

# Tri Murthis: The Three Gods

The Indian culture consisting of Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Epics and the classical books explain that there are three Gods:

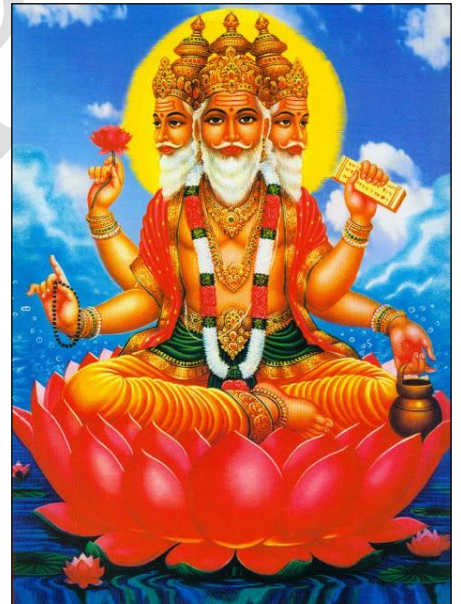
- Brahma
- Vishnu
- Maheswara

Each of them has been identified with specific functions in the Universe.

## Brahma, the Creator

Four-faced God Brahma is called *Chaturmukha* Brahma. He has taken birth from the Lotus flower which came out of the navel of Bhagavan Vishnu. He has four faces and four hands. He holds the four Vedas in one of His hands. He is seated on Lotus.

The story of Brahma is the story of Creation. Brahma is the beginning. He is the Origin of all the Creation. This is sum and substance of the story of Creation as available in all the sacred books of India (Vedas and Shastras). Hamsa (Swan) is his vehicle.



## Goddess Saraswati

Goddess Saraswati is Brahma's consort. She is Goddess for *Vidya* or education and learning. She also grants *Jnaana* (Knowledge and Wisdom).

Brahma granted boons to many *asuras* (demons) in the past because they did penance or *tapasya* for Brahma's appearance. He gave them what ever boons they wanted. Some asuras

like *Hiranya Kashipa*, became violent and cruel. Lord Vishnu had to incarnate on earth and kill these asuras who troubled the devataas, lokas and even the ordinary human beings.

## Vishnu, the Protector

Vishnu is the God who protects the Universe. He took ten avatars (births or incarnations) to save the earth, to protect the good people and to punish the persons doing wrong deeds. Vishnu is also called Shesha Sayana.

In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna (8<sup>th</sup> avatara of Vishnu) gave reassurance that he would descend to earth and take birth whenever dharma (good) declines and adharma flourishes, whenever good people are troubled or tormented.

Vishnu has four hands. He has *Sudharshana Chakra* and *Pancha Janya Shankha* (conch) on two of his hands. He wears a garland named *Vyjayanti Mala*. *Kaustuba* is the precious gem which Lord Vishnu wears. Garuda, the Divine bird is his vehicle.

Lord Vishnu is the protector of entire Nature and Nature's kingdoms. Vishnu pervades in all beings. The meaning of 'Vishnu' means *Vyapti* or the one who spreads. He is everywhere. He feeds all the beings and in this manner, he sustains every part of blood stream in our body. Vishnu is all expanding. He is the Life Force or Prana itself. This is the primary duty of Vishnu. *Akasha* or Space Ether is ruled by Lord Vishnu and therefore *Akasha* is expansive. It has no boundary. It extends everywhere.



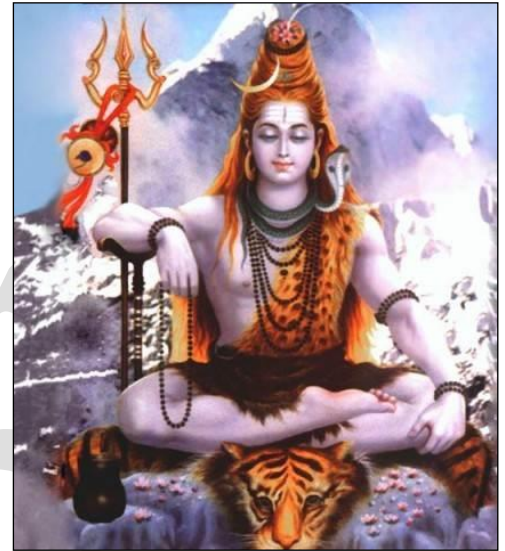
## Goddess Lakshmi

Goddess Lakshmi is Vishnu's consort. She is the embodiment of grace. She is giver of wealth and all material benefits and even spiritual blessings.

## Shiva or Maheshwara, the Destructor

Shiva is the lord of destruction, also called 'Laya Karaka'. In Sanskrit, Laya means dissolving. He is in-charge of the direction of North-East (Eeshanya). Shiva's first wife was Sati (the daughter of Daksha Prajapati). When King Daksha didn't honor him for the Yagna, Lord Shiva was annoyed. This led to the destruction of Daksha's Yagna.

Sati, wife of Shiva, felt humiliated by her father. Through Yoga, she invited *Yogaagni*, the Fire God, and burnt herself to ashes. She was born again as Parvati, the daughter of Parvata Raja Himavan (Himalayas).



Lord Shiva was engaged in *tapasya* and meditation for many long years and then Manmadha, the lord of Love, shot an arrow on Shiva. Then, Lord Shiva was disturbed from his *tapasya*. He opened his third eye and burnt Manmadha.

Shiva has granted half of his body to Parvati, his wife and this form is called '*Ardha Naarishawara*'.

The abode of Shiva is Mount Kailash. Shiva is fond of dancing. He dances in happiness. *Tandava* means dancing. Shiva Tandava is very famous. Shiva is the presiding deity for all dance forms and is therefore called *Nataraja*.

He is worshipped in the form of Linga. He is pleased by offerings of water as abhisheka, so he is also called '*Abhisheka Priya*'. There are 12 *Kshetras* or holy places associated with Lord Shiva called '*Dwadasa Jyothir Lingas*'. Nandi, the Divine bull is his vehicle.

## Goddess Parvathi

Goddess Parvati is the Consort of Lord Shiva. She has many forms and many names such as Lalitha Tripura Sundari, Bramarambika, Durga, Meenakshi, Kamakshi, Annapurna, Raja Rajeswari, Vishalakshi, Jnana Prasunamba and many other interesting names. Kaali or Kalika is her terrible form.

Sample Questions based on different age groups:

1. Vishnu is
  - a. The Destroyer
  - b. The Creator
  - c. The Protector
  - d. None of the above
2. Name the Tri Murthi's.
3. What is the significance of Tri Murthi's in the Indian Culture.