

Brahma (the creator - the one)

Brahma is the god (deva) of creation.



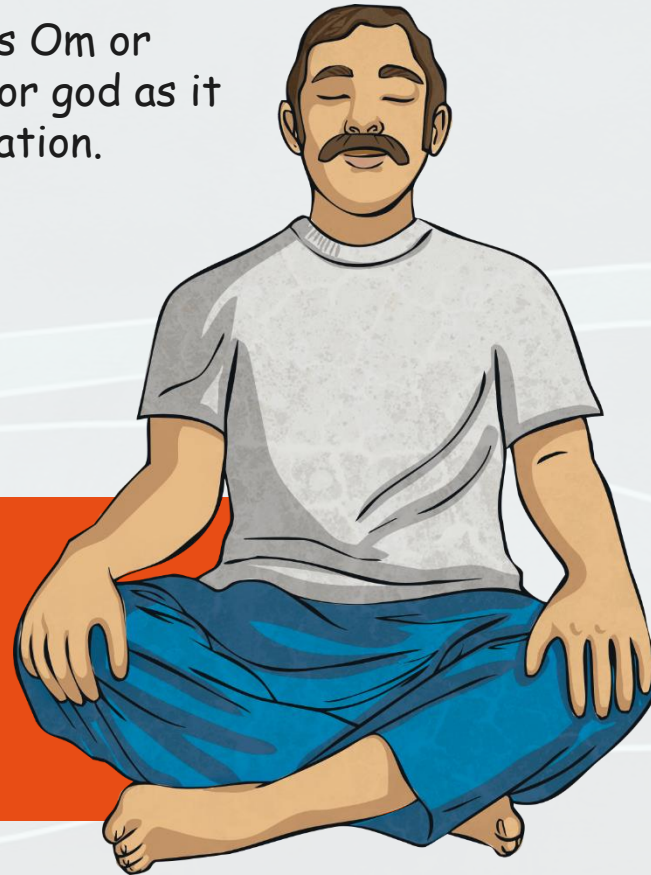
Each of his four heads is believed to be responsible for one of the four Vedas (sacred Hindu texts).

Brahma is not worshipped as much as the other gods, as it is believed his role as creator is over.

His wife is Saraswati - the goddess of Knowledge.

Aum

This is the sacred symbol of Brahman known as Om or Aum. It is said to be the most suitable name for god as it is a low sound heard during the deepest meditation.



Saraswati

Saraswati is the goddess (devi) of knowledge and the arts.

Her swan personifies pure knowledge. She is sometimes depicted with a peacock which is said to represent the arts.

She taught Brahma (her husband) the ability to sense, think, comprehend and communicate.

Saraswati rejected material things in favour of pure wisdom.



Vishnu (the preserver)

Vishnu is the god responsible for preserving and protecting the universe.

His role is to return to Earth during troubled times to restore the balance between good and evil.

His incarnations (human forms of Vishnu) include **Rama** and **Krishna**.

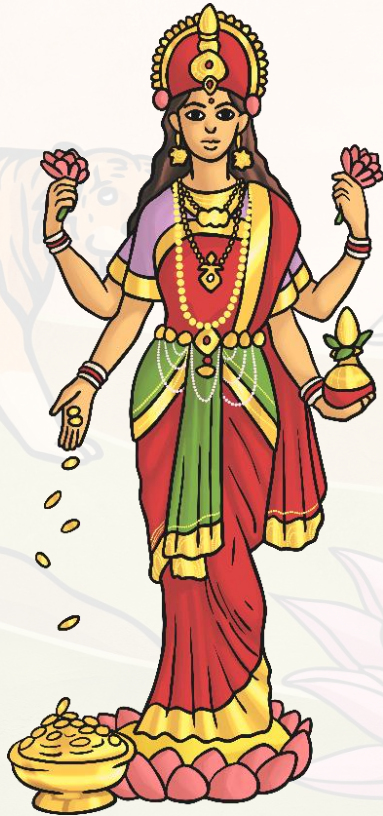
His last incarnation is said to be Siddhartha Gautama - otherwise known as 'Buddha' (the founder of Buddhism).

His wife is Lakshmi.



Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and purity.



She is depicted with four arms and standing on a lotus flower.

Hindus believe that if she is worshipped sincerely, and not in greed, she will bless them with fortune and success.

Like her husband, Lakshmi has also had incarnations on Earth as Sita, Radha and Rukmini.

Shiva (the destroyer)

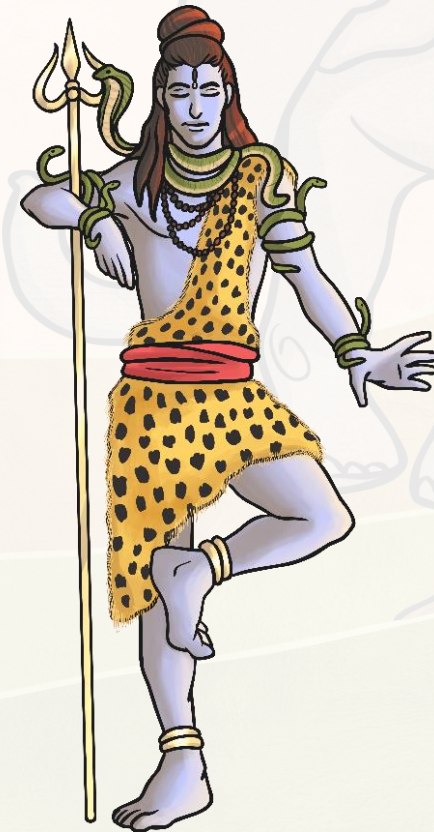
Shiva is the god of destruction. His role is to destroy the universe in order to re-create it.

He is seen as the source of both good and evil.

His wife, Shakti, is said to enable him to gain balance.

He is often depicted with:

- a third eye (represents wisdom and insight)
- a cobra necklace (representing destruction and recreation - snakes represent this in the way they shed their old skin for new skin)
- vibhuti (three lines drawn across the face to represent his power)
- a trident (which represents the three functions of the Trimurti)



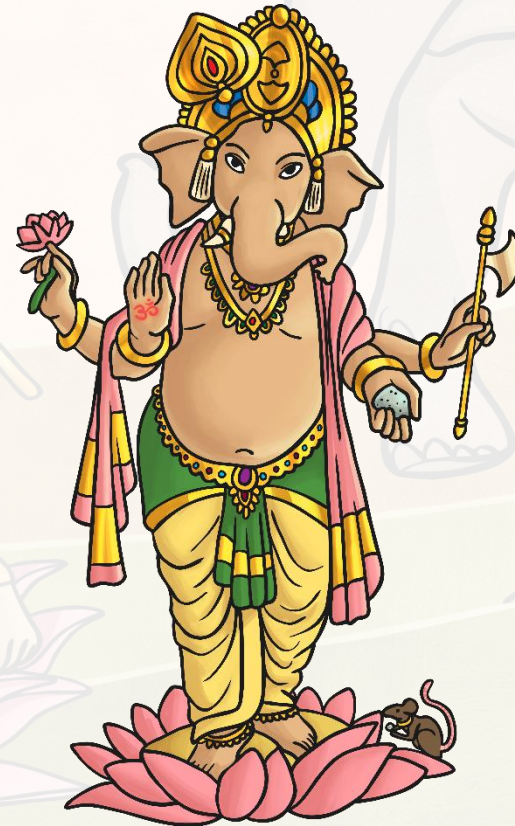
Ganesha

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.

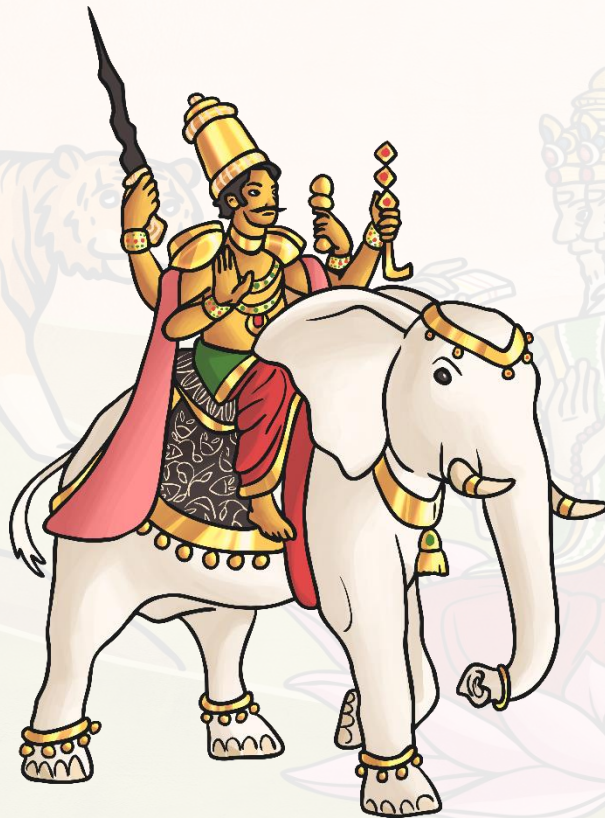
Ganesha is worshipped by Hindus who believe he bestows good fortune and wisdom.

He is often prayed to when his followers are starting something new in their lives e.g. getting married, starting a new job.



Indra

Indra is the king of heaven and lord of the gods who maintain the heavens.



He wields a thunderbolt, creates thunderstorms and provides rain.

He wages war against the opponents of the gods and thus is considered the god of war.

The rainbow is referred to as Indra's Bow.

Surya

Surya is the Sun god.

He is depicted as a warrior on a chariot pulled by seven white horses.

He 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 main doors will bring them good luck.

Agni

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 from and to them.

He lives on Earth among humans rather than with the gods.