INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Religion has been playing an important role in the Socio-religious life of the mankind throughout the world since ancient and pre-historic periods. The sources of origin of religion is very much controversial and the scholars have failed to attribute any positive reason or cause towards the origin of religion. According to Western scholars like Harbert Spencer, Hugo Elard Meyer, S.Eitrem and others, all religion originates in the honour and respect shown to the spirits of the dead. On the other hand, it is also asserted that the religion springs from a direct recognition in nature of powers superior to those of men. Another view regarding origin of religion is propounded that the gods are sprung from Kings or other famous and distinguished men, apart from any connexion with magic. The absurdity of interpreting Vedic religion of the period 1400 to 1000 B.C. by the light of investigation of the modern Hindu, separated by great differences in blood and tradition, would seem self-evident and it is also viewed about the historical character of Indra as a great king and even to localize his exploits.

The basis of Hindu-religion is the Vedas. All other subsequent religious texts have their roots in the Vedas only. The Vedas were originated as religious texts. The origin of the Vedic religion is to take refuge in the absolute power.
or the cosmic power of the universe and this is also associated on account of two reasons. When the man smells danger, he wishes to take shelter in the absolute power in order to overcome the danger. In another occasion he requires the favour of this absolute power to fulfill his desires. The Vedic Aryans imposed divinity in any natural phenomenon which they could not understand or explain and also where favour they required of and on. In this way number of divinities developed such as Sūrya, Varuṇa, Agni, Indra and others and they all were worshiped for some specific purpose.

Now we would consider the origin of the word Devatā. In Vedas, we have found Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and others were termed as Devatā. At the very initial stage, the meaning of the word Devatā was just the subject of the hymn. But this word was subsequently modernised and according to Vaska it is ये साह देवताः. So Devā or Devatā are synonyms. Now the word Deva has originated from the root Div meaning shining or illuminated. So whatever illuminated is a Devatā such as Sūrya, Agni, Chandra etc. Indra certainly does not mean illuminated but since he bestows rain by breaking the clouds, so he is indirectly considered as illuminated one and as such a Devata.

In Vedic mythology and subsequent literature Indra has, all along been considered as a rain-god and so he was propitiated by a wide section of people. But Indra was worshiped not only in India but in other parts of the world.
with other names. A tribe named Dink inhabitants of the surrounding areas of white Nile river used to worship a god named Denind, a variant of Sanskrit Indra. Denind is also a rain god as well as king of the gods like Indra. Another uncivilised tribe known as Damar, worship a god 'Omakuru' who is a rain god and lord of the gods like Indra. So is the Indra of the Damara. Among the primitive tribes of America, there were two civilised tribal races. They were 'Ajteks of Mexico and the subjects of ancient tribe 'Inka' of Peru. The Ajteks used to propitiate Plobo who was like Indra an aerial god, rain god and a god with Vajra or thunderbolt as his weapon. Among the tribes of Peru, Indra is not a god but a goddess. The worship of rain god is also in vogue among some tribes of Nicaragua. A section of uncivilised tribal people of Orissa in India known as Khand, worship a rain god named Pijjwana. The coloos term their large mountain as Narambaru and worship it as rain god. The Romans used to propitiate Jupiter Plubeus as rain god. So Plubeus was the Indra. So this particular god, most probably could assume an obvious position by virtue of his being worshipped at different parts of the world and by people belonging to different religious and customs and culture. The advent of Aryan civilisation opened a new horizon in the history of the mankind and Indra was their supreme and the most favourite national god. He was
actively associated with the Aryan people particularly in
their wars against the non-Aryans. So Indra was in a very
responsible for the development and the stability of the Aryan
Civilisation in ancient India. Moreover, Indra could retain
his primary position throughout the early Vedic period and
continued to remain as an important divinity in the Epic,
Puṣānic, Buddhist and Jaina periods also. So, the study of
this particular deity enables us to know the basis of Hindu
religion and the subsequent changes that it has undergone.
A threadbare discussion on Indra has been made in this work
in the following chapters. Moreover, not only ancient period,
but any event of any timing related to Indra has also been
taken into consideration for the purpose of maintaining relevancy.

Indra, undoubtedly was the most prominent deity of the
Vedic Aryans, essentially, an atmospheric god, he has to his
credit nearly 250 hymns in the Rgveda, or in other words, he
has succeeded in memorialising about a fourth of that great Vedic
work, which is looked upon as the earliest Indo-Iranian liter-
ary product. However, it should be remembered that Indra was
known even to the ancient Iranians, but not as a deity, but as a
mischievous demon. It is, however, a fact that his most popular
epithet, namely Vṛtra-rāja, bestowed on him several times in the
Ṛgveda, is prominently mentioned in the Ṛgveda as a proper noun,
and Vṛtra-rāja there, is an auspicious angel and plays a vital
part in the mythology of the early Iranians. This is something
quite inexplicable, unless we are prepared to believe that a section of the original Indo-Iranians were opposed to Indra, but not to his exploits. We should further take note of the fact that in the draft of the famous Baghaz-Koi treaty, this particular god is invoked along with Mitra, Varuna and Agastya as an auspicious heavenly being.

The word *Indra* is of uncertain origin, although MacDonald in his *Vedic Mythology* suggests that it is probably derived from *Indu*, meaning 'drop'. The name is otherwise absent in the literature of Greece and Rome, but a thunder-wielding god, known as *Jupiter*, is known to both those peoples. In the *Rigveda*, Indra essentially is a god of thunder, and his favourite weapon is *Vajra* lightning. It is permissible therefore to conjecture that the earliest Aryans or the Indo-European worshipped a god, connected with lightning a physical phenomenon, which they could not properly explain, but for which they had both fear and respect.

Since the Indo-Aryans were a people, given to imagination, they believed that Vajra was fashioned for Indra by some other deity, and the consensus of opinion is that, it was probably fashioned for him by *Vasishtra*, one of the most obscure members of the *Vedic* pantheon, but who was generally regarded as a skilful artificer.

The *Vairabho* or the *Vairabhu Indra* was at the same time, looked upon by the Vedic seers as a warrior god, who is delineated as fighting both heavenly and earthly enemies in
numerous Vedic passages. He is represented not only as the 'king of the gods', but also as the leader of the celestial army. Any discerning reader of the *Iṣṭakṣetra* will not fail to notice that this particular deity is depicted as destroying the well-built forts of the black-skinned non-Aryans. The well-known epithet *suraśakta* is peculiar to Indra and Agni, but its association with Indra is much more common. Another similar epithet, namely *purabhid* (fort-destroyer or shatterer) is peculiar to him. Such descriptions of Indra, in the Vedic literature, have given rise to the belief that it was under Indra's leadership, that the Indo-Aryan barbarians had succeeded in destroying the old Harappan civilisation. Although a very tempting suggestion, it has not found general acceptance among the present-day scholars.

The Indra-Vṛtra myth is another important feature of the mythology, connected with this great Vedic deity. As an atmospheric god, and as a god of thunder and lightning, Indra is naturally connected with the rains. Vṛtra, the demon, obviously represents the dark mass of clouds, which Indra pierces with thunder, and helps in releasing the water for the benefit of mankind, and his worshipers. So Indra was looked upon as a rain-god, and this is one of the reasons of his popularity.

Indra's relationship with Agni, is of special importance, as both of them are avowed enemies of the non-Aryans, who were basically against the fire-cult. Both of them are commanders-in-chief in the Vedic period, and both of them, as already noticed,
are sort-destroyers. Both have been implored by the Vedic poets to help the worshippers in their sanguinary battles against the non-believers, and particularly the Dāses and Bāyus. Another god, whose relationship with Indra, deserves special mention, was Sīra, who stimulated Indra in all his actions, particularly his martial exploits. Varuṇa, Vāyu, Uṣas, Śūrya and others, are also depicted as Indra's associates. But sometimes this mighty deity is represented as indulging in pure mischief.

However, in the later Vedic period, Indra gradually lost his prominent position, and Prajāpati replaced him as the number one Vedic god, and Indra was relegated to the second place. However, he continued to play the role of devarājas, and his actual position in the later Vedic literature has been exhaustively discussed in this chapter.

In this chapter, we have tried to analyse and assess the position of Indra, as described in the two great Indian epics, namely the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. We have already seen that in the later Vedic literature, Indra's overall image is somewhat tarnished, and Prajāpati, who afterwards came to be known as Brahma, became the most important and powerful figure of the later Vedic pantheon. But even this Brahma, gradually lost his supreme position in the Indian pantheon, and the two new gods, namely Īśva and Viṣṇu became all important, and with them started a new religious movement, which was based on Bhakti. However, Indra as the "King of Gods" has a special
role in both the epics, and let us first see how, he has been treated in the lesser epic, namely the Rāmayana.

In the Rāmayana Indra is depicted like an ordinary mortal, with all his shortcomings. He does not hesitate to dazzle both Shakya and Gautama, and is seen as sexually assaulting Shakya in the first book of the Rāmayana. The last book of this epic describes his humiliation at the hands of Afghosha, the son of Kāvana. In the Pārāvartya we are told that Indra stole the sacrificial horse of Jambhītha.

Vālī is described as Vānakūma, the son of Vānaka. Several popular names of Indra like Jāmba, Vānaka, Sāhasrāhaka, Dvāpayā, Urujati, Dvānanda, Vaheṇḍra, Jatakrata, Sanātana etc., recur in the Rāmayana. Indra's son Jāyanta is mentioned. He also his wife Śaci, and his charioteer Nāṇḍī and his Vānaka Vāku-vāta.

However, it is the UŚabhārata, that gives us the most elaborate information regarding the exploits of this god. Indeed this epic presents us with a complete picture of Indra. Some of the exploits of Indra, mentioned in the Vālī literature, are repeated in the UŚabhārata. For example, the killing of Vṛtra has been described in the Sāntipāvan of the UŚabhārata and Vṛtra is described as a devotee of Viṣṇu, and hence in the descriptions of Indra-Vṛtra fights, we find a veiled allusion to the rivalry of Viṣṇu (basically an Aditya) and Indra. The same is the case with Vālī and Sugāṇa, the former being the son of Indra, and the latter of Śūrya, an Aditya. In the description of the rivalry of Karna and Arjuna in the UŚabhārata,
we also find the repetition of the same myth, the former being
the son of the Aditya Surya, and the latter of Indra. Elsewhere,
we find Indra described as an opponent of Vasudova, the
incarnation of Visnu. The story of the burning of the Kāñchana
forest, told in the Rāmāvata of the Mahābhārata, proves the
rivalry of Indra and Vasudova, the human incarnation of Visnu.
Elsewhere in the Purāṇas and the Hariyavan, this rivalry
between the two deities, namely Indra and Visnu, has been
further described, and this will be noticed elsewhere in our
Introduction.

Although essentially an atmospheric god, Indra in the
Mahābhārata, is sometimes represented as an Aditya, and this
is also supported by the evidence of the Vedas. This epithet
is more probably due to the fact that he was indeed a son of
Aditi and not himself a sun-god like Varuna, Savitṛ, Pushan,
Bhaga etc. Unlike other gods, Indra is already represented in
the Vedas in the anthropomorphic form, and in the Mahākāvyas
his anthropomorphism is complete, although surprisingly, no
icon of Indra has been mentioned in either of the two epics.
The great festival of Indra, known as Indraśeṣa or Sākramgha,
according to the Great Epic, was first popularised by the Kula
King Vasu Upārīcara, who surprisingly was a great Vaishnava. The
same epic refers to a missing work called Indragīta (II, 89.5
Grod) and also refers to a class of devotees who wore his
bhaktas (cf. the expression Sākramgha in Moh, IX, 47.3).
Numerous names of Indra are found in the Great Epic, but he
certainly lost his earlier position as commander-in-chief of the Devas to Karttikeya.

Indra's unusual passion, for the wives of others, has already been noticed. In the Mahabharata also, his penchant for extra-marital love has been well illustrated in the Vimalapakhyana, included in the 13th Book, namely the Anushasanaparvan. Here this great god has been given the unflattering epithet paramastrikamcharin. The Harivamsa too, in the story of Vasuvarita, tells the same thing. But Indra had other superior qualities. We are told in the Santigapurvan that the celebrated treatise on ethics, called Mahabandotaka, originally composed by Brahman, was abridged by none other than Indra. Elsewhere in the Great Epic also, this particular deity has been eulogised for some of his superior qualities.

The Puranic texts, which were apparently compiled after the Mahakavyas, give a lot of information on Indra-Worship, and there is little doubt that at the time of their composition, Indra, as devaraja was worshipped throughout India by devout people, along with other major gods. As noticed earlier, Indra was particularly worshipped during the Indradhanusa or Laksmahana festival, for which, we have a good number of references in the Puranic literature. The Vaishnava Harivamsa, though known as the Khila (appendix) part of the
Mahabharata, is actually a Puranic text, and its contents are similar to that found in the Vishnu Purana. The Harivamasa has a few interesting chapters in its second Book (chs 59 ff, critical edition, Poona). Here we find Vasudova Krishna openly opposing the Sakrema or Indra festival during the rainy period at Vrindavana, which immensely displeased Indra, but in the long run he had to submit to Vasudova. But there is no doubt that in spite of the opposition by Krishna and others, Indra-worship remained extremely popular with the masses and the Buddhist texts, particularly, make repeated references to it. The third Book of the Harivamasa, namely the Bhaishyaparvan again tells the story of Indra's mischief, in connexion with the Asvamedha Sacrifice of Janamejaya II, the great-grandson of Arjuna. It is apparent that later Puranic writers knew of Indra's weakness for married ladies, and this particular aspect of Indra's character, was never forgotten.

The Vishnu Purana, one of the earliest Puranic texts, frequently mentions Indra. A story told in its First Book (chapter 11) tells an interesting tale regarding the curse of Durvasas on Indra. It was because of the curse of this temperamental rishi, that Indra once lost all his hold over the Universe and only after the churning of the ocean (Sugandhramantra), and after obtaining Lakshmi's boon that he succeeded in regaining his hold over mankind. The same
chapter contains the beautiful stotra, addressed to Lakshmi by Indra. The Harivamsha story of Indra-Vasudeva rivalry, in connexion with the festival of Indra, is also repeated in the Vishnu Purana (V.10.16ff). The Matsya Purana gives a beautiful description of how an icon of Indra (called here Suraraja) should be fashioned (269.65 ff.).

The relevant lines are quoted below:

शेषोनयासद्या दया नाम्पाराणासामसयति

रिखुरुक्तकोन्होदनेन सिंहसंक्षणम महेभुलन

किर्तिकुपलसार्थिणेन सिद्दरोहुक्षणम

वेज्रूपलशिरायस माहिश्वराणाब्धिशितम

छत्रकुमारसाहित्यतुष्टिः स्त्रियाः सर्वाः प्रदर्शायेत

सिंहसूक्ष्मगतांत्यं गांधर्ववागचारायुं

इंद्राधिभमतासायव कुरुदुधुलसाहित्यिनम

The above-mentioned lines directly prove that images of Indra were worshipped by his bhaktas in the period of composition of the earlier Puranas. The Bhagavata also describes the rivalry of Indra and Vasudeva in connexion with the description of the Indrayaga festival of Vandavana (3, ch. 26 2).

Let us now discuss the evidence of the non-Puranic Sanskrit texts, beginning from the Ashtadhyayi of Panini. This god is mentioned several times in this particular work, and this great grammarian cannot be placed after
500 B.C. The following names of Indra are known from this work - Naruttvat, Maghavan, Vrtrahan and Mahendra. However, one cannot expect to get all the popular name of Indra in this work on Sanskrit grammar. However, Patañjali (Second century B.C.), the great commentator on Panini's grammar, in his Mahabhashya has names like Sakra, Puruhut, Vrtrahan, Maghavat, Harivan, Purandra and Mahendra. Patañjali also tells a small story regarding Indra's boon to an old, unmarried maiden (Vṛddhakumari). Here Indra, indeed appears as a very suspicious and boon-granting deity. The Arthasastra of Kautilya, probably of the 4th-century B.C., recommends the construction of the temple of Vaijayanta (Indra) and his son Jayanta in the fort (II.4). This proves that the shrines, dedicated to Indra and his son, were regularly built in the Mauryan period. There is no doubt that such temples contained icons of both Indra and his son.

Among the Sanskrit playwrights, it is Kālidāsa, who has repeatedly referred to Indra in his works. The following names of Indra are found in Kālidāsa's works - Vajri, Puruhūta, Satekratu, Vṛtrasṛṣṭru, Vajrapani, Purandara, Surenāra, Saka, Parvatapakṣasatana, Kari, Maghavan, Gotrabhid, Vāsa, Vīcāja, Suresvara, Prācinabarhi, Vīrasaṅga, and Sahasranātra. A much longer list of Indra's names, is preserved in the Gupta lexicon Amarakosha, the first systematic Sanskrit work
on lexicography. The entire list is reproduced below:

Indra, Narutvat, Meghavan, Vidajaus, Pakaosane, Vuddhabrovas, Sunascira, Puruhuta, Puranlata, Sakra, Satamanyu, Divamspati, Satranan, Sattrabhid, Vajrin, Vasava, Vttrahan, Vghan, Vostoshpati, Surapat, Balarati, Sacipati, Jambhabhadin, Harihaya, Svaraj, Nemuciisudana, Shankrundona Duscyavana, Turasakha, Haghavahana, Akhandala, Sahasraksha and Jashubhin. This exhaustive list of thirty-five names in this great dictionary compiled in the Gupta period indirectly shows the extensive popularity of this god, in this golden age of the history of this sub-continent, when Visnhu was the most popular deity.

The Buddhist and the Jain Canonical works have a lot of new information on Indra. It should be remembered that these works were composed by persons, who were against the Brahmanical forms of worship, and naturally, like other gods, Indra or Sakra are looked upon as inferior to the Buddhhas and the Tirthankaras. Even then, unlike other gods, Indra is treated somewhat differently in the religious texts of the Buddhists and the Jains. Let us first discuss his position in the Buddhist Canonical literature.

A number of popular names of Indra are known to the Buddhist writers. Among these names are Haghavahana, Sakra, Purin-gala (Sanskrit Purandana), Sahasraksha (Sanskrit Sahasrakhyha) vacha (Sanskrit Vttraha), Sakinda (Sanskrit Sakinda) etc.
Like the epico-Purānic writers, the Buddhists represent Indra as Śvavaśī, his charioteer is Nālaka, a name also found in the Brahmanical texts. His wife is Suja, which is a variant of Śaci. His palace is Sudhamma. Like the Vedic and epico-Purānic Indra, the Indra of the Buddhists is Vaiśravaṇī (Sanskrit Vaiśravaṇa).

Although the Pāli Buddhist writers have painted Indra favourably, still he is depicted as much inferior to Buddha. Budhisattvas, and even some of the principal disciples of Buddha, like Nāgārjuna, Sāriputta, Mahākassapa etc. everywhere, we find him honouring the Buddha as his preceptor, and a number of lectures were delivered by Buddha, far the benefit of Śakra or Indra. Indeed Śakra was one of the most zealous followers of Buddha in the Pāli literature, and sometimes he is seen helping Buddha’s disciples in their attainment of the goal. In the Pāli texts Śakra appears as the guardian of the moral law in the world, a feature almost unknown in the Brahmanical literature. In the Jātakas also, Indra or Śakra appears as a friend of the Budhisattvas, and plays a crucial part in many stories. However, we do not agree with Kālacakrakara when he declares (1. 345, II, 535) that in the Buddhist literature Indra and Śakra are two independent conceptions. Regarding the festival of Indra, called Śrāvakaṇa, we can say this much, that it is very prominently mentioned in the Buddhist literature.

The Jātakas also have a lot to say on Indra. It is, at his orders, that we find Śkanda or Harinagasemi transferring the embryo of Mahāvīra from the womb Brahmani Dēvaṇanda to that
of Kshatriyan Triśalā, This is known from the Kolpasyūtra, a very early Jain Canonical text. Everywhere we find Śekka or Indra (Sanskrit Indra) paying homage to the Jinas or the Tirthākaras. The festival connected with this god, has also been described, and we learn, that this festival was connected with much drinking and sacrificing. Among the popular names of Indra in the Jain literature, we have Pagasādana (Sanskrit Pāgadasana), Sayakka (Sanskrit Sayaka), Vajjrapāni (Sanskrit Vajrapāni), Durvadāra etc.

In this chapter the historical development of the cult of Indra has been outlined. As we have already noticed, from the days of the composition of the Vedas and even earlier, this god played an important part in the religious history of this subcontinent. It has also been conjectured by a few scholars (see J.K. Banerjee, Development of Hindu Iconography 2nd edition, 1956, pp. 45 ff.) that, even icons of Indra were regularly worshipped in the RVvedic period. However, Macdonell vehemently denies it. But it appears that in the period of the composition of the epics, Indra icons were regularly worshipped. Indra as a Lokapāla was also worshiped from the period of the composition of the later Vedic texts, and in the epic-Purāṇas etc.

In the Nāgāghāṭ inscription of Nāyanikā (1st century B.C.) Vāsava, which is a prominent name of Indra, appears along with Yama, Varuṇa and Kubera, as one of the four Lokapālas. It is of great significance to note that in this particular epigraph, Indra, as a god, is distinguished from Vāsava, as a Lokapāla.

In the Mahābhārata, practically everywhere, this list of the four
Lokapālas, is preserved (see Sorenson, An Index to the Names of the Mahābhārata, p. 447). However, in a few cases, Soma replaces Indra, and sometimes even the name of Agni is inserted. In the canonical texts of the Jains, we are told, that every Indra has his own Lokapālas, and these are Yama, Varuna, Soma and Vasamana (another name of Kubera) (See Prakrit Proper Names, II, pp. 656-57). However, as we have already seen, Indra’s position as a Lokapāla was accepted in the last century B.C. by the Andhra Kings of Maha- rāṣṭra.

It is of great interest to note that Indra was sometimes worshiped as a Yaksha, and this is known not only from a few Buddhist canonical texts, but also from that remarkable poem the Mahānayurī, assignable to the first century A.D. We are told in the verse number no.49 of that work that the Yaksha Indra is the presiding-god of Indrapura, which D.C. Sircar places in the Bulaunshahr district of U.P.

Indra appears on the coins of the Bāṇaḷa King Indramitra and also on the coins of Jayagupta and both of them are assignable to the 2nd-1st century B.C. Indra is shown on Indramitra’s coins as standing and holding an uncertain object, probably a śringā, in his right hand, and on Jayagupta’s coins, also, standing Indra appears.

As J.N. Benerjee observes, Indra appears in the garb of Zeus in the coins of Dukratides (2nd century B.C.). He also shows Indra’s Vahana, the elephant. On the coins of Antialkidas, Indra has a long sceptre in his left hand, and the elephant is seen as saluting him
with his trunk. This deity also appears on some copper coins of Hattag in the enthroned position. Obviously as a deva-rāja, and his head is placed on the shoulder of a female figure. Almost all important texts of the post-Christian period, refer to Indra, and the festival connected with him. His icon has been described by Varahamihira in the Bhāsmehitā, and it is quite possible that he was much more popular with the foreign monarchs.

As we have already seen, Indrotsava was first introduced in this sub-continent, by Vasu Uparicara, the famous god-king, who flourished a few generations before the Bharata Var. It should be remembered that this Uparicara was a Vaishnava, and therefore, in the earlier period, even the Bhāgavatās or the Vaishnavas patronised this particular god, and the festival, connected with him, but within a short time, this particular festival became a very important social event, and the Vaishnavas gradually disassociated themselves from this festival. The Harivamsa, the Vīsanu Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata fully describe the hostility existing between Indra and Vāsudeva, and the latter opposing this particular festival. It appears from these texts that Vāsudeva had succeeded in stopping this practice, from some Vaishnava pockets, including Vṛndāvana and Mathurā. But in other parts of India, this festival continued its popularity, and we have a number of literary texts, which testify to its great popularity among the masses in ancient India. The Buddhist and the Jain texts repeatedly refer to this festival. In the Jātakakālā of Āryasura (early Gupta period), we have a beautiful description of the festival, and all the technical details, connected with it, are supplied by Varahamihira (early 6th century), in his Bhāsmehitā. Varahamihira also supports...
the evidence of the Mahabharata regarding Vasu Uparicara's role in connection with the Indra festival. This particular festival was a seven-day affair, and it started on the 8th day of the bright fortnight of Shraddha, and ended on the full-moon day. Kalhana in his Rajatarangini himself refers to the Indravāsadī festival, which was popular in Kashmir. The original Jain texts and the Sarpi commentaries (7th century) mention this particular festival. It is of great significance to note that Vasudeva's suppressing of the festival, connected with Indra, was known to Al-Biruni (see Alberuni's India by Sachau, II, p. 175), who wrote his great work on India in 1030 A.D. However, according to the early Tamil Text Silappadikaram Indra-festival was celebrated in South India from the Vaishākha āṣamina for 20 days.

Several Sanskrit texts give a good account regarding the fashioning of Indra icons. According to the Briktrasaññī, the elephant of Mahāendra or Indra should be shown as white, and he has four tusks. Indra should be shown with his thunderbolt and his third eye should be placed horizontally on his forehead (chapter 57). The Viṣṇudharmottara (which is probably of a somewhat earlier date), describes Indra or Jāna as a four-armed deity, and along with the image of Indra it also describes the four-armed image of Śaci, the consort of Indra. The third eye and the four-tusked elephant are also mentioned here. The South Indian texts mention the two-armed image of this god. Indra's icons are generally associated in the earlier period.
with the Buddhist relief compositions of North-west India and Mathura. In the red sandstone relief from Mathura we find the god as seated on his mount Airavata. In the Gāndhāra icons of Indra, we have Vajra as his emblem, and the so-called basket like head-dress of this god, according to J. R. Banerjoe, is nothing but the foreign adoption of the Hirita of Indra. Infra also appears in Mahasampur stone reliefs, assignable to the 8th century A.D., and we have also quite a number of South Indian icons of this god. On the famous Chidambaram temple-complex, we have the four-armed figure of Indra. The two front arms are in the abhaya and varada poses, and the back hands have ankusa and Vajra (see for details, see, Elements of Hindu Iconography, II, p. 520).