

Hindu Gods and Goddesses

Most Hindus believe in a supreme spirit, Brahman. Hindus do not pray to Brahman. They worship hundreds of different gods and goddesses who represent different aspects of Brahman. Some Hindus worship many gods. Some worship one specific god. Others do not formally worship any gods at all.

Hindu gods and goddesses are often shown with many heads or arms, each holding a sacred object. These features symbolise their special powers and the aspect of Brahman that they represent.

The Hindu Trinity

The three most important Hindu gods are Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. Vishnu and Shiva are very popular gods, with many temples dedicated to them.

Brahma

Brahma, the first member of the Hindu trinity, is the creator of the universe. He is shown with four heads, facing each of the four corners of the earth. He rides on a swan or sits on a sacred lotus blossom. His wife is the goddess of learning and the arts, Saraswati. Brahma has four hands, one always raised in blessing.

Vishnu

Vishnu is the preserver of the universe. He is often shown riding on an eagle or sleeping on a giant serpent. His wife is Lakshmi, goddess of beauty and wealth. He has come to earth ten times, in ten different forms to save the world.

Shiva

Shiva is the destroyer of evil in the universe. He carries a trident, the symbol of destruction. On his forehead is the third eye of knowledge. Shiva rides on a bull, called Nandi. His wife is the goddess Parvati. He is often seen to be dancing and dances on those who are ignorant in the world.

Parvati

Parvati is often worshipped as the kind, gentle mother goddess. In other forms she can be cruel and terrible. As Durga, warrior goddess, she rides a tiger and holds a weapon in each of her ten hands. As the bloodthirsty goddess, Kali, she wears a skull necklace and conquers the ugliness of evil.

Ganesha

Ganesha is the son of Shiva and Parvati. He removes obstacles and is the patron god of travellers.

Krishna

Krishna is famous for his mischievous nature and for the tricks he plays on his friends. He also performs miracles, such as lifting up a huge mountain to shelter his companions during a torrential downpour of rain. He is usually shown with dark blue or black skin and is seen to be carrying or playing a flute. He is often surrounded by cows and by gopis, or milkmaids.

The Roles I Play

Think about the different roles that you play. What does each role require you to do? Draw a picture of yourself in the middle, then complete the speech bubbles with your roles and what you need to do.

Son / Daughter



Pupil



Friend



Brother / Sister / Cousin

