

*To whose temple the Arch is starlit,
In whose temple the Sun is the image of God,
To whose temple the Moon goes every month
And brings the message out every full Moon,
And whose message the Moon sings as a word of sixteen letters,
His religion I belong to, His temple I visit,
His name I utter, His glory I live in.
To Him I offer the lotus of my day,
To Him I offer the lotus of my night.*

These seed thoughts from the Spiritual Psychology meditations of Dr Ekkirala Krishnamacharya give the note for the Lunar Messenger of the Circle of Good Will. The Moon is the reflective principle and symbol of the mind. When pure and calm, it reflects impressions from higher circles. The time of the full Moon is especially conducive for higher alignment, if we are poised enough. The alignment of the sun, Moon and earth in the sky helps us to experience the magic of the light of the soul and its manifestation down to the physical.

The Lunar Messenger is published every month in time for the full Moon. It contains thoughts from the teachings of eternal wisdom. Its purpose is to inspire us to put the teachings into practical life.

VISTAS OF WISDOM 104: SYMBOLISM 4 - ANIMAL SYMBOLS

Keys of Animal Symbolism

In the scriptures, there are many semi-mythical narratives in which we encounter animals such as lions, elephants, serpents, and so on. The animals appear as symbols that seek to tell us something. The stories are allegories not to be taken literally. Their purpose is to make esoteric teachings understandable to an average intelligence and to awaken our intuition. As students of wisdom, we should try to discover, with the appropriate keys, the original wisdoms that show themselves in different ways in different places and at different times. All initiates speak through symbols and parables. Commenting on scriptures without understanding them is arrogance. Without knowing the right approach, we will not learn anything. A key to understanding is through symbolism.

Many mythological heroes kill a lion. However, it is not about a lion, but about entering the inner cave of the sign of Leo. The bull in a Vedic scripture is symbolic and represents speech, the Word. The horse stands for the life principle. The bird represents pulsation; the serpent represents cycles of time. We cannot read the writings of the wisdom teachings like a novel; otherwise, we grasp only what is outwardly apparent, but not its hidden essence. Many read the books too quickly thus missing the treasure contained in the statements of the great initiates. In the teachings, one single sentence may carry a thousand sentences behind it. If we reflect, we understand better; with intuition, we understand even more. As much as we transform our lives through spiritual discipline and the study and contemplation of symbols, so much the teachings reveal themselves to us.

The Serpent

Some symbols have undergone their own developments through history. In biblical symbolism, for example, the serpent was considered in certain centuries by certain people as something non-sacred, as a symbol of temptation, tempting man to evil. Before and even after that time, the serpent had a much wider symbolism. Among some sects of the Jews the serpent was considered very sacred. Whenever Jesus Christ spoke about the serpent, he meant it as a symbol of hidden wisdom.

In Vedic symbolism, the serpent is always associated with time. The involutory and evolutionary aspect of time is represented as a circular serpent: The fire springing from the source which we call "God Unspeakable" conducts all of creation and once again it turns back to the Father. In the world scriptures, the descent of the energies is also symbolically represented as a serpent; the ascent of the energies is likened to an eagle, a peacock, or some other significant bird.

The descent of the serpent from the tree of life is indicative of the process of creative unfoldment through time. With involution, the perfect creation descends into the imperfect material creation. In paradise, Adam and Eve were of subtle nature. When they assumed clothes of skin, creation reached the physical plane. When consciousness, represented by a bird or an eagle, died for the sake of the material, the 'winged bird' became a 'crawling serpent', going down deep into the earth. The symbolism relates to humanity's experience in matter: Man buries himself more and more in the objective life, and proportionately consciousness is put to death. However, now, through the practice of discipleship, the earlier process is reversed. There is now the reverse, death to the personality and birth to the soul. Thus,

we return to consciousness, and the snake once again becomes a winged bird. This is called overcoming the serpent.

Hercules, *Krishna* and *Apollo* are said to have vanquished the serpent. Every disciple must vanquish the serpent on his path to Truth. The initiates and avatars exemplify this in their lives. It is not killing a serpent in objective life, but vanquishing one's own poisonous (harmful) inner attitudes, to enable the awakening of inner consciousness from the material centre, the lower base centre, to the spiritual centre, the eyebrow centre.

Shiva wears serpents as ornaments on his body. There is a great symbolism behind this. Time is his ornament. He has a fountain on his head (Aquarius); he has a bull (the expression of the divine word) as his mount. *Shiva* carries out his activity through his wives and his sons. One wife sits on a lion; one son, *Ganesha*, has an elephant's head and a rat as his mount; the mount of another son, *Kumara*, is a peacock. This combination looks very strange to the non-knower, but it is an excellent poetic representation of the combination of energies that was perceived by the seers and then represented in these forms.

In every average person there is an animal. This animal must be tamed so that we can ride upon it. The personality is the animal on which we should ride as a soul, rather than the animal riding on us. Goddess *Durga* is depicted as riding on a lion. The lion represents the astrological sign Leo. The symbol represents the activity of Virgo and the preceding sign Leo for when we are on the evolutionary path to Spirit the direction of the zodiacal wheel is reversed.

Elephant and Rat

The elephant-headed *Ganesha* or *Ganapati* is the cosmic Jupiter principle; he is worshipped as the lord of wealth and wisdom. His belly represents fulfilment. The colour is a variation from golden yellow to honey yellow, and the stone is topaz. His large ears are symbolic of deep listening. His sound is GAM, and the number is three. His head represents a triangle and is a symbol of wisdom. The geometric symbol of *Ganesha* is the triangle inside the circle with a centre. His trunk represents the *kundalini* force. The ascending trunk of the elephant indicates the upward movement of sound. Our head and spinal cord system look like the elephant's head and trunk.

Ganesha looks very large and rather immobile, but he rides a rat. The rat represents Mercury and skill. The symbolism conveys the message that if we possess great wisdom but cannot manifest it, the wisdom is only a burden and not of any use. The rat, on the other hand, is fast and also an excellent thief. If Mercury is not combined with virtue, it can be skilful in a dangerous way. All intelligent people who are skilful but not guided by noble motives are a danger. For like rats, they can intelligently steal. Nowadays, many businesses cleverly use intelligence to appropriate, manipulate and and steal. When Mercury is associated with Jupiter, we

have the opportunity to manifest wisdom in a skilful way for the benefit of society.

The elephant is one of the most profound Vedic animal symbols. It also represents beings of light, the Masters of Wisdom. The white colour of the elephant refers to the light that the elephant brings forth. The Divine Mother is surrounded by groups of elephants. There can be no ignorance around her because beings of light are there. A white elephant, a white winged horse, a white dog, a white dove or a white swan in quiet waters are symbols recommended for contemplation. We are instinctively attracted to such forms because in them consciousness is present in a richer form.

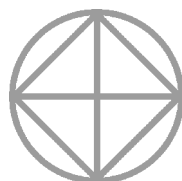
Cow, Horse and Dog

Dattatreya and also *Krishna* are accompanied by a healthy white cow. In Vedic symbolism, the cow represents creation and also our planet Earth. The planet and the creation are ready to be milked, meaning to nourish the living beings on all levels of existence. For this reason, the cow is considered sacred, is revered, protected and fed well before taking its milk. It is also a symbol of righteousness and of the ray of light beyond the seven planes.

The seers considered the sun ray as the transmitter of light and life, and they made the horse a symbol of the life force and of the fire aspect in creation. They symbolically said that the Sun has a chariot with seven horses, radiating forth the seven rays. The horse is called '*ashva*' in Sanskrit. *Ashwa* means 'not past, not future', but being in the present. One who can live constantly in the present has mounted the horse. The horse is also called '*haya*.' '*Haya*' is a sublime sound related to the *sahasrara* and the *ajna* centres. The three fire signs of the zodiac are related to the symbolism of the horse. Aries represents the head of the horse and also the spiritual fire; Leo represents the body and the soul fire; Sagittarius represents the tail of the horse and the physical fire. This is the path of fire.

The symbolism of the dog is very profound and can only be hinted at here. The dog is a symbol of vigilance, clairvoyance and loyalty. It teaches us gratitude and devotion and to be attentive to the signals of the Master. It is the master consciousness that is channelled through accomplished human instruments. To the extent that a person is loyal to the Master, he can absorb the energy of the Master. In Vedic symbolism, the sign of Leo is called 'the Dog' and it is associated with the Hierarchy. Leo and Scorpio are connected with the Dog Star Sirius. Lord *Dattatreya*, the Lord of the Dog Star, is always surrounded by four dogs, a symbol of the fourfold dimension of creation.

Sources used: K.P. Kumar: *Sri Suktam. Div. seminar notes / E. Krishnamacharya: Spiritual Astrology. The World Teacher Trust - Dhanishta, Visakhapatnam, India (www.worldteachertrust.org)*



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