

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி

(Dharma Neri)



47



Maduri Sunthareswarar & Meenakshi amman ther-Chithirai thiruvila

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கேஷத்திர (வயல்) விநாயக ஆலயம்,
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Editorial.

'Path to Dharma', the monthly publication by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is offering the 47th number this month.

The basic central effort of this monthly is to express the visualization matters related to Hinduism and its rituals and dharma to the concerned readers.

The comments and analysis of the readers are appreciated.

*B.S.Sarma,
Kshethra Vinayaka Temple,
Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka. November, 2011*



Suggestions from the readers

Dear Mr.B.S.Sarma,

Author, 'Path to Dharma' magazine

I am reliably pleased with the area and the concepts of the subject matter discussed, in "Path to Dharma' magazine. It is very easy to grasp the subject dealt with because of the simplicity of the language used in the explanations.

Thanks for giving a short explanations of the idols/statues seen in a Hindu temple in the last issue of the "Path to Dharma'. If you can explain about the Vedic deities and the idols and forms which we worship in the present day at temples it would be very useful to all.

K.. S Thayanithy, France.

14th Nov ,2011

Mr.B.S.Sarma, 'Path to Dharma'

I am really fortunate to receive your monthly magazine 'Path to Dharma'. I and my friends are actually pleased with the manner in which subject matters regarding Hinduism and other related problems are discussed.

The attitude and the methodology used in discussing the queries are in a positive approach which we are pleased with. I and my friends have sent you some questions for which we expect the answers in brief accounts.

With kind regards,

E. N. Madhava, U.K

19th November 2011

Dear B.S.Sarma, "Path to Dharma'

I appreciate very much, the efforts rendered by you towards the publication of the monthly magazine, 'Path to Dharma, and creating awareness among Hindus around the world. The use and applications of the contemporary information, technology, knowledge, skill, attitude etc. are utilized to the maximum in the production of this monthly.

May God bless you.

S.Vaheesan, Dandenong, Victoria, Australia

27th Oct, 2011

Vedic Gods

“ Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti ”.

“Truth is One, but sages call it by many names”

- (Rig Veda 1:164:46)

“ the gods are loved not for their own sake, but because the Self lives in them”

-The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (4.5.)

This "Self" is **Brahman**, the one God who is ultimately beyond form or gender. So all the Gods in Hinduism are thought of as the many varied ways that the One makes Itself known.

There are 1028 hymns in the Rigveda, most of them dedicated to specific gods. Vedic gods refers to the divinities (devas) about whom the four (Rig, Yajur, Sama.& Athavana) vedas refer to. The main Vedic gods are 33 namely eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Indra, and Prajapathy Brahma. They are the gods of earth (Prithivi), heavens (Dyaus) and the intermediary space (Antariksha/Trisanka).

Deities in the order by prominence in Rigveda

(Some dedications are to paired deities, such as Indra-Agni, Mitra-Varuna, Soma-Rudra.)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Indra 289 | 17. Dyaus (Heaven) 6 with Prithivi, |
| 2. Agni 218 | 18. Prithivi (Earth) 6 with Dyaus, Earth alone |
| 3. Soma 123 (most in Soma Mandala) | 19. Apas (Waters) 6 |
| 4. Vishvadevas 70 | 20. Adityas 6 |
| 5. the Asvins 56 | 21. Vishnu 6 |
| 6. Varuna 46 | 22. Brahmanaspati 6 |
| 7. the Maruts 38 | 23. Rudra 5 |
| 8. Mitra 28 | 24. Dadhikras 4 |
| 9. Ushas 21 | 25. the Sarasvati River / Sarasvati 3 |
| 10. Vayu (Wind) 12 | 26. Yama 3 |
| 11. Savitr 11 | 27. Parjanya (Rain) 3 |
| 12. the Rbhus 11 | 28. Vāc (Speech) 2-mentioned 130 times |
| 13. Pushan 10 | 29. Vastospati 2 |
| 14. the Apris 9 | 30. Vishvakarman 2 |
| 15. Brhaspati 8 | 31. Manyu 2 |
| 16. Surya (Sun) 8 | 32. Kapinjala-Heathcock, a form of Indra 2 |

The following are the minor deities (one single or few words or no dedicated hymns in Vedas)

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Manas (Thought) | 12. Nirrti |
| 2. Dakshina | 13. Asamati |
| 3. Jnanam (Knowledge) | 14. Urvasi |
| 4. Purusha (Cosmic Man) | 15. Pururavas |
| 5. Aditi | 16. Vena |
| 6. Bhaga | 17. Aranyani |
| 7. Vasukra | 18. Mayabheda |
| 8. Atri | 19. Tarksya |
| 9. Apam Napat | 20. Tvastar |
| 10. Ksetrapati | 21. Saranyu |
| 11. Ghrta | |

Adityas- (dedicated hymns, 6) Adityas are Vedic deities of light. Adityas include gods like Vishnu, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha, and Amsha.

Agni



(dedicated hymns , 218) Agni is the Vedic God of fire, principally the sacrificial fire during homa ceremonies. Agni the sacrificial fire and messenger of the gods. The flame of the Agni is the mediator between humans and the Gods, as he carries the sacrifices to the Gods. Agni is portrayed with one, two, or three heads, four arms, a crown of flames and his *vahana* (vehicle) is a ram (goat). He is occasionally shown possessing a fan, a ladle, a waterpot, and rudraksha mala (prayer beads). He is the custodian of the southeast.

Apas (dedicated hymns , 6)- Apas/ Waters is Vedic God of water and its resources.

Apris (dedicated hymns,9)

Ashvins



(dedicated hymns , 56) - Ashvins are the Vedic Twin Gods of healing. Their name and designation give the meaning, as "possessor of horses" and are understood to drive the chariot which brings Ushas (Goddess of dawn) every morning. Ashvins know all the healing procedures and uses of plants and are depicted as young, healthy, and handsome. The Ashvins, are considered the twin horsemen.

Brahmanaspati (dedicated hymns , 6) - Brahmanaspati is the Vedic God often identified as Brhaspati. He grants wisdom, healer of diseases, protector of bodies, upsurger of agricultural produces, protector of the heroes in the battle fields from enemies and granter of wealth. Any sacrifice is complete only with the prayer of Brahmanaspati.

Brihashpati (dedicated hymns, 8) – Brihashpati is the Vedic God of prayer. Brihashpati is seen as a heavenly priest who mediates between humans and Gods. He is moreover identified with Jupiter.

Dadhikras (dedicated hymns , 4) - Dadhikras is the Vedic God of prayer. Dadhikras is well known as the granter of many gifts who is popular among the kings.

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Dyaus – Dyaus (dedicated hymns , 6) - Dyaus /Heaven is the Vedic God of the sky.

Indra



(dedicated hymns , 289)- Indra is a Vedic God of the sky, and of invasion and domination. Indra is the slayer of the demon of drought, known as Vritra. One-fourth of all hymns in the Rig Veda are dedicated to Indra. Indra is depicted as having a thousand eyes all over his body, and as carrying *vajras* (thunderbolts) with which he destroys all the enemies. His *vahana* (vehicle) is an elephantwhite in colour termed Airavata.

Indra, a heroic god, of the Vala, liberator of the cows and the rivers.

Kapinjala (dedicated hymns, the Heathcock, a form of Indra 2) - Kapinjala is a Vedic god in the form of a bird of good omen with a sweet melodius voice.

Manyu (dedicated hymns, 2) - Manyu is a Vedic god who controls the war.He is supposed to be the wielder of thunder, killer of enemies, of Vrtra, and of dasyu of exceptional vigor and self existent

Maruts (dedicated hymns, 38) - Marutsis the Vedic storm God. Maruts are considered as, violent and distructivein action. Marutsis lash the world from one end to the other. Marutsis make the mountains rock and reel, rend the forest-king apart . Marutsis cause the earth to quake, and inundates the earth with heavy rains.

Mitra (dedicated hymns, 28) – Mitra is the Vedic God of the sun. Mitra is the God of light (the daytime sky). Mitra is also the God of bonds and guardian of the law. Mitra is depicted with two or four arms and carries lotuses, the sacred soma plant, and a trident. He rides on a chariot drawn by a horse.

Parjanya(dedicated hymns , 3) – Parjanya /Rain is the Vedic God of rain. Parjanya is ferocious in character.All the life forms fears Parjanya at the sight of his mear presence. Parjanya is the slayer of demons with his mighty weapons.When ever Parjanya fills the sky with the cloud of rain,the winds burst forth, the lightnings flash, the vegetation shoot up with somatic vigor food springs abundantly for all living creatures to flourish and the earth adore Parjanya.

Prithivi Prithivi (dedicated hymns , 1) – Prithivi/Earth is the Vedic Goddess of the Earth.

Prithivi is most frequently paired with Dyaus, God of the sky. Prithivi and Dyaus are seen as the universal parents of the gods and of the created world. Prithivi in the later stages of history is associated with Vishnu and is identified as Bhudevi (the Goddess of the Earth).

Pushan (dedicated hymns , 10) - Pushan is the Vedic God Pushan is a pastoral god and known as the lord of the paths. Pushan protects people from wild animals and guide them showing the correct path.He is the guardian of cattle.

Rbhus (dedicated hymns , 11) - Rbhus are the group of Vedic Gods who are wise and skilful craftsmen,deft in work and gracious. Rbhus bring about wealth ,prosperity and are linked with the craft of chariot constructions

Rudra (dedicated hymns , 5) – Rudra is the Vedic God who is frequently identified with Siva. Rudra is the chief of the storm Gods called the Maruts. Rudra is considered a tremendous God who overturns and brings disaster. Rudra being an early form of Shiva

Sarasvathi



(dedicated hymns , 3) – Sarasvathi /Saraswathi river is the Vedic Goddess of the Sarasvati River (now dried up). Sarasvathi is the consort of Brahma. In the Vedas, Sarasvathi is shown as mighty and powerful since her waves could breakdown strong mountains. Sarasvathi is requested to for prosperity, productiveness, fertility and nourishment.Sarasvathi was considered the guardian of the sacrificial Vedic rites. Sarasvathi is also the Goddess of wisdom, learning, the different arts, language, and music. She carries the veena (a stringed musical instrument), as well as prayer beads, a book, and a water pot.Her *vahana* (vehicle) is the swan. Rivers play an important role, deified as goddesses, most prominently the Sapta Sindhu and the Sarasvati River.

Savitar (dedicated hymns, 11) – Savitar is the Vedic God of the sun. Savitar is supposed to be the source of light. Savitar is described as possessing golden coloured eyes,hands and tongue. Savitar is considered as the solar deity before the sun rise but distinguished from the sun. Savitar is known as the golden sun of the morning and the latent sun of the dark night.

Soma (dedicated hymns, 123 - most of them in the Soma Mandala) - Soma, is frequently mentioned in the Rigveda. The RigVeda calls the plant the "God for Gods" seemingly giving him precedence above Indra and the other Gods.It is described as prepared by extracting juice from the stalks of a certain plant. In tradition, the name of the drink and the plant are the same, and also personified as a divinity, the three forming a religious or mythological unity.the original plan may be a species of Ephedra, possibly *Ephedra sinica*. In the Vedas, Soma is portrayed as sacred and as a god (deva). The god, the drink, and the plant refer to the same entity. Indra and Agni are portrayed as consuming Soma in copious quantities. The consumption of Soma by human beings is well attested in Vedic ritual.

Surya



Surya (dedicated hymns, 8) – Surya /Sun is the Vedic God of the sun andits light andbrightness.Surya is the personification of the Sun

Usha (dedicated hymns, 21) – Usha is the Vedic Goddess of the dawn. Usha is anticipated as a young maid carried in chariot drawn by hundreds of horses. Ushas is implored to drive away darkness and get rid of the forces of evil. Ushas promotes humans to perform their duties of sacrifice. Ushas (the dawn), the most prominent goddess of the Rigveda

Vac (dedicated hymns, Vāc- Speech 2) ; mentioned 130 times, deified e.g. in 10.125) – Vac is the Vedic Goddess of ritual speech. The term Vac means, the Truth. Vac is enthused the poetic expressions of religious truth of the Vedas. Vac bestows vision to the seers (rishis).

Varuna

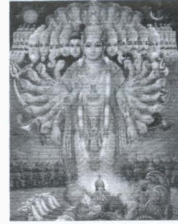


- (dedicated hymns , 46) – Varuna is the Vedic God of water as well as of Rita, the cosmic order. Varuna is prayed for the supply of natural water sources.

Vastospati (dedicated hymns, 2)

Vayu (Vayu -Wind 12) - Vayu is the Vedic God of the wind. Vayu is represented as having two or four arms with young and handsome personality, dark-complexioned. Vayu is shown to carry a goad and a staff. His *vahana* (vehicle) is the antelope or the lion.

Vishnu



(dedicated hymns , Vishnu 6) – Vishnu is one of the major Gods of Hinduism. Vishnu is the Preserver and proctorer of the trimurti (trinity). Vishnu carries the shankha (conch), the chakra (discus), a lotus, and a mace. He was a solar deity in the Vedas. He exemplifies compassion, law and order. He is often depicted as lying on Ananta, the serpent whose coils represent eternity. Vishnu is shown with a lotus growing onwards from his navel, from which, Brahma, the Creator, is originated. Vishnu's *vahana* (or vehicle) is the eagle Garuda.

Vishvadevas (dedicated hymns ,70)

Vishvakarman(dedicated hymns ,2)

Yama



Yama is the Vedic God of death. Yama is the first ancestor, also worshipped as a deity, and the god of the underworld and death

Some of the post Vedic gods which are famous are given below;

Aditi - Aditi is a Vedic Goddess presumed the mother of the Adityas and of cosmic space. Aditi is also assumed the mother of Indra. She is pleaded and prayed to for advantage of attaining wealth and provision and also for the freedom from hindrances such as sin and diseases. Aditi is the mother both of Agni and of the Adityas or Asuras, led by Mitra and Varuna, with Aryaman, Bhaga, Ansa and Daksha.

Aryaman- Aryaman is considered the Vedic God of the ancestors remembered and worshipped during the religious rituals done for the ancestors.

Bhudevi (Bhumidevi) - Bhudevi is the Goddess of the earth. She has been acknowledged with Prithvi. Vishnu is said to have rescued her from the bottom of the ocean in his incarnation as Varaha (the boar).

Brahma



Brahma is the God of creation. Brahma is part of the *trimurti* (trinity), which also includes Vishnu (the preserver) and Siva (the destroyer). Brahma is usually depicted as having four heads (facing each of the four directions), and four arms. He holds a drinking vessel, prayer beads, and a book of the Vedas. Brahma's *vahana* (vehicle) is a swan or a goose.

Brahman - Brahman is the self-existent, all-pervading God, from whom all things originated. As *Nirguna Brahman* "he" is said to be without form or attributes and is completely ineffable. But as *Saguna Brahman*, "he" is recognized by various aspects, names, and forms. As for example, Brahma, called the Creator, could also be described as the creating aspect of Brahman; and Vishnu, the Preserver, could be described as the preserving aspect of Brahman.

Dhruva- Dhruva is the Pole star. Vaishnavas have faith in Dhruva to be a minor aspect of Vishnu.

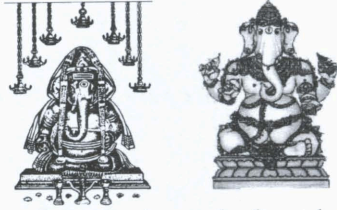
Diti – Diti is the Vedic goddess thought to be the mother of the asuras. Diti is also the sister of Aditi. Diti is the mother of the Maruts, (storm gods).

Durga



– Durga is the Vedic Goddess who is considered as an aspect of Parvati, wife of Siva. Durga destroyed the cruel buffalo headed demon Mahishasura and other demons. Her *vahana* (vehicle) is a lion or tiger, and she carries various weapons in her many arms.

Ganesha



– Ganesha is an elephant-headed God who is the elder son of Siva and Parvati. He is the remover of problems and is invoked at the commencement of the worship rites and at the inauguration of a venture. Ganesha is a God of wisdom and he grants success and good luck. Ganesha is shown with a broken tusk and holding a plate of ladoos (sweet), a noose, a goad, and prayer beads. His *vahana* (vehicle) is a mouse.

Ganga – Ganga is the Goddess river Ganges. Ganga is known as Apas who is Vedic God of water and its resources.

Garuda



Garuda is the *vahana* (vehicle) of Vishnu. Garuda is shown as human form with wings of eagle attached at the shoulder.

Gauri



– Gauri is the Goddess associated with rain. Gauri is the consort of Siva or Varuna. The name Gauri means "brilliant, golden, yellow." Gauri is depicted as having two or four arms and carrying a water pot and prayer beads. Her *vahana* (vehicle) is the iguana, or occasionally a lion, wolf, pig, or goose.

Hanuman (Hanumat)



– Hanuman is the son of Vayu. He is shown as an example for heroic and strong characters. Hanuman has the capability for the transformation shape. Hanuman is customarily depicted as having the face and tail of a monkey but with a human body. Hanuman is revered as the exemplary devotee of the Lord as Rama and his wife Sita.

Indrani – Indrani is a Vedic Goddess and consort of Indra. Indrani pronounced as being very attractive and beautiful. Indrani is called Shachi which may indicate that she exemplified an early version of Sakti, the feminine energy or power of the God.

Jyeshtha – Jyeshtha is the sister of Lakshmi, often identified as Shitala, the Goddess of smallpox. Jyeshtha is traditionally worshiped amongst the rural communities.

Kali



– Kali is the frightening manifestation of Parvati. Kali destroys the evil inclinations of human beings. She is depicted as dark (the name Kali means black) with her tongue drenched with the blood of demons. Kali dresses a garland of skulls and that of human arms. Kali grasps a severed head of human beings which signifies the transience of life

Kama – Kama is the God of love.

Karttikeya – Karttikeya is the God of war and the ruler of the planet Mars and the Pleiades (Krittikas). Karttikeya is the younger son of Siva and Parvati. Karttikeya is depicted as a very young man carrying a spear as well as other weapons. He rescues the world by defeating the demon Taraka. His *vahana* is a peacock.

Krishna



– Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu who came to free the earth of the evil king, Kamsa. Krishna is depicted as blue in color and often playing the flute. Krishna conveyed the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to his devotee Arjuna.

Lakshmi



— Lakshmi is the Goddess of wealth. Lakshmi is the Consort of Vishnu. She emerged from the churning of the ocean of milk by devas and asuras. Lakshmi is associated with the lotus. Lakshmi is also commonly known as "Sri."

Mariamman – Mariamman is the Goddess of smallpox popularly worshiped in the villages. Mariamman is depicted with a damaru (handheld drum), a skull cup, noose, sword, trident, and a parrot.

Murugan



— Murugan is the God depicted as a handsome young man who dwells in the forest. He is identified with Karttikeya.

Navagrahas



sun moon mars mercury venus jupiter saturn rahu kethu

— Navagrahas are a group of planetary deities. Navagrahas are namely the main nine planets. These planet gods are Surya (also known as Savita or Mitra), Chandra (also known as Indu), Mangala, Budha, Guru, Shukra, Shani, Rahu and Kehtu.



sun moon mars mercury venus sukra sani rahu kethu

Nirrti



— Nirrti is a minor Vedic God of death, destruction, and misfortune. The hymns in the Rig Veda that mention Nirrti are asking that she be driven away. Nirrti is depicted as dark and as wearing dark clothes.

Parvathi



— Parvathi is the wife of Siva, whom Parvathi won over by performing tapas (austerities). Parvathi is acknowledged of as the ideal devotee of Lord, Siva. The name Parvathi means "daughter of the mountain." Parvathi is depicted with four arms and usually carrying prayer beads, a mirror, bell, and citron. Her *vahana* (vehicle) is a lion or tiger. She is worshiped as a Mother Goddess, and has manifestations as Durga, Kali, etc.

Prajapathi – Prajapathi is the Vedic God of ritual worship and creation. At later stages in history, Prajapathi was identified with Brahma.

Radha – Radha is the lover of Krishna. Radha symbolizes the intense love of devotee for Krishna (God). Radha's love is completely unselfish and noble, in that Radha gains nothing in return except for the love itself.

Rama



- Rama is a god of incarnation of Vishnu as a righteous prince and king. The Ithihasa known as Ramayana narrates the story of Rama written by sage Valmiki.

Ratri - Ratri is the Vedic Goddess of the night. Ratri is the sister of Ushas, the Goddess of the dawn. Ratri is portrayed as a beautiful maiden who provides light in the darkness and dresses the stars for her jewelry. Ratri is occasionally described absolutely, as one who provides relief and refuge against the evils lurking in the night, but at other times of the day, Ratri is seen as those very dangers and hence described destructively.

Santoshi Matha (Santoshi Ma) Santoshi Matha is the Goddess traditionally worshiped by folks. The name Santoshi Matha means "Mother of contentment." Santoshi Matha is believed to be the daughter of Ganesha by the North Indian communities and can have both benevolent and awesome aspects.

Sati - Sati is the consort of Siva. Sati sacrificed herself in the sacrificial homa fire due to an offense to her husband. In the later period of history Sati reincarnated as Parvati.

Shakti - Shakti is the the characterization of the female energy or divine power. - Shakti signifies the energy of any deity.

Shashthi – Shashthi is the Goddess venerated for the safeguard of a newborn baby. Shashthi is also pleaded to by women to bear children. Shashthi is portrayed with a child in her arms. The *vahana* (vehicle) of Shashthi is a cat.

Shiva



Shiva is one of the major Gods of Hindu religion. Shiva is considered the destroying or terminating and rejuvenating aspect of the Trimurti (Trinity). He has a third eye on his forehead. Shiva is represented as a meditating ascetic with his body covered with ash and his hair matted. His *vahana* (vehicle) is the Nandi (bull).

Sita- Sita is the wife of Rama. In early Vedic literature, Sita was worshiped as the Goddess of the furrow for the plenty of crops. Lakshmi is said to have incarnated as Sita when Vishnu incarnated as Rama. Ramayana gives an account of her life.

Tvashtri – Tvashtri is the Vedic God who is a divine carpenter. Tvashtri has the ability to create anything that is necessary for the community.

Venkateshvara (Venkatesha) - Venkateshvara is worshipped as the Lord of the Venkata Hills. He holds a shankha and a chakra. He is richly adorned.





