



# Hinduism and the Arts

By

Anuradha Sharma

For

<http://faithandthearts.com>

April 2007

## Index

Introduction	3
Origin of Hinduism	3
Essence of Hinduism	3
Ethics and Morals	4
Sanskaras	5
Hindu Scriptures	5
Worship in Hindu Dharma/ Worship of Deities	6
Hinduism in Visual Arts	7
Paintings	8
Images used in paintings	8
Sculptures	9
Art in Daily Puja	9
God and Goddesses	9
Art in Pilgrimage/Holy Shrines	11
Sacred River Ganges	11
Crafts	11
Hinduism in Performing Arts	12
Dance	12
Music	13
Instruments in Music	15
Folk Music/Theatre	15
Literature/Poetry/Spoken Word	16
Marketing and Communication	17
Art in Hindu Greetings	17
Venues/Dietary/Programming	17
Festivals/Art in Festivals	18
Conclusion	20
Bibliography	21

Hinduism and the Arts by Anuradha Sharma, April 2007

# **HINDUISM AND THE ARTS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Origin of Hinduism**

Hinduism is the oldest living religion and the third largest religion in the world. India is the soul of the religion and its origin is in the essence of that land. It flourished on the banks of three sacred rivers (Sindhu, Ganga and Saraswati) and ran through parts of the holy Himalayas. One noble Hindu inspired by its glory narrated that "India is cradle of human race, birth place of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legends, great grandmother of traditions and the one land that all men desire to see".

Hinduism has long and unbroken traditions that have continued for thousands of years. It has survived several setbacks but through the sheer energy and divine activities of pious sages and great thinkers of India, it has continued to flourish.

The word Hindu is not found in the scriptures or any other religious text. The faith is better known as **Sanatana Dharma**. Sanatana means ever fresh. Dharma means that which upholds or law of being. The principle which sustains the creation is known as **Sanatana Dharma**. Therefore it is the laws of nature that holds a society and civilisation together through the teachings of righteous living.

The basic principles of Hinduism are based on primary scriptures, known as the Vedas. The Veda comes from the root "vid" (to know), meaning wisdom. The Rig Veda is the oldest scripture known to the humans, and with the other three Yajur, Sama and Atharva Veda form the body of knowledge. Each Veda has four sections Samhita (invocations), Brahmanas (rituals), Aranyaka (forest treatises), and Upanishad (philosophical or esoteric knowledge).

Hinduism has no founder or a prophet. The Vedas are the revelations of God realised and experienced by our saints and sages. Worship of nature is highly revered in the Vedas. The invocations to five deities representing the five natural elements are common to all the Hindus both highly learned and the common person.

### **Essence of Hinduism**

Although Hinduism is not based on any one founder, the saints and sages have interpreted the Vedas by realising the creation and its relation with the Creator, God. Over thousands of years this teaching been passed on from generation to generation with a vast diversity and vibrant philosophy providing practical approach to conduct our daily life. The teachers of Hinduism may have different interpretations, but all of them have common principles related to the God, Soul and creation.

God resides in every living being and also in the insentient world. The whole creation is enveloped and pervaded by God. This is the main reason that Hindus worship the nature in diverse ways.

God is all Real, Knowledge and Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda.). Real means that which is not limited by time and space, and cannot be destroyed by any force of nature.

The soul or the Self is eternal and different from the physical body. The body goes through six modifications during its lifetime. These are Birth, existence, Youth, Metamorphosis, Decay and Death, but the Self remains the same who experiences all these modifications.

God is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer, known by different names Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva respectively. God is eternal and beyond time and space.

Hinduism and the Arts by Anuradha Sharma, April 2007

Individual Soul or Self strives for freedom from the cycle of deaths and births. Each individual follows the life of dharma, ethics and morals to achieve this freedom (Moksha). One may not achieve in one life time but continues to progress in the next life. The previous life's efforts are not gone in vain.

Every individual has the freedom of enquiry and worship the God in whichever way he or she chooses. All religions and faith are different way to achieve approach God and achieve Freedom, Salvation, or moksha.

The Vedas accept that all faiths lead to the same goal.

### **Ethics and Morals**

Hindus believe that God resides in every living being and we are entrusted to care for the others and the Mother Nature. The value of non-violence is based on this principle. The Vedas say that one should speak the truth, respect the mother, father, teacher and the guest (Taittiriya Upanishad-Sikha Valli).

The aim of every Hindu is to become free from the cycle of births and deaths. This can only be achieved by purification of the heart and mind. The purification the heart is achieved by practicing good values such as truthfulness, non-violence, sympathy, compassion, straightforwardness, absence of greed and acceptance of one's own limitations.

According to Hinduism, a human being is born with three debts. Debt to the Saints and sages, debt to the Gods, and debt to the ancestors. Debt to the saints is fulfilled by learning the spiritual knowledge from Holy Scriptures. Debt to the Gods is fulfilled by observing religious karmas, such as prayers, fasting, and austerity, giving charity and performing rituals. Debt to the ancestors is fulfilled by progeny or keeping family lineage. All these are followed daily or occasionally on religious days. Every member of the family makes special observances on special religious days. Charity is given in terms of money or by helping the needy in any form.

The Vedas classify all pursuits of a human being into four fundamental pursuits, collectively known as:

Dharma – Ethics  
Artha – Security  
Kaama – pleasures  
Moksha – Liberation

The pursuit of security and pleasure is common to all living beings. The pursuit of ethics and liberation is unique to human beings.

One performs his or her duties in accordance natural abilities with ethics and morals which neutralise the actions. This process purifies the mind which is the essential condition to achieve liberation.

The means to purification of mind are defined throughout the Bhagawad Gita, our most revered scripture. These include values such as Absence of ego, absence of false pretence, non-violence, forbearance (accommodative), truthfulness, straightness or rectitude which means alignment of thought, word and deed and purity of heart.(Bh.G. Ch13 verse 7-8 )

The Vedic thinkers have defined that these values are to be assimilated for one's own growth. The Gita mentions that one who performs even a minimum duty with these values, is saved from the cycle of births and deaths. Again, each individual performs the duties according to his or her natural abilities. In any society in the world we see four groups of people who perform certain duties. Scholars, academics, administrators, judiciary, government and defence, commercial, agricultural, and service providers. These are on horizontal plane and not hierarchical. The Gita has clearly stated that every individual performing his or her duty faithfully, accepting all results gracefully, reaches the ultimate goal.

## Sanskaras

The word sanskara is evolved from the root 'Sanskrit' which means to purify or form thoroughly. Sanskriti (civilization) and Sanskrit are derived from this root 'sanskri'. Sanskrit is considered the most refined and grammatically perfect language compared to other regional languages in ancient times. Hindu Sanskaras symbolize disciplinary rites to make a house-holder's life refined and useful. From birth to death, sixteen sanskaras or rites of refinement are laid down by sastras and religious texts. These sanskaras are meant to purify the person by observing of which a person became 'susanskrit' (civilized or refined).

There are sixteen sanskaras laid down by Hindu religious texts. They also vary in ceremonial details from one community to other. Many these ceremonies are formed with inclusion of visual arts and music. The most known Sanskaras are Namakarana (naming the new born baby), upanayanam (initiation of sacred thread), Vivah (Marriage) and Anyeshti (Last or funeral rites).

## Hindu Scriptures

The vision of Vedas is conveyed through many scriptures which include Mythologies, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Smritis (Books of conduct). The literature is vast and a Hindu has a choice to follow any one to become a better human being.

Most Hindu scriptures like Bhagawad Gita are in the form of questions and answers, giving every individual the complete freedom of enquiry and expression.

Bhagawad Gita addresses the fundamental quest of a human being for freedom from all limitations and sorrows. It was revealed to Arjuna from Lord Shree Krishna. The Gita along with two other texts Brahma Sutra and Upanishad concentrates on the philosophy of self knowledge. This knowledge is known as Brahma Vidya. It is the highest wisdom, inquiry and discovery to remove ones' confusion and unfolds as the vision of ones' true essence.

Hinduism is very individualistic and due to its diverse nature, every Hindu practices devotion to God in his or her own way. The Gita has said that one only needs to do within his or her ability and capacity. God accepts these gracefully.

The other scriptures include

- Six Vedangas (Auxiliary sciences common to all the four Vedas) – Siksa(Pronunciation), Jyotisha(Astronomy), Chandas(Prosody), Nirukta(Lexicography & etymology), Kalpa(Ritual rules), Vyakarana(Grammar)
- Four Upvedas (Minor Veda – Ayurveda (Medicine), Dhanurveda (military science), Gandharvaveda (music & fine arts) and Sthapatyveda (architecture etc)
- Six Darshanas (Philosophical views of various schools) – Nyaya, Vaishesika, Sankhya, Yoga, Puva Mimamsa and Uttar Mimamsa (Vedanta).
- Dharma Shastras – Law codes
- Puranas – Mythologies
- Two Epics – Mahabharata and Ramayana

Mahabharata (Sanskrit) One of the two great epic poems of ancient India, the largest poetic work known to literature, consisting of 220,000 lines. The masses of tradition and tales in this epic make it the national treasury from which bards, poets, dramatists, and artists, as from an inexhaustible source, draw their themes. It contains the history of the family of the Bharatas in addition to a great many beautiful truly mystical and occult teachings. The main theme of the epic is the great struggle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, descendants through Bharata from Puru, the great ancestor of one branch of the Lunar race. The object of the struggle was the kingdom whose capital was Hastinapura (elephant city), the ruins of which are said to be traceable 57 miles northeast of Delhi.

Ramayana is undoubtedly the most popular and timeless Indian epic read and loved by all. The term "Ramayana", literally means "the march (ayana) of Rama" in search of human values. It combines "the inner bliss of Vedic literature with the outer richness of delightfully profound story telling. Universally regarded as one of the world's most important literary works, Ramayana has had a profound impact on the art, culture, family relations, gender, politics, and nationalism in the Indian sub continent.

The heroic deeds of Rama and his exciting adventures have inspired generations of people, and for centuries, the epic existed only orally in Sanskrit. Other famous versions of Ramayana include Shri Ramcharitmanas in Avadhi or old Hindi by Goswami Tulsidas, Kamban's Kambaraamayana in Tamil, the Patala Ramayanam in Malayalam, and the Bengali Ramayana by Krittivas Ojha. This monumental work had a deep influence on almost all Indian poets and writers of all ages.

Long ago the Ramayana became popular in Southeast Asia and manifested itself in text, temple architecture and performance, particularly in Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Malaysia. Today, it belongs to the whole humanity because it is capable of serving as a code of ethics for all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed, color and religion.

The Puranas were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. There were eighteen Puranas and they contained the essence of the Vedas. The aim of the Puranas is to impress on the minds of the masses the teachings of the Vedas and to generate in them devotion to God, through concrete examples, myths, stories, legends, lives of saints, kings and great men, allegories and chronicles of great historical events. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. The Puranas were meant, not for the scholars, but for the ordinary people who could not understand high philosophy and who could not study the Vedas. Vyasa is the compiler of the Puranas

Puranas contain the history of remote times. They also give a description of the regions of the universe not visible to the ordinary physical eye. Pundits and Purohits hold *Kathas* or religious discourses in temples, on banks of rivers and in other important places.

The best among the Puranas are the Srimad Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana. The most popular is the Srimad Bhagavata Purana. Next is Vishnu Purana. A portion of the Markandeya Purana is well known to all Hindus as *Chandi*, or *Devimahatmya*. Worship of God as the Divine Mother is its theme. Chandi is read widely by the Hindus on sacred days and Navaratri (Durga Puja) days.

## **Worship in Hindu Dharma**

### **Worship of Deities**

Although God is beyond form, name and gender, individual worships a given form. The most popular forms are the incarnations of Vishnu (The Preserver), Shiva (The Destroyer) and Shakti (divine Mother).

The Divine mother has 3 forms, Durga (Strength), Lakshmi (Wealth) and Sarasvati (Knowledge). These three together nourish and maintain, keep up and help in the progress of the child. An artist, student, or person who studies secular knowledge will pray to Goddess Saraswati. Goddess Saraswati is the consort of Brahma, the creator. Her form shows that she is dressed in white (purity), holding Veena (a stringed musical instrument) and Sama Veda in the other hand. In India any form of teaching or knowledge precedes by invoking prayer to Goddess Saraswati.

In the text called Durgasaptasati Mother Divine is described as "Vidyah samastah tava Devi bhedah, striyah samastah sakala jagatsu" - "O mother Goddess, all sciences are your variations, and all the women in the world are your embodiments".

Sculptors, painters, craftsmen who create images of gods and goddesses, temple carvings from stones and metals, and buildings worship Lord Vishwakarma who is another form of Brahma, the creator.

Worship is an important element of the religion and becomes a form of a 'performance' to revere God. There are two types of worships in Hinduism:

### **Personal worship**

This is where you have place for your puja or worship in your own home in private. In the early morning and evening (daily) one performs puja or yajna or ritual as an individual or with family offering devotion and love towards Parmatma (Almighty) i.e. direct personal communication with God.

### **Public worship**

Temple and holy shrines are the place of communal worshipping and togetherness. Where the divine love for supreme is expressed through devotional songs in the form of "Kirtan and Bhaktiras" (sharing prayers with others). There are different ways of worship.

- God as Nirguna/Nirankar - God without any form (formless) i.e. one can express their devotion through chanting "Naam". That is known as Bhakti towards spiritual progress.

- Sakora - God has existence and can be seen as form and quality i.e. through most ancient form of prayer known as Havan Yajna. It is a religious ceremony in which sacred fire is lit and Sanskrit Mantras are recited which also represents the protection of the environment we all have to live in

- God can be worshipped through Symbols, Names, Mantras, Images, Yantras, and Idols i.e. known as Murti Puja which is Thanks Giving rituals performed towards God in the form of a particular Deity or Deities. Worshipping God through symbols or deities describes the physical expression of prayer

- Marta i.e. Fasting - Vow of fasting is a vow of silence where purification of the body, mind and spirit sanctify one's prayers towards God. Therefore it is a way of disciplining or living for spiritual purposes.

Thus, in all kinds of worship in, prayer is the essential and core means of expression of the spiritual dimension. Whether praying through mental, oral or physical form (different modes of prayer) the essence is connecting your inner spiritual dimension to God and expressing our appreciation through prayer.

## **Hinduism and Visual Arts**

Symbols and images represent philosophical principles in form of **Visual Art**. As it has been mentioned earlier art is an expression to inspire our spiritual dimension. Spiritual symbolism in Hinduism is a concept of understanding of almighty which cannot be perceived through sense organs. Great Hindu Thinkers explained and translated that knowledge through Symbols, Images, Idols using metaphors to reveal our true spiritual nature and nature of the universe around us.

In the ancient time symbols were the main source of recording, explaining and revealing to teach the meaning of the divine without using written Language. Therefore Art form was/and is best media (unique gift) to make ordinary people understand the concept of God and its existence without learning the written Language. A well known saying is that one picture is the description of one thousand words. This is the best example of philosophy of Art hidden in the symbols. There are various ranges of Art form as sculptures, paintings and images to depict God. Hindus discovered art form as a tool to invoke spirituality.

Spirituality in Prayer is fundamental attitude of spiritual expression and immediate result of prayer is the inner comfort that comes with/from acknowledging one's limited capacities and accepting a higher power than oneself. It is the higher form of communication with the Lord and purpose of prayer may carry a different intent for different individuals.

Painting, sculpture, scrolls, crafts and skills are the different traditions which flourished over the period of time in all parts of India. Study of ancient paintings and sculpture in Hinduism not only depicts divinity in the creation but also helps us to visualise and appreciate the human style of the past era.

## Paintings

Paintings called 'Chitrakala' and image is also a media for worship. The whole concept of art is described in 'Shilpa Shastra' text which states that the word form is reflected in a painting just as the moon is reflected in water. The paintings followed many themes including mythology, love religion, spirituality etc and fell into four broad categories; Wall paintings, cloth paintings, manuscript paintings and miniature paintings on paper.

### Images used in paintings:

In Hinduism there are geometric figures which express divine order and these are called Yantra and Mandalas. Hindus believe that certain geometric figures correspond to the symmetry of cosmic inner world. Each Yantra is supposed to invoke the special attributes of the deity it is associated with e.g. Shree Yantra and Kuber Yantra.

**1. SAWASTIKA** - In Sanskrit root Swasti means well being. Thus this symbol represents good luck (well being) from all four directions of space (the universe); or eternally ever changing world around fixed, unchanging centre of almighty. Hence it is a symbol of auspiciousness. It represents Hindu Dharma as below:

- Four Directions - North, East, West and South
- Four Vedas - Knowledge in Rig, Sama, Yujur and Atharva
- Four Purusharthas - objectives of life, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha
- Four Ashramas – Stages of life, Brahmacharya, Grahastha, Vanaprastha, Sanyasa
- Four Varnas - Social structure of the society, Brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya, sudra
- Four Seasons - Cycle nature of time, summer, winter, autumn and spring.

This is a true example of the saying that one picture can convey a thousand words. Thus SWASTIKA symbolises the world peace and prosperity.

**2. AUM (OM)** - the sacred symbol of Aum is the powerful symbol of God.

Therefore Om is the name of Brahm; the cause and basis of creation; Om as a sound symbol is used in prayers (chanted before and at the end of every Mantra); and in meditation as a most potent, most natural sound. Hindus believe that Aum the first initial and eternal sound was produced at the creation of the universe.

The sacred three syllables in AUM is the name of God as the trinity, generator, preserver and destructor e.g. the shape three represents Trinity, the curled up tail accompanying the three is the symbol of consciousness and on the top is the half moon with a dot which represents momentary silence between two successive chants. Sound A is the sound emanating from the base of the throat, U is produced by impulse of rolling forward the tongue in the mouth, and M is produced by closing the lips. There is no sound beyond these two extremes. Hence AUM covers the entire phenomenon of sound.

Aum stands for pure consciousness called **pranava** that sounding which runs through **Prana** (breath). Thus, **Aum** is the highest Mantra which creates vibrating effect on human mind to create harmony, peace and bliss (Aum iti aksharam – Mandukya Upanishad, Atharva Veda)

**3. LOTUS FLOWER** - In Hindu Dharma it is a symbol of purity and detachment. It is a symbol of vegetation and prosperity; born out of watery mud and unfolds itself into a beautiful flower means symbol of the origin of the Universe. It also symbolises that one can raise himself from evil to purity.

**4. THE CONCH** – (Shankha) it symbolises the origin of the Universe from one single source or force (God) and being found in the water it also symbolises that everything is evolved and dissolved into the water. When it is blown, Aum sound is produced, that is why it is blown at the times of rituals, worship and prayers.

### **Sculptures**

“Vinatu nrityashastrena chitrasutram sudurvidam” – Without the knowledge of dance the knowledge of sculptural art cannot be known. This is the well known expression in the text called Vishnudharmottara Purana which describes the techniques of painting and sculpture. Temples in India portray the fine art in sculpture. Many of these are in forms common to classical dance and folk dances. The sculpture is described as darpana sundari – the beauty who looks at the mirror.

The temples had six different architectural styles; Cave, Shikhara, Pagoda, Mandap, flat-roofed and Gompa. There are various colourful images and sculptures in temples and shrines to describe God and his existence. In Hinduism, where everything is looked upon as an expression of the lord, works of art were another glory to the lord. ‘*Vastu Sastra*’ is devoted to sculptures as well as architecture. ‘*Shilpa Shastra*’ is applied exclusively to sculpture temple. The word *Shilpa* is derived from the root ‘Sil’ meaning concentrate. The nominated sculptor is expected to live a life of religious discipline – each piece of art is exclusive and original and identical images are not allowed to be created.

**Sculpture/Statue of Shiv Linga:** - It is another misunderstood image of this form. Shiv Linga is also a symbol of lord Shiva and it represents two roles. Shiv Shakti (energy) represents fire i.e. a fire can destroy but it is essential to sustain life. The image is usually made up of black stone and its base represents power of creation, octagonal middle part represents preserving power and flame like cylindrical part the Shakti power of benefactor and destroyer (a combination of Male power and Female energy).

### **God and Goddesses (Deities)**

Although Hindus believe in one God and they worship one supreme called Ishwer in various forms of deities.

### **Art in Daily Puja – is called Murti Puja:-**

Performing rituals in daily puja are expression of spirituality in Hindu way of life and is also form of Visual Art and performing Art. Thanks giving and offering by devotee to his deity

- (i) Water – sprinkling water around shrine is symbol of purification
- (ii) Tilk – spiritual awakening to enlighten and experience
- (iii) Diya – signifies fire or light from darkness of ignorance
- (iv) Earth – offering of fruit and food e.g. sign of gratitude
- (v) Bell – is rung to draw the mind to inner sound

(1) **Image of Trinity** – although one power controls the entire universe called **Sharishati** but through three major forces or qualities which is represented in the Trimurti of the inner form of Brahma (Creator or Generator) Vishnu (Preserver or Operator) and Shiva (Destroyer) and their power is their female strength attributes.

There are few examples of Hindu Deities conveying their metaphoric philosophy hidden behind their Art form. These figures are the explanatory media to understand the most difficult concepts. Although to other faiths these figures create confusion but these are the best unique gifts of the ancient to preserve and play major role for the sustenance of the faith and culture. Thus Hindus do not believe in many Gods but worship one God in many forms.

**(1) Ganesha** - He is pictured as having a human form with an elephant head.

The elephant head indicates gain of knowledge through listening (large ears) and reflection (large Head). The two tusks, one perfectly shaped and other broken, represent the perfection and imperfection in the physical world. The trunk represents the physical and mental strength, and the intellect which is to be used between the pair of opposites (perfect and imperfect). The large stomach represents the ability to 'digest' whatever experiences the life throws at one; the rat and food denote desires and wealth both of which should be under control (at his feet). Lord Ganesha is usually shown with one leg on the ground and other leg folded in a meditative pose symbolising a balance between practical and spiritual life. In one hand he is shown carrying a noose and in the other an ankush (sharp iron hook used by rider to control an elephant) The noose symbolises the trap of desires and the 'ankush' is there to remind that painful hook of stern 'self-discipline' is needed to control desires. 'Ganesha' is the combination of two words: 'Gana' meaning people and 'Isha' meaning King or Leader. All the above mentioned qualities represent a good and strong leader. That is why; Lord Ganesha has great spiritual significance for Hindus and is considered to be remover of obstacles. Please note that use of term 'Elephant God' for Lord Ganesha is offensive and should be avoided.

**(2) Shiva** - There are numerous forms of Shiva also known as Mahesh but two of the forms are explained here:

- **Yogiraj:** - When Shiva is sitting in the meditation form (i.e. Stationary form). Shiva is blue in complexion conveying infinite stature, blue is also associated with immeasurable entities (sky or ocean). He has a snake around his neck representing "Kundalini Shakti" (i.e. evolutionary power) within human body. As Yogiraj is a kind of Yoga he sits in a meditative pose with his eyes half closed, indicating peace and perfect inner harmony and symbol of Trishul means three powers are under his control.
- **Natraj:** - As Natraj (king of dance) he stands posing the endless cosmic dance, the natural cycle of creation and destruction. There are four hands of Natraj; one holding the drum to announce the 'Big Bang' at the beginning of the universe, the second holding the flame of destruction and purity, the third is raised to bless, the fourth pointing to the uplifted foot to show how to rise above ignorance. The small figure under his second foot represents the ignorance. The whole figure of Natraj represents the movement within circle of fire. The circle represents the universe without beginning (anadi) and without an end (anat). He is fulfilling both the roles: He is benefactor and he is Destroyer. He performs these functions like fire, which can destroy but which is also essential for sustaining life. This flame of fire is also represented through another symbol called the 'Shivalinga' which looks like a lamp with a flame.

**(3) Durga Mata** - Power (Shakti) of Supreme in female form i.e. cosmic power which is the energy driving the Universe. This energy represents the power of God and its nature behind creation and destruction and that is known as Durga Shakti in Hinduism. She is known by 108 names but most popular ones are: Devi, Kaali, Bhawani, Ambika, Parvati and Durga.

Durga Mata has eight arms holding eight symbols of power. The eight arms represent powers over: Health, Education, Wealth, Organisation, Unity, Fame, Courage and Truth. The weapons in her hands are for the destruction of evil and protection of good which is represented by the lotus flower. Sitting on the Lion represents suppression of the danger of ego. This form therefore depicts the enormity of the power of God by which the entire Universe is sustained.

**(4) Tantric Meaning Kaali Roop:** - Most misunderstood form of power of energy or of Shakti (Power). In the modern scriptures explanation of Kaali especially by the West which represents very evil, ugly and distorted meaning form as well as some modern Sadhus have taken its meaning literally and applied it to their Tantric Practice. In fact very few people know the real very, very deep metaphoric meaning of its Visual Art form. The real philosophy behind the image of Kaali Mata is the description of God or Supreme between the end of the Universe (end of time) and before the formation of new Universe.

## Art in Pilgrimage/Holy Shrines

India has countless holy places called Tiratha, that is why India is also known as land of holy places which are considered to be the abode of Lord. Making journeys to these pilgrimages is called **Tiratha Yatra**. The sanctity of these places is glorified in many legends and traditions and has been the source of inspiration to people throughout the ages.

Since the ancient time, mainly these places flourished between the middle of three main sacred rivers i.e. **Ganga, Yamuna and Sindhu**. These holy places provide the ample setting for soul searching, self purification and self realisation. Bathing in Holy Water is very sacred i.e. making self analysis and to seek Moksha.

These Holy Places also maintain and keep written records of all Hindu family trees so they provide a service to fulfil ancestry vows and to perform after death ritual ceremony by the son or any other male member of the family.

Living proof of exhibits of visual and performing Art can be seen during special unique gigantic gatherings on banks of Holy River called "Mela" e.g. **The Kumb Mela** is a symbol of unity and bathing in holy water (sight of gigantic gathering) is to purify thoughts and seek purity and knowledge and to wash away sins of ignorance.

## Sacred River Ganges

Holy Ganga has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilisation, ever-changing, ever flowing and yet ever the same Ganga. The unique quality of its sacred water Ganga Jal is that it can be preserved in the container for up to a hundred years. That is why Ganga Jal is kept in Hindu households for religious purposes.

River Ganges flows from the Himalayas in the north through plains into the Bay of Bengal in the east. Many of the holy places are situated on the Ganga Ghat (Bank). One noble Hindu described its beauty as "Ganga is a symbol and memory of the past of India, running into the present and flowing to the great ocean of future". It has been our great inheritance which is not only as river but as flow of all the sacred knowledge.

## Crafts

The art in Hinduism is not only present in religious rituals, but also visible in customs and traditions e.g. in some parts of India people still draw patterns with colours on the walls and on the doors called **Kolamas** to sanctify and purify the household. Making **Rangoli patterns** on the floor and on the paper during religious festivals is also customary tradition e.g. making colourful patterns at Diwali times using white and coloured powders.

There are many fine examples of craft traditions that still exist today. Various trees; pine, walnut, horsechestnut, birch trees, to name a few have all been used to prepare wooden craft items. The use of floral designs, birds, snakes, peacocks, and gods are the most commonly used motifs in these works of art.

Mehndi (Henna) is made from green colourful powdered leaves mixed with water into paste and if applied to the skin it leaves orange/red colour effect for one or two weeks. It is Hindu tradition of painting and decorating bride and ladies hands and feet with mehndi at weddings and other auspicious days.

## Hinduism in Performing Arts

Music, dance, drama and visual arts occupy central place in Hinduism which embraces the omnipresence of god in the universe. The Vedas provide ample evidence where we find the chanting of verses and invocations in classical music with unique style. Lord Shiva is also known as the Nata Raja. Nata is Dance and Raja means the king, the king of the dance. All of the Arts knowledge is known as the Gandharva Veda, belonging to the Sama Veda. The Earliest treatise known and most referred is Natya Sastra, written by Bharata Muni (200 B.C.). The Naya Satra provides exhaustive thematic structure of dance, drama and music.

The word Natya means combination of nritya (drama) and nritya (dancing). The core of the performing arts is to create Rasa. Rasa means the mood, content or feel which expresses the sentiments in the individual. These emotions known as bhava are represented by a performer or a devotee using fourfold forms. These are physical body (angika), verbal expressions (vachika), costumes and ornaments (aharya) and physical signs of mental states.

“Anandarupata Sarvarasanam” – All Rasas are the nature of Bliss (Abhinavabharati 1-292). Rasa is the soul of everything. An artist is in contact with nature and expresses the moods, emotions, sentiments through arts, sculpture, dance, drama and music.

In the later period, the work of Natya Sastra was further elaborated by various texts such as Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikeshwara, Hasta Lakhsana Deepika, Kohala Bharatam, Dattilam, Narada Siksha and Sangeet Ratnakara of Saragdeva. All these texts bring about the essence of classical style in music, dance and dramaturgy.

The whole concept of the arts in Hindu Religion is to raise spirituality in one, life. The art in the form of temple buildings, sculptures, paintings, and other devotional music provides the means to experience the presence of God in nature.

### Dance

Great Sanctity applies to all form of art in Hinduism. Origin of ancient music and dance are found in the Sama Veda and Lord Shiva revealed this himself by performing the cosmic dance. This knowledge was further evolved into Upaveda known as Gandharveda and we can find the earliest authoritative text on drama, music and dance in sage Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra in which he states and beautifully illustrates how Brahma (the Creator) evolved dance from the four Vedas.

Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikeshwara, a text on Dance offers prayer to Lord Shiva

Angikam bhuvanam yasya  
Vachikam sarva vangmayam  
Aharyam Chandra taradi  
Tam vande sattvikam Shivam

I worship the benevolent Lord Shiva  
Whose limbs is the movement of the universe  
Whose speech is the literary output of the entire world  
Whose decorative ornaments are the moon and the stars

The Lord took the recitation (Patya) from Rig Veda, the songs from Sama Veda, representation ((abhinaya/acting) from Yajur Veda sentiments (Rasa) from Atharva Veda. Therefore the sanctity of music and dance form has been symbolised earlier with regard to Natraj being an inspiring representation in art from symbolizing the truth of creation. From the ancient time, music, drama, dance and instrumental music are often performed together.

The legacy of dance in India is tremendous. Whether this is on temple walls or on urban stage, classical dance gives unique expression Natya, Nrtya, Nritya and abhinaya are important elements of classical dance.

The main purpose of the dance is to evoke Rasa, the spiritual mood in the audience. The Sanskrit text Abhinaya Darpana says in this most popular verse:

Yatho Hasthas tatho dristi  
Yatho dristi tatho manaha  
Yatho manas tatho bhavah  
Yatho bhavas tatho rasa.

Where the hands go, the eyes should follow  
Where the eyes go, the mind should follow  
Where the mind goes, emotional state should follow  
Where emotional state goes, Sentiment ( Rasa) arises.

Natya is the dramatic representation of dance with speech. Nrtya is that aspect which includes Rasa an aesthetic flavour, bhava (emotion) along with grace and full movement of the body. Nrta is based on tala, rhythm, is pure movement of the limbs but does not include mood of the dance.

Abhinaya is the dance form which is rich in expressions and evokes feelings among audience. Natya Sastra has listed 8 Rasas which sought expression through the performing arts. He says that the perfect artistic expressions would take the listener through 8 emotions, and leave him or her with Peace or shanti which becomes the 9<sup>th</sup> Rasa. The 8 Rasa are:

Sringara – Charm  
Hasya – Humour  
Karuna – Compassion  
Rudra – Fiery  
Vira – Heroic  
Bhayanaka – Terrifying  
Bhibasta - Despicable  
Adbhuta – Surprise or Wondrous

The physical representation consists of various gestures and postures of hands, limbs and eyes called Mudras. The Rasas are expressed through the mudras. Mudras are a means of communication for the dancer to the audience in expressing the theme of the dance or the song.

In classical dance various themes are based on stories from Puranas and Itihasas (historical and religious books).

The classical dances of India are numerous. These dances communicate are old tales of love, longing and rage. Katakali of Kerala, Bharat Natyam of Tamil Nadu, Kuchi Pudi of Andhra Pradesh, Manipuri and Odissi from Orissa, Kathak from northern India, Nati most popular dance form in Himanchal Pradesh (dance generally combines folk tunes and songs based on local episodes and historical events) and Mohini Attam from Karnataka are prominent dance forms of great heritage of Hindu culture and religion.

Bharat Natyam is the great heritage of our divine origin of traditions and the importance of continuity of the past. In ancient time as Bharat Natyam evolved into the temples rich in Raga & Bhava rhythmic beauty, the system of its existence was built around the devadasi (mostly pure and pious) who served the divinity as the base of Bharat Natyam. Since ancient time this dance has been the most effective form of expression of joy.

## **Music**

The science of sound and music has been studied exhaustively and deeply in India than any other part of the world. Sages like Panini the grammarian, Patanjali, Bhartrahari, Nadikewhara, Anjaneya, Sarangdeva and Bharata are par excellence in research of sound and music.

The Supreme Divinity underlying all existence described in the Upanishad, Brahman is also exemplified by Aum (or OM) the elemental sound (Sabda). Sound is the property of the element Space. This also known as the Sabda- Brahman which manifests through power of oral chanting. Many religious traditions conveyed the concept of sacred sound as Sabda Brahman which gradually evolved into Nada Brahman. This Nada Brahman included musical sounds and non-linguistic sounds heard in deep meditation. The conch shell of Lord Vishnu, flute of Krishna, veena of Goddess Saraswati, Damaru of Lord Shiva symbolise Nada-Brahman, the sacred sound.

The Hindu Scripture is essentially oral from the beginning, emphasising pure pronunciation in recitation. The power of sound and speech known as Vac in the Rig Veda is prominent with pronunciation and metres. The Sanskrit grammarian Panini also followed the rules of phonetics and sound based on Vedic chants.

The most important musical treatise Sangeetranakar by Sarangdeva begins with the invocation: "We worship Nada Brahman, that incomparable Bliss which is immanent in all the creatures as intelligence and is manifest in the nature of this universe. Indeed, through the worship of Nada-Brahman are worshipped Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, since they are essentially one".

### **Bhakti Sangeet**

It is said in one of the Hindu Scriptures:

Naaham vasaami Vaikunthe  
Na yogi hriday gaavati  
Madbhakta yatra gaavati  
Tatra tishthami Narada

"I dwell not in Vaikuntha(Heaven), nor in the hearts of yogis, nor in the sun, but where my devotees sing, Oh Narada, do I reside."

Devotional singing and music is known as bhajan, the word derived from Sanskrit root bhaj, to share or participate. Bhajan is performed to praise God, Bhagavan who possesses bhaga, good fortune. The styles of bhajan ranges from temple music to informal groups and single songs.

In the Vaishnava tradition of Hinduism bhakti or devotion to God gives salvation, Moksha. In keeping with this principle a numerous poetical saints have given some of the most beautiful writings which are still very popular among the masses of ordinary people. Tulsidas wrote Ramayana in Brij language and is one of the most loved poetical work written since 16<sup>th</sup> century. The contemporary saint Kabir has also written songs and poetry in a methodical and melodious composite. Among women saints Meerabai, the princess of Rajasthan and a great devotee of Lord Shree Krishna, created some of the most beautiful gems of poetry. Saint Surdas, also a Krishna devotee, gave bhakti sangeet in a new dimension known as Haveli Sangeet. Other great saints include Sanit Tukaram of Maharashtra and Narsi Mehta of Gujarat. All these saints and poets have a mark on all the people of India with richness in devotional sangeet.

Natya Shastra classified various elements of music as well as providing a definition of music as 'Art of expression in sound, in melody and in harmony'. So, it is the art of sound in time which expresses ideas and emotions in significant form through rhythm, melody, harmony and colour. Classical music is a unique language by itself and it derived from 'Nada' the sound of all activities of universe and eternal sound without any words which reached to people in Raga System. These Ragas being the products of emotion express the aesthetic feelings of love, anger and other mental attitudes of humanity.

Natya Shastra these elements of music: Svaras, notes, pitch, gramas, scale and Jatis as well as Parent Raga (which had their own family trees of Rags and Ragnias. The basic scale of Indian music has seven notes; Raga and Tala are the other two important elements of music.

According to Narada Siksha the seven notes or Swaras are metaphorical as the sounds of animals and birds.

SAdja – peacock  
Rlshabha – bull  
GAndhara – ram  
MAdhyama – crane  
PAnchama – cuckoo  
DHaivata – horse  
NIsad – elephant

Richness of Indian music is not only pleasure and food of soul but also exhibits moods of all three worlds. It has magic effect on the listener to state of self absorption. Indian music as a whole always plays an important role in every aspect of cultural, religious and social phenomenon.

### **Instruments in Music**

The variety of instruments used in Indian music (classical, folk & tribal) is: -

- (1) Tanta – those which have strings e.g. Veena, Sitar & Tanpura
- (2) Avanadha – (percussion) e.g. Tala & Drum
- (3) Ghana – (the Hollow) e.g. Flute, Sushira and Shehnai
- (4) Tata – Solid percussion e.g. Bells, Ghungru & Majeera

Many of the musical instruments such as flute, drum, veena and cymbals mentioned in the Vedic literatures. The Veena is played by the wife of the sacrificer in Vedic rites. The Gandharavas (celestial gods) were led by Narada Muni accompanied by their wives, the dancing apsaras and the kinnaras on the musical instruments.

### **Folk Music**

Folk music develops from the contribution of the native people of that land; no external ideas influence its nature. Festival songs, recreational songs, seasonal songs and women songs are the torch of our cultural traditions which have been passed on through our folk music. All the good things belonging to our culture have been passed through sweet springs of poetry and music. These folk songs give us a foundation of knowledge about the history of the past, their civilisations customs, manners and songs concerned with a variety of subject's e.g. occupational songs, devotional, festival and occasional songs. Most of the folk melodies are conceived, remembered and expressed musically first and always in the verbal form.

### **Musical Tradition in Modern Times**

To- day many artist and performers have carried on the tradition and are well known around the world. Just to name some of the most famous musicians include Pandit Ravi Shanker, Ali Akbar Khan, Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Shiv Kumar sharma, Ram Narayan, bismillah Khan, Pandit Samta Prasad, Ustad Alla Rakha and Ustad Zakir Hussain. Pandit Jasraj, Omkarnath Thakur, Kishori amonkar, Hirabai Barodkar, Bhimsen Joshi and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan are great vocalists.

### **Theatre**

Kathakali is one of the oldest theatre forms in the world. It originated in the state of Kerala. Kathakali is a group presentation, in which dancers take various roles in performances traditionally based on themes from Hindu mythology, especially the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. One of the most interesting aspects of Kathakali is its elaborate make-up code. Characters are categorized according to their nature. This determines the colours used in the make-up. The faces of noble male characters, such as virtuous kings, the divine hero Rama, etc., are main green in colour.

Ramleela and Rasleela are two important forms of religious folk theatre in Northern India. Many villages have their own troupe of Ramleela actors who perform it each year. These plays are frequently improvised with comic interludes and folk songs. The Rasa troupes travel from village to village and they are known as Ras Dhariya who have their own 'Dera' (camps). The Rasleela depicts scenes from the life of Shri Krishna.

Another popular folk form is Karyala, which is the most innovative of folk theatre in that it does not follow any written script. The performers are required to create dialogues and songs instantaneously according to the situation.

## **Literature/ Poetry/ Spoken Word**

### **Kavya (Poetry)**

Poetry in Hinduism has been gifted with rich literacy of legacy and its act of expression to reveal gratitude of devotion towards God. There are numerous/countless Poets who excelled in artistic genius. The themes of these kavyas unfold the profundity of the Vedic culture and offers insight into the lifestyle of its people and their nurturing aspiration inspired the attitudes of the society e.g. Devotional literature was and is also an integral part of daily worship in temples and households.

There are two types of Poetry in Hinduism

- (i) Drshya – Poetry that is seen or dramatised – It comprises of two parts 'Rupaka' and 'Urupaka'. Rupaka is another name for drama or theatre. It is story telling mainly of devotional of epics such as Puranas, through poetry which are visually presented. Examples of these include Yakshagna, Kriali, noutanki and puppetry which are ancient forms of folk drama. There are still occasional stage performances in rural areas of India.
- (ii) Shravya – Poetry that is listened to. It also comprises of two parts; 'Padya' which is written in accordance to the metric system (Maha Kavya of Ramayan and 'Gadya' which is a single story narrated by and on a single character.

There are also 'Kathas' which are stories narrated by different characters and 'Kathanaka' which are fables that were presented in the form of the Panchtantra.

There are five main Maha kavyas which express in beautiful and linguistic form the aesthetic beauty of God and Nature intertwined together as one.

There are many great artists of India in performing arts who have become legends in their own field:

Bhasa and Kalidasa are major early authors, Kalidasa qualifying easily as the greatest poet and playwright in Sanskrit. He deals primarily with famous Hindu legends and themes; the famous works by Kalidasa are Vikramōrvaśīyam (Vikrama and Urvashi), Mālavikāgnimitram (Malavika and Agnimitra), Kumarasambhava and Raghuvansam. He is most popularly known for the play Abhijñānaśākuntalam (The Recognition of Shakuntala).

A king by the name Sudraka who wrote well known play Mricchkatikam (Little Clay Cart) The Gita Govinda (The song of Govinda) by the Orissan composer Jayadeva is the story of Krishna's love for Radha, and is written in spectacularly lyrical and musical Sanskrit.

Gopal Nayak, Baij Nath (Baiju Bawra) and Tansen (with Swami Hari Das) were disciples of an ancient form of music called 'Dhrupad'.

**Raja Bhoj** was one of the expert singers of ancient tune (instrument). **Sage Narad Muni** was a Tanpura Player. **Arjuna** from Maha Bharat was an expert classical dancer, during the period when the five Pandavas were exiled he took part in dance competitions.

## Marketing and Communication

Hindus have always maintained their culture and preserved their religious identity wherever they go or live. At the same time through adaptability and flexibility in their characters, they integrate comfortably into any society to fulfil their role of a good citizen. It is a well known fact that British Hindus have displayed the best example by making genuine and harmonious approach. They have achieved higher goals and they have made great contribution in every field.

They have brought with them the strong foundation of religious wisdom, great strength of social customs and traditions, which enable them to continue to uplift themselves from any kind of prejudice. Hinduism provides them the wisdom of understanding that the elements of negativity of any kind or form are the biggest enemy and setback for human progress in the society.

Therefore when a person has the understanding of the value of life which is universal (applies to all mankind), righteous living comes along within itself. Hence British Hindus are a peaceful community. However, there are certain sensitive issues, misperceptions and misconceptions that cause confusion and racial prejudice and ill feeling towards Hindus.

1. Hindus do not eat beef.
2. All symbols of Hinduism are sacred. So these objects or symbols are not show pieces and should not be displayed in any public place or anywhere and anything i.e. motifs on clothes and shoes etc.
3. Media and British press should be fully aware and note that the contents should be well explored before showing these to the public in form of documentaries or any kind of exposure/publication.
4. Wash hands before touching religious artefacts or entering into prayers
5. No shoes are allowed near the religious artefacts
6. Symbols representing god, goddesses are not allowed to touch the floor

**Art in Hindu Greetings:** - There are two main greetings

**1) Namaskaar** (Namaste): - This is said whilst joining two palms and placing these near your heart (place of Atma/Soul) and at the same time bowing the head. This greeting acknowledges the presence of divinity in all human being. The person saying Namaste implies "with all my physical strength represented by folded hands and my intellect represented by bowed head" It means I pay respect to the soul within you. Paying respect to Deities involves another unique form of performing Art.

**(2)Ashirvaad** (blessings) When a Hindu shows respect to elders, parents, grandparents or guru by bowing his head and touching their feet the response given by the elders is called Ashirvaad i.e. grant them all their blessings.

## Venues/ Dietary/ Programming

### Venues

Temples are called Mandirs/places of worship. India (soul of Hindu Dharma) is known as Land of Temples that are rich in Vedic heritage which has flourished in these temples since ancient time. Therefore ancient temples of India are also our pride. These temples were the centre for all the Vedic activities including cultural, religious (worship, rituals, and karma kinds) school of Art form including paintings, sculpturing, music, dance, drama and poetry.

Architecture of the temples was and is also in the unique planned Art form and highly symbolic. It represents the cosmic presence of God and it symbolises the discovery of creation and truth. The sight of the temples provides the feeling of sanctity and purity. Hindu temples are always built precisely according to the original literature known as **Agama Shastra or Vastu Shastra**.

Ancient temples were the resource centre of the whole structure of the society. These grandeur social institutes were not only places of worship or charitable activity but also teachings of academic (study of Vedas), health (yoga and ayurveda), science and Vedic traditions.

The other symbols in the temples that form important part of ritual ceremony during Puja (worship) are: bells (representing AUM sound), Jyoti (sacred flame), coconut fruit (earthly material), holy water and Kalash (a container). The actual performance of the rituals/ceremonies also demonstrates visual and performing Art form e.g. importance of burning lamp called Jyoti is most significant. Jyoti is atma and everlasting light of wisdom can be achieved by gaining control over physical stage (body, mind and intellect).

### **Dietary**

Most Hindus are vegetarian. Vegetarianism is another gift by Hindus to mankind. Since the Vedic Culture, food is considered to be sacred i.e. food is not merely nourishment for physical body but as serving our inner growth e.g. as a very famous saying goes "JESA ANN VESA MANN" whatever you eat effects your actions and reactions. That is why our old scriptures classified food in to three categories i.e. **Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic.**

### **Programming**

All the festivals in Hindu Dharma are dedicated to worship of nature and to the divine Lord (Parmatma). Generally these are celebrated through prayers, fasting, rituals and offerings. Hindu festivals have religious and cultural significance with deep spiritual philosophy. Since ancient time these are celebrated in the way of Vedic traditions; time and day of these auspicious occasions is also calculated by Hindu calendar which is different from the standard Calendar. Knowledge of Astronomy was formulated in order to determine the position of planets and stars in the past and in the future. A system of Astrology (called Jyotisa Shastra) was developed in order to study the influence of planetary movements on human life. This study was part of sacred scriptures Veda (called Ved Angas) and Paricha Riga was devised to calculate the next century's Calendar.

So all the festivals fall on these calculated times and dates. Through these festivals, events, cultural, religious values are passed on from generations to generations. Hence they are the reminder of India's rich history and cultural diversity.

There are five kinds of festivals in Hindu Dharma where with one spirit – whole community aspired to strengthen the bond between the family members and social groups. Prayers, puja and yajna are performed during the day so that the whole day has religious atmosphere. Most of the festivals are celebrated annually.

**(1) Religious Festivals:** - Diwali, Shivratri, Navaratri, Ganesha Chaturthi, Durga Ashtmi are some of the religious festivals and during the procession of these festivals display of Deity is called **Rath Yatra**

**(2) Historical Festivals:** - Vijay Dashmi (Dussehra), Diwali, Janam Ashtmi, Shree Guru Govind Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti, Mahavir Jayanti are some of the historic festivals.

**(3) Seasonal Festivals:** e.g. Makar Sankranti, Basant Panchmi, Baisakhi, Sharad Purnima and Holi are some of the seasonal festivals as Hindus have close links with nature these festivals are associated with nature and people enjoy influence of nature.

**(4) Mythological Festivals:** Some festivals are celebrated in the commemoration of mythological events e.g. some events only take place among particular social groups or area and some rituals are performed in the remembrance of Kul Devta, Gram Devta and Asthan Devta. Generally people celebrate in form of Mela.

**(5) Cultural and Traditional Festivals:** Karva Chauth, Raksha Bandhan, Sacred Tree Puja, Bhai Duj, Ayohi, Ashtmi etc. These are some of the customary traditional auspicious occasions celebrated. Meaning of these signifies bond of mutual love and trust, promise of protection and symbol of care and well being towards relationships.

### Importance of Festivals

- Festivals are occasions of joy and happiness, with caring and sharing feelings among everyone
- Auspicious religious occasions are reminder of spiritual aspirations
- They bring people together for love and friendship and time to help them mend any broken relationships.
- Whole atmosphere sanctifies spirituality to purify not only thoughts but also to thoroughly clean and purify the house.
- Sharing good food and exchange of presents is also another way of thanks giving practice.
- Festivals give opportunity to donate food, clothes and money to poor and needy people of the community. So these occasions are also reminder of charitable activities.

Hence in Hindu Dharma everything in the nature is sacred and so the festivals take place all year around giving respect and importance to each month of the year to remind ourselves not to abuse nature but to respect nature and help us to preserve the links between nature and our existence in this Universe.

**Art in Festivals:** Below given are some examples of festivals to show how role of Art is significant during the celebration of these festivals.

**(1) Diwali:** the most popular festival in Hinduism is the celebration of Diwali as it signifies its importance in many ways. It is not only a religious but also historic and seasonal festival. Diwali is a festival of lights known as Deepavali meaning row of lamps (diyas). It falls on a dark night in October/November month. All the households and streets are lit with oil lamps and candles, sweets and presents are distributed and firework displays are also held.

It is a reminder of victory over evil forces, on this day lord Rama's homecoming celebration were held after the victory over the defeated demon Ravana. It is also an auspicious day to do Lakshmi Puja (worship of the Goddess of wealth and prosperity) with all the family members present.

Diwali also signifies with Lord Krishna who killed the demon Narkaasura and rescued many women and freed them from slavery. Thus Diwali is also the reminder of justice – light is a symbol of pure consciousness as well as symbol of divine presence.

On that day Hindus decorate their homes with brightly coloured lights. Some historic events took place on this day e.g. Lord Mahavira (founder of Jainism) attained Moksha.

**(2) Holi:** Holi is a festival of colours. It occurs in the month of Feb/March and is literally celebrated with colours by smearing each other's faces with powdered colours. Everybody of all age groups gets together and celebrates by singing, dancing and splashing washable colours on each other. The occasion celebrates arrival of spring time for rejoicing. It also commemorates a mythical event.

**(3) Shivratri:** Shivratri signifies the day on which Lord appeared in the form of **Jyoti Linga**, a tower of sanctum, a column of light to bless Sages in the form of (Lingodbhava). It also falls on the dark night between February/March. On this day, devotees visit temple to seek Lord Shiva's blessings. They worship Shivalinga by offering milk and bilpatri (bilva leaves) to invoke the Lord's grace; chanting Shiv Mantra "Om Nameh Shivaya" in order to seek spiritual knowledge. Devotees fast all day.

**(4) Navaratri:** Means Sacred Nine Nights. This event is historic as well as highly religious. These nine days are associated with Goddess Shakti (Power) in the form of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati successively, for 3days each. It symbolises the victory of good over evil by invoking Shakti (strength). This event also marks the nine days when Lord Rama defeated demon Ravana and that day is known as **Dussehra**. On Dussehra day a huge statue of Ravana is burnt to symbolise victory.

For nine days devotees gather together to perform special folk dance called **Garbha** around the image of **Goddess Durga** and on the tenth day Durga Puja takes place to pray for blessings and Shakti. Hence the whole event signifies one message that one can/should progress or excel beyond any limitations with power of good intentions i.e. good karma.

**(5) Makar Sankranti:** As sun is the main source of life, and it is an ancient festival celebrating the return of the Sun across the equator in the northern direction after six months in the southern direction. It is an auspicious journey towards the north and the north of India is the birth place of Vedic culture. This festival occurs in the month of Magha (around the middle of January) when the Sun enters Macara (Capricorn).

## **Conclusion**

Hinduism and its Vedic culture have a self-sustaining strength, flexibility and adaptability to improve the quality of life. In spite of various variations in the religious forms, they are all respected and accepted equally because Hinduism allows freedom of speech and they are all connected through common thread of Vedic wisdom.

The unique relationship of Art and Hinduism is clearly and visually defined in all aspects of the Hindu life through prayers, deities, temples, festivals etc. If any kind of existing art form is the improvisation of universal truth of creation then metaphoric symbols in Hinduism are the improvisation of eternal truth beyond any means.

The universe created by God is entrusted to us and we obliged to respect and honour its natural values. All the living beings depend upon the nature constituted from Space, air, fire, water and earth, which is perceived through our fives of knowledge ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. One of the Hindu aims of life is Kama, the enjoyment of nature is highly praised, but without any greed or malice. The life experience of material world is meant to evolve our minds and to realise that behind every experience there is a divine power on which the life depends.

The enjoyment of art in any form is the enjoyment of nature which is the Signature of God.

## Bibliography

1. Vedic Heritage Teaching Program (Children's Workbook), Volume I, Part 3, Sunita Ramaswamy and Dr Sundar Ramaswamy, 1995, Sri Gangadharewar Trust
2. Virat Hindu Sammelan, Souvenir Publication, 1989
3. Hinduism for Schools, Seeta Lakhani, 2005, Vivekananda Centre
4. Explaining Hindu Dharma; A Guide for Teachers, Edited by Dr Nawal K Prinja, 1996, Religious and Moral Education Press
5. Tantra, Mantra, Yantra ki aloukik sidhiyan, C M Srivastav
6. Srimad Bhagavatam, A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 1993, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust
7. An Introduction to the Commentry on the Vedas, Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, 1973, Pandita Rakesh Rani
8. Ancient India, E Royston Pike, 1961, Widenfield & Nicholson Ltd
9. States of our Union: Himachal Pradesh, B R Sharma, 1997, Ministry of Informationa & Broadcasting Publications Division
10. Gems of Aryan Wisdom, Acharya Vaidyanath Shastri, 1968, Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha
11. VedaMritam: Vol XII; Rigveda-Subhasitavali (5878 Maxims from the Rigveda), Dr K D Dvivedi & Dr B Dvivedi, 1989, Vishvabharati Research Institute
12. Akhand Jyoti, Vol 4, Issue 5, September-October 2006
13. Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni
14. Sangeet Ratnakar of Sarangdeva
15. Abhinaya Darpana of Nadikeshwara
16. Bhagavad Purana
17. Mahabharata
18. Ramayana
19. Rig Veda
20. Manukya Upanishad
21. Bhagavad Gita
22. Hindustani Music

