

# Vishnu

- Vishnu is one of the Trimurti. He presides over *sattva-guna* (the quality of goodness) and is the maintainer/sustainer.
- He is also one of the three main focuses of worship.
- Vishnu resides in the spiritual realm (Vaikunthaloka), where he is known as Narayana.
- In this world, he has three principal forms:
  - (1) The soul of the entire creation (Maha Vishnu). As he lies in the causal ocean (the ocean of milk) the innumerable universes emanate from pores of his body and from his breathing
  - (2) The soul of each universe (Garbhodakshayi Vishnu). Lord Brahma (the creator) is born atop a lotus which emanates from Vishnu's navel.
  - (3) The soul within the heart of every living being and within each and every atom (the *antaryami*, the lord within)
- Vishnu's consort is Lakshmi, the goddesses of fortune.
- His carrier is the giant eagle, Garuda. He also lies on a couch in the form of the giant, many-headed serpent, Ananta-shesha
- Vishnu's colour is blue. Some say that sky-blue represents his all-pervading nature; Others say that this is his factual, ontological colour.
- In his four arms, Vishnu carries four symbols. The club and discus weapon are for the Lord's enemies i.e. those who transgress *dharma* and the laws of nature. The discus, with one thousand spokes, represents the wheel of inexorable time (*kala-chakra*). The lotus and conch-shell are to give pleasure to the Lord's devotees.
- Vishnu is most often worshipped through his incarnations, most notably Krishna and Rama. He is often venerated with his consort, as Lakshmi-Narayana, Radha-Krishna and Sita-Rama.
- The Bhagavat Purana lists twenty-two incarnations, but there are ten main ones (the Dashavatar), as follows:
  - (1) Matsya (the fish)
  - (2) Kurma (the turtle)
  - (3) Varaha (the boar)
  - (4) Narasimha (the half-man/half-lion)
  - (5) Vamana (the dwarf)
  - (6) Parashurama (the warrior)
  - (7) Rama or Ramachandra (the monarch)
  - (8) Krishna\* (the cowherd)
  - (9) Buddha (the teacher)
  - (10) Kalki (the slayer)

\* or, according to some, Balarama, Krishna's brother

- Further references: Teacher Book: pages 48-49, 52, 71-2,113, 134, 137  
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