

Hindu Gods

Religions around the world generally fall into two categories:

- **monotheism** – a belief in one god/goddess
- **polytheism** – a belief in many gods/goddesses

Hindus believe that there are three great gods (Māhadevas). These are considered the Trimurti - the three aspects of the universal supreme God known as Brahman.

Trimurti

Lord Brahma is the creator of the universe and all knowledge. He is the first god in the Hindu Trimurti - three gods who are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the world. Brahma grew inside a lotus from the navel of a sleeping Vishnu. He has 4 heads and has the goddess Saraswathi as a companion. Brahma is sometimes depicted with a beard.

Lord Vishnu is the Hindu god who preserves the universe and people. He is the second god in the Trimurti. Hindus believe that he has saved followers by appearing to them in other forms. Vishnu has four arms to represent the four corners of the world.

Lord Shiva is the destroyer of the universe so that new life can come again. He restores the balance between good and evil. Shiva is the third god in the Trimurti.

Tridevi

The Tridevi are goddesses who are equally important. Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu and travels on a lotus flower. She is the goddess of wealth and success.

Saraswathi is the wife of Brahma and the goddess of learning and wisdom. She also plays the lute.

Finally, Shakti is the mother goddess - the source of all energy, power and creativity in the universe. She represents nature and can be nurturing as well as dangerous.

Other Important Hindu Gods

Ganesh is the son of Parvati and Shiva. He has an elephant's head and a human body. His tusks – one broken and the other unbroken – represent imperfection and perfection in the world. Hindus believe he bestows good fortune and wisdom. They pray to him when they are beginning something new in their lives, e.g. getting married or starting a new job.

Indra is the king of heaven and lord of the gods who maintain the heavens. He wields a thunderbolt, creates thunderstorms and provides rain. Indra wages war against the opponents of the gods and is therefore considered the god of war. The rainbow is referred to as Indra's Bow. He has incredible speed and he is a superb warrior.

Agni is the god of fire. Fire holds a special place in many Hindu ceremonies, including weddings. The sacrifices and offerings made to him go to the other gods as he is a messenger to and from them.

Surya is the sun god. He is depicted as a warrior on a chariot, pulled by seven white horses. Surya is thought to be capable of healing the sick and dispelling darkness by illuminating the world. Hindus believe that placing the sign of the Sun over the main doors in the home will bring them good luck.

Vayu is the god of air and wind. He is also considered to be the god of life as air is vital to being alive. Vayu is also known by the names of Pavana, Vata and Prana. He is the father of Hanuman, who is known as Pavanaputra (son of Pavana). Like other gods, he is considered a powerful and heroic fighter/destroyer.

Hanuman is the Hindu monkey god. It is believed that as a child, Hanuman was mischievous and liked to play tricks. It is for his role in the story of the festival of Diwali that he is best known. He commanded an army to aid Rama's fight against the demon Ravana, in order to rescue Sita.

Krishna is often seen with blue skin, playing the flute and wearing peacock feathers on his head. He is the god of love and the most worshipped of all. Krishna is strong, young, handsome and mischievous.

Garuda is the god of the birds and a messenger from God. He has a human body and the wings of an eagle. Garuda has the ability to carry people to safety.



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- **polytheism** – a belief in many gods/goddesses

Hindus believe that there are three great gods (Māhadevas). These are considered the Trimurti - the three aspects of the universal supreme God known as Brahman.

Trimurti - Lord Brahma is the creator of the universe and all knowledge. He is the first god in the Hindu Trimurti - three gods who are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the world. Brahma has 4 heads.

Lord Vishnu is the Hindu god who looks after the universe and its people. He is the second god in the Trimurti. Vishnu has four arms to represent the four corners of the world.

Lord Shiva is the destroyer of the universe; this means that new life can come again. Shiva is the third god in the Trimurti.

Tridevi - The Tridevi are goddesses who are just as important.

Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu and travels on a lotus flower; she is the goddess of wealth and good fortune. Saraswathi is the wife of Brahma and the goddess of learning and wisdom. She also plays the lute. Finally, Shakti is the mother goddess who represents nature and can be nurturing as well as dangerous.



Other Important Hindu Gods

There are many more Hindu gods and goddesses. Ganesh has an elephant's head and a human body. His tusks – one broken and the other unbroken – represent the good and bad things in the world. Hindus believe that he grants good fortune. They often pray to him when they are starting something new in their lives, such as getting married. Ganesh is very wise.

Surya is the Sun god. He is a warrior on a chariot pulled by seven white horses. Surya is thought to be able to heal those who are ill. Hindus believe that putting the sign of the Sun over main doors in the home will bring them good luck.

Krishna is often seen with blue skin, playing the flute and wearing peacock feathers on his head. He is the god of love and the most worshipped of all. Krishna is strong and handsome.

Hanuman is the Hindu monkey god. It is believed that as a child, Hanuman was mischievous and liked to play tricks. In the story of the festival of Diwali, he went with his army to help Rama fight against the demon Ravana, in order to rescue Sita.

Hindu Gods

Hindus believe in many different gods and goddesses.

The three most important gods are called the Trimurti - three forms of the supreme God known as Brahman.

Trimurti



Lord Brahma:

- creator of the universe
- has 4 heads



Lord Vishnu:

- looks after the universe and its people
- has four arms



Lord Shiva:

- the destroyer of the universe so that new life can come again

Tridevi - The Tridevi are goddesses who are also very important.



Lakshmi:

- wife of Vishnu
- travels on a lotus flower
- goddess of good fortune



Saraswathi:

- the wife of Brahma
- the goddess of learning and wisdom



Shakti:

- mother goddess who represents nature

Other Important Hindu Gods

Here is some information about a few more Hindu gods.



Ganesh:

- has an elephant's head and human body
- Hindus pray to him when they are about to start something new, such as starting a new job



Krishna:

- blue skin
- plays the flute
- wears peacock feathers on his head
- the god of love and the most worshipped



Hanuman:

- the Hindu monkey god
- He went with his army to help Rama's fight against the demon Ravana, in order to rescue Sita

Hindu Gods Questions

1. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?

2. How many heads does Lord Brahma have?

3. Why do you think many Hindu gods have more than two arms and more than one head? Explain your reasoning.

4. Which goddess is the wife of Vishnu?

5. A Hindu who was just about to start a new school might pray to which god? Why?

6. What is the name of the Hindu god of war?

7. Why do many Hindus believe that placing the sign of the Sun over a main door in their home will bring them good luck?

8. Which other names is Vayu known by?

9. 'His tusks – one broken and the other unbroken – represent imperfection and perfection in the world'. Explain your understanding of this sentence in your own words.

10. Which is your favourite Hindu god? Why?

Hindu Gods Answers

1. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?

The difference between monotheism and polytheism is that monotheism is the belief in one god/goddess whereas polytheism is the belief in many gods and goddesses.

2. How many heads does Lord Brahma have?

Lord Brahma has 4 heads.

3. Why do you think many Hindu gods have more than two arms and more than one head? Explain your reasoning.

Various answers.

Answers may suggest that the more arms/heads the god has, the more powerful they are as they have the ability to do several things at once. Or the answer may refer to the idea that each head represents a different aspect of the god's personality.

4. Which goddess is the wife of Vishnu?

Lakshmi is the wife of Vishnu.

5. A Hindu who was just about to start a new school might pray to which god? Why?

A Hindu, who was just about to start a new school, might pray to Ganesh. This is because Hindus believe Ganesh bestows good fortune and wisdom upon those starting something new in their lives.

6. What is the name of the Hindu god of war?

The Hindu god of war is known as Indra.

7. Why do many Hindus believe that placing the sign of the Sun over a main door in their home will bring them good luck?

Hindus believe that placing the sign of the Sun over a main door in their home will bring them good luck as the symbol represents Surya, the Sun god. Surya is thought to be capable of healing the sick and dispelling darkness by illuminating the world.

8. Which other names is Vayu known by?

Vayu is also known by the names Pavana, Vata and Prana

9. 'His tusks - one broken and the other unbroken - represent imperfection and perfection in the world'. Explain your understanding of this sentence in your own words.

Various answers.

I think that his tusks represent the good and bad things in the world.

10. Which is your favourite Hindu god? Why?

Various answers.

Hindu Gods Questions

1. What does monotheism mean?

2. What does polytheism mean?

3. What is Lord Vishnu's job?

4. Which Hindu god is the destroyer of the universe so that new life can come again?

5. Which flower is associated with Lakshmi?

6. Which goddess is the wife of Lord Brahma?

7. A Hindu man is about to start a new job. Which god might he pray to? Why?

8. Which is your favourite Hindu god? Why?

Hindu Gods Answers

1. What does monotheism mean?

Monotheism is the belief in one god or goddess.

2. What does polytheism mean?

Polytheism is the belief in many gods or goddesses.

3. What is Lord Vishnu's job?

Lord Vishnu's job is to look after the universe and its people.

4. Which Hindu god is the destroyer of the universe so that new life can come again?

Lord Shiva is the destroyer of the universe so that new life can come again.

5. Which flower is associated with Lakshmi?

Lakshmi is associated with the lotus flower.

6. Which goddess is the wife of Lord Brahma?

Saraswathi is the wife of Lord Brahma.

7. A Hindu man is about to start a new job. Which god might he pray to? Why?

A Hindu, who was about to start a new job, might pray to Ganesh. This is because Hindus believe Ganesh grants good fortune and he is thought to be very wise. He is often prayed to when his followers are beginning something new in their lives.

8. Which is your favourite Hindu god? Why?

Various answers.

Hindu Gods Questions

1. How many heads does Lord Brahma have?

2. What does Lord Vishnu look after?

3. What is Lakshmi goddess of?

4. Who is Shakti?

5. When might Hindus pray to Ganesh?

6. How did Hanuman help Rama?

Hindu Gods Answers

1. How many heads does Lord Brahma have?

Lord Brahma has 4 heads.

2. What does Lord Vishnu look after?

Lord Vishnu looks after the universe and its people.

3. What is Lakshmi goddess of?

Lakshmi is goddess of good fortune.

4. Who is Shakti?

Shakti is the mother goddess who represents nature.

5. When might Hindus pray to Ganesh?

Hindus might pray to Ganesh when they are about to start something new in their lives.

6. How did Hanuman help Rama?

Hanuman helped Rama by going with his army to help Rama's fight against the demon Ravana, in order to rescue Sita.