



The Friends of the Pagoda Association
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INFORMATION SHEET SEVEN

THE NEPAL PEACE PAGODA SOUTH BANK PARKLANDS BRISBANE

THE PAGODA'S ICONOGRAPHY (II) THE TIER SUPPORT STRUTS, THE CHERUBS

There are four sets of six support struts at the second level of the Pagoda, and four sets of four support struts at the third level of the Pagoda, with the top 2/3rd of each support strut thematically hosting a Hindu God or Goddess, and the bottom 1/3rd of each support strut hosting a sub-theme of topics of merry-making, music-making, love-making, and friendship.

The Hindu Gods/Goddesses on the front set of six support struts and the back set of six support struts are the same. And, similarly, the Hindu Gods/Goddesses on the left set of six support struts and right set of six support struts are also the same. Hence, there are two sets of six deities, a total of 12 deities all together. However, you will note that the sub-themes at the bottom 1/3rd of all struts differ for each strut, resulting in 24 separate topics discussed at the second-level tier, and similar topics discussed at the third-level tier, as well as at the second and third-level tier support struts of the Side Pavilions.

The theme of the Brisbane Nepal Peace Pagoda has a strong Shiva focus, who is one of the chief principal deities of the Hindu trinity. Hindu itself has some over 300 million Gods, with the trinity of Shiva-Brahmin-Vishnu forming the most powerful trinity. The Lord Shiva is regarded as the most powerful of the three, as he is the Destructor, but he destroys in a positive sense, in the sense that he destroys evil. For this reason he is also known as the Creator, for, in the process of destroying evil, he creates a new and better entity in its place.

There are over 3000 Peace Pagodas in Nepal, and whilst the overall architectural structure of the Pagodas may be quite similar, the stories depicted on the Pagoda doors, archways and support struts host a great variety of topics and discussion, from manifestations of the village Hindu Patron deity, to do's and don't's, day-to-day merry-making, and even sensuality and sexual practice, a virtual public guide to accepted and non-accepted norms.

Some of the common stories at the Brisbane Nepal Peace Pagoda support struts are the different manifestations of Shiva, for example, the second level third support strut is a rendition of the Lord Shiva as Nataraja, Goddess of the Dance, and the fourth support strut is a rendition of the Lord Shiva as Bhairab, who invokes the fearsome wrathful nature of

the Lord Shiva's personality.

Other common manifestations at the Pagoda include the second manifestation, as 'Lady of the Secret', and, the three-headed manifestation of Dattareya, who represents Shiva in the three time dimensions of past, present, and future.

Each of these figures teach us a different aspect of the Lord Shiva's personality, as well as chief stories important to Hinduism.

As Nataraja, the Lord Shiva as Goddess of the Dance, she is constantly engaged in a dancing state of celebration in the act of creating the universe. She also dances upon the back of a smaller dwarf like creature, who is known in Hindu as 'the person who cannot remember', or, 'the sloth', who represents our natures in our pre-pubescent 'un-understanding' mode of being. And, in essence teaches us, that unless we wake out of our sleepful (and premature) ignorance of the world, we run into the danger that we will be trodden on by the forces of creation, never being able to grow, or progress towards nirvana - spiritual enlightenment.

As Bhairab, the many fanged, wide-eyed monster like figure, with his impressive headdress, skull necklace, and many arms, the wrathful fearsome nature of the Lord Shiva is communicated, and Bhairab is popularly invoked to create fear in young children, lest they be eaten up by him.

The story of Lady of the Secret also teaches us the important role of role play and folk tale in religion, as, it tells us the story of a young couple who were betrothed to be married, and who were observed on their wedding night by the bride's father, who had chosen to be disguised as a tramp whilst they were making love. So distraught at this, the daughter threw herself into a fire, and thence died. The husband then took her body to be cremated, however, as the journey was long, her body crumbled into pieces, and the exact location where her female sexual organ fell, became the holy site of a temple dedicated to her.

And, as Dattareya, the past-present-and-future are represented through Dattareya's three heads.

All together the Pagoda has twelve principal deities representing the different aspects of the Lord Shiva at the Second level support struts, each with their own unique physical attributes, name, and story.

THE CHERUBS, WITH HEAD DRESS, AND WITH VEIL

All along the second and third tier levels of the main Pagoda structure and the side Pavilions are miniature cherubs, some in rows with head dresses, and some in rows with veils, in regular intervals. You will note that whilst the cherubs with head dress nearly look all the same, the cherubs with veils each have their own expression and gaze.

TIER CORNERS

Each tier corner has a decorative copper banner.