-Sakti* at the moment. In the trine, the Naksatra No. 5 is *Mrigasira* (*Mriga* + searching + *Sira* = head mind) the mind of a hunter; searching mind. The other Naksatra in the trine is No. 24 *Citra* - the star of prosperity.

In Siva-ratri the tithi or the phase of the Moon, is very important. On the tithi or the XIV phase, *Caturdasi* of the Moon in the dark period, the Sun is in Kumbha and the Moon is in Makara. They are side by side and both the divisions are the signs of Sani - the power of unseen destiny. Objectively, Makar is *Avidyā* and Kumbha is *Vidya* or *Ajñāna* and *Jñāna* or Sea and river respectively. The service is done at the *Sandhi* (meeting place or at the conjunction of the two divisions, Makara and Kumbha. The time being selected is in

consonance with nature helpful to turn for inner accomplishment or for any fruitful result of the mediation or the vow.

Significance of Siva-ratri Brata.

Mind is an inherent power and is always in modification and fluctuations of experiences in grief and joy. Mind as power continues all through life and even after death.

Every action in life has its Cause and Effect and results in the folds of destiny in mind and the destiny is revealed as experiences in turns of time. There is no escape from the results till the accumulations in mind are cleansed. The present life and destiny and its experiences are the results of the accumulations of the past.

Practice for inner accomplishments is the effective attempts of Brata or the vow. The ritual of Siva-ratri aims at potential knowledge and purposive behaviour of life.



NANDY

(the Sacred bull, the bahana of Siva)

Symbol of virtuous deeds

Bull is responsible for milk in Cow and helps agriculture that
Sustain life on the earth.

GANES CATURTHI



*Om eka-dantam mahā -kāyam-lambodara
Gajānanam;
Bighna Nā sakaram devam herambum
Paranamyām-aham.*

P u r p o r t : God, with one tooth, big in form, bulky in belly and the face of an elephant, remove all hindrances, O God, I am bowing you.

Gane's - a popular deity.

Ganes is a universal Devata of the Hindus. People believe that blessings of Ganes are essential to gain success and popularity from the people for their achievements. It has been

a practice amongst the Hindus that before commencement of any venture or public exhibitions, or demonstrations or any new activity aspiring success or popularity, Ganes is worshipped for heavenly blessings for success as well as for protection against any obstacle in the activity.

Ganes is *Siddhidātā* (one who grants success). Students before appearing at the their examinations bow in deep obeisance before Ganes praying for success. In Hindu home, commercial and places of business, factories, workshops, chambers of lawyers and medical practitioners, shops for buy and sale of commodities, public offices, an icon of Ganes is kept and the owners and staff bow in devotion or begins the work for the day after small prayer to Ganes, even there are professional priests who visit door to door for service to Ganes daily any time in the day.

Icon of Ganes

A close study of the icon of Ganes reveals the philosophy of Ganes. It has been a very great ingenuity of human intelligence of the philosophers and the artists in portraying the ideas of Ganes into a form on stone, wood or paper. The icon of Ganes is different in form and style in the hands of different artists and sculptors at different places but the inner significance is almost common everywhere. There are five headed Ganes amongst the tribals. There are dancing Ganes which is uncommon. In the common form the upper part of Ganes is the head of an elephant with one tusk and the rest is the body of a man in form with two hands. In one hand he holds scriptures and in another hand he holds Durba (a species of grass). The colour of the upper portion the head of an elephant, is white and the body is in red (vermilion).

The symbolic representations are very appropriate. Of all animals the elephant is social in behaviour and possesses uncommon senses to feel dangers ahead and use his superior intelligence and physical power to overcome them. In the icon, the head of the elephant represents merit of the elephant. The single tusk or tooth of the elephant represents power, the power of subjugation (tooth = *Dantan* ; *Daman*). It is only the one tooth used to signify 'daman' which is distinct from the set of teeth which represents teeth for chewing food.

Below the head, in the right hand the scrip represents knowledge, intelligence and in the other *Dhub* grass represents power of sustenance and power to fight against odds. *Dhub*

grass has a great power to absorb and keep the solar energy within.

The significance of the icon is that superior intelligence and activities effect success. This is common truth. The activities referred to here are duties and welfare.

In the icon, the head is white. The white is the colour of *Sukra Graha* (derived from *Suchi* meaning purity, deeds of virtue). The body is vermillion (sindur colour) in colour. Vermillion is the colour of *Mangal Graha* (activities that are duty). *Graha* means the power of nature.

The powers of nature and the ideas in them are revealed by the positions of the planets in the celestial sphere and the ideas in them. In the zodiac signs in the *Kālacakra*. *Tulā* (for Venus) and *Vṛścik* (for Mars) are side by side. Venus or *Sukra* represents desires, senses, Mars or *Mangal* represents courage, duty - duty towards discharging own personal obligations, duty towards family, society or country. Where *Mangal Graha* is powerful in life it works as *Rinantak* (*Rin* = debt + *antaka* = termination) ; free from debts.

The ideas of *Sukra* and *Mangal*, the sense of desire and duty or action are at the very root of creation, Improper desire, indiscriminate activities without thoughts of consequences of blind impulsive actions may not give success but grief. Proper activities of *Kamana* and *Kartabya*, desire and duties are at the root of ideas of Ganes.

The *Bāhana* (carrier) of Ganes is a rat. Time explain the reason for symbolising rat as a carrier. During the time of ritual of Ganes, Moon is gliding into *Tulā Rāśi* (a division of *Kālacakra*, or *Prakṛti*) in the zodiac. In the division of nature *Tulā Rāśi* is *Bāiyu* (Air) Karana and Tama Guna (attributes that Cause change). Air moves unseen and Tama Guna attributes of *Prakṛti* is helpful for destruction of the existing things and creation of a new one. The stealthy movements (as that of Air) and the destruction is the behaviour of a rat . Therefore, the carrier or *Bahana* of Ganes, a rat, is appropriate in icon.

Timing the Ritual

Though the service to *Ganes* is a daily routine in many Hindu homes and places of activities with men and materials

yet *Ganesh* is worshipped with special service and ceremony as *Vināyaka* (distinctive leader) in *Bhādra* (Aug. - Sep.) on *Caturhi Tithi*. On this day the Sun is in Simha Rasi and the Moon is in Tula. In some parts of India the ritual is observed with pomp and grandeur.

Mantra

The Mantra of Mangal is "Aing Hrang, Hring, Sarva Dusthana Nāsāya Nāsāya Svaha".

Purport : Aing is the Beeja Mantra of Saraswati (wisdom); Prayer for expression.

(While uttering *Hrang*, feel the dynamic spirit of *Mangal* is moving all through the body)

Hring : (*Ha + ra + ing*); *Teja + Rasa*. With the sound of *Hring* feel that the water and Agni within is mixed up (Agni and water is the root cause of creation within and the force is driven for destruction of evil)

Svāhā is dedication. Just as Ghee is poured into Agni or fire that helps to increase the heat of Agni.

(N.B. In case of male deity the dedication is *Svāhā* and in case of female deity it is *Namah*)

The Beeja Mantra of *Ganesh* is "Gang". *Vināyaka* is a distinctive leader in activities the Mantra of Mangala is repeated with inarticulate sound till the energy of *Vinayaka* is felt within. In inculcating the Mantra (*Japa*) the devotees feel the energy in *Moolādhāra* (end of the spine) and repeats the Mantra both as dynamic energy moving in inhale and exhale till the breath is charged with the warmth of Mangal.

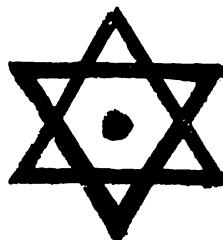
Significance of Ganesh Puja

Ganes (*Gana* = people in general + *Isa* = *Iswara, dāvatā*) is the supreme creative power that rules people and popularity. Icon of *Ganes* indicates intelligence and performance of duty for any achievement.

Man has greatly increased his interest to know the ways and means for achievements. Down the unimaginable corridor of time, the age old disciplines of *Ganes Puja* are the faithful guide to regulate life and activities in consonance with nature for power and popularity in creative living.



Popular icon of Ganesh



Symbol of Prosperity
(Painted in vermillion)

(Three corners of each triangle means-Devatा, Bisaya, Indriya and the dot in the centre represent the Supreme Energy)

One Triangle means that your fortune is the product of the past deeds and the other means that your present activities are creating your fortune in the future. The symbol in office and home before the eyes is a caution against misdeeds and a reminder to turn activities to good deeds.

JHULAN AND DOL-YĀTRĀ

There are on this earth two inevitable events - one is birth and the other is death. Life appears and again disappears. Philosophically, it is like continuous swing of see-saw in the garden of this beautiful earth. It is Jhulan.



VISNU

Puruṣ and Prakṛiti are the basic thoughts behind all creations and activities, either physical, mental or subtle. Krisna and Radha are the basic ideas of Purus and Prakṛiti respectively. Jhulan of Krisna and Radha is the philosophy of life, swinging on the cradle of this earth in "Come and go".

Jhulan - a Ritual of the Vaisnabas.

Since the earliest days of human civilisation, untraceable in history, Vaisnabas, a section of the Hindus worship Viṣṇu as God, the supreme power behind the entire creation.

In mythology, Viṣṇu means the power who crosses the space in three strides - past, present and the third is beyond the two ; the invisible. The Sun is synonymous to Viṣṇu.

In the Vedas and Tantra (an extension of the Vedic knowledge) in all Hindu rituals and worships, the devotee, at the outset, takes a few drops of water (water being the origin of creation) in the centre of his right palm and remembering the Sun, sips the water three times (past, present, future) and turning to breath (inhale and exhale) chant the first mantra -

Om Viṣṇu, Om Viṣṇu, Om Viṣṇu,
Tad Viṣṇu paramam padam,
Sadā pasyanti Suraya,
Dibība chaksurātataṁ.

Purport: The Supreme power Viṣṇu is past, present and future. I am looking at the Sun, the feet of Viṣṇu. Give me the divine vision.

Viṣṇu is the Reality, the creation, the integration of Puruṣ and Prakṛiti Sakti. It has been a common experience that a grain of barley or gram when kept soaked in water shows growth of seedling which is indicative of the effect of union of Puruṣ and Prakṛiti Sakti (male and female virtues), energy and matter. It is the same principle that undergoes modifications even in an insignificantly small thing. This is evident and true in all forms.

The ideas of Krisna and Rādhā or Rāma Sītā, the perfect personalities of Puruṣ and Prakṛiti are expressed as incarnation (Avatār) of Viṣṇu. Commonly, Radha or Sita is used in the fore in putting stress on the prominence of Sakti before energy (Kṛsna or Rama). Every life, precisely, all forms represent Rādhā Kṛsna or Sītā Rāma, the Sakti of Viṣṇu.

In Vaisnavism, love, devotion, dedication in divine sense is the common culture and practice through which life can proceed towards perfection or Mokṣa in life or absorption in the Reality.

Vaisnavism is very rich in philosophy. In ritual Jhulan, Kirtan (Song) and Bhajan (literal expression in praise of Viṣṇu or God) devotees recite the philosophy of life, union and separation, love and anxieties and the various behaviour of

life and diverse experiences in common human behaviour which are the manifestation of God in human life.

The Kirtan (songs) in Vaisnab Padabali are highly talented compositions. In literary beauty, profound philosophy and charm they have no parallel. Different sects of the Hindus attend the functions of Jhulan attracted by the Kirtan and Bhajan.

DOL-YATRA

Dol-Yatrā is popularly called Holi festival. Literally, Yātrā means journey (journey of life) and 'Dol' is the swing in life - death - life ... (Jhulan) experiences in life — (dark-bright-dark...) Jhulan and Dolyātrā are complementary to each other. The festivals and the rituals are six months apart from each other.

In the festival people in groups go about on the streets dancing, singing Kirtan and Bhajan of Radha-Krishna or Sītā-Rām in accompaniment of drums, bells, flutes, etc. and sprinkle in cheers coloured water from the bucket freely on people they meet or pass by. Some of them rub Abir (red powder) on each other's head and face with shouts in delight, 'Holi Hai' 'Holi Hai' 'Holi Hai' (It is Holi).

Local practices, however, differ in different places and groups. Amongst the upper classes in society, ladies and gents, usually visit friends and relations or the elites of the city or locality. They use Abir in putting (or exchanging) Tilak on each other's forehead and offer sweets. The youngsters put Abir on the feet of the elders or superiors and tender Pronam. These are the common practices on the day of Dol-Purnimā (Dol Yatra).

Abir is powder, vermillion in colour. Vermilion is the color of Mangal (that brings welfare). Mangal represents virtuous material activities. Abir is rubbed on the head, face upto neck, resembling pot or pitcher- the Kumbha (upside down of the pot). Sani Graha : the Graha of Kumbha Rāshi. Sani represents destiny. The idea of rubbing on the head means wishing virtuous activities in destiny. Destiny is the effect of activities in the past, in this life or in the past, the effect of activities that are within and await to effect. Virtuous deeds in the present will be effective in results in future.

Youngsters put Abir on the feet of the elders or superior means wishing progress. Śani is expressive of Gati (motion), feet is the idea or means of progress.

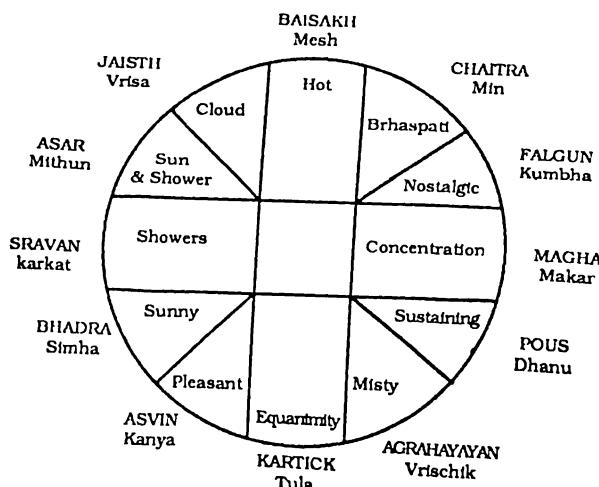
The sprinkling of coloured water and the use of Abir are highly significant, philosophical and symbolical in their ideas. Different colours are expressive of diverse experiences or presentations in life in pains and pleasures and they are manifestations of the Supreme being, Viṣṇu in life. Such manifestations of Viṣṇu are to be rejoiced in Kirtan and Bhajan of Radha-Krishna or Rama-sita.

Vaisnavism was more pronounced when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (15th centry AD) revived the spirit of Vaisnavism with the profound scholarship and toured in many parts of India with Kirtan and Bhajan. So Mahaprabhu is also regarded as Avatar of Viṣṇu.

TIMING THE RITUAL

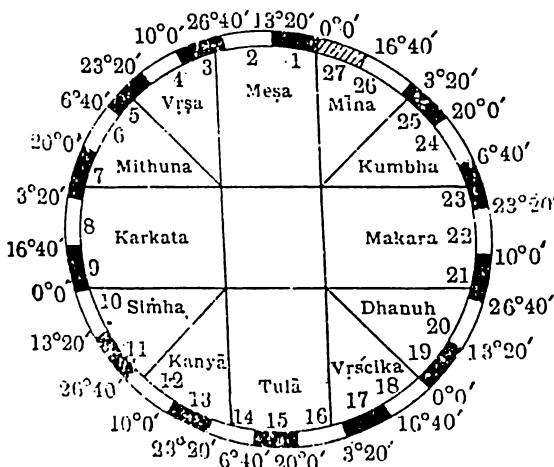
Nature is expressive by time. Time and Nature are contemporary to each other.

Ideas in Nature
(according to month)



The zodiac, the blue dome above is a giant clock that helps to know time and the corresponding ideas in nature. The dial is divided into 12 divisions or Rāsi (cluster of stars) or 12 months beginning from Baisākh (Mesh Rasi). On the dial

there are 27 Naksatras (fixed stars) each at an equal distance from the other. The Zodiac with 12 *Rāsi* and 27 *Naksatra* is called *Kālacakra* (wheel of time).



A garland of asterisms: *Naksatra* : *mālā* :

Names of the *Naksatra* : (1) Asvini; (2) Bharani; (3) Krittika; (4) Rohini; (5) Mrigasirā; (6) Ardra; (7) Punarbasu; (8) Pushyā; (9) Aslesā; (10) Maghā; (11) Purba phalguni; (12) Uttar phalguni; (13) Hastā; (14) Citrā; (15) Svatī; (16) Bisakhā; (17) Anurādhā; (18) Jyesthā; (19) Moolā; (20) Purba ḥāśādhā; (21) Uttarāśādhā; (22) Sravānā; (23) Dhanisthā; (24) Satabhīṣā; (25) Purba bhādrapada (26) Uttar bhādrapada; (27) Revati

On the celestial dial the Sun and the Moon continuously move according to their schedule rate of motion and they help to reckon time. The movement of the Sun and the Moon reciprocate the modifications within the life. Symbolically, Rabi, the Sun, represents the vital force of life and the Moon is mind or behaviour that man manifest in life.

When the Sun and the Moon glide over a *Naksatra* they help to know time as well as the ideas of nature expressive by the ideas of time, *Rāsi* and *Naksatra* in synthesis.

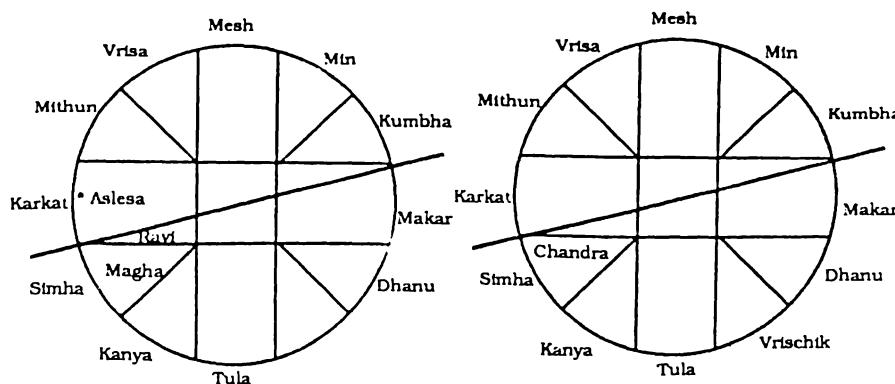
In the *Kālacakra* when the Sun and the Moon are directly opposite to each other it is *Purnimā Tithi* (Full Moon) when it is auspicious time in revealing the behaviour of Mind in full glow of the Sun or the Soul in life. In the *Kālacakra*, the end of *Karkat Rāsi* is *Aslesā* *Naksatra* and the beginning of *Simha Rāsi* is *Maghā* *Naksatra*. Philosophically, *Aslesā* is termed

'Lee' and *Maghā* is termed 'La'. At the junction of the two it is 'Leela' they imply the play of God *Viṣṇu*. Whirling on its yearly trek when the Sun comes here it is auspicious time for Jhulan.

Again after six months the Moon is in *Sinha* Rasi and the Sun is in *Kumbha* Rāśi (near the junction of *Makara* and *Kumbha* Rāśi) it is auspicious for *Dol-yātrā*.

Both *Makara* and *Kumbha* Rāśi are the Rāśi of *Śani* representing *Mayā*, *Moha*, the domain of illusions (changing/not permanent) in life, also in pains, pleasures, misfortunes and fortunes, sorrows and joys. The meeting place of *Makara* and *Kumbha* is marked by an imaginary Nakstra 'Basu' (from *Basati*-that Sits) in Dhanistha Nakṣatra (Devata Basu). Precisely, one side of *Basu* is *Makara* and the other side is in *Kumbha* Rāśi is spiritual (Airy); one is ignorance and the other side is knowledge. So when *Ravi* is in *Basu* and *Candra* is in *Simha* Rāśi it is a token intimation to turn to the realities of life in diverse experiences and progress in its journey beyond the limits of all pains and pleasures, precisely, cultural progress.

Fortunes and misfortunes are the inevitable experiences of life as destiny (*Śani*) in the life. They appear and disappear in time. By appeasing *Śani* or turning to deeds of virtue one may reduce the strikes of misfortunes from *Śani*.



Jhulan in Bhadra

The Ritual

There is no Tantrik process of Puja in the ritual of the Vaisnavas. The common practice has been to exchange flowers and sandal wood paste in putting Tilak on the forehead and sing the glory of Radha-Krisna.

Holi in Falgun

*Hare-Krisna Hare Krisna
 Krisna Krisna Hare Hare
 Hare Rā ma Hare Rā ma
 Rama Rama Hare Hare.*

or

Hare Krisna Hare Rama ; Netai Gour Rā dhashyā ma.

Significance of the Ritual

The festival of Jhulan and Holi (Dol-yatra) are distinct from the ritual of the other sections of the Hindus. Dance, music, Kirtan and Bhajan together with distribution of Prasad are the main function in the festivals. There is no distinction of any caste, creed or religious faith. Every life is the embodiment of *Rā dha-Krisṇa* or *Viṣṇu*, the supreme Godhead. Movements and modifications in life are the manifestations of God and the life is adored as God in a form.

There is no prayer to God to give us daily bread or to give us peace and prosperity in life or power to fight the enemies in life. There is no sense of dualism or self and God although there is lot of controversy on the subject. However, *Jhulan* and *Holi* are the manifestation of the Reality on the earth.

'*Na Vidyā Sangītāt Param'* — there is no knowledge superior to music. Music has charm that captivates the mind. Music helps concentration, self realisation, love and devotion and surrender to *Viṣṇu Śakti* that ultimately helps liberation. Vaisnavism is the highest form of civilisation effecting unity in diversity.



NATARAJ (Lord of the Dance)

Life and Dance

Fire and flame

Soul and Nature

*The Reality and its manifestations are same. The symbol is
expressive of Cosmic Evolution*

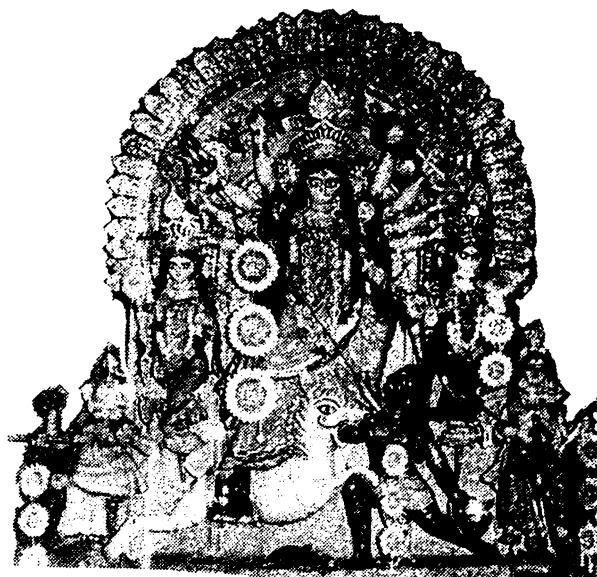


SWASTIK

*The most ancient symbol of the Hindus signifying
peace and happiness.*

*(Some interpret it as the symbol of the Reality,
Integration of the two - Purus and prakriti Sakti)*

DURGA PUJA



Durga

A princely ritual

Durga durgati nasini : Durga is Sakti. She destroys the miseries in life.

The history of Durga Puja predates the period of the Ramayana. The epic story of the Ramayana says that Sri Ramachandra while in exile worshipped the Goddess Durga and by the blessings of the Goddess Durga regained powers and got out of his miseries and killed Ravana, his enemy and rescued his wife Sita. Ravana had taken away Sita, imprisoned her in his palace in Srilanka, an island in Indian Ocean. Evidently, the culture of Durga Puja existed earlier than the period of the Ramayana.

Since those days of the Ramayana there is no regular history of Durga Puja upto date. Old, broken, disfigured icon of Durga of uncommon and different shapes and expressions either with or without weapons in hands and in the manner of attack are seen in some temples, rocks, caves, palaces in different places in India which are evidences of existence of Durga Puja in India.

Durga Puja is a princely ritual since it needs a team of trained priests with knowledge of the philosophy of life and nature (the Vedas), Tantra - Mantra, Yoga as well as formalities, processes and performances in the ritual. It needs elaborate resources of men and materials which are not possible for any ordinary common being. The ritual aims at approach towards perfection in life.

Crisis in culture

Towards the end of the Moghul rule and the beginning of the British supremacy in India, once in West Bengal (a State in India) a few rich landlords celebrated Durga Puja with fantastic pomp and grandeur and lavish expenses and attractive dance and drinks.

In the following period till the present Durga Puja is seen in the houses of a few rich families on the auspicious days of the Puja as their traditional ritual and duty without much outward pomp and ceremony.

But common people remember the attractions and allurements, fun and fancy, music and dance during the Puja days of the earlier landlords. Some local people in a group collect money and resources, and celebrate Durga Puja with

attractive festivals, entertainments, decorations and fair which are in modern time known as National Festival in the country. They are *Sarbajanin* (Community) *Durgotsaba* (Durga + utsaba - festival). Durga Puja is an excuse in the functions.

It has now been a common practice in society for exchange of gifts, social meetings, exhibitions, demonstrations and entertainments. Naturally, on the occasion of Durga Puja, commercial houses, traders, and media houses are all out to exploit this opportunity.

Sarbajanin Puja is now increasing in number all over the country and extending the culture even abroad by the Hindus residing in USA, UK, Europe, Japan and many other countries.

In most *Sarbajanin Puja* the organisers are more interested in gathering visitors, decorations and shows, various functions for entertainment, defying the purposive behaviour of the ritual and the knowledge of Durga Puja that it aims at. In these functions *Kumāri Puja*, worship of a virgin, has been an attraction. Money rolls down in lakhs without any fruitful result or any utilitarian end. This has been a crisis in culture.

Icon of Durga

Durga Puja is a Tantrik Puja in which Yantra, Mantra and performances are important. And yet icon (*Pratimā*) is essential since it helps to know and comprehend the ideas of Durga.

In Durga Puja icons or *Pratima* are not common everywhere. The icon of Durga may have two, four, or ten even eighteen arms with or without weapons. The Puja, Mantra, disciplines in Puja and timings, however, are same and they are processes and performances according to Tantra Sastra.

The variations of icon in form and figure are known by different names, viz., Bana Durga, Maha Durga, Giri Durga, Jaya Durga, Suli Durga, Mahisa Mardini Durga, Sakti Durga, Ghor Durga, Chanda Durga, Names differ in different countries.

Many icons are simply Devi Durga in fighting posture ; some of them have *Sirha* (lion) as *Bāhana* (Carrier) of Durga.

Each and all Durga are regarded as Sakti. They may be in any of 9 different manifestations of Sakti, such as, Ugra Chanda, Pranachanda, Chandogra, Chandanayaeka, Chanda,

Chandabati, Chandrarupa, Ati Achandika, Rudra Chandika as are known by the sculptors.

Durga, according to its icon is also known by 9 different names, such as, Brahmini, Vaisnabi, Maheswari, Narasimhi, Varahi, Indrani, Kounari, Chamunda, Chandalika.

Since the 18th century following the ideas in Tantra and the recommendations of Raghunandan Smriti, Pandit of West Bengal, the icon of Durga with ten weapons in ten hands and with *Luxmi* and *Gan̄eś*, *Saraswati* and *Kārtik*, daughters and sons of Durga on one platform and under one background has been popular in Puja in many parts in India.

The symbolical ideas of the icon are highly philosophical; The hand represent activities- evil or virtuous. In human life in course of various activities miseries accumulate in life due to one or all the evils in life, namely, greed, envy, jealousy, lies, evil desires, *Māyā* (putting in faith which is not true), *Mohā* (mental obsession), vanity, hatred and anger.

These ten causes create condition and circumstances of miseries and misfortunes and in course of time suffer various consequences. These causes are termed ASURA, the demon (precisely, beast or beastly propensities). Devi Durga being pleased with the puja and the prayers kill the Asura (the evils) with ten weapons in her ten hands. Asura, the evils in life being killed, the activities of virtuous deeds or virtues emerge in life since activities are the incidence of life, mentally and physically. Activities cannot be stopped in a common life. Virtuous activities effect peace and popularity and turn the life towards progress for perfection and free from miseries.

If one would closely study the ideas of the icon and the attributes of each *Sakti* in the icon he will get the truths of Durga Sakti from the icon.

DURGA, the main *Sakti* is in the centre. The auxiliary powers, *LUXMI* (the purposive behaviour) *GAN̄ES* (personality) are on her right side and *SARASWATI* (Vidya/wisdom) and *KĀRTIK* (the fighter) are on her left. Therefore, Durga together with Luxmi and Ganesh ; Saraswati and Kartik, all together are the entire *Sakti* for annihilation of the miseries. Further, Durga is kicking her bāhana (carrier) lion, the king of beasts, in fighting the Asura (beastly propensities). She killed the Asura with her weapons to rid of the miseries and the root causes of the miseries.

Now, it will be easy to understand that in life when all the evil propensities or in one word, Asura, is killed, the purposive behaviour, and the expressions of virtues within together with wisdom and personality over people automatically emerge as *Śakti* in life. Thus *Durgā Sakti* blesses the life with peace, popularity and prosperity.

TIMING THE RITUAL

Time is an essential knowledge for the determination of auspicious moments. Nature is expressive by time. Time is divided into a *Rāsi*, *Naksatra* and *Tithi*. Further minute divisions are relevant to Puja are for the priests.

The earth is some times nearer or further from the Sun due to its elliptical orbit and travels either faster or slower but not in uniform speed throughout the year. Therefore, the extant of *Naksatra*, *Tithi* by time also differ every year. *Pancang* or *Panjika* or *ephemeris* give the correct timing of ritual in any particular year also record the extant of *Rāsi*, *Naksatra* and *Tithi*.

Here are clues to follow ideas of the divisions that are relevant to *Durga Puja* ritual.

RASI (or Sign) : The Sun takes little over 360 days to complete the yearly trek round the earth or *Kalacakra*. However, it is divided into 12 divisions and each is a *Rāsi* by name or symbol.

Kanya Rasi (Virgo)

Ideas : Autumn, pleasant, female, artistic and intellectual, activities.

Vṛiścik Rasi (Scorpio).

Ideas : Mysticism, solitude, psychic, creation after destruction.

Dhanuh Rasi (Sagittarius)

Ideas : Aiming high with one object, ascending from material to spiritual plane.

Makar Rasi (Capricornus)

Ideas : Material and spiritual, concentration.

NAKSATRA : There are 27 *Naksatras* in *Kālacakra* each at an equal distance from the other. *Naksatra* is called *Dakshaja* in mythology. *Daksha* = capable + *ja* = *janam*, that is to say, capability ; a potential power. When the Moon (*Candra*) glides over a *Naksatra*, the ideas of the *Rāsi*,

Naksatra (also blended with the ideas of the Tithi) appears expressive in mental behaviour (Moon represents mind).

Anuradha (in Vriscik). Its Devata (the cosmic force in it) is Mitra, meaning friendly.

Ideas : Anuradha is Radha/Ārādhana Sakti or power of worshipping.

Jyestha (in Vriscik). Its Devata is *Indra*.

Ideas : Indriya or senses, control over senses, unlimited power.

Moola (in Dhanu). Its Devata - *Nirriti*. It is cloud that melts and drops on the earth for creations.

Ideas : Moola is raddish, a vegetable. It does not go up high on surface but penetrates into soil, goes deeper within just as vegetables, plants and trees.

Purbasadha and Uttarasadha (in Dhanu). *Purba* is the former part and *Uttara* is the latter part. A small part is in Makar Rasi. Devata Purbasadha is *Toya* (water). It is also known by other names *Apārajitā* (undefeated).

Ideas : *Toya* or water ; is a creative power. Devata of Uttarasadha is *Ganadevata*, lord of living things.

Ideas : dominating power over living things.

Saravana : (in Makara) its Devata is *Visṇu*.

Ideas : Three foot prints of *Visṇu* ; progress from material to spiritual plane.

TITHI : Soul is represented by the Sun/Ravi. Consciousness and mind (represented by the Moon/Candra), precisely, Ravi and Candra. They are expressive in mental behaviour (also a *Sakti*). Ravi and Candra are continuously moving over the Kālacakra (Zodiac). They meet and part. The distance between Ravi and Candra is Tithi. There are 15 Tithi. Each is significant for its potential power of nature both within and without. The powers are named after its Devata (cosmic power or the divine force).

Pancami Tithi : (bright half period).

Ideas : (in Vriscik) In Anuradha or Jyestha *Naksatra* - feelings within.

Sasthi Tithi (next to Pancami). Devata - Kārtikeya, Guha (occult).

Ideas : (in Moola *Naksatra*) *Nabapatrika Puja* or worship of nine plants and leaves. (Worship of Nature).

Saptami Tithi : Devata Ravi.

Ideas : Puja of Devi and Devatas in the icon of Durga.

Astami Tithi : Devata -Siva.

Ideas : Puja of Devi and Devata in icon.

Navami Tithi : Devata -Durga

Ideas : Puja of Devi and Devata in icon.

Dasami Tithi : Devata Yama (from Yama, - 'gati', progress)

Ideas : Puja for Dasami Tithi. Progress from material to spiritual life.

Synopsis of the timings

Auspicious time is related to action or events. Time and nature is counterpart to each other. When nature within and without are in consonance or in harmony to each other it is auspicious.

Durga Puja begins in Autumn when the Sun is in Kanyā Rāśi and the Moon is in Vṛiṣčik Rāśi on Pancami Tithi. In the beginning the ritual is Bodhanā-awakening of realisation (Bodha/feelings). It is an attempt to kindle the spiritual feelings of realisation within.

In the next step on the VI Tithi it 's time to turn towards things occult (, Naksatra Moolā). It helps to visualise God in all objects of Nature. It is ritual for Nabapatrikā (9 leaf/herbs). There are various trees and plants, out of them nine selected botanical objects help to visualise the esoteric workings of nature, the divine attributes that provide for us food, nutrition and cure to enjoy heavenly pleasures and objects of blessings from God. Those 9 are - (1) banana tree (*Musa sapientum*) ; (2) *Haridrā* (*Curcuma domestica*) ; (3) *Asok* (*Saraca Indica*) ; (4) *Bael* tree (*Aegle marmelos*) ; (5) *Jayanti* (*Sesbania Sesban*) ; (6) *Mānkachu* (*Alocasia Indica*) ; (7) *paddy* (*Oiza sativa*) ; (8) *Dalim* (*Panica granatum*) and (9) *black/Krishna kochu* (*Alocasia inica*) and they are tied in a bundle with the creepers of *Apārajitā* (*clitoria ternatea*). These nine herbs are as if material blessings of God Durga in person.

Durga Puja is continued and all the Gods and Goddesses in the icon are worshipped on the following (VII) Tithi - (Devata Ravi) the vital force of life). Usually, the Moon is in Dhanu Rasi, at *Aparājita* (*Purbā sadha*) *Nakṣatra*

Dhanu Rāśi is a symbol for aiming high. With certain object in view. It has one arrow. It aims at only one at a time

and has, therefore, an empty quilt. It is expressive of ascending from material to spiritual plane.

Sandhi Pujā (the time of meeting VIII and the IX Tithi) is the meeting (or union) of Siva and Durga (effecting creation). Precisely, effective power of destruction of the evil and creation of the desired object. Creation means a change from one form to another. It may be said that Sandhi Puja is the quintessence of Durga Puja.

The last Puja is Dasami Tithi Puja. Usually, it is time of Moon in *Sravana Nakṣatrā* ;. It is expressive of progress from material to spiritual plane, precisely, the purposive behaviour of life.

From the beginning to the end, the Durga Puja is a streamlined process from realisation within to manifestation of the virtuous powers after destroying the evils vieded in life effecting miseries. It aims at spiritual progress in tune with nature and in steps with time.

Pujabhaba arise from the dualistic motion of the worshipper and the worshipped. He who having realised the Advaitatattwa that all is Brahman there is neither worshipper nor worshipped, neither Yoga nor Puja or dhyana or other spiritual process. In the external worship there is worship of either Pratima or Yantra.

The Puja (Worship)

Puja begins with worship of Panch Devata or Surya (the Sun), Siva, Visnu or Narayana, as may be desired. Puja is done with a particular end in view. It is *Sankalpa*. This is a statement of resolution to do the worship. If the Puja is sponsored by somebody else and the priest functions as representative, this is also mentioned in the *Sankalpa*.

The priest invokes Devi Durga with 16 *Upācara* - (1) *Asana* (Seat) ; (2) *Invocation* ; (3) *Paddya* (water for washing the feet); (4) *Arghya* (offering unboiled rice, flower, sandel paste, Durba grass) ; (5) & (6) *Achmana* ; (7) *Madhuparka* (honey, ghee, milk and curd) ; (8) *Snān* ; (9) *Vasana* (cloth) ; (10) *Ābharana* (ornaments) ; (11) *Gandha* (perfume) ; (12) *Pushpa* ; (13) *Dhupa* ; (14) *Dipa* ; (15) *Naivedya* (food) ; (16) *Vandana* (Prayer).

Besides the 16 *Upācaras* there are two very important functions - *Prānapratisthā* and *Chaksu dāna*. The devotee or

the Sadhaka or the priest worships mental image of the form and then in giving *Prāna* infuse the image by the light and energy of the Brahman which is within him to the image without from which there come *Caitanyamayīsakti* through *Prāna-pratistha*. It is same as a light kindles another light. *Pratimā* or the *Pratik* is then regarded same as the living soul.

The Service on the days between the V to the X Tithi are relevant to the priests only. All the Devatas in the icon are worshipped separately. In some orthodox home each and all the weapons are also worshipped to assure victory of Durga.

The service follows the *Ārati* of Devi Durga (commune with Devi) and the *Vijayā* ceremony.

Ārati

A + rati = act of union with divinity. The union of within and without. The 5 causes of nature - Space, Air, Fire Water and Earth and the 5 attributes of life - Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell merge into one in Reality. In greeting the divinity (*Ārati*), a *Panca pradip* (five lamps in one lampstand), bell, fan, camphor, incense, etc. are used as symbols. Through the *Ārati* the worshipper and the worshipped become one and same in commune and the life turns in *Durgā Sakti* - the power that destroys the miseries in life. It is same a *Yoga* (by mantra) in Tantra without any material object.

The functions of Durga Puja end with *Ārati*. The Icon (*Pratimā*) is taken out in a procession of worshippers and the visitors for immersion in water.

Vijayā (or Bijayā) ceremony

After the immersion of the *Pratimā* the ceremony of *Vijayā* (*Jai* = victory) begins. It is the ceremony of victory of the virtuous attributes and spirit, precisely, virtuous or purposive behavior in life over the evil propensities within.

The ceremony is significant since the rich and the poor, the friends and the foes, forgetting their differences embrace each other as one in spirit and heart. The youngs tender their *Pronām* (respects and regards) to the elders and the elders bless the youngs for the *Vijayā* (or *Bijayā* = victory) in life. The ladies also enjoy the ceremony by exchanging *Sindur* (vermillion) as a symbol of the act of virtue.

The ceremony follows distribution or exchange of *Prasad* (food or materials that delight).

Recitation of Chandi

Chandi (Goddess) is considered same as Devi Durga or a substitute of Durga. The recitation of Chandi Stotram including Debisukta (*Devi* = goddess + *Ukta* = utterances) or stated by the Devi is a part of the ritual on the days of the Puja. Chandi as it is in Markandeya Purana is from CANDA which means Anger. It states that Raja Surath fell into miseries, stripped off from all possessions, lost his kingdom, family, and friends turned foe but after worshipping Chandi who was pleased with the prayers blessed him in regaining the possessions. The stotram relate the attempts of Asura to gain supremacy over *Sakti* (Devi Durga). Devi as Chandi kills the Asura and establishes that she is the ultimate Sakti and destroys the miseries in life. Chandi, as a matter of fact, is the prime dynamic *Sakti*.

KUMARI PUJA.

Of late Kumari Puja is gaining popularity. A teen aged virgin is beautifully dressed with jewels and decorative materials and worshipped as a *Pratik* of *Durga* *Pratimā*. This has been in practice in some rural parts in India for a long time. The philosophy and psychology of the Puja is not very clear but questionable. Particularly, when the Puja is done by a saffron clad Sannyasi it is paradoxical since Sannyasi who has renounced materialism and has no role in material Puja it is contrary to the culture it professes.

Beeja Mantra of Durga

Beeja Mantra may not convey its meaning on its face. The worshipper (*Sādhaka*) knows that meaning is its own form of the particular Devi whose Mantra it is. Every Mantra is thus a particular sound form (*Rup* of the Brahman). There are Beeja Mantra for common use. Some Mantra are formed with the first letters of the name of the Devi or Devata for whom they stand for. For Durga it is Dum. The textual source of Mantra is to be found in the Vedas, Puranas and Tantra sashtra or Mantrasastra. The Beeja Mantra of Durga which is common is HRIM : H + R + I + M. H is for Siva ; R is Sakti, I is Mahamaya and M is the Nada of Universe. The Mantra is the dispeller of sorrows or miseries.

Significance of Durga Puja

Durga Puja is significant for the following four reasons.

- (1) Durga Puja is a Tantrik Puja. There is no distinction of caste in Tantrik Puja. Durga Puja or recital of Candi-

Stotram may be done by any person, male or female, and there is no restriction for participation by any community or class.

- (2) There are in every society rich and poor, believers and nonbelievers, friends and foes. Being blessed with *Bijayā* (Victory over the enemies) they all meet as one and greet each other forgetting their differences and renewing their bondage of love and affection.
- (3) Durga Puja unveils the esoteric workings in life and nature.
- (4) Durga Puja aims at perfection in life. From stern materialism, fluctuations of pains and pleasures incessantly, the Puja leads life to absolute tranquillity and peace.

Annexure to Durga Puja

LUXMI - the goddess of Fortune

LUXMI, the goddess of fortune has a special significance in the worship. In almost all Hindu home in India, particularly Ladies love to keep an icon (*Pratima*) of either clay, stone or of any solid material or a picture of Luxmi. The goddess is either standing or seated on a bloomed lotus.

She is richly dressed in a Saree (cloth) wearing various ornaments full of gems and jewels. In her right hand she holds a lotus and in her left she holds a casket. Her face is lovely and appears self contented. Near her feet is seated a white owl, her bahana (carrier).

Lotus is the symbol of chastity and purposive behaviour or knowledge of what it is, what it was or will be as well what it ought to be ; virtuous behaviour as duty; impressive manner ; shewing complacency on existing prosperity or poverty.

The carrier white owl is truly the most appropriate symbol. This creature flies in darkness of night and catches its prey and sleeps in the day. The symbol signify the attributes that can see an object to satisfy its needs when others do not see due to darkness of the night ; neglect or lack of foresight or uncared for attitude or probe into opportunities or possibilities.

Such attributes of wisdom of owl is the true carrier or wealth (material or spiritual) and assure prosperity. The icon represents the idea that wisdom and judicious thoughts and foresight precisely, wise behaviour fulfils the objects of needs

in the circumstances where such fulfilment is believed to be impossible (darkness) to others. Briefly, it may be said that, wise and judicious behaviour gentle in dealings, steady, firm and attractive manners assure prosperity in life. It is a common saying that such and such boy or girl or a housewife is Luxmi which means that he or she is well behaved and not materially rich enough in Life. Good and gentle behaviour in life and activity is more than gold of all other possessions. It is same moral as simple living and high thinking. Persons with superior personalities bless the youngs saying to became a Luxmi.

The Popular belief that goddess Luxmi if pleased with Puja blesses the life with riches and material prosperity. Many people with such misbelief offer Puja of Luxmi on Thursday (day of Luxmi) and do not make any financial transactions on thursday. Acting on such superstitions many traders keep their offices or business closed on thursday. This is superstition.



*Symbol of Luxmi.
Two foot prints side by side signifying **Sthiti** (static)*

KARTIKA

Kartika is called a Dev-senapati, a commander, a fighter. The *bahana* of Kartika is a peacock. This creature kills the snakes. The behaviour of enemies are like that of a snake which moves silently and secretly and can strike fatal bites. Peacock is the most appropriate symbol of *bahana* of Kartik.

KALIPUJA AND DIWALI



Icon of Kali

Synopsis

Autumn is the time for Kali Puja and Diwali to commensurate with nature and attempt perfection in life. We are the legatees of our long past good and bad deeds that either mar or mark our existence in life in misfortunes and fortunes in a weighing balance and an escape from the time seems impossible.

The child that hoists its fists in the cradle apparently has not brought anything into this world but with the march of time it reveals its glorious or inglorious existence in the past. It enflashes in the mind the existence of a superior creator. The man a defenceless creature, is born on the surface of this rotating earth, grows and usually at half the age he begins to understand that there is some one behind the life that controls and conducts the games of life. No answer satisfies him other than his own search in the absolute stillness of his innermost being where soul and mind dive into regions beyond the limits of his fate or fortune.

If you could keep on watching the sky above on a dark night, you would find that several glittering bodies or innumerable stars, big and small, are continuously gliding in an endless drift. The drift represents the Cosmic Evolution. Below on the surface of the Earth every one of us, in different name and form is also following a similar course in the journey of life. Births and deaths in this course are names to denote modifications in nature in evolution. Death is a change for a new messenger for a new creation. The cremation ground has, therefore, been the holy alter for the ascetic worshippers praying for change from material to spiritual life.

The power behind the cosmic evolution is revealed at the junction where birth meets death and answers questions about its existence. Death is an expression of nature expressive by time. Time and nature are thus counterparts of each other. Time exclusively is inexpressible. Time is an idea, an imagination. Nature is expressive by time. Time is unseen and nature is seen. One is static and the other is dynamic. Together they make up one whole and thus they are indivisible and yet the divisions are imaginable and comprehensible by the ideas of time and modifications in nature. In essence, it is progressive culture of the highest form of civilisation striving to reveal the mysteries of life and nature and reach the goal which is optimistically called progress towards perfection.

Icon of Kali

The icon is significant in revealing the imaginations ; static time and dynamic nature and their modifications, as well as the austere practices of the devotees. The eternal time is *Mahākala*. Literally, *Mahā* means great and *Kāla* means

time. *Māhakāla* is time without any beginning or end, without movement or change. It is like one dead. The counterpart of time is nature and it is always in action and modifications.

Every action or modification is a new creation. Creation is the virtue of a woman. Therefore, nature is represented in the icon as Goddess *Kāli*, female in form and a gesture representing dynamic changes, action and progress.

In the icon, *Māhakāla* is *Siva* or *Saba*, male in form, ash colour ; by colour it is the symbol of *Vṛṣa* or *Sukra*, representing virtue. *Siva* is like a dead body and is lying still. On the body of *Māhakāla*, the dynamic power, *Kāli*, female in form is in gesture of action and progress, represented by her stretched legs and steps. This *Māhakāla* and *Kāli* are *Purus* and *Pra-kr̥ti*, the static and dynamic in one whole is the ultimate form of Realities for realisation of *Ādiśakti* (*Kāli*).

The Tantriks explain the same views ; static at *Muladhara* and the *spandana* is dynamic ; continuous modifications within.

The continuous and limitless static time, having neither day or night is without expression. It is dark. On the vast canvass of time without any beginning or end, the Sun, the Moon are the divisions of time in two variables. Thus the two luminous bodies, *Ravi* (the Sun) and *Candra* (Moon) are the symbolic representations of consciousness (*Ātmā*/soul) and Mind (*Mana*) respectively. The eternal consciousness, without any end, birth and death are expressions of nature and they are expressive of cosmic evolution in nature by its Moon or Mind.

From the symbols in the icon it is possible to understand and realise the idea ; to understand the cosmic evolution ; and perception. It needs scourging of the mental process from the world of mental experiences and reach spiritual stage. The icon is a help and significant in the process of progress in realisation negating the feeling of self and the thoughts in and out.

The infinite time without beginning or end is darkness and so *Kāli* is darkness itself (black). So time is unboundable, uncoverable. Therefore, *Kāli* is without any cover or garment, naked. Several cut out arms are tied around her waist suggestive of stoppage of all physical activities. In the icon around her neck she has a garland of fifty human heads

representing fifty letters (alphabets). Alphabets are the source of knowledge (*Vidyā/Avidyā*). She has four hands. In one she holds a cut-out head of a man indicating severance of feelings of human existence and the senses. In another hand she holds a *Kharga* (*khara* - quick + *ga* - go/ *gati*) the weapon that cuts in quick movements. The *Kharga* is in the shapre of V (fifth) phase of the Moon (*Pancami tithi*) indicating severance of material thoughts and knowledge from mental conception. On third hand on the right it is raised and the palm with the signers closely joined together, suggesting control of five senses (five fingers are corelated to five senses in expression ; symbol of *Yoga* ; union of mind and spirit). The fourth hand shows the thumb touching the middle portion of the middle finger (the starting point of counting *Japa* of *Mantra*, precisely, the repitation of *Japa* of *Mantra*). In the icon the produced tongue held by the teeth represents control of all speech and worldly thoughts within. *Kala* means time, *Kāli* is the *Sakti* (power) of time ; the modifications indicated by time. The third eye on the forehead represents spiritual foresight. In synthesis of ideas, the icon is a help for realisation of the Supreme *Sakti* (*Ādyā Sakti*) and progress from material to spiritual world.

Time for Puja

In the pitch black dark New Moon night when the Sun and the Moon (*Ātmā* and *Mana*) are in conjunction and invisible but gliding over *Svāti Naksatra*, it is auspicious time for Kali Puja.

Naksatra is a star in the zodiac representing modification of nature expressive by its name and ideas attached to it. The name *Svāti* implies *Svatata gachhati iti Svāti*, meaning moving by self. This is the character of Air which is attributed to be its *Devata*. This *Naksatra* is related to knowledge of space (*Ākāśa*) since space is the abode of air. Literally, Air or in Sanskrit *Pavana* (*Pu + Anena*) is that which purifies or *Baiyu*. *Baiyu* by other name comes from the word *Vā* which means to move.

Pavana and *Teja*. *Baiyu* and *Agni* are always inseparably together and they together are also responsible for creations.

So it has great affinity for the Sun (symbolically). It has in it the powers and tenacity of wind and attributes of purification.

The idea of the symbol of winnowing paddy denotes purification of the paddy.

In the divisions of time (seasons) it is autumn. It is time when day and night are equal in duration. In the 12 divisions in the zodiac, it is *Tula Rāśi* (Sign of Libra), *Bātū Kārana* (Cause) and *Tama* (modifications in effect) *Guna*.

Puja and the festivals are like the twins. *Puja* is a ritual, metaphysical activities the activities of the worship. Common people celebrate the occasion with festivals on the next day following the New Moon or *Amā basyā Tithi*.

Festival of Diwali (a ceremony)

The day of festival is Diwali or Deepabali or illumination, the day for lighting ceremony. Every house is decorated with lights in and out. Sound, manifestation of air forms a part of the festival. Sound being the attribute of *Akāśa*, fire works and fire with sounds like bombs, crackers, are parts of the festival. Balloons with lights are let afloat in the sky. It follows the idea of *Svāti*-to go as it likes.

In some parts in India people hoist lamps on poles at night as showing light to forefathers who are moving in the space during the dark nights as this month is *Pitṛ pakshya* (fortnight for the forefathers). Merchants close their books of accounts for the past year and begin afresh. In recent time the exchange of Diwali Greeting Cards by post is a western imitation.

Mantra and Yoga

Mantra, literally, *Manā* (mind) + (trana) : is a thought movement expressed in sound or speech sought for any relief or for attainment of anything material or spiritual.

Yoga (from root *Yuj*) means to join, the conscious communion or human spirit merged or absorbed in divine spirit. Yoga has theoretical and practical aspect. The latter (including *Yoga Darśan*) is concerned with teaching of the methods and for effective results. It needs the guidance of an adept (Guru) who has attained *Siddhi* (success).

Mantra in Yoga manifests *Kundalini Śakti*. The prime energy in a life is coiled (*Kundalini*) like a thread finer than a hair at *Mulādhāra*, at the base of the spinal column and extends upto *Sahasrār* on the top upto cerebral centres.

From the Muladhara to *Sahasrār* the spinal column has six principal centres and each is termed as *Cakra*. They are (1) *Mulādhāra*, (2) *Svādhishṭhān*, (3) *Manipura*, (4) *Anāhata*, (5) *Viśudhā*, (6) *Ajna Cakra* (between the two eyebrows). The seventh region beyond the sixth *Cakra* is the upper brain, the highest centre of manifestation of consciousness in the body.

The *Cakras* are the centres of *Sakti*, the centres of *Prāṇākti* (force of life) manifested by *Prāṇabāīyu* (breath) in the living body. *Cakras* are not perceptible to the gross senses. They are the observance by the Yogis in *Atindriya* (super senses) observations.

Six *Cakras*, each resembles a lotus. They are apart from each other and connected by thread like chains, by name *Gangā*, *Jamunā* and *Saraswati*. The petals of each lotus vary in number and they are 50 in all and each *Cakra* is determined by the number and positions of the *Nādi* (*Nād* means motion) and *Yoga* nerves around the the *Cakra*. *Yoga Nādi* are the subtle channels along which the *Prāṇik* currents flow.

There are two sympathetic cords *Idā* and *Pingalā*, on the left and right side of the spinal *Susumna* : and they meet at *Ajñā Cakra* in three fold knot called *Tribeni*.

Mantra helps to manifest and express *Sakti* (prime energy). *Mantra* is distinct from prayer (ritual hymns) which is only a self dedication. When the thoughts of *Mantra* is in absorption in realisation and is in *Yoga* (union) with vital force of life, *Mantra* attains the stage of *Mantra Caitanya* and the *Mantra* becomes effective and then *Mantra* turns to *Sakti* and acts accordingly. Mere utterances of *Mantra* without *Yoga* or without the knowledge of thoughts of *Mantra* or meaning (*Artha*) of *Mantra* are only movement of lips and are ineffective.

Movement of the air within as a result of the utterances of *Mantra* or vibrations within produces sound within which while ascending upwards through the spine for expression strike the *Cakra* one after the other and produces sound in the *Cakra* in the categories of letters (50 letters in Sanskrit) and thus turn to *Aksara*. In *Yoga* mind and *Mantra* when absorbed like the odour in a flower or rain in cloud the *Aksara* (indestructive) turn to *Brahman*. Particular *Mantra* for

particular deity (Devata/Devi) consists of certain letters arranged in definite sequence which the letter represents.

The ability to make *Mantra* effective through *Cakra* (*Mantra* and consciousness in *Yoga*) is called *Mantra Siddhi*. Whatever the *Sādhaka* desires he surely obtains when he attains *Mantra Siddhi*. It is the compelling force and power of mind to produce any gain or accomplish desires (*Ichhā Sakti, Kriyā Sakti, Jñāna Sakti*, etc.) *Siddhi* is the achievement as a result of *Japa* of *Mantra* in *Yoga*.

Beeja Mantra

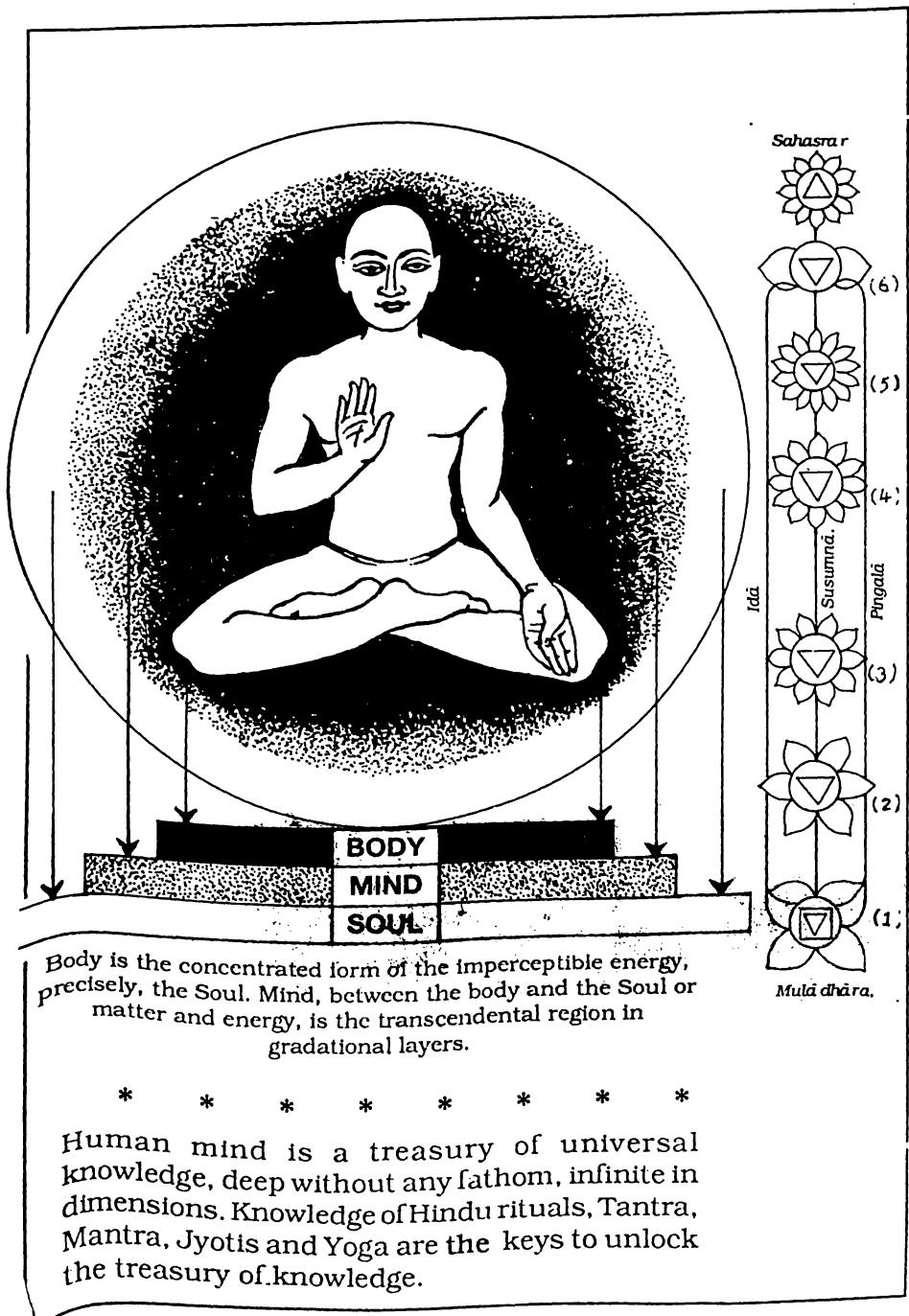
Beeja Mantra of *Kāli* is *KRIM* (*K* = *Kāla/Kāla Sakti* + *Hrim* = *Siva* and *Sakti/Devi* combined) and the ideas in *Yoga* as are in the icon are effective in modifications as desired.

Surrender to *Mahasakti* (time) and *Japa* before the image of *Mahāsakti* with Beeja Mantra in raising the powers within from *Moolādhāra* to *Sahasrār* is effective in modifications reflecting over the desired object.

Significance of Kali Puja

All over the world people believe in God or look at the sky above for any supernatural power who controls and conducts the births and deaths in life. Births either in a poor or a rich home or to enjoy the best of opportunities without apparent reasons remain unexplored. The faultless efforts turning fruitless ventures are unforeseen and unpredictable. Man is ever curious and inquisitive to know them, the mysteries in them and cultivate power to dominate over the effect of time and get the divine blessings.

The knowledge of *Ādyā Sakti* and *Kāli pujā* is a way to get the answers and to know them. The truths are intelligible only to *Sādhakas* (worshippers) who is able to awaken the powers through the six *Cakras*. The devotee or the worshipper becomes a deity himself and at that state of enlightenments accomplishes his desired ends.



CAKRA	SITUATION	NUMBER OF PETALS	LETTERS ON SAME	REGNANT TATTVA AND ITS QUALITIES	COLOUR OF TATTVA
(1) Muladhara	Spinal centre of region below genitals	4	Va, sa, sa, sa	Prthivi; cohesion stimulating sense of smell	Yellow
(2) Svadhisthana	Spinal centre of region above the genitals	6	ba, bha, ma, ya, ra, la	Ap; contraction stimulating sense of taste	White
(3) Manipura	Spinal centre of region of the navel	10	da, dha, na, ta, tha, da, dha, na pa, pha	Tejas; expansion, producing heat and stimulating sight-sense of colour and form	Red
(4) Anshata	Spinal centre of region of the heart	12	ka, Khs, ga, gha, na, ca, ccha, ja, jha, jna, ta, tha	Vayu; general movement, stimulating sense of touch	Smoky
(5) Visuddha	Spinal centre of region of the throat	16	the vowels a, a, i, i, u, u, r, r, I, I, e, ai, o, au, am, ah	Akasa; space-giving stimulating sense of hearing	White
(6) Ajna	Centre of region between the eyebrows	2	ha, and ksa	Manas (mental faculties)	...
<p>Above the Ajna is the causal region and the Lotus of a thousand petals, with all the letters, wherein is the abode of the Supreme Bindu Parasiva</p>					

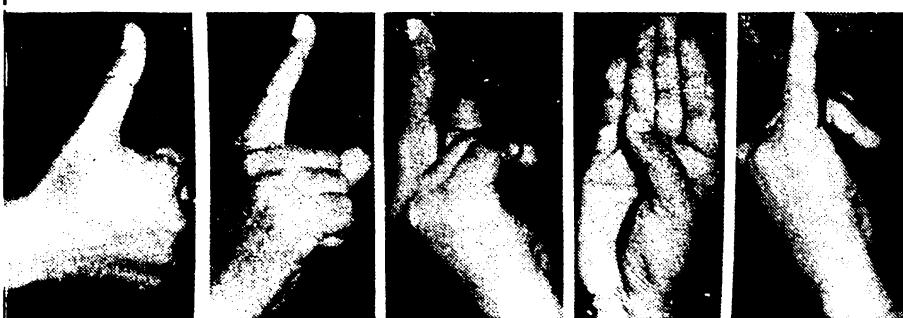


EXPRESSIONS BY FINGURES

(Mystic relations in Soul and Nature)

Divisions in Nature Significance

1. Akash - Sunnya
2. Baiyu - Force
3. Agni - Energy
4. Jala - Creative
5. Prithvi - Concentration



(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

Fingure

Thumb

First

Middle

Third

Small

Ideas

Sunnya
Universe

Force

Energy
Teja

Creative
Japa

Goodwish
Welfare
(mangal)

Joining the first fingure with the thumb
(Sunnya and Baiyu signify neditation



NAMASKARA

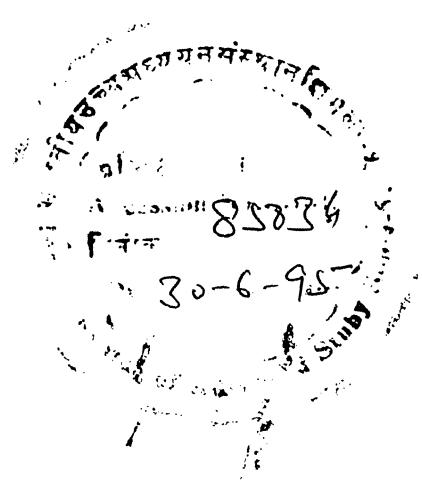


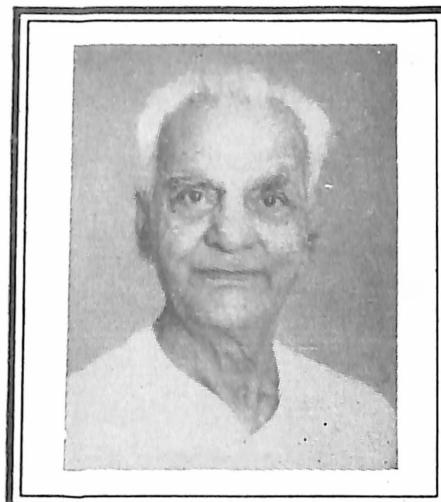
This is wrong.



This is right

Join the two palms uniting the fingers (uniting all the senses) touch the bottom of the thumb (Sunnya) at the centre of the eye brows (spiritual vision) and the forehead (destiny; Bhagya/experience) and visualise the Reality in a form in the object.





About the Author

Viswanath Deva Sarma has been a Jyotirvid and a researcher in Vedanga Jyotis. He has been teaching Vedanga Jyotis since 1953 and founded Viswa Jyotirvid Samgha in 1972.

He edited two monthly Journals, VIDYA in English and JYOTI in Bengali.

He is also the author of JYOTISHI SIKHSA in several volumes in Bengali; ASTROLOGY AND JYOTIRVIDYA (Fundamental Principles) in English.

He contributed a large number of articles in different journals on Jyotish and Indology.