
Symbolism in The Iconography Of Vishnu

Iconography is the images or symbols that are associated with a particular subject. It is commonly used in religion to portray important figures. Vishnu is a God of the Hinduism religion representing preservation and protection. To symbolize this, Vishnu is commonly showed with four arms holding items with different meanings. Furthermore, the physical appearance of Vishnu, such as his blue color, makes him easily identifiable to his followers. Thus, the iconography of Vishnu establishes a reverent figure in the Hindu religion.

Vishnu represents preservation. This symbolism is associated with his four arms, which can reach out to aid anyone in need.

The Shankha, or more commonly known as a conch shell, is a religious instrument which makes it identifiable of the God. This sacred emblem is seen being held in Vishnu's lower right hand. Given the name "Pancha-Janya" remains closely connected to the five senses within the body and mind-fire, water, air earth, and sky or space. These may also be attributed to the principles of the five elements. The Shankha, represents the origin of existence and this symbol aids Vishnu's ideology of the power to create and maintain the universe. It is also closely tied to water element- being an instrument related to the sea. In ritual the vibrations from blowing into the instrument result in the primal sound of which creation expanded.

The Chakra, also known as discus, symbolizes a purified spiritual mind. This weapon-like instrument is held in the upper right hand. It is given the name "Sudarshan" purposely because each syllable holds meaning to a different term. Su, meaning good or superior and Darshan meaning vision, together create "Superior Vision". This allows for the destruction of one's ego, and ability to overcome the illusion of self-existence, all while realizing the soul's original nature. This would cleanse spiritual ignorance and allow one to look farther than illusion. This discus also happens to contain six spokes, each regarded as six petals of a lotus flower representing limitless power of creation and destruction, along with symbolizing the preservation over all six seasons. The Chakra design of a wheel connects to everlasting life and the cycle of time which continues to renew itself. It is as radiant as the sun and it symbolizes a universal mind which nature is to revolve. This is the most cohesive aspect of Vishnu.

The Gada, or commonly known as a mace is also held in the lower left hand. This instrument symbolizes divine power in all aspects. Also given the name "Kaumodaki", exemplifies the mental, physical, and spiritual strength over many demonic tendencies. This is commonly used to signify Vishnu's power to destroy materialistic or negative aspects of one's consciousness. If these were to hinder one from reaching God, Vishnu will spiritually purify and sever our bonds associated to these restraints. This is needed to help overcome ones individual existence and prove that strength all lies in God's hands.

The Padma, also called the lotus flower, exemplifies many aspects of liberation and can be seen in Vishnu's lower right hand. Connected to divine perfection and purity over one's spiritual consciousness, the lotus flower symbolizes God is the source and power of which the universe is created from. An individual soul emerges from this expansion of creation and this awakening of the soul fostered our original spiritual consciousness. This awakening must be sought out

through surrendering and linking ourselves with Vishnu. These qualities of divine truth also bear knowledge, truth, abundance, growth and originators of rules of conduct and rightness. It is also used as an element to represent the six transcendent powers.

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