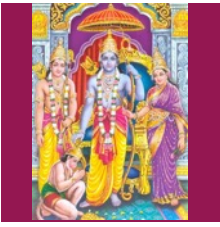


Sita Ram



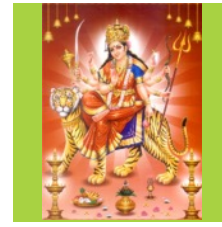
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



## Navagrahas - The Nine Planetary Gods in Hinduism

- by Jayaram V

Just as many ancient civilizations had their own versions of astronomy, Hindus had their own version from very ancient times. The Hindu astronomy, whose origins are in the Vedas, is based upon the configuration of the nine planets (grahas) and their collective influence on the world in general and each individual in particular.

Depending upon where these planets are located at the time of a person's birth, Hindus believe that the possibilities and potentialities of his life and energies are determined well in advance. Just as many other concepts in Hinduism, the word graha has multiple meanings. The Upanishads describe the senses as grahas, since they are the grasping (grahnam) ones. The deities that preside over them are called atigrahas, or their controllers. For example the mind and the breath are considered atigrahas because you can control your senses with their help.

The nine planets are collectively known as Navagrahas. They are worshipped in Hinduism for good luck or to overcome adversity, bad luck or misfortune arising from past karmas or birth related defects (dhoshas). They are found in most Hindu temples either grouped together on a panel or on a pedestal in commonly visible areas of the temple. Devotees usually propitiate these gods before offering prayers to the main deity in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Of the nine deities, seven are named after the planets in the solar system, and correspond with the names of the seven days in the week of the Hindu calendar.

The remaining two deities are actually demons who managed to gain a place in the pantheon through an act of trickery. Their names are derived from either comets or from the dark and somewhat hostile planets of the solar system (Neptune and Pluto). Depending upon their location in the planetary system and their association with the remaining deities, they are deemed either auspicious or inauspicious.

The nine planetary gods have a great significance in Vedic astrology. Hindu astrologers draw the birth charts of individuals based upon the their position at the time of their birth. Depending upon where they are located in the astrological chart at a given time, they exert positive or negative influence upon people and their destinies. The position of Sani, Rahu and Ketu are especially

considered important. If their positions are not favorable, astrologers suggest remedial measures to pacify the planets and ward off their negative influence.

While Navagrahas are usually found in many temples as subordinate deities, there are some temples which are exclusively built for them where they are worshipped as the main deities. One such temple is the Navagraha temple located on the banks of the river Kshipra in the outskirts of Ujjain, a famous pilgrim center of Saivism in central India. Some times we also come across temples built exclusively for only one of the Navagrahas such as the temples built for Surya and Sani in many parts of India. For example, there is a famous temple of Sani near Hindupur, which is frequented by many devotees.



A brief description of each of the Navagrahas is given below:

**1. Surya (Sun):** He is the Sun god, also called Ravi. In the company of the other planets, he generally stands in the center facing east, while the other planets stand around him in eight different directions, but none facing each other. He rides a chariot that has one wheel and pulled by seven white horses. The seven horses symbolically represent the seven colors of the white light and the seven days of the week.

**2. Chandra (Moon):** Also knows as Soma, and probably because of his waxing and waning qualities, in the images he is never depicted in full. We see him with only his upper body from chest

upwards, with two hands holding one lotus each, riding upon a chariot drawn by 10 horses.

**3. Mangala (Mars):** Also called Angaraka, Mangala is a ferocious god with four hands. In two hands he holds weapons, generally a mace and a javelin, while the other two are held in abhaya and varada mudras. He uses ram as his vehicle.

**4. Budha (Mercury):** We generally see him depicted with four hands, riding upon a chariot or a lion. Three of his hands hold a sword, a shield and a mace respectively, while the fourth one is held in the usual varada mudra (giving gesture).

**5. Brihaspathi (Jupiter):** Brihaspati also known as Brahmanaspati is the teacher of gods and is praised in many hymns of the Rigveda. He is generally shown with two hands, seated in a chariot driven by eight horses. The eight horses probably represent eight branches of knowledge.

**6. Sukra (Venus):** Sukra is the teacher of the demons and the author of Sukraniti. He is generally shown with four hands, riding upon a golden or a silver chariot drawn by eight horses. Three of his hands hold a staff, a rosary, a vessel of gold respectively while the fourth one is held in varada mudra .

**7. Sani (Saturn):** Sani is a turbulent and troublesome god who makes and breaks fortunes by his influence and position in the planetary system for which he is invariably feared and especially worshipped by those who believe in Hindu astrology. He is generally shown with four hands riding upon a chariot, or a buffalo or a vulture. In three hands he shown holding an arrow, a bow and a javelin respectively while the fourth one is held in varada mudra.

**8. Rahu:** His image resembles that of Budha (Mercury) in some respects but both gods differ fundamentally in their nature and temperament. He is generally shown riding a dark lion, in contrast to the white lion of Budha. But just like the other god, he carries the same weapons, namely a sword, a javelin and a shield in his three hands, while his fourth hand is held in varada mudra.

**9. Ketu:** In Sanskrit Ketu (Dhuma ketu) means comet. The scriptures describe him as having the tail of a serpent as his body, a description which very much matches with his connection to the image of a comet. However in the images, he is usually shown with a poke marked body, riding upon a vulture and holding a mace.

- Continued on Page 3

## Pancha Bhutas - The Possibility of the Five Elements - Sadhguru

Whether you want to know pleasure or you want to know bliss, for both your system has to become willing. If you want to know pleasure, your mind should come to a certain state of willingness and your physical body should be in a certain level of sensitivity. If you want to know the bliss of being one with something larger than yourself, once again your body has to cooperate. Whether it is the individual human body or the larger cosmic body, essentially, they are made of five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. In this, the first four elements are the active participants – space is the catalytic force. It is in the lap of this boundless space that these four elements play the game. So, the pancha bhutas are the five elements of nature.

What you call “myself” is just a mischief of these five elements. If you want to realize the full potential of this mechanism that you call a human being or if you want to transcend this one and

possibility of entering into something. In either case, it is the same door; which side of the door you are on decides everything about your life, even in terms of time and space. Whether you experience this body as a great possibility or a great barrier simply depends on the extent these five elements are cooperating.

India is a land which has seen that kind of sadhana, focus, understanding and mastery for a very long time. For the five elements in nature, there are five temples, which are all geographically located within the Deccan Plateau – four in Tamil Nadu, and one in Andhra Pradesh. These temples were created not for worship, but for sadhana. People moved from one temple to the other to do sadhana on each of the five elements. At one temple, they did sadhana on earth, then, they went to the next temple to do sadhana on water, and so on. Unfortunately, this connection is not there anymore because the sadhana atmosphere has been taken away. This understanding and mastery is generally missing, but the temples still exist. Some of them have maintained that vibrance and quality, while some of them have become weak.



Sri Kalahasti (Air)



Ekambareshwar (Land)



Nataraja (Sky)



Jambukeswara (Water)



Arunachaleswarar (Fire)

become one with the larger, cosmic mechanism, you need their cooperation. Unless you have a certain amount of mastery over these five elements you can neither know the pleasure of the individual self nor the blissfulness of the cosmic being.

The fundamental sadhana in yoga to gain mastery over these five elements or to purify the elements in the system in such a way that they cooperate, is referred to as bhuta shuddhi. If these five elements don't cooperate, you can struggle as much as you want, nothing happens. Only with their cooperation, from the basic aspects to the highest aspect, your life becomes a possibility. This human system is like a doorway. A door has two aspects to it – if you are always facing closed doors, for you doors mean that which stops you. If doors are opening up for you, then for you a door means a

to deal with these five elements. What you are right now is just a little bit of earth, water, air and temperature. All the ingredients are out there in the garden; it just takes a little divine touch to make these four things into a throbbing human being.

Sitting here, if you are aware of how the water, air, earth and fire in your body are functioning, suddenly you live your life with so much ease, people start thinking you are superhuman. But this is not about being superhuman – this is about realizing that being human is super. Being human is super if only you learn to use your humanity and this human mechanism as a possibility, not as a barrier.

- [www.isha.sadhguru.org](http://www.isha.sadhguru.org)

## Navagrahas - continued

### Symbolism

Of the nine planets, only seven are actually gods and the other two, Rahu and Ketu are demons. The seven are usually spoken as planets, while the two are compared to comets and the like, having a shadowy influence upon the destinies of people. The names for the seven days in the week are derived from the planetary gods. As can be seen from their names, some of the deities included in the Navagrahas are actually Vedic gods. Most likely, the concept of Navagrahas is later Vedic concept. There is no mention of the Navagrahas in the early Upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (3.2) speaks of eight grahas and eight atigrahas in the body in the sense of grasping deities (sense-organs) and overseeing grasping deities (sense-objects). The eight grahas mentioned in the Upanishad are incoming breath (prana), speech, tongue, eye, ear, mind, hands, skin. Their overseeing grasping deities are apana (downward breath), name, taste, color, sound, desire, touch. We do not know whether this concept of grahas in the body underwent a transformation subsequently.

The Navagrahas are not the actual planets in the modern sense, although they are called planets. They are deities in the Cosmic Person with corresponding presence in the microcosm. Their positions in the body as well in the world influence the course of events both at the universal and individual planes.

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## March 2017 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

11 Saturday	Holika Dahan
12 Sunday	Holi
14 Tuesday	Meena Sankranti
20 Monday	Basoda, Sheetala Ashtami
23 Thursday	Papmochani Ekadashi
27 Monday	Somvati Amavas
28 Tuesday	Chitra Navratri, Gudi Padwa, Ugadi
30 Thursday	Gauri Puja, Gangaur

For more details please refer [DrikPanchang.com](http://DrikPanchang.com)

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