

Hinduism gods



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Hinduism is a religion that consists of thirty-three million gods, both male and female deities are worshipped with equal regard. Hindus worshipping gods and goddesses has always been a real enigma for most people, especially westerners that worship only one God. Hinduism is a model of a religion that stands in sharp opposition to Western notions of what constitutes a religion. The religion does not draw a sharp distinction between divine and human beings. This suggests that it is possible for gods to become humans and for human beings to become gods (Olsun 9).

The religion of Hinduism has no single founder, creed, teacher, or prophet acknowledged by all Hindus as central to the religion, and no single holy book is universally acclaimed as being of primary importance. Hindus may acknowledge many deities but consider only one to be supreme; or they may consider all gods and goddesses equal, but worship one who is their favorite (Narayanan 6). With that being said, a majority of the Hindu population worship two gods in particular; Vishnu and Shiva.

In Hinduism, Vishnu is the second god in the Hindu trimurti. He is known as the god that preserves the universe and that restores order to the world. Gods and goddesses all have their own iconographic characteristics, and every position of the hands or feet, every associated animal, plant, or bird, has a special significance (Narayanan 30). Unlike other gods, Vishnu appears more often in human or animal forms. He has benevolent, mild, world-preserving features. He is commonly drawn out as having one head, four arms, and blue skin. He carries around a lotus flower, mace, conch, and a discus (Michaels 212).

Vishnu is portrayed as having a multiplicity of incarnations. It is believed that over the ages he has descended to earth several times in various animal and human forms to overthrow evil and establish dharma, or righteousness (Narayanan 31). Vishnu's first descent was a fish that saved Manu, his family, and many animals from a flood. Vishnu was subsequently incarnated as a tortoise, a boar, a creature that was half lion and half man, and a dwarf-being. The four fully human incarnations of Vishnu follow: the warrior Parasurama; Rama; Balarama; and Krishna. It is believed that the tenth incarnation of Vishnu will come at the end of the present world age, which according to some reckonings began ca. 3102 BCE and will last 423, 000 years (Narayanan 32).

Vaishnavas, followers of Vishnu, worship Vishnu in many ways. Many believers still go to a temple or nearby holy place in the morning before they eat their first meal. Here, the gods, spirits, and ancestors, including Vishnu, are usually thought of by presenting a part of the rice dish to animals, primarily cows, chickens, crows, and ants (Olsun 240). Puja, however, has become the currently most common form of divine worship and the ritual center of the Hindu religions (Olsun 241).