

What a tangled Web we weave

*Sites where Eastern and Western
threads in the Web meet.*

The oldest living culture is making a comeback in the newest realm of science. There seems to be a trend of naming new computer technology after Vedic gods. Perhaps all the sun-related Greek gods have been exhausted on things like the computer font called Helios and NASA's numerous Apollo space rockets. Now it's the Vedic Sun God Surya's turn. And, of course, Shiva also has found a powerful place in this brave new culture.

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"The Praise of Shiva's Greatness"

From *Mahimnahstava*, translated by W. Norman Brown

"Since the way of religion is diverse, including the Triad of Vedas, the Sāṃkhya, the Yoga, the doctrine of Paśupati, Vaiṣṇavism, and one person considers this one best and another person that one suitable - because of the variety of preferences, you are, for men who favour different paths, straight or winding, the single goal, as the ocean is of waters.

"A mighty bull, a skull-capped club, an axe, a tiger's skin, ashes, serpents, and a skull - only so little, O granter of boons, is the paraphernalia for your way of life; but the gods possess each his own wealth entrusted to him by a movement of your eyebrow. For a mirage of sense-objects does not delude him (Shiva) whose delight is in his soul.

"All is eternal, says one; another, this entire universe is impermanent; another proclaims that in this whole world both permanence and impermanence exist with diverse spheres of operation. O crusher of cities, though I am confused, as it were, by these various partisans, I am still not ashamed to praise you. Is not my babbling presumptuous?

"When with all their might Viriñca went upwards and Hari downwards to measure the majesty of you whose body was a burst of flame, but went in vain, then, O Giriśa, that which they were supremely praising full of bodily devotion and spiritual faith appeared before them of its own accord. Does not devotion to you bear fruit?

"The ten-headed Rāvaṇa reduced the three worlds without effort to a state where they no longer opposed him and still had his [twenty] arms dominated by the itch for war, This, because he had made an offering to your lotus feet consisting of [nine of] his heads like a row of lotuses, was a consequence of unwavering devotion to you, O destroyer of the three cities.

"When Rāvaṇa in his might was extending the forest of his arms, whose strength he had acquired through service to you, with violence against your dwelling on Kailāsa itself, you idly moved the tip of your great toe [causing him to fall] and even in Pātāla (the underworld) he could not find a resting place. Certain it is that when a trouble-maker prospers, he becomes mad.

"The fact, O boon-giver, that [the asura] Bāṇa reduced Sutrāman's (Indra's) power, though it was so exalted, and thus brought the three worlds to being his retinue, that is no marvel, since he was paying devotion to your feet. To what elevation does bowing of the head to you not lead?

"The stain which you received when you swallowed the poison, O three-eyed one, while you were swayed by compassion for the devas and asuras, who feared the sudden destruction of the universe, that stain on your throat, paradoxically, does not fail to produce beauty. Even disfigurement commands praise for one engaged in