

SURVEY

Jose Nereparampil
Dharmārām, Bangalore

Artistic Symbolization in Dharmaram Chapel

Introduction

Symbolism is an art and not a science and the symbols are selected, or combined not on a scientific basis but with a view to convey to the common man the underlying ideas as easily and effectively as possible. So, the study of symbolism is mostly a question of interpretation and not scientific investigation. The interpretation should be such as to appeal naturally to one's reason and common sense. In fact, it is possible to have more than one interpretation of the same symbol both equally reasonable and illuminating. It is also possible that one may not be able to interpret a particular symbol or may interpret it incorrectly. The important thing about symbolism is not the exact meaning of everything, but the fact that everything has a meaning and generally a profound significance related to spiritual life.

1. Hiranyagarbha and the Cosmos

The artistic symbols of Dharmaram Chapel at Bangalore seems to synthesize the Indian Theogony and the Hebrew theophany in a holistic world-vision :

In the beginning arose the Golden Germ :
He was, as soon as born, the Lord of Being,
Sustainer of the Earth and of this Heaven.¹

In the beginning this world was merely non-being [*a-sat*]. It became existent; it developed. It turned into an egg. It lay for the period of an year. It was split assunder. Then came out of

1. *Rgveda* X:121, 1.

the egg-shell two parts, one of silver, the other of gold. That which was of silver is this earth, that which was of gold is the sky.²

“In the beginning God created heaven and earth” [Gen. 1:1].

The top and the bottom of this Chapel remind us of the above cosmic-egg, the *Hiranyagarbha* and the indwelling Presence of the One God within. This special structure makes us think that here meet heaven and earth and here man from below can come to meet the God from above.

According to the Hebrew imagination there are several store houses in the sky above: of wind, snow, rain, hail-storm etc., which fall into the earth when God opens the windows of such store-houses. There is a space in the inner depth of the earth which is called sheol.³ Similarly in this chapel the various rings of the echo-proof canopy on the ceiling seem to represent the store-houses of the sky above. And the crypt of the chapel can be considered as a symbol of the sheol.

The top of the chapel with the cross and the rail-crown look like the Sanchi-stupa. The cross of glory in the middle of the ‘Crown’, seems to proclaim that he who conquers himself wins the crown of eternal life.⁴

2. The Guru-Frontispiece

As the motto of Dharmaram College is *Ishabhakti Paramjñānam* (Devotion to the Lord is Supreme Wisdom) this Chapel is dedicated to Christ, the Divine Guru, whose figure is executed in ceramic tiles-mosaic as the frontispiece. Here we find Christ the divine Guru in contemplation. He is surrounded by the traditional symbols of light, life and truth. The divine wisdom is expressed through the “teaching gesture” (*adhyāpana-mudra*). The bodhitree in the background is also indicative of the divine wisdom. It may remind us also of the tree of life with its perennial fruits and leaves for the “healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). The cross and flower signify Christ who died out of love and rose again in glory. Indian lamp indicates Christ the “light of the world” (Jn. 8:12). The divinity and the humanity of Christ as well as his eternal priesthood are represented by the two “coconut halves.” The grapes, bread and chalice are the symbols of the Eucha-

2. *Chandogya Upanishad* III:19, 1-2.

3. Cf. Ps. 103, 104; Gen. 7:11; Job. 38:22.

4. Cf. Rev. 2:17; 3:5, 21; 21:7.

ristic Christ. Thus all of them together represent an attempt to present the different dimensions of the whole Christ. And it is providential that this picture came in front of this chapel of Dharmaram, as it symbolically indicates *jñāna* (knowledge) with *bhakti* (devotion) the seat of both is Christ, the Guru, at whose feet Dharmaram thrives to learn wisdom and devotion.

3. Symbols on the Sanctuary Wall: A Hymn to Unity

a) The Central Cross (*fig. 1*)

The cross of Christ, the symbol of God's self-sacrificing love, is prominently placed in the centre of the sanctuary wall. "The Cross affirms the primary relationship (union) between the two worlds of the celestial and the earthly."⁵

The Cross without the mangled body of Christ is a blossomed Cross, which signifies the glorious resurrection more than the suffering and death. Here we emphasize the divinity of Christ rather than His human suffering. "The Christian regard for the Cross as the tree of life prompted the suggestion of growing branches and flowers."⁶

b) The Holy Book & the Holy Eucharist (*fig. 2 & 3*)

On either sides of the Cross we see an open Bible and a Tabernacle. They together represent the Word of God (Bible) which was made flesh (the Eucharist). The Bible symbolizes the self-communication of God, and it carries within itself what has been communicated to humanity down through history: God's thought in human language. The Eucharist, on the other hand, represents the Word which became flesh. A symbol generally carries what it signifies. The speciality of Eucharist is that in it the symbols of bread and wine are identified with what they signify, namely, the body and blood of Christ.

c) The Altar (*fig. 4*)

The Altar made out of fortythree wooden plates, topped with a marble slab, is in the shape of a chalice with a paten, in a gesture of self-offering representing the praying people with their gifts of offering.

5. J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical library, 1962), p. 65.

6. Appleton and Bridges, *Symbolism in Liturgical Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 23.

d) The Left Panel (fig. 5)

The theme is the manifestation of the Spirit through the religions of mankind. In the beginning man discovered and experienced God through nature. The superior powers of the universe were his object of worship: (a) *The sun* without whose heat and light the world would have no life and energy, took the first place among the gods (represented at the top by a spiral). Down on the earth, too, man had gods. (b) The sting of the *Nāga* (serpent) was fatal. Appease the *Nāga*, and then escape is easy, the primitive man thought:

Its swift yet graceful and mysterious gliding motion without feet or wings, unlike that of any other animal, its power of disappearing suddenly, the brilliance and power of fascination of its eye, its beauty and strength, the sudden fatal consequences of its bite or of its enveloping folds, the practice of casting its skin, which suggested its longevity or even immortality: ⁷

all these made him feel that it is stronger, wiser, subtler than he; in a word, uncanny. Thus out of fear and wonder began the *Nāga-worship*.

The big and tall trees also became his object of worship:

For the short-lived man, any tree must have seemed immortal, especially the evergreens which remained changeless, whatever the time of year. Man's instinct was, perhaps to venerate the trees, and once his need for more or less identifiable deities had crystallized, it was a short step to identify tree with God. Or make tree embody deity. It seems clear that trees in general, and some trees in particular, were very widely venerated among early peoples.⁸ It is said that all plants possess the gifts of immortality and health.

The next stage in the evolution of religious worship was the *Ayudha puja*. For the ancient people of India the trident was the symbol of such worship. Man from time immemorial used tools and implements for self-defense and gathering food. The power that emerged

7. J.A. Macculloch, "Serpent worship" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings (Ed.), Vol. II, 3rd (ERE) ed. (New York: T & T Clark, Edinburgh, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).

8. A.J. Huxley, "Trees", in *Man, Myth and Magic* by Cavendish Richard (Ed.), Vol 21 (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1970), p. 2873.

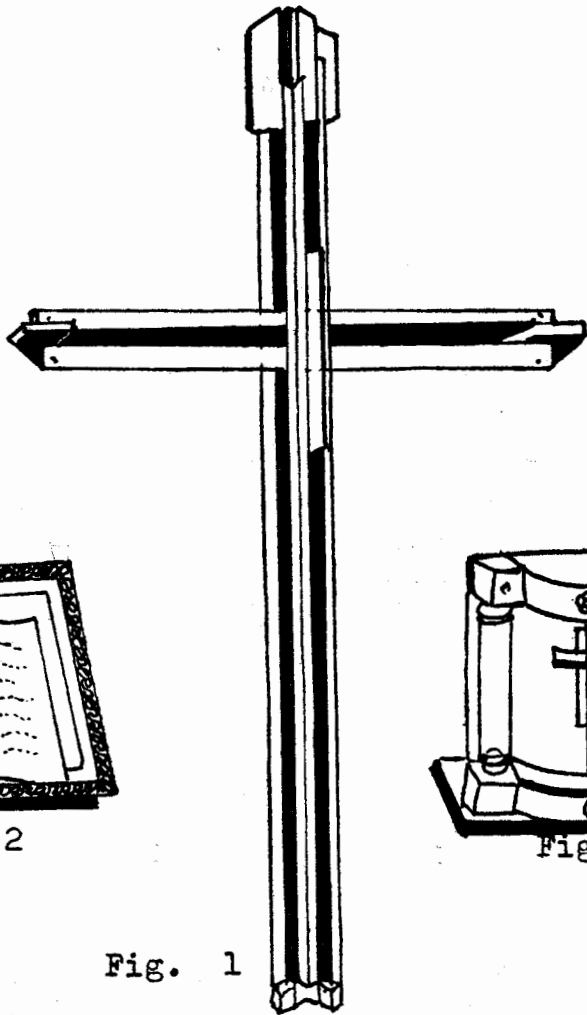


Fig. 2

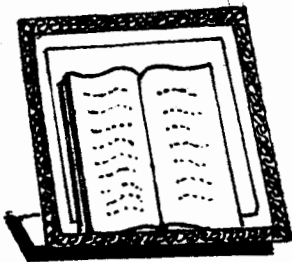


Fig. 3

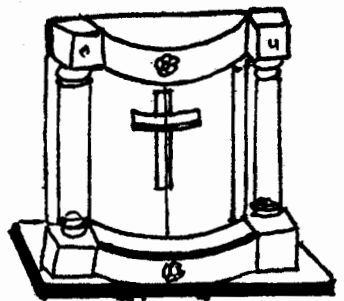


Fig. 1

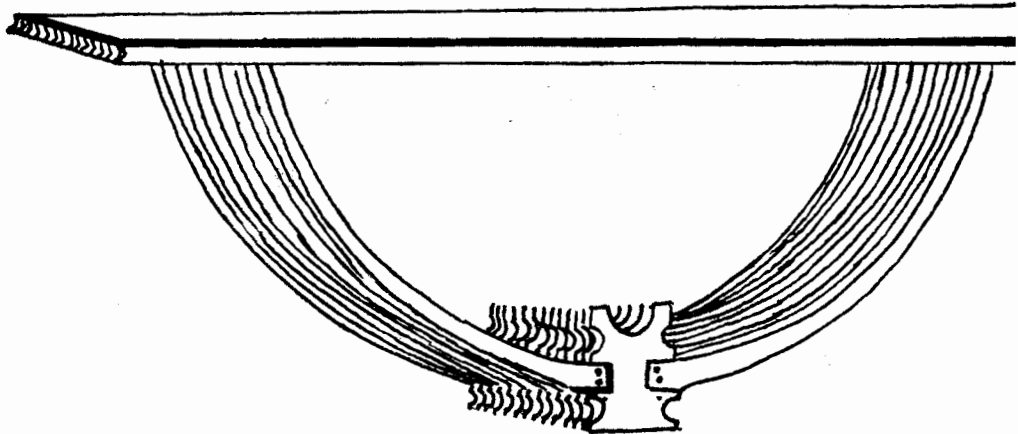


Fig. 4

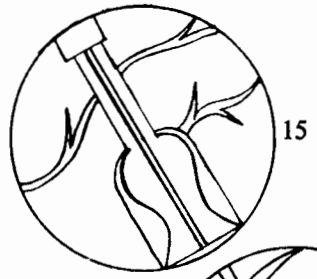
77



Fig. 5



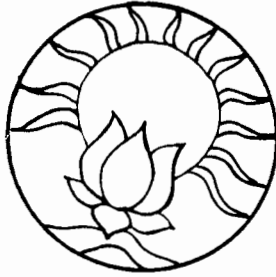
Fig. 6



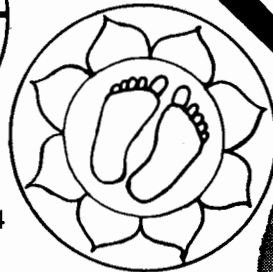
15



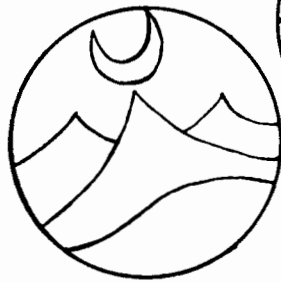
7



22



14



21



13

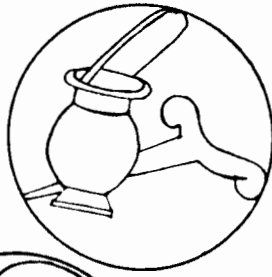


12



20

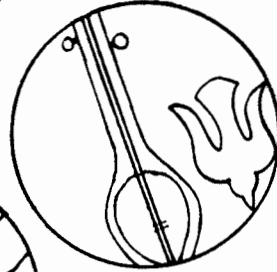
4



16



8



17



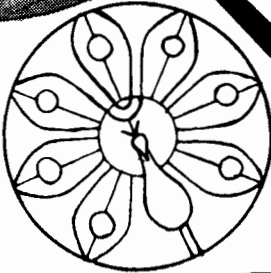
9



10



18



11



19

from the tip of weapons seemed to have a mystery which commanded his veneration. So this panel indicates by means of some selected symbols man's religious aspirations expressed in very many forms and ways.

Some of the symbols of this panel represent the different religions. Here the *trident* represents the Shaivite religions. "The trident (*trishula*) was a weapon of the Hindu God Shiva and is carried by his followers or planted in the ground when a Shaivite *sannyasi* sits in meditation. A sect of Shaivites are the Tridandins, bearers of triple batons who carry a stick with three knots."⁹

Swastika stands for Jainism. "Among the Jains it is an especially auspicious symbol, connected with the seventh *Jina* and marked on objects and utensils of worship. Sometimes it is called the Jaina Cross."¹⁰

Tai-Chi (Ying Yang) symbol represents Taoism :

Tai-Chi is the Supreme Ultimate or Transcendent Absolute in Chinese Philosophy. Borrowed from Taoism, the concept was developed by Neo-confucian scholars from the tenth century A.D. Particularly interesting is the use of an ancient diagram, *Tai-Chi T' u*, to express the production of *Yand* and *Yin* and their interaction.¹¹

Dharma Chakra (Wheel of the Law) stands for Buddhism :

Its eight spokes also representing the eight-fold path of Buddha's teachings, and the flames which usually surround it recalling the fact that the wheel was an ancient solar symbol in India and Central Asia. Both Wheel and Lotus are included in the group. Commonly known as the Eight Buddhist Symbols.¹² This Buddhist expression (Wheel of the Law) is derived from the earlier Buddhist legend of the mystic wheel.¹³

9. Geoffrey Parrinder, *A Dictionary of non-Christian Religions* (London: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 287.

10. Parrinder, *op. cit.* p. 270.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

12. Van R. Cammann Schuyler, "Symbols", in *Encyclopaedia of Arts, Runes & Schrickel* (Eds.) (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 981.

13. Cf. T.W. Rhys Davids, "Wheel of the Law" in *ERE*, Vol. 12, p. 736.

The Crescent and Star stand for Islam pointing to the religious determination of Calendar for prayers and festivities which the Muslims generally observe.

Aum represents Hinduism. *Aum* is the most sacred word of the Hindus, occurring first in the Upanishads. It is composed of the sounds, A-U-M and a humming nasalization, and so it is said to represent the three oldest Vedas, and the triad of gods: Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma.¹⁴

The Seven Branched Lamp (Menorah) stands for Judaism. The golden seven-branched candle stick that stood in the temple of Jerusalem, and stands in Jewish synagogues. According to tradition the light of the Menorah was never extinguished till the temple was destroyed; an afflaming Menorah has been a symbol of the unquenchable spirit of Judaism. "The seven branched menorah is mentioned in the Talmud and has long been used in art as an iconographic symbol signifying Judaism."¹⁵

The Gate Way stands for Shintoism. The word Shinto literally means, "the way of God" or "the way of Kami" (Kami means "Mystical", "Superior" or "Divine").¹⁶ It is known as Torrigate. "A torrigate always stands in front of a *shindoshrine*."¹⁷ This is a open shrine. "Probably the gods were first worshipped in the open, though tradition has that the shrines or 'houses' for the gods go back to the earliest times."¹⁸

As years passed by religions became institutionalized. One can see down at the bottom the representative symbols of the existing major religions, a Temple, a Church and a Mosque.

Undeniably the spirit of God did inspire the various forms of worship. The dove at the top of the panel represents the Spirit of God. By Him, was directed the sacred search of man to know and experience God over the years.

14. Geoffrey Parrinder, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

15. Helen Hemingway Benton, (Publ.), *The new Encyclopaedia Britanica (Micro-paedia)* Vol. VI, 15th ed. (Chicago: 1974), p. 792.

16. Eric Maple, "Shinto", Cavendish Richard (ed.) Vol. 19, *op. cit.*, p. 2561.

17. Eric Maple, *op. cit.*, p. 675.

18. Eric Maple, *op. cit.*, p. 2561.

e) The Right Panel (fig. 6)

This panel presents the praying Christ who unites unto himself the whole of humanity characterised by different cultural traditions.

The equilateral triangle at the top symbolised Christ's relation to Holy Trinity. "In the highest sense triangle concerns the trinity."¹⁹ Triangle is the symbol of "Trinity".²⁰

Seven various cultural symbols are depicted on the garment of Christ. They are: 1) the rocket which signifies the scientific progress, 2) the brush and the pallet for art, 3) the guitar and the violin for music, 4) the wheel for industrial development, 5) the book for literary achievement, 6) the spike of corn for the progress and prosperity, and 7) the flask signifies the investigation and discovery.

The Human figures around Christ represent the basic life situations of contemporary man. On the left (from top to bottom): 1) the man who seeks the Lord just in his privations, 2) the man who has discovered God and has made Him the centre of his life, 3) the man who looks back and experiences the bitter agony and despair of a wasted life. On the right (from top to bottom): 4) the man who challenges the existence of his creator, 5) the man who through prayer and repentance longs to atone for the sinful past, 6) the indifferent man who does not care for God and religion.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus the central figure of this panel is the symbol of the love of Christ. "In the Roman Catholic Church, the image of the Sacred Heart in public places must combine the Heart with the figure of Christ. It is customarily surrounded with a crown of thorns, enveloped with flames, and surmounted with a cross."²¹

In this picture the lotus flower is the pedestal for Christ. According to Indian traditions the holy flower lotus is the seat or pedestal of gods, signifying creativity, prosperity and fulfilment. The lotus is also said to represent involvement and transcendence as the lotus grows in the water but its leaves and flowers float on the water; so are the holy men of God. Though they are in this world, they are not contaminated

19. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

20. Appleton & Bridges, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

by the dirt of this world. Their life is in our life-situations, and they participate in our predicaments, but they always transcend them in their union with God and fellow-men. In order to signify the involvement and transcendent character of holy men they are depicted in a lotus flower.

4. The Balcony-Ring, Rails and Symbols

The balcony rails together with the sanctuary-wall with the Cross in the centre and the panels where only the symbols are depicted look like a wedding ring given by Christ to His Sweet Heart, Dharmaram. This ring indicates that the divine is coming down to establish an eternal spousal relationship with the humans. This wedding ring with the Indian symbols reveals the nature of God and the various attitudes and virtues of human soul.

Of the sixteen different symbols on the balcony rails many are the traditional Indian symbols; the rest are a variety of combinations. Incarnation, God's protection and grace, redemption, inner beauty and life of the human soul, devotion and self-offering, the holy spirit, discipleship, prayer and penance are some of the themes elucidated through the symbols.

a) The Indwelling Presence of the Spirit (fig. 7)

The symbol of a dove hovering over a lotus indicates Incarnation and Immanence of God. The dove represents the Holy Spirit. "And the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon Him in the form of a dove," at the baptism of Christ [Mt. 3:16]. The lotus represents Blessed Virgin Mary. "Lotus is an emblem of divine purity", and the lotus is an emblem of divine birth."²² This symbol also stands for an Indian Christian synthesis of the mysteries of Incarnation and Eucharistic transformation of the human nature into the life divine by the working of the Holy Spirit. Below the lotus flower there is the Eucharistic bread signed with a cross, placed on a lotus-leaf which historically points to the ancient practice of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, bringing Eucharistic bread on a lotus-leaf from homes to the Church to be consecrated at the Sacrifice [*Pāju* in Malayalam and Sanskrit] or at the Offering [*Kurbāna* in Syriac]. Out of this Sacred

22. L.A. Waddell, "Symbolism of lotus in Buddhism", in *ERE*, Vol. 8, p. 144.

Offering preceded the life, symbolically represented by the traditional Indian lamp-flame.

b) The Damaru and AUM [fig. 8]

This symbol signifies the *Nāda Brahma*, the creative Word of God. *Damaru* was the musical instrument of Śiva. *Damaru* produces sound which in its subtlest form forms the very basis of the manifested universe and is generally referred to as *Nāda*.²³ A drum is a symbol of primordial sound.²⁴ It is the original source of sound. Language evolved from the same source. *Damru* or *Damaru*, a very small double sided narrow waisted drum, was used by Śiva as an accompaniment to the *tāṇḍava nrtya* [cosmic dance]. With this drum he sets the rhythm of the Universe.

The symbol *AUM* comprises three independent letters A, U and M, each of which has its own meaning and significance. The letter "A" represents beginning, the letter "U" represents preservation, and "M" represents finality or dissolution. Hence the symbol *AUM* is the Word representing the totality of God's power responsible for creation, preservation and dissolution of this universe.²⁵ Here the symbol *A-U-M* symbolizes God as the beginning, the middle and the end, of the whole cosmic order.

c) The Cross and the Hand extended downward [fig. 9]

This symbol stands for God's protection and grace. Downward extended hand was the symbol constantly in use during the first eleven centuries to express the presence and will of God, the Father.²⁶ It was usually shown emerging from a cloud which concealed the Majesty no man can behold and live. As such it continued in use until the seventeenth century, although a head began to appear instead in the twelfth. There are many variations available.

According to Berber, the hand signifies protection, authority, power and strength. *Manus* [hand] had the same meaning for the

23. I.K. Taimni, *An Introduction to Hindu Symbolism* (Madras: The Theosophical publishing House, 1965), p. 42.

24. Cf. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.* p. 85.

25. Cf. Swami Harshananda, "What is behind symbols?" in *Bhavan's Journal*, Vol. 26, Oct. 7; Oct. 20 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, 1979)

26. Cf. Appleton & Bridges, *op. cit.* p. 43.

Romans. In the Egyptian tongue, the term, designating the hand was related to the pillar or support. And it signifies manifestation, action and donation.²⁷

Another interpretation is that the Cross and the empty hand may symbolize self sacrifice and emptying of oneself for the service of others.

d) The Finger, Chakra and Triangle [fig. 10]

This symbol indicates God's redeeming work in gathering back all unto Himself.

"The circle or disk, is very frequently, an emblem of the Sun, and indisputably so when it is surrounded by rays. It also bears a certain relationship to the number ten symbolizing the return to unity from multiplicity, when it stands for heaven and perfection and sometimes eternity as well."²⁸ Triangle in its highest sense points to the Trinity. In its normal position with the apex up, it expresses the aspiration of all things towards the higher unity, the radiating point—God.²⁹ In Indian tradition this symbol represents God who swirls round the Sun with his finger. The sun is considered to be the time-symbol and the source of power and energy. It, therefore, indicates that God transcends time and He is Omnipotent, having control and power also over the cosmic forces like the sun.³⁰

e) Peacock (fig. 11)

The Peacock symbolizes the inner beauty and harmony of the human soul. It appears also as a symbol of immortality and glory. "The bird (Peacock) was given even more power as a symbol of immortality by the belief that its flesh was not subject to putrefaction after death".³¹ St. Augustine stated that its [Peacock's] flesh was incorruptible. The Peacock was also adopted as the symbol of resurrection, possibly because after moulting it was seen to become clothed again in splendour.³²

27. Cf. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

28. Cf. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

29. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

30. Appleton & Bridges, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

31. E.A. Armstrong, "Peacock", Cavendish Richard (ed) *op. cit.*, Vol. 16, p. 2154.

32. Cf. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

f) The Hand with Lotus Buds (fig. 12)

The symbol stands for devotion and self-offering of the devotee, especially her heart, through vows. Here, we note three flowers, and they signify the three vows : Chastity, Poverty and Obedience.

Here the offering object is lotus, which symbolizes a person, especially his/her heart. In the Upanishadic teachings lotus is compared to the body of a person whose soul is residing in the cup of a lotus.³³

g) The Dove and Jñāna Mudra (fig. 13)

The dove represents the Holy Spirit the real source of wisdom. As we know, it was only after the descent of the tongue of the pentecostal fire, the disciples received the gift of the tongue (Acts. 2:2). *Jñāna Mudra* also implies wisdom. It is the *Mudra* of *Jñānam*, i. e., symbol of Wisdom. *Jñāna Mudra* is the teaching mode of a guru. In *bharatanātyam* this *Mudra* is used to express blessings and to symbolize nectar. Thus both these taken together they imply the imparting of wisdom.

h) The Padukas (fig. 14)

This symbol expresses one's decision to follow the divine *Guru* with docility. To bow down and touch the feet of parents and elders is a sign of respect and obedience, a custom widely prevalent in India.

Pāda-mudra was regarded as an integral part of the individual and was believed to bear some of the properties of its owner. . . Veneration of foot prints is found in varied contexts. . . The foot prints of a deity, saint or holy person are held in great veneration. So gods and saints were represented by a large foot print carved on a piece of rock or engraved on a large wooden board, and marked with auspicious signs. Such a foot-print is worshipped with offerings of flowers, lights and prayers as if it were an idol. Buddhists thus worship the foot-print of Buddha, Vaishnavites the foot-print of Vishnu and so on.³⁴

33. Cf. Menakshi Bhavani, *The dance in India*, (Bombay: Taraporevala's Treasure House of Books, 1979), p. 136.

34. Cf. Benjamine Walker, *Hindu World*, Vol. I, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1968) p. 362.

i) The Sārangi and Thorn (fig. 15)

They together depict suffering. Since *sārangi* has a sympathetically vibrating metal string, it reminds one of the still, sad music of humanity. The thorn is related to the world-axis and therefore to the Cross. The thorn on the rose-bush helps to emphasize the counterpoise or conjunction between thesis and anti-thesis, that is, between the ideas of existence and non-existence, ecstasy and anguish, pleasure and pain; this again is related to the symbolism of the Cross.³⁵

j) Kamandalu and Staff (fig. 16)

These are the symbols of asceticism and of perseverance in a devout life. They are used by ascetics and students of religion. "Carrying an alms bowl, a staff, and a water pot, let him continually wander about, controlling himself and not hurting any creature. A gourd, a wooden bowl, an earthen dish or one made of split cane, Manu, the son of Svayambu, has declared to be vessels (suitable) for an ascetic."³⁶

k) Tamburu and The Dove (fig. 17)

This symbol stands for *dhyāna* (meditation). The *bhajan* with musical accompaniments provides an atmosphere for prayer and meditation. The dove represents the Holy Spirit who enlightens our mind and enkindles our heart.

l) Bell and the Conch (fig. 18)

This symbol represents prayer. The Buddhist monks sounded the bell as a signal to begin prayer. "In Buddhistic ceremonial, bells and gongs play a large part. The noise made during certain rites is quite deafening, the object being to call the attention of the divinity to the prayers and ceremonies of the devotees."³⁷ After A.D. 313 the Christian Church used the bells for summoning the faithful to worship.³⁸ The sound of bell is said to be a symbol of creative power.³⁹ In the *Gītā*, the conch was blown to awaken Arjuna to take up his duties.

35. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.* p. 322.

36. A.S. Geden "Asceticism (Hindu)", ERE, Vol. 2, p. 805.

37. Alexander Chamberlain F., "Gongs and Bells" ERE Vol. 6, p. 315.

38. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

39. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

m) The Hand holding a Lighted Lamp (fig. 19)

It is the token of preparedness to meet the Lord. This reminds one of the virgins who kept vigil to receive the Lord. (Mt. 25:16).

“Light in a religious worship is very ancient in the world. Among the pagans and Jews lights have been considered as an expression of public image to God.”⁴⁰ “There were perpetually burning lamps such as that kept alight by the vestal virgins, or that of the temple Venus noted by St. Augustine.”⁴¹ “In comparison with sound which in worship usually presents a coercive character, lighting and fire, whether permanent or occasional, generally signify a sacred or spiritual presence, an offering, prayer, intercession, or purification.”⁴² In the act of consecration, the flame in the *ārati* (fire-oblation) represents the soul of the devotee which is offered to the deity. It is rekindled with the divine light of the creator, preserver and destroyer. The devotee integrates his self with the supreme Being. Such surrender is the core of prayer.⁴³

n) The Holy Book and the Lamp (fig. 20)

“*Swadhyāya-pravachanābyam na pramāditavyam.*”

“Let there be no neglect of study and teaching”

(*Tait. Up.* I. 11, 1).

This symbol indicates the importance of learning and teaching of the word of God. A book is designed to serve as an instrument of communication. “The early Aryan Religion of India and the Indian systems of religion allied thereto consider the *Veda* (knowledge) as the primal wisdom.”⁴⁴ Lamp is a symbol of scripture as the word of God. “The word is a lamp unto my feet.”⁴⁵ Lamp is also “a symbol of intelligence and the spirit”⁴⁶ and light is a symbol of knowledge and spiritual illumination.⁴⁷

40. Joseph Tomy, *Christian Symbols and Holy Mass*, (Alway: Jubilee Memorial Press, A.P. Seminary, 1940), p. 68.

41. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.* p. 168.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

43. D.C. Kelkar, *Lamps of India*, (Delhi: Director of Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1961) pp. 4-5.

44. Alfred Jeremias, “Book of life”, *ERE*, Vol. 2, p. 793.

45. *Psalms*, 119, 105.

46. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.* p. 168.

47. M.P. Pandit, *Key to Vedic Symbolism*, (Pondicherry: Dipti Publications, 1967) p. 39.

o) The Mountain and the Lunar Crescent (fig. 21)

This is a symbol of hope. "In medieval emblems, the symbolism of the 'mountain of salvation' is defined by a complementary figure surmounting it, such as the *fleur-de-lis*, the star, the lunar Crescent, the Cross, the steps, the crown, the circle, the triangle, or the number three."⁴⁸ "The later Christians' beliefs about mountains take us a long way from the psalmists: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." There is a belief among both Christians and non-Christians that mountains are the source of strength and inspiration.⁴⁹ The mountain symbolizes Christ, [the hope of human race], and the Lunar Crescent symbolizes our Lady, the mother of Jesus as also our mother: . . . "who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon. . ."⁵⁰

The mystic sense of the peak comes from the fact that it is the point of contact between heaven and earth, or the centre through which the world axis passes, binding the three levels together.⁵¹ To the Hebrews Mountains were symbols of Jahweh's righteousness, His kindness and His guardianship. Mountains are everywhere symbolic of strength and everlastingness. [Cf. the frequent phrase in O.T. 'the everlasting hills, though compared with Jahweh, they are as nothing'.⁵²

p) The Sun and The Lotus (fig. 22)

Here the Sun represents Christ, the true light. "The whole earth is full of the mercy of the Lord."⁵³ Christ in Christian literature, is the sun of justice, the sun of salvation. In Indian tradition, *Surya* is the Lord of the supreme sight, the vast light, *byhat jyothi* or as it is sometimes called the true light, *rtam jyothi*.⁵⁴ The lotus represents the human race. The lotus blooms at the rise of the sun symbolic of the human race that awaits the second coming of Christ, the flowering time of the human aspirations.

48. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.* p. 210.

49. David Philips, "Mountain", Cavendish Richard, (ed.) *op. cit.*, Vol. 14, p. 1900.

50. *The Song of Solomon*, 6:10.

51. J.E. Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

52. Mac. Culloch, "Mountains, Mountain gods", *ERE*, Vol. 8, p. 867.

53. Cf. Marcel Bruer, *Sun and Shadow*, (New York: Longman's, 1956).

54. M.P. Pandit, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

The Panels on the ring of the dome depict Indian symbols of life and light motives. The motive of lotuses and lighted lamps that form the base for the lighting fixtures symbolize light and life. [As seen before, lotus symbolizes nascent life]. The ring of peacocks and “St. Thomas—Cross”, an ancient symbol of the Syro-Malabar Christian tradition, stand for resurrection and eternal life.