

# 1. Major Categories, IFP – Photo Archives

The IFP photo archives have a collection of 1,36,261 black and white photographs. The completed database is grouped down to 14 major categories and a small description is given under each group.

In India, religion is a way of life. It is an integral part of the entire Indian tradition. For the majority of Indians, religion permeates every aspect of life, from commonplace daily chores to education and politics. Secular India is home to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other innumerable religious traditions. Hinduism is the dominant faith, practiced by over 80% of the population. Besides Hindus, Muslims are the most prominent religious group and are an integral part of Indian society. In fact India has the second largest population of Muslims in the world after Indonesia. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism are the major religions of India.

Common practices have crept into most religious faiths in India and many of the festivals that mark each year with music; all communities share dance and feasting. Each has its own pilgrimage sites, heroes, legends and even culinary specialties, mingling in a unique diversity that is the very pulse of society.

Few countries in the world have such an ancient and diverse culture as India's. Stretching back in an unbroken sweep over 5000 years, India's culture has been enriched by successive waves of migration, which were absorbed into the Indian way of life. It is this variety, which is a special hallmark of India. Its physical, religious and racial variety is as immense as its linguistic diversity. Underneath this diversity lies the continuity of Indian civilization and social structure from the very earliest times until the present day. Modern India presents a picture of unity in diversity to which history provides no parallel. Indian religions, festivals, rituals, artifacts, monuments, costumes, music and dance, language and literature are very special in nature.

## I - SIVA AND SIVA ASSOCIATED

In this category the photographs pertaining to Siva, His different forms and His associated Gods are grouped. The names of the deities are given below.

**Agoramurti:** Among the rites and ceremonies that are prescribed for kings for attaining success against their enemies is the adoration of Aghoramurti. The image of this aspect of Siva is for gaining victory, for destroying great sins as brahmahatya or brahmanicide and for granting riches.

**Andakasuravadhamurti:** Andakasura, an asura king piously practicing a long

series of austerities, obtained several boons from Brahma and became very powerful. He started causing troubles to devas, who ran to Kailasa to complain to Siva about the asura chief. Even as Siva was listening to their complaint, Andakasura appeared at Kailasa with a view to carry away Parvati. Siva thereupon got ready to fight the asura with his army of ganas. Vishnu and other gods helped him but could not withstand the fighting of the asuras and ran away. At last Siva aimed his arrow and shot at the asura and wounded him; blood began to flow and each drop of it as it touched the earth assumed the shape of another Andakasura. Thus, there arose thousands of Andakasuras to fight against Siva. Vishnu destroyed with his chakrayudha the secondary asuras produced from the blood-drops. Siva created out of the flame from his mouth a sakti called Yogesvari to stop the blood falling on the earth. Indra and other devas also sent their saktis to serve the same purpose. They are Brahmi, Mahesvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda. They are the female counterparts of the gods, Brahma, Mahesvara, Kumara, Vishnu, Varaha, Indra and Yama also known as Saptamatrikas or Mother-Goddesses.

**Ardhanarisvaramurti:** Half man-half woman Lord. One day when the gods and rishis came to Mount Kailasa to pay their homage to Siva and Parvati, Bhringi rishi, Siva's devotee, refused to do *pradaksana* (circumambulating) around the divine couple. He had taken a vow to worship only Siva and so abstained from honouring the goddess. Outraged, she reduced him to a skeleton. Bhringi could not stand any more and so Siva gave him a third leg. The devotee danced with joy, praising Siva. Parvati was annoyed and requested her spouse to be united with his own body. Bhringi would thus be obliged to go around both the divinities. However Siva's devotee assumed the form of a beetle, pierced a hole in androgynous body so that he could circumambulate only Siva and therefore keep up his vow. Parvati admired his steadfastness and bestowed her grace on Bhringi.

**Bhairava:** Bhairava, "the horrific", is the terrible form of Siva. It is this aspect that the god assumed to behead Brahma. Bhairava's aspect has eight different forms and further into eight subordinates forms, thus making sixty-four in all. These aspects of Bhairava are not directly related to the Brahma's beheading episode. Bhairava images are numerous; the god often assumes the role of *ksetrapala*, protector and is the guardian of Saivaite temples.

**Candesanugrahamurti:** Favour granted to Candesa.

One day the young Vicàsarman saw a cowherd ill-treating a cow. Incensed, he decided to look after the cows of the village himself. The cows were very happy and yielded abundant milk, which began to flow from their udder. On seeing the wasted milk, Vicàsarman collected the milk and being devoted to Siva, poured it over liigas made of sand. The earlier cowherd spread the rumour that Vicàsarman was milking the cows and wasted the milk by pouring it over sand mounds. The father of Vicàsarman wanted to verify these accusations and in fact saw his son pouring milk over sand mounds.

Furious, he kicked the sand mound that the boy had been worshipping.

Vicàrasarman was roughly woken from his meditation and cut his father's leg with his axe. Siva was pleased with the boy's devotion and appeared before him with his consort. He made him the head of his servants and the steward of his household under the name of Candesa and crowned him with the flower garland worn by Him. Siva is seated next to Pàrvati; his right hand is in the *varada* pose and his left on Candesa's head, or his right hand is holding the end of the flower garland and tying it round his devotee's head with the left hand. Candesa is represented with hands joined in the *anjali* pose, standing in front of Siva or sitting at his feet.

**Chandikesvara:** One day the young Vicàrasarman saw a cowherd ill-treating a cow. Incensed, he decided to look after the cows of the village himself. The cows were very happy and yielded abundant milk, which began to flow from their udder. On seeing the wasted milk, Vicàrasarman collected the milk and being devoted to Siva, poured it over lingas made of sand. The earlier cowherd spread the rumour that Vicàrasarman was milking the cows and wasted the milk by pouring it over sand mounds. The father of Vicàrasarman wanted to verify these accusations and in fact saw his son pouring milk over sand mounds. Furious, he kicked the sand mound that the boy had been worshipping. Vicàrasarman was roughly woken from his meditation and cut his father's leg with his axe. Siva was pleased with the boy's devotion and appeared before him with his consort. He made him the head of his servants and the steward of his household under the name of Candesa and crowned him with the flower garland worn by Him.

**Chandrasekara / Umasahita Chandrasekara:** The name Chandrasekara implies an image, which has Chandra (the moon) as its head-ornament and his consort Parvati on his left. The image of Chandrasekara has that of the Devi by his side, either on the same pedestal or a different one, it is said to be Umasahitamurti or Chandrasekara with Uma. Chandrasekara embracing Devi with one of his left arms is Alinganamurti.

**Daksinamurti:** Daksinamurti is the aspect of Siva as the teacher of yoga, arts and sciences. His name is sometimes explained by the fact that he was seated facing south (*daksina*) when he taught the *rishis* (sages). Daksinamurti is represented as seated on a secluded spot on the Himalayas, under a banyan tree.

**Ekapada-Trimurti:** The term *trimurti* ("three aspects") signifies the trinity of Brahmà the Creator, Vishnu the Protector of the cosmic order and Siva the Destroyer. Ekapada-Trimurti is standing erect with only one leg upon a padmapitha

**Gajasurasamharamurti:** A demon assuming the form of an elephant disturbed the meditations of sages who were gathered round a linga in Benares. Siva came out of the linga, killed the elephant and took its skin as garment.

**Ganapati:** The elephant head God Ganesh is also known as Ganapati, Ekadanta, Vinayaka, Heramba, etc. is the first son of Lord Siva (the Lord of the Gods). He brings joy and happiness to the family and may remove all the Obstacles. Innumerable devotees praise this benevolent Lord all over India. He is always worshipped first in temples and private houses. His vehicle is a mouse or a rat.

**Gangadharamurti:** Siva receiving Ganges in his hair. The sage Kapila reduced the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara to ashes. They could go to heaven only if their ashes were sprinkled with the water of the Gangà. Bhagāratha, Sagara's descendant, performed severe austerities to bring the celestial river to earth. Gangà granted his request, but her descent had to be checked, otherwise the earth would be pierced by the force of her fall. Bhagiratha then addressed Siva who, being satisfied with Bhagiratha's austerities agreed to receive the river on his head. Gangà came to earth, her impetuous flow winding through the labyrinth of Siva's hair-locks, and purified the ashes of Bhagiratha's ancestors.

**Hariharamurti:** Hari Hara combines Siva (Hara) and Vishnu (Hari) in a single image. Vishnu is reported to have said to a rishi that he and Siva were one and that Siva resided in him and manifested this composite form to the rishi. The right half of the figure is that of Siva, the left half is Vishnu.

**Jalandaraharamurti:** The account of the destruction by Siva of the asura named Jalandhara. The fire that emanated from the forehead of Siva at the time of the destruction of the three castles of the Tripurasuras was let into the sea where Sindhu joins it. This rose up a child named Jalandhara, grown and became most powerful king of the world. One occasion Jalandhara attacked the devas in connection with the taking off a great quantity of the Milky Ocean. On the advise of Naradha Jalandhara wanted to possess Parvati, the consort of Siva. Siva forthwith set out a battle with this impudent asura by his ganas and could not succeed in the beginning. Siva when appeared in person for a combat and finally killed Jalandhara with the Sudarsana chakra which Siva obtained from the sea.

**Kalarimurti:** Siva once got angry with Kala, the god of death, burst out of the Linga in great anger and kicked him on his chest to save Markandeya. He blessed Markandeya to remain forever at the age of sixteen years. This incident took place in Tirukkadavur.

**Kalyanasundara:** Siva assumed the form of an old brahmana to get married with Parvati. Parvati saved him from a crocodile and after Siva showed his real self to her and she was immediately gratified with her lord. She dedicated herself to Siva and the regular marriage was celebrated. Vishnu and his consorts Lakshmi and Bhudevi were the givers and took the parts of the parents. Bhiksatana, Kankala, Ardhanarisvara, Sukhasana, Kamantaka and Dakshinamurti aspects do not have Devi near them.

**Kamantakamurti:** Siva is represented as like Yoga-Daksinamurti, before which the figure of Manmatha or Kama should be sculptured as having fallen down at the mere glance of Siva. The height of the figure of Manmatha may range from one to seven-tenths of that of Siva.

**Kankalamurti and Bhikshatanamurti:** Once upon a time, the rishis wanted to learn who was the real creator of the universe and so went to the mountain Meru and asked Brahmà who, lost in Siva's *màyà*, boasted that he himself was the Creator of the Universe. Vishnu in his turn claimed the title of the Creator of the worlds. The four Vedas and the sacred symbol *Om* then interceded to proclaim the superiority of Siva, but it was not enough to end the dispute between the two divinities. It was then that a huge pillar of light appeared with Siva in its middle. However Brahmà remained obstinate claiming the rank of Supreme Lord, his fifth head inflamed in rage and addressed him thus: "I know you. You were once born from my forehead. Take refuge in me". This enraged Siva and he created Bhairava ("Terrible") and asked him to punish Brahmà for his arrogance. Bhairava cut off the fifth head of Brahmà, the one that committed the offence. Brahmà suffered temporary death, but soon revived himself through the power of his yoga and eventually accepted Siva's superiority. However, to expiate the terrible sin of killing a brahmin, Bhairava was condemned to roam the three worlds begging for food in the skull of his victim which from then on remained stuck to his hand and followed by *Brahmahatyà*, (killing a brahmin). He thus showed the world the expiatory rite that would free the sin of *Brahmahatyà*. Wandering and visiting numerous holy places, Bhairava finally reached Vishnu's abode. The gatekeeper Visvakṣena did not recognize the supreme Lord and did not allow him to enter.

**Kiratarjunamurti:** Siva presented Arjuna with the powerful weapon named Pasupatastra to fight successfully against the Gauravas by observing severe austerities for pleasing Siva.

**Linga:** *Līga* signifies "sign". *Linga* is the symbol of transcendent Siva. Linga : Siva is worshipped in a number of anthropomorphic forms, as also in the form of Linga. The chief image in the central shrine of a Siva temple is the Linga. There are many forms of Linga too like Mukhalinga, Sahasra Linga, Dhara Linga etc.

**Lingodbhavamurti:** Brahmà and Vishnu had quarreled, each one claiming to be the creator of the universe. Siva appeared in the form of an enormous pillar of fire. Both Brahmà and Vishnu tried to find the ends of this pillar. Brahmà and Vishnu were failed in their attempts. Siva then manifested himself in the middle of the immeasurable fiery *linga* and thus revealed his superiority. The form of Siva is said to have appeared in the form of a blazing pillar of immeasurable size to quell the pride of Brahma and Vishnu.

**Mahakala:** An asura named Dushana was giving trouble to the Brahmanas residing in and near Ujjayini. They prayed to Siva to relieve them from the visitations of the cruel asura. Siva pleased with the prayers of the Brahmanas,

appeared on the spot and with a breath of his reduced Dushana to ashes. The Brahmins then prayed to Siva to stay away in their midst; Siva assumed the form of a Jyotirlinga and the Mahakala and stopped away at Ujjayini.

**Nataraja:** King of dancing. Siva danced in a hundred and eight modes. The ones that are most often represented are *bhujangatràsa*, *lalita*, *catura* and *lalàñatilaka*. Siva's dance is the symbol of his cosmic activity. His five activities (*pancakkrtya*), viz., creation (*srsti*), preservation (*sthiti*), destruction (*samhàra*), illusion (*tirobhàva*) embodiment and grace (*anugraha*) are represented by the sound of the drum in his upper right hand, protection pose (*abhaya*), fire in his upper left hand, another hand in *gajahasta* pose (like an elephant's trunk) and the raised leg uplifted for worshipping by his devotees.

**Nayanar:** There are sixty-three Saiva saints or Nayanars and the twelve Alvars or Vaishnava saints are seen invariably in Saiva and Vaishnava temples whose images are also enjoined to set up for worship.

**Pasupatamurti:** This aspect of Siva is not linked to any particular episode. Siva Pàsupata is standing very erect (*samabhaiga*). This is a peaceful aspect with four hands and used for the daily services in temples.

**Ravananutgrahamurti:** Ravana, king of Lanka, having gone to defeat Kubera was returning after achieving his purpose. He on his way unable to cross the Sarava hills where Mahadeva (Siva) with his consort Uma was sporting on the mountain and had prohibited all crossing that way said Nandikesvara, a bull-faced powerful dwarf. Ravana insulted Nandikesvara and Nandikesvara cursed that Ravana should be destroyed by monkeys like himself. Ravana got angry and lifted the mountain Kailasa and it trembled and Uma actually began to shake out of fear. Siva, learning the real cause, pressed the mountain with the great toe of his foot, which fixed the mountain firmly as of old and also pinned down Ravana underneath it. Ravana wept and praised Siva and at last Siva was pleased with Ravana and presented with a sword at his request and let him return to Lanka.

**Sadasivamurti / Mahasadasivamurti / Mahesa:** Sadàsiva is the Supreme Being, subtle, formless, beyond comprehension, an undifferentiated formless entity. Sadasiva has five heads and ten arms, Mahasadasiva with twenty-five heads and fifty arms. Mahesamurti manifests himself to the devotees in different forms, performing several sports as seated or standing, dancing or riding upon vehicles as terrific or pacific. Mahesamurti is the fully manifested Supreme Siva and is the cause of creation, protection and destruction.

**Sarabhamurti:** After Vishnu, in his Narasimhàvatàra (half man-half lion), killed the demon Hiranyakasipu, his destructive power was not abated. The terrified gods approached Siva and prayed to him to intervene. Siva tried to appease him but in vain. He then assumed the form of Sarabha, a fantastic animal with beak, crooks, two wings, big arms, four legs, strong claws sharp as diamonds and a

long tail. Thundering, he hurled himself on Narasimha and killed him. Sarabha is represented with two uplifted wings, four lion legs resting on the ground and four others lifted upwards. He has crooks and a tail. The upper part of his body is human, but his face is of a lion. With two of his legs he is carrying an anthropomorphic Narasimha, whose hands are joined in the *anjali* pose.

**Sastha:** Sastha is the third son of Lord Siva born for Siva and Vishnu (assumed the form of a charming damsel). He is called as Sastha because he is able to control and rule over the whole world. He is considered as the guardian of the land and as such eight mountain tops along the Western Ghats surmounted by eight temples in which are set up eight images of Sastha to protect the country on west of the mountain ranges, inhabited by the Malayalis, from all external evils and misfortunes. In the Tamil country he is known as Ayyanar. Purna and Puskalambika are His consorts.

**Siva:** Siva is an ambivalent and complex divinity, represented in several forms (*murti*). *Murti* signifies manifestation, incarnation and form. In His divine game (*lilā*) Siva appears in various forms; he assumes divine, human, animal or hybrid forms. He manifests himself to vanquish demons, save the world or simply to test the devotion of gods, sages or men. One of the oldest and widely spread cult in India is that of Siva, the God of destruction. Siva was besought by the Gods to destroy the demons who were the dwellers of three castles, the Tripurasuras, he sought and obtained one half of their strength from all the gods; he was thenceforth known among the gods as Mahadeva or Mahesvara. Mahesamurti is the Supreme Lord, Creator, Protector and Destroyer.

The images of Siva are of five classes, namely, the Samharamurtis (destructive aspects), the Anugrahamurtis (boon conferring aspects), the Nritta-murtis (dancing aspects), the Dakshinamurtis (yogic, musical and philosophic aspects) and other minor aspects.

**Somaskandamurti:** In this aspect Siva is represented with his spouse Umā as the same relative position like Umasahitamurti and there is the additional figure of the child Skanda. Skanda may be standing, sitting on the seat or on the lap of Umasahitamurti or dancing.

**Subrahmanya:** Subrahmanya also known, as “Muruga” is the second son of Lord Siva. Siva after he was married to Uma began to indulge in gratifying his love towards her; thousand years of the gods passed thus but no issue was born. The gods in the meanwhile becoming alarmed that the offspring that might be born to Mahadeva would be of an extraordinary character, entreated him to practice austerity. Siva acceded to their prayer but inquired what would become of the seed, which he had already discharged. The gods replied that the earth should receive this and Agni and Vayu should enter it. Agni accordingly entered it and produced a white mountain, where Kartikeya was born. Valli and Devasena are His consorts. Cock is His vehicle.

**Sukhasanamurti:** The image of Siva is in a seated pose with four arms, three eyes a very handsome appearances, seated erectly upon a bhadrâ-pitha with its left leg bent and resting upon the seat and the right one hanging below it.

**Tripurantakamurti:** Siva became the most powerful god to destroy the three castles of the three sons of Târaka. Vishnu became his arrow, the Vedas became his bow, and Brahmâ his charioteer and armed, Siva destroyed the three castles and their occupants.

**Umasahitamurti:** Siva is seated next to his spouse (Umâ). His backhands are carrying the axe and buck; his right front hand is in *abhaya* and the left in *varada* or in *siühakarôa* ("lion-ear") pose. The goddess is seated to Siva's left.

**Visapharanamurti:** One who took away the poison. When the gods and asuras churned the ocean of milk to obtain ambrosia (*amrta*), a dreadful poison (*kàlakuta*, *halâhala*) escaped from it in deleterious clouds, threatening to suffocate the entire universe. Siva swallowed the poison and kept it in his throat, which became blue. Siva is then known as Nilakântha, "blue-throated".

**Vishnvanugrahamurti / Cakradanamurti:** Lord offering *cakra* to Vishnu. Once upon a time the demons had become too powerful and troubled the gods unceasingly. Vishnu then did penance to obtain Siva's grace, reciting his one thousand names, offering one lotus flower for each name. Siva took away one of the flowers to test Vishnu's devotion. When Vishnu found that one flower was missing, he offered one of his eyes (which are often compared to lotus flowers). Siva was so pleased with Vishnu's devotion that he offered him his *Sudarsana cakra*, with which Vishnu was able to vanquish the demons.

**Virabhadramurti:** On one occasion, Daksa, Siva's father-in-law, organized a big *yâga* (sacrifice) to which he invited all the gods except Siva whom he did not like. Sati, Siva's wife, went to Daksa's *yâga* despite her husband's reservations. Her father insulted her and so she committed suicide by throwing herself into the fire. Learning of her death, Siva was enraged and from a lock of his hair he created Virabhadra who destroyed Daksa's *yâga*. This aspect of Siva - Virabhadra has a fierce face with side-tusks and in his four hands he carries a sword, a shield, a bow and an arrow. He is wearing a garland of skulls and sandals on his feet. Sometimes on his right is the figure of Daksa with a goat's head and hands held in the *anjali* pose.

**Vrshavahanamurti / Vrishabharudamurti:** Siva is represented seated on the bull, his vehicle, embracing the goddess and offering his protection in the *abhaya* pose. This is one of the favourite modes in which Siva has often appeared in person before his devotees.

## II - VISHNU AND VISHNU ASSOCIATED

Lord Vishnu is known as a benevolent god who watches over the welfare of humanity. It is believed that Vishnu descends to earth and takes on a human form to fight catastrophes and wars for humanity. Vishnu is the protector God in the Hindu mythology. Vishnu is an old Vedic God who is mentioned in all four Vedas. Vishnu is the god who has manifested himself in the threefold form of fire, lightning and the solar light on the earth, in the mid region the atmosphere and in the sky respectively. Vishnu as Narayana is described as residing in the orb of the sun and is worshiped as Suryanarayana. Vishnu is generally represented by sitting, standing and reclining attitudes. The most commonly accepted and recognized incarnations of Vishnu are ten; and they are declared to have been assumed on different occasions by him with a view to destroy certain asuras and to set right the wrong done to the world by them. The ten incarnations i.e. "avatars" of Vishnu are Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (man-lion), Vamana (the dwarf) including Trivikrama, Parasurama, Rama, Balarama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.

However in Hindu mythology Buddha is not considered as an avatara of Vishnu and substitutes his place Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna as an avatara. Sridevi and Bhudevi are his consorts. In each avatara his consorts name also gets changed. In this category the photographs pertaining to Vishnu, His different avatars and His associated Gods are grouped.

### **Dasavatara:**

**Balarama:** Balarama is elder brother of Lord Krishna and is the eighth incarnation. This avatar and that of Krishna happened in Dvaparyuga. Vasudeva's first wife was Rohini. The second wife was Devaki. For the seventh time Devaki conceived and it was Balarama. But, Lord through His 'Yogamaya' had the fetus transferred from the womb of Devaki to that of Rohini. Balarama was the aspect of Adishesha, just as Lakshmana was in Ramavatara. His adventures include the slaying of the ape Dvidya and the demon Dhenuka, shaking the ramparts of Hastinapura (the capital city of the Pandavas) and dragging the river Yamuna out of its course. Balarama married Revathi, daughter of Raivata. He killed 'Rukmi brother of Rukmini when he exceeded his limits in his misbehavior. Once he dragged the entire Hastinapura with his plough when the Gauravas refused to free Sambhan, the son of Jambavati (one of the wives of Krishna). When the Gauravas surrendered he also released Hastinapura. During the Mahabharata war he did not join either Gauravas or Pandavas but left on a pilgrimage along with Vidhura because both sides were his close relatives. After the destruction of the Yadavas, he took his serpent form, entered the sea and disappeared.

**Bhumi / Bhudevi:** Bhumi or Bhudevi meaning the Goddess of Earth is also a consort of Vishnu. This association of the Goddess Earth with Vishnu is due to

his boar-incarnation and she is the producer of plants, gems etc. in addition to Lakshmi and Bhudevi, there are other goddesses associated with Vishnu in relation to some of his other incarnations. For instance Sita is worshipped as the consort of Rama and Rukmini, Satyabhama and Radha as the consorts of Krishna.

**Kalki:** The tenth Avatara is Kalki. It is believed that he will descend upon the earth at the end of the present age (Kali Yuga). Riding on the back of a white horse, with a drawn sword, he will destroy the enemies of Dharma and re-establish it in all its glory. The last incarnation is yet to be as Kalki, the mighty warrior born in a pious family to rid the world of the oppression of its unrighteous rulers. The avatars mentioned earlier happened in the earlier yugas. This avatara is expected to take place at the fag end of Kaliyuga. The present yuga is Kaliyuga. After Krishna's ascent to Paramapadam at the end of Dvapra yuga, evil forces started raise their ugly head. To put an end to the present calamitous yuga, with a blazing sword on hand and riding a horse. He will exterminate all evil, re-establish Dharma and make the golden age spring forth again as if watered by his compassion may he get rid of our pangs of Samsaara”.

**Krishna:** Krishna, the eighth avatar or incarnation, of the god Vishnu. According to tradition, Vishnu appeared as Krishna to rid the world of a tyrannical king named Kamsa, the son of a demon. He appears prominently in the epic poem Mahabharata, in which he sides with the Pandavas, one of two contending families, and acts as the charioteer of the hero Arjuna. Krishna delivers the celebrated discourse on duty and life known as the Bhagavad – Gita.. He was the charioteer of Arjuna in the battle of Kurukshetra in Mahabharata. To the Hindus, Sri Krishna is the supreme statesman, warrior, hero, philosopher and teacher. He is the great expounder of the 'song celestial', the Bhagavad Gita.

**Kurmavatara:** The second incarnation is the Tortoise. The gods and demons undertook the churning of milk ocean with mount Meru as the churn to obtain the nectar of immortality. They found the churn sinking in to the ocean and were unable to hold it up. Then god appeared as the great Tortoise on whose back the mountain could rest and allow the process of churning to proceed, bringing up different products and ultimately the nectar of immortality. The churning of the milk ocean was to obtain the ambrosia for the gods when the gods and asuras churned the ocean. Here the form is that upper half is man and the lower that of the tortoise.

**Lakshmi / Sridevi:** The chief among Vishnu's consort is Lakshmi. When the ocean of milk was churned for obtaining the ambrosials for the gods, many other valuable things came out from the ocean. The goddess of wealth Lakshmi, who became afterwards the consort of Vishnu, came out from that ocean then. Lakshmi is conceived to be treasured by her lord on the right side of his broad chest. She is known by Sri, Padma and Kamala. On either side is an elephant emptying water on her head from pots presented attendant celestial maidens, is

known as Gajalakshmi.

**Matsyavatara:** There was a partial dissolution of the universe, in which the earth and other worlds became submerged under the ocean. Then the powerful Hayagriva (a rakshasa), snatched away the Vedhas which had proceeded from the mouth of the creator, who from the drowsiness, which had come on through lapse of time, had become disposed to go to sleep. On discovering this deed of Hayagriva, the chief of Danavas, the divine lord Hari took the form of a saphari fish and recovered the Vedhas. This fish avatara is meant to recover the lost Vedhas from the ocean. The image of Matsya may be either like an ordinary fish, or in a form which is half fish and half man, the upper being that of man and the lower that of the fish. In the fish incarnation, the primary purpose was the recovery of the vedhas, which had been stolen by a daemon and hidden in the waters. This required the destruction of daemon.

**Narasimha:** The Man-Lion incarnation, the emphasis is on devotion. This guarded the child devotee Prahlada, he was put to endless torture by his father Hiranyakshapu, a Demon, for repeating God's name instead of his own. But Prahlada withstood all these tortures with steadfast devotion. Finally God appeared as Man-Lion of terrible form and killed the demon. This incarnation indicates that God is incomprehensible, i.e., He is not limited by our knowledge. It also illustrates that the real devotee alone is truly fearless and the terrible form has no terror for him. Vishnu appeared as Narasimha (man-lion) emerging out of the pillar shown by Hiranyakasipu and killed him. Kasyapa-prajapati begot by Diti two sons named Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyaksha received certain boons from Brahma, which made him notably powerful; and he thereupon began to jugate the gods and teases them. The gods complained to Brahma. Then Brahma with other gods approached Vishnu and implored him to deliver them from the troubles caused by the asura. Vishnu created a strong warrior sent with Garuda to vanquish Hiranyaksha; but they could not succeed in their endeavour to do so. Then Vishnu himself proceeded against the demon, when he was opposed by Hiranyakasipu and was overpowered. Vishnu became very angry and tore the asura Hiranyakasipu to pieces and seeing this the other asuras ran away. After Vishnu, in his Narasimhâvatâra (half man-half lion), killed the demon Hiranyakasipu, his destructive power was not abated, grew arrogant and harsh. The terrified gods approached Siva and prayed to him to intervene. Siva tried to appease him but in vain. He then assumed the form of Sarabha, a fantastic animal (partly bird and partly the beast lion) with beak, crooks, two wings, big arms, four legs, strong claws sharp as diamonds and a long tail. Thundering, he hurled himself on Narasimha, tore him and wore his skin as a garment, using his face as an ornament on the chest.

**Parasurama:** Parasurama is the sixth Avatara born as the son of the sage-couple, Jamadagni and Renuka. He exterminated the tyrannical among the Kshatriyas led by Kartaviryas, who were oppressing the people. When the power conferred for protection, grown mighty by its proper exercise, had how ever

degenerated into an oppressive tyranny, it had to be crushed ruthlessly. The terrible Parasurama was the appropriate form for this need. Vishnu became incarnated as Parasurama. The Kshatriyas oppressed the earth, Hari assumed a mortal form, in order to protect the gods, the Brahmanas and mankind. Parasurama though a Brahmana, took to the ways of the Kshatriyas at one stage cut the head of his mother Renuka with an axe.

**Rama:** Sri Rama, one of the two most popular incarnations of the Lord Vishnu, comes next in the series. As told in the Ramayana, Vishnu came in the form of Rama to rescue the world from the demon, Ravana. This incarnation demonstrates how a man can rise to divinity by unswerving adherence to the law of his being, his Dharma in all its details. Sri Rama was perfect in his general dharma as man and in his particular dharma as King.

**Vamana and Trivikrama:** The incarnation of Vishnu is Vamana (the dwarf). Bali, a demon, achieved supernatural power by asceticism. To protect the world, Vishnu appeared before him in the form of a dwarf and asked him a favour. Bali granted Vishnu as much land as he could cover in three steps. Vishnu then became a giant. With the first and the second steps he covered the earth and heaven and with the third, he pushed down Bali to the pathala (underworld). Hence he is known as Trivikrama, one who encompassed the world with three big steps. The Dwarf incarnation shows us that valour finds its fulfilment only in complete surrender to God. King Bali, the mighty vanquished all gods including Indra, the Lord of Heaven. But he found his true fulfilment when he surrendered himself to God. Once Indra was driven out of his kingdom by the asura king Bali. Aditi, his mother prayed to Vishnu to be born as a son to her and to conquer the asuras and restore the lost celestial kingdom of Indra. Accordingly Vishnu was born as the son of Aditi, went to the place where Bali was conducting a sacrifice and begged of him for some land to be given as a gift. The boy asked Bali, the emperor of the asuras to bestow on him the gift of just three paces of space, which was of course readily promised and confirmed by the ceremonial pouring out of water. At once this Vamana, the young dwarfish boy assumed a gigantic form and with one pace he measured the whole of the Bhuloka or the earth-world, with another Antariksha-loka or the mid-world between the earth and the heaven. There was thus nothing left for measuring out the third pace of space, which Bali had promised. The worlds so acquired from Bali were duly made over to Indra by Vamana who had been Trivikrama to the great satisfaction of Aditi.

**Varahavatara:** The third is the Boar; God incarnated this time to lift up the Earth, which had been taken away into the regions of darkness, under the Water by Hiranyaksha, a Demon. This demon was destroyed when earth was retrieved. The earth was lifted up by a black boar Emusha, by the boar-incarnation of Vishnu with a hundred arms from the depth of the lower regions, placed it as it had been before.

### III - BRAHMA AND ASSOCIATED

In this category the photographs pertaining to Brahma and his associated Gods are grouped: Brahma, Sarasvati, Sulabrahma

**Brahma:** Brahma is the god of creation. Brahma was born in a golden egg and therefore known as Hiranyagarbha; that he sprang from the waters and the ether; that he took the form of a boar and lifted up the earth from the ocean; that he took the avatar of a fish; that he was born from the lotus that issued from the navel of Vishnu; that he was father of Daksha and other Prajapatis, that he disputed the superiority of Vishnu over himself and that when, in connection with the dispute Siva appeared between them in the form of a pillar of fire, Brahma went up to search for its upper end and failed to do so; he was born to rishi Atri and his wife anasuya as one of the aspects of Dattatreya; he served as a charioteer of Siva when Siva attacked the Tripurasuras; he acted as purohita (officiating priest) in the marriage of Siva and also of Subrahmanya. No temples are dedicated for his exclusive worship. He is one of the most important of the parivara-devatas of the first prakara of a Vishnu or Siva temple. Four peaceful looking faces of Brahma are symbolic of the four Vedhas, the four Yugas and the four Varnas. Formerly Brahma had five heads, but one of them was cut-off by Siva.

**Sarasvati:** Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, is associated with Brahma, who is the creating God. She is seated upon a white lotus and has three eyes.

### IV - GOD AND GODDESS ASSOCIATED

In this category the photographs pertaining to the God and Goddess associated divinities and other things are grouped. The names are given below.

**Adityas and Navagrahas:** The Adityas are very ancient class of deities. They are seven, eight or twelve in number and it is conceived that they correspond to the twelve months of the year. They are called Adityas because they are the sons of Aditi. Between this the worship of Surya, the Sun - god is the object of worship as the principal deity and the latter as attendant deities. The nine planets Surya, Candra, Bhauma, Budha, Sukra, Brihaspati, Sani, Rahu and Ketu are also worshipped and found in all-important Siva temples.

The Sun is the chief of grahas. In Hindu astronomy as well as astrology, the Sun, the moon, the five planets – Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn and also the ascending and the descending nodes of the moon, Rahu and Ketu constitute the well-known nava-grahas or nine-grahas. Candra or the moon is also known as Soma.

**Agni-Durga:** Have eight hands and three eyes, riding a lion with terrific look. On the right and left of this goddess is standing in a reverential attitude two celestial

damsels holding each sword and a shield

**Amman:** The goddess Amman / Devi is worshipped in many forms. She is variously named sometimes according to her imagined age; thus when she is worshipped as an year old baby, she is known by the name Sandhya; if she is conceived to be two years old, she is called Sarasvati, if of seven years of age, Chandika; if of eight years of age, Sambhavi; if of nine years of age, Durga or Bala; if of ten years of age, Gauri; of thirteen, Mahalakshmi; and of sixteen, Lalitha. Sometimes she is named in recognition of one or other of her heroic achievements; for instance, she is called Mahisasuramardani in consequence of her having destroyed the Mahisasura. She is also known by Satakshi, Sakambhari, Durgadevi and Bhramari. Devi who is unmanifested, takes the three forms of Lakshmi, Mahakali and Sarasvati, representing the characters. By creation or character she is Mahakali exercising control over Brahma and bringing the world into existence at the time of destruction she is Mahamari; as giver of wealth and prosperity she is Lakshmi and as destroyer of wealth and prosperity Alakshmi or Jyeshthadevi. The manifestations of divine power are conceived to flow from Mahalakshmi. This Devi is indeed at the basis of the worship of Sakti. For the purpose of description the Devis are grouped according to the cult whether they belong to the Saiva or Vaishnava cult. Devi is worshipped independently as the Supreme Deity under the name of Sakti in Saktism, in association with Siva in Saivism and Vishnu in Vaishnavism.

**Bhadrakali:** Has eighteen hands, handsome appearance and with three eyes. She is seated in a chariot drawn by four lions.

**Devas:** Devas, in Hinduism and Buddhism, are exalted beings of various types. The term 'deva' in Sanskrit means, "*shining one*." Hinduism recognizes three types of devas: mortals living on a higher realm than other mortals, enlightened people who have realized God, and Brahman in the form of a personal God. In Buddhism, devas are gods who live in the various realms of heaven as rewards for their previous good deeds, but they are still subject to rebirth.

The types of angels or gods that were progressed entities from previous planetary periods. They came to earth before the elementals and human beings, and would remain in the state of dormancy until a certain human evolutionary stage was reached. Then devas would join with the elementals to help further the spiritual development of mankind.

Presently devas are more commonly thought of as nature spirits. They are invisible to most people, except those possessing the psychic ability of clairvoyance. They are said to communicate through means of clairaudience and meditation.

**Dikpalakas:** The eight guardian deities beginning with Indra govern the eight quarters of the universe and hence these eight deities are known by the name of Dikpalakas.

These deities are: Indra – the lord of the east, Agni – the lord of the south - east,

Yama – the lord of the south, Nrrtti – the lord of the south - west, Varuna – the lord of the west, Vayu – the lord of the north - west, Kubera – the lord of the north and Isana – the lord of the north – east.

**Durga:** The goddess Durga may have four, eight or more hands with three eyes, made erect on the head of a buffalo or seated on a back of a lion. She is the younger sister of Vishnu and came out of the Adisakti. The nine different forms of Durga are named as Nava-Durgas.

**Harasiddhi:** The goddess who confers attainment of the desired ends to her votaries.

**Jaya-Durga:** Have three eyes and four arms, lion as the vehicle. The crescent moon adorns the crown of this goddess. This form of Durga should be worshipped by those who desire to attain Siddhi

**Jyeshthadevi:** The goddess Jyeshthadevi is terrific and powerful, said to confer fortune upon her votaries and also destroy their enemies. She is described as the eldest of the group of eight goddess beginning with Jyeshthadevi and ending with Manonmani.

**Kshemankari:** The goddess capable of giving health

**Mahakali:** Has tusks in her mouth. She wears on her head a garland of skulls.

**Mahisasuramardani:** The goddess Durga, as Mahisasuramardani have ten hands, three eyes and on her head seen the digit of the moon. At her feet a buffalo with its head cut off and with blood gushing from its neck, visible the half emerged real asura bound down by the naga-pasa of the Devi and her left leg touching the buffalo-body of Mahisasura.

**Mohini:** Once upon a time Bhasmasura, a powerful Asura, meditated on Lord Siva and performed severe penance. The Lord was pleased and granted him a boon. The boon bestowed upon the Asura the power of turning people to ashes with not more than a mere touches. However at first the skeptical Bhasmasura didn't believe that Lord Siva would grant him such a powerful boon. Therefore he decided to test the validity of the boon on Lord Siva himself. The Lord fled with fear and approached Lord Vishnu and requested him to rescue him from destruction. Lord Vishnu decided to trick the Asura. He appeared before Bhasmasura in the form of an enchanting damsel named "Mohini". Bhasmasura was passionately excited and forgot his objective. He wanted Mohini to marry him. Mohini agreed, subject to one condition that he should promise her by touching his own forehead that he would not think of another women from then on. Bhasmasura forgot the consequences of this and touched his forehead. Momentarily he turned into ashes.

**Nilakanthi:** The bestower of wealth and happiness

**Ripumari-Durga:** A terrific look, her mantra is repeated ten thousand times, all the while concentrating the mind on her as being placed in the surya-bimba (the disc of the Sun) she is believed to effect the destruction of enemies and their followers.

**Rudramsa Durga:** Her vehicle is lion and in either side of the goddess is seen the Sun and the Moon.

**Saptamatrika:** Andakasura, an asura king piously practicing a long series of austerities, obtained several boons from Brahma and became very powerful. He started causing troubles to devas, who ran to Kailasa to complain to Siva about the asura chief. Even as Siva was listening to their complaint, Andakasura appeared at Kailasa with a view to carry away Parvati. Siva thereupon got ready to fight the asura with his army of ganas. Vishnu and other gods helped him but could not withstand the fighting of the asuras and ran away. At last Siva aimed his arrow and shot at the asura and wounded him; blood began to flow and each drop of it as it touched the earth assumed the shape of another Andakasura. Thus, there arose thousands of Andakasuras to fight against Siva. Vishnu destroyed with his chakrayudha the secondary asuras produced from the blood-drops. Siva created out of the flame from his mouth a sakti called Yogesvari to stop the blood falling on the earth. Indra and other devas also sent their saktis to serve the same purpose. They are Brahmi, Mahesvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda. They are the female counterparts of the gods, Brahma, Mahesvara, Kumara, Vishnu, Varaha, Indra and Yama also known as Saptamatrikas or Mother-Goddesses.

These mother Goddesses are eight in number including the goddess Yogesvari representing eight mental qualities, which are morally bad. Accordingly Yogesvari represents Kama or desire; Mahesvari, krodha or anger; Vaishnavi, lobha or covetousness; Brahmi, mada or pride; Kaumari, moha or illusion; Indrani, matsarya or fault finding; Yami or Chamunda, paisunya, that is tale-bearing and Varahi, asuya or envy. The seven Matrikas caught all drops of blood as they fell in the battle between Siva and Andhakasura and thus stopped the further multiplication of secondary Andhakasuras. Finally Siva defeated Andhasura.

**Uma:** Gauri is worshipped under different aspects such as Uma, Parvati etc. Uma is the goddess who is worshipped even by the Devas.

**Vana-Durga:** Have eight hands.

**Vindhyavasi-Durga:** Seated on a golden lotus, with three eyes and four arms adorned with crescent moon, lion as her vehicle standing near to her and Indra and other gods praising her seen standing near to her.

## V - Buddha

In this category the photographs pertaining to Buddha are grouped: Buddha, Hariti, Jataka

**Buddha:** The philosophy of Buddhism is to take the Middle Path, avoiding the extremes of getting addicted to worldly pleasures and subjecting oneself to unnecessary rigors. It rejects the idea of God, and stresses on moral progress independent of any God or God like figure. It questions the idea of a permanent or immortal soul, but accepts the idea of transmigration of souls.

Buddhism originated from the teachings of Gautama Buddha, a prince from the Nepalese terai, who relinquished palace life for a life of meditation and spiritual upliftment, emphasised dharma or right conduct, and organized monks and nuns into monasteries called samghas. A most important idea of Buddhism is that of the Four Noble Truths: Suffering exists; it is caused by desire; suffering can cease; and there does exist a path to nirvana or cessation of suffering. This Noble Eightfold Path consists of: Right resolve, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration.

Mahayana and Hinayana (Theravada) are two sects of Buddhism. Mahayana laid stress on the concept of the Bodhisatta or 'one destined to be the Buddha' and also conceived of Eternal Buddhas who resemble gods or deities. Hinayana regarded the Buddha as a man and had a doctrine, Theravada, stressing the salvation of the individual. Later, the interaction of Mahayana philosophy and Hinduism gave rise to Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayana.

Buddha decried the Vedic principles. Therefore he is calculated as atheist. Anyone who does not agree with the Vedic principles, he is considered as atheist. So Buddha although incarnation of Krishna, He said, "I do not believe in Vedas." What was the reason? The reason was to save the poor animals. At that time people were sacrificing the poor animals under the plea of Vedic sacrifice. So demonic persons, they want to do something under the protection of authority. The demons are so intelligent that they take advantage of scriptural injunction and do all nonsense. So these things were going on. In the name of Vedic sacrifice, they were killing animals like anything. So Lord became very much compassionate these poor animals, and He appeared as Buddha, and his philosophy was nonviolence. His philosophy was atheist because He said, "There is no God. This combination of matter is a manifestation, and you dismantle the material elements, there will be void and there will be no sense of pleasure and pain. That is the nirvana, ultimate goal of life." That was his philosophy. But actually his mission was to stop animal killing, to stop the men from so much sinful activities. So people will be surprised that Buddha is designated as atheist and still the Vaishnavas, they are offering their respectful prayers to Vishu (Buddha).

## VI - Jain and associated

In this category the photographs pertaining to Jain and associated Gods and things are grouped: Empalement, Gomatisvara, Juvala, Mahameru, Mahavira, Nandisvarameru, Panchameru, Parshvanada, Samosaranam, Thirthankara, Yaksha, Yakshi.

Jainism as a religious tradition was established in India about the same time as Buddhism. Mahavira, one of the jinas (conquerors) preached the Jain philosophy around the same time that Buddhism began.

Dating back to Vedic times, Jainism is an ancient, Indian-born philosophy. Jainism is a Nastik (Atheist) philosophy and does not accept the Vedas to be revelations from God. Twenty-four preachers, known as 'Jinas' (conquerors) or 'Tirthankaras' (ford makers), propounded it across the river of life. 'Tirthankara', its first founder, was one Rishabhadeva mentioned in the Yajur Veda. The 24th and last Tirthankara was Mahavira. Jainism though does not believe in God, however, believes in the concept of re-birth. The ethical doctrines of Jainism are based on the path of liberation, comprising right belief, right knowledge and right conduct. The prescriptions of Jainism are about the way to achieve this liberation. They apply to ascetics and householders. The householders have 12 Vratas or codes of conduct, five Anuvratas (small vows) and seven Shilavratas (supplementary vows). If the Anuvratas are strictly performed, they become Mahavratas (Great vows).

The Jains are divided into two major sects, Digambara (Sky-clad or naked) and Shvetambara (White-clad). Digambara Jains are more austere and go about nude or free from all material trappings and social inhibitions. To attain Kavalajnana or final liberation, they prefer voluntary death. In Shvetambara, which is less austere, people can use a simple white cloth. The difference in the two sects is more in rituals than in doctrines.

Jains believe in Anekantavada, or the theory that reality is many-sided. They subscribe to Syadavada, that is, prefix the word 'syad' to every proposition as a check against dogmatism. They do not believe a statement to be complete, unless all its varying conditions have been fully stated, and this has led to an expanded form of Syadavada known as Saptabhanginaya.

Like Buddhism, Jainism rose against the corruption in the interpretation of Hinduism prevalent at the time. The underlying philosophy of Jainism is that renunciation of worldly desires and self-conquest leads to perfect wisdom. This faith believes in total abstinence and asceticism as practised by the *Jinas* and the *Tirthankars* ("crossing-makers"). The "crossing refers to the passage from the material to the spiritual realm, from bondage to freedom. Followers of this faith accept the popular gods of Hinduism but they are placed lower than the *jinas*.

The focus of this religion has been purification of the soul by means of right

conduct, right faith and right knowledge. This faith also enunciates complete non-violence and the Jain monks can be seen with their nose and mouth covered by a cloth mask to ensure that they do not kill any germs or insects while breathing. Today, Jainism has more than 3 million adherents in India and finds wide acceptance because of its philosophy of sympathy for all living beings.

## VII - Demi Gods

In this category the photographs pertaining to Demi gods are grouped. Asura, Demi gods, Virarakshasa, Vidyadhara

A number of minor gods such as the rishis, pitris and nagas are considered as demi gods. These demi gods are to be placed in the Hindu temples. The demi gods are the Vasus, Nagadeva and the Nagas, Sadhyas, Asuras, Apsarasas, Pisachas, Vetelas, Pitris, Rishis, Gandharvas and Marutganas.

The asuras are usually called demons, for it denotes a sinister quality, which is not always in the character of these beings. The asuras are the powerful beings who are opposed to devas. In early Vedic times, they were originally another class of gods, perhaps the indigenous deities who were overrun by the Aryan supplanters but who were incorporated into the new pantheon. Such important Vedic gods as Varuna and Mitra were classified as asuras. Certainly some of the asuras were quite evil, such as Vritra, but some of them were also as pious if not more so than some of the gods. They would, at times, even be more powerful than the gods, forcing them to flee in the face of their power until some way of dealing with them could be found. On the other hand, in certain instances they were known to work alongside the gods for a common goal. The *Asuras* are generally considered divine beings, which are primarily known for doing evil, but not always. It might be better to say that the *Asuras* are powerful beings that often are opposed to the gods. By the end of the Vedic period, however, the asuras had attained their more demonic role.

Asuras are fierce beings that live in the Ocean surrounding Mt Meru. They are considered superior to animals and inferior to humans. They are much stronger than humans and often use their strength to oppose and fight the deva gods. They are considered protectors of Buddhism. The most famous asura is Rahula Asura, the ruler of an enormous city under the Ocean. He is extremely quarrelsome and threatened to make the sun and moon into earrings if they didn't stop passing over his territory. When Rahula climbs Mt. Meru to visit the heavenly maidens, he is blinded by the sunlight. He blocks the sun with his hand to protect his eyes, thus causing a solar eclipse.

This is the realm of the Asuras, the jealous gods or titans. These are powerful demigods who are perpetually at war with the gods of the lowest heavens. These are beings devoted to warfare and everything that goes with it; anger, pride, lust

for conquest and so forth.

There is a Jataka which describes the origin of the war between the gods and the Asuras. At one time, it seems, they shared the same realm as the gods of the first heaven. This is located at the summit of the mythological Mt. Sumeru, the world-axis. On the slopes of this mountain there grows a huge tree with intoxicating fruit. The Asuras, being coarser than the devas, were more heavily affected by the fruit and lay about in a drunken stupor.

Sakka, the king of the gods, decided to be rid of these loutish fellows and had them grasped by the heels and tossed down the side of the mountain, to the roots of the tree. Coming to their senses, they realized what they had lost and have been fighting to regain their lost place in heaven ever since.

## **VIII - Epics (Ramayana and Mahabharatha)**

### **Ramayana**

The stories of Ramayana and Mahabharatha are narrated in temples in the forms of panels, paintings and other architectural figures. In this category the photographs pertaining to the two great epics and the associated are grouped.

The path of Rama is called Ramayana. Between these two epics Ramayana was the earlier.

Rama is considered to be the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu. The main scriptures are the four Vedas and the Mahabharata, (in particular a section called the Bhagavad-gita which concerns Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu). However the Ramayana is important and widely revered as a scripture by a wide proportion of the Hindu community.

Ramayana is one of the great epics of India. This story of Sri Rama by the great sage Valmiki is referred to as the Adi Kavya. The Ramayana has been a perennial source of spiritual, cultural and artistic inspiration, not only to the people of India but also to the people all over the world. It has helped to mould the Hindu character and has inspired millions of people with the deepest of love and devotion. Rama, the ancient idol of the heroic ages, the embodiment of truth, of morality, the ideal son, the ideal husband and above all, the ideal king.

The Ramayana is the epic tells of a Raghuvamsa prince, Rama of Ayodhya, whose wife, Sita, is abducted by Ravana. According to Hindu mythology, Rama is an *avatara* or incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The main purpose of His incarnation is supposed to be a demonstration of an ideal human life on this planet earth. Rama slays the evil and its propagator Ravana at the end of the story and establishes Dharma.

Rama is the eldest son of the King Dasaratha of Ayodhya and the brother of

Lakshmana, and Shatrughna. When the princes are but young boys, Sage Viswamitra comes to visit King Dasaratha and asks the king to send Rama and Lakshmana to protect him from demons while he performs his penances. Though King Dasaratha is reluctant at the beginning, not wanting to earn the wrath of the sage and after consultation with his Raja Guru Vasishtha he bids Rama and Lakshmana farewell and asks them to protect Sage Viswamitra. The brothers meet with a few adventures on their way including the slaying of Taraka, and many more legends are explained on their way. The brothers fulfill their duty by protecting the sage from Maricha and Subahu, the demons who try to wreak havoc during the penance performed by the sage. The sage pleased with the brothers, bestows them with heavenly weapons. Further along their journey they reach the land of Mithila. There the Swayamvara of Sita is held. She is the daughter of King Janaka and the princess of the land. The king poses a challenge that whomsoever bends the Shiv Dhanush and strings it would get to marry Sita. Many a princes who want to marry the beautiful Sita try to string the mighty bow. When all others fail, Rama is asked to handle the Shiv Dhanush. Rama does this with effortless ease, and in fact breaks it into two pieces. Thus, he gains the hand of Sita in marriage and proceeds to his kingdom, where Dasaratha plans his coronation.

Just before the day of his coronation, Kaikeyi, under the influence of a deceptive consort, demands the throne to Bharata, who was born to her. Helpless Dasaratha has to yield to her demands because of a promise he had made to her in the past. He had promised Kaikeyi, that he will grant her three boons, to be availed by her any time. Taking advantage of the promise, Kaikeyi demands the following three boons.

- Rama should not be coronated
- Bharata should be coronated
- Rama should spend 14 years in exile

Rama, being an obedient child, leaves for the jungles with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana, who in spite of repeated requests by Rama himself, decides to shun the kingdom and follow his elder brother devoutly in his time of crisis. Meanwhile, Bharata who is also devoted to Rama, is furious with Kaikeyi, for her acts which took place in his absence, and tries to persuade Rama to return to the kingdom and assume the throne. Rama politely refuses, saying that he is duty-bound to see that his father's promise is not left unfulfilled. Reluctantly Bharata agrees to return to the kingdom, requesting Rama to present to him his sandals. He formally treats Rama's sandals as the reigning entity, and ascribes himself as the representative ruler of the rightful king Rama, in his absence. Dasarata meanwhile dies in sorrow of having to be separated from his son.

Surpanakha, Ravana's sister, enamoured by the handsome Rama, tries to seduce him, during his stay in the jungles. Rama, renowned for his practice of Ekapatnivrata (the vow to practice unassailable loyalty to one's wife) is

unperturbed. But, infuriated by this act of wilful seduction, Lakshmana cuts off her nose. Surpanakha, complains to her brother Ravana who is the Lankan Rakshasa emperor. He manages to trick Lakshmana and Rama away from Sita one day with the help of Mareecha, and abducts her in his Pushpaka Vimana (an airborne vehicle) to avenge his sister's loss of nose.

Inconsolable Rama, with Lakshmana, wanders the forests in search of Sita, and obtains clues to the direction of their flight from the vulture king Jatayu who lies dying after having valiantly fought Ravana. He reaches the Rishyamukha mountain range, and meets the Vanara (monkey) king Sugriva. He helps Sugriva kill his violent brother King Vali, and installs him to the throne. Sugriva starts a reconnaissance mission to find out the whereabouts of Sita through his loyal follower, Hanuman, who flies to the Lanka island and gets back to Rama declaring her presence in the kingdom of Lanka.

Rama, overjoyed at the news of the welfare of Sita, sends a peace-keeping mission, which Ravana rejects. Rama prepares for a war, and ably helped by his Vanara army, builds a bridge across the Palk Strait, somewhere in the area surrounding Rameswaram in modern day Tamil Nadu. Having reached Lanka, Rama is left with the only choice of slaying Ravana, which he does to get back his wife Sita. Rama, in an act which is often debated for the ethical aspects, asks Sita to prove her celibacy through a test by fire. Sita passes the test successfully and is reunited with Rama. Rama, having finished the fourteen years in exile, gets back to Ayodhya and assumes the throne from Bharata and rules his kingdom with rigor and ensures justice for all his subjects. This period is often called Ram Rajya (*The reign of Rama*), a phrase often used in modern Indian society, as a metaphor for the ideal rule of law.

Ramayana illustrates

- an ideal son, an ideal king and ideal husband through Rama.
- an ideal wife through Sita.
- an ideal brother through Lakshmana and Bharata (another half-brother of Rama).
- an ideal unassuming devotee through Hanuman
- what not to do through Ravana.

## **Mahabharatha**

The Mahabharata says that it was Lord Ganesh is the God of wisdom, intelligence, education and prudence. He is a son of Siva and Parvati. Ganapati the elephant-headed god of the Hindus who, at the behest of Vyasa, wrote the epic down on manuscript. He is said to have agreed, but only on condition that Vyasa never pause in his recitation. In the course of writing, Ganesh's pen failed, and he broke off one of his tusks in the rush to keep writing. It is said that Mahabharata was so profound, that even Lord Ganesh, the god of wisdom, was pressed to contemplation by Vyasa's words. One quotation from the beginning of

the Mahabharata is a fit summary of its scope and grandeur: "What is found here, can be found elsewhere. What is not found here, will not be found elsewhere."

The Mahabharata is thought to have been derived from what was originally a much shorter work, called *Jaya* (Victory). The story was developed in its present form during the establishment of Classical Hinduism, from which modern Hinduism was developed.

The core story of the work is that of a dynastic struggle for the throne of Hastinapura, the kingdom of the Kuru clan. The two cousin branches of the family that participate in the struggle were the Pandavas and the Kauravas and the Pandavas are victorious in the end. The Mahabharata itself ends with the death of Krishna, and the subsequent end of his dynasty, and ascent of the Pandava brothers to Heaven, one with God, the achievement of the primary goal of Hindu life. Through the steady breakdown of truths of which the eighteen-day war of Kurukshetra, the clash of hundreds of thousands of men, elephants and horses, consisted. To represent the central war of the Mahabharata as a fight between 'good' and 'evil' is woefully off-base. Some of the history's most noble and revered figures end up fighting on the side of the Kauravas, due to allegiances formed prior to the conflict. One of the most poignant stories is that of Karna, the noble warrior whose immense powers failed him during the battle because he had lied, so many years before, to his Guru about who he was. Another is Bhishma, the sage who had renounced his kingdom and become celibate for the sake of his father's love of a fisherwoman, who had the gods' boon to choose his time of death. He ended up dying on a bed of arrows laid by Arjuna, the Pandava brother whose army had fought against Bhishma's side. These are just some examples of the thousands of stories and huge depth of complex psychological and literary lore that are found in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata claims to contain the essence and sum of all the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. Mahabharata says every cause has an effect and vice versa.

### **The characters of Mahabharata:**

One of the most poignant stories is that of Karna, the noble warrior whose immense powers failed him during the battle because he had lied, so many years before, to his Guru about whom he was.

Bhishma, the grandsire who had renounced his kingdom and become celibate for the sake of his father's love of a fisherwoman and had the gods' boon to choose his time of death. He ended up dying on a bed of arrows laid by Arjuna, the Pandava brother whose army had fought against Bhishma's side. Bhima is one of the five Pandava brothers whose strength, size, and loyalty are legendary.

Yudishtira, the eldest Pandava, is known never to have told a single lie in his life, and thus gained great power from it. It was only in the middle of the war, at a critical juncture, that to save his army from defeat at the hands of his own teacher, Drona, a general of fabulous power, he lied. Having told the one lie of his life to his former teacher, that Drona's son had been killed, Yudishtira's chariot, which had earlier floated above the ground, immediately sank into the

mud. Yudishtira is commonly known in India as the paragon of integrity, fallen for his one lapse.

## **IX - Temple associated**

In this category the photographs pertaining to the temple's architectural details, architectural figures, general views and the other temple associated are grouped.

Hindu temples were not meant for large congregational worship. Pillared mandapas with elaborate sculptures, sadas for dancing and wide circumbulating passages with other deities placed around the main deity constitute a temple complex.

The prominent forms of temple designs are the North Indian temples and Southern Indian temples. There were changes in styles, but certain basic rules fundamental to Hinduism were followed regarding the position of the garbagraha, directions of the other deities.

Almost all Indian art has been religious and almost all forms of artistic tradition have been deeply conservative. The Hindu temple developed over two thousand years and its architectural evolution took place within the boundaries of strict models derived solely from religious considerations. Therefore the architect was obliged to keep to the ancient basic proportions and rigid forms, which remained, unaltered over many centuries.

Even particular architectural elements and decorative details which had originated long before in early timber and thatch buildings persisted for centuries in one form or another throughout the era of stone construction even though the original purpose and context was lost. Indian architecture is extremely conservative. The simplicity of building techniques like post and beam and corbelled vaulting were preferred not necessarily because of lack of knowledge or skill, but because of religious necessity and tradition.

On the other hand, the architect and sculptor were allowed a great deal of freedom in the embellishment and decoration of the prescribed underlying principles and formulae. The result was an overwhelming wealth of architectural elements, sculptural forms and decorative exuberance that is so characteristic of Indian temple architecture and which has few parallels in the artistic expression of the entire world.

The Shastras, the ancient texts on architecture, classify temples into three different orders; the Nagara or 'northern' style, the Dravida or 'southern' style, and the Vesara or hybrid style, which is seen in the Deccan between the other two. There are also distinct styles in peripheral areas such as Bengal, Kerala and the Himalayan valleys. But by far the most numerous buildings are in either the Nagara or the Dravida styles and the earliest surviving structural temples can

already be seen as falling into the broad classifications of either one or the other. In the early years the most obvious difference between the two styles is the shape of their superstructures.

From the seventh century the Dravida or southern style has a pyramid shaped tower consisting of progressively smaller storeys of small pavilions, a narrow throat, and a dome on the top called a shikhara (in southern terminology). The repeated storeys give a horizontal visual thrust to the southern style.

The type of raw materials available from region to region naturally had a significant impact on construction techniques, carving possibilities and consequently the overall appearance of the temple. The soft soap-stone type material used by the Hoysala architects of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries allowed sculptors working in the tradition of ivory and sandalwood carving to produce the most intricate and ornate of all Indian styles. Hard crystalline rocks like granite typical of the area around Mahabalipuram prevented detailed carving and resulted in the shallow reliefs associated with Pallava temples. In areas without stone, such as parts of Bengal, temples constructed of brick had quite different stylistic characteristics.

Royal patronage also had a very significant effect on the stylistic development of temples. Regional styles are often identified by the dynasty that produced them. Temple styles would be different for the various Hindu cults. Even Jain temples such as those at Khajuraho were often built in almost identical styles to the Hindu temples.

From the eighth century onward with the development of ever more sophisticated rituals and festivals, the Hindu temple especially in the south started to expand and become more elaborate. There were more mandapas (halls) for various purposes such as dancing, assembly, marriage and eating. During the Vijayanagara period (fourteenth to sixteenth century) the highly embellished and often brightly painted structures become extremely numerous. The width of the storeys of pavilions and other architectural elements were carefully adjusted to create a concave contour, which is a distinctive characteristic of the Dravida temples seen throughout the south, particularly in Tamil Nadu.

The North Indian temples (Nagara) differ widely from their South Indian counterparts (Dravidian). A vimana or the tower is the one that crowns the innermost sanctum of a South Indian temple.

Tamilnadu: The Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayakas have made immense contributions to temple art in Tamilnadu.

Imperial Chola Monuments : The Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur in Tamilnadu (11th century) is a colossal structure with a towering and is

considered to be a masterpiece of Chola architecture. The Darasuram temple described as a sculptor's dream lived in stone, is built in the form of a chariot and is a grand specimen of Chola architecture, as are the Gangaikonda Cholapuram and the Tribhuvanam temples.

**Hoysala Architecture:** The Hoysala temples of the earlier part of the 2nd millennium, display a unique architectural style, distinct from the Dravidian style that prevailed during this period in the neighboring state of Tamilnadu.

**The Nagara Style:** This is the prevalent style of temple architecture in North India. The well-developed temples of Khajuraho and the majestic temples of Orissa are good examples.

**Kerala Temples:** Kerala temples experience the old world charm.

**Temples of Karnataka:** The Chalukyas, the Gangas, the Hoysalas, the Vijayanagar rulers and others contributed to diverse temple styles in Karnataka.

**Andhra Pradesh:** The history of Andhra Pradesh provides an insight into the various temple architecture styles.

## **X - Veda / associated**

In this category the photographs pertaining to the Vedas are grouped.

In the Vedic sacrifice a god or gods are invoked by the hymns or mantras. Offerings of food, butter, or soma are prepared and offered to the fire, which as an intermediary god, conveys these to the other gods. The total number of Vedic gods is said to be 33, although more than this number are actually mentioned in the Veda. The three main kinds of gods are celestial, atmospheric and terrestrial. Their attributes shift, and one god can be identified with another or take on his or her powers.

The most important gods are Agni, the fire god, who plays a central role in the sacrifice, and Indra, the warrior god and thunder god, celebrated for his slaying of the drought demon Vritra. Several solar deities are found, including Surya, Savitri, Pushan and Vishnu. Varuna is the all-seeing god of justice, guardian of the cosmic order or *rita*. Soma personifies the plant whose intoxicating juice was offered as an oblation.

With the passage of time the sacrifice became increasingly elaborate and priests became highly skilled specialists.

Rig Veda - lore of the verses, enumerates numerous Vedic Gods. Vedic priests believed in ceremonies and rituals, which were offered to appease these Gods.

No one Vedic God has been considered the Supreme God. In fact, different Gods have been considered as Supreme at different times, attributing the powers and qualities of one to another. Apart from Gods who have been attributed specific characteristics, several inanimate objects, qualities, emotions and various forms of nature had also been deified and worshipped.

#### **XI - Buildings and associated**

In this category the photographs pertaining to the buildings of Pondicherry and other associated are grouped :

Bâtiment, Chauderie, Entrepôt, Maison, Monastère, Mutt, Palais, Phare, Usine

#### **XII - Historic monuments / Evidences**

In this category the photographs pertaining to the historical monuments and the other associated are grouped :

Fort, Fortification, Grotte, Collection Particuliere, Dolmen, Ellaikkal, Emblème, Excavation site, Hache néolithique, Inscription, Kudaikkal, Légende, Monnaie, Pierre, Site Monolithe, Plaque, Satikkal, Stèle, Tajmahal, Terracottah, Urne, Virakkal

The most written records and entire edifices that testify to India's contribution to civilization have been obliterated over time, some of them from the close of the last millennium are an eloquent reminder of the vitality of a continuing civilization for at least 5000 years. The meeting of different cultural traditions can be seen in the innumerable forts, palaces, monuments and tombs that dot the Indian landscape.

#### **XIII - Reproduction**

In this category the rare collections, books, maps, plans and the old views of Pondicherry were recopied and grouped.

#### **XIV - Miscellaneous**

In this miscellaneous category the following photographs are grouped.

Boite, Carte, Cimetière, Dessin, Divers, Ethnologie, Exposition, Manpanjapattavan, Nandipada, Plan, Statuettes, Stylepalme, Tableau, Tranchoir à legumes, Visvakarma, Colline, Mont, Nandikona, Port, Rue, Site, Ville, Bain, Barrage, Bassin, Chute d'eau, Éclusée, Étang, Kumarithirham, Lac, Picotte, Pont, Puits, Rivière