

The Face as a Narrative

Special Project Report

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Guide: Prof. Raja Mohanty

Approval Sheet

The Visual Communication project titled
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Guide: Prof. Raja Mohanty

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=] or :-) or :) or =) or :^)
Smile or Happy

:-(or :(or =(or D:
Frown or Sad

:-/ or :-\ or =/ or =\ Skepticism,
annoyance, uneasiness, or a slight frown;
dissatisfaction, lack of favourable opinion
on the subject, undecided

:-| or :| Indecision, deadpan, a lack of
response, or indifference; shock - also
often used with a contrasting statement
to convey biting sarcasm
(e.g. "That was hilarious. :-|")

;-) or ;) or ;|
Wink

:-D or :D Wide grin, happy smile

An emoticon is a small piece of specialized ASCII art (usually 2-5 characters, always on a single line) used in text messages as informal markup to indicate emotions and attitudes that would be conveyed by body language in face-to-face communications. They represent stylized facial expressions. With the advent of richer media in modern instant messaging and sophisticated web-based BBS systems these are often replaced in the display by a small graphic image (usually based on the generic smiley, although other evocative imagery such as hearts are also used).

Introduction

The Face as a Narrative in the contemporary time. Every object that we see around us or a voice we hear on the telephone/ radio, we as simple people desire to form a face or give it a facial identity. We look for faces in everything, which always consist of two symmetrical horizontally positioned dots for the eyes and a horizontal line just a little below to form the mouth. All other details are negligible, it is not vital that other details like the forehead/ eyebrows/ nose/ the philtrum and chin be present.

The face is an important feature for the identification of others and conveys significant social information. The basic face would be shaped of eyes that can see us and a mouth that may speak to us. As children, we may construct faces out of plug-points, headlights on cars/ scooters, draw smileys on dusty car windows and make faces at the mirror.

The fact is it is human nature to look for an identity primarily as a face in the things that we see. It just gets easier for us if the elements are placed symmetrically. A colon and a bracket :) used worldwide (known as emoticons- icons that emote) as a smiley in short messaging system and chat windows is a simple happy face. And a greater sign followed by a colon and an inverted bracket >: (becomes an angry face. How is it that people ascribe emotions to colons and parenthesis?

Why is there a need to draw a face in messaging systems like the sms and online chat? Is it because we cannot see or hear (unlike a telephone) in these communication systems that there arises a need to identify with the emotions of the person you are 'talking with'? This perhaps brings us to the point that communication is based on tangible emotions of the person one is trying to connect with and vice versa. There is an intense desire to be able to see or imagine (like in this case) who we are talking to and what his emotive condition is so that we can respond accordingly.

The face is only immediate and widely recognizable feature which distinguishes one individual from another. Ironically, because of the importance of its role in social interaction, the newer communication systems like sms and online chat completely eliminate the instance of 'seeing' the person you are communicating with. There are solutions of course to this situation, one of them is where you can post a picture of yourself, or if you do not like your face too much, or simply want to 'lie' about your appearance, wear a mask!

These softwares come with a collection of default faces which one can 'wear' if you either want to conceal your identity or become a totally new person. One can choose from face shapes, eye and hair colours to clothes and accessories. Popularly called as 'avatar' which is a Hindi term for incarnation, this implies that the user could become someone that he always wished to be or develop into a personality that goes well with the person he is 'talking' with.

Home Appearance Apparel Extras Backgrounds


Face & Eyes | Hairstyles

Create a New Look

Click a category name to see all the available items. Try on different things by clicking on them. When you like the look, click "Save Changes." Click on the small color palette next to the picture to change the color of your hair.


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 next »

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Brown Long Straight Hair w/Side-Swept Bangs
Brown Pulled-Back Updo
Brown Swept-Back Updo

[+ Add to Favorites](#) [+ Add to Favorites](#) [+ Add to Favorites](#)



Brown Long Hair & Tie-Dye Scarf
Brown Ponytail & White Sweatband
Brown Geisha Hair

Previewing Changes: Happy

Pan and Zoom

Save Changes Clear

Add To Favorites


What I'm trying on

What I'm wearing


- Face 2 w/Dark Brown
- Eyes
- Brown Short Messy Hair

Previewing Changes

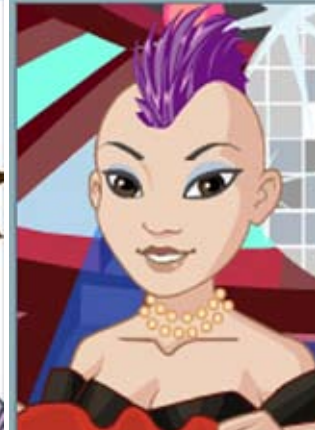
Excited




Previewing Changes



Previewing Changes



Previewing Changes




Home Appearance Apparel

Create a New Look

Try on different things by clicking on look, click "Save Changes."

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 29 30 31 32 33 next »

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Representation of Lakshmi

Divinity and Beauty

The depiction of faces of Hindu Goddesses & Gods
The graphic depiction of Gods in India is one of the finest examples of imagined beauty. One can see illustrated examples of faces almost near to perfection. The Hindu Gods and Goddesses are portrayed with a sense of aesthetic measure. There is a degree of flawlessness associated with the portrayal of divinity. This notion emerged from the Greek identification of perfection and limitation, leading to identifying God as being infinite, perfect and immeasurable in form. It would be interesting to see the two points of views here:

1 (the septic)

God is perfect ;

Being perfect entails being existent ;

Therefore, God exists.

2 (the aseptic)

Whatever is divine is (absolutely) perfect ;

Were nothing divine, divinity would be imperfect;

Therefore, something is divine.

Existence and the Ontological Argument

Murray Kiteley

Philosophy and phenomenological research.

Essence of the Vedas:

Ultimate God was and always will be an inner, formless, individual realisation, in the human search for realisation of the ultimate reality or Truth.

1. Thus, the famous Brahmin painters of Nathdwara led by Narottam and B.G. Sharma, dominate the way the gods are printed in present-day calendar art, with its twin aspects of the darshanik image and katha image, or the image for worship and the narrative or pedagogic image. The proliferating studios also became sites for the mass-produced images of nationalist leaders. Strong frontal images of Rabindranath, Vivekananda or Ramakrishna usually embracing Kali with a garland of red hibiscus flowers, occupied the same space as the religious images of the idealising, pure nation. Calendar and popular art enters a new phase of visibility in academic discourse as well as through the commercial auction. The value of this art form is now underscored by the gradual demise of the calendar art studio and the dominance of the digital print. A progression in the paintings that formed the basis of the calendar print now becomes available for study. As models for prints, Ravi Varma's oil paintings were replaced by the gouache paintings of the Nathdwara artists, "in which a figural excess signifies a religious repleteness."

(Slow dies the calendar art- Gayatri Sinha)



Representation of Shankar- Darshanik Image

The widely popular representation of Hindu Gods and Goddesses that we see as calendar art is an illustrated example in both rural and urban parts of the country. Though the depictions may vary from one place to another, we also find painted rocks worshipped as Gods, there are sculpted examples of faces of Gods and Goddesses which are considered to be divine and sacred. The south Indian temple sculptures of deities are the best examples of imagined characteristics of Gods and Goddesses. These are made with symmetric and mathematical measures. In the Kaimur district of central India, archeologist describe concentric triangles in sandstone and laminae are set up as shrines for the worship of the female principle Shakti which was built by the group of Upper Paleolithic hunters and gatherers.

Darshanik image & Katha image

The present-day calendar art has with its twin aspects of the - darshanik image and katha image. The darshanik image is the image that is worshipped and some people revere these images. The katha image portrays a story or a legend about the character and usually there are various other characters and possessions woven into the image to complete the narrative. ¹



Representation of Shankar- Darshanic Image

Why do we tell stories?

Human beings need to feel connected with each other, often this connection comes from what we talk and remember about things around us. These 'stories' may be true or made-up, it is human nature to listen to what other people have to say and always have an opinion about the things we hear. We may or may not believe in them, but we tend to create an impression, sugar-coat and exaggerate facts and reality. People feel the need to forget certain experiences, express what they feel inside and communicate with one another; hence, not every newspaper article may be entirely true. While part of it may have facts, the piece in its entirety may be fictitious only to get the readers engaged. Often, we find the need to lie and exaggerate to amuse and entertain. Humans have a tendency to tell lies or fib; perhaps liars make the best storytellers.

Storytelling is an inherent part of human existence, we tell stories of inspiration and encouragement, horror and fear, tales of love and emotions, stories help us as individuals to keep our personal thoughts together.

This brings us back to the katha image of Gods/ Goddesses we see as part of the Hindu mythology, where each image has an engaging narrative. Lord Shiva if depicted in a meditating pose, will also have Ganga, the river Goddess caught in his matted locks, which tells the viewer of the exact details of the circumstances, (after the death of sati, he went to the Himalayas to meditate, this was before the time of his second marriage).

The same image of Shiva when holding a bowl in his palms reminds us of the story about him drinking the poison hala hala which came out from the churning of the ocean by the devas and the asuras. Thus the name neelkanth because he had the poison lodged in his throat, this was when Parvati (his consort) stopped him from swallowing it.

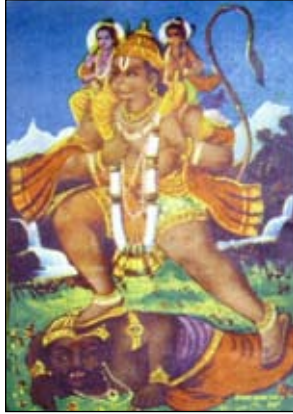
A clinical research psychologist discovered that stories are in fact the way our brain works to store memories. According to Dr. Jacobs, we do not remember individual facts, but instead, we keep in mind facts as bits of a larger story that we make up as we go along. This is one reason for the well-known variation between eyewitness accounts- each person may see the same individual facts, but each person recalls those facts in the context of a story that belongs uniquely to her or him. There is a small region in the brain called the hippocampus whose job it is, according to Dr. Jacobs, to take our individual memories and weave them together into a coherent pattern.

Katha Image



Hanuman setting Lanka on fire

Katha Image



Hanuman defeating Mahishasur and bringing Ram and Laksman home to safety

20th Century representation of Hanuman-

Darshanic image vs Katha Image

Hanuman, the Monkey God has several visual representations in the contemporary time, most popularly seen as the muscular, powerful with human like physical manifestation. The son of 'vaayu', fraternal relationship with Bhim of the Pandavas, is shown holding a club for valour and a mountain in the other hand which elucidates the tale of how he went to search for a particular life-saving herb for Laxman, and when he could not find it, brought back the entire mountain. This popular tale of courage, victory and strength is known by most people in India has been vibrantly depicted by Amar Chitra Katha. Illustrated as half human- half monkey, this heavily muscled hero had initially made a mark as a humble, noble servant of Lord Rama. It was much later that he has been depicted as a sole God, with strength and valour as traits. This towering figure displays a fully human body which is furless and heavily muscular which according to the author of the paper, Philip Lutgendorf (Hanuman, poster art and post colonial anxiety) is a shift from the initial iconographic style of representation, where he is represented with simian characteristics. The shilpa shastras that establish conventions for the representation of the major Gods like Vishnu, Shiva and Krishna, do not make elaborate directions for the representation of Hanuman. It is only in the 20th century that makes a shift in the depiction of Hanuman and shows him as a lone super God who possessed the power of speech, shape-shifting, leaping great distances and extraordinary strength.

The 'Sundarkand' a katha depicts hanuman as the monkey who assumes 'a body of immeasurable' size, with eyes that blazed like the moon and the sun' in order to leap across the ocean. The Ramayan juxtaposes the feral and superhuman traits of hanuman, which possibly helped artists in the depiction of this character.

Difference between the two depictions: Dasya Bhaav vs Panchmukhi

In the Ramayan, he is seen as being a humble servant of Lord Rama and never singled out as a God to be independently worshipped. His tail is limp and docile and is shown hands folded with the head facing downwards with his eyes closed. After the 8-9th century freestanding images of Hanuman are seen. The modern images depict hanuman as a muscular superhuman in a fiercely energetic pose with one arm raised and the other holding a mace. His luxuriant tail here is emerges to rise up and curl over his head. One foot is raised with one leg bent at the knee and rest of a demon. This depiction narrates the role of Hanuman as the demon dispeller or the role of protector. The club simply is an association with the warrior class/ martial culture of the pahalvans who venerate Hanuman while working out with clubs. Another depiction is made of Hanuman, where he is centre stage with Ram and Laxman on the ether shoulders like dwarfs where his body becomes large and he leaps swiftly. The Panch mukhi hanuman is a rare icon in which all other heads

Darshanic Image



The image of Hanuman in meditation- most common darshanic image

Darshanic Image



Hanuman tearing his heart to show reveal the image of Ram and Sita

Katha Image



Hanuman overpowering Ravana

Katha Image



Hanuman carrying the Mountain on which Sanjeevani grew

Katha Image



Hanuman fighting with the Demoness-

Katha and Darshanic Image



The docile, humble image of Hanuman

belong to the other super-Gods. The less common ones of Hanuman show him in a meditative pose or the one where he is seen with a drooping tail.

Sharp teeth and gleaming yellow eyes

In Maharashtra, the Paithans developed a stocky but richly decorated reddish body and black snout, with sharp nails and teeth. In Orrisa he is seen with more body hair. The obligatory tail and the non-human face make an appearance throughout all the texts, as opposed to the androgynous appearances of deities with softly rounded cheeks, dimpled lissom limbs, large eyes, full red lips-doll like appearances. The post-modern depiction shown is with vague anthropomorphic and natural human like qualities. The mountain-bearing pose is the icon most common representation seen. The monkey God with fair, hairless body is unmistakably human. Towards the end of the 20th century Hanuman was seen with wash-board abs and prominent pectorals.

This super-muscled being represented strength and valour, though criticised and condemned by most traditionalists because 'muscles' imply brute force. And Gods could not be represented as having beast like characteristics.



Kanyakumari- of the south India



Annapurna- Goddess of Food



Lakhmi- Goddess of Wealth



Meenakshi- of the Madurai

Devi and Beauty

Why is the notion of beauty associated with divinity?

In India, the vision of the sacred or the divine as a woman has always existed. 'Women are divinity, women are vital breath,' asserts the Sarvollasa Tantra. 'Women are the Goddess, women are life... *It is said that her equal participation or superiority is essential in tantrism. The woman represents the primordial female in the purest form, a personification of totality whose essence makes her archetypal, as in Jung's anima.*

It seems the two aspects of beauty represent two sides of God, order, the form of God, light, God's formless unknowable aspect, "hidden even amid the revelation", as Pseudo-Dionysius puts it.

To the Gothic mind beauty was the radiance of truth, a manifestation of Divinity. Beauty was a quality of things that reflects their origin and greater or lesser participation in God, as Hugh of St Victor stated; "visible beauty is an image of invisible beauty."

Beauty being inseparable from God, was a way of participating in divinity.

Idealized beauty for man is perhaps a notion associated with divinity. Thus contemplate the divine form was to participate not only in its aesthetic beauty, but it was a way to commune with God. The attempt make God look beautiful was to describe the quality of God itself. There is a sense of harmony between proportion and symmetry associated with the form of beauty. As was stated in the Wisdom of Solomon, God had created all form based upon a proper harmony of proportion.



N T Rama Rao as Krishna



M G R of Tamil Nadu

The Changing face of Reverence

There are Chalcolithic finds at Bilwali in Central India of Mother Goddess of an archaic type with exaggerated buttocks, heads, noses, arms and breasts. Mother Goddesses of virgin figurines are seen with discoloration and wearing that through the centuries people have touched their genital areas which were regarded as the source of all life and focus of the cosmic energy. These parts were objects of reverent touch.

In the contemporary time, where wealth and authority is considered to be of utmost importance, objects of reverence have changed to more materialistic things like the autorickshaw meter where one finds Ganesha painted by the autorickshaw driver on the metal body. Ganesha symbolises good fortune at the beginning of an event, so the meter is worshipped to bring good fortune for the day's earnings. At milk shops in Mumbai, the milk canister is marked with the holy symbol of the swastika. These have now become objects of reverence for people today.

Politicians/ Actors

In south India, Dr. M.G. R. of Tamil Nadu and N.T. Rama Rao of Andhra Pradesh both actors turned politicians are revered and worshipped by some people. They are the popular faces of esteem, recognition, fame and money. M.G.R. portrayal of Vishnu, especially Rama and Krishna made people believe that he was the avatar of Vishnu in real life, and was considered as a symbol of the ideal man.

N.T. Rama Rao was considered to be 'God' in the non-Telugu speaking states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Personification of objects
Such as Auto rickshaws / trucks/ meters, common objects of worship during the Vishwakarma puja





Personification of Vishnu seated on the Shesh Nag
Rameshwaram 2006



Stone temple image of Kali

Hypothesis: If the representation of the divine is sought to have a face?

If something is worshipped, does it need to be complete in terms of a facial identity and structure?

Although objects of reverence may have lost the 'holiness' or 'sacredness', they may still be revered and worshipped. Essentially, people look for a facial identity in something that they worship; these objects need to have the basic elements, such as the symmetrical dots for eyes and a horizontal line for a mouth. Sometimes though, a mouth may not be necessary at all. For eg. The stone temple image of Kali worshipped at Kalighat in South Calcutta.



Hindu Goddesses

In India it is said that there is a goddess in every village, every tree, a nymph in every lake. Demonesses stand guard on village frontiers. Untamed forests echo with the laughter of celestial virgins. It is a land of mysterious Apsaras and seductive Yakshinis, of terrifying Dakinis and wise Yoginis- each with a story to tell.

The female half of existence is at first identified with Nature, she comes to be seen as the primal mother, source of being and nurture. The all-giving mother then transforms into the dancing nymph, a seductress offering worldly pleasures that bind man in the cycle of life. As this nymph is disciplined, the dominant image of woman becomes the virtuous wife with extraordinary powers. Finally, the submissive consort shows herself as the wild and terrifying goddess who fights battle, drinks blood, and demands pacification.

- Devdutt Patnaik, author of The Five Faces of the Eternal Feminine

The image of the Mother Goddess can be both worshipped and feared when she carries the face of mortal woman.

The Goddesses are seen in different points of time as:

Vedic- Aditi, Diti, Prithvi, Saranyu, Ushas, Nisha, Rati, Manasa

Rarely worshipped, natural mother Goddesses

River Goddesses: Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati

Brahamanical Goddesses: Saraswati, Lakshmi,

Devi, Sati, Uma, Parvati, Durga, Kali, Shitala,

Shasti.

Indus Valley Civilisation was highly developed over 4000 years when the Pre- Aryans lived and worshipped the female power, associating with mother earth, agrarian communities placed emphasis on the fertility of the earth and the earth and fire was worshipped for fertility.

It was in the post- Vedic period that females were given high reverence. The Indus Valley Civilisation, Mesopotamia and Egypt gave equal importance to both the paternal and maternal ties. The Brahmanas and Upanishads pushed the female aspect of the divine in the background; it was Hinduism that brought the Goddess into the foreground.



Vishnu in the Varaha Avatar



Vishnu in the Matsya Avatar

Anthropomorphic qualities

Originally the Vedic Deities were conceived as anthropomorphic deities and worshipped as superman/ woman. Non human abstract concepts such as earth, fire, dawn, light, sky. Sun, powers of creativity, fertility, continuity or preservation, dissolution and destruction were given a facial identity. Sometimes gods are represented with a figure that looks like a person, although it may have additional superhuman characteristics. The ten avatars of the Hindu supreme god Vishnu possess both human and divine forms and qualities, although their degrees of divinity vary. He is seen as taking the form of a fish in Matsya avatar, a boar in Varaha avatar and a lion in Narsimha avatar.

Anthropomorphism is the attribution of uniquely human characteristics and qualities to nonhuman beings, inanimate objects, or natural or supernatural phenomena. Animals, forces of nature, and unseen or unknown sources of chance are frequent subjects of anthropomorphosis. The term is derived from two Greek words (anthropos), meaning human, and (morph), meaning shape or form. It is a common and seemingly natural tendency for humans to perceive inanimate objects as having human characteristics, although few believe this to be of significance.

Common examples of this tendency include naming cars or even begging machines to work. In 1953, the U.S. government began assigning hurricanes names; initially the names were feminine, and shortly thereafter masculine names were introduced.

(Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism>)

Theomorphism & Anthropomorphism:

From the perspective of religions in which the deities have human characteristics, it may be more accurate to describe it as theomorphism, or the giving of divine qualities to humans, rather than anthropomorphism, the giving of human qualities to the divine.

According to beliefs, the deities usually existed before humans; therefore humans were created in the form of the divine. However, for those who do not believe in the doctrine of the religion, the phenomenon can be considered anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism in the form of personification consists of creating imaginary persons who are the embodiment of an abstract concept such as lust, war, or death.

(Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism>)

Folk Stories & Myths

The Indian books Panchatantra and The Jataka tales employ anthropomorphized animals to illustrate various principles of life. Anthropomorphized animals are frequently used to portray stereotypical characters, in order for the author or artist to quickly convey character traits; notable examples include George Orwell's Animal Farm and Rudyard Kipling's Just so stories where human characteristics commonly ascribed to animals in popular culture often highlight their perceived personality (owls are typically portrayed as wise), their appearance (penguins are usually portrayed as plump aristocrats, as their plumage resembles a tuxedo); or a combination of both (raccoons are commonly portrayed as bandits, because the band of dark colored fur around their eyes resembles a mask, and because they roam at night).

For this project, I decided to read up a few stories about the lesser known Goddesses and think of what they would possibly look like and what I would imagine them to look like. Thought I have tried hard not to let my previous knowledge influence my imagination, there might be influences of what I have already seen in my work. It is difficult to perceive a new face when one has already seen depictions, which is why I chose to represent Goddesses that people may not be familiar with. The signs and symbology used are obvious from the meanings of icons that I have read about, for instance, the lotus and fish symbolise fertility.



Aditi

Aditi is the mother the Devas and appears as the mother of Vishnu in the Dasha avatar as mother Devki (Krishna's mother and in Vamana Avatar as sage Kashyap's wife). Perhaps the most outstanding attribute of Aditi is her motherhood. She is preeminently the mother of the Adityas, a group of 7 or 8 gods which include Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha and Amsa. Aditi is also said to be the mother of the great god Indra, the mother of kings and the mother of gods. Unlike Prithvi, however, whose motherhood is also central to her nature, Aditi does not have a male consort in the Rig Veda.

As a mothering presence, Aditi is often asked to guard the one who petitions her or to provide him or her with wealth, safety, and abundance. Appropriate to her role as a mother, Aditi is sometimes associated with or identified as a cow. As a cow, she provides nourishment, and as the cosmic cow, her milk is identified with the redemptive, invigorating drink soma. As A-diti, she is un-bound, free one, and it is evident in the hymns to her that she is often called to free the petitioner from different hindrances, especially sin and sickness. She is called the supporter of creatures.

Rigved 1.11.60
Oh revered mother of Gods, Aditi
Oh beautiful haired, forehead and figured Ainivali
Establish the cooking utensil with your hands.
With her powers may she hold that unity.
Sacred utensil with her hands wielding Agni
In her midst, just like a mother holds her child in lap.
Oh revered mother, you are the foremost of the Yageya Havan'

Diti



In Hinduism, Diti is an earth goddess and mother of the Maruts with Rudra. She wanted to have a son who would be more powerful than Indra (who had killed her previous children) and so she practiced magic and kept herself pregnant for one hundred years. Indra used a thunderbolt to splinter the fetus into many pieces, the Maruts. She is also Aditi's sister. She is one of the thirteen wives of Kashyapa, another prajapati and a great sage. She has many demon sons and daughters. Her two most famous sons were the rebirths of Vishnu's gatekeepers Jaya and Vijaya who failed to keep their dharma. They were Hiryanakha who was slain by Vishnu's varaha avatara and Hiryankashyapa who was slain by Vishnu's man-lion, narasihma avatara. She also had a daughter named holika who was killed by her own powers. Diti is usually mean and cruel to Kashyapa and Aditi. She is always obsessed with trying to raise the power of demons to its peak. She also hates Aditi's sons who are the gods.

Birth of Diti's children

Diti too was eager to have a son. So, she had asked Kashyapa for company. Though Kashyapa had acceded to her request, He had asked her to wait for an hour as it was then the time when Shiva and his retinue of ghosts and spirits moved about; which was considered inauspicious and unsuited. However; Diti; shaken by the passion of love and lust, couldn't wait and she seized Kashyapa by his garments, which was a sign of immodesty. Since Diti's mind was impure; tainted by lust, she

would give birth to two unworthy sons who would violate all the ethics (Dharma) and follow the path of Adharma. When Diti felt sorry, Kashyapa consoled her by saying that they would be slain by Lord Vishnu himself and thus be blessed by the Lord's contact in the end. Also; one of her four grandsons' by her first son, would be a great devotee of Vishnu and also the noblest man (He is Prahlada.). In this way, Jaya and Vijaya were born in this earth to Diti as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha.



Tara

Tara - Pre-Vedic Goddess is known from India to Ireland. Indo-European primal Goddess Earth. Taramata (Mother Tara) nicknamed The Rioting because of its wild orgiastic customs. In India, Tara is called The Most Revered of the old pre-vedic Goddesses. Wine is sacred to Her. Goddess of Compassion, Diamonds are Her sacred stone. Tibetan Buddhist Great Mother. She is a Bodhisattva, an enlightened One who has vowed to incarnate until all beings have attained enlightenment. She also vowed to incarnate only as a female. She governs the Underworld, the Earth and the Heavens, birth, death and regeneration, love and war, the seasons, all that lives and grows, the Moon cycles.

Green Tara is Her Nature-related aspect. Typically She is seen as a slender and beautiful woman of white complexion, long golden hair and blue eyes. She can also appear as red, black or dark blue. Her animals are the sow, mare, owl and raven.

Bluish like the blue lotus, 3 eyed, holding a scissor, skull, lotus, dagger. Tara is the power of the golden embryo, (Hiranyagarbh), a situation where the light of the stars in a dark night, universe and methods evolve its power. Tara stands for void, boundless space.

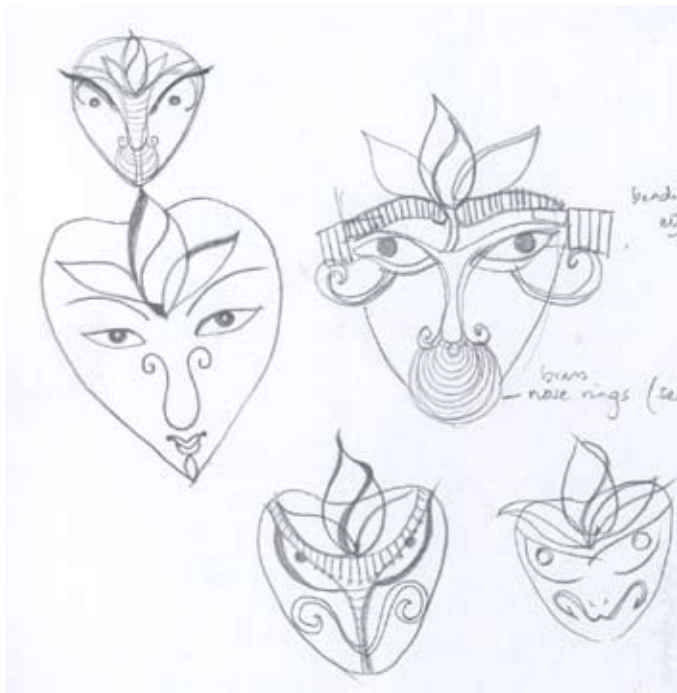
'The Lady Twilight was seen, devoted to the stars and clad in the red sky'. In the Tibetan descriptions of Tara she is benign, gentle and compassionate deity who cheats death. In one account, all the creatures lament the thought of Avalokiteshvara abandoning them as

he is about to achieve nirvana, on hearing them Avalokiteshvara sheds a tear of compassion for all beings. That tear becomes Tara who is thus understood to be the essence of the essence of compassion.

Though Tara is known to be the cheater of death, the prolonger of life, and is popularly known as a charming playful young girl, she has a variety of forms, some of which may be fierce and terrifying.

Ugratara

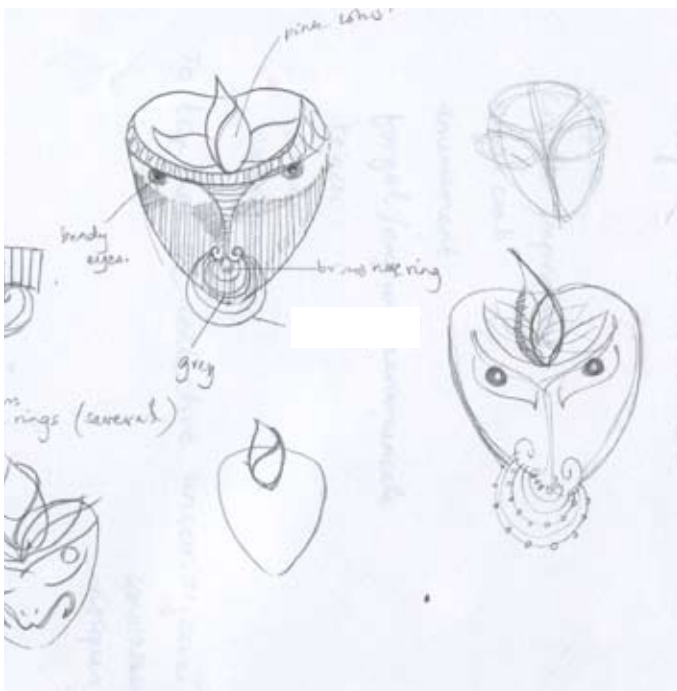
The fierce form of Tara She is aweinspiring with a garland of heads hanging from the neck. She is short and has a protruding belly, and her looks are terrible. Her complexion is like that of the blue lotus, and is three-eyed, one faces, celestial and laughs horribly. She is in an intensely pleasant mood, stands on a corpse, is decked in ornaments of snakes, has red and round eyes, wears the garments of tiger skin round her loins, is in youthful bloom, is endowed with the five auspicious symbols and has a protruding tongue. She is most terrible, appears fierce with bare canine fangs, carries the sword and the Kartri in the two right hands and Utpala and Kapala in the left. Her Jatamukuta of one coil is brown and fiery and beards the image of Aksobhya within it.



Serpent Goddess Manasa

Roughly speaking, in North India the image of a serpent considered male in character and known as Nagaraja or the king of the snakes is held in worship, and in the south it is the living snakes to whom worship is often offered. Instead of the “king of the serpents” and the living snakes, an anthropomorphic serpent goddess known as Manasa is worshipped in Bengal. In Hinduism, Manasa is a naga and goddess of fertility. She is popularly known as the goddess of wish fulfilment and one who protects against snakebite. She is also associated with the earth and higher knowledge. Though she is venerated mostly in eastern India, some of her well known temples can also be found in other regions, such as Hardwar and Chandigarh.

Manasa is said to be the daughter of Kasyapa, a famous sage, and Kadru, the sister of the serpent-king Sesha. Unlike her uncle, Manasa is still actively worshipped as a goddess who protects and saves humans from snake-bites. Her cult is most prevalent in Bengal where she is ceremoniously worshipped in temples. She is also attributed with the powers of curing infectious diseases like small-pox and of bringing wealth and prosperity. At the onset of the rainy season, when the snakes are most active, she is ritually invoked with sacrifices and offerings. She is probably a pre-Aryan goddess but this tale is of more recent vintage and comes from Bengal where she is most revered and tells how she gained recognition for herself as a potent member of the Hindu pantheon.



There is also another legend behind Manasa, who is considered to be daughter (out of wedlock) of Lord Shiva. Manasa requested Shiva to include her in the pantheon, so that she is worshipped by humans. Shiva responded to it by saying, if the merchant (king?) Chand (of Anga kingdom) agrees to worship you, you will be included amongst the goddesses. When Manasa approached Chand, he refused to worship her. This infuriated Manasa, and she killed all his sons. After this event, Chand's wife gave birth to their seventh son Lakhinder. Manasa's wrath had not been pacified even by the time when Lakhinder's marriage to Bihula was fixed. She vowed to kill him on the Suhaag Raat .

To counter the threat, Chand planned to construct an iron room for Lakhinder's Suhaag Raat. However, Manasa threatened the blacksmith as well, and asked him to keep a small pinhole in the room. As nobody noticed this hole, In the night, Manasa sent a very thin snake to enter the room through the pinhole. Once inside the room, this snake turned into a Cobra and bit Lakhinder, killing him instantaneously. Bihula overcame grief and built a boat to go to Heaven to present this injustice to gods. Lakhinder was then revived by the gods. During the return from Heaven, Bihula managed to persuade Chand to worship Manasa. Chanda grudgingly agreed to worship her with his left hand. To this day, Manasa is the only Hindu goddess worshipped by the left hand. In the Anga region, she is also known as Bishahari and worshipped to prevent snake-bite related deaths.



The Lotus

The lotus represents the perfection of beauty and symmetry. A common symbol in Asian art, the lotus symbolises birth and rebirth through the fact that the petals open when the sun comes out and close when the sun sets. Also a symbol for fertility, creation, and purity. The long stem symbolises our connection to our origins, while the flower represents the enlightenment to which we aspire.

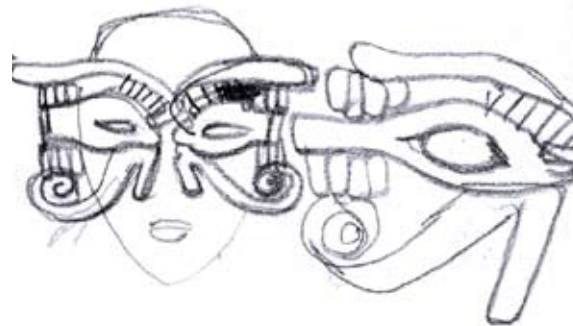
Vandevi- patron of nature

People in villages believe that in every forest there is a goddess who lives in a tree. The people in the village select a tree which they believe is the home of Vandevi, and tie a rope around it. The goddess is said to be showing her back and wearing a scarf to cover her hair. Therefore, every woman in the village must cover hers with either a sari or sarong. It is believed that if a woman does not comply, Vandevi not be pleased.

Bhagwan Ram gives way to the demands of his people, and expels Sita, who then goes to reside with Lord Valmiki, calls herself Vandevi, and gives birth to twins - Luv and Kush. In the meantime, Valmiki has finished writing the Holy Book Ramayan, and ensures that the twins read and understand this, which they do. Then when Bhagwan Ram announces a Aswamedha Yagna (to expand Ayodhya's boundaries by letting a horse run through different kingdoms, and whosoever stops the horse, challenges Bhagwan Ram and his armies). When Vandevi hears of this, she is shocked as this Yagna can only be performed by a ruler with his wife at his side, is it that Bhagwan Ram is getting married again? Before she could find any answers to this question, she is told that her sons have stopped the horse from Ayodhya - and are ready to do battle with the powerful armies of Ayodhya.

Goddess for the Contemporary time

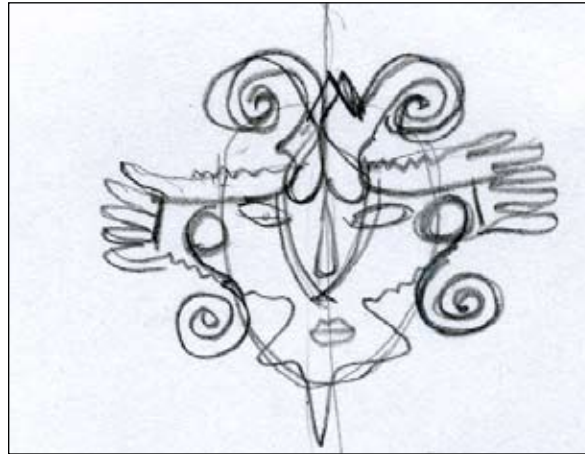
Looking at how we have a very progressive way of viewing life around us, how can we make this world a better place to live in free from ill-actions? Have we kept room for spiritual thoughts in our life? The contemporary world is need of a faith or a religious figure that will teach people to create fewer problems for themselves and others, and to live in peace and harmony. Religions have always shown man in a lesser light, reduced him to a mere follower. The 'sense of responsibility' is often shrugged off on 'God' this happens when man is considered to be a small being. What if there existed a religion that would bring the person who prays in the forefront as God himself? It is said that there is a bit of God in every one of us, then that would really mean that we ought to do things right without causing harm to the environment and other beings. A religion that proposes that man is responsible for his own actions and this would perhaps cause a person to reflect upon his inner-self and consequently his thoughts and actions. What face should we give to the God who lies amongst us? Thus one might argue that the very notion of God (or gods, or the divine) cannot be reduced to human concepts of mind or body; God is a sui generis entity. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, we see a face that is genetically composed. Then how can we represent the truth that lies within us? Perhaps the answer to this lies in the emotional state of our being, happiness for instance (though subjective) will always make us do good things, and bring harmony around us, and where we live. Is there a religion that will make us look inside of us?



Goddess of Happiness

The Goddess of happiness brings deep joy to the person's inner self. When one thinks of this Goddess he is reminded of all the good that has happened to him and lets him loose on a journey of bliss and ecstasy. The happiness within grows and positive energies start flowing into the body. The heart is then filled with delight and glee, that one would feel intensely happy with oneself and share it with others around him. There is a condition here, when one looks at this Goddess he is supposed to think of ten things that make him happy, and at least five happiest moments of his life. He is then supposed to meditate and think of at least five people that bring him happiness, or is happy to be with or simply the people who he sees that bring a smile on his face.

This initial thinking will get him going on counting his blessings, and every time he sees the mask, he will be reminded of the happy times of his life.



Goddess of Self

Concept revolves around being able to see oneself in the eyes of the Goddess. Goddess is a term that refers to a being admired for her great beauty and mystical powers. But beauty is only skin deep. It is finding the true self where one starts to look for the inner beauty. The self buried beneath many layers of pretense and guise is the true nature, not the image that one portrays to society and peers in order to appear “proper”.

We create an image of ourselves out of dread for not being accepted for who we really are. Self-acceptance gives one the liberty and the courage to enjoy ourselves and others without judgment and without judgment, one is able to be happy.

“There is only one journey. Going inside yourself.” -Rainer Maria Rilke

Papier-mâché Masks



1. Tear newspaper into thin strips length-wise
soak in water in a bucket for 3- 4 days
2. Insert cinnamon sticks
3. Methi powder may be added 4-6 tbsp



4. Use a colander to remove excess water,
5. put in a blender with fevicol and make a lumpy
paste, you should be able to knead it like dough.



6. Heat Industrial clay in the oven to 62 degrees
7. Use immediately before it cools
to moulds



8. Apply vaseline on the clay-mould

9. Make base with newspaper strips soaked in fevicol- water solution and place over clay-mould

10. Place a string under the to pull out mask



11. Let it dry overnight



12. Style hair with thin strands

14. Detailing can be done even after the mask is dry

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Photographs taken at Ramnathpuram village, Rameshwaram dec. 2006

