

Iconology of *śankha*: Tracing Its Antiquity in Ancient Indian History

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Icons and symbols in Indian religion emerged to help understand the natural phenomenon and complex metaphysical ideas. These include objects, animals, plants, abstract shapes, etc. Symbols used usually contain a feature that is similar to the feature/power they represent.³ Some symbols are pretty clear in their character and their meaning e.g. lotus is a sign of prosperity. A bull is an apt representation of virility, strength and fertility. There are some common symbols (animals, objects, shapes, etc.) that appear throughout time and in different religions. It is interesting to see that such symbols represent similar/identical ideas. *Śankha* is one such symbol seen in the ancient Indian religions. This paper traces the antiquity of this unique object in ancient India and how it came to become an important symbol amongst various religions.

Keywords: ancient India; conch; iconology; *Śankha*; symbolism