

# ***Symbols and Attributes of the Pañca Mahādevas (Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Devī) in Hindu Pantheon Based on the Art***

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Symbols abound in the mythology and art, and they stand for brevity and serve as a link between communication and understanding. In our heritage, we have to explore the wondrous realm of the Hindu deities, their attributes and symbols for understanding their concept and meaning. In the Indian mythology and art, the symbolic representations of the deities are encoded for the future generations to understand their inherent meanings. The various attributes of deities represent a consistent and scientific approach of ancient artists and thinkers to clothe philosophical wisdom with symbols and allegories so that the relatively difficult spiritual meaning becomes understandable even to the common man. With the development of religious thoughts, deities were shown in the form of art, sculpture, painting, dance, music etc. During this period, symbols and attributes gained much significance by being main prop around which fine art flourished. Symbols become conventional signs employed to convey thoughts and meanings on the spiritual and moral planes. They include attributes, emblems, types enigma, parallels, fables, allegories etc. The Hindus have innumerable symbols for the varied worships of deities whose utility and efficacy are wonderful.

The Indian art represents these symbols and attributes along with deities denoting some specific meanings and purpose. In the early medieval art, the icons of the Pañca Mahādevas (Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and Devī) abound in India bearing various symbols and attributes in accordance to the mythological traditions. These symbols and attributes convey deep meaning of esoteric significance and are coded in the Purāṇas and other scriptures.

Śiva is the creator of the whole universe, whereas this creation is stark clean and unadorned, as such the deity is shown ithyphallus. The unclothed body of the deity indicates transcendental aspect of God in a naked form. The four directions east, west, north and south are His clothes. Thus, he is free from the bondage of the material world<sup>1</sup>. The five faces of Mahādeva represent Sadyojāta as Earth, Vāmadeva as Water, Aghora as Light, Tatpuruṣa as Air and Īśāna as Sky<sup>2</sup>. The matted-locks on the head of the deity represent accumulated power, while the three locks symbolise the three branches of the philosophy Vedānta, Sāṃkhya and Yoga. The ashes on His body reminds the relative insignificance of the mundane world. These also symbolise the oneness of the living beings and non-living objects. The white complexion of the God represents Prakṛti (nature)<sup>3</sup>. His three eyes symbolise the Sun, the Moon and the

Fire<sup>4</sup>. These also symbolise desire, action and knowledge. In the **Bhuvaneśvarī Samhitā**, the snake is symbolised by Kāla (Time) or Death who him-self offers as a decorative ornament to Śiva and acts according to His wish. His frontal arms represent the manifest world, whereas the back arms represent the unmanifest world.

The three prongs of the trident in His hand symbolise three *guṇas* *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* qualities<sup>5</sup>. These also symbolise peace, detachment and knowledge. Thus, the God Śiva carrying the trinity of *guṇas* and the key to success in *sādhanā* is the Supreme Master. This trident is remover of all the three types of miseries, physical, mental and spiritual. The *damaru* produces *nāda* (cosmic sound) with its ceaseless motion or the sound of *OM* in the cosmos. This *nādabrahma* is omnipresent in all beings and causes all the sounds in the universe. The *jñānamudrā* (the knowledge bestowing pose) of the deity suggests that the action of the God is aimed at the welfare of the creation. He also bestows knowledge to the devotees in this *mudrā*, leading to Eternal Bliss. The *varadamudrā*, the boon bestowing pose blesses devotees with the spiritual and material gains. The mirror in His hand symbolises the idea of Self-realisation, while the *daṇḍa* (staff) in the hand of Bhairava is the death itself<sup>6</sup>. The rosary represents the strict laws of creations of the God with constant vigilance. The head of the rosary (*sumeru*) is of three beads symbolising *guru*(teacher), *mantra* (initiation) and *devatā* (deity). The Kamaṇḍalu (water-vessel) in the hand of God represents the divine grace on the devotees for his welfare. The half-closed eyes (*ardha nimīlita netra*) of the God indicate introspection in the meditative pose and also around the manifest world. The crescent moon on the head of the deity shows his divine power<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, the waxing and waning phenomena of the moon is indicative of the cycle of life from birth to death, and from death to birth, from summer to winter and from winter to summer, from day to night and from night to day, as such the moon is shown on the head of the God. Thus, the Time is an ornament of the God which he puts-on when he creates the world and takes-off when He dissolves it. The tiger-skin of Śiva represents various *tr̥ṣṇā* (desires)<sup>8</sup>. The citron in the hand of God indicates the seed of the world representing atoms, constituting the world<sup>9</sup>.

The flower *dhatūrā* shows stages of creation. The five-cornered petals of the flower represent creation, sustenance, destruction, cyclic arrangement and compassion. The river Gaṅgā symbolising purification falling on the head of God represents the legend of the descent of the river goddess. The Vāsuki snake indicates His anger, subduing the three worlds<sup>10</sup>. The three threads of the *yajñopavīta* symbolise *Om̐kāra* (*a-u-m*). The elephant-skin used as the drapery of the deity symbolises grandeur, firmness and forbearance. The mount Nandī bull represents *dharma* as the means of righteousness, morality and justice<sup>11</sup>. The aura behind the God's head represents vastness, peace and serenity. The *bilva* tree near the God symbolises supremacy, whereas the *vaṭa* tree under which the God is seated has tiny seed indicating that a small seed of desire binds the individual soul to the gross world of

objects. The dance of Śiva in Naṭarāja form (Fig.-1, Naṭarāja, Ujjain, Central Museum Gwalior C. 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) represents the cosmic dance<sup>12</sup> which keeps equilibrium in His activities of creation and destruction. The dwarfish body of the demon on which Śiva is dancing represents the ignorance, subdued by the God and, thus, the devotee attains final Emancipation. The drum holding hand makes the rhythm of creation, while the hand in *abhaya* pose bestows protection and peace<sup>13</sup>. The lifted foot symbolises the divine activity leading to the release, and is the refuse and salvation of devotee<sup>14</sup>. Śiva's functions are five fold. As the cosmic dancer He embodies and manifests the eternal energy in five activities : He unfolds the whole creation. He maintains it, He destroys its phenomenal existence. He conceals His transcendental nature behind the garb of apparitions and He favours or bestows grace through a manifestation which is ready to accept the devotee. The God effects the world process for the sake of the world's release. It does not effect in any way His nature. Śiva remains the same whether the world evolves or not<sup>15</sup>.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic God identified with Sun and is said to have measured the seven regions of the universe in three steps<sup>16</sup>, latter associated with His Vāmana form. The *tripāda* (three steps) suggest three different positions of sun in morning, noon and evening. He is the last born Āditya which indicates the solar origin of the God<sup>17</sup>. The God Viṣṇu is the preserver of the universe and the sustainer of the animate beings. Viṣṇu is the Supreme Reality which pervades the microcosm and the macrocosm. The four-faced god represents *bala* (strength), *jñāna* (knowledge), *aiśvarya* (sovereignty), and *śakti* (power)<sup>18</sup>. *Bala* is personified in Vāsudeva, *jñāna* in Saṅkarṣaṇa (Balarāma), *aiśvarya* in Pradyumna and *śakti* in Aniruddha, the *vyūha* form of the God. Viṣṇu is shown as seated or reclining on the Śeṣanāga symbolising endless time. The four arms of the deity symbolise *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The *śaṅkha* (conchshell), in the hand of the God represents the cosmic sound, symbolising sky in His hand<sup>19</sup>. The *cakra* (disc) in the hand of the deity symbolises the rotation of the world or the cycle of movement or sun<sup>20</sup>. The *gadā* (mace) symbolises the moon<sup>21</sup>. The mace held in the right hand denotes contact with the manifest world used for its evolution. The eight- cornered mace symbolises *dharma* (duty), *vairāgya* (detachment), *adharmā* (falsehood), *avirāga* (attachment), *jñāna* (knowledge), *aiśvarya* (prosperity), *ajñāna* (ignorance), and *anaiśvarya* (poverty). The *padma* (lotus) in His hand stands for water, while the lotus emerging from the navel of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu symbolises *mahi* (Earth) and its stalk the Meru hill<sup>22</sup>.

The *vaijayantī mālā* (garland) with five gems suggests five elements. The Viṣṇurahasya records "From the earth comes the sapphire, from water the pearl, from fire the *kaustubha* gem, from air the cat's eye and from ether the *puṣparāga*. The garland also binds the world together"<sup>23</sup>. The *kaustubha maṇi* (gem) adorned in the neck of the Lord suggests pure knowledge<sup>24</sup>. The *lalitāsana* (seated pose) of the deity suggests the strict laws of the God sitting in awareness. The *kiriṭamukuta* (crown)

over the head of the God represents the concept of Lord's majesty and sovereignty. The *kuṇḍalas* (ear-rings) represent the pair of opposites comprising *kṣara* and *akṣara*, destructible and non-destructible object subservient to Him<sup>25</sup>. (Fig. 2, Viṣṇu, Rajshahi distt. Bangladesh, Patna Museum, C. 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). The mount Garuḍa of the God represents mind pervading bodies of all creatures, while *lāṅgala* and *mūsala* (ploughshare and pestle) in the hands of Balarāma represent time and death<sup>26</sup>. The bow and arrows in hands of Pradyumna represent Sāṁkhya and Yoga Philosophy<sup>27</sup>. The *carma* (leather-shield) in the hand of Aniruddha is the symbolic illusion necessary for the creation of the world<sup>28</sup>. Narasimha incarnation (Fig. 3. Narasimha, Viratnagar, distt. Sahdol, M.P., Birla Museum, Bhopar, c. 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) of the God is the embodiment of *jñāna* (knowledge) who destroys Hiraṇyakaśipu demon as the personification of *ajñāna* (ignorance)<sup>29</sup>. The other incarnation of the deity, Varāha as the embodiment of *aiśvarya* (power) overpowers Hiraṇyākṣa, the personification of *anaiśvarya* (mightlessness)<sup>30</sup>.

Sūrya occupies an important place among the five principal deities of the Hindu pantheon, and a sect named Saura came into existence with legends and mythology of its own<sup>31</sup>. He is an universal deity of immemorial time. A number of Indus valley seals and potsherds represent the *svastika*, wheel, circle with radiating ray, bull and birds, specially falcon and peacock, which might suggest their association with the Sun<sup>32</sup>. the various aspects of Sūrya, such as Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Dakṣa and Amśa are referred to as Ādityas in the **R̥gveda**<sup>33</sup>. The Gāyatrī, the most important Mantra of the Vedas is addressed to the Sun. The Gāyatrī is Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva and the Vedas<sup>34</sup>. The mystic monosyllable “AUM” is also traced to the Sun God which represents the solar fire as well as the Trinity. It is written inside a circle representing the orb of the Sun and worn by Hindus as lockets.

In the early-medieval age, the spirit of synthesis in various sects can be seen in the unique image of Sūrya with Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. The concept of Trimūrti also developed where the Sun God replaced Brahmā. According to the **Viṣṇudharmottara**, the Sun God Āditya is red in colour as He is the source of all lustre<sup>35</sup>. The seven horses attached to the chariot of Āditya are seven Vedic metres Gāyatrī, Uṣṇik, Anuṣṭup, Bṛhatī, Paṁkti, Triṣṭup and Jagatī<sup>36</sup>. Sūrya holds the entire universe by keeping the rays in His hands<sup>37</sup>. By wearing girdle He bears the entire world<sup>38</sup>. His four wives Rājñī, Ṛkṣubhā, Chāyā and Suvarcasā represent the earth, the sky, the shadow and lustre respectively<sup>39</sup>. On the banner of Āditya, lion represents *dharma*<sup>40</sup>. (Fig. 4 Sūrya, Baijnath, dist. Almora, Uttaranchal, c. 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). Thus, the various attributes, motifs etc. associated with the God Sūrya convey deep philosophical meanings with esoteric significance.

Vināyaka Gaṇapati (Gaṇeśa) became popular in the later Gupta period and rose to the status of the great God, and a sect developed around him<sup>41</sup>. The most popular deity at the present time in the Hindu pantheon has not been referred to in

the **Rgveda**<sup>42</sup>. Gaṇeśa is clearly mentioned along with Rudra and his consort for the first time in the **Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra**<sup>43</sup>. The Gāṇapatya sect became so popular by the time of Śaṅkarācārya at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that it was subdivided into six folds, such as Mahā-Gaṇapati, Haridrā-Gaṇapati, Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati, Navanīta, Svārṇa and Sanātana<sup>44</sup>. The worship of Gaṇeśa also spread in the foreign countries in a very short time and His medieval images have also been found in the Indo-China, Java and other countries<sup>45</sup>.

Gaṇeśa also enjoys a unique place in the Hindu mythology. He is the symbolic perfection of the human endeavour. The elephant-head of the deity represents an acute sense of discrimination. Moreover, this elephant-head also symbolises the inflated ego or the conscious "I", the first principle which emanated from the unmanifest Prajāpati<sup>46</sup>. The large ears of the deity have the capacity for continuous and intelligent listening as a quality for the seeker. The proboscis of the God has a peculiar efficiency of solving problems of the world and also in the subtle realms of the inner beings. The two tusks of the deity symbolise discrimination between wisdom and folly, good and evil, right and wrong. The four arms of the deity represent mind, intellect, ego and *citta* (conditioned consciousness). They also convey the idea of four direction = east, west, north and south, symbolising omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. The two front hands symbolise objective activity of the manifest world, while the back hands symbolise the subjective activity in the unmanifest world. The battle-axe in the hand of God meant to cut-off attachments of devotees. The *abhaya* pose of the right hand of the deity signifies the blessings of protection from all obstacles on the spiritual path. The crown on Gaṇeśa's head symbolises sovereignty and power (Fig. 5, Tewar, Jabalpur, M.P., Jabalpur University Museum, c. 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). The deity is also worshipped fervently not only in India but also in many parts of the world like Java, Bornio, Nepal, Cambodia etc.<sup>47</sup>.

Devī or Mother-Goddess occupies an important place among the five principal deities, symbolising as she does, the universal energy, pure knowledge and Absolute Truth. Even today, she commands the deep devotion of Śāktas. It to be pointed out that the antiquity of Devī is greater than that of any other deity, and her worship was prevalent in one form or the other in various parts of the world right from prehistoric times<sup>48</sup>. The antiquity of female worship in India may be traced to the peasant culture of Baluchistan<sup>49</sup> and Harappan sites<sup>50</sup>. In the Vedic period, Devī enjoys a position inferior to that of the great male gods. The female deities gained in status in the later Vedic period in as much as they came to represent the primary energy of *Brahma* with whom she created the universe<sup>51</sup>. By the time of the **Baudhāyana Gr̥hyasūtra**, the position of Devī is well established and she is worshipped like the god himself<sup>52</sup>. In the Purāṇas, she occupies an exalted position and is conceived as the Supreme Deity at par with the other Gods, though still associated with Śiva in Śaivism and Viṣṇu in Vaisnavism in various forms<sup>53</sup>. The

unmanifested Devī takes three forms of Lakṣmī, Mahākālī and Savasvatī, symbolising the rajasa, the tamasa and the *sattva guṇas* (qualities). Under the Mahālakṣmī command, Brahmā took Sarasvatī as his consort, and the universe was born out of them. Śiva took Pārvatī as his consort, while Lakshmi herself chose Viṣṇu as her consort and protected the universe<sup>54</sup>. In course of time Durgā-Pārvatī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī became most popular among goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. They occupied important positions among gods. In the early-medieval age, numerous forms of Devī are sculptured throughout India.

Durgā belongs to Śri-Kula, the manifest world, while her other form the goddess Kālī belongs, to the unmanifest causal world. Durgā is the symbol of struggle for total victory over evil, while Mahākālī is the symbol of the struggle for attainment of divine grace. Thus, the deity relates herself to the world of action at the physical, mental and intellectual levels. The symbols and attributes of the deity are detailed in various Purāṇas. The blue lotus and mirror in Pārvatī's hands (Fig. 6, Pārvatī, Baijnath, Almora, c. 10<sup>th</sup> century) symbolise detachment and pure knowledge<sup>55</sup>. The eighteen arms of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī represent the collective power of divine forces. Her eighteen weapons presented by gods symbolise eighteen qualities. The rosary (*akṣamālā*) in her hand symbolises eternal sounds from *a* to *ḥṣa* in devanāgarī script, standing for the united forces of all the gods to defeat the demons. The battle-axe given by Viśvakarmā indicates firmness for the destruction of the demon in kindness. The mace represents of the absolute power of the leader as the sole monarch. The bunch of arrows given by Vāyu *devatā* were used to kill the eight demon chiefs symbolising the *rajoguṇa*, *tamoguṇa* and the demon Mahiṣāsura, the embodiment of ego and ignorance. The thunderbolt presented by Indra represents the firm mind for the destruction of the demon. The lotus given by the sea shows the growth of the inner self with continuous evolution. The bow presented by Vāyu *devatā* symbolises the force and concentration of energy. The *daṇḍa* (staff) offered by Yama represents discipline and system. The *śakti* (spear) presented by Agni represents the cosmic energy.

The sword created by the Divine Mother herself symbolises knowledge which has the sharpness of the sword. This knowledge with its discriminatory power distinguishes between the right and wrong, destroys ignorance of the mind in a single stroke and makes it illuminated. The *khetaka* (shield) symbolises defence with forbearance. The five raised spots in the shield represent the five channels of defence from the *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (covetousness), *moha* (illusion) and *ahaṁkāra* (ego). The *kamaṇḍalu* (water-vessel) presented by Brahmā shows that one should acquire virtues diligently and use them properly in a planned manner. The bell given by Indra symbolises sound proclaiming the invincibility of the goddess. The bowl presented by Kubera, the god of wealth suggests the intoxication caused by material prosperity. Finally, the trident given by Lord Śiva, symbolising the

determined destruction of obstacles by knowledge kills the demon Mahiṣa representing ego or ignorance. The *pāśa* (rope) offered by Varuṇa is to bind the evil forces for the victory of righteousness. The *sudarśana cakra* offered by the God Viṣṇu represents the victory of truth by destroying all obstacles. Lion (*simha*), the mount of Mother symbolises power, will and determination to win the evil forces (Fig. 7, Mahiṣāsūramardini, Pippala Devī Temple, Osia, dist. Jodhpur, Rajasthan, c. 825 A.D.). This suggests to the seeker that he has to develop all these qualities in order to destroy the demon of ego, which is to come in his way in many forms of horrible, deceptive and sweet aspects<sup>56</sup>.

The concept of seven or eight Mothers (*sapta* or *aṣṭa mātṛkās*) are discussed in the Purāṇas. The **Varāha Purāṇa** mentions eight Mothers by including Yogeśvarī with Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Cāmuṇḍā. they are symbolised with eight bad mental qualities : Yogeśvarī represents desire, Maheśvarī anger, Vaishṇavī covetousness, Brahmāṇī pride, Kaumārī illusion, Indrāṇī fault-finding, Yamī or Cāmuṇḍā tale-bearing and Vārāhī envy. It adds that the myth of the killing of Andhakāsura is an allegory representing spiritual wisdom fighting ignorance. Śiva as the spirit of *vidyā* tries to eliminate *avidyā*, the more foes, the later increases. This fact is represented by the multiplication of the figures of Andhakāsura. Unless the eight bad qualities are altogether controlled by *vidyā* and kept under restraint one can never succeed in putting down Andhakāsura<sup>57</sup>.

Lakṣmī, the divine power, is represented in a female form symbolising affinity and harmony with human beings. This is to convey the idea that the state of consciousness represented by a particular god is within the reach of all human beings. The four arms of the deity represent *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (desire) and *mokṣa* (salvation). The half-blossomed lotus in the left hand is related to the *anāhatacakra* of *tāntrika sādhanā*. The *varadamudrā* of the hand represents bestowing prosperity to the devotees at all levels of the physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual planes with good health, peaceful mind, pure knowledge and total liberation. The *abhayamudrā* of one of her hands gives the assurance of protection from all fears of life. The front two arms represent *preya mārga*, the manifest enjoyment of the world in the *artha* and *kāma*, while the back arms represent *śreya mārga*, the path of merit, constituting *dharma* and *mokṣa*<sup>58</sup>. According to the **Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa**, the book in Vaiṣṇavī's hand represents all *sāstras*<sup>59</sup>, with rosary in her hand she symbolises *Kāla* (time)<sup>60</sup>. The nectar-pot represents the essence of water, while lotus in her hand stands for wealth<sup>61</sup>. *Śaṅkha* (conchshell) in Lakṣmī's hand represents good fortune<sup>62</sup>, while *bilva* fruit in her hand indicates the whole world<sup>63</sup>. Anointing of Lakṣmī, by the pair of elephants personifies the two *nidhis* i.e. *śaṅkha* and *padma nidhis*<sup>64</sup>. (Fig. 8, Gaja-Lakṣmī, Bhitari, Gazipur distt., U.P., 6<sup>th</sup> century).

The face of Lakṣmī is full of compassion and love. The grace of the deity

bestows prosperity, wealth, comfort, victory, knowledge and capacity to perform meritorious acts with perfection. The goddess Lakṣmī is invoked and worshipped with fervour to cleanse one self of all bad qualities and to kindle the light of knowledge for the attainment of worldly prosperity and spiritual illumination.

The goddess Sarasvatī represents the divine principle which is the cause of all movements, source of knowledge and spiritual light and destroyer of ignorance. The word Sarasvatī originates from the Sanskrit root “*śṛ gatau*” meant vibration and movement. She is the Vedic goddess of knowledge and is considered to be the source of all learning. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna*, Sarasvatī personifies Sāvitrī or Gāyatrī, the foremost of all<sup>65</sup>. Her two eyes stand for the sun and moon<sup>66</sup>. The four arms of the deity represent the four Vedas<sup>67</sup>. The *Kamaṇḍalu* (water-vessel) in her hand represents the nectar of all *śāstras*, while the rosary represents time<sup>68</sup>. The book in her hand represents all *śāstras*<sup>69</sup>, and all achievements (*siddhis*)<sup>70</sup>. Her four arms also symbolise *mana* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *citta* (conditioned consciousness) and *ahaṁkāra* (ego). Her fair colour and white garment signify absolute purity. The *vīṇā* (musical instrument) signifies the music of life with supramental knowledge and downward knowledge. The rosary in the hand of the deity symbolises concentrations. The mount *haṁsa* (swan) represents purity and discrimination between the right or wrong. The other mount peacock represents *avidyā* (the mundane knowledge). The lotus-seat of the goddess symbolises *ṛtambharā-prajñā* (supreme knowledge). Lotus in her hand also stands for creation and detachment. The red aura around the head of the deity symbolises *rajoguṇa* (the world of activity) (Fig. 9, dancing Sarasvatī, State Museum, Lucknow, c. 9<sup>th</sup> century). At times, Sarasvatī is shown as seated in lotus-pond floating in calm and clear water. The water symbolises the ocean of life indicating that one has to attain supreme knowledge living in the world and not running away from it. Infact, she is the presiding deity of all academic pursuits of the Hindus<sup>71</sup>.

Thus, the auspicious symbols, motifs and attributes of the deities as a part of religious thoughts and ritualistic signs penetrated deep in the Hindu society and took such strong roots as to have survived through the ages to our own times. These ancient symbols and attributes naturally entered the realm of art and iconography. They assumed a fresh exalted position in association with the different deities. An analysis of the dispersal and assimilation of these ancient symbols holds the key to the understanding of Indian art forms as they had been handed down from the past. Heinrich Zimmer aptly remarks, “Hindu myths and symbols and other signs of wisdom from afar, in just such a way will speak to us of the treasure which is our own. And we then must dig it up from the forgotten recesses of our own being. And at last, it will end for us our troubles and permit us to erect for the benefit of all around us a temple of the living spirit<sup>72</sup>.”

## References

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Fig. 1 : Natarāja, Ujjain (M.P.)  
Gwalior Central Museum, c. 9th cent. A.D.

Photographs - courtesy, Archaeological Survey of India and American Institute of Indian Studies.



Fig. 2 : Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva, Lakṣmī  
Bangladesh, Rajshahi Dist. Patna Museum  
c. 12th cent. A.D.



Fig. 3 : Nṛsimha, Viratnagar Dist. Shahdol (M.P.)  
Birla Museum, Bhopal early c. 9th cent. A.D.



Fig. 4 : Sūrya, Baijnath, Dist. Almora, Uttaranchal



Fig. 5 : Dancing Gaṇeśa, Tewar, Jabalpur (M.P.)  
Jabalpur University Museum



Fig. 6 : Pārvati-Baijnath, Almora c. 10th cent.  
Chlorite Stone, Pala School



Fig. 7 : Mahiṣāsūramardini 8 Armed, Pippla Devi Temple  
Oria, Dist. Jodhpur (Rajasthan)  
Mahanam Style, early 9th cent.



Fig. 8 : Gaja Lakṣmi from Bhitari, Ghazipur  
Lucknow Museum



Fig. 9 : Dancing Sarasvatī (State Museum Lucknow)  
c. 9th cent. A.D.