

## Sri Lakshmi / Padmavati

Lakshmi or Mahalakshmi is the Hindu goddess of wealth, luck, love and beauty. Representations of Lakshmi (or Shri) are found in Jain and Buddhist monuments, in addition to Hindu temples. Analogous to the Greek Aphrodite and Roman Venus - who also originated from the oceans - she is generally thought of as the personification of material fortune, beauty and prosperity.

According to the Vishnu Purana, Lakshmi is the daughter of Bhrigu and Khyaati and resided in Swarga but due to the curse of Durvasa, she left Swarga and made Ksheer-sagara her home. Amongst the host of divine gifts which appeared from the ocean, goddess Lakshmi appeared and then chose Shri Vishnu as her consort, as only He had the power to control Maya or 'illusion'. This is consonant with the basic philosophy of "Sri Vaishnavism" which honours Sri (Lakshmi) as the "Isvarigm sarva bhootanam" i.e. the Supreme goddess and not just the goddess of wealth.

In some places like in Tirumala, She is seen in two forms, Bhudevi and Sridevi, both either side of Sri Venkateshwara or Vishnu. Bhudevi



is the representation and totality of the Material world or energy called the aparam Prakriti, in which She is called Mother Earth. Sridevi is the Spiritual world or energy called the Param Prakriti. Most people are mistaken that they are separate beings although they are one, Lakshmi. All the different goddesses in the Hindu pantheon are manifestations, or different forms of Lakshmi.

Mahalakshmi's presence is also found on Lord Sri Venkateswara (at Tirumala) or Vishnu's chest, at the Heart. Lakshmi is the embodiment of Love, from which devotion to God or Bhakti flows from. It is through Love/Bhakti or Lakshmi that the atma or soul is able to reach God or Vishnu. She is also the personification of the Spiritual energy within us and universe called Kundalini. Also, She embodies the Spiritual World or Vaikunta; the abode of Lakshmi-Narayana or Vishnu, or what would be considered Heaven in Hinduism. She is also the Divine qualities of God and the soul. Lakshmi is the embodiment of God's superior spiritual feminine energy or the Param Prakriti, which purifies, empowers and uplifts the individual. Hence, She is called the Goddess of Fortune.