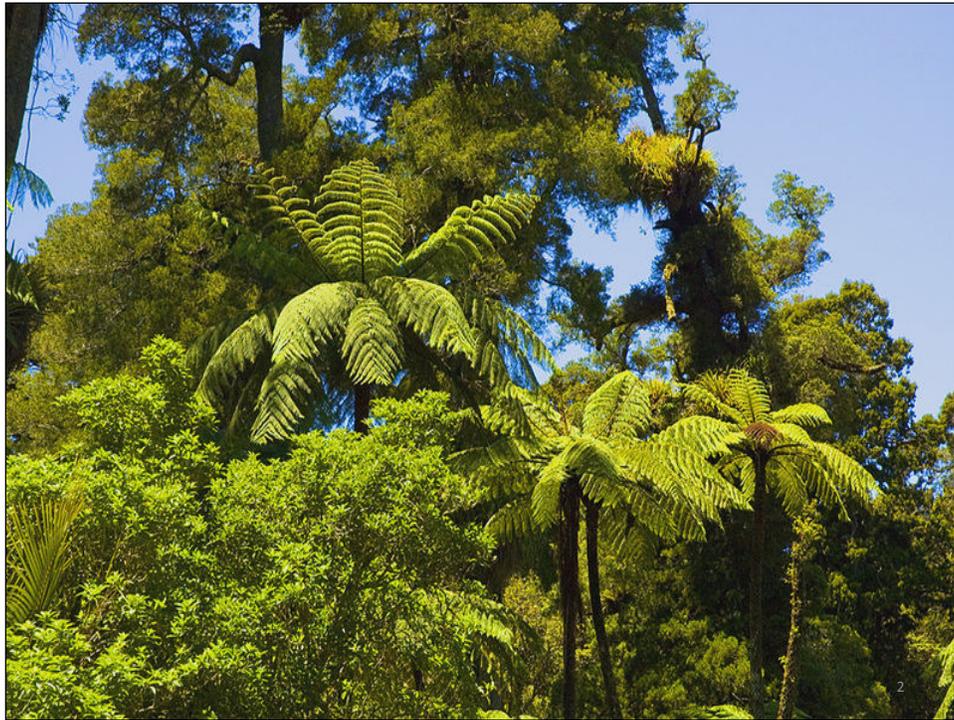


Week IV



Waitakere Forest, New Zealand, Children of Tane

Part of humanity is death. We will cover afterlife mythology later in the course.

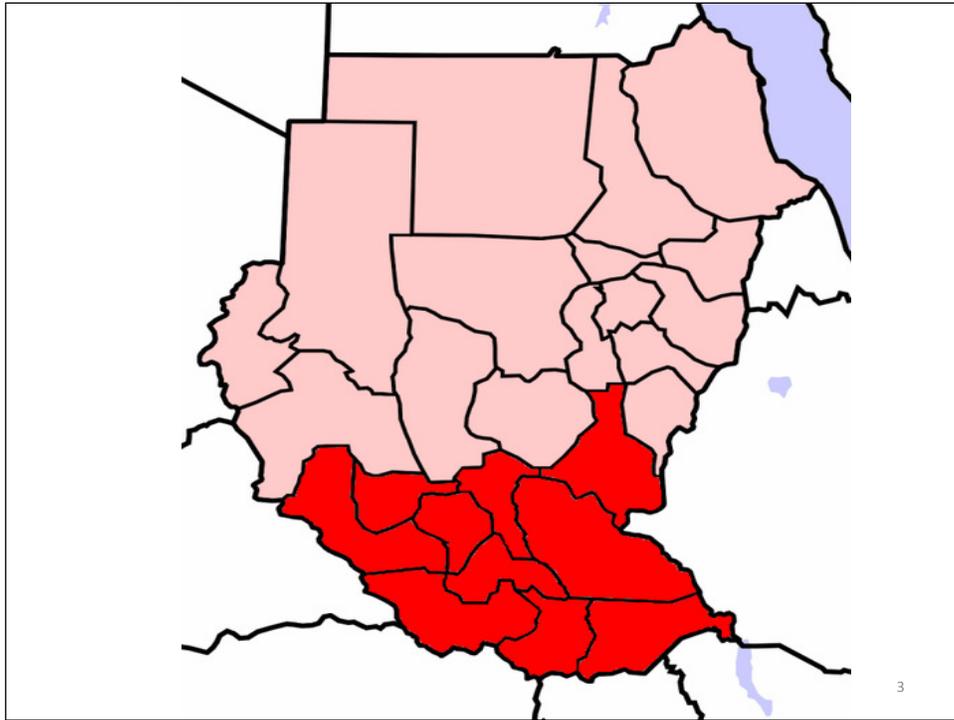
Willis indicates that the introduction of evils through Pandora is etched in many other mythological traditions.

Polynesian myth connects **the origin of death with the creation of the first woman.**

A Maori version of the story tells how Tane, god of forests and trees, fashioned the first woman from the sand of Hawaiki island. She bore him a daughter called Hine-titama or Dawn Maiden, whom the god then married also. But Dawn Maiden had not known that Tane was her father. When she discovered the shocking fact, she fled to the underworld.

Tane pursued her there, but Dawn Maiden told him that **he had “severed the cord of the world,”** and from that time on she would remain in the underworld and **pull Tane’s human children down to the realm of darkness.**

That is how **both death and the prohibition of incest** came to humanity.



Rope to Heaven: According to many African peoples there was originally no death, and its arrival is attributed to the transgression either of human beings or some animal. The Nuer pastoralists of Eastern Africa relate how there once was a rope joining heaven and earth. Anyone who grew old climbed the rope and was made whole again by the High God before returning to earth.

One day a hyena and a weaverbird climbed up the rope and entered heaven. The High God gave instructions they should not be allowed to return to earth where they would cause trouble. One night they escaped and climbed down, and when they were near the ground the hyena cut the rope.

When the part above the cut was drawn up to heaven, there was no way that human beings could get there, and now when they grow old they die.

The Nuer provide a mythological account of why some people have white skin and others have black skin. Kwoth (spirit of the sky) gave Europeans white skin as punishment for an act of mother-son incest committed by a pair of their ancestors. Kwoth is a god of over 70 African tribes who is everywhere and nowhere, inside everything but impossible to discover.

Southern Sudan, land of tribes, Neighbors Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Dem. Rep. Congo, CAR, Chad.



Shoshoni tribe.

Space is Limited. In North America, the afterlife is regarded as a place much like this world but with more game. The **“Happy Hunting Ground”** of the Plains people.

For the Shoshoni tribe, Wolf said that when a person died he could be brought back to life by shooting an arrow into the earth beneath him.

But Coyote said **it was a bad idea to bring people back to life, because then there would be too many people.**

Wolf agreed, but decided secretly that Coyote’s son would be the first to die, and by this very wish brought about the boy’s death.

Soon grieving Coyote came and told Wolf that his son had died. He recalled Wolf’s words that people could live again if an arrow was shot underneath them.

But Wolf countered with what Coyote himself had said, that man should die. Since then it has always been so.



Shoshoni family



The Grim Reaper. Kronos: **harvest god** worshipped by a culture before the Greeks.
His sickle was used in harvesting grain.

Harvest associated with death. The end of the growing season. The beginning of winter.

Time devouring all things was represented poetically by Kronos eating his own children. It was the Greek's very dramatic way of saying nothing lasts forever.

Other terms for the Grim Reaper: Angel of Death (Hebrew); Thanatos, twin brother of Hypos, god of sleep (Hellenic); Angou (Celtic Welsh); Ankou (Celtic Breton); Giltine (Baltic Lithuanians); Yama, the land of death (Hindu); Yomi, the underworld (Japanese mythology); and Sikhism, one of Gods Angels.

The importance of grain to ancient civilizations.

How horrible the thought was that **some mystic creature with the power to swipe away their whole harvest with a single swing of the mighty sickle.**

Also the flock of famished crows, which would accompany such a terrible figure.

The Grim Reaper symbolized death in an extremely effective way.

The Grim Reaper poses no real threat to our life,.

His legacy has instilled a sense of mystery and respect for death.

Reference: The Answer Bag. Not bad at all.



Stonehenge. Stonehenge a prehistoric monument, one of the most famous sites in the world.

It is at the center of the most **dense complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments** in England, including **several hundred burial mounds**.

The first iconic stones were erected about 2500 BCE although some of the early phases of the site date to 3100 BCE.

The site served as the **earliest know site for cremations** in the British Isles.



Sunrise over Stonehenge Summer Solstice June 2005

Supernatural Beings

- Websters: **L** *super* + *nautura* nature. 1: of or relating to God or a god, demigod, spirit or devil. 2: a: departing from what is usual or normal, esp. to transcend the laws of nature. b: attributed to a ghost, spirit or devil.

9

Many supporters argue that it is **reasonable to assume that a non-natural entity or entities resolve the unexplained.**

By its own definition, science is incapable of examining or testing for the existence of things that have no physical effects.

Proponents of supernaturalism claim that their **belief system is more flexible, which allows more diversity** in terms of intuition and epistemology.

Free Online Dictionary:

Belief – any cognitive content held as true

Angel – spiritual being attendant upon monotheistic God or polytheistic gods

Supernatural Beings 2

- Free Online Dictionary: deity, divinity, god, immortal – any supernatural being worshipped as controlling some part of the world or some aspect of life or who is the personification of a force.



Waken Tanka, Great Spirit or supreme deity of the Lakota Souix.

In all mythologies the principal actors in the drama of cosmic creation begin as spirit beings so fundamental or so awe-inspiring, or both, as to be describable only as generalities.

Native North Americans refer to the All Spirit or Great Mystery (For example, Wakan Tanka, the great spirit of the Lakota Sioux).

The Hindu creator divinity is Brahma, whose name means the Absolute.

God is a word of disputed etymology, but probably derives from a term meaning the Worshipped One. Oddly, the exact history of the word *God* is unknown. The word *God* is a relatively new European invention, which was never used in any of the ancient Judaeo-Christian scripture manuscripts that were written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek or Latin. According to the best efforts of linguists and researchers, the root of the present word *God* is the Sanskrit word *hu* which means *to call upon, invoke, implore*.



Dogon people, [Mali](#)

Amma, the original creator god of the African Dogon myth, is said to mean The One Who Holds.

The *Amma* cult: worships the highest [creator god](#) Amma. The celebration is once a year and consists of offering boiled millet on the conical [altar](#) of Amma, colouring it white. All other cults are directed to the god Amma.

Previously mentioned is the **gigantic snake** in creation myths as diverse of those of Australia, India, Southwest Asia, Mesopotamia, Africa, Scandinavia and the Americas.

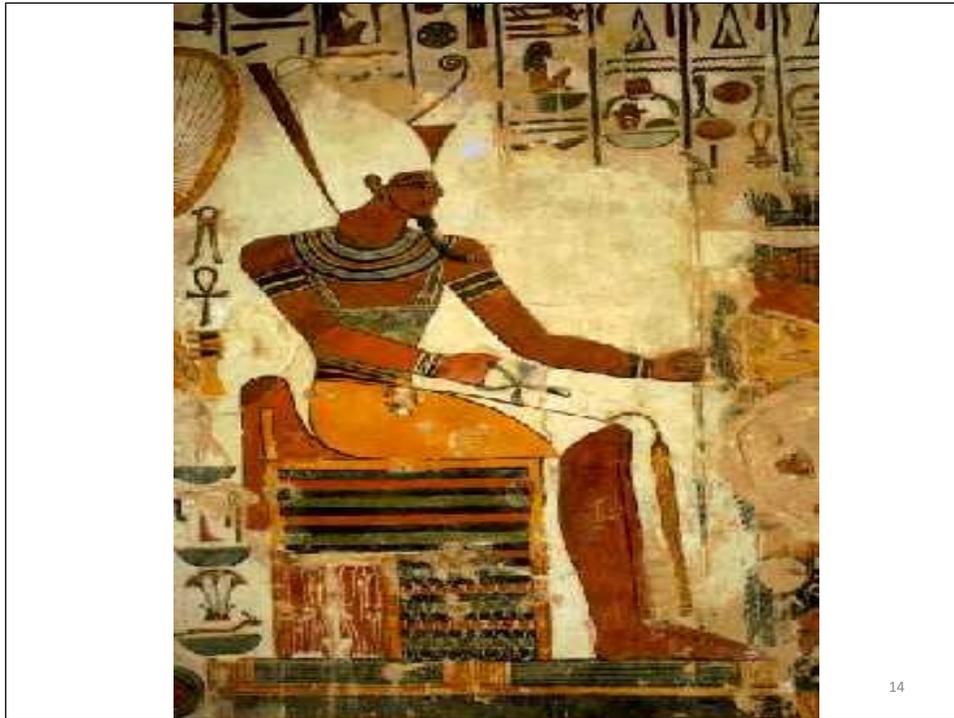


13

Chinese creator god Pan Gu, previously discussed, is a good example.

Other early members of the Chinese pantheon appear as partly **animal and partly human**—for example, the creator couple Fu Xi and Nu Gua may be portrayed with **combined human and serpentine bodies**.

Ancient painting of Nuwa and Fuxi unearthed in Xinjiang.



Another frequent theme in early creation mythology is the appearance of humanoid beings combining both male and female having created himself

Atum creator divinity, Androgeneous, Annunaqui Eloheem race of beings.

Atum's name is thought to be derived from the word 'tem' which means to complete or finish. Thus he has been interpreted as being the 'complete one' and also the finisher of the world, which he returns to watery chaos at the end of the creative cycle. As creator he was seen as the underlying substance of the world, the deities and all things being made of his flesh or alternatively being his [ka](#).

Atum is one of the most important and frequently mentioned deities from earliest times, as evidenced by his prominence in the [Pyramid Texts](#), where he is portrayed as both a creator and father to the king. He is usually depicted as a man wearing either the royal head-cloth or the dual white and red crown of [Upper Egypt](#), and [Lower Egypt](#), reinforcing his connection with kingship. Sometimes he also is shown as a [serpent](#), the form which he returns to at the end of the creative cycle and also occasionally as a [mongoose](#), [lion](#), [bull](#), [lizard](#), or [ape](#).

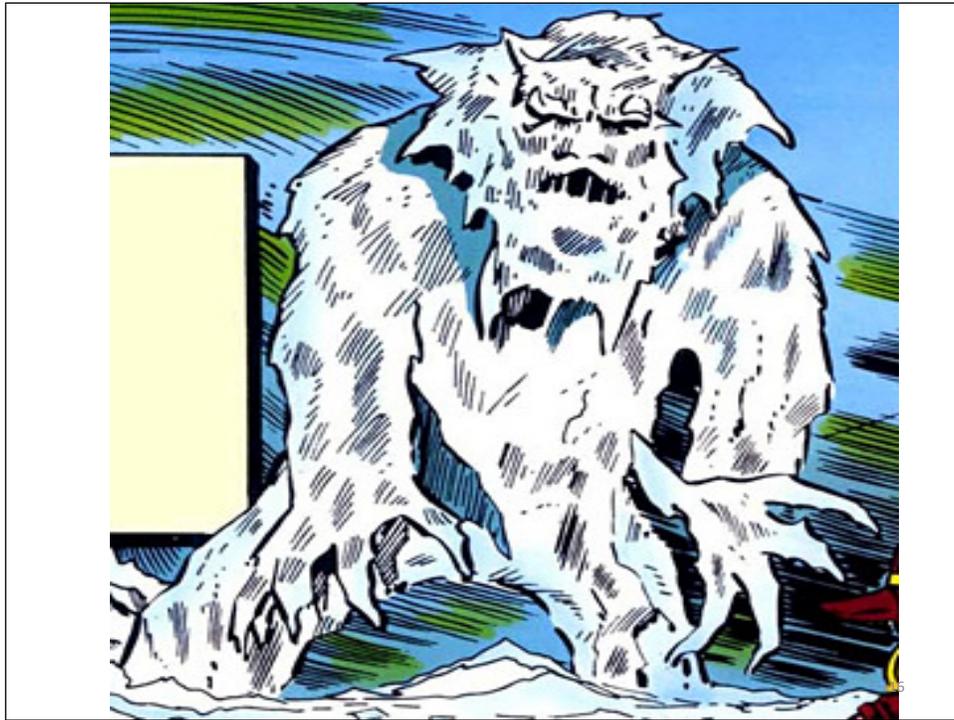
In the [Heliopolitan creation myth](#) established in the [sixth dynasty](#), Atum was considered to be the first god, having created himself, sitting on a mound ([benben](#)) (or identified with the mound itself), from the primordial waters ([Nu](#)). Early myths state that Atum created the god [Shu](#) and [goddess Tefnut](#) from spitting her out of his mouth.^[1]

In the [Old Kingdom](#) the Egyptians believed that Atum lifted the dead king's soul from his pyramid to the starry heavens.^[2] He was also a [solar deity](#), associated with the



15

Atum, finisher of the world, androgeneous



Ymir, courtesy of Marvel comics. In Norse creation myth the primal giant Ymir, who was both male and female, was transformed from the union of fire and ice at the beginning of time.

The first living being formed in the primeval chaos known as [Ginnungagap](#) was a **giant** of monumental size, called [Ymir](#).

When he slept a jötunn son and a jötunn daughter grew from his armpits, and his two feet procreated and gave birth to a son, a monster with six heads.

These three beings gave rise to the race of *hrímpursar* (*rime thurs*), who populated [Niflheim](#), the world of mist, chill and ice. The giant Ymir subsequently was slain by [Odin](#).



Exu or Eshu, African Yorba Protector of travelers, deity of roads especially crossroads, deity power over good and bad fortune and the personification of death.

Wikipedia: A deity is a postulated preternatural or **supernatural immortal** being who may be thought of as holy, divine or sacred held in high regard, and respected by believers, often religiously referred to as a **god**.

Notable deities include Tsui Goab (African tribal), Mangar-kunier-kunja (Australian aboriginal), Shiva (Hindu), Yuanshi Tianzun (China Taoism), Ra (Egypt), Zeus (Greek), Anu (Sumerian), Ahura Mazda (old Iranian Zoroastrian), Vesta (Roman goddess of the hearth), Odin (Norse), Yahweh (Hebrew Biblical), Quetzalcoatl (Aztec), Ika Omkara (India Sikhism), Exu (African Yorba) and others.



Djedefra 26 Century BC Egyptian Pharaoh, called himself “Son of Ra”

Wikipedia: Some deities are thought to be invisible or inaccessible to humans, dwelling mainly in **otherworldly, remote or secluded and holy places**, such as heaven, hell, the sky, the under-world, under the sea, in the high mountains or deep forests, or in a supernatural plane or celestial sphere.

Deities are depicted in a variety of forms, but are also frequently expressed by having **human or animal form**.

They are **usually immortal**, and are commonly assumed to have personalities and to possess consciousness, intellects, desires and emotions similar to those of humans.

Such natural phenomena as **lightning, floods, storms, other “acts of God” and miracles are attributed to them**, and they may be thought to be authorities or controllers of various aspects of human life (such as birth or the afterlife).

The boundary between the human and the divine in most cultures is by no means absolute. Demigods are the offspring from a union of a human with a deity, and **most royal houses in antiquity claimed divine ancestors**.

Beginning with Djedefra (26th century BCE), the **Egyptian pharaohs** called themselves “Son of Ra” as well as “Bull (son) of his Mother,” among their many titles. (My note: **The shaman of Neolithic times has gained status**)

Some human rulers, such as the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, the Japanese Tennos and some Roman Emperors have been **worshiped by their subjects as deities while still alive**.

The **earliest ruler known to have claimed divinity** is Naram-Suen of Akkad (22nd century BCE), perhaps based on his extending the Akkadian Empire to its zenith. (“Suen or Sin” refers to god).



Baba Yaga, Slavic folklore kidnaps (and presumably eats small children), antagonist but also know for wisdom in some folktales and may offer guidance to souls. Lives in a hut that stands on chicken legs.

Just to illustrate the **complexity of mythology for a given culture** or area of the world we might think about Slavic deities, few if any that you would know.

Wikipedia lists over **12 major** Slavic gods or deities including the sun god; god of vegetation; harvest god; god of thunder and lightning; god of love and fertility; god of fire; a three-headed god; god of earth, waters and the underworld; god of beauty; and three guardian goddesses of morning, evening and midnight stars.

Many of these have additional roles.

The list of 43 **lessor Slavic deities** includes gods of rain, spirit of the west wind, hunt, death, winter sun, moon, fire, nightmares, grain, home and hearth, female activities, echo and gossip, underground, drink, weather, woods, hospitality, marriage, woodland, fates, destiny and glory, meadows and fields, sorcery, seed and healing.

Thirty Slavic **spirits and demons** include bad weather, **eater of small children in house which stands on chicken feet**, bathhouse, evil spirits various, protective spirits, household, mines, one-eyed embodiment of misfortune, heat stroke, wild animals, whirlwind creature, waterways, **misfortune to drunkards**, flying imp and various others with positive or negative supernatural abilities.

Rounding out the list are **nine creatures**, including six-legged monster with gnarled horns; winged animal that enables understanding animal language; glowing bird which brings blessings or doom; **demonic creature with human body, horse legs, dog's head with iron teeth and single eye on forehead**; a dragon-like creature; creature with head and chest of a woman and the body of a bird.



Hindu At the Kirshna-Balarama mandria in Virindan, India. Balarama (left) and Krishna (right).

Pantheons: Webster's: 3. the gods of a people; *esp.* the officially recognized gods.

Willis in *World Mythology* highlights the well-known major Egyptian, Greek, Indian, Japanese and less well-known Celtic, Mayan, Inca and Maori pantheons.

Pantheons. Wikipedia provides links to 20 pantheons with roughly 750 deities including some semi-deities, spirits, creatures and a few heroes.

The summary includes overlaps between deities in more than one region, but likely excludes deities in many other regions or countries so that the world total likely is toward 1,000. If one had complete knowledge of Neolithic and later agricultural cultures and of lesser deities the numbers might be much larger.

So if you are not familiar with a deity being discussed in a given illustration of mythology or religion, you are likely not alone.



Krishna as [Jaganatha](#) in a typical [Oriya](#) (eastern ethnic culture India) style, shown at the far right, with sister [Subhadra](#) in the center and brother [Balarama](#) on the left.



Hindu one of 330,000 personal gods Dagdashet Halwai Ganpati expresses image of divine spirit, A clay Ganesha murti, worshipped during Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

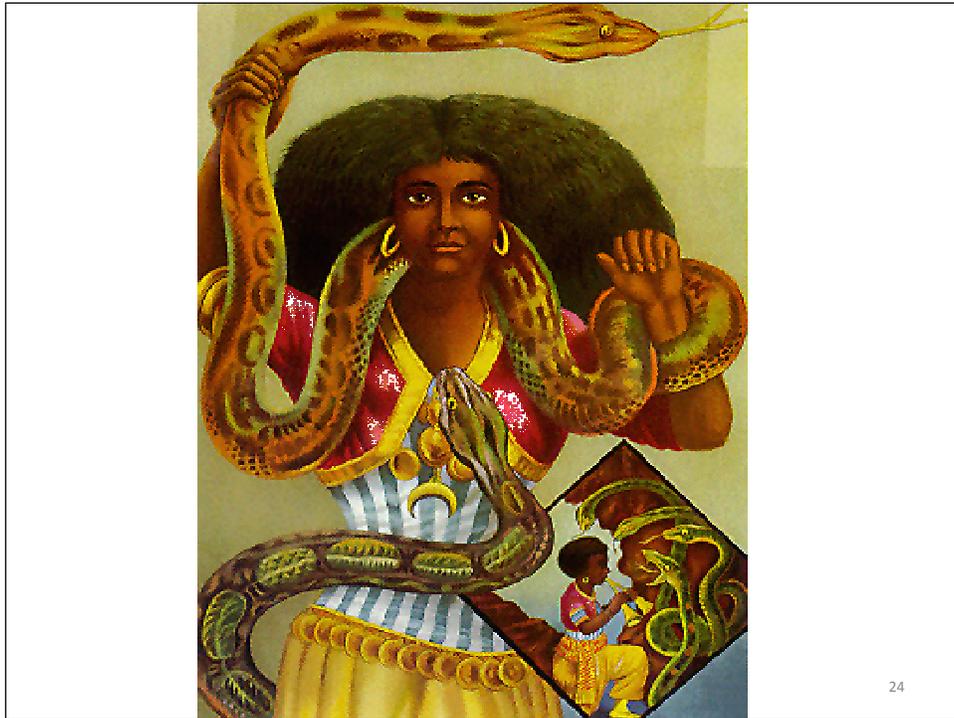
Within [Hinduism](#) a large number of [personal gods](#) are worshipped as [murtis](#). These beings are either aspects of the supreme [Brahman](#), [Avatars](#) of the [supreme being](#), or significantly powerful entities known as [devas](#). The exact nature of belief in regards to each deity varies between differing [Hindu denominations](#) and [philosophies](#). Often these beings are depicted in humanoid or partially humanoid forms, complete with a set of unique and [complex iconography](#) in each case. These deities may be different but they are generally all considered forms of the one god ([Brahman](#)). These deities and their [Puja](#) provide one of the ways to communicate with this one divinity.

The devas are expansions of Brahman into various forms, each with a certain quality. In the [Rig Veda](#) 33 devas are described, which are personifications of phenomena in nature.^[1] These 33 later became expanded into 330 million deities, a figure symbolizing infinity.^{[2][3]} All **Hindu deities** are composites from the earlier Vedic deities, but this process is not well documented.^[4] Hindus believe everything is god and contains the divine energy of god so everything is worthy of worship be it the Murti, an icon or nature itself.^[5]



23

The Wisdom Gundari Myoo A manifestation of one of the five Buddhas Japanese Buddhist pantheon

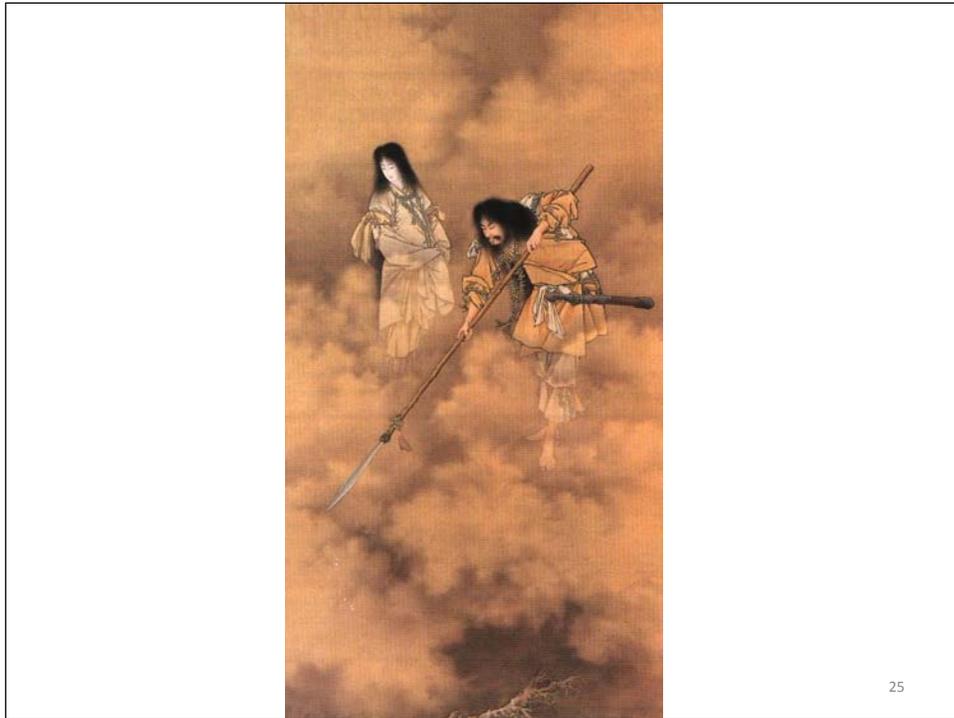


Mami Wata “Serpent Princess African deity venerated in West, Central and Southern Africa and the Carribean and parts of North and South America.

Traditions on both sides of the Atlantic tell of the spirit abducting her followers or random people whilst they are swimming or boating. She brings them to her paradisiacal realm, which may be underwater, in the [spirit world](#), or both.^[4] Should she allow them to leave, the travellers usually return in dry clothing and with a new spiritual understanding reflected in their gaze. These returnees often grow wealthier, more attractive, and more easygoing after the encounter.^[5]

Her worship is as diverse as her initiates, priesthood and worshippers,^[12] although some parallels may be drawn. Groups of people may gather in her name, but the deity is much more prone to interacting with followers on a one-on-one basis. She thus has many [priests](#) and [mediums](#) in both Africa, America and in the Caribbean who are specifically born and initiated to them.

It is believed that all of ancient Africa possessed a multitude of water-spirit traditions before the first contact with Europeans. Most of these were regarded as female, and dual natures of good and evil were not uncommon, reflecting the fact that water is both an important means of providing communication, food, drink, trade, and transportation, but at the same time, it can drown people, flood fields or villages, and provide passage to intruders.^[13]



Searching the Seas with the Tenkei MFA Boston Izangi to the right and Izami to the left.

Birth of Gods: **Theogony** is the account of the **birth of gods**. Hesiod's *Theogony*, provides an accounting of the emergence of the Greek gods. It is a comprehensive account and is universally accepted.

Most other accounts are scraps and pieces drawing upon oral mythologies. Willis relates that three Japanese invisible gods in the "High Plains of Heaven" came together with two lesser deities to form the five primordial "Separate Heavenly Deities."

Then came seven more generations of "heavenly" gods and goddesses, culminating with the Japanese primal couple: Izanagi (the August male) and his sister and wife, Izanami (the August female).



Depiction of bearded Emperor Jimmu with his emblematic long bow and an accompanying wild bird -- artwork by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892).

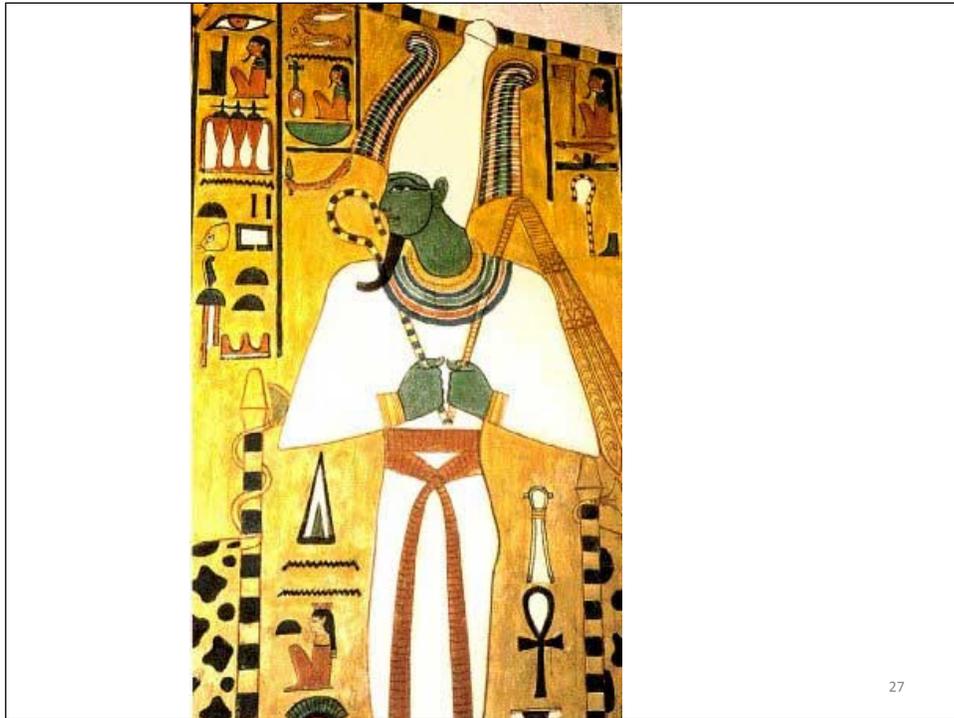
Commanded by the deities to “complete and solidify this drifting land”, Izanagi and Izanami stood on the Floating Bridge of Heaven (perhaps a rainbow) and stirred the brine below with a jeweled spear. Drops from the spear formed an island, the first solid land.

After several symbolic stories that legitimized sexual inequality and warned against a deformed first child (or set of twins), they gave birth in abundance producing a series of islands (Japanese archipelago) and then a series of gods and goddesses.

In time and after other important symbolic events, Amaterasu (August Person who Makes the Heavens) and Tsuki-yomi (The August Raging Male or Moon God) were born.

With apologies for omitting far too much and my cultural ignorance of the *Kojiki*, the Japanese pantheon of gods emerged and the legendary first emperor of Japan, Jimmu-tenno, was considered a direct descendent of the gods.

Shortly after, they descended onto the new island, erected a “heavenly” pillar and built a palace. The two invented a marriage and had sexual intercourse.

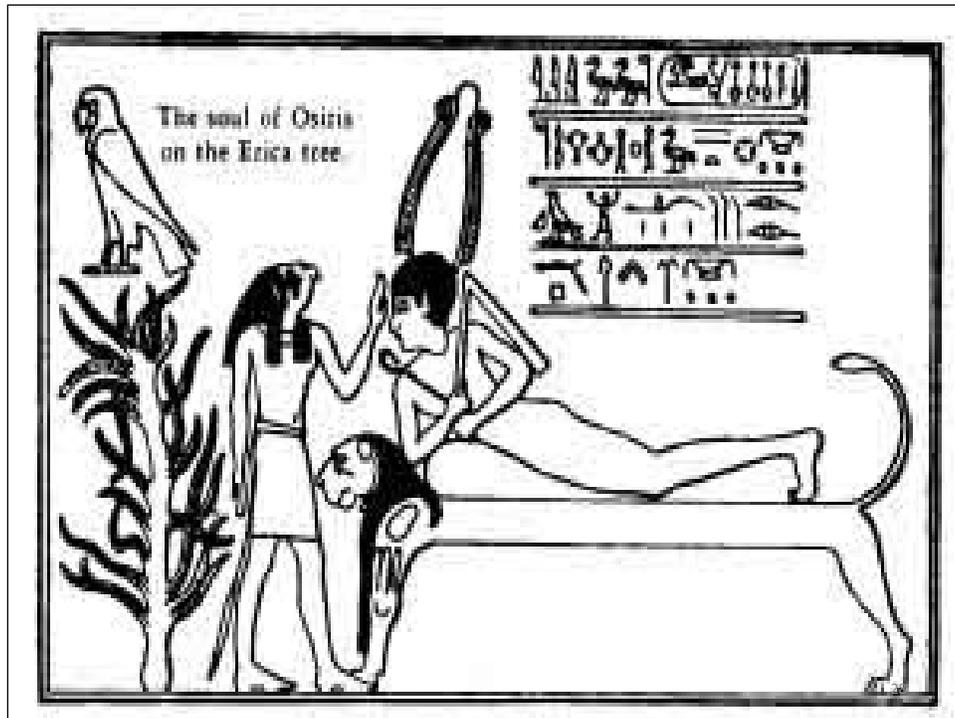


Osiris, His green skin symbolizes re-birth.

Death of Gods: The death of supernatural gods was not a major part of mythology.

Osiris was an Egyptian deity, one of the Nine Gods of Heliopolis, usually identified as the **god of afterlife, the underworld and the dead**, but also god of agriculture who taught humanity the secrets of farming and civilization. The twin child of Nut, the sky goddess, Osiris was destined to rule Egypt.

Osiris was not only a merciful judge of the dead in the afterlife, but also the underworld agency that granted all life, including sprouting vegetation and the fertile flooding of the Nile River.



Osiris, rising from his bier.

Death of Osiris: The death of the good god Osiris was one of the central events of Egyptian myth.

His murder and dismemberment is mentioned, as is a more routine death by drowning.

Another version is that his brother Seth turned into a small mosquito and bit him fatally on his foot.

Isis, his sister and consort, searched for his body, used her magic powers to prevent his decay and summoned the jackal god Anubis who embalmed and bandaged the body of Osiris, making him **the first mummy**.

The Kings of Egypt were associated with Osiris in death—as Osiris rose from the dead **they would in union inherit eternal life through a process believed to be magic**.

By the New Kingdom (Egyptian Empire 16th to 11th century BCE) all people, not just the pharaohs, were believed to be associated with Osiris at death if they incurred the costs of assimilation rituals.

Osiris was widely worshiped as Lord of the Dead until the suppression of the Egyptian religion during the Christian



In [Gallo-Roman religion](#), **Epona** was a protector of [horses](#), [donkeys](#), and [mules](#). She was particularly a goddess of [fertility](#), as shown by her attributes of a [patera](#), [cornucopia](#), ears of grain and the presence of [foals](#) in some sculptures^[1] suggested that the goddess and her horses were [leaders of the soul](#) in the after-life ride, with parallels in [Rhiannon](#) of the [Mabinogion](#). Unusually for a Celtic deity, most of whom were associated with specific localities, the worship of Epona, "the sole Celtic divinity ultimately worshipped in Rome itself,"^[2] was widespread in the [Roman Empire](#) between the first and third centuries CE.

Mother Goddess: Willis indicates the cult of mother goddess has left clear traces in **Celtic mythology**. War goddesses appear under a variety of names; other goddesses gave birth to heroes.

Scathach (the Shadowy One) is a goddess identifiable in early Ulster Irish folktales with training legendary hero Cu Chulainn in the martial arts of combat, teaching him feats of arms and giving him his deadly notched spear, the Gae Bulg.

The legendary warrior woman also grants him the "friendship of her thighs" when the training is almost complete.

The horse goddess Epona was venerated throughout the Celtic world, from Britain to the Danube. She had the unique honor among Gaulish divinities of being given a festival by the Romans, in particular, the Gaulish cavalry in the Roman army were her devotees.

Epona has associations with water, fertility and death—aspects which seem to connect her with the Mother Goddess.

All these attributes come together in the concept of **sovereignty**. The king of **myth is "married" to his kingdom in a ceremony**, at which a libation is offered to him by his bride, Sovereignty.



Lady of the Lake, King Arthur Medieval with a modern touch

Divine Specialization The world moved toward emphasis on agriculture and settlements away from nomadic hunting and gathering, tribes and peoples began to change.

The beings who embody spiritual forces tend to lose their monstrous qualities, and, while still retaining supernatural powers and status, fall into the familiar categories of animal and human, male and female.

Willis notes that in Greek mythology, after the first cosmic upheavals and the defeat of the Titans, the Olympian gods and goddesses lead lives not far removed from those of human beings.

Like aristocratic humans in civilized societies, they take on such specialized functions as patrons of the arts and crafts, and of love and war.

This attribution of social functions to the gods becomes even more emphatic in Roman mythology, which to a large extent is a rationalized version of the Greek.

In Norse myth, the period after the death of the androgynous giant Ymir saw the appearance of gods of war, music and crafts and goddesses of fertility.

In Mayan religion, the supreme creator deity Itzamna was the patron of writing and scholarship; Ix Chel or Lady Rainbow was the divine patroness of medicine, weaving and childbirth.

Divinities with such functions can be found in a broad range of cultures.



Fragments of a [brazier](#) depicting Tlaloc from Stage IVB of the [Templo Mayor](#) in [Mexico City](#).

Tlaloc and Fertility: Dominating the Aztec pantheon by sheer numbers were the many gods of moisture, agriculture and fertility.

A vast number of gods and, more especially, goddesses, are connected with fertility, ranging from generalized earth mothers to complex figures such as Tlaloc and his female parallels in Mesoamerica.

In valley regions of erratic rains, seeing crops wither before they sprouted was all too common, leading to threats of famine.

Chief among the fertility gods was Tlaloc, an ancient rain deity, who was worshipped throughout Mesoamerica.

As lord of the rains, Tlaloc presided over a host of related fertility deities, and it was to these that most sacrificial rites were dedicated.

Like a thread binding together the complex web of Aztec beliefs, the symbolic equation of blood, water, human sacrifice and fertility was all-pervasive.

Maize stalks and ears, brought in from fields and venerated in households as gods, were also used as ritual adornments for warriors, along with quetzal plumes.

Also associated with fertility are a group of little corn gods, collectively known as the "Four Hundred Rabbits" (Centzon Totochtin).

Among them are Ometochtli (god of a fermented drink called octli) and the god of drunkenness, Tepoztecatl.



Tepoztecatl, Aztec god of pulque (octli), of drunkenness & fertility



An excerpt from a scene depicting the 11th "week" of 13 days and nights ruled by the deity Patecatl, who was associated with pulque, a fermented maguey beverage.



34

Demons and Spirits: Malevolent beings. Projection of humanity's deepest fears.

The range of forms is enormous: semi-human and non-human creatures, dragons and monsters, giants and giantesses, demons and dwarves and specialized demons for example the invisible *oni* of Japan who attend the gods of the underworld.

In Western myth spiritual beings are usually either positive or negative, but in other cultures there is a greater preponderance of ambivalent or neutral beings.

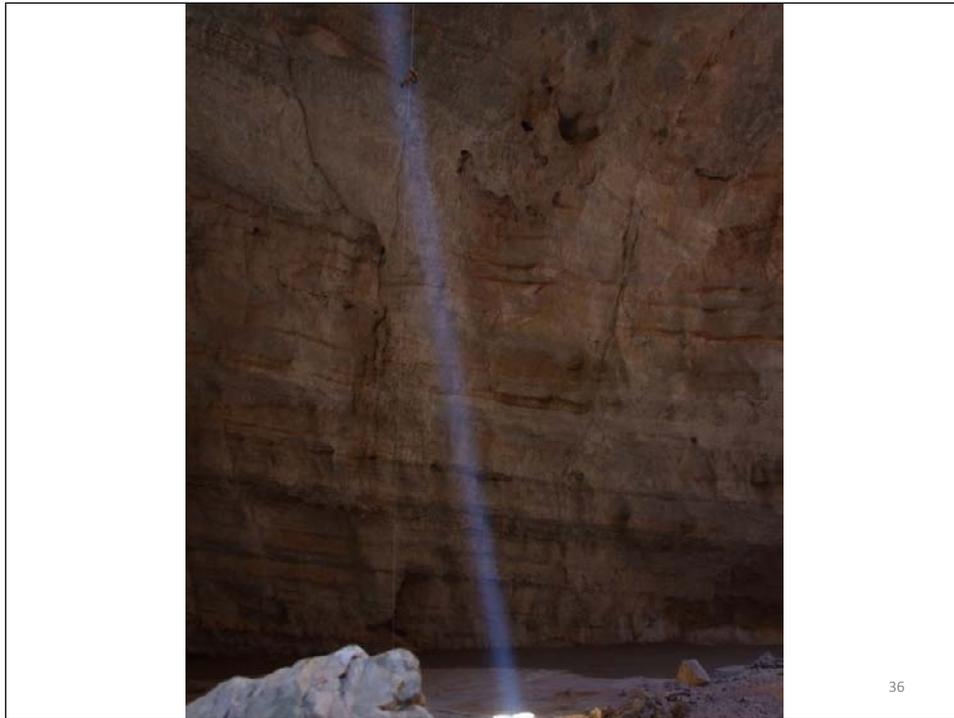
Oni in pilgrims clothing, Tokugawa period (1600's so not old mythology) sharp claws, wild hair two long horns



Oni, note iron club indicates invincible or undefeatable.

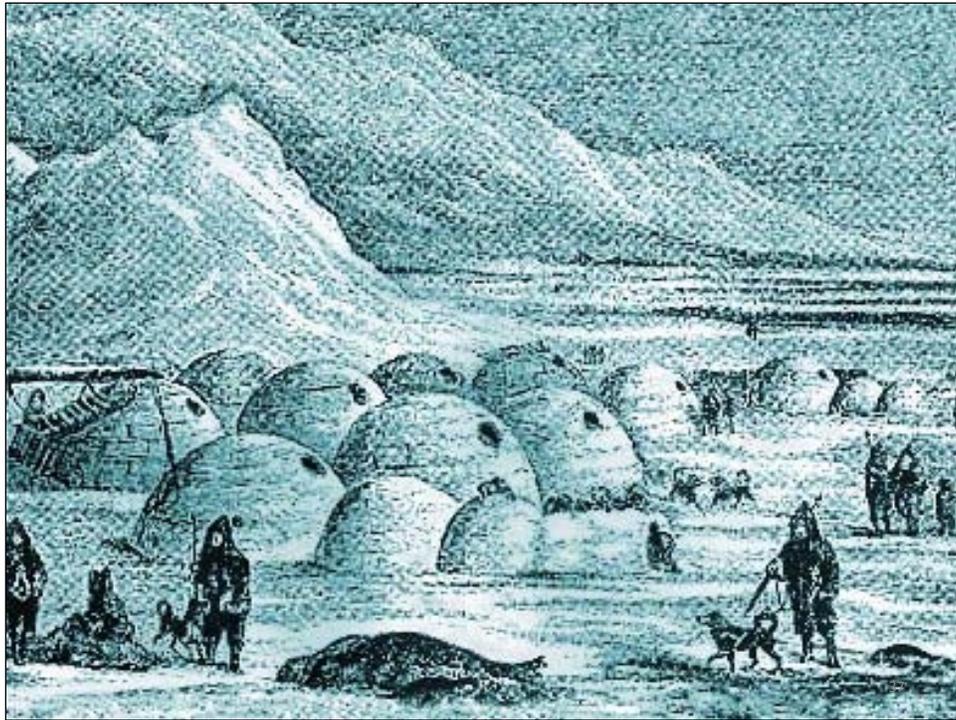
In some cultures, divine specialization was a matter of locality rather than a role. Spirits peculiar to special places played an important part in the life of the community.

In ancient Japan every region, village and house had its resident spirit, with powers that had to be respected. In addition, unusual natural features such as large or oddly shaped rocks, old trees and springs were also associated with spirits.



Genie (Arabic) or djinni is a supernatural creature in Pre-Islamic or Islamic mythology which occupies a parallel world to that of mankind, and together with humans and angels makes up the three sentient creations of Allah. The Qur'an mentions that jinn are made of smokeless flame, and their form being just similar to humans, which also can be good or evil.

In Islam, for example, the *djinni* (genies) can be either benevolent or malevolent: they were created out of fire 2,000 years before the creation of Adam, the first man.



Inuit Village, unknown artist and vintage.

Inuit Spirits of Sea and Sky: Spiritual powers, of lesser or greater import, dominate Inuit life. The most famous is the Sea Spirit of the Canadian Inuit.

Known as Sedna (also Nuliajuk), the Sea Spirit exercises suzerainty (overlordship) over all the animals, which provide food for humans.

In her residence at the bottom of the sea, from where she sends out the animals for hunting, she takes on the form of a woman. Even shamans fear her.

Another major spirit is the Spirit of the Air, known in many parts as Sila (weather, intelligence).

This spirit controls rain, snow, wind and sea from a domain far above the earth.

Although inherently benevolent, yet humans perceive spirits as threatening, especially the Sea Spirit, because they are highly sensitive to human misdemeanors, responding to them by sending foul weather, failure in hunting and sickness.

To fend off such visitations, people incant magical words, don masks and amulets and mobilize their shamans.



Inuk in a kayak, 1929 The Inuit belief in lands in the sky and under the world's surface, each realm defined by a major spirit who dwelt there, facilitates the concept of "souls" and the notion that these are recycled. An important idea is that animals have souls which leads to a special respect for prey.

Inuit Moon Spirit and Animism: One of the major spirits of the Inuit is the Moon Spirit (Tarqeq), whose concerns are with fertility, moral propriety, and in the case of the Alaskan Inuit, the control of animals.

The moon spirit is male, a mighty hunter, whose abode is the land of the sky. A typical mask depicting the spirit has a white border around the face symbolizing air, hoops around the mask denoting the levels of the cosmos and feathers that signify stars.

The Souls of Animals: The Inuit believe that prey is not "taken" by a hunter, but permits itself to be killed.

When the animal dies, the hunter performs a brief ceremony to ensure that the soul is returned to the non-earthly world to rejoin the society of animals—in readiness for being sent out again as hunter's quarry.

Over much of Alaska, Inuit hold important festivals to acknowledge and influence the animals' appearance on earth. For example, the Bladder Festival is a five-day winter event at whose climax the inflated bladders caught by the communities hunters during the year are pushed through hole in the ice, thus returning the animals souls to the spirit world.



Some Inuit believed that the spirits of their ancestors could be seen in the northern lights



Rangda's awesome representation in a Barong dance The name rangda means widow.

Demons and Monsters: A common theme in mythology throughout Southwest Asia is the encounter with some magic power, often a representative of the dark forces of evil or barbarity which stand in opposition to civil society.

These forces usually take human or near-human form and can be either male, such as the half-human Moyang Melur, or female Bota Ili.

The ferocious Balinese female child-eating folk demon Ranga figures as the leader of a band of evil witches whose immortal antagonist is the spirit king and leader of forces of good, Barong.

She is commonly depicted as old and nearly naked, with unkempt hair, pendulous breasts, and clawlike fingernails and toenails. The combat of these two magical powers, in which Ranga is customarily defeated, is re-enacted on Bali by masked dancers.



Durga, Devi with 10 arms, riding a lion, carrying weapons and lotus flower. Creative feminine force, independence, compassion.

Durga is the Hindu “inaccessible” or the “invincible,” “one who can redeem in situations of utmost distress.”

Durga is the form of a Devi, the supremely radiant goddess, depicted as having ten arms, riding a lion or a tiger, carrying weapons and a lotus flower, maintaining a meditative smile and practicing mudras, or symbolic hand gestures.

Durga manifests fearlessness and patience, and never loses her sense of humor, even during spiritual battles of epic proportion