

DATA ENTERED

Psychology of
IMAGE WORSHIP
OF THE HINDUS

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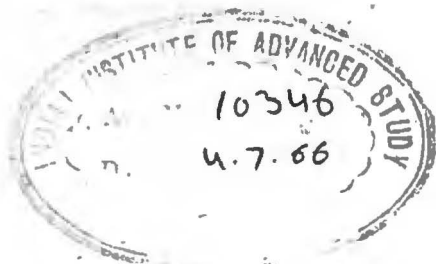


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PREFACE

For ages past artists and visionaries have tried to catch a glimpse of the unknown and express in curves and lines God-ecstasy and kindle inanimate canvas and stone with rapture. They have always tried to build a bridge between the mind of man and the Great Cosmic Life by a process of extra-sensory perception. The Hindu images of Divine Power are an attempt to make concrete to the mass mind these abstruse ideas.

It is difficult for foreigners to understand the inner significance of the Hindu images. Lord Curzon described them as "bizarre, grotesque," Sir John Birdwood as "monstrous" and Vincent Smith as "monstrous and impossible forms—impossible to defend." Lord Ronaldshay denounced them as "a travesty of human forms." The greatest works of art are always so to the people who have not the artistic mind. It is a psychological fact that the faculty of taste has also to be trained and refined; otherwise it will be difficult for it to receive and understand the message of the Unknown.

The Hindu images differ from the Greek and Roman gods and goddesses who were nothing but glorified human beings with the good and bad qualities of man in excessive degree. They should not be studied from the humanistic point of view, but as crystallised thought.

In these images the Hindu artists made an attempt at description of Eternal Beauty. God may be permanent and universal, but once He is localised He acquires a personality and becomes eminently human.

Further it is impossible to conceive of anything without form and "God without form" is beyond the range of mind. The Hindu never worships idols—but ideas and is not therefore an idolater, but rather an "idealater" or *worshipper of ideals*.

True art is an expression raised above the everyday happening. It is the result of inspiration and during the process of artistic creation the artist becomes lost in something greater than himself. The image which assumes form is created in a moment of ecstatic state and expresses the perception of human souls. They are not merely figures but symbols of the Great Divine Power which is the source and guidance of all living and inanimate things on earth.

I passed a great part of my life in the company of Sadhus, Yogis and men versed in the ancient

scriptures of India in search for the Truth. In this book I have tried to present a psychological study of the MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP of the Hindus. It is published in the hope that the inner significance of the Hindu images, as revealed in the mind of the author may be of some use to the worshippers and also may help persons ignorant of Hindu religion to understand the truth behind image worship.

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DURGA

The Divine Energy

INTRODUCTION

THE VISION OF GOD

‘Listen, O ye sons of the Immortal . . . I have known the Great radiant Personage beyond darkness.’

The sages of ancient India thus conceived the idea of the transcendental and absolute God who is supra-personal as well as personal.

The Upanishat declared: “There is no image of the Great Eternal God.” (Swetaswētara Upanishat). How can one form an image of one who is “not knowable by mind?”

It is not, however, possible for human mind to conceive “God without form” and the ancient writers recognised this difficulty.

“Without Sakti Siva is inscrutable and it is not possible to fix the mind on Him during prayer.” (Bāmakeswara Tantra)

“It is difficult for man attached (to objects)

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to worship God who cannot be described by words.” (Gitá)

Man could not be happy with the vague idea of a “God without form,” who is beyond his power of thought and realization. At first he tried to create an image of his Creator in words and strove to describe Him by analogy. In his prayers he attributed the personal qualities of man to his God. A word is but the symbol of an idea and an idea is but the symbol of a thing. In this way man tried to relieve his emotional tone without coming into too severe a conflict with the reality motive built up by his wisdom.

The mental picture of a form of ‘God without form’ was thus created in the mind.

Man conceived God as a super-human being. It was said in the Bible “God created man in His own image,” which means in other words that God looks like man. The devotees of “formless God” bow down their head to His ‘feet’ and expect blessings from His

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

'hand'. There is no difference between a form created in the mind and the expression of that mental picture on canvas or stone. It is, however, curious to find that a man who worships the image formed in his mind of God with hands and feet will ridicule one who portrays the same image in sculpture. He deludes himself with the thought that the mental pictORIZATION is not image worship.

For ages man has longed to know how his Creator looks like. Science has progressed and come to know the mysteries of the atomic energy but still we are like children playing with pebbles on the sea shore. When even our knowledge of this finite universe is not complete no one can say that he has known everything about the infinite God. This is why Hinduism does not recognise any religious work as the only authentic or any religious system preached by any sage or prophet as the only way to salvation. Man is still striving to know the Divine Power—the

INTRODUCTION

source of all matter, energy and life, and a true and scientific religion can only be an honest search after Truth. This is why in Hinduism there are so many contradictory philosophical ideas. "Every way leads to God"—just as every experiment made by scientists helps in opening the secret doors of Nature.

Poets and artists have visualised manifestations of the Supernatural and of the Absolute behind every aspect of Nature, and tried to express the hidden wish in the hearts of men into works of art—the beautiful images of their vision.

When this wish is repressed it may take other forms of worship. In the Mohamedan religion the worship or even drawing of an image is forbidden. This repression has led to the worship of a meteorite, the Kaaba at Mecca and the tombs of dead persons, who it is believed, were invested with divine power and men and women pray before them for

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

deliverance from danger or cure of illness. All these are nothing but idolatry.

It is not possible to contemplate "God without form" and even in practice when no idol is built in a temple or church or mosque the worshipper creates in his mind the picture of God with the appearance of man with his own qualities in profuseness.

The worshipper of an image assumes the existence of God in the image carved by him. When a mosque built by man is thought to be sacred the idea is also the same and the worshipper believes that it has become the abode of God. The image is similarly thought to be imbued with the Divine Spirit and its sanctity lies in it.

Once a preacher who had gone to preach in a village said that God is everywhere and it is a sin to make an image of Him. He abused the people of idolatry and pointing to an image said that there is no God in it.

An illiterate villager retorted : "You have

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yourself said that God is everywhere. How can it be that He is not present only in that idol?"

"God is present everywhere." The universe is pervaded with the Great Spirit and the image prepared by the idealist, poet, seer and artist is also His abode. It is true that these images are erections of human mind, but these are honest attempts of man in his search for the Truth behind the mysteries of the Divine Power.

The Hindu carves images symbolising the various attributes of God. These images are not worshipped for their own sake. The worshipper never thinks that the idol can protect him or bless him. The prayer is offered not to the idol, but to the Divine Spirit of which the image is but a mere symbol. Before an image is installed and worshipped the priest prays to God to make the image His abode—a ceremony known as the "infusion of the spirit" (Prán Pratishtá).

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Again when the worship is over an image is thrown into the river as it has served its purpose. The object round which centred so much devotion and meditation naturally acquires a sanctity, but a true devotee is not captivated by the outer form of the image so as to forget the Spirit of which the image is a mere symbol.

“I value the true spirit behind idol worship. It plays a most important part in the uplift of the human race. . . Idolatry is bad, not so idol worship. An idolater makes a fetish of his idol. An idol worshipper sees God in a stone, and, therefore takes the help of an idol to establish his union with God. Every Hindu child knows that the stone in the famous temple in Benares is not Kashi Vishwanath. But he believes that the Lord of the Universe does reside specially in that stone. This play of the imagination is permissible and healthy. Every edition of the Gitá on a bookstall has not that sanctity

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which I ascribe to my copy. Logic tells me there is no more sanctity in my copy than in any other. This is in my imagination. But that imagination brings about more marvellous concrete results. It changes man's life. I am of opinion that whether we admit it or not, we are all idol worshippers or idolaters, if the distinction I have drawn is not allowed. A book, a building, a picture, a carving are surely all images in which God does reside, but they are not God. He who says they are, errs." (Gandhi)

The Hindu uses the image only for concentration of mind. The object of Yoga is concentration and the mind is rested on any object in order to withdraw thought from all worldly business and affairs, and an image serves the purpose well.

One who is Almighty can certainly take any form at His will for the satisfaction of his devotee.

The prayer offered to Nature and to the

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

images is prayer offered to God. Thus said Sri Krishna in the Gítá :

“Those, who worship with respect Indra or other gods, certainly worship Me indirectly, because there is no other god but Me.”

The image is not the end and is not worshipped for its own sake. The poets, sages and sculptors of ancient India tried to form images which can convey a glimpse of the infinite and eternal Divine Power.

This is the essence of image worship of the Hindus. In worshipping the image the Hindu worships the Almighty.

DIVINE POWER

“Everything in this world is permeated by Life.” (Upanishat)

“This Sakti or Energy is the source of all “energy.” (Rig Veda)

“The Divine Energy creates, preserves and destroys this universe at Her will. Vishnu, Siva, Brahmá and Indra, the Sun and the Wind cannot do their work; and it is through the influence of Divine Energy that they can perform their duties. It can be found from direct evidence.” (Devi Bhágabat)

The universe with its myriads of inhabitants from the invisible microbe to man was created by a Power (Sakti) whom we worship as God.

The work of God was not finished with the

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

creation. Since that day the universe is being sustained by an invisible Power through a process of continuous creation. We pray to God as the Creator, the Preserver and Protector of the world and its inhabitants.

But there is another aspect of this Divine Power, the manifestation of which we find in the terrible collisions and explosions of stars in the vast space; in the earthquakes, cyclones and other natural catastrophes playing havoc with the lives and property of man in this earth; and also in the destructions caused in wars as a result of human passion running riot. When human passions went astray it was explained by some as the work of Satan, a rival of God who is fond of playing mischief. But this cannot explain the natural processes of destruction in which vast populations including men, women and children and temples, mosques and churches are effected from the surface of the earth without making any distinction, between the good and the

DIVINE POWER

bad and the virtuous and the wicked. *In destruction there is the germ of a new creation* and it is to a Hindu a part of Divine Power.

The Divine Power is, therefore, described in Hindu mythology in three aspects—creation, preservation and destruction. These three forces are depicted as Brahmá, Vishnu and Siva. They are not separate gods, but represent the three aspects of Divine Power which creates, conserves and if necessary destroys His own creation in order to recreate it. God is thus three in one and one in three.

The best example of the “Trinity” is the Maheswari image in the Elephanta cave near Bombay. This three headed bust represents the three aspects of God. “There are few material representation of the divine principle at once as powerful and as well as this in the art of the whole world.” (Rene Grousset).

DURGA

The Goddess Durgá represents Divine Energy incarnated from the totality of energies of a nation. The sources of power are physical strength, intelligence, wealth and unity. The image of Goddess Durgá is surrounded by images of Kártika, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Ganapati, representing these qualities.

Kartika represents physical prowess.

Saraswati is the emblem of Intellect and Learning.

Laksmi is the Goddess of Wealth.

Ganapati represents the mass.

(The Lord Gana-pati literally means the leader of the people)

The image of Durgá has ten arms carrying weapons. The arms represent the ten directions signifying that the divine power reaches all parts of the world. She rides on a lion

the symbol of power.

The Goddess is seen killing Mahisásura the wicked King of the Asuras who had enslaved the Devas. The spear is thrust into the heart of the Asura and a triumphant smile is visible on the face of the Goddess—a symbolic representation of the triumph of the Divine Power over the powers of wickedness.

The worship of Durga is worship of the Divine Power in the nation.

THE STORY OF THE CREATION OF DURGA
FROM THE UNITED ENERGY OF DEVAS

Long long ago there was a war between the Devas and the Asuras. The king of the Devas was called Indra. The Asuras, who were very powerful, were led by their king Mahisásura.

The Asuras won in the long run and conquered the land of the Devas. Mahisásura became the king of the region over which Indra ruled.

The conquerers subjected the conquered

DURGA

race to all sorts of humiliation and cruelty. Indra and many of the Devas fled from their country and had to live in hiding to avoid persecution.

In their despair the Devas appealed to Vishnu and Siva—Lords of Creation and Destruction.

“Driven out from their land by this wicked Asura, the Devas are roaming on earth like unlucky people.

Be pleased, O Vishnu and Siva, and find out means so that the Asura may perish.”

On hearing this Vishnu and Siva became

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angry and their faces became terrible to behold. A blaze of light came out from the bodies of Vishnu and Siva and from all the other Devas.

These lights combined to produce a column of fire. This fire now shaped into the form of a goddess. The energy from Siva formed her face, the energy of Vishnu created her arms and the energy of Brahmá made her legs. The energy of the God of Fire formed her eyes, the energy of the God of Death (Yama) made her hair and the energy of the God of the Winds (Varuna) her waist. The Goddess was thus created out of the total energy of the Devas. She thus represented the combined force of a whole nation.

The Goddess was then equipped with arms by the Devas. Vishnu gave her a wheel (Chakra), Siva took out his trident of destruction (Sula) and presented it to her. Indra, the king of the Devas, gave her a thunderbolt. The God of Death (Yama) gave her a mace.

DURGA

The Lord of Air gave her his bow and arrows. The Lord of Wealth (Kuvera) bestowed on her a golden-vessel. The King of the Himalayas presented her with a lion to ride upon.

Thus the Devas were united with all their arms and stood solidly for the common cause. The Goddess Durgá represents this United Force.

The mighty Goddess stood in all her beauty, striking terror in the heart of the wicked. The world trembled at the sight and the Devas were filled with joy.

The Asura king heard of this new Power and sent his army to crush the rebellion.

The great battle now began. The Asura army was very formidable with millions of soldiers equipped with fatal weapons, chariots, horses and elephants. But before the mighty Goddess of the United Race the Asura army could not stand and the battle field was soon filled with the dead bodies of the Asura soldiers and their horses and elephants and

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with broken chariots. One Asura general after another was killed and the king was then forced to take the lead himself.

Mahisásura fought bravely, but was at last struck with a spear and died on the battle field. Thus fell Mahisásura the terror of the Devas, who regained their lost freedom.

There was rejoicing in the land of the Devas and they prayed to the Divine Power :

* * *

“We bow down our heads to Thee,
who hast created this infinite universe.

* * *

Let Thee, whose unlimited power even Brahmá, Vishnu and Siva cannot express, protect this world.

DURGA

We bow down to Thee that scatterest fortune in the homes of the virtuous and misfortune in the homes of the sinners.

* * *

O Goddess, Thou hast appeared for the welfare of the world. So be kind to us and destroy our enemies whenever they appear.

* * *

At the time of danger men pray to Thee for protection. And Thou re-

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movest the cause of their fear.”

After the defeat of the Asuras peace again reigned over the land of the Devas.

THE SECOND GREAT WAR

Ages passed since the first Great War between the Devas and the Asuras. War, however, again broke out and the land of the Devas was once more threatened with invasion.

Sumbha and Nisumbha were two great Asura chiefs who attacked the Devas. After a severe fight, the Devas were defeated and again driven out of their land.

In their hour of woes the Devas remembered the Goddess Mahámayá (the Great En-

DURGA

chantress). They prayed to her :

* * *

“Thou art the Primal Spirit—Thou
art the Eternal—Thou art the Nurse of
the universe.

* * *

Thou art the Great Benefactress—
the Bestower of wealth and success.

* * *

Thou art beyond comprehension—
Thou art the Saviour of people in dis-
tress—Thou art the Mother of all.

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

Thou art the Cosmic Principle of
creation. We bow down our heads to
Thee.

* * *

Thou art the Goddess who lives in
every creature as its Strength, Intelli-
gence, Understanding, Mental Faculties
and all other qualities.

* * *

Thou art the Goddess that lives in
every creature as Race.

* * *

DURGA

Thou art the Goddess that lives as
Life through this universe.

* * *

We bow down our heads to Thee
again and again.

* * *

O Goddess, be kind to us and destroy
all our enemies.”

The Goddess appeared in response to the
prayer.

Sumbha, the king of the Asuras, sent his
army to crush the rebellion of the Devas. The
Asura generals Dhumralochan, Chanda and

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Munda fell on the battlefield. The country trembled under the terrible dance of the Goddess Kali, the spirit of destruction. Nisumbha, the Commander of the Asura army, was also killed.

Then Sumbha himself went to fight this new force.

The Goddess blew her conch. The clarion call filled the whole land.

The king of the Asuras accused the people for fighting with the help of foreign forces.

The Goddess answered :

* * *

“O wicked one, in this universe there is no other Force than myself. All that thee seest will again merge in me.”

* * *

DURGA

The battle was severe and long. At last the Goddess pierced the heart of the Asura king with her spear and the wicked king fell dead on the ground.

The Devas regained their lost independence and there was peace and joy on earth again.

The story of these wars between the Devas and the Asuras was not mere fiction. In ages past there were wars between the Aryans and the Assyrians living in the land now known as Iraq. These stories probably describe the conquest and subjugation of the land of the Aryans by the Asura (Assyrian) emperors and their expulsion by the united force of the patriotic Aryans.

The Devas were not gods living in heaven as is suggested commonly, but they were a clan of the Aryans. Even now the Brahmins of India write "Deva" after their name and their women are known as "Devi."

When a united nation stands as one man

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there is no power on earth which can withstand it. When the Devas united against their common enemy, those who had wealth gave their everything; those who had intelligence and wisdom devoted their energy whole-heartedly for the cause; while those who had strength and were able to fight came forward to fight the common enemy. This is how the Goddess of Wealth (Lakshmi), Goddess of Learning (Saraswati) and the God of Arms (Kártik) combined to make the effort successful. The whole mass—as personified by Ganapati—was united for the common cause. Durgá is the emblem of this unity of all the resources of a nation. The human soul is a part of the Divine Soul and God helps to conquer evil through His devotees.

THE CONQUEST OF LANKA BY RAMA

Ráma, the prince of Ajodhyá (modern

DURGA

Oudh), went to live in a forest with his wife Sitâ and brother Lakshman. Râvana was at that time the king of Lankâ (modern Ceylon). His court was a centre of luxury and debauchery. He heard of the beauty of Sitâ and one day taking advantage of the absence of Râma he forcibly carried her away. When Râma returned, he found the cottage empty and came to know of the incident.

Râma was in exile and was without any means. What could he do against the powerful king beyond the sea? But he did not despair.

Râma took the help of the aboriginal chiefs and trained their armies. The allied force built a bridge over the sea between India and Ceylon and made preparations for the invasion of the kingdom of Râvana.

Before the attack, Râma worshipped the Goddess Durgâ the united force of the nations which had been collected under his banner. After the Puja (worship) the allied force

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crossed the bridge and marched towards the golden city of Rávana and captured it after a severe fight. Rávana was killed and Sitâ freed from her captivity.

The day of the march to victory is still celebrated on the fourth day of the Durgâ Pujâ in the autumn every year. The "Dassera," as it is called, is the occasion of display of arms in many of the Indian States.

In Bengal on this day the people embrace each other and try to forget their differences and bury their old enmity. This is the real Pujâ of Durgâ--the first step to unity and organisation which is the only way to power and success.

The community worship of Durgâ (Sárbanjanin Pujâ) has served as the medium of social contact between the rich and the poor and the different sections of the people.

In the history of the world it is found that in different ages and in different countries the Goddess made her appearance whenever the

DURGA

liberty of a nation was at stake and the people sincerely cried in distress for her help. In France She freed the people from the tyranny of a king, in Russia She manifested herself during the throes of the Revolution; and even recently She saved Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Korea and other countries from bondage.

There is no better or more scientific prayer to the Almighty—the Primal Force—the source of creation than the prayer offered by the Hindu to the Great Divine Power (Mahá-Sakti).

* * *

“Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Race. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

* * *

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

O Goddess, be kind to us and destroy all our enemies.”

She has promised in the Chandi to appear in this world whenever there is opposition from the forces of evil and kill the enemy.

The true worship of the Divine Spirit is in the cultivation of strength and power and in united efforts and action. A man who is devoid of strength and courage cannot expect any blessing from Sakti the Goddess of Power. The strength and bravery of an individual is an asset to a country, but the supreme strength comes only from unity and organisation; and when a whole nation is imbued with this spirit the goddess Durgá comes to its help and bestows success and victory.

THE SUPREME CONTROLLER OF DESTRUCTION

KALI

Káli is the Primal Spirit of Destruction. She arose during the clash of evil and good and was the outcome of the anger of Durgá.

THE STORY OF THE ORIGIN OF KALI

According to Hindu mythology Káli was incarnated from the body of Durgá at the time of her fight with Chanda and Munda the generals of the Asura king Sumbha.

She appeared with a dagger and club on her hands, and looked awful with terrible countenance, wide mouth and red eyes. She wore tiger skin and had a garland of human heads.

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Káli danced wildly and the battle-field was filled with dead bodies and blood flowed on all sides. She caught the Asura soldiers and devoured them and crushed their arms with her teeth. She then caught the Asura generals—Chanda and Munda and cut off their heads.

THE FORCE OF DESTRUCTION

Durgá is Sakti or Divine Power. This Divine Energy is often employed in the work of destruction and Káli is the emblem of this force. This is why Káli is depicted as emanating from Durgá for the purpose of destroying the Asuras. Durgá and Káli are thus the same Great Divine Energy (Mahá-Sakti).

Destruction is often the way to construction—a precursor of creation. We demolish an old building to build a new and a better



KALI

The Destructive Force of Nature

MYSTERIES OF IMAGE WORSHIP

one in its place. Destruction is thus not always an evil.

Terrible earthquakes occur causing destruction to many innocent lives and property and changing the face of the earth. Stars burst in the space giving rise to terrific light. Who knows that these are not for the creation of a better world? There can be no better or nobler picture of the Destructive Force of Nature or Divine Energy than the image of Káli. Amidst chaos, blood shed and death, the Goddess dances a terrific dance of destruction. Atoms burst under her feet letting loose the fury of released energy.

Kali is pitch black with no dress on her body except the dark space of eternity. A girdle of severed arms encircles Her waist and a garland of human heads with blood dripping therefrom hangs from Her neck.

Her right upper hand indicates the sign of 'no fear' (abhaya), while the right lower hand is in the gesture of benediction. The terri-

KALI

ble expression on Her face, the wide mouth, the red tongue besmeared with blood, the awful eyes and the dark body besmeared with blood give a picture of the mighty force of destruction. In Her left upper hand She holds the sword of destruction and in the lower hand the severed head of the Asura general.

Under the feet of Kali lies supine the prostrate form of Siva in a trance with no outward sign of life. The indestructible Power in the spirit of Siva lies dormant when there is dissolution of destructible matter through the power of destruction.

We hear the sound of the steps of the dancing Goddess in the midst of wars that fill the earth with the agony of humanity. When man kills man or nations fight and destroy one another with arms, atom bombs and other objects of destruction it is then that we can see the manifestation of Goddess Káli in all her naked terror.

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Man looks with awe at the terrible aspects of nature and Death before which he is helpless. He prays to the Divine Power to save him from the forces of destruction. In the midst of the dance of destruction the Goddess has a peculiar smile on Her face and one of Her right hands is in a pose of benediction assuring the faithful not to fear but to proceed with courage through the battle of life sure of victory over the forces of evil. She is the bestower of freedom (Mukteswari). The people worship the Goddess to crave of Her the destructive force to destroy evil and forces of oppression. To the oppressor She is terrible, but She has a smile and benediction for the oppressed.

The mystic combination of the Protector and Destructive Forces of Nature is represented in the image of Káli. During the process of destruction Siva the Conscious Spirit lies trampled under the feet of Káli the Primal Cosmic Energy. In Her dance

KALI

of death Káli destroys evils so that truth and righteousness may triumph. The reverse union—the Goddess Sakti standing on the breast of Siva—symbolizes the temporary victory of the power of the force of destruction.

When the destruction is at an end, the terrible aspect of Káli is changed to a benevolent one and a pleasant smile appears on Her face. She looks at the body of Siva beneath Her feet and the Will to create arises in Her mind. The union of Siva and Sakti harbingers the advent of a new creation—the dawn of a new light in the place of the eternal gloom.

The worship of Káli is celebrated on a dark night in the autumn. The night is called the Festival of Lights and every Hindu home is illuminated with lights. The light illuminating the encircling darkness represents the advent of a new creation after des-

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truction—the victory of Good over Evil powers.

God is the destroyer of the wicked and the protector of the universe and Káli symbolizes this Divine Power.

SIVA

“We bow down to Siva who soothes the pangs of poverty.”

Siva represents austerity and renunciation—the negative of Creation and Preservation.

Siva is portrayed as a homeless wanderer and the Eternal Beggar and Sanyāsi with merely a tiger skin tied round His waist and a begging bowl in His hand. He is the picture of the suffering humanity—the down-trodden mass, the starving millions and the coolies living in slums amidst filth and germ-laden atmosphere. He has sipped the poison of evil to save humanity and is the picture of Democracy.

In Siva there is a peculiar compromise of wealth and want. He is an ascetic though the possessor of eternal wealth and the Lord of the Universe.

He is, like the poor mass, easily satisfied

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with a trifling offering. But like the mass when moved to fury, He is Destruction personified and woe to those who go against Him.

Siva is the changeless ordainer of change—formless renewer of forms. Himself without fetters He destroys fetters of bondage.

THE ENERGY OF SIVA

The power of Siva is portrayed as Durgá the Great Goddess or Mahā-Sakti. When Siva is in fury His power is then portrayed as Kali. Just as without the electron the proton is useless, so we cannot conceive of God without His Energy through which He acts.

“When Siva is united with Sakti (Divine Force) He can become the Lord of the Universe. Otherwise He has no power, even of moving.” (Ananda Lahari)

“Without Divine Power (Sakti) Siva is

SIVA

not able to do anything. He is able to work only when He is united with Divine Power.” (Bämakeswara Tantra)

When the Divine Energy is in fury, the earth trembles—stars are crushed into electrons—chaos and ruin occur everywhere. Káli dances amidst the ruins. The beneficial side of Siva is in suspense for the time being and Káli reigns supreme. The senseless body of Siva lies prostrate trampled by His destructive force Káli.

THE DANCING SIVA

Siva is often pictured in the dancing pose.

There is a rhythm in the universe. The electrons concealed in the atoms dance round their protons—the earth moves round the sun—and the stars move in the space through eternity. Life itself is a rhythm. The dan-

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cing Siva represents this rhythm in the creation and eternal life.

THE TANDAVA DANCE

The history of man is a record of moral nihilism in the fury of which the towers of civilisation crumble down to dust. In the blind fury of destruction carried out by the mad mob of Paris during the French Revolution—in the plunders and vandalism caused by the barbaric marauders leaving behind ashes of great cities and countries plunged in misery, we see Siva dancing His terrible dance creating whirls in the minds of men who lose all sense of virtue and justice.

In the mad wind and cyclone blowing away everything that falls in its way—in the fury of the flood washing away the homes of thousands of people—in the earthquake turning a land inhabited by people into

SIVA

a sea, we see the picture of Siva dancing His Tāndava Dance of destruction.

The Tāndava Dance of Siva represents the awakened fury of the proletariat and the self-assertion of subject nations against exploitation, poverty and hunger and of people groaning under the yoke of unscrupulous exploiters and oppressors.

When the hidden Energy in the creation is let loose, the rhythmic movement of the universe gives place to an explosion, the Tāndava Dance of Siva.

But He destroys only to facilitate creation. Siva's dance is thus symbolic of the rhythmic adjustment of the chaos into cosmos. Life and death—creation and destruction—light and shade are nothing but the two sides of the same picture. The Tāndava Dance of Siva is only a prelude to His rhythmic dance of creation.

BRAHMA

THE LORD OF CREATION

“From whom all things visible are created.”

God is the creator of the universe. The creative power of God is personified in Brahmä.

Brahmä is described as a sage in meditative mood with a rosary in one hand.

Concentration of mind on a subject (Yoga) is necessary for creation and Brahmä is therefore a Yogi.

ORIGIN OF BRAHMA

According to Hindu philosophy there is a supreme dynamic principle. “Everything is covered by God.” The finite is created by the Infinite Absolute.

BRAHMA

The popular story of creation in the Purāna may be of interest. In the beginning the universe was void and there was only the spirit of Mahāmāyā. Lord Vishnu—the sustaining force of God—was asleep. Then from the body of Vishnu sprang Brahmā the Creator.

The whole space was dark. There was no sound—no form or colour—no sign of life or matter—no time or space. Brahmā meditated in the midst of this bliss of perfect peace.

Then began the creation. Brahmā dispelled the darkness with the glare of His person. At first He created the sky and then the universe out of the cosmos (Prakriti) and last of all life.

VISHNU

THE SUSTAINING POWER OF GOD

With the creation of the universe the task of God was not finished, but rather began as the creation has to be sustained.

The process of conservation is almost one of continuous re-creation. The child which grows into a man is identified by a name. But changes take place in his body continuously not only during the period of growth but also throughout his life. After years the change is so complete that anyone seeing him after a long time fails to recognise him to be the same person.

There is an unseen influence which controls matter and thinking substance in the universe and sustains them by a process of continual reproduction. This power of God is repre-

VISHNU

sented by the figure of Vishnu, the Preserver and Protector of the universe.

DESCRIPTION OF VISHNU

Vishnu is pictured with a human form having four arms carrying a conch, a wheel, a mace and a lotus flower.

The clarion call of the Conch is the conscience of human mind which reminds man of his duty to his own self, his family, his country and to the world.

When a call for duty comes one must act promptly and the Wheel is the emblem of speed.

The Mace represents power, which is necessary for the preservation of peace and order and punishment of the wicked.

The Lotus is the emblem of wealth and beauty.

When the cry of the oppressed rends

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the sky, one should go to help them with speed armed with weapons and finance which are sinews of war. Force and wealth are also necessary for preservation.

SRI KRISHNA—THE INCARNATION OF VISHNU

In every age Vishnu appears on earth to destroy evil spirit and save society and civilisation.

“In all the ages whenever society and religion are polluted, I appear in this world for their preservation.”

This is the difference between Hinduism and other religious systems.

The Christian believes there was only one incarnation of God in a human being. To a Hindu there have been many incarnations and there may be more should occasion arise.

In the history of mankind whenever there is moral wickedness among people and civili-

VISHNU

sation is at the mercy of demoniac forces the suffering of the dumb millions will provoke as a reaction some man inspired by Divine Power to come to their help. Circumstances and the need of the world create a leader. The Divine Power of God as the Preserver of the world is infused in the soul of the man fit to serve the cause. People find in him their Saviour and follow him.

Every country and every age has its own saviour in its hour of spiritual darkness. The indwelling Divine soul in man is used by Vishnu to protect the world and save the people.

Vishnu is more close to the heart of man as a friend and benefactor of humanity. In Him we find God as a God who suffers with the world and with man.

Sri Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu. He was born in a prison where his parents were imprisoned by the King. The child was smuggled out of the prison in a dark



VISHNU

God as the Creator

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stormy night and brought up by a cowherd. When he was only twelve years old he defeated the wicked king and set his parents free. Then he conceived the idea of a united world—Mahābhārat—a League of Nations under Yudhisthir, a virtuous and selfless man.

In the war of Kurukshetra near Delhi the forces of the reactionary autocrats were crushed and Yudhisthir was proclaimed as the Emperor of the 'Empire of Righteousness' (Dharma Rājya).

Krishna was at once a shepherd, a warrior and a teacher. His teachings are contained in the Gitā (the Song Celestial) which is set in the midst of a great battle.

Krishna's message is: Worship God by your work. He emphasised the value of work and service.

"Make your daily work an offering to the Lord."

This is Karma-Yoga or Activism—communion with God through duty, work and

VISHNU

service to humanity. One must work without any evil desire and without worry about the result and without being disheartened if there be failure. His aim was the establishment of a spiritual society that would work on a higher plane than that of political power or economic interests. The attempt of Sri Krishna failed to produce permanent result in those days and his was a cry in the wilderness, but he has left his message in the Gita for all time to come. A kingdom of the Spirit endures when the kingdoms and empires built on violence, hatred and miseries of the downtrodden mass will crumble to dust.

In the Gitä Sri Krishna described God Vishnu in the following words :

“I am the Self in every heart, and birth,
growth and end of forms.....

I am the Mind and the Lord of the Senses ;
in living beings I am conscious-
ness.....” (Gitä)

LAKSHMI

Wealth is personified as Lakshmi, the harbinger of prosperity. She is fair and beautiful with a lotus in her hand and a casket of paddies and gold on her lap.

The lotus is the emblem of beauty and wealth. The casket represents wealth. Wealth does not consist merely of gold, silver or rare metals, but in foodstuffs and necessities of life.

Lakshmi is described as the Energy of Vishnu, that is of God when He plays the part of the Protector of his creation. Food and wealth are necessary for the nourishment, development, protection and preservation of life of man. Lakshmi is thus the Protective and Nourishing Power that sustains the creation and protects it from destructive forces.

SARASWATI

Saraswati is the symbol of wisdom, intelligence, learning, arts and success. She is white—the emblem of purity—with a smiling face and has a musical instrument in her hands.

Saraswati is also the Spirit of Vishnu the Protector. Both knowledge and wealth are necessary for protection and preservation of society, and so Saraswati and Lakshmi—the goddesses of learning and wealth—have been described as the Divine Power of Vishnu.

Work is the best way of worshipping God. The scientist working in his laboratory and trying to probe into the mysteries of Nature, the poet expressing the quivers of the heart, the musician who attempts to catch abstract beauty and puts it into tune, the politician who devotes his intelligence for the good of his country are the true worshippers of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning.

GANAPATI

THE IMAGE OF DEMOCRACY

Ganapati is the God of Democracy. He is represented as a man with the head of an elephant.

The elephant is a very big animal with a very small brain and consequently its level of intelligence is very low. This animal may be taken as an excellent emblem of the mass. An elephant is patient and quiet, but when it becomes angry it is a terror.

Ganesh has a short stature—a sign of humility; and a protuberant abdomen, signifying easy-going nature. He is described as “beautiful” and the beauty lies in the excellence of his heart. These are the characteristic of the mass. But when the mass is infuriated there is revolution with all its mad excesses. Ganesh destroys his enemies with

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his big teeth which are coloured with blood of the oppressors of the masses.

The worship of Ganesh the mass-god is necessary for success in any enterprise. Business men who have to deal with the public worship Ganapati.

JAGANNATH

THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

The temple of Jagannäth at Puri is a wonder. The vast and lofty temple, well-conceived and decorated with fine artistic decoration, is a masterpiece of architecture. The man who conceived the idea of the temple and built it was a master artist.

In the innermost sanctuary of this temple is kept the image of Jagannäth—the Lord of Creation. The image seems to be bizarre with a strange face, with a peculiar smile and without hands or legs.

The sculptors, who shaped the beautiful human models which decorate the walls of the temple and the artistic images in the smaller temples in the same building could certainly carve out a more beautiful image of the deity in whose honour the temple was built. The

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question is—why they did not do it. Was it intentional?

The story goes that the King of Orissa engaged the services of Viswakarmä, the heavenly engineer, for the building of the temple and the image of God—Lord of Creation (Jagannäth) to be installed in it. Viswakarmä accepted the service on the condition that no one must try to see anything before completion. The work was begun. After sometime the king became impatient and curiosity got the upper hand over his promise. He went to see the temple which was already finished, but the image was still incomplete. On seeing the king before the appointed day Viswakarmä became angry and vanished without finishing the image and this is why the image is without arms and legs and the finishing touch. But this story was apparently invented for the ignorant mass.

We think that the great artist wilfully left

it unfinished. The man who conceived the beautiful temple was a master-architect, and the marvellous carvings and life-like figures on the walls are unique in their beauty and freshness and are more than ordinary art--visions of the dream world. It would have been easy for him to carve out a very beautiful figure to represent the Lord of Creation, but he did not do it. We can see in our mind's eye the picture of the artist trying to come in conscious contact with the Divine and to transform spiritualistic ideal into a realistic matter. How does God look like? Is he like man? The mind of the artist revolted against the idea of the Almighty God being a mere replica of man. There are many images of God conceived by poets, artists and philosophers; but there are many who declare that he has no form. The Upanishat after describing the Divine Spirit with all the usual qualities attributed to Him admits at last the failure to reach any conclusion.

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People bow down to His feet, but does He have feet like us? The devotees expect blessings from His hands, but this expectation also pre-supposes that He is like us. The artist was bewildered and apparently could not accept any compromise between his ideal of the inscrutable Supreme Power and the idea of the man in the street to whom God is but an enlarged edition of man. The very vastness of the canvas baffled all attempts at delineation and the artist left the image unfinished.

INCARNATIONS OF GOD

God loves His creation. He descends on earth from time to time out of love to protect His beloved. The Hindu believes that God takes the form of mortal beings possessing divine qualities necessarily restricted by confinement within a material perishable body. In the Gitä Sri Krishna said :

“Whenever religion and society are in danger, I shall be born on earth.”

There were many incarnations of God and there may be many more should occasion arise.

According to Hindu mythology God did not always incarnate in a human being. There were according to the old Purānas (history) ten divine incarnations according to the different stages of creation. The description of these stages written thousands of years ago shows that the ancients discovered long before Darwin the mysteries of the origin of

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the human race through a process of evolution.

Long long ago the earth, on which we live, was a glowing hot body like our present Sun. It is not possible for any living matter to exist at such a temperature. So we can conclude that life had a definite beginning on earth after it cooled down sufficiently since its separation from the sun.

It is possible that the human race was evolved out of the first living thing created on earth. New species have been and are being produced by the modification of old species. Changed external conditions affecting the germ-cells and slightly affecting their hereditary potentialities are according to Darwin the cause of variation leading to differences between species.

From the remains of animals preserved in the rocks it has been found that none of the species now existing were living since the beginning of life on the earth, but have arisen

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gradually as time went on through the operation of natural processes.

The animals in their growth from the germ until they reach the adult condition pass through a great number of stages in which they present quite different appearances. If we study the life history of the frog we shall find that when young it lives in water and looks like a fish (tadpole). In the old red sandstone or Devonian rocks there are remains of similar lung-fish; while in the carboniferous rocks lying above this layer frog like creatures were found proving the evolution of these creatures from the lung-fish. The frog in its growth from the tadpole to the adult condition gives a summary of the history of the race of frogs. This is true of all animals including man. The individual in its development recapitulates the history of the race.

Even a superficial examination will convince one that the bodies of human beings are

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constructed on the same general plan as those of all other animals with backbone (vertebrata) such as the birds, fishes and mammals like lion, cow, monkey etc. The human race is probably descended from monkey-like ancestors.

The ten incarnations as described in the Purāna show the metamorphosis of man from the stage of fish living in water in the early stage of creation and the evolution from the animal-like man to the human species. In early stages of evolution God came to the help of His creature and it is through the preservative Divine Power that this evolution was possible and it is through His help that man has been able to raise himself above the animal.

1. FIRST INCARNATION : AS FISH (MINA) :

The first incarnation of God was in the form of a fish.

INCARNATIONS OF GOD

“When the world was in flood at the time of cosmic revolution—God took the form of a fish to preserve knowledge ”

In the early stage of life on the earth, when our fore-fathers were mere fish, some Divine Force preserved them from the extinction which was the fate of many other animals and helped in the evolution of the body and mind. In all the story of animal progress nothing is so important as the development and perfection of the brain and the consequent development of knowledge (Veda). God lit the torch of intelligence which continued burning brighter and brighter through the stages of evolution.

2. SECOND INCARNATION : AS TORTOISE (KURMA) :

The second Divine incarnation was in the form of a tortoise an animal which can live

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on earth as well as in water.

In this stage of creation land was appearing gradually in the midst of the oceans and some of the fish including the ancestors of man became partly land and partly sea animals. The invisible Divine Power is visible in this process of metamorphosis.

3. THIRD INCARNATION : AS BOAR (VARAHA) :

Higher animals gradually originated through changes produced in members of the mother species by the different conditions they had been subjected in different regions. In the course of evolution the warm-blooded hairy quadruped or mammal was created. The Boar represents this stage.

4. FOURTH INCARNATION : LION-MAN (NARA-HARI) :

In the pre-glacial days man looked more



SARASWATI

Goddess of Learning

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like an animal. Man is, according to the modern science, mere ground-apes which have deserted the trees and taken to the open country for their means of subsistence.

The Narahari is the symbol of the stage of creation, when man was in an intermediate stage of development between man and animal. In His incarnation God naturally took the form of the animal-man.

An Asura king named Hiranya-Kasipu tyrannised the people and God came on the earth to save them from his wickedness. The image of Nara-Hari is half-man with the face looking almost like that of a lion. The Asura King is seen lying dead on His lap.

5. FIFTH INCARNATION : THE DWARF (VAMANA) :

Mankind has progressed, but is still smaller in size in comparison with the present generation.

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When Emperor Vali conquered the whole world and took away the independence of many a country, God appeared on earth as Vāmana (the dwarf) to free them. Vali had his ambition of becoming an Emperor but he was otherwise a good man. Vāmana through the exercise of his wit and appeal to the charitable nature of Vali made the Emperor leave the countries conquered by him.

6. SIXTH INCARNATION : PARASURAM :

In the primitive age struggle and strife were the rule. Man lived in the forests which produced him his food. In the Neolithic age man has already invented the axe in the place of ancient chipped flint-knife.

Parasurāma represents man of this age with an axe on his shoulder. He was born at a period when the people were subjected to incessant raids, warfares and atrocities

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and might was thought to be right. He destroyed these evil forces and brought peace on earth.

7. SEVENTH INCARNATION : RAMA :

The primitive man found that only when acting together in a tribe was he able to maintain and protect himself. The evolution of man is the evolution of society. With the progress of civilisation the society developed in India. To the ancient Hindus religion and society were synonymous. "Dharma" is that which holds or acts as a cohesive force in society.

The whole of northern India was in the hands of the Aryans and the Deccan was still a land unknown to them.

Rāma was born as the son of the King of Ajodhya (modern Oudh). He gave up his legal right to the throne in favour of his step-brother to save his father who was va-

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cillating between affection for his son and word of honour to his wife from embarrassment. Rāma with his wife Sitā and a brother went into voluntary exile to the forests of Southern India and lived there. At that time Rāvana was a rich powerful King of Lankā (Ceylon) beyond the sea. The people of that island had not reached a high standard of morality though from the material point of view they had also reached a high stage of civilisation. When Rāvana heard of the beauty of Sitā he forcibly abducted her and kept her imprisoned in a garden house.

The ideal of a Hindu woman since the days of the Ramāyana is monogamic purity and feminine fidelity and the life of Sitā will remain for ever as the highest ideal of married life. The overtures, allurements and threats of Rāvana could not force her to deviate from the path of virtue. She passed years of confinement in the prison room for

the sake of an ideal.

In the meantime Rāma had secured the co-operation of the kings of the indigenous races living in South India. He trained these people in warfare and with this allied force consisting of men of different races in different stages of civilisation he conquered Lankā. Sitā was freed atlast.

Bharat, the step-brother in whose favour Rāma had waived his right to the throne, was also an upright man. He did not like to take what was not legally and morally due to him. After the death of his father, he ruled the kingdom in the name of his absent brother Rāma and at the very first opportunity handed over the throne to him.

8. EIGHTH INCARNATION : SRI KRISHNA

When the world was full of tyrants and oppressors and the society was on the verge of

collapse, God again appeared on earth as Sri Krishna.

Born in a prison where his parents were kept by Kansa, the tyrant king of Muttra, the baby Krishna was smuggled out of the prison house on a dark stormy night. He was brought up in the house of a milkman at Brindāban and passed his childhood in the company of the poor village boys and girls who adored him. At the age of twelve he killed Kansa and became the ruler of Muttrā. The Yādava clan under Sri Krishna was very-democratic and the people loved him as their friend and guide.

Even in those days barbarous hordes from the northwest invaded India from time to time. There were many small states fighting each other and the idea of a united nation was unknown. The country was thus at the mercy of the armed raiders from outside the borders of India. The only way to save the civilised world was to unite the little king-

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doms and form a League of Nations under a righteous and upright man. Sri Krishna had no selfish motive and did not want to establish an empire for himself. He found a worthy man in Yudhistir, the Pändava prince of Delhi. Soon an opportunity came. In the family quarrel for the throne of Delhi almost all the kings of India and the neighbouring countries took part on one or the other side. With the moral support and guidance of Sri Krishna Yudhistir became victorious and the "Empire of Religion" (Dharma Räjya) was established uniting the whole country under one banner.

The Gitä which contains the teachings of Sri Krishna is the greatest practical religious work in the world.

Baladeva, the brother of Sri Krishna, is also considered as a divine incarnation. He was the spokesman of the labour and agriculturists and his symbol was the plough.

9. NINTH INCARNATION : BUDDHA

In time religion became mere rituals and Buddha gave a new philosophy based on love and purity of character. The new ideal spread rapidly to Tibet, China, Japan, Burma, Siam, Indo-China and other countries. The world saw a new type of conquest in which there is no bloodshed or feeling of enmity. It was aptly called by Asoka as the religious conquest (Dharma Vijaya). This cultural conquest of love bound the people of these lands in a common bond of fellow feeling and it seemed as if wars would be a thing of history. But the time was not then or even to-day ripe for the teachings of Buddha. No one knows whether such a time will ever come when man all over the world will be able to subjugate the animal instincts in his nature and feel universal love. So long all the nations on earth do not accept universal brotherhood as a religion there will be no end

of wars or tyranny. Buddha lived for an ideal which may or may not be possible to fulfil, but is surely one which should remain as the goal—the only way to permanent peace and happiness in this world by ending wars for ever. In the modern age of Imperialism and Fascism and the reign of arms and atomic bombs, Buddhism is, however, not a practical proposition.

10. TENTH OR FUTURE INCARNATION : KALKI

“For destroying the hordes of vandals with His sword like a fierce comet, God will come to the earth as Kalki.”

The days of incarnation are not over and man expects Him in future to come to his help to save him from distress and difficulties and solve his problems.

Now a question may be asked—Can God incarnate in the form of a man? The Supreme Power transcends the human soul.

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There is an organic relation between God and his creation. Man ascending to God stands at the apex of creation and he is potentially the divine. When occasion arises and civilisation is in danger a superman arises and saves the people from ruin and catastrophe. These supermen have always been worshipped by mankind as manifestations of Divine Power—Avatär or incarnations of God in human being.

THE DIVINE POWER

BEHIND THE FORCES OF NATURE

“Everything is covered by God.” (Ishpanishat).

The idea that God is present in His creation led many artists and poets of India to visualize the hidden spirit of the different aspects of Nature. They saw the Divine Spirit in everything.

“The Divine Force is present everywhere and this force is considered as God.” (Devi Bhagabat).

It is in God that things live and minds have their being.

Primitive man worshipped the forces of Nature before which he felt helpless. With the advance of knowledge he realised that there is some Divine Force acting behind them. These are all manifestations of the same Divine Power or Mahäsakti.

SURYA

THE SOLAR POWER

The worship of the Sun was introduced in India by the Scythians. The tremendous atomic energy generated in the Sun gives rise to heat and light radiating from it. The primitive man thought that this energy is the source of life on earth and bowed his head down to the Sun in reverence and awe. But with the advance of knowledge into the secrets of Nature man was able to form conceptions of his relationship to this wonderful universe. The sages declared that the solar power is only a manifestation of the Great Cosmic Conscious Energy and the worship of the Sun took a new turn.

Surya is portrayed as a charioteer. The chariot has seven horses representing the seven colours forming the sunlight.

ARDHANARISWARA

Modern science has discovered the secrets of the atoms out of which the universe is built. These consist of the active electrons moving round the inactive protons—a wonderful union of the negative and positive charges. Matter is inert without the electron. The energy concealed in the atom is materialistic energy.

Science has so far been able to reach the bottom of the material world and the source of material energy hidden in the atom has been discovered. This discovery has enabled us to understand the cause of the solar energy and many of the phenomena of Nature. But this material energy has no consciousness. The Great Conscious Energy of which life is a manifestation is still a mystery. The solution of the problem of "Life" has still eluded the grasp of human mind.

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The Divine Power was considered by the ancient Hindu sages as having two aspects—active and passive—Prakriti and Purusha. The human body without life is a mere corpse. Similarly Purusha is inactive without Prakriti or Divine Energy. Prakriti, the Divine Power, is symbolized as a woman and Purusha as a man.

There are three aspects of Divine activity—Creation, Sustenance and Destruction—Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva. The energy of each of these aspects has been symbolized. Thus the Divine Energy and Power that sustain the creation are Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Saraswati (Goddess of Learning and Wisdom), described as the consorts of Vishnu. The Sakti (Divine Energy) of Siva is Durgā.

The union of electron with proton results in the formation of the atom, the basis of the structure of the world. The union of Prakriti and Purusha is thought to result in

ARDHANARISWARA

creation and life.

This idea is visualized in the figure of Ardhanāriswara—Siva and Sakti in the same body. The right half of the image is Siva and the left half Durgā. The right side of the face has a stern look, while the left half has a pleasing and beautiful appearance. On the right side of the head there is knotted hair with snakes and on its left side the hair is dressed like that of a woman. On the neck there is a necklace, which consists of human skull on the right side and of jewels on the left. The left breast is protuberant like that of a woman. The half-part of the body representing Siva is covered with a tiger skin; and the left side is clothed with a fine cloth.

On the right hand there is a sharp trident; and on the left hand there are ornaments. The left foot is dyed with red lac (alakataka).

The union of man and woman is necessary for the birth of a child. Christianity was ashamed of this biological fact and in the

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birth of Christ the father is left out of the picture. The religious preceptors of the Hindus were not afraid of recognising the truth. From analogy of the wife being the half of the husband (better-half, ardhāngini) they conceived the idea of God as male and female in the same body.

The figure of Ardhanaṛiswar is also symbolic of the union of God with the human, of the Infinite Divine Power with the Finite. The difference between the subject and the object—the Creator and the created—the worshipper and the worshipped is lost. God comes to the heart of man who feels a bond with the Almighty.

PRAYERS

PRAYER TO DIVINE ENERGY (SAKTI)

“We bow down our heads to the Goddess,
Who is the greatest Goddess and is always
beneficial.

Thou art the Primal Spirit (Prakriti)—
Thou art Benevolent. We always bow down
our heads to Thee.

Thou art Fearful to behold—Thou art
Beautiful—Thou art Eternal—Thou art the
Nurse of the Universe. We bow down our
heads to Thee.

Thou art the Moon-beam—Thou art the
Light—Thou art the Great Bliss. We
always bow down our heads to Thee.

Thou art the great Benefactress—the
Bestower of wealth and success. We bow
down our heads to Thee.

Thou art the Goddess of Fortune and at

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the same time the Giver of Misfortune—
Thou art the Almighty. We bow down our
heads to Thee.

Thou art beyond comprehension—Thou
art the Saviour of people in distress—Thou
art the Mother of all—Thou art the Best.

We always bow down our heads to Thee.

Thou art exceedingly Beautiful and at the
same time Thou art Terrible. We bow down
our heads to Thee.

Thou art the Protectress of the world. We
bow down our heads to Thee.

Thou art known as the Great Enchantress
(Mahämäyā), the Cosmic Principle of crea-
tion. We bow down our heads to Thee again
and again.

Thou art the Goddess who lives in all crea-
ture as Intelligence. We bow down our
heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in all
creature as Understanding. We bow down
our heads to Thee again and again.

PRAYERS

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Sleep. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in all creature as Hunger. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in all creature as Shadow. We bow down our heads to Thee.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Strength. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Thirst. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Forgiveness. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Race. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every

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creature as Modesty. We bow down to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Peace. We bow down to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Respect. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Beauty. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Fortune. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Mental Faculties. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Memory. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every

PRAYERS

creature as Kindness. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Contentment. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives in every creature as Mother. We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess who is the Controller of the Senses and of the Elements—Who pervades all creatures.

We bow down our heads to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess that lives as Life through this universe.

We bow down to Thee again and again.

Thou art the Goddess to whom we offer our humble salutation at this hour of danger.

Thou art the Goddess, who when remembered, destroys all danger. O Goddess, be kind to us and destroy all our danger.

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PRAYER TO GODDESS DURGA

We bow down our heads to the Primal Spirit who covers the universe. We bow down to the feet worshipped by the world-- We bow down to the Protectress of the world—Save us, O Durgä.

Thou art the only way to salvation to all beings who are helpless, poor, thirsty, afraid or in bondage. We bow down our heads to the Saviour of the world. Save us, O Durgä.

Thou art the only way in the forest, in wars, in the midst of enemies, in fire, ocean, deserts or in courts of justice. We bow down our heads to the Saviour of the world. O Durgä, save us.

We are sunk in the great and unfathomable sea of danger and Thou art the only way to salvation. We bow down our heads to the Saviour of the world. O Durga, save us.

PRAYER TO VISHNU

Thou art God—the great abode—without form, but still having a form—without any quality, but still having qualities.

Thou art the Great Soul—without any form—not attached to anything. Thou art the matter and energy and the great cause.

The three powers of creation, preservation and destruction—Brahmä, Vishnu and Siva are Thy parts.

Thou art the Energy, Wisdom—Thou art beyond description in words.

O God, we pray to Thee.

Thou art the Almighty, the abode of all power. Thou art self-luminous, all Joy and Eternal.

Thou art without any form, but can take all forms—Thou hast no senses, but still knoweth all the subjects of senses.

PRAYERS

What shall I pray to Thee, beloved—Be pleased with me, O friend of the poor—Be kind to me.

