

Recognizing Hindu gods and goddesses

When you go into a Hindu temple, you will typically see different gods and goddesses.

Some Hindu gods and goddesses are fairly easy to recognize by their appearance, or by the things they carry. The following pages show some of these gods and goddesses.

Other Hindu gods and goddesses are more difficult to recognize, because they can take on many forms.

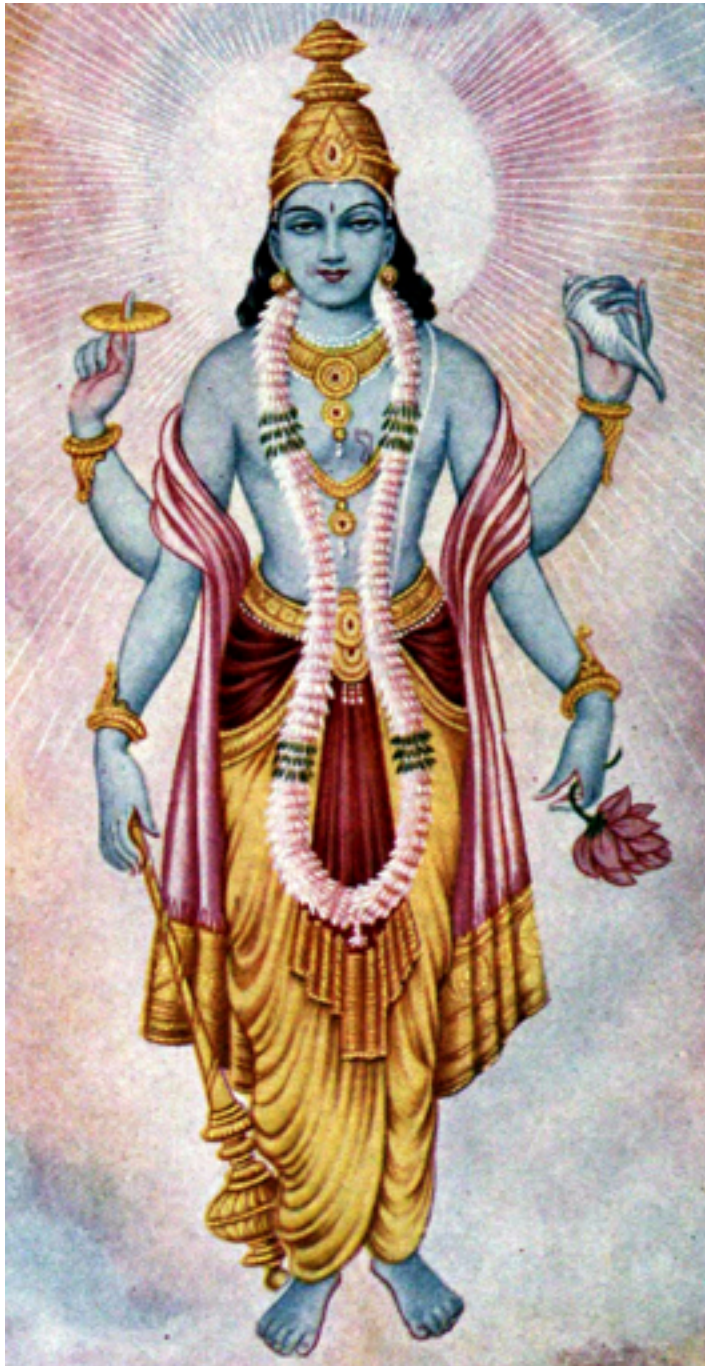


Ganesha
has an elephant head, and a plump
belly.

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Hanuman
is a monkey, as you can tell
from his face and tail.



Vishnu

has blue skin and 4 arms. He carries a conch, a lotus flower, a mace, and a discus. (He and Lakshmi are married.)

He has several avatars, versions of him that come to earth when needed. Two important avatars are Rama and Krishna.

Rama has blue skin and 2 arms. He wears kingly clothing and carries a bow and arrow.

Krishna has blue skin and 2 arms. He often carries a flute and appears with a cow.



Lakshmi

has 4 arms, golden skin, and wears elegant clothes. She stands in a lotus and carries a lotus. (She and Vishnu are married.)



Shiva

has a trident, and a third eye in his forehead. He rides a bull.

However, Shiva can take on different forms that may be hard to recognize.

This picture shows Shiva with his family, and some other gods. Shiva sits with his wife Parvati and their baby son Ganesha. Around these three, you'll see an older Ganesha (upper left corner), then Devi, Vishnu, and Surya (clockwise around). Shiva's bull lies in front.

Public domain image, before 1906.



Kali

is also married to Shiva, and she is usually shown stepping on him. She wears a necklace of human skulls, and has fangs.

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