

## Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti

Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti is Lord Śīva manifest as the first teacher. It is said in the Purāṇās that Lord Brahma, the creator, in the beginning of creation created out of his mind four progeny known as the Sanatkumāras: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra. It is said that Lord Brahma asked them to join him in the task of creation. However, they were renunciates by nature and even at that age possessed a keen desire to know the truth. So, they set out in the northern direction in search of truth and then performed penance. Pleased with them, Lord Śīva appeared before them as a teacher, seated under a banyan tree, facing the south, and imparted Brahma-vidyā (knowledge of Brahman) to the Sanatkumāras.

It is said that Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti revealed the truth, which is the identity between the jīva (the individual) and Brahman (the limitless). Thus, Lord Śīva, as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, is the presiding deity of knowledge. The truth is that the Lord is the source of all knowledge, beginning with the Vedas which are a body of knowledge that is revealed to the Ṛṣis. Dakṣiṇāmūrti, thus symbolizes knowledge and is a very appropriate altar of worship for seekers of knowledge.

## The Meaning of the Word Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti

The word Dakṣiṇāmūrti can be understood in several different ways. *Dakṣiṇa* means south and *mūrti* means form. So Dakṣiṇāmūrti means the one who is facing south. The teacher is facing south while imparting knowledge and the disciples are facing north. *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Upaniṣad* defines the word *dakṣiṇa* as the enlightened mind.

According to this definition, Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the one whose form or truth (*mūrti*) is perceived by an enlightened mind (*dakṣiṇa*).

The word Dakṣiṇāmūrti can also be seen as made up of two words: *dakṣiṇa* and *amūrti*. *Dakṣiṇa* means able, skillful, and competent. *Amūrti* means formless. The Lord who is formless in his true nature is also the competent creator, sustainer, and dissolver of this universe through the power of *māyā*.

*Dakṣiṇa* also means *anukūla*, favorable or kindly disposed. Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti is always kindly disposed to his devotees and seekers of knowledge. He imparts the knowledge with love and compassion.