

Main Hindu Gods & Goddesses

THE TRIMURTI (Hindu Trinity):

Brahma

The Creator

Vehicle: swan

has 4 heads, 4 arms, and a reddish complexion

not commonly worshipped; not to be confused with Brahman (the ground of all being) or the Brahmin (priestly caste)

Vishnu

The Preserver

Vehicle: garuda (bird)

has 4 arms, a blueish complexion, and rests on a snake

was incarnated (born as an animal or human) nine times with one more still to come; is the main god of **Vaishnavism**

Shiva

The Destroyer / Transformer

Vehicle: bull

has matted hair, a third eye, a blue throat and a trident in his hand

often worshipped in the featureless lingam form; is the main god of **Saivism**

SHAKTIS (female aspects):

Saraswati

Goddess of knowledge, music, and the arts

Vehicle: swan

wife of Brahma

sits on a white lotus playing a veena

Lakshmi

Goddess of wealth and prosperity

Vehicle: owl

wife of Vishnu

usually shown bestowing coins and flanked by elephants

Parvati

The Divine Mother

Vehicle: lion

the reincarnation of Shiva's first wife

has many forms, such as the popular Durga and Kali (see below); often shown together with Saraswati and Lakshmi as the **tridevi** ('triple goddess')

OTHER POPULAR HINDU GODS

Ganesh

God of the intellect and the remover of obstacles

Vehicle: mouse

son of Shiva & Parvati

has an elephant's head

Murugan

God of war

Vehicle: peacock

son of Shiva & Parvati

popular in Tamil areas

also known as Skanda

Durga

A fiercer form of Parvati

Vehicle: tiger

has ten arms holding many weapons

Kali

Goddess of time and death

Vehicle: donkey

usually portrayed as dark and violent