

VISHNU

Vishnu is part of the Hindu trinity and is the preserver and protector of creation and Dharma

- Vishnu (Preserver) forms part of the Hindu Trinity, and along with Brahma (Creator) and Shiva (Destroyer) forms Brahman.
- **The embodiment of mercy and goodness; the self-existent, all pervading power.**
- Described as 'one who maintains Cosmic Order (Dharma)'.
- Vishnu is often represented seated on a coiled serpent 'Shesha'; His consort, Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) is sat by His feet.
- The four attributes that Vishnu is portrayed with (one in each hand) are: the Conch (Sankha); the Disc (Chakra); the Mace (Gada); the Lotus (Padma). Vishnu is also sometimes depicted carrying a bow and a sword.
- When the balance of Dharma (righteousness) is in the favour of Adharma (evil and wrongdoing) Vishnu reincarnates onto Earth to restore its balance.
- His incarnations are known as *Avatars* and there are ten in total; his first nine avatars have appeared on earth but the tenth is yet to appear.
- The ten avatars of Vishnu are:
 1. Matsya- Fish
 2. Kurma- Turtle
 3. Varah- Boar
 4. Narsimha- Half man, half lion
 5. Vaman- Dwarf
 6. Parshuram – forest-dwelling man
 7. Ram – complete man, the ideal
 8. Krishna
 9. Buddha
 10. Kalki- Yet to come
- Followers of Sri Vishnu and His *avatars* are called *Vaishnava*. They form a vast majority of Hindus and theologically they see Vishnu as supreme.