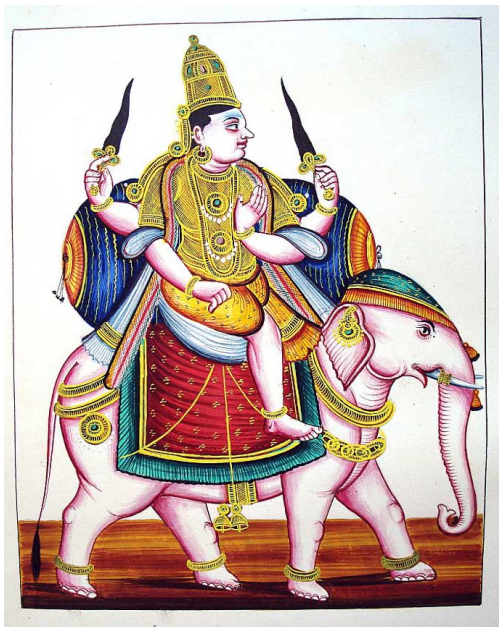


ICONOGRAPHY OF THE VEDIC DEITIES,

Almost all the original High Gods of the Rig Veda have been demoted in modern Hinduism to Loka-pālas — guardian deities of the directions. Three relatively minor deities of the Rig Veda were elevated to the modern Trinity — Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The Loka-pālas play a major role in Vāstu and are invoked in all ceremonies involving buildings. In All major yajñas they are also invoked and offerings made to them.

THE LOKA-PALAS Guardian Deities of Space

Indra — Regent of the East



Indra is the king of the gods and was one of the major deities of the Rig Veda. A quarter of the hymns of the Rig Veda are dedicated to him and he is the national god of the Vedic people. His most lauded activity was the destroying of the demon Vrtra who had imprisoned the cows in the mountainous cave. Using his famed *vajra* — diamond thunderbolt. Vrtra means the obscurer or the “one who conceals.” The cows represents the streams of light or consciousness.

Indra represents the all pervading electric energy (vidyut śakti), he is the ruler of the storm but also the cause of fertility.

The devas represent various aspects of our psychology and Indra is the king of all the senses and as such represents the mind. Indra assumes manifold forms and shape-shifts as he will. He has all the exuberance of youth and is addicted to pleasure and intoxicants. He has numerous love-affairs and sends Apsaras to disturb the meditation of sages

Indra lives in the city of **Amarāvati** (immortality) with his wife is **Śaci** — (Divine Grace) and by her has 3 sons: **Jayanta** (victory) **r̥ṣabha** (excellence) and **Mīdhuṣa** (liberality).

Indra has two vehicles – an elephant with four tusks names **Airāvata** (born-of-the-ocean) and a horse named **Ucchaiśravas** (loud-neighing).

Accoutrements

Vajra (thunderbolt) — represents diamond like wisdom which destroys ignorance in the form of the demon-who-conceals.

Aṅkuśa (elephant goad), **Pāśā** (noose), **Dhanuṣ** (bow), **Khadga** (sword)

Agni — Regent of the South-east

Agni was the most important god of the Rig Veda, the mediator between humans and gods and the protector of men and their homes. Esoterically he represents divine illumination. The science of fire is the key to all knowledge. The discovery of fire led to the creation of laws, rules and discipline — civilization stems from the correct use of fire.

In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa Agni is the firstborn son of Brahmā. In the human world Agni's father was **Dharma** (eternal-law) and his mother **Vasubhārya** (Daughter-of-light). His sister is **Medhā** (intelligence).

He was married to **Svāhā** (invocation-at-offering) and by her has 3 sons **Pāvaka** (Purifier), **Pāvamāna** (purifying) and **Śuci** (Purity). His second wife is said to be **Svadhā** — the invocation of the ancestors.

He is shown having 3 faces — representing the 3 Vedic fires Āhavanīya, Dakṣiṇa and Gārhapatyā agnis.



Accoutrements

His standard is smoke (**Dhūma- ketu**) and he rides on a ram (**Chāga**) one of the main sacrificial animals which also represents leadership and aggression.

He carries a:—

Javelin (**Tomara**) — same symbolism as a spear — mental focus on the goal

Lotus (**Abja**) — enlightenment and purity

Axe (**Paraśu**) — severing the bonds of attachment

Torch (**ulkā**) — kindling of the fire or enthusiasm for the dharma and enlightenment

Fan (**vyañjana**) — fanning the spark of knowledge

Oblation spoon (**sruk**) — converting all action into service of the divine.

The Ten Forms of Agni

THERE ARE ten main forms of fire, five natural forms and five ritual forms.

The five natural forms are:—

1. **Agni** is the earthly or common fire, either visible or potential, that is, hidden in fuel.
2. **Indra** (or Vayu), the power of the lightening which dwells in the clouds, is the fire of space, of the intermediary world. It is the source of conflagrations and of the dreaded bush-fires (dāva-agni').
3. **Sūrya** (the Sun), the fire of the heavenly sphere which illumines the world, is known as the celestial-fire (divya-agni).
4. **Vaiśvānara** (the all-pervader) is the power of digesting, found in all things, all beings. It is the support of life.

5. Vāḍava Agni The fire of destruction, Agni's most fearful form remains hidden under the sea, ever ready to destroy the world.

The five forms of ritual fire are:—

6. Brahmā-agni — The fire-of-the- Immensity is said to appear spontaneously during the ritual of sacrifice at the sound of the magic formula (the Arani-manthana Mantra that is uttered while the fire stick is revolving. This is the fire born of the world.

7. Prajāpatya-agni — The fire-of-the-lord-of-progeny is handed over to the unmarried student when he is invested with his sacred thread. In this fire he is to perform the daily ritual offering known as Agnihotra. He is pledged to preserve this fire, worship it, and feed it with offerings, till the day when, at the approach of old age, he abandons his home to retire into the forest.

8. Gārhapatya-agni — The house-holder's fire is brought into the house after the marriage ceremony and is the center of family rituals. It is to be kept ever alive and all the offerings of the married man should be offered into it.

9. Dakṣiṇa-agni — The Ancestors' fire or 'Southern fire' in which offerings are made to Ancestors. The rituals of exorcism (abhicāra yajña) are to be performed in this fire. During the great ritual sacrifices a fire lighted from a 'Southern fire' has to be maintained outside the southern gate of the sacrificial-pavilion (yajña- maṇḍapa). This fire is expected to burn away the obstacles which would otherwise arise to prevent the completion of the ritual.

10. Kravyāda-agni — The funeral-fire which is lit on the funeral pyre and into which the body is offered as the final oblation.

Elsewhere the ritual fire is shown under six forms:— the fire of the householder, **gārhapatya-agni**, the fire of Vedic rituals, **āhavanīya-agni**, the fire of the Ancestors, **dakṣiṇa-agni**, the fire of the assembly, **sabhya-agni**, the fire of the Sacrifice (Agnihotra), **āvasathya-agni**, the fire of divine service, **aupāsana-agni**.

Yama — Regent of the South



Yama (the Binder) is the god of death, the sovereign of the infernal regions. The wrathful one who judges the dead whom his messengers drag before his throne. He is the embodiment of righteousness (Dharma) and the king-of-justice (dharma-rāja). He is, however, compassionate.

In the Vedas, Yama is the First Ancestor and the king-of-Ancestors (pitr-rāja). He rules over the kingdom of the dead where the Ancestors dwell. He is also the king-of-ghosts (preta-rāja).

The word *yama* means "binder, restrainer." It is Yama who keeps humankind in check. "He binds, he decides what are the actions of the living beings that bear or do not bear fruit"

Yama is punishment (*daṇḍa*), the Eternal Law on which the universe rests. He is Death (*Mrtyu*) and the End (*Antaka*), Time (*Kāla*), the Finisher (*Kṛtānta*), the Settler

(*Śamana*). As the ruler of the southern direction, Yama is called lord of the south (*Dakṣiṇa-pati*).

Yama is the son of the resplendent Sun god —Vivasvat (Rig Veda 10.14.5), the embodiment of social morality represented as one of the aspects of the Sun and envisaged as the progenitor of humankind. Yama's brother is the Lawgiver, Manu, who shares with him the title of progenitor of humankind. Yama's twin sister is Yamī, who loves him passionately, though he is sometimes said to have resisted physical union with her (ibid. R.V.10.10). After his death she mourned him so bitterly that the gods created Night (*Yāmini*) to make her forget. Yamī later appeared on the earth as the river Yamunā.

Yama married ten of the daughters of Ritual-Skill (*Daksa*), who are the powers born of the ritual sacrifice. Some texts state that his two beloved consorts are shroud-of-smoke (*Dhūmorṇā*) that rises from the funeral pyre and Victory (*Vijayā*.) Yama is sometimes shown with another 2 wives, — Golden-Garland (*Hema-mālā*), Good-Behavior (*Suśīla*).

Yama's city is the City-of-Bondage (*Samyamini*). Manifold-Secret (*Citra-gupta*) is his scribe. His ministers are Wrath (*Caṇḍa*) and Terror (*Mahācaṇḍa*). Yama's charioteer is Sickness (*Roga*). He is surrounded with demons who are personifications of the different diseases. But there are also many sages and kings who assemble in his court to pay him homage. Musicians and heavenly dancers charm his visitors. At the door of the judgment hall is a guard called Legality (*Vaidhyata*).

Yama owns two four-eyed dogs with wide nostrils, who were born to the Fleet-One (*Sārama*), the bitch who guards the herds of Indra. They watch the path of the dead.

Accoutrements

Yama is of dark green complexion with glowing red eyes. He dresses in blood red garments. His hair is tied on the top of his head and he wears a glittering crown. In many stories he's described as a handsome man. The virtuous and the sinners see Yama in different forms. To the virtuous he appears beautiful and compassionate like Viṣṇu. To the sinner he appears wrathful and terrifying.

He holds a pāśa (noose) and a daṇḍa (staff), and also carries an paraśu (ax), a khadga (sword), and a dagger. He rides a black buffalo and sometimes appears himself in the form of a buffalo. The buffalo being the symbol of *Tamas* — darkness, inertia, ignorance.

Manifold-Secret (Citra-gupta), the Scribe of the Lord of Death

Brahmā having completed his work, meditated upon the Supreme Immensity. Suddenly, while he sat in meditation, a man of divine appearance sprang forth from his body. This man held in his hand an account book and a pen. He came to be known as Manifold-Secret (*Citra-gupta*). Dwelling near the king-of-justice (Yama), he was instructed to write down an account of the good and bad deeds of all living beings.

He is the patron deity of all scribes, accountants and others involved in secretarial work.



Nirṛta — Regent of the South-West

The regent of the southwestern direction is Misery (*Nirṛta*). Misery is the son of Vision (*Kaśyapa*) and Fragrance (*Surabhi*). He is also one of the eleven Rudras (Padma Purāna, Sṛṣṭi khāṇḍa, ch. 40). He is the lord of elves (*nairṛta*), ghosts (*bhūta*), and night-wanderers (*rākṣasa*) and also the lord-of-the-directions (*Dikpāla*). People worship him to gain victory over their enemies. In Vāstu his direction is the place of the rubbish heap or re-cycling bins as he presides over decay and rot.

A legend says that once there was a virtuous king of the criminal tribe of the Śabara named Yellow-Eye (*Piṅgākṣa*). One day in the forest he heard people crying for help. He ran and found travelers being looted by a group of savages (*dasyu*). He fought them and was killed — being killed in the defence of strangers is equal to a Vedic Yajña and as a reward he attained godhood and was made the regent of a direction.

The *nairṛtas* are the descendants of Nirṛti and are represented as a kind of elf associated with Kubera.

NIRṚTI

Nirṛti, the Goddess of Misery is a sinister goddess representing suffering, poverty, disease, and death. As the Embodiment of all sins, she appeared at the time of the churning of the ocean before the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmi. Hence she is the older sister of Lakṣmi known as Alakṣmī. Her abode is the sacred fig tree, the pippala, where, every Saturday, Lakṣmi comes to visit her.



To her realm belong gambling, prostitution, sleep, poverty, disease, and all the forms of trouble.

She is the wife of Sin (Adharma), the son of Varuṇa. Her sons are Death (*Mṛtyu*), Fear (*Bhaya*), and Terror (*Mahābhaya*). In this world all those who are born with a handicap, in the families of thieves or evildoers, and yet are virtuous and kind are especially protected by Nirṛti.

Varuṇa — Regent of the West



Varuṇa (the Coverer or Binder), the personification of the Mysterious Law of the Gods presides over the relationship of humans with the gods. He is the ruler of the "other side," of the invisible world. He represents the inner reality of things, higher truth (*rta*), and order in their transcendent aspects, beyond understanding. His absolute power is felt during the night and in all that is mysterious, while man-made laws, represented by Mitra, rule the day. Although usually linked with Mitra, Varuṇa is occasionally invoked alone. He is everywhere, in the universe and around it, pervading all things as the inner law and order of creation. He established and maintains natural and moral laws, expressions of the cosmic order. His laws are unassailable and rest upon him as on a mountain. As the King, Varuṇa is the Justice-giver, whose duty is to punish the guilty. He catches the evildoers and binds them with his noose.

In the later mythology Varuṇa came to be relegated to the position of a god of death. Indra, the ruler of the sphere of space, took precedence over him, the ruler of the sky. In the Mahābhārata (2.9) and all later texts Varuṇa appears as the lord of the waters, the ruler of the sea or the

subterranean waters. He is the giver of rain and has been the owner of the soma. He is the regent of the western direction. His domain is the Western Ocean. He is rich and happy. He also rules over one of the lunar mansions (nakshatra).

The name Varuṇa may be derived from the root *vr*, meaning "to surround, envelop, cover." It refers to all that veils or covers, all that is mysterious, cryptic, hidden. Varuṇa is also the lord of the causal waters that surround the world. It can also be derived from the root *vr*, "to restrain," "to check," referring to the god's character as the enforcer.

His city, the most beautiful in the world, is called Starry-Night (Vibhāvārī), or Earthly-City (Vasudhā-nagara), or Joyful (Sukha). He has two wives the junior being Prosperity (Ṛddhi), and the elder wife Vārūni, is the goddess of liquor. She is sometimes called or Gaurī, the Fair One. His sons are:— Nourisher (*Puṣkara*), Strength (*Bala*) and a daughter Liquor (*Surā*). Another son, Wrong-Deed (*A-dharma*), married Misfortune (*Nirṛtī*). Her sons are are:— Ill-omens (*nairṛta*) and demons (*rākṣasa*), Fear (*bhaya*), Terror (*Mahā-bhaya*), and Death (*Mrtyu*).

Accoutrements

Varuṇa appears as handsome and well-dressed. He rides upon the **Makara** — a mythical sea-monster sometimes associated either with a shark or a crocodile. His right hand shows the **abhaya-mudra** — gesture of removing fear. In his left hand he holds a **nāga-pāśa** — noose made of a serpent.

Vāyu — Regent of the North-West

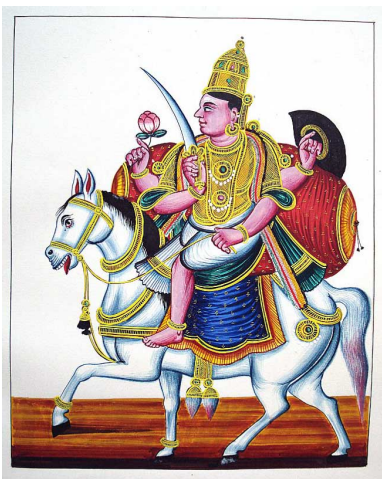
Vāyu is the Lord-of-Wind. In the Upanisads, Vāyu appears as the cosmic life breath, the universal "spirit," the impeller of life and of the living. Vayu is also the substance and the essence of speech (*vāc*). A few Vedic hymns are addressed to him. The name Vāyu comes root *vā*, "to blow."

Vāyu is the purifier, the first to have drunk the ambrosia, the soma. He is an explorer, the messenger of the gods, the leader of sacrifices. He is also called the "wanderer" (*Vāta*), he without whom one dies" (*Marut*), "the one by whom one lives" (*anila*) and the "cleanser" (*Pāvana*). Vāyu has a destructive aspect (*ugra*) as well as a gentle, beneficial form (*śānta*). Vāyu is the friend of Agni whom he strengthens and helps.



Accoutrements

In the Vedas Vāyu is pictured as a strong and powerful white man riding a deer. He carries a bow and arrows and flags. All his attributes are all white. He is also the father of Hanumān.



Kubera — The Regent of the North

THE REGENT of the northern direction is Kubera the god of wealth, the chief of the genii, called the mysterious- ones (*yaksa*) or the secret-

ones (*guhya*), who guard the precious stones and metals stored inside the earth.

Kubera's half brothers were Roarer (*Rāvaṇa*), the powerful king of Srilanka, Jar's-Ear (*Kumbhakarna*), and Terrific (*Vibhisana*), who became Rama's ally. Their sister is Sharp-Nails (*Śūrpa-nakha*). Ravaṇa drove Kubera away from his capital in Lanka and took over.

Kubera's wife is Auspicious (*Bhadra*) and his sons are Reed-Axle (*Nalakubera*), who is also called "son of Mayu rāja" (the king of animals resembling men)," and Bejeweled-neck (*Maṇi-grīva*), who is also called Colorful-Poet (*Varṇa-kavi*). His daughter is Fish-eyed (*Minākṣī*).

Kubera is shown as a white dwarf with a large belly. He has three legs which represent the three principle desires — *putreṣa* (desire for offspring) *vitteṣa* (desire for wealth and power) and *lokaiṣa* (desire for fame and recognition).

The name of Kubera seems to be of unknown origin, though it has been, suggested that it may be derived from *ku-bera*, the "ill-shaped one," a word similar to *kim-purusa*, *ku-purusa*, etc.

An offering is made to him at the end of all ritual sacrifices, though he does not appear to have a separate cult. He is now worshiped mainly in Nepal, but is one of the seven divinities of wealth known all over Asia. Kubera is the giver of jewels, the protector of travelers. He is associated with Gaṇeśa, the lord of categories. Whatever treasures are in the earth, they all belong to Kubera. Only through his kindness do men obtain precious metals and stones from the entrails of the earth.

The Yaksas, Guardians of the Earth's Treasures

THE *yaksas*, with their king, Kubera, were originally anti-gods (*asura*), but made friendly overtures to the gods and were accepted in their midst.

The term *yaksa* comes from a Vedic word meaning "marvelous" or "mysterious." The mysterious-ones (*yaksa*) are also the secret-ones (*guhya*). They are often mentioned with the night-wanderers (*rākṣasa*), or demons. The Yakṣas are also connected with the serpents (*nāga*). With Kubera at their head they seceded from the *rākṣasas*.



Īśāṇa — Regent of the North-east

The north eastern direction according to Vāstu is the most important of all directions being ruled by Lord Śiva in the form of Īśāṇa — "The Ruler".

He is the embodiment of all learning and the master of all knowledge. Īśāṇa is connected with the element air, the sense of touch. The *prāṇa* enters into the house from the Īśāṇa kona and exits via Nirṛti kona. In the Īśāṇa kona one installs the household deity or at least keeps some sacred object.

Some texts state that he should carry a Lute (*vīṇā*) and a skull (*kapāla*)



THE NAVAGRAHAS — Planetary Deities

The Nine planets (*grahas*) are the “Lords of Karma” and are the mediators of Karma – Action — it’s causes and it’s effects. Everything in the world is ruled by one or other of the *Grahas*. The external Macrocosm is known as *Brahmāṇḍa* and the internal Microcosm of the individual is known as *Pinḍāṇḍa* — both are mutually related to each other. For example the Sun in the solar system is homologous with the Self (*jīva*) in the individual. The Moon is homologous with the emotions in the individual etc. etc.



SŪRYA NĀRĀYAṆA

Sūrya Nārāyaṇa is the personification of the Sun which is daily worshipped by all Hindus. The Sun is the direct manifestation of the Absolute or Brahman. The physical Sun shares some characteristics posited of Brahman — the Absolute Reality.

We speak of the Sun rising, setting being hidden by the clouds etc. In fact he neither rises nor sets nor is covered by anything. All of these perception of the Sun are conditioned by our time and space bound existence upon earth.

Self-luminosity is that which reveals itself and throws light on other objects. The earth and the moon both come from the Sun but neither is self-luminous, it is the Sun that reveals both

the earth and the moon — all of this is akin to what we conceive of in *Brahman*.

The Sun is both the material cause and the efficient cause of his satellites, he originates them and sustains them but himself does not undergo any change. Brahman projects the universe into being, sustains it but is never Itself modified.

The Sun rides a chariot drawn by 7 horses which are the 7 colours of the spectrum. He carries the **Śankha** and **Cakra** — conch and wheel, the symbols of creation through sound and order. He’s often depicted displaying the **varada** and **abhaya** mudras as well. Sometimes he is shown just holding two lotuses as symbols of unfoldment.

Sūrya has four wives:—

1. *Suvarcala* — the Resplendent, illumination or knowledge
2. *Chāyā* — Shade
3. *Jyoti* — Light
4. *Aiśvarya* — Sovereignty

His charioteer is Aruṇa the red-light of dawn and his companion is Uṣā — the dawn itself.

The Moon (Chandra or Soma)



Chandra is said to be the son of Prabhākra (the Sun). He is also identified with the Vedic SOMA. Soma = Amṛta the nectar of immortality which alludes to the nourishing, nurturing and invigorating influence of the Moon on all life forms. He was married to the 27 daughters of Daksha Prajapati which represent the 27 lunar mansions known as nakṣatras — his favourite wife being Rohini. He seduced the wife of Brihaspati named Tārā and had by her a son — Budha.

He is described as young, beautiful, fair; two-armed and having in his hands a club and a displaying the varada mudra, or holding 2 white lotuses. He rides in a chariot pulled by ten white horses or sometimes just an antelope. The 10 horses represent the 10 indriyas (organs of action of organs of knowledge) and the 3 wheels of the chariot represent the 3 Gunas.

Mars (Kuja or Mangala)



Once when Lord Śiva was immersed in deep meditation (*samādhi*) at his abode, Mount Kailāśa, three drops of perspiration originated from his forehead and fell down on the earth. From those drops manifested a very beautiful infant, who was of reddish complexion and who had four arms.

Lord Śiva handed the child over to the earth goddess, Bhūmi for upbringing and he was thus named **Bhauma** as he was nurtured and brought up by 'Bhumi' (earth).

When Bhauma grew up, he went to Kāśī and did a tremendous penance to please lord Śiva who blessed him by granting him the status of a Graha and appointed him to rule 'Mangala loka' (the Abode of Auspiciousness), which was superior even to the 'Śukra loka' (the Abode of the god of Venus — Śukra).

His weapons are the mace (*gadā*), trident (*śūla*) and śakti and he displays the *abhaya mudra*. His vehicle is the Ram representing leadership and being head-strong. Mangala is considered a malefic of the first order. He rules over the signs Mesha (Aries) and Vrishchika (Scorpio), is exalted in Makara (Capricorn) and has his fall in Karka (Cancer). Mangala represents drive and physical

energy, aspiration, self-confidence and ego, strength, anger, impulsiveness, heroism and adventurous nature. As the God of War he is associated with battle, war and soldiers.

Mercury (Budha)

The adulterous son of the Moon by Tārā wife of Jupiter. He married Ila who was the daughter of Manu. Manu was childless and arranged for a yajña to be performed for obtaining a son, but the priest got the mantras wrong and a daughter was born. Mitra and Varuna performed a sex-change and Ila became a boy who was named Sudyumna. Under a curse of Śiva, Sudyumna again became a woman and married Budha. Later on she was again transformed by Vishnu into a male and had 3 sons. Another version of the story has Ilā (Īḍa) as the eldest son of Manu who trespassed upon a grove sacred to Lord Shiva and under a curse was transformed into a woman. Due to his friends supplications Śiva and Pārvati agreed for him to be male one month and female the next.



Mercury rules the intellect and communication skills. He rides upon a lion and holds a mace (*gadā*), sword (*khaḍga*) and a shield (*khetaka*) and shows the *varada-mudra*. or *abhaya-mudra*.

Jupiter (Guru or Brihaspati)



Bṛhaspati — "lord of prayer or devotion", also known as *Deva-guru* (guru of the gods), is considered the personification of piety and religion, and the chief 'offerer of prayers and sacrifices to the gods' (purohita), with whom he intercedes on behalf of humankind.

He is the arch-nemesis of Śukrācārya the guru of the Dānavas (anti-gods) He is also the god of wisdom and eloquence, to whom various works are ascribed, such as the Barhaspatya sutras.

Bṛhaspati is the son of Rishi Angiras and has three wives. His first wife Śubha gave birth to Bhānumati, Rāka, Arciṣmati, Mahāmati, Mahiṣmati, Sīnivali, and Haviṣmati, his seven daughters. His second wife Tāra gives birth to seven sons and a daughter.

Through his third wife Mamata, he has two sons, Kacha and Bharadvaja. He attained his position as the preceptor of the Devas, by performing penances. Lord Shiva granted him this position, as well as his position as one of the Navagrahas (Nine Planets).

Bṛhaspati is considered to be the greatest benefic of any of the planets.

This indicates vastness, growth and expansion in a person's horoscope and life. Br̥haspati also represents the balance of past karma, religion, philosophy, knowledge and issues relating to offspring. He is concerned with education, teaching and the dispensation of knowledge.

He displays the *varada-mudra* and carries the water-pot (*kamaṇḍalu*) rosary (*akṣamālā*) and a stick (*daṇḍa*).

Venus (Sukra)



Śukra “clear, pure” or “brightness, clearness”, is the son of Bhrigu, and Guru of the Daityas and Asuras. He is of white complexion, middle-aged and of agreeable countenance. He is described variously as mounted on a camel, horse or crocodile. He holds a stick, japa-mālā and a lotus and sometimes a bow and arrow

He studied the Vedas under the rishi Angirasa but he was disturbed by Angirasa's favouritism for his own son Brihaspati. He then left and went to study under rishi Gautama. He later performed penance to Lord Shiva and obtained the Sanjivani mantra (a mantra that revived the dead). He married Priyavrata's daughter *Urjāsvati* and they had four sons — Caṇḍa (fierce), Amarka (deathless), Tvaṣṭṛ (designer) Dharātra (support) and a daughter from his marriage to Indra's daughter Jayanti by the name Devayani (path of the gods)

Due to the hatred Śukrācārya bore towards **Vishnu** for what he perceived as the murder of his mother as she had given shelter to some asura whom Vishnu was hunting, Śukrācārya decided to become the Guru of Asuras. He helped them achieve victory over the Devas and used his knowledge to revive the dead and wounded among them.

In one story, Lord Vishnu is born as the Brahmin dwarf-sage Vāmana. Vāmana comes to take the three worlds as alms from the asura king Bali. Lord Vishnu wanted to deceive the king Bali who was the grandson of the great king Prahlada, in order to help the Devas. The sage Śukrācārya identifies him immediately and warns the King. The King is however a man of his word and offers the gift to Vamana. Śukrācārya, annoyed with the pride of the king, shrinks himself with his powers and sits in the spout of the Kamaṇḍalu from which water has to be poured to seal the promise to the deity in disguise. Lord Vishnu, in disguise of the dwarf, understands immediately, and picks a straw from the ground and directs it up the spout, poking out the left eye of Śukrācārya. Since this day on, the guru of the asuras has been known to be half blind.

Devayani was the daughter of Śukrācārya, who was rejected by the son of Brihaspati, Kacha. She later marries the legendary Somavanshi king Yayati. In the time of the Mahabharata, Śukrācārya is mentioned as one of the mentors of Bhishma, having taught him political science in his youth

Saturn (Śani or Śanaīścara)

Śani is also known as *Śanaīścara* comes from *Śanayē Kramati Sah*, the one who moves slowly, because Saturn takes about 30 years to revolve around the Sun.

Śani is the son of Surya and his wife Chāyā (Shade). He is the elder brother of Yama, the god of death, who is also the Lord of Dharma or justice. Surya's two sons Śani and Yama judge and punish all beings for their bad karmas. Śani supervises the results of our deeds in this life through appropriate joy and sorrow; Yama grants the results of our deeds after death.

It is said that when Śani opened his eyes as a baby for the very first time, the sun went into an eclipse, which clearly denotes the impact of Śani on astrological charts. He is known as the greatest teacher and well-wisher for the righteous as well the greatest punisher for those who follow the path of evil, betrayal, backstabbing and unjust revenge.

He is depicted dark in colour, clothed in black; holding a sword, arrows and two daggers and mounted on his vehicle the carrion crow which consumes the rice-balls offered to the dead.



Rahu (North node of the Moon)



During the Great Churning of the Ocean — *Samudra manthana*, the asura Rahu drank some of the *amṛta* (divine nectar). Sun and moon realized it and alerted *Mohinī* (the female avatāra of Vishnu). Before the nectar could pass his throat, *Mohinī* cut off his head. The head, however, remained immortal due to the effect of amrita and became Rahu. It is believed that this immortal head from time to time swallows the sun, causing eclipses. Then, the sun passes through the opening at the neck, ending the eclipse. The body also turned into Ketu due to a boon, and it in turn swallows the moon on timely basis to cause a lunar eclipse.

Rahu is a legendary master of deception who signifies cheaters, pleasure seekers, operators in

foreign lands, drug dealers, poison dealers, insincere & immoral acts, etc. It is the significator of an irreligious person, an outcast, harsh speech, falsehoods, uncleanliness, abdominal ulcers, bones, and transmigration. Rahu is instrumental in strengthening one's power and converting even an enemy into a friend.

In Vedic astrology Rahu is seen as an asura or demon who does his best to plunge any area of life he controls into chaos, mystery, and cruelty. He is associated with the world of material manifestation and worldly desire, as well as random, uncontrolled growth without wisdom or understanding.

Rahu is supposed to be a mighty and naughty child of *Maya*, and thus has a lot of dualities attached to its *mayavi* (illusory) nature. It relates to the Seventh Ray energy of esoteric astrology, as it represents a force displaying all the possibilities within the realm of existence.

There is no equal to Rahu when it comes to giving upliftment in name and fame or sudden luck at gambling. The area in which this success is attained usually relates to the significations of the house Rahu is placed in. All the electric lights that illuminate our world in the nighttime can be said to be associated with Rahu. Rahu is known as the “artificial sun,” which is fitting considering the introduction of electric lights, adding to the illusion and glamour of modern times. Rahu has in a way created its own artificial sun for his favoured time, the night.

Rahu rides upon a lion and holds a sword (*khadga*), shield (*khetaka*) a trident (*sūla*) and displays the *varada-mudra*.

Ketu (South node of the Moon)



Ketu is the descending lunar node. Vipracitti begot one hundred and one sons, through his In his wife Simhikā, of whom the eldest is Rāhu and the others are the one hundred Ketus.

Ketu can have a tremendous impact on human lives and in some special circumstances it helps one achieve the zenith of fame. Ketu is often depicted with a gem or star on his head signifying a mystery light.

Ketu represents karmic collections both good and bad, spirituality and supernatural influences. Ketu is associated with the Meena Avatar (Fish Incarnation) of Vishnu. Ketu signifies the spiritual process of the refinement of materialization to spirit and is considered both malefic and benefic, as it causes sorrow and loss, and yet at the same time turns the individual to God.

In other words, it causes material loss in order to force a more spiritual outlook in the person. Ketu is a *karaka* or indicator of intelligence, wisdom, non-attachment, fantasy, penetrating insight, derangement, and psychic abilities. Ketu is believed to bring prosperity to the devotee’s family, removes the effects of snakebite and illness arising out of poisons. He grants good health, wealth and cattle to his devotees. He rides on a vulture and carries the club (*danḍa*) while displaying the *abhaya-mudra*.