

Sri Naageshwari Devi

"The Snake Goddess"



The reasoning behind compiling this much awaited article is that around the world snakes are given a bad name and have a notorious reputation and are slaughtered so unnecessarily. This is rather sad & unfortunate and we at DIPIKA want to change these unjust and common mis-perceptions, fears and phobias (Ophidio-phobia) etc people have about/with snakes. We humbly pray to Devi Naageshwari (a.k.a. Manasaa), for Mata to shower her merciful Ashirvaad (blessings) on us to compile this ground breaking article. Jai Mother Naageshwari (Manasa) Devi.

Srimati Naageshwari Devi, also known as Manasaa Devi, is an expansion of Parashakti Devi, therefore she has all the aspects of Mother Parashakti, The Supreme Energy and The Universal Mother. Manasaa Devi has the repository of the power of all Vedic Mantras. She bestows the grace of Universal Mother to her devotees. Whichever Mantra one recites, the very invocation of Manasaa Devi enables that person to attain quicker achievement (Siddhi) of the mantra. All desires will be fulfilled and all Vratas will yield immediate fruit." "May your desires be fulfilled with the grace of Srimati Naageshwari Devi"

Om Parashaktiye Namaha (Namastasyai X3) Namoh Namaha

Manasaa Devi is the Guardian Deity of Snakes and Reptiles - worshipped mainly in India - chiefly for the prevention and/or cure of snakebites and also for fertility and prosperity. Mother Manasaa is the sister of Vasuki, king of the Nagas (snakes) and wife of sage Jagatkaru (a.k.a Jaratkaru). Mata is also known as Vishahara (the destroyer of poison), Jagadgaury, Nitya (eternal) and Padmavati.

Manasaa Devi is depicted as kind to her devotees, but harsh to demoniac people. Manasaa Devi is recognized as the daughter of Mahamuni Kashyapa (one of the 10 manasa putras-sons of Lord Brahma) and Kadru (the mausie (maternal aunt) of Garuda {The bird carrier of Lord Vishnu}), the mother of all Nagas. Manasaa Devi is depicted as a female Deity covered

with snakes, sitting on a lotus or on a snake.



Mata is sheltered by the canopy of the hoods of seven cobras. At times Mata is depicted/illustrated with her son on her lap called, Astika. Mata is often called "the one-eyed goddess", as one of her eyes was burnt by her stepmother Chandika Devi (Mother Parvati). The great epic Mahabharata narrates the katha of Manasaa's Devi's marriage. The sage Jagatkaru practised severe austerities and had decided to abstain from marriage. Once he came across a group of men hanging from a tree upside down. These men were his Pitras (ancestors), who seemed to be doomed to misery and suffering as their descendents (children) had not performed their last rites. So they advised sage Jagatkaru to marry and have a son (Putra) who could free them of those miseries by performing the Shraddha (death ceremonies). Maha-naga Vasuki offered his sister - Manasaa's hand to sage Jagatkaru. Manasaa Devi mothered a son, named Astika, who in due time freed his ancestors. Astika also helped in saving the Naga (snake) race from destruction when King Janamejaya (Arjuna's {of the Pandavas} great-grandson) decided to exterminate all snakes by sacrificing them in his Sarpa-Yajna (fire offering) - pictured below.



Our sacred Puranas narrate kathas about Mata's appearance and declare that Mahamuni Kashyapa is her Pitaji (father). Many millennia ago, when serpents and reptiles were

creating chaos on the earth, Mahamuni Kashyapa created a devi and called her Manasaa as she was a creation of his mind (mana). The creator of this universe - the 4 headed Lord Brahma-ji - thereafter made Devi the presiding deity of snakes and reptiles. Manasaa Devi then gained control over the earth by praying to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shree Krishna Bhagavan. Upon being pleased by her sincere worship, Shree Krishna-ji then granted Devi divine Siddhi (powers) and ritually worshipped her, making her an established Devi. Mahamuni Kashyapa then had Manasaa Devi married to sage Jaratkaru, who agreed to marry her on the condition that he would leave her if she disobeyed him. Once, when sage Jaratkaru was awakened by Manasaa Devi, he became upset with her because she awakened him too late for his worship, and so he deserted her. On the request of the great Hindu Deities, sage Jaratkaru returned to Manasaa Devi and she eventually gave birth to Astika.

According to Manasaa Vijaya, when Lord Shiva saw Manasaa Devi, he took Manasaa Devi to his home where his wife, Chandika Devi, suspected Manasaa Devi of being Lord Shiva's concubine or co-wife, and insulted Manasaa Devi and burnt one of her eyes, leaving Manasaa Devi half-blind. Later on when the great ocean was being churned by the demons and Devas to get various jewels etc, a very disturbing poison called "Halahala" which caused Lord Shiva a negative effect on his body affected Him. Manasaa Devi thereafter cured him. On one occasion, when Chandika Devi kicked her, Manasaa Devi rendered her senseless with a glance of her poison eye. Finally, tired of quarrels between Manasaa Devi and Chandika Devi, Lord Shiva left Manasaa Devi under a tree, but created a companion for her from his tears of remorse, called Neto (a.k.a Neta). Later, the sage Jaratkaru married Manasaa Devi, but Chandika Devi ruined Manasaa Devi's wedding night. Chandika Devi advised Manasaa Devi to wear snake ornaments and then threw a frog in the bridal chamber which caused the snakes to run amok around the chamber. As a consequence, the terrified Jaratkaru ran away from the house. After few days, he returned and Astika, their son, was born.

Generally, Manasaa Devi is worshipped without an image. A branch of a tree, an earthen pot or an earthen snake image is worshipped as Devi, though images of Manasaa Devi are worshipped as well. She is worshipped for protection from and cure of snake bites and infectious diseases like smallpox and chicken pox. Devi is widely worshipped in the rainy (monsoon) season in India, when the snakes are most active.

Manasaa Devi is ceremonially worshipped on Naag Panchami - a festival of/snake worship in the Vedic month of Shravan (July-August). This year (2014) Naag Panchami falls on the 1st August. Ardent devotees observe a fast (vrata) on this day and offer milk and so forth at Pithu's (snake holes/pits).

Ma Naageshwari, is a great devotee of Lord Shiva and learnt all the shastras and vidyas from him. She then went on to contemplate on Lord Vishnu as well. Having been married to the powerful sage Jaratkaru, she gave birth to a divine child, Aastika. In the meantime, Maharaja Janamejaya planned to conduct the Sarpa Yajna, a fire ritual where snakes would be offered as sacrifice. All the Nagas (members of the snake clan), Deva's and Devi's were fairly disturbed by his plan, but could do nothing to help the situation. Aastika went to the Yajna just as Maharaja Janamejaya was about to start the rituals. Maharaja Janamejaya got so impressed by this divine countenance that he promised to give the boy anything he asked for. Aastika asked him to stop the Yajna, thereby saving the Naaga clan from mass destruction. Having fulfilled her divine mission, Mata Nageshwari proceeded towards Manasa Sarovar and then settled down there as Manasaa Devi. The benevolent Manasaa Devi bestows immense boons on her devotees and helps them tide over their adversities and

cures them of all their ills as well.

Amazing Benefits of Snakes

Most often snakes are thought of as ugly, slimy and dangerous creatures but, believe it or not, the purpose of snakes are not just to scare us but also to help us in many ways.

For Example:- Snakes help to control the smaller members of the animal kingdom from becoming overpopulated. Farmers save many hundreds if not thousands of rands yearly because of snakes protecting their farm products from destructive rodents.

The Most Valued Benefit

Snake Venom is highly valued. The Snake venom is extracted through a series of steps. Then the venom is injected into horses, which have to be watched closely for many months. As the horses become immune to the snake venom, blood will be collected, taken to a medical laboratory and processed into snakebite serum. The blood is then distributed to hospitals and doctors. If someone is bitten by a poisonous snake the horse serum, or antivenin, can be injected to make the snake venom in the body become ineffective.

There may not be very many benefits to snakes, but the few that are evident have proved to be worthwhile and life-saving time and time again.

Additional information on Snakes

Naag a.k.a. Naaga, Naga... is the Sanskrit word for a deity or class of entity or being, taking the form of a very great snake—specifically the King Cobra, found in Hinduism. The use of the term naaga is often ambiguous, as the word may also refer, in similar contexts, to one of several human tribes known as "Naagas"; and to ordinary snakes, particularly the King Cobra. A female naaga is a naagee or naaginee. There are several words for "snake" in general, and one of the very commonly used ones is sarpa. In the great epic Mahabharata, the depiction of Nagas tends toward the negative, and they are portrayed as the deserving victims of the snake sacrifice and of predation by the eagle-king Garuda. The epic calls them "persecutors of all creatures", and tells us "the snakes were of virulent poison, great prowess and excess of strength, and ever bent on biting other creatures" (Book I: Adi Parva, Section 20). At the same time, nagas are important players in many of the events narrated in the epic, frequently no more evil nor deceitful than the other protagonists, and sometimes on the side of good. The epic frequently characterizes Nagas as having a mixture of human and serpent-like traits. Sometimes it characterizes them as having human traits at one time, and as having serpent-like traits at another. For example, the katha of how the Naga prince Shesha came to hold the world on his head begins with a scene in which he appears as a dedicated human ascetic, "with knotted hair, clad in rags, and his flesh, skin, and sinews dried up owing to the hard penances he was practising." Lord Brahma is pleased with Shesha, and entrusts him with the duty of carrying the world. At that point in the katha, Shesha begins to exhibit the attributes of a serpent. He enters into a hole in the Earth and slithers all the way to bottom, where he then loads the Earth onto his head. (Book I: Adi Parva, Section 36.) The serpent king Vasuki helped the devas and auras to recover amrita, the elixir of immortality, from the Ocean of Milk by serving as the cord they wrapped around Mount Mandara in order to churn up the depths of the ocean. (Book I: Adi Parva, Section 18.) The naga princess Ulupi had a son Iravat with the Pandava hero Arjuna. (Book I: Adi Parva, Section 216.) Though he had the support of many nagas, Iravat was eventually slain by the Rakshasa Alamvusha at the battle of Kurukshetra. (Book VI: Bhishma Parva, Section 91.) Matali, the charioteer of Lord Indra, sought a husband for his daughter Gunakesi. He approached the naga Aryaka and proposed the marriage of Gunakesi with the naga's handsome grandson Sumukha. Alas, Aryaka replied, Garuda had already declared his intent

to devour the comely youth, having previously murdered his father. Matali, however, persuaded Lord Indra and Lord Vishnu to give Sumukha a draught of amrita, the elixir of immortality. Sumukha drank the potion, and thus was rendered impervious to any assault by the lord of the birds. The young couple were happily married. (Book V: Udyoga Parva, Section 103.). Pastimes involving the naagas are still very much a part of contemporary cultural traditions in the predominantly Hindu regions of Asia (India, Nepal, and the island of Bali). In India, naagas are considered nature spirits and the protectors of springs, wells and rivers. They bring rain, and thus fertility, but are also thought to bring disasters such as floods and drought. According to traditions naagas are only hostile to humans when they have been mistreated. They are susceptible to mankind's disrespectful actions in relation to the environment. They are also associated with water bodies, like rivers, lakes, seas, and wells and are generally regarded as guardians of treasure. The naagas also carry the elixir of life and immortality. Garuda once brought it to them and put a cup with elixir on the ground but it was taken away by Lord Indra. However, few drops remained on the grass. The naagas licked up the drops, but in doing so, cut their tongues on the grass, and since then their tongues have been forked. Nagas are also snakes that may take human form. Nagas are recognized as superior to humans. They inhabit subaquatic paradises, dwelling at the bottoms of rivers, lakes and seas. A most important function of these divine serpents is their function as guardians. We find them at the doors of Hindu and Buddhist shrines. They can not only frighten ordinary human intruders with their dangerous aspect as cobras, they can - as divinities - discern and repel any divine invader.

Naagas



Naagas are a type of snake race who spread throughout India during the period of the epic Mahabharata. The devic tribe called Suparnas (in which Garuda belonged) were arch-rivals of the Naagas. The great nemesis of the Naagas in the Mahabharata is the gigantic eagle-like Garuda. Garuda and the Nagas began life as cousins. The sage Kashyapa had two wives, Kadru and Vinata, the former of whom desired many offspring, and the latter of whom desired few but powerful offspring. Each got her wish. Kadru laid 1000 eggs which hatched into snakes, and Vinata laid two, which hatched into the charioteer of Surya the Sun Deity and Shree Garuda. Through a foolish bet, Vinata became enslaved to her sister, and as a result Vinata's son Garuda was required to do the bidding of the snakes. Though compliant, he built up a grudge that he would never relinquish. When he asked the snakes what he would have to do in order to be released from his bondage, they told him he would have to bring them amrita, the elixir of immortality. Garuda stole the elixir from the Devas and brought it to the serpents in fulfilment of their requirement, but through a ruse prevented them from partaking of it and achieving immortality. From that point onward, he regarded them as enemies and as food. (Book I: Adi Parva, Sections 16ff.) Kadru, the ancestral mother of snakes, made a bet with her sister Vinata, the stakes being that the loser would be enslaved to the winner. Eager to secure victory, Kadru requested the cooperation of her offspring in order to fix the bet so that Kadru would win. When her offspring balked at the request, Kadru grew angry and cursed them to die a fiery death in the snake-sacrifice of King Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, who was the son of Abhimanyu, who was the son of Arjuna. The king of the snakes Vasuki was aware of the curse, and knew that his brethren would need a hero to rescue them from it. He approached the renowned ascetic Jaratkaru with a proposal of marriage to a snake-goddess, Manasa, Vasuki's own sister. Out of the union of the ascetic and the snake-maiden was born "a son of the splendour of a celestial child." This son was named Astika, and he was to be the saviour of the snakes. In accordance with Kadru's curse, Janamejaya prepared a snake sacrifice of a type described in the scriptures, the Puranas. He erected a sacrificial platform and hired priests and other professionals needed for the rites. Following the proper form, the priests lit the sacrificial fire, duly fed it with clarified butter, uttered the required mantras, and began calling the names of snakes. The power of the rite was such that the named snakes were summoned to the fire and were consumed by it. As the sacrifice took on genocidal proportions, Astika came to the rescue. He approached Janamejaya and praised the sacrifice in such eloquent terms that the king offered to grant him a boon of his choosing. Astika promptly requested that the sacrifice be terminated. Though initially regretful of his offer, Janamejaya was true to his word, and the sacrifice came to an end. (Book I: Adi Parva, Sections 13-58.). Some well-known naagas are Lord Ananta-Sesha, ("Limitless-Eternal") the world serpent with a thousand heads serving as a bed of Lord Vishnu. Lord Balarama, origin of Ananta-Sesha. Karkotaka controls weather. Mucalinda protects the Buddha. Padmavati, the Naagee queen & companion of Dharanendra. Paravataksha, his sword caused earthquakes and his roar brought about thunder. Takshaka, king of the Naagas. Ulupi, a companion of Arjuna in the epic Mahabharata. Vasuki, king of the Nagas who helped the devas recover amrita from the Ocean of Milk. Kaliya, a snake conquered by Lord Krishna. The regions where naagas live are Patala (or Nagaloka), the seventh of the "nether" dimensions or realms, Bhoga-vati being its capital. Lake Manosarovar, lake of the Great Naagas. Mount Sumeru. Nagaland in India. Kacha Naga/Duplicate Naga, the Naga tribes outside Nagaland. Naggara, a village in the Himalayas, Tibet, that derives its name from Naga (Cobra). Nagpur, Indian city derived from Naagapuram, literally "city of naagas". Sheshna's well in Benares, India, said to be an entrance to Patala. Nagadaa, where naag-yagya was performed. Mekong river. Anantnag, Indian city (Kashmir) named after one of 12 prominent divine naga kings mentioned in Bhavishyapuram. Takshila, an ancient place in

Pakistan named after one of 12 prominent divine naga kings in Bhavishyapuran.

There are some powerful lessons that devotees of the Divine Goddess can find in her serpent aspects. The information that follows is very interesting to say the least about the Snake culture from different religious dominations. The snake, or serpent, is an image that has been inseparable from the Shakti/Goddess from the earliest of times onward to the most sophisticated Hindu philosophical musings on the Goddess as Kundalini, or the Serpent Power. Mother Nageshwari is more than a primal Hindu vision of the Goddess -- but she too falls into the same ancient association. One of the earliest indications of the serpent first appears in the Neolithic era as a serpent Mother Goddess around 5000BCE from Sesklo, Thessaly, and is also drawn coiling around the womb and the phallus as the principle of regeneration. In the Sumerian cities of Ur and Uruk, in the lowest level of excavation, two very old images of the Mother Goddess and her child, both having the heads of snakes, were found.

One of the most famous "Snake Goddesses" from outside India is the ancient figurine found in the palace of Knossos in Crete (c. 1600 BCE). A Judeo-Christian understanding of the snake as a symbol of Evil and the most damned of all creatures is very saddening indeed. "In images of the Goddess in every culture, the serpent is never far away -- standing behind Her, eating from Her hand, entwined in Her tree, or even, as in Tiamat, the shape of the Goddess Herself. [The Biblical Book of] Genesis is no exception to this, unless it be that, formally, there is no Goddess, only a woman of the same name [i.e. Eve, the "Mother of All Living"]. However, [here] the serpent, once lord of rebirth, has now turned into his opposite, the instigator of death in league with Eve." By contrast, the Hindu image of Nageshwari, the Serpent Goddess is free of these negative connotations and associations. In the Puranas however she is depicted as an almost wholly merciful deity. And doesn't it just "feel" right that She should be? For around 10,000 years (or maybe more) of recorded human history, the serpent was not a negative symbol; the Old Testament - in its zeal to wipe out the ancient Goddess cults of Canaan - essentially flipped the symbolism on its head. Ancient images were given new interpretations - but mankind's genetic memory (Jung's "Collective Unconscious") is strong: Intellectual redefinitions of a symbol as old as humanity cannot easily change our instinctive reactions. The basic symbols of the Bible are that no amount of rhetorical stress on the patriarchal interpretation can suppress. They address a pictorial message to the heart that precisely reverses the verbal message addressed to the brain - and this rather nervous discord inhabits Christianity, Islam as well as Judaism, since they all share the legacy of the Old Testament." So one may ask why did all this happen? Well it's rather simple: In the Bible, the "story of Eve is, in part, the story of the displacing of the Mother Goddess by the Father God". Demythologizing a Goddess is indeed a subtle process whereby the holiness that once belonged to Her is withdrawn and encompasses another figure, in this case Yahweh [the 'jealous God' of the Old Testament]. Insofar as She was formerly also known as Creation or Nature Herself, the demythologizing process extends to the whole of nature, which becomes, like her, fallen and cursed." The Goddess becomes a woman, thereafter this woman becomes cursed, and this woman and all of nature are given to man to possess and rule over. Lovely I must say hey? But how sad. Of course, such an interpretation is a trap for the overly literal and concrete mind, and much less beautiful and inspiring than a true interpretation in keeping with the ancient symbolism. The role of Shaktism (Mother worship), in Hinduism - or virtually any mystical religious practice on Earth - is to reclaim that Unity; that Yoga (Yoga means to unite). Sadhana (spiritual practice) is the practice by which we regain this lost Unity, by which we become "fully human." And Shakti Sadhana - the mystical religious practice that places the Goddess at its centre - is an especially powerful route by which to achieve that goal. That is why, in Shakti

Sadhana, is often a folly to deny or reject the world in the course of one's spiritual strivings. Whereas non-mystical forms of Christianity and Islam tend to offer the Paradise of Unity with the Divine only after death of the body, Sanathan Dharma (Hinduism) teaches that you can have it here and now, because the body is a manifestation of the Divine, if only we can manage to draw back the veil. And for that matter, Jesus - himself a great Yogi, when taken at his word rather than the later dogma that grew up around him - taught the same thing, in words that any Shakta would readily endorse: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21.)

In the above, we spoke of Christianity's Jesus as a yogi. But what we think of today as institutional "Christianity" is mainly the work of St. Paul, who wrote the most influential, doctrinal and interpretive books of the New Testament; which were then further cooked up and perverted by medieval theologians like Augustine - until finally we ended up with a nasty dogma, propounded and enforced by massive corporate entities like the Catholic and Protestant churches, with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Under all that weight of history and dogma, however, the historical Jesus - a gifted Yogi whom Hindus can understand as readily as the great Sripad Adi Shankaracharya, Shree Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Swami Shivananda, Srila Prabhupad, or Swami Ramakrishna, etc - can still be heard clearly.

Jesus is simply using the male idiom of his time to explain that humanity is the son of God, the Father - just as Shaktism (and every ancient Goddess religion) sees all humanity are the children of the Mother. But Jesus was a great Yogi whose insight extended beyond the confining Male paradigm of his time. In the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas (also rejected by the ancient Church Fathers), Jesus sounds like a *real* Shakta when he speaks of the relationship between spirit and matter: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female ... then you shall enter the Kingdom." (Logion 22). And again, he offers an unforgettable image of Divine Immanence: "Cleave a piece of wood, I am there; lift up the stone and you will find Me there." (Logion 77). Our focus is upon the Divine Feminine. In this article, we choose not to condemn or disparage any other honest and tolerant approaches to the Divine. There is no need for dogmatic Christianity to disappear - let it remain in place for those who need it and find comfort in it. But let us also realize that - at the individual level - all of these labels of belief cease to have concrete meaning. After all, the Hindu mystic (or Tantric), the Buddhist mystic (or Tantric), the Muslim mystic (or Sufi), the Christian mystic (or Gnostic) - all are approaching the same Unity with the Divinity within, where all oppositions and differences are burned away.

Sarpa dosha (the curse of a snake)

From time immemorial, people and serpents were living in close proximity and had a "love and hate" relationship. It is believed that hurt serpents are vengeful and curse the person(s) who has/have hurt them. The serpentine curse has devastating effect, and it is so intense that it continues to haunt the person(s) even after death (also in future births) till it gets absolved. The adverse effects of Sarpa dosha appear at very important phases of human life, that is, marriage and progeny. The impact of Sarpa dosha is so severe that it may create early curtailment of wedlock, by death of spouse or divorce, delay in progeny or denial of progeny and unexpected accidents. Miscarriages, still births or deformed children may also result.

You can perform any of these remedies that appeals to you:-

*** Worship Lord Subramanya (Muruga / Kartikeya) who is widely worshipped as the serpent deity and as forgiver of all doshas connected with serpents. Lord Subramanya is called Sarpa Dosha Nivaraka (remedier).

*** Pray to Lord Muruga daily and ask him to remove this snake curse that you may have incurred. It is necessary to propitiate serpents by visiting serpent shrines/Pithu and performing appropriate worship like offering milk and unsalted popcorn.

*** Some offer eggs (This is optional). You can if you like offer incense, lamp and flower thereafter. Keep it simple.

*** Those who are suffering Sarpa Dosh (Naga Dosh) perform remedial pujas for Lord Shani like fasting salt less on Saturday, chant Hanumanji's Chalisa, or chanting Shanidev's mantra "Om sham shanaish-charaaya namah"

*** The Sarpa Dosha Nivarana Mantra below can be recited 3 or 9 or 11 or 21 or best 108 times daily to be relieved of the Sarpa Dosha.

'Anantho Vasukee Seshaha Padmanaa-bhascha Kamba-laha
Sankha-paalo Dhaatha-raas-traha Taksha-ka Kaaliyas-thatha
Ethaani Nava-naa-maani Nagaa-naam cha
Mahaathma-naam Saayam-kaale pateth nityam praatha-kaale'...

*** Wear a ring made out of silver in the form of a snake in your middle or fore right finger.

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Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. We pray that this article will assist you in some way and we also pray that it helps you to appreciate the beauty and remarkable foresight of our ancient Hindu culture. We wish to educate all readers and demystify the path of Hinduism (Sanatan Dharma). Please feel free to share these articles with friends and family who do not have direct access to our website or articles. If you use the articles in any form including blogs and/or as part of other articles kindly credit our website as a source. We hope that the articles serve as a reference to you and your family when you need clarification of certain topics. Jai Hind... Jai Shree Naageshwari Devi kee Jai.

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanathan Dharma
Narottam das & Arjun Nandlal
[Email info@dipika.org.za](mailto:info@dipika.org.za)