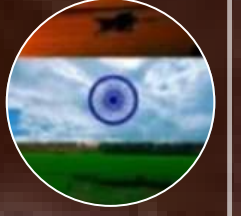




DAKSHI

॥ संस्कृति ज्ञान की ॥



SHILPASHASTRA

" कलानां प्रवरं चित्रम् धर्मार्थ काम मोक्षादं । "



EDITION 1

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2025

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Director's Note

It is with great scholarly satisfaction that we present DAKSHI Shilpashastra, a volume dedicated to the systematic study of Bhāratīya Shilpa-Paramparā. This work seeks to elucidate the philosophical, technical, and symbolic foundations of Indian iconography, exploring its enduring significance in the civilizational context of Bharat. By examining the relationship between ancient treatises and physical manifestations in sculpture and art, the book aspires to deepen academic engagement with India's rich shilpa traditions.

The theme of Gyānparv'25, devoted to the Shilpaśāstrīya Paramparā of Bharat, is symbolically reflected in the choice of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti Iconography as the event's emblem. Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti, revered as the eternal teacher, represents the silent communication of wisdom and the dynamic integration of knowledge and artistry. The volume is intended as a substantive contribution to the fields of art history, aesthetics, and Indic studies, fostering renewed inquiry into the forms and philosophies that have shaped our shared heritage.

This endeavor owes its success to the critical inputs and scholarship of numerous contributors, academicians, practitioners, and traditional Shilpa-Āchāryas whose expertise has enhanced the richness and rigor of the work. Sincere gratitude is extended to collaborating institutions, archival curators, and field researchers for facilitating access to essential resources and source materials. Above all, we remain indebted to the living tradition of Shilpa, which continues to inspire and ground our explorations.

– Akshit Kumar Bhadauria

INTRO

Śilpaśāstra is the ancient Indian science of arts and crafts, guiding temple architecture, sculpture, and iconography. It combines technical skill with spiritual philosophy, showing how art becomes a sacred act — a bridge between the divine and the material world!



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KAMADEVA

Kama as the divinity of love to be contemplated is represented as an icon. He is extremely attractive in features, with a bright face, but eyes indicating intoxication..



He is shown with two arms, carrying bow and arrow. His bow is the stalk of sugarcane (iksu), and the arrows are flowers. It is specified that his arrows are five in number (viz. five flowers: aravinda, asoka, cuta, nava- mallika, and nilotpala).



Hence his name Pañca-bana'. His arrows are also named EM after stages of the love-lorn condition: unmadana (excitement), tapana (heat), sosana (drying up), stambhana (arrest of normal functions), and sammohana (hypnosis). His vehicle is a parrot (suka), and his banner has fish represented on it (minaketana), or alternately, the mythical crocodile (makara)



KAMADHENU

KAMADHENU also known as SURABHI, the divine bovine, the mother of all cows is said to have risen from the churning (milk) of the ocean.



Iconographically she is generally depicted as a white cow with a female head and breasts, the wings of a bird, and the tail of a peafowl.



On her head she wears makuta/crown in between her 2 horns that are slightly curved inward. She is depicted having long hair that is beautifully braided that reaches to her legs, falling on her side. She wears large rounded kundalas that touch her body. Her body is adorned with jewels. Certain depictions have a calf suckling on her teats.



BHAIRAVA

The word **BHAIRAVA** means "one with a frightening cry" ('bhir bhayankaro ravo yasya'), and it refers primarily to **Rudra** (viz. Siva). In fact, Bhairava is regarded as one of the violent forms of **Siva**, associated with his fights against demons..



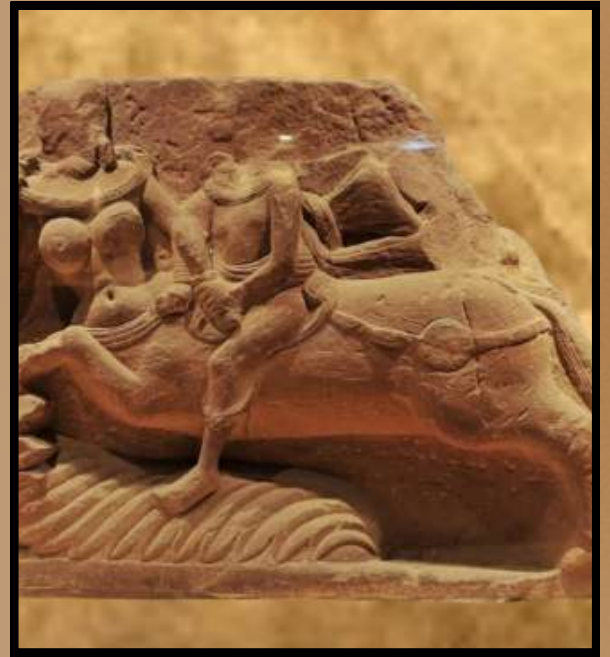
Vamana-purana ascribes the origin of Bhairava to Siva's fight with the asura **Andhaka**. When the asura struck Siva's chest with a mace, the streams of blood that flowed out brought forth in succession eight Bhairavas. Each of the eight bhairava is associated with a specific consort. The first seven consorts are celebrated as **Sapta Matrkas**, in some texts all the eight are included and referred to as **Asta Matrkas**.



KINNARA

06

A celestial and mythical class of beings (**deva-yoni**), distinguished by a human body and horse's head (**asva-mukha**), or by the horse's body with a human head and wings of a bird. The expression '**kinnara**' (**kimnara**) literally means a curious specimen of the human species.



Kinnaras are celestial **musicians**. (**svar-gayaka**) and they depicted in Agni-purana are as playing musical instruments like lute (**vinā**) or as singing. They are usually seen with their sorts (**kinnaris**) and are closely allied to the yaksas, apsaras, **gandharvas** and **vidhyadhāras**.

According to Jaina ideology, they live in the 'vyantara', viz mid-region between earth (**bhuvana**) and the heavens (**jyotiksa**). Kinnaras are distinguished from Kimpurusas, who also live in this region, along with the great serpents (**mahoraga**), **gandharvas**, **yaksas**, **raksasas**, **bhutas** and **pisacas**.



According to the **Jatakas**, kinnaras are fairies and are shown as going in pairs noted for mutual love and devotion. In the **Chanda kinnara Jataka** the devotion of the Kinnarai to her wounded kinnara husband brings Indra on the scene to cure him from the wound. The kinnaras are noted for their long life. In Southeast Asian mythology, the female counterpart of the kinnara is called the **kinnari**, and is depicted as **half-bird**, half-58 woman.

KIRTIMUKH

KIRTIMUKHA or "the face of glory" is an important ancillary in Shiva Temples, usually found in the Śukanāsā of the garbhagriha

Its reference is found in the Skanda Puran, when the asura Jalandhar had sent Rahu to Shiva asking him to handover Maa Parvati to him. Enraged, Mahadev manifested a monstrous being



Fig. 5 Detail of a book cover for a Jain manuscript, c. 1125 CE. Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad.

Source: Pratapaditya Pal, *The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), fig. 79.



Lion like face, with wide fangs and an emaciated body, the monster was ordered to eat Rahu. With Rahu begging for forgiveness, Shiva ordered the monster to feed on himself.

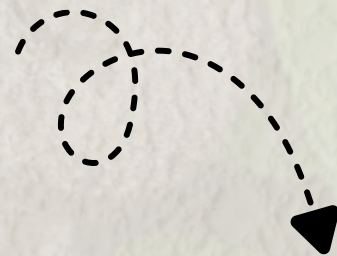
In the blink of an eye, the monster devoured himself, leaving just his head intact. Shiva could not help himself marvel over the sight and thus named the monster, Kirtimukha and thereby accorded it a prime position in his temples, where all must acknowledge it before the Mahadev.



AYUDHA PURUSH



The **Gods** and **Goddesses** in Hindu iconography find their distinction from the weapons and instruments they hold. The weapons and emblems held by the Gods are also equally revered by the devotees and often find their place beside their holders.



They are adorned with the "**Karanda Mukuta**", a pair of hands, held together in front of their chest in the "**Anjali pose**".



The weapons and emblems are personified and known as "**AYUDHA PURUSHAS**", where they are concretized as images and sculptures as males, females and eunuchs.

One of the best visual examples of Ayudha Purushas is the **Sudarshan Chakra Murti** seen in the presence of Lord Venkateshwara's main idol in the garbgriha of Tirumala.

MANDAPAM

Mandapam, an integral part of ancient Indian temple architecture, is a **hall** or pavilion often used for congregational purposes, rituals, and ceremonies.

Its design, proportions, and symbolism are deeply rooted in **Shilpashastra**, the ancient Indian treatise on architecture and sculpture. The Mandapam embodies **spiritual** and **aesthetic** values, representing the transition space between the **secular** and the **divine**.



A porch - like structure in a ancient **nagra** and **Dravidian** style temple that leads to the temple through the ornate gateway (**gopuram**). It's often used for religious dancing and music, and as a gathering space for worshippers and ceremonies.

There are different types of 11 mandapas, including the **Ardha Mandapa**, **Asthana Mandapa**, **Kalyana Mandapa**, **Ranga Mandapa**, and **Maha Mandapa**.



Mandapas can be described as "open" or "closed" depending on whether they have walls. The entrance doorway of the sanctum is often decorated with floral, figural, or **geometric ornamentation**.

The term "**Mandapam**" is derived from Sanskrit:

Man (to think or meditate) *Dapa* (a structure or pavilion).



NARMADESHWAR SHIVLING

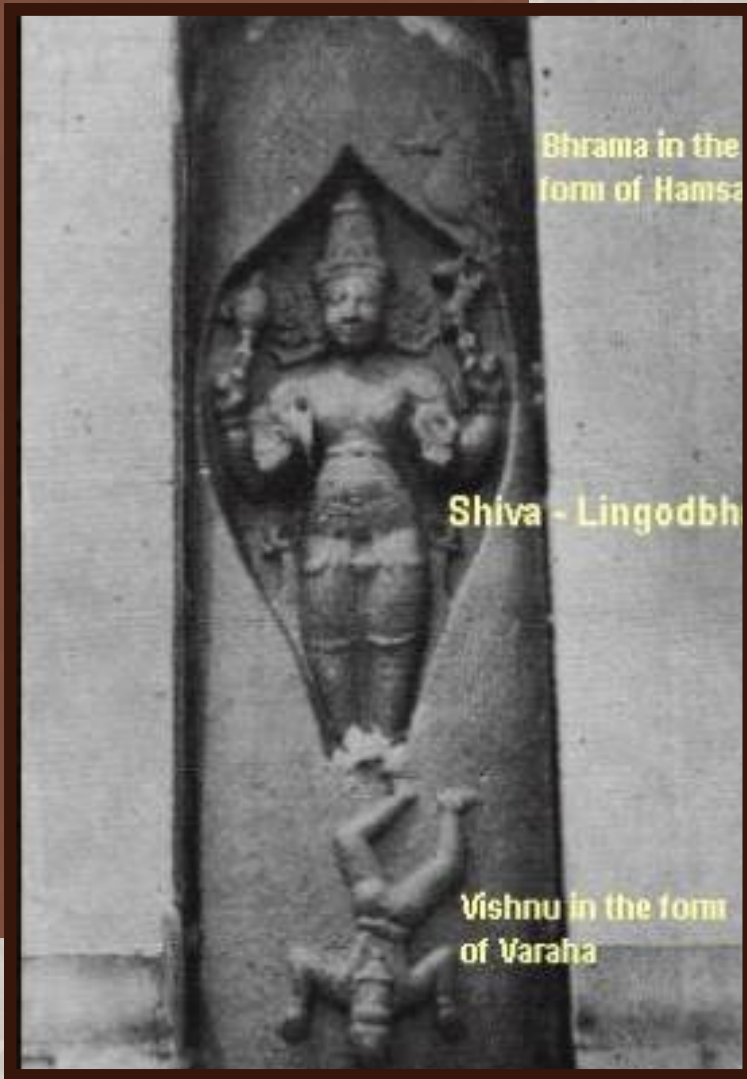


The Narmadeshwar Shivling forms in the river of Narmada in Madhya Pradesh. Being naturally formed, it is also called "Svayambhu", referring to the "self formed" elliptical Lingam shape of the stones found in the river bed, seen as the outward manifestation of the essence of Siva.



The states blessed by the sight and presence of Narmada, have from time immemorial a popular saying : "Narmada ke Kankar Uthe Shankar", highlighting the essence of Siva in each pebble stones of Narmada. Being formed of gems and jewels, the Narmadeshwar Shivling is usually rested on a pedestal said to be symbolic of Mata Parvati.

Siva Purana states that the earthly elliptical image of Siva is the most excellent of all images of Siva and must be made as a single whole, whether of gems, gold, mercury or Pusparaga.



LINGODHVA LINGAM

Lingodbhava is the story of emergence of lord **Shiva** in the form of a linga to put to rest, dare I say, a very mortal dispute that arose between Brahma and Vishnu who is the greater of the two? To settle they approached **Shiva**. Shiva took the form of a Linga - **pillar of fire**, which stretched from depths to heights no one could see. The one between Brahma and Vishnu who could reach either top or bottom would be declared greater! Brahma took the form of a **swan** and flew to find the top while Vishnu took form of a **boar** to find the bottom.

Many years passed and neither found an end; Vishnu realized the greatness of Shiva and accepted defeat but Brahma tried his luck to trick Shiva. He asked the help of a "**Ketaki**" flower to falsely testify that he had indeed seen the top end of the linga. The unfortunate flower did as asked by Brahma. Shiva was furious at this devious attempt and cursed Brahma that he will never be worshipped. He also cursed the "**Ketaki**" flower that it would not be used in his worship.



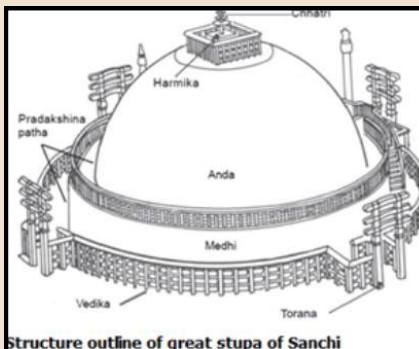
SANCHI STUPA



The **Great Stupa** at Sanchi is one of the oldest stone structures in India, and an important monument to the historical architecture of India. It was originally commissioned by the Mauryan emperor **Ashoka** in the 3rd century BCE.

“

"Where silence speaks of peace, the Sanchi Stupa stands as a timeless symbol of Buddha's eternal wisdom."



Structure outline of great stupa of Sanchi

Its nucleus was a simple hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha. The simple structure was damaged at some point during the 2nd century bce. It was later repaired and enlarged, and elements were added; it reached its final form in the 1st century bce. The building is 120 feet (37 metres) wide and 54 feet (17 metres) high.

Elements of Stupa:-

- 1.Anda (Dome)
- 2.Harmika(Square Platform)
3. Chhatra (Umbrella)
4. Medhi (Base/Terrace)
5. Torana (Gateway)
6. Vedika (Fence)
- 7.PradakshinaPatha (Circumambulatory Path)



MATRIKAS



Matrikas are the Divine Mother Goddesses representing **Sakti**, or the manifestation of the universal energies in the abstract.

The Matrikas are the female counterparts of the male gods and are as follows:

Yogesvari of Siva, Brahmani of Brahma, Mahesvari of Mahesvara, Kaumari of Kumara, Vaishnavi of Vishnu, Varahi of Varaha, Indrani of Indra and Chamunda of Yama. They are armed with the same weapons fashion the same ornaments and ride the same vahanas as the corresponding male god.



The origin of Sapt Matrikas revolves around the fight between **Siva** and **Andhakasura**, who was causing trouble to the devas because of the boons granted to him by Brahma. During the fight, when Siva gravely wounded Andhakasura, his blood on contact with the earth assumed the shape of another **Andhakasura**. To stop the blood from falling on the Earth, Siva created from the flame in his mouth, **Yogesvari**. Soon the other male gods followed suit and thus, emerged the **Matrikas**, who caught all drops of blood and thus ensured the defeat of Andhakasura.

The Varaha Purana states them to be eight in number, whereas other agamas and Puranas count them upto seven.



The Seven Mother Goddesses (Matrikas) flanked by Shiva (left) and Ganesha (right)

The **Varaha Purana** chronicles about the Matrikas to be symbolic of the eight morally bad **mental qualities** of desire, pride, anger, greed, illusion, fault finding, tale bearing and envy. The fight between Siva and Andhakasura represents the fight between **Atma- Vidya** or spiritual wisdom and **Avidya** or ignorance. Ignorance cannot be removed as long as the eight evil qualities are not brought in the fold of Vidya and thus be purified by it, only then can the veil of ignorance be lifted and Ultimate truth be realised.

KALARIMURTI

The Kalarimurti form of Siva encaptures the tale of Rishi Markandeya, one of the Chiranjeevis

The story goes as follows:

Rishi Mrikandu longed for a son and thus prayed to Siva for the same. Pleased by his intense tapas Siva appeared before him and offered him a boon of either having a large number of dull-wittees, evil sons or a pious, intelligent son who could live only upto 16 years of age. The rishi chose the latter and thus in due time his wife Manasvini bore a son named Markandeya.

Markandeya was remarkably smart and witty but as he approached the 16th year mark, he was told by his parents about his doomed fate

Undeterred by such news, Markandeya resolved to intense puja of all gods at all prominent places of pilgrimage and in the course of his journey he reached to Tirukadavur (in modern day Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu), where he was absorbed in the worship of the Shiva Linga enshrined in its temple. It was there that Yama or Kala, the god of death approached Markandeya to carry out the final formalities of the boon given to Rishi Mrikandu.

As Yama flung his noose to capture Markandeya's soul, the noose also found within its loop the Linga which Markandeya was worshipping. From the Linga, burst out Siva with his right leg still submerged in the Linga upto the knee and raised his left leg as high as possible to kick Yama on his chest.

Yama was thus brought to his senses and realised that Markandeya could not be subjected to death under the protection of Siva and thus retreated unfulfilling his duties Siva then blessed Markandeya to be forever of sixteen years of age and thus his destiny of dying after the age of 16 years of age would forever be on hold. This is the why Rishi Markandeya is Chiranjeevi and is always portrayed as a child and Siva because of the act of chastising Yama or Kala is portrayed as Kalarimurti.





MUDRAS

"Actions speak louder than words", the saying comes into life when one undertakes a journey through the non - verbal cues embodied in the sculptures and paintings.



Mudras refer to the various poses in which the hand is held and is an integral and omnipresent component in the world of hindu jain And Buddhists Iconography. The Mudras seem to evoke a sense of life breathing out from the stationary statues and establish a sacred thread of connection between the worshipper and his ishta-devata (paramatma).



One can find references about the mudras in Natyashastra Abhinaya Darpana Agamas and Buddhist literature. R.K Poduval in his Administrative report to the archaeological department of the Travancore State categorised the mudras into 3 basic types of Vedic, Tantrik and Laukik.

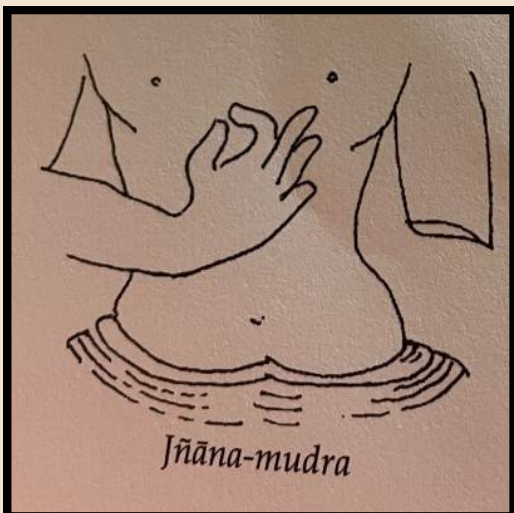
The most common among the Mudras is the Abhaya Mudra in which the hand is raised to the shoulder with the palm facing its viewer and embodying a grant of protection. It finds its reference in Varahamihira's Brhatsamhita while describing Vishnu murtis. This mudra is seen most in Buddha statues.



The Vyakhana Mudra has the same formation as the Jnana Mudra but the subtle difference comes in the outward showcasing of the palm to the seer. It conveys the idea of distributing knowledge to others and derives its meaning from the fact that Buddha in his sermon at Sarnath displayed a similar gesture while addressing to the people.



Varada Mudra is performed while having the palm outwards and extending the fingers and pointing them downwards, symbolising the idea of the deity granting a boon to the devotee, the boon being that no one can harm him.

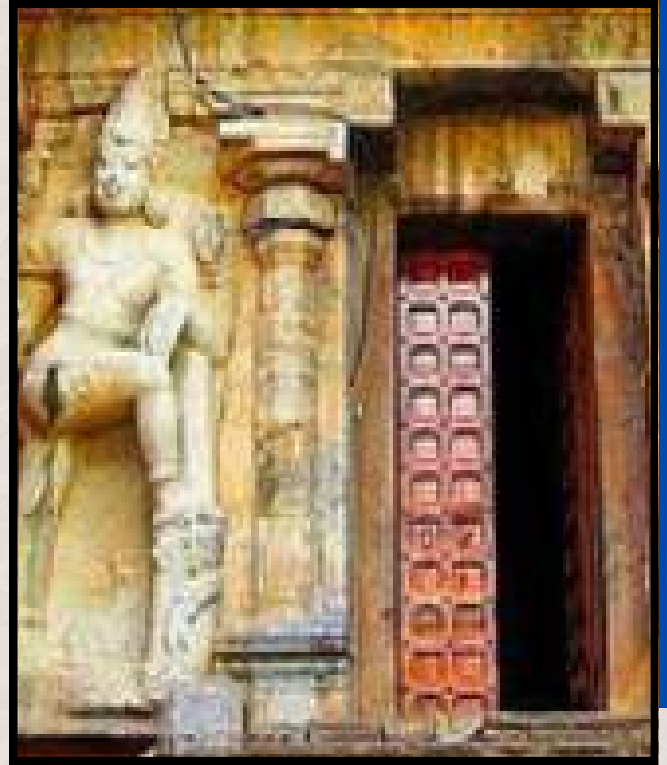


The Jnana Mudra is performed by joining the tips of the right thumb and index finger and facing the palm inwards. It symbolises that knowledge comes from within, that the repository of knowledge always resides within ourselves and it's upto us to realise it.

DVARPALA



A Dvarapala or Dvarapalaka which is the Sanskrit word for "door guard" is a door or gate guardian often portrayed as a warrior or fearsome giant, usually armed with a weapon - the most common being the gada (mace). The dvarapala statue is a widespread architectural element throughout Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina cultures,



Dvarapalas are regular features of a major Hindu or Buddhist temple complex. They are the formidable looking 'gate-keepers' and guards in service of the presiding deity of the temple. They are the servants and the protectors of their masters. They are typically envisioned as huge and robust warriors.



The pairs of Dvarapalas are most usually placed at the entrance to the temple and also at the doorway to sanctum (garbha-griha). As you mentioned, each god or goddess has his or her own set of Dvarapalas

AMRAVATI STUPA

“



The Amaravati Stupa is a ruined Buddhist stupa located in the village of Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, India, considered one of the most important Buddhist sites in the country; renowned for its intricate carvings depicting scenes from the life of Buddha on its railings, built primarily during the Satavahana dynasty between the 3rd century BCE and 250 CE, with significant additions and renovations occurring around the 1st century CE notable for its detailed sculptures showcasing both aniconic and iconic representations of the Buddha, making it a prime example of ancient Indian art and architecture.



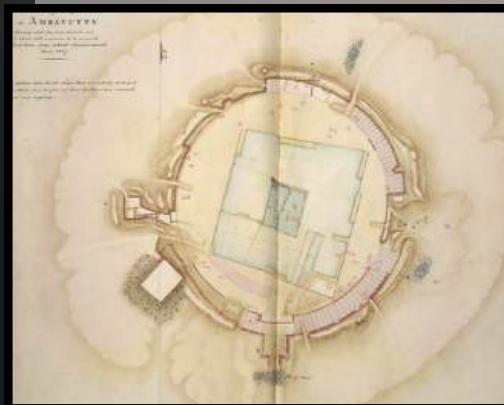
The Role of the Railings:

The intricately carved stone surrounding the stupa served as a key element for devotees to walk around the stupa while viewing the life of Buddha depicted on the carvings.

Archaeological Significance:

The Amaravati site is protected by the Archaeological Survey of India and is a significant location for studying ancient Buddhist art and architecture.

The most prominent feature of the Amaravati Stupa is its intricate carvings, which depict various episodes from the Buddha's life, including his birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana, often with detailed depictions of human figures and everyday life scenes.



RISHI VRINGI

According to shiva purana, Bhiringi was an ancient sage (rishi), and a great devotee of Shiva,

The story goes that Bhiringi one day, came to Mount Kailas, the abode of Shiva, and expressed his desire to go around Shiva. As he was going around, Shiva's consort, Shakti, said, "You cannot just go around him. You have to go around me too. We are two halves of the same truth. Bhiringi, however, was so focussed on Shiva that he had no desire to go around Shakti.

Seeing this, Shakti sat on Shiva's lap making it difficult for Bhiringi to go around Shiva alone. Bhiringi, determined to go around Shiva took the form of a snake and tried to slip in between the two.



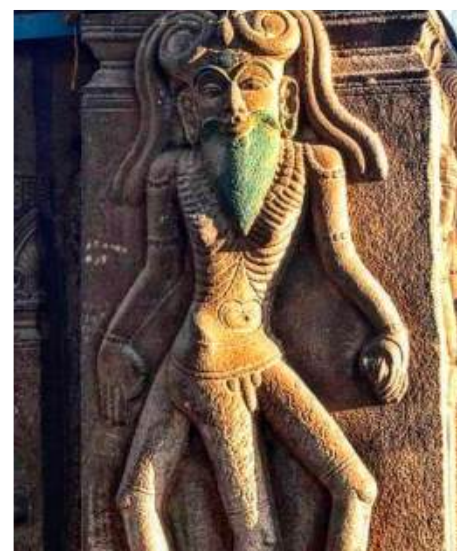
Amused by this, Shiva made Shakti one half of his body the famous Ardhanareeshwar form of Shiva. This was God whose one half is the Goddess. But Bhiringi was adamant. He would go around Shiva alone. So he took the form of a bee, and tried to gnaw his way between the two. This annoyed the Goddess so much that she said, "May Bhiringi lose all parts of the body that come from the mother."

(In Tantra, the Indian school of alchemy, it is believed that the tough and rigid parts of the body such as nerves and bones come from the father (purusha) while the soft and fluid parts of the body such as flesh and blood come from the mother (prakriti). Instantly,)



Bhiringi lost all flesh and blood and he became a bag of bones. He collapsed on the floor, unable to get up.

Bhiringi realized his folly. Shiva and Shakti make up the whole. They are not independent entities (purusha and prakriti) One cannot exist without the other. Without either there is neither. He apologized. So the world never forgets this lesson. Bhiringi was denied flesh and blood forever. To enable him to stand upright he was given a third leg, so that his legs served as a tripod.



ASTADIKPALA



The Significance of Astadikpalakas:-

In Hinduism, the Astadikpalakas play a vital role in maintaining order and balance in the universe. Each deity is associated with a specific direction, element, and attributes, reflected in their mounts, weapons, and characteristics.

• Directional Significance:

- The eight directions are sacred in Hinduism, each associated with a specific deity:
- **East:** Lord Indra, symbolizing new beginnings and growth.
- **West:** Lord Varuna, representing decline and transformation.
- **North:** Lord Kubera, associated with wealth and prosperity.
- **South:** Lord Yama, symbolizing spiritual growth and transformation.
- **North-East:** Lord Isana, representing spiritual growth and self-realization.
- **South-East:** Lord Agni, associated with purification and transformation.
- **North-West:** Lord Vayu, representing intellectual pursuits and communication.
- **South-West:** Nirrti, symbolizing decline and transformation.

Vastu Shastra and the Astadikpalakas:

The Astadikpalakas are closely linked with Vastu Shastra, the Hindu science of construction and design. Vastu Shastra aims to create harmony between the built environment and the natural world. By aligning buildings with the directions and elements associated with the Astadikpalakas, individuals can attract positive energies and improve their quality of life.

PRAJAPATI DAKSH



दक्ष प्रजापति हिंदू परंपराओं में एक महत्वपूर्ण व्यक्तित्व हैं, जो स्वायंभुव युग के दौरान मानव जाति के प्रजनक और सृष्टिकर्ता के रूप में जाने जाते हैं। कहा जाता है कि उनका जन्म ब्रह्मा के दाएँ अंगूठे से हुआ था और वे ब्रह्मा के "मानसपुत्रों" (मन से उत्पन्न पुत्रों) की श्रेणी में आते हैं। उन्हें सती के पिता के रूप में भी जाना जाता है।



Veerabhadra Alongside The Goat headed prajapati Daksha

सती का विवाह शिव से हुआ, जिसका दक्ष ने विरोध किया क्योंकि शिव परंपराओं को तोड़ने वाले, स्थापित व्यवस्था के विनाशक थे, जबकि दक्ष समाज में विद्यमान व्यवस्था को बनाए रखने में विश्वास रखते थे। दक्ष ने अपने भव्य "दक्ष यज्ञ" में शिव को आमंत्रित नहीं किया, जिससे सती के साथ उनका टकराव हुआ। अपने पति का यह अपमान सहन न कर पाने के कारण सती ने स्वयं को अग्नि में समर्पित कर दिया।

इस घटना के परिणामस्वरूप शिव अत्यंत क्रोधित हुए और अपने केशों से वीरभद्र नामक प्रचंड स्वरूप को प्रकट किया, जो उनके क्रोध का प्रतीक था। वीरभद्र ने अंततः दक्ष का सिर काट दिया। बाद में ब्रह्मा, विष्णु, ऋषियों और अन्य देवताओं के अनुरोध पर शिव ने दक्ष को पुनर्जीवित किया, लेकिन इस बार उन्हें बकरे (छाग) का सिर प्रदान किया, जो विनम्रता और संतुलित सोच का प्रतीक माना जाता है।

DURGA ICONOGRAPHY

Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva created Goddess Durga, as an avatar of Ma Shakti using their energies, to save Devalok, where the Gods resided and the Bhūrloka, where the living beings on earth lived from the demon Mahishasura, as neither of the three could vanquish the demon

Goddess Durga, with weapons provided to her by the three Gods took over the task of vanquishing Mahishasura. Goddess Durga is seen standing on Mahishasura in many sculptures but also sitting on lion in some.



SEAL FROM NALANDA, GUPTA PERIOD,
DEPICTING DURGA SIMHAVAHINI, 600-700
CE, NATIONAL MUSEUM (DELHI).



MAHISHASURAMARDINI, ODISHA, 13TH C.
CE, BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

She has 8-10 hands holding different weapons. Lord Vishnu gave her discus, Sudharshan Chakra.

1. The Sun God gave her the Sword.
2. The Himavan gave her the Lion.
3. Shiva gave her a trident.
4. Varuna, the sea God gave her the Conch.
5. Kubera, the god of wealth gave her the mace.
6. Vayu, the god of wind gave her the bow.
7. Agni, the god of fire gave her axe.



GANGA AND YAMUNA



गंगे च यमुने चैव गोदावरी सरस्वती।"



The river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna are most important divinities represented in the temple art of India. Though, the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna are considered as Hindu deity, but in Buddhism and Jainism they are also identified as important deity attached with religious edifices. Mostly, the river goddesses as guardian deity are associated with the temple door.



In Brahmanical art, Gupta period is marked for first depiction of river goddesses on the door-jambs of the temple. In the iconographic representations, Ganga stands upon makara (crocodile), and Yamuna stands upon kurma (tortoise). In temple art of Assam, the river goddesses occupied important place to decorate the temple doorway.

The stone-built door-frame of Daparbatiya temple of Assam contains unique representations of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna. The study focuses upon the development of image forms of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna in Indian art, and the study also focuses upon the features of the representations of river goddesses in temple art of Assam.

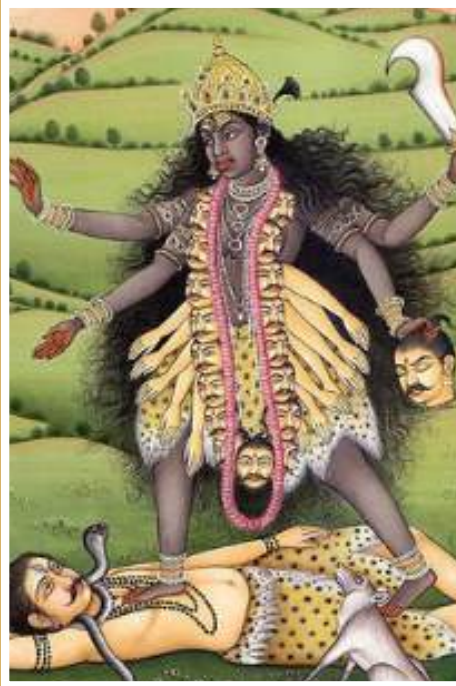


MAHAVIDYAS

The reference to the Maharvidyas can be found in the Devi Purana and Brihad Dharma Purana. The story takes place just before the Daksha Yajna. The story in the Brihad Dharma Purana goes as follows:

Prajapati Daksha had organized a Grand Yajna and had invited all the Devas, Gandharvas, Nagas etc but not Siva, his son-in-law. Hearing about her father's yajna, Sati was adamant on taking Siva alongwith her to the Yajna, as she assumed that her father had forgotten to invite them. Sati requested Siva to let her go to the yajna but Siva refused as he believed going somewhere uninvited invites death and that he was not that willing to lend his or Sati's ears to Daksha's insults. But Sati was adamant and thus kept pleading her husband to change his mind. Prajapati Daksha had organized a

Grand Yajna and had invited all the Devas, Gandharvas, Nagas etc but not Siva, his son-in-law. Hearing about her father's yajna, Sati was adamant on taking Siva alongwith her to the Yajna, as she assumed that her father had forgotten to invite them. Sati requested Siva to let her go to the yajna but Siva refused as he believed going somewhere uninvited invites death and that he was not that willing to lend his or Sati's ears to Daksha's insults. But Sati was adamant and thus kept pleading her husband to change his mind. Eventually Siva lost his cool and in anger told her to do as she wishes, calling her depraved.



On hearing this, Sati stood still and silent, with tears in her eyes. Eventually, Sati's eyes turned bloodshot, with fire emanating from her third eye. Her body started to assume a darker tone and she was eventually fashioning 4 arms. The atmosphere became heavy and mountains began to shudder as if trembling at the sight of Sati's new form - Maa Kali. Siva seeing such a fearful figure, tried to make an escape, but Maa Kali soon summoned other Devis to block his exodus. Whereever Siva looked, in each cardinal direction and upward and downward, his gaze met with that of a Devi. Out of helplessness, Siva asked Maa Kali, who she was and where his Sati was. It was then that Maa Kali enlightened him, it was Dakshayani that was in front of him. She is Prakriti and Siva the Purusha and that it was Siva that accepted her when Brahma and Visnu closed their doors to her because of her distorted figure and since then she has always been at the behest of him.



GANDHARVA

A class of **celestial** beings distinguished by their devotion to music and dance. They are said to be denizens of a world above that of the **Guhyakas** (another class of celestial beings) and below that of the **Vidyadharas** (still another class of celestial beings).



That world is described as sky, air or heavenly waters. **Kasi-khanda** describes the gandharvas as of pure conduct, and as the **musicians** for gods; they are also said to entertain great kings and wealthy folk with their music, for they are inordinately fond of money. **Jatadhara** names the following gandharvas: **Haha, Hūhu, Citra-ratha, Hamsa, Visvavasū, Gomāyu, Tumburu** and **Nandi**. **Agni-purana** enumerates eleven groups (ganas) of gandharvas.

The gandharvas are said to be principally of two classes **mortal gandharvas** (martya-gandharvas) and **celestial gandharvas** (deva-gandharvas). The former are those whose merit has ripened during this very Kalpa (great period of time) and have taken birth as men and women especially proficient in music and dance. The latter are those whose merit acquired during the previous Kalpa ripened even at the commencement of the present **Kalpa** and therefore are no longer mortal.



GAJALAKSHMI



GAJALAKSHMI, setting PADMASANA, showcasing the Abhat Mudra on the left and the VARADA

The reverence for Goddess Lakshmi in India has been as old as the Indian civilization, finding her invocation in the annals of Rig Veda, the oldest amongst the Vedas.

अश्वपूर्वा रथमध्या हस्तिनादप्रबोधिनीम् ।
श्रियं देवीमुपह्वये श्रीमदिवीर्जुषताम् ॥ ३ ॥

"Harih Om. O Jatavedo(reference to Agni Dev), Invoke for me that Lakshmi Who is Abiding in the Chariot of Sri (in the Middle) which is driven by Horses in Front and Whose Appearance is Heralded by the Trumpet of Elephants Invoke the Devi who is the Embodiment of Sri Nearer so that the Devi of Prosperity becomes Pleased with Me"



Gajalakshmi, a revered form of Goddess Lakshmi symbolizing prosperity, abundance, and royal grace.



GAJALAKSHMI accompanied by elephants, sitting on the lotus in the Varaha Cave, Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu

The above shloka is the Sri Suktam from the Rig Veda and contains the earliest known reference to the Gajalakshmi. The Gajalakshmi is one of the eight forms of Maa Lakshmi, commonly identified by a pair of elephants and her iconic Padamasana pose.

SARABHA

"The number of stars in the sky, the countless grains of sand and the raindrops, all can be specified and counted by an intelligent person at some time in the future over the course of many births and many Kalpas, but not of the incarnations of Siva."

Such is the description of the vast range of **avatars** of **Siva** in the Siva Purana and today we let us go unravel one of Siva's most ferocious avatars - **Sarabha**.

All of us must be well aware of the encounter between Visnu Ji's **Narasimha** avatar and **Hiranyakasipu**. For the vast majority of us, the story ends right there, but the Siva Purana has more to tell us about.

When **Hiranyakasipu** was killed by the **Narasimha** avatar of Visnu, the universe attained peace and normalcy but the fiery fury of the man-lion Narasimha did not subside. The devas were not happy with what they were witnessing and thus Brahma and other Devas approached Siva to once again restore the happiness of all worlds.

Siva sent **Veerabhadra** to quell the fury of **Narasimha**, but having failed in convincing him. Siva came down in his **Sarabhesvara** avatar.



SARABHA



He had a thousand hands and wore matted hair. The crescent moon adorned his head. He appeared like a bird with wings and beak. His body was fierce and fully developed. His fangs were very sharp. Adamantine claws were his weapons. His neck was black. He had massive arms and four legs. He was blazing like fire. His voice was terrible and horrifying, raging like the clouds at the end of a Yuga, with eyes blazing furiously

At this very sight, Visnu lost all of his power and was within seconds high in the sky, in the clutches of Sarabha who's claws wedged itself deep into his navel and legs.

Sri Narasimha realising his erroneous action, praised Lord Sarabeswara with beautiful epithets, which later became the Ashtothra (108 Names) of the victorious Lord. With hands joined deep in reverence, Visnu was helpless and thus came to the end of his life.

"Yatha Jaley Jalam, Kshiptham, Ksheeram, Ksheeray Kruthang Kruthey Yekayeva Thatha Vishnu: Shiva Leetho Nachanyatha"

Just as water poured into water, ghee poured into ghee and milk poured into milk becomes one with those things, so also is Visnu merged into Siva and not otherwise

The primary iconography of Sharabha is identified with eight legs, four of them like a lion's, resting on the ground, and four long, clawed legs turned upward; a body that is half-man, half-lion, and two wings, which are associated with Durga and Kali.



THE FOUR GATES OF LORD JAGANNATH TEMPLE

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The outer wall of Lord Jagannath Temple has gates openings for the devotees in the four direction. These four gates are represented by the four animals.

These are the four ways by which one can reach The Lord of Universe. The doors are names after the animals because of their symbolic representation at the door.

• Northern Gate/Hasti Dwara



• Eastern Gate / Singha Dwara

The two lions statues are there in this gate in the crouching position. The lion is a symbolic of representation MOKSHYA. Hence is is popularly said that if you enter in the temple through this gate, you will get mokshya. The deities present in simhadwar are Kasi Biswanath, Goudia Nrusimha and Bhagya Hanumaan

The Hastidwara or the Elephant Gate had on each side a colossal figure of elephant, which is said to have been disfigured during various invasion. Subsequently, these figures were repaired and plastered with mortar and placed at the northern gate of the inner enclosure (Kurma Bedha). The images of Lokanath, Isanesvara, Parsunath, Dhabalesvara, Laxmi-Nrusimha Hanumaan are present here. and Tapasvi

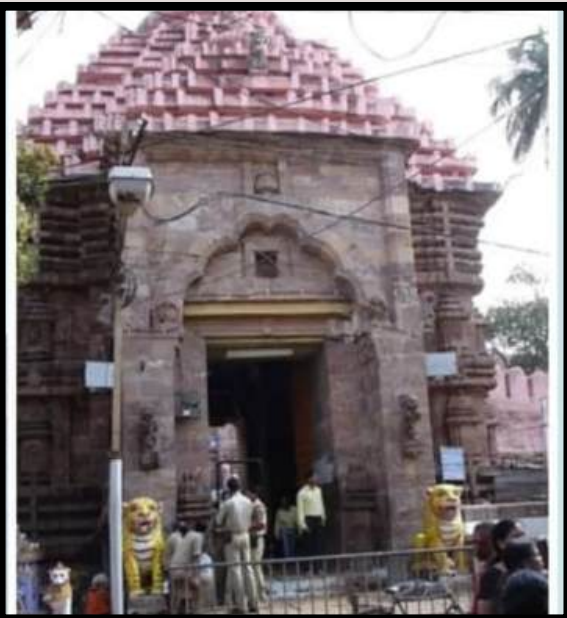


THE FOUR GATES OF LORD JAGANNATH TEMPLE

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- Southern Gate/Aswa Dwara

The horses symbolically represent the KAMA or lust. There are two galloping horses with Jagannath and Balabhadra on their back in the martial glory. The images of Lokanath, Isanesvara, Parsunath, Dhablesvara, Laxmi-Nrusimha and Tapasvi Hanumaan are present here. You have to sacrifice the feeling of lust while entering through this gate.



- Western Gate/ Vyaghra Dwara

Tiger is the symbol of DHARMA. The Dharma is an important philosophy in the Hindu Religion. In each and every moment to have to adhere with your Dharma. The deities present here are Ramesvara, Nisa Nrusimha and Birabikram Hanumaan.



KINHAL DOLLS

31

Nestled in the heart of Karnataka's Koppal district, Kinnhal-also spelled Kinnal-is a heritage craft village where wooden dolls and idols have been lovingly hand-carved since the times of the Vijayanagara Empire (15th-16th centuries).

The ancestors of today's artisans were painters and sculptors of temples and palaces in Hampi and Badami, infusing their divine inspirations into the craft. Today, these Kinnal dolls serve as living relics of India's glorious past, marrying mythology, devotion, and artistic finesse.



Kinnhal dolls preserve Indian craftsmanship, mythology, and regional identity in tangible form. They are living artifacts-hand-made, eco-sensitive, and richly narrative.

Beyond mere collectibles, they are cultural ambassadors: reminding us that artistry, spirituality, and sustainable tradition can co-exist. In a world rushing toward mass production, Kinnhal dolls offer a pause-a return to devotion, story, and soulful creation. Embrace them, and you hold centuries of Indian heritage in your hands.



Kinnal dolls echo India's traditional repertoire-gods and goddesses of Vaishnavism characters and from Shaivism, epic the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Navagrahas (nine celestial bodies), and vibrant creatures. such as Garuda and elephants

Each figure carries layers of devotional symbolism and regional storytelling. These dolls merge art with ritual, embodying both spiritual heritage and festive tradition in one-making them deeply resonant within Indian cultural consciousness.

DAKSHINAMURTHY



Dakshinamurthi is a form revered by students the most and popularly views as a teacher of yoga, jnana, veena and an expounder of sastras.

He's usually represented sitting secluded in the Himalayas on a tiger skin under the Banyan tree The right leg of Dakshināmūrti hangs below the seat while the left one is bent and rests across on the right thigh wholly called as virasana.

The hanging right leg usually rests upon the Apasmarapurusha , a common accompaniment in Saiva iconographies and stands for ignorance or avidya.

The human mind is well known for its curiosity. Doubt creates questions, questions create answers and answers create more doubts, its nature is cyclical

The silence does not point to inability.

Para vaak refers to the highest level of Vaak, a sound directly coming from the pure consciousness, accessible to only a few and which falls deaf on the ears of ones still attached to the material play of things.

Within the void of words of Sri Dakshinamurthy was found the light of the Para - Brahman, by choosing to say nothing, Sri Dakshinamurthy actually speaks a lot and awakens the glory of the Atman within us

मौनव्याख्या प्रकटित परब्रह्मतत्त्वं युवानं वर्षिष्ठांते
वसद् ऋषिगणैः आवृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः। आचार्येन्द्रं
करकलित चिन्मुद्रमानंदमूर्तिं स्वात्मारामं
मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥१॥

KALIA NAAG DAMAN

Kaliya, the son of Kadru was a mighty 101 hood serpent who originally used to reside in the Ramanaka Sea shifted to River Yamuna to take refuge from the threat of Garuda, the predator of all serpents. He couldn't enter Yamuna river as he was cursed that if he even consumed a fish from a river, he would die and this reason gave confidence to Kalia to live in River Yamuna.



The story as mentioned in the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavat Purana states that once while roaming around the bank of river Yamuna, Shri Krishna saw Yamuna in a poisoned state due to the presence of Kalia Naag in it.

Due to its poison, even the surrounding trees got burnt.

Shri Krishna got to know that after being defeated by Garuda, the vaahan of Vishnu, Kalia had come to river Yamuna from the sea to take refuge. Because of his poison, the river got polluted and even the humans as well as the animals couldn't quench their thirst from it.

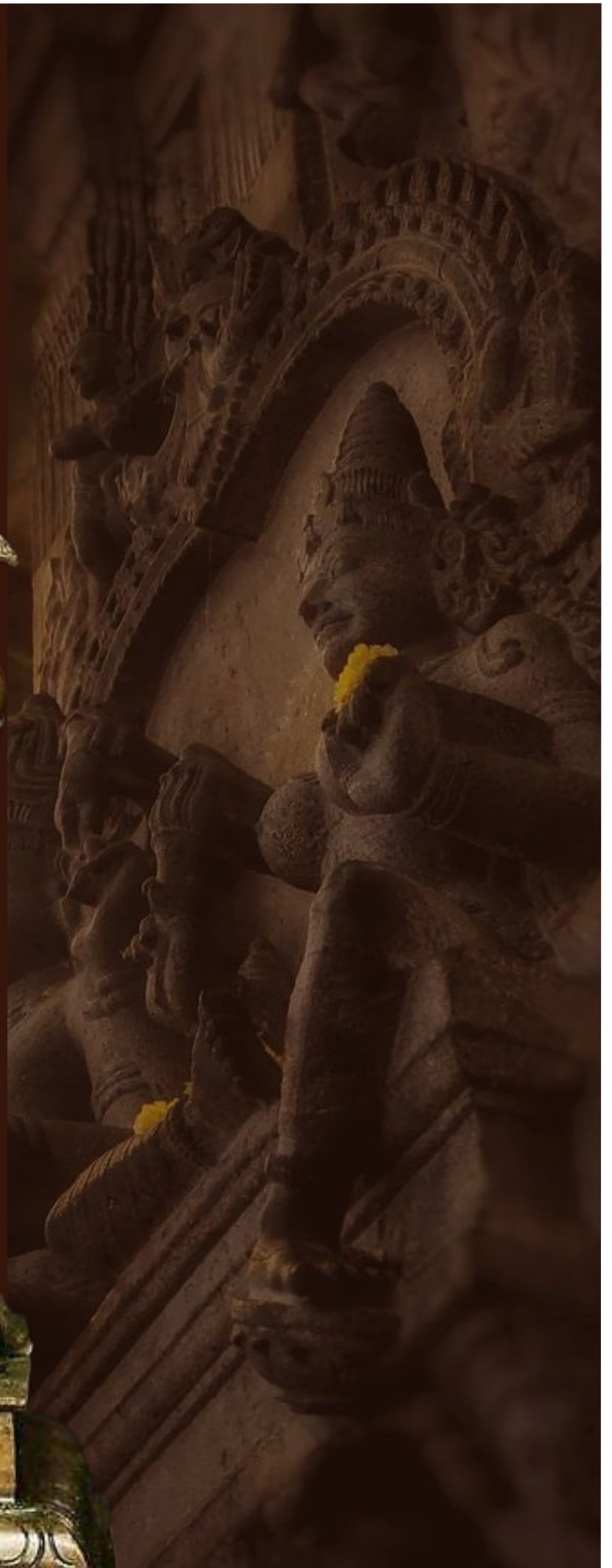
Hence, Shri Krishna thought to defeat (daman) Kalia Naag so that the Brajwasi could live and use river Yamuna's water without any fear.





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