

# Hinduism

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## **1-31 - Figures of Hindu deities**

Made of copper alloy, silver and alabaster

These figures were used in domestic shrines for worship (*puja ghar*) where offerings of flowers, incense and food were made. Worship (*puja*) is performed in the morning, after washing and before eating food. Sometimes the food is offered to the gods, and then eaten as blessed food (*prasad*).

### **1 - Durga**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Pune, Maharashtra

This figure shows Devi with the traits of the goddess Durga. She is seated on a lion, holding a conch shell (*shankha*), a lotus bud and a shield, with a snake canopy behind.

### **2 - Shiva (*Panchanana*)**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
India

Shiva is one of the most powerful Hindu gods. This figure shows him in his most common form – the male organ (*lingam*) placed on the female organ (*yoni*). The lingam is made from five faces with Shiva markings, on a snake.

### **3 - Head of Shiva**

Acquired 1932

India

This silver figure shows the head of the god Shiva with a snake. It was probably a bell used during ceremonies in honour of Shiva.

### **4 - Head of Parvati**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Maharashtra, central India

Parvati is the wife of Shiva. She can be depicted in many forms but is shown here as Gauri, “the Golden Lady”.

### **5 - Shiva and Parvati**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Maharashtra, central India

This figure depicts Shiva and Parvati with Nandi, Shiva’s carrier (*vahana*). It was made in Nasik, a centre of pilgrimage for the followers of Shiva.

## **6 - Vishnu and Lakshmi**

Made before 1862

India

Vishnu is the preserver of all created things. He is sitting on a lotus, which remains unpolluted even in the dirtiest of waters. His wife Lakshmi is sitting in his lap.

## **7 - Lakshmi**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Karnataka, south India

Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and the wife of Vishnu. She is holding a lotus flower and stands on a lotus, a symbol of purity.

## **8 - Garuda**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

Garuda is half vulture and half man. He carries Vishnu and the reasons as to why deities have animal carriers are unclear, though there may be a link with Mesopotamian gods who have smaller mounts.

## **9 - Vithoba**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Maharashtra, central India

Vithoba is an incarnation of Vishnu popular in the area of Maharashtra. He wears a long head-dress, holds a conch shell in his left hand and stands on a brick. The figure would have been adorned with earrings.

## **10 - Vasudeva and Krishna**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Pune, Maharashtra

Krishna is one of the central figures of Hinduism. He was the eighth son of the prince Vasudeva. His life was threatened by the King Mathura, so Vasudeva hid the baby Krishna on a leaf in the River Yamuna. He was found and brought up by cowherds.

## **11 - Bala Krishna**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Gujarat, western India

This figure shows Krishna as a young boy, stealing a ball of buttercurd from the cowherd Nanda. She brought him up as her own son after she found him on the leaf in the river.

## **12 - Portable shrine depicting Krishna**

Collected before 1860

India

This wooden shrine is carved in the shape of a gourd. Krishna is shown with two cowherds (*gopis*). He is playing a flute and wearing a peacock head-dress.

## **13 - Krishna and Radha**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

North India

In his youth, Krishna (left) had amorous adventures with the cowherds (*gopis*) with whom he grew up. He is seen here playing his flute. Radha, the figure on the right, was his favourite *gopi*.

## **14 - Virabadhra**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Madras area, south-east India

Shiva is shown here in another of his forms, Virabhadra. The smaller figures beneath him depict Daksha, whose daughter Sati married Shiva against her father's will. In a fight, Shiva removed Daksha's head, replacing it with a goat's head.

## **15 - Daksha**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

North India

Daksha is shown here with a goat's head, given as a result of a fight with Virabhadra.

## **16 - Bhṛigu**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

North India

Brighu was a wise man or priest (rishi). He was sent by the other priests to test which of the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, was the most worthy.

## **17 - Durga**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Rajasthan, western India

Durga is the aggressive aspect of the Mother Goddess, lions stand either side of her. She is the consort of Shiva and carries his symbol, the lingam, and a figure of Ganesh, her son.



## **18 - Nandin the bull**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

Nandin, or Nadikeshvara, is the carrier (*vahana*) of Shiva. Nandin is associated with fertility and as such his figure is touched by devotees in the temple.

## **19 - Ganesh**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

Ganesh, son of Parvati, is the god of wisdom and remover of obstacles. He is sitting astride the rat, his carrier (*vahana*). He holds an elephant goad (*ankush*), signifying control over all things.

## **20 - Khandoba on a horse**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Maharashtra, central India

Khandoba is a form of the god Shiva popular in the Deccan area of central India. He is holding the discus (*chakra*), a small drum (*damaru*) to control the rhythm of creation, a sword (*khadja*), trident (*trisula*), and the flaming bowl of destruction.

## **21 - Khandoba with Parvati**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Maharashtra, central India

Here Khandoba is mounted on a horse with Parvati, his consort, at his side holding a bowl of rice.

## **22 - Spoon**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

This spoon shows Shiva under a snake canopy. It was used in a temple to Shiva to sprinkle holy water onto devotees as they left the temple.

## **23 - Vishnu**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

Vishnu is the preserver of all created things. He is shown here standing on a lotus, holding the discus (*chakra*) and conch shell (*shankha*), and with a distinctive tiered crown.

## **24 - Lakshmi**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

South India

Lakshmi is shown here in a dancing posture with long head-dress and a lotus in her left hand. She is associated with beauty and is one of the most popular of Hindu female deities.

## **25 - Vishnu and Lakshmi**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Pune, Maharashtra

Rama, and his wife Sita, are the main characters in the Ramayana epic. They are the incarnations of Vishnu and Lakshmi. Rama is depicted with a quiver of arrows, with which he fought the demons and also hunted animals in the forest.

## **26 - Devi as Durga**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Varanasi (Benares), Uttar Pradesh

This figure shows Devi with the traits of the goddess Durga. She has eight arms holding weapons, and has slain the buffalo-giant Mahishasura. She grasps the hair of a demon trying to escape from the buffalo.

## **27 - Krishna and Radha**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Northern India

From the twelfth century, Hindu deity art witnessed a new development. This was the appearance of Krishna and his female partner, Radha, associated with ideas of intense romantic love. Here, Krishna is holding Radha.

## **28 - Rama and Sita**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Pune, Maharashtra

Rama, and his wife Sita, are the incarnations of Vishnu and Lakshmi, the main characters in the Ramayana epic.

## **29 - Hanuman**

Collected before 1933

South India

Hanuman is the popular monkey god and a major character in the Ramayana epic. His pose depicts him supporting others. He carries a platform to show his strength, and for other figures from the epic to be displayed such as Rama, Sita, and Rama's brother Lakshmana.

### **30 - Hanuman**

Collected before 1929

Jaipur, Rajasthan

This alabaster figure depicts Hanuman. He helped his master to rescue his wife Sita from the clutches of the evil Ravana. Here he holds a club (*gada*) in his right hand, in his left hand he is holding up the mountain, whilst his foot is crushing a female demon.

### **31 - Kumara**

Collected before 1876

India

Kumara is the Hindu god of war. He was the son of Shiva and Parvati, or alternatively the son of Agni, the god of fire. This alabaster carving depicts his six-heads with his hands holding a bow and arrows. Shown beneath him is the peacock, which is his carrier (*vahana*).

### **32 - Painting on mica**

Probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Thanjavur (Tanjore), south India

Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, is shown here with lotus symbols. The lotus is the symbol of purity since it remains unpolluted even in the dirtiest of waters.

She is sitting on an open lotus throne, and holds lotus flowers.

### **33 - Painting on mica**

Probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Thanjavur (Tanjore), south India

This painting depicts a combination figure of Shiva and Parvati, called Ardhanareswari.

The right half shows Shiva in blue, the left is Parvati in white.

By combining the deities the image shows Shiva and Parvati are elements of a single power.

### **34 - Tray**

Collected before 1905

Varanasi (Benares), north-east India

Vishnu is depicted here in four incarnations – Krishna with a flute, Narasimha the lion emerging from a pillar to kill the evil king Hiranyakashipu, Rama and Hanuman from the Ramayana epic, and Parashurama, a warrior hero with an axe.

### **35 - Painting on mica**

Probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Thanjavur (Tanjore), south India

The marriage of Shiva and Parvati. Shiva is blue and holds the discus. Parvati is white and holds the pellet drum.

### **36 - Painting on mica**

Probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Thanjavur (Tanjore), south India

This image portrays Parvati as Shiva's consort. Shiva is seated on her carrier, the bull Nandin. Parvati is seated on Shiva's lap.

### **37 - Figure of Ganesh**

Collected before 1876  
India

Ganesh is the Hindu god of practical wisdom, the remover of obstacles. He was the son of Parvati. He is holding an elephant goad (*ankush*), an axe and a bowl of sweetmeats.