

HINDU BELIEFS AND LIFESTYLE

AT1:

Pupils will:

- *Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other principle religions represented in Great Britain and their associated beliefs, experiences and practices.*
- *Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of some of the influences of life experiences, beliefs, values and faith traditions upon individuals, communities, societies and cultures.*

AT2:

Pupils will:

- *Respond to core questions with reference to the teachings and practices of religions, and to their own understanding and experience.*
- *Develop positive attitudes of respect towards other people who hold views and beliefs that are different from their own.*

Pupils will be enabled to:

- *Consider their own beliefs about God's character and understand Hindu belief and teaching about Brahman and Hindu gods and goddesses.*
- *Know and understand how Hindus worship their gods and goddesses and that this worship can take place in the home and in the temple and that certain times of the year are special for Hindus.*
- *Appreciate Hindu teachings and dharma (duty) through family life.*
- *Understand that Hindus regard life as a journey.*

SESSION 1: Introduction – Explanation of Gods and Goddesses / Hindu Worship

1. Discuss the basics of Hindu worship

- *Hindus believe that there is no supreme, great power or 'universal spirit' and this is 'Brahman', who does not take any human form or characteristics.*
- *The concept of 'Brahman' is illustrated to Hindus by salt being dissolved into water – salt is present but unseen, in every drop of the water; like Brahman is present in everything in the universe.*
- *The sacred symbol used to represent Brahman is called 'Aum'. Hindu prayers begin with this sound.*
- *Hindus believe that this power can be best understood through the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses.*
- *There are 3 deities which Hindus believe help them to best understand aspects of Brahman.*
 - *Brahma – the creator god*
 - *Vishnu – the preserver and maintainer of life*
 - *Shiva – the destroyer – god of life, death and rebirth*
- *Together, these 3 deities are known as 'Trimurti'*

2. Explain how there are different versions of the same God (eg; Shakti, Kali, Parvali and Durga are all aspects of divine feminine energy).

- *Discuss how many different characters each of us are; eg; friend, peacemaker, daughter / son, entertainer, hard-worker, football player etc.*

3. Draw yourself and write down all the different characters they are.

4. Draw a picture of one of the Hindu gods or goddesses and write down a bit of information about them.

SESSION 2: Festivals / Ceremonies

1. Look at the information on Hindu Festivals

- *Discuss why some festivals are important to Hindus.*
- *Discuss Christian festivals and ceremonies – when do they occur in the year? Are they similar or different to Hindu festivals and ceremonies?*

2. Use the Year circle – write on the months and choose one Festival to put on each month.

SESSION 3: Lifestyle

1. Discuss Hindu belief in life being a journey of 4 stages.

- *The ultimate goal is to be united in Brahman. Hindus believe the real self is reincarnated after death to another life as part of a continual cycle.*
- *Discuss the word 'duty' and what it means. Discuss Hindu ideas of duty (dharma) – to always do your best. Such duties include honesty (asteya), patience (dhriti), forgiveness (kshama), piety or self control (dama), sanctity (shauch), control of senses (indraiya-nigrah), reason (dhi), knowledge or learning (vidya), truthfulness (satya) and absence of anger (krodha). Hindus also believe in being kind to animals and people, being thoughtful and taking part in regular worship.*
- *Discuss why these might be important to Hindus. Discuss what duties the children have and why they have them.*

2. Present information about Hindu ideas of 'duty' or dharma in writing and pictures and explain why this might be important to Hindus.

SESSION 4: Mahatma Gandhi

1. Listen to information about Gandhi.

- *How did he show the teachings of Hinduism in his life?*

2. Present information about Gandhi – use writing and pictures.

- *Produce a Fact File about Gandhi.*

SESSION 5: Food

1. Listen to information about Hindus and the food they choose to eat or not to eat.

- *Why do Hindus believe it is wrong to hurt or kill an animal? Do you agree?*
- *Why is the cow sacred to some Hindu's?*

2. Present some information about Hindu's and food - use writing and pictures.

SESSION 6: Learning from Hinduism

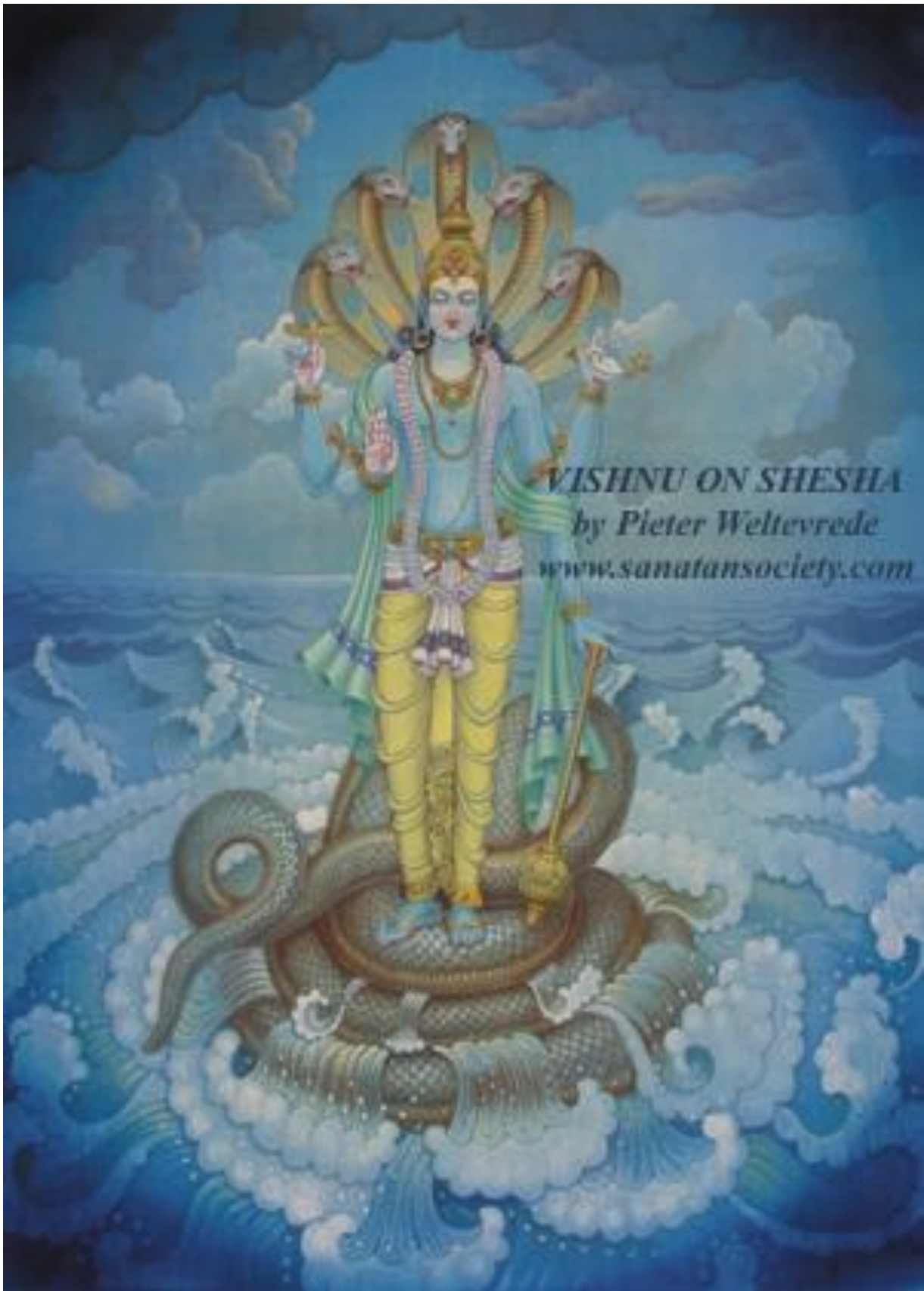
1. Recap on information learnt in this topic.

- *What can be learned from Hindu belief and lifestyle? How does this relate to pupils' own ways of life?*
- *How does belonging to a Hindu family influence life?*

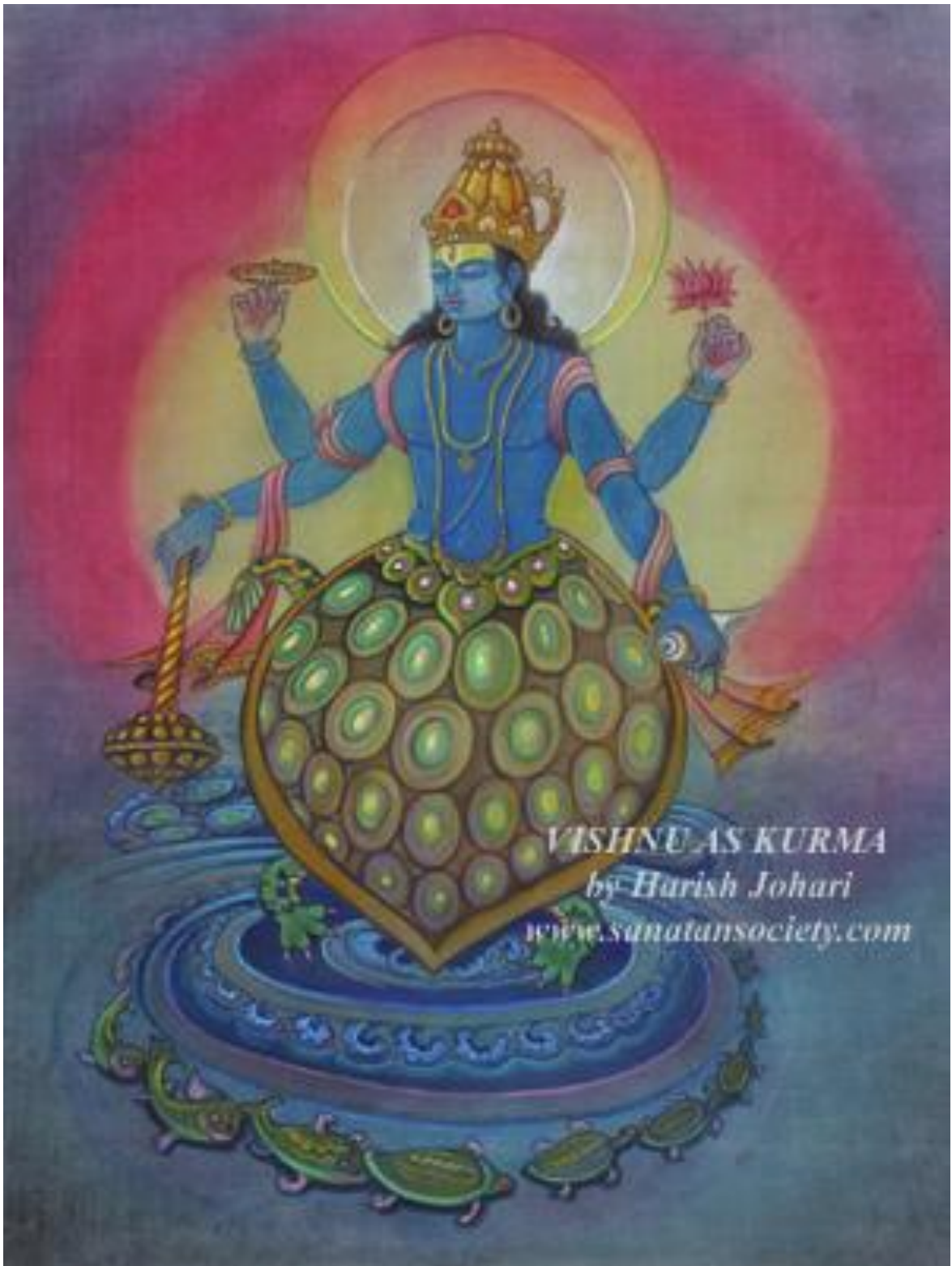
2. Present as much information as possible from the whole topic, to make a piece of work about Hindu Beliefs and Lifestyle – use writing and pictures.



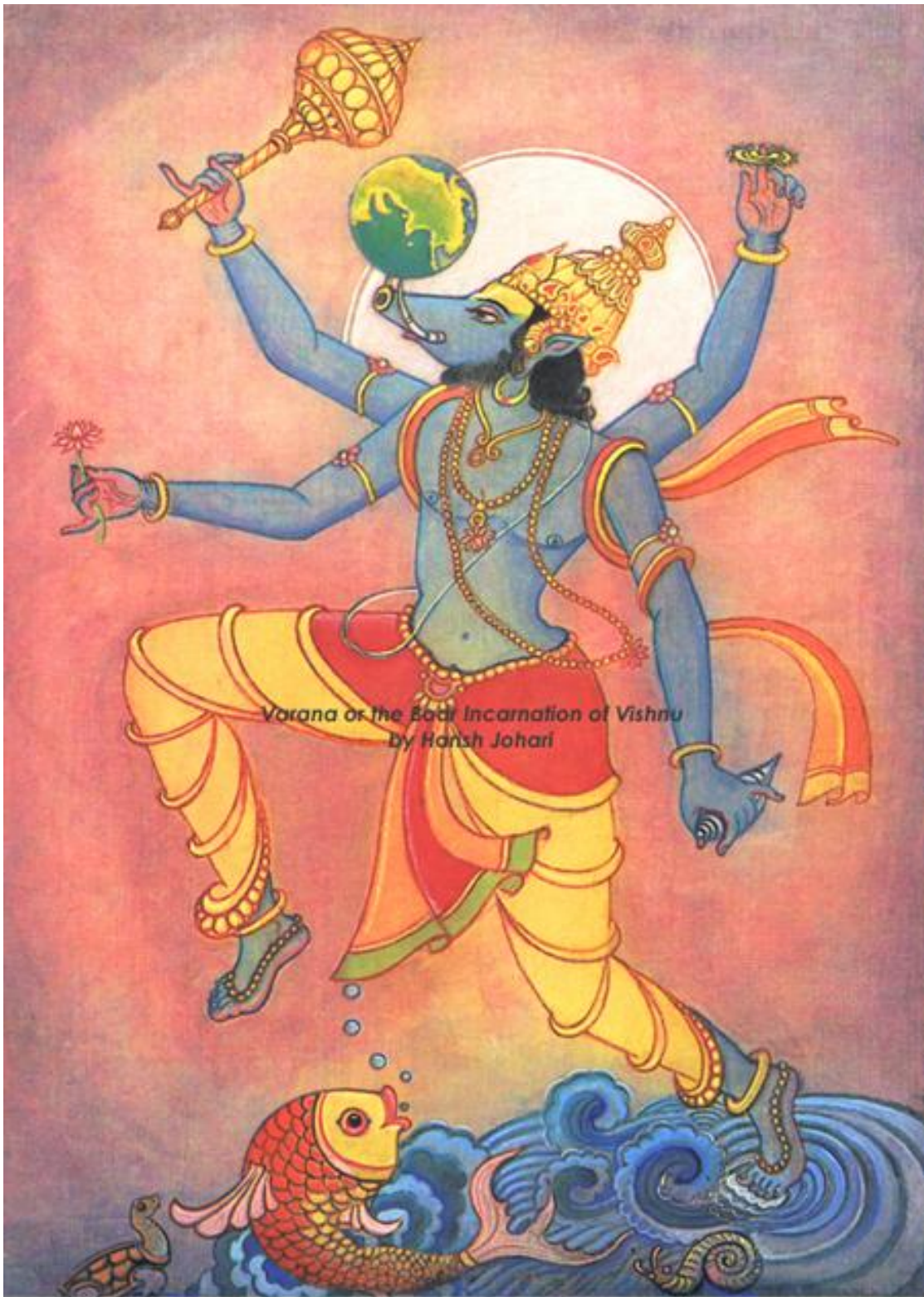
Ganesh



Vishnu



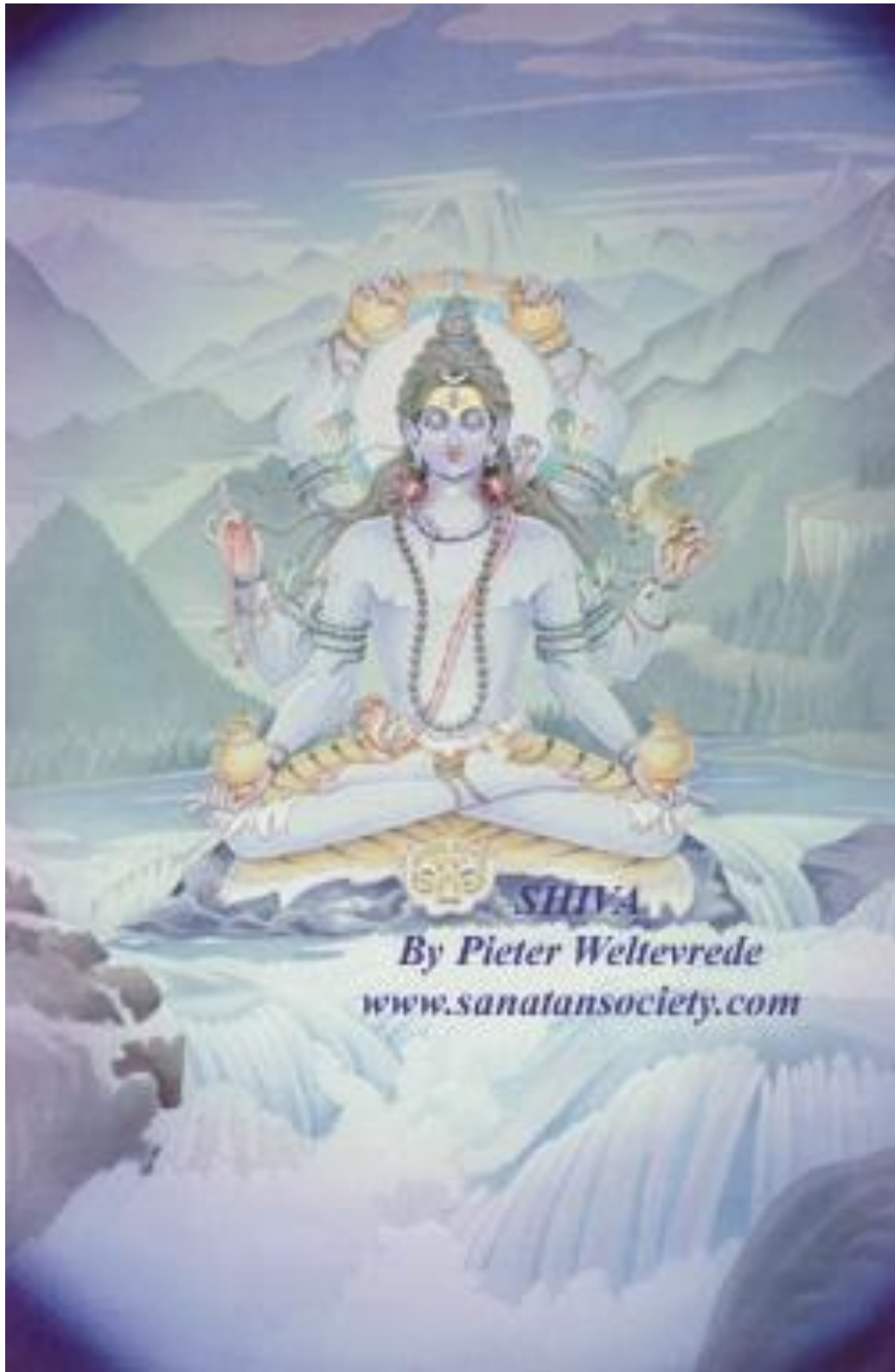
Kuma



Varaha



Narasimha



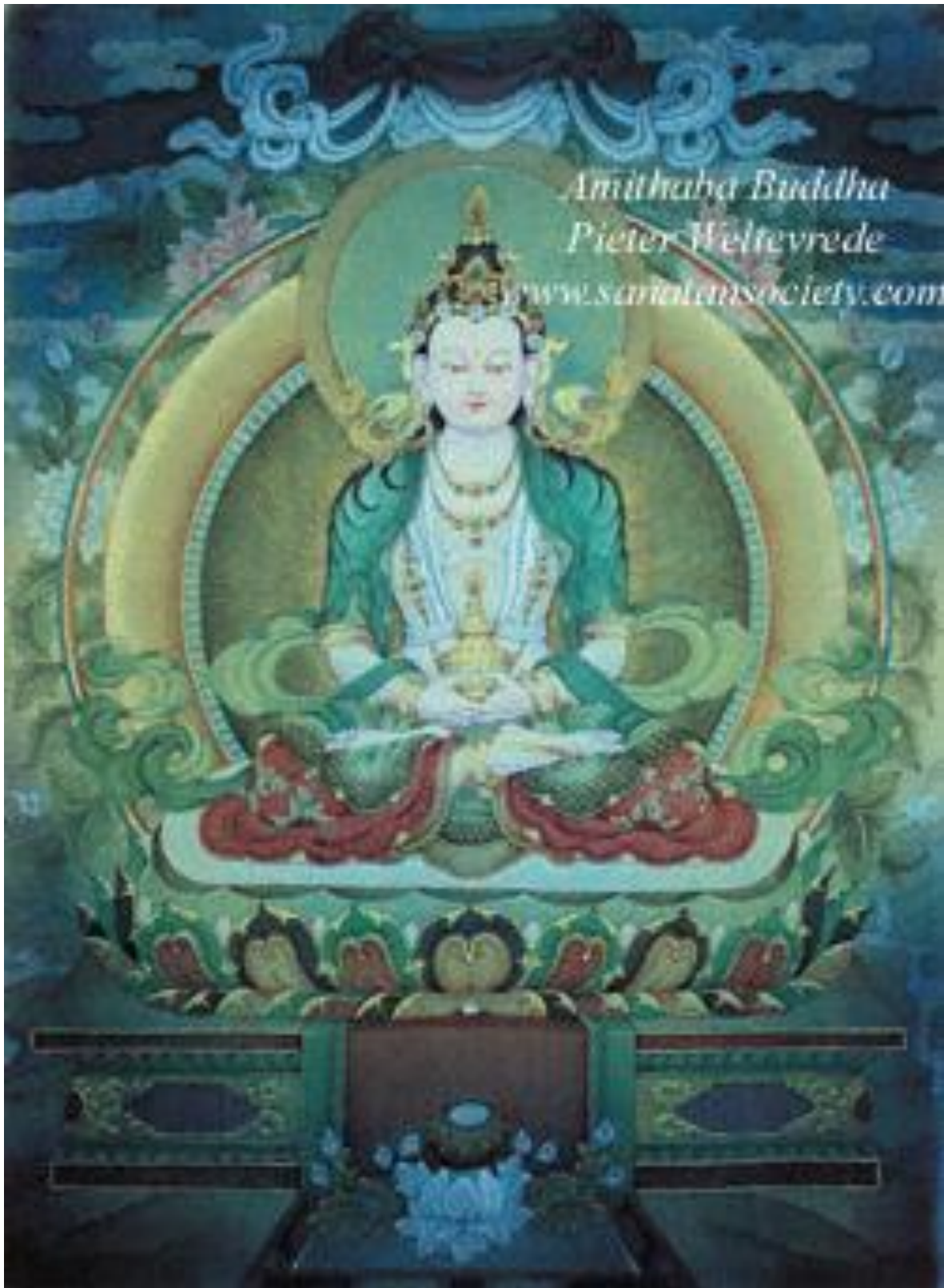
Shiva



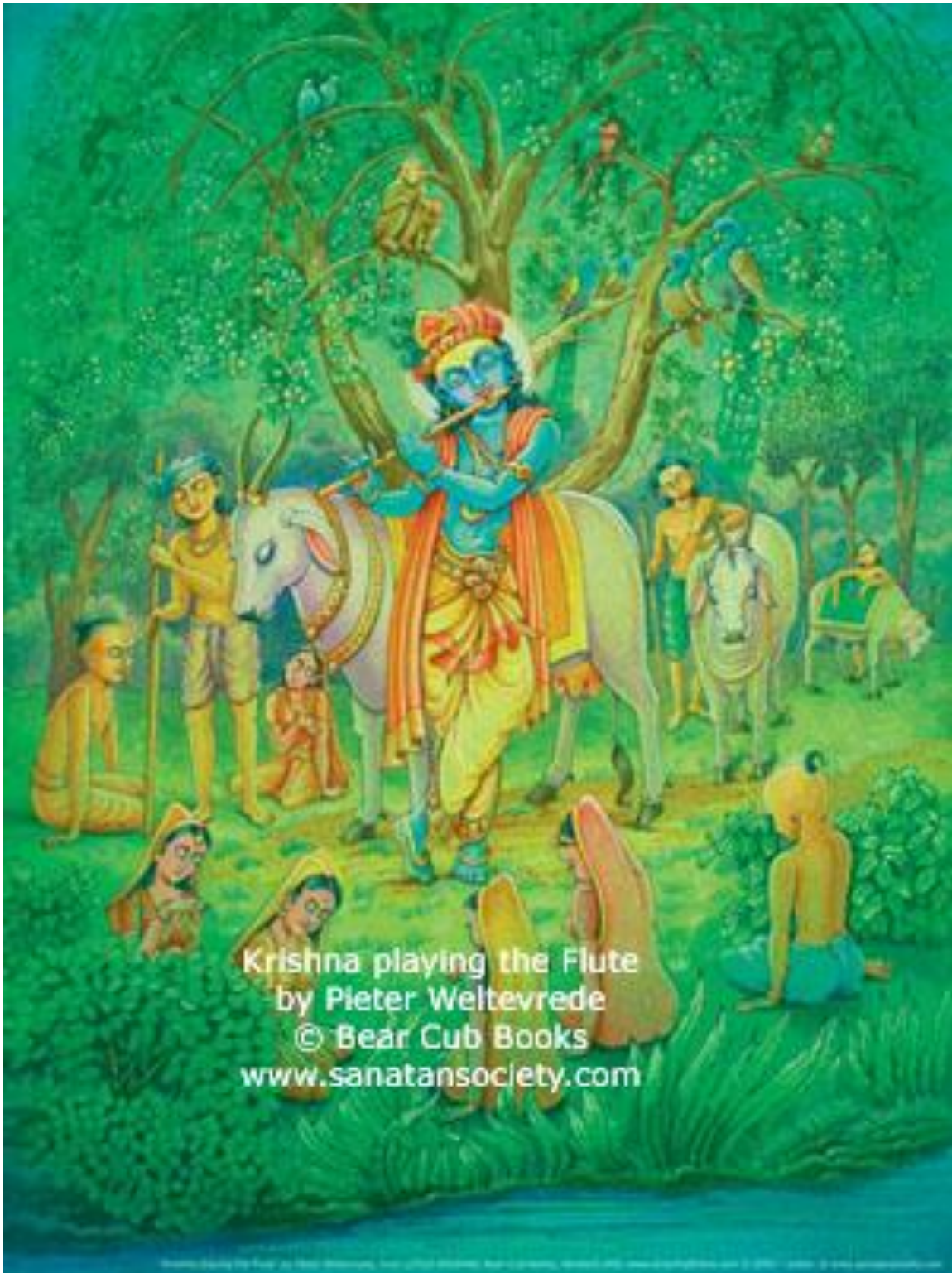
Kalki



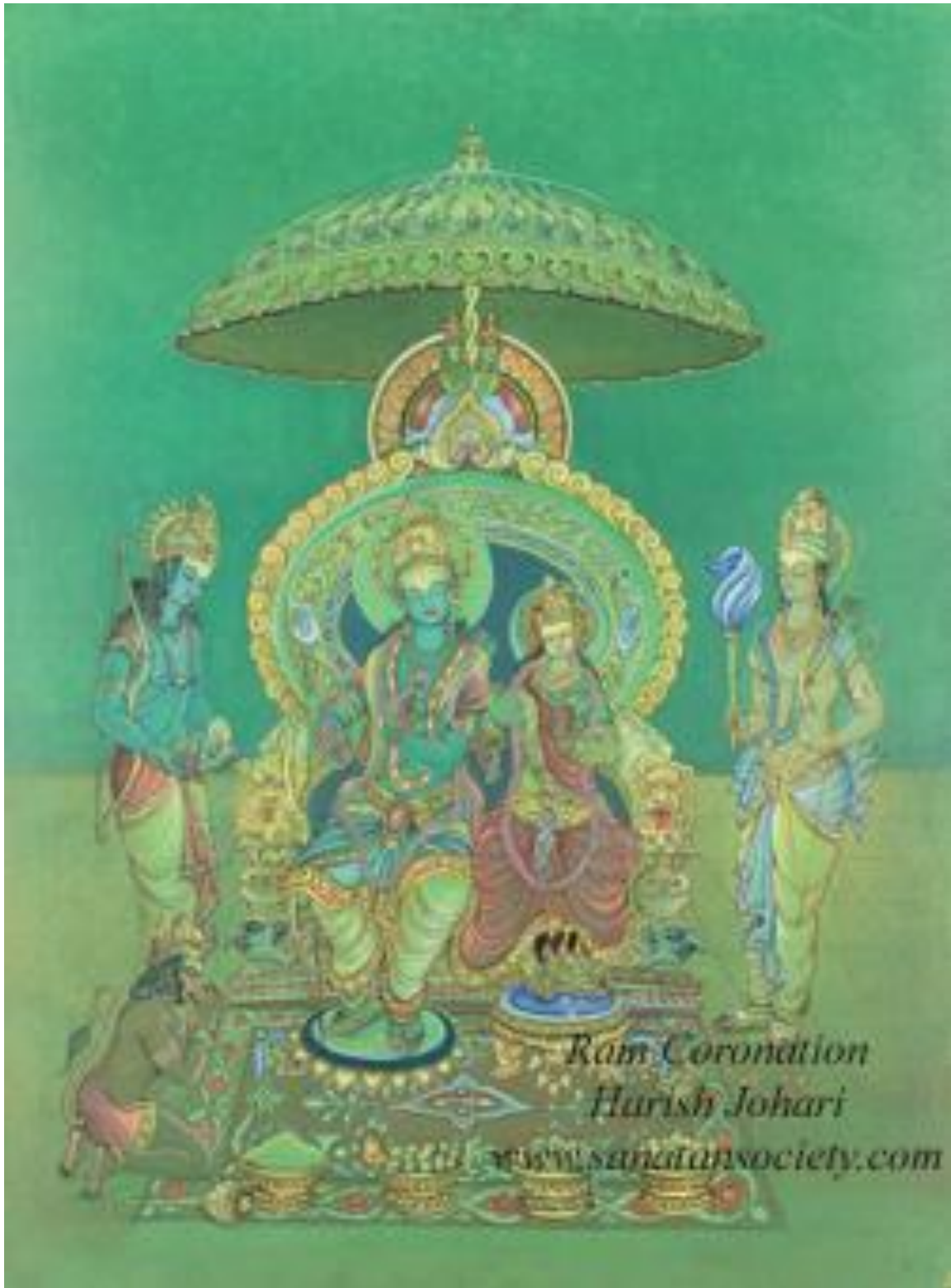
Parasurama



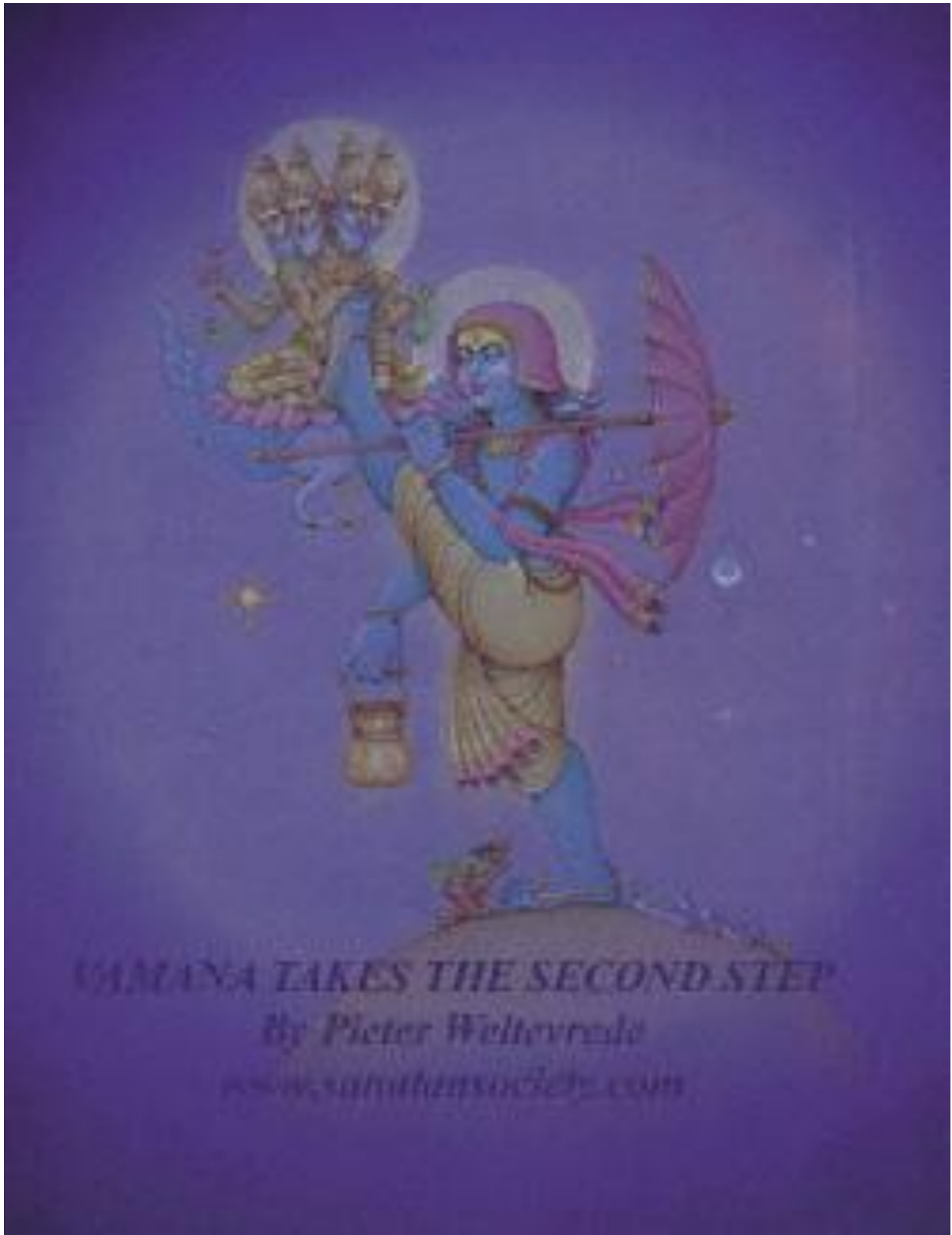
Buddha



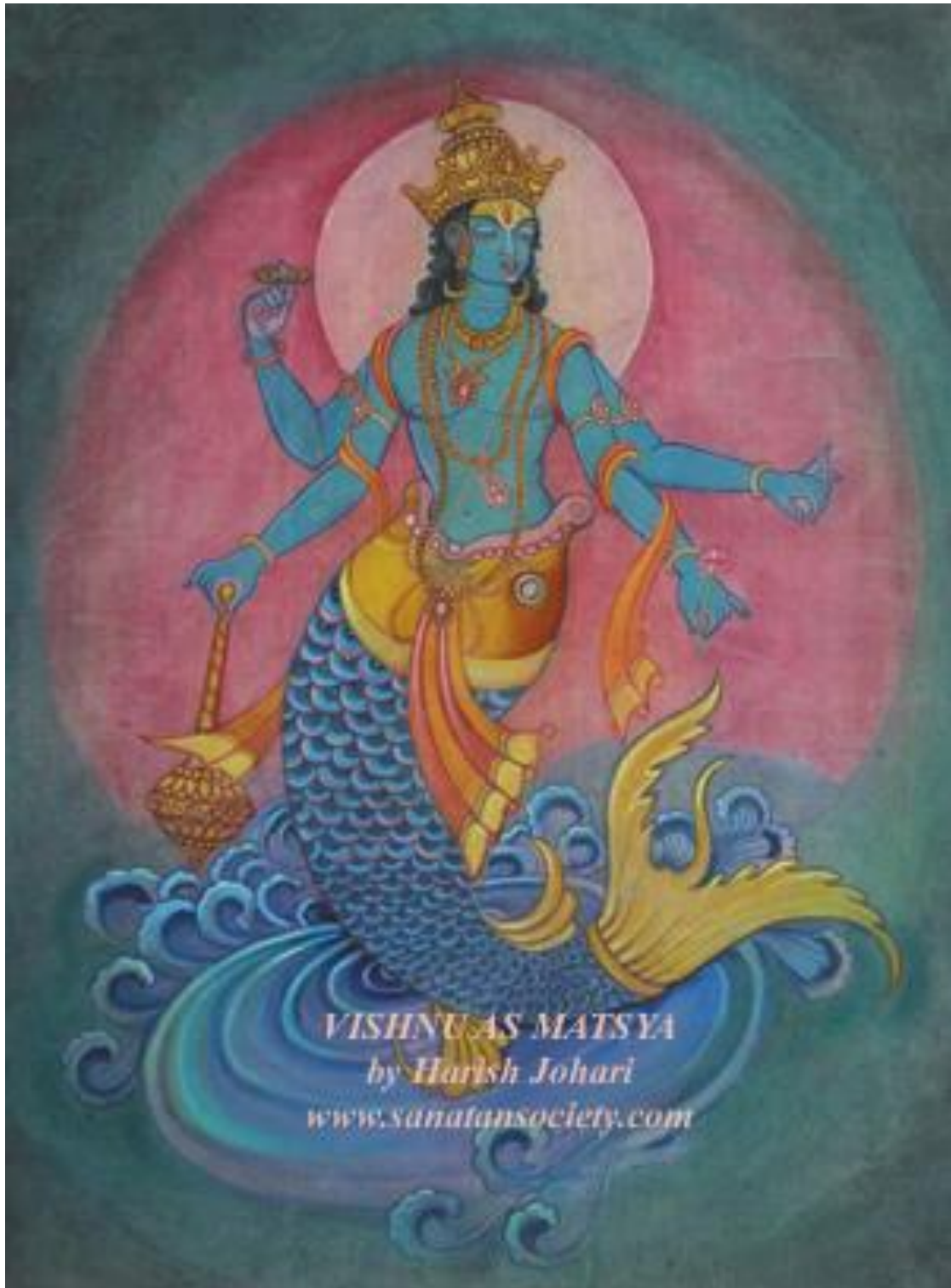
Krishna



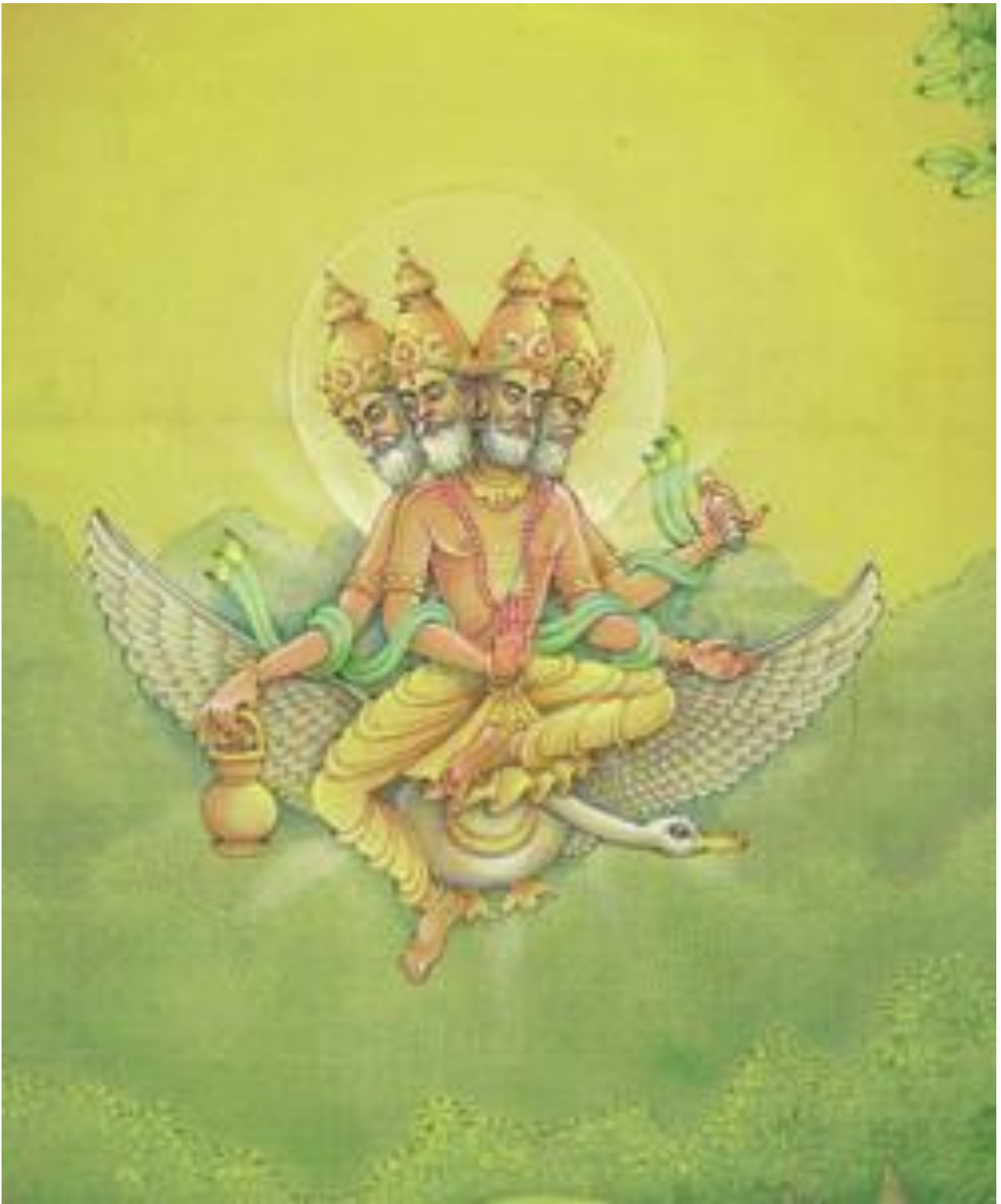
Rama



Vamana



Matsya



Brahma

Brahma

The Creator

Vehicle: swan

- has 4 heads, 4 arms, and a reddish complexion
- not commonly worshipped
- not to be confused with Brahman (the ground of all being) or the Brahmin (priestly caste)

Saraswati

Goddess of knowledge, music, and the arts

Vehicle: swan

- wife of Brahma
- sits on a white lotus playing a veena

Vishnu

The Preserver

Vehicle: garuda (bird)

- has 4 arms, a blueish complexion, and rests on a snake
- was incarnated (born as an animal or human) nine times with one more still to come
- is the main god of **Vaishnavism**

Ganesh

God of the intellect and the remover of obstacles

Vehicle: mouse

- son of Shiva & Parvati
- has an elephant's head

Murugan

God of war

Vehicle: peacock

- son of Shiva & Parvati
- popular in Tamil areas
- also known as Skanda

Durga

A fiercer form of Parvati

Vehicle: tiger

- has ten arms holding many weapons

Kali

Goddess of time and death

Vehicle: donkey

- usually portrayed as dark and violent

Rama

The 7th avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu

- the central figure in the epic story *Ramayana*

Krishna

The 8th avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu

- usually portrayed as a child and a prankster; often shown playing the flute

Hanuman

- an ape-like god known for assisting Rama

Surya

God of the Sun

- pulled on a chariot by horses

Lakshmi

Goddess of wealth and prosperity

Vehicle: owl

- wife of Vishnu
- usually shown bestowing coins and flanked by elephants

Shiva

The Destroyer / Transformer

Vehicle: bull

- has matted hair, a third eye, a blue throat and a trident in his hand
- often worshipped in the featureless lingam form
- is the main god of **Saivism**

Parvati

The Divine Mother

Vehicle: lion

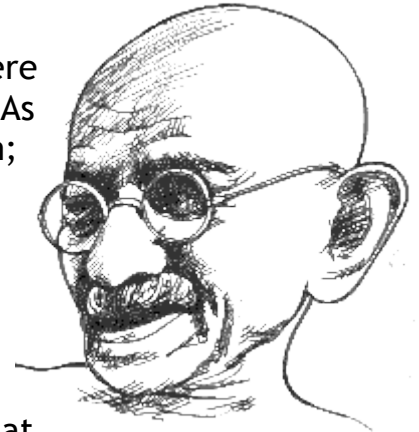
- the reincarnation of Shiva's first wife
- has many forms, such as the popular Durga and Kali (see below); often shown together with Saraswati and Lakshmi as the **tridevi** ('triple goddess')

Gandhi

Thinker, statesman and nationalist leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi not only led his own country to independence but also influenced political activists of many persuasions throughout the world with his methods and philosophy of nonviolent confrontation, or civil disobedience.

Born in Porbandar in Gujarat on October 2, 1869, his actions inspired the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore to call him "Mahatma" ("great soul"). For him, the universe was regulated by a Supreme Intelligence or Principle, which he preferred to call satya (Truth) and, as a concession to convention, God.

Since all human beings partook of the divine essence, they were "ultimately one". They were not merely equal but "identical". As such, love was the only proper form of relation between them; it was "the law of our being", of "our species". Positively, love implied care and concern for others and total dedication to the cause of "wiping away every tear from every eye." Negatively it implied ahimsa or 'non violence'. Gandhi's entire social and political thought, including his theory of Satyagraha, was an attempt to work out the implications of the principle of love in all areas of life. Gandhi himself felt that he was most influenced by his mother whose life was an "endless chain of fasts and vows" as a devout adherent of Jainism, a religion in which ideas of nonviolence and vegetarianism are paramount.



Married by arrangement at 13, Gandhi went to London to study law when he was 18. He was admitted to the bar in 1891 and for a while practiced law in Bombay. From 1893 to 1914 he worked for an Indian firm in South Africa. During these years Gandhi's humiliating experiences of overt racial discrimination propelled him into agitation on behalf of the Indian community of South Africa. He assumed leadership of protest campaigns and gradually developed his techniques and tenets of nonviolent resistance known as Satyagraha (literally, "steadfastness in truth").

Returning to India in January 1915, Gandhi soon became involved in labour organizing. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of Amritsar (1919), in which troops fired on and killed hundreds of nationalist demonstrators, turned him to direct political protest. Within a year he was the dominant figure in the Indian National Congress, which he launched on a policy of noncooperation with the British in 1920-22. Although total noncooperation was abandoned, Gandhi continued civil disobedience, organizing protest marches against unpopular British measures, such as the salt tax (1930), and boycotts of British goods. Gandhi was repeatedly imprisoned by the British and resorted to hunger strikes as part of his civil disobedience. His final imprisonment came in 1942-44, after he had demanded total withdrawal of the British (the "Quit India" movement) during World War II.

Gandhi also fought to improve the status of the lowest classes of society, the 'Untouchables', whom he called harijans ("children of God"). He believed in manual

labor and simple living; he spun thread and wove cloth for his own garments and insisted that his followers do so, too. He disagreed with those who wanted India to industrialize. Gandhi was also tireless in trying to forge closer bonds between the Hindu majority and the numerous minorities of India, particularly the Muslims. His greatest failure, in fact, was his inability to dissuade Indian Muslims, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, from creating a separate state, Pakistan. When India gained independence in 1947, after negotiations in which he was a principal participant, Gandhi opposed the partition of the subcontinent with such intensity that he launched a mass movement against it. Ironically, he was assassinated in Delhi on January 30, 1948, by a Hindu fanatic who mistakenly thought Gandhi's anti-partition sentiment were both pro-Muslim and pro-Pakistan.

Gandhi's intellectual influence on Indians has been considerable. Some were attracted by his emphasis on political and economic decentralisation, others by his insistence on individual freedom, moral integrity, unity of means and ends, and social service; still others by his satyagraha and political activism. For some students of India, Gandhi's influence is responsible for its failure to throw up any genuinely radical political movement. For others, it cultivated a spirit of non-violence, encouraged the habits of collective self-help, and helped lay the foundations of a stable, morally committed and democratic government. Gandhi's ideas have also had a profound influence outside India, where they inspired non-violent activism and movements in favour of small-scale, self-sufficient communities living closer to nature and with greater sensitivity to their environment. Prominent among these are Martin Luther King in the United States and, more recently Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

Hinduism and Food

In Hinduism, food is so vitally important it is considered to be part of God or Brahman, as it nourishes the entire physical, mental, and emotional aspects of a human being. It is considered a gift from God and should be treated respectfully. Here is a brief description of the nuances of Hindu food.

- Food is considered an actual part of Brahman, rather than simply a Brahman symbol.
- Beef is strictly forbidden; cow is considered Mother in Hinduism.
- Pork is a strictly forbidden food in Hinduism.
- Food contains energy-like sound waves that can be absorbed by the person eating them.
- According to the Hindu religion, violence or pain inflicted on another living thing rebounds on you (karma).
- To avoid causing pain to another living thing, vegetarianism is advocated, but not compulsory.
- Prohibited animal products may be different from one area to another; for example, duck or crab may be forbidden in one location and not in another.
- Alcohol, onions, garlic, and red-coloured foods such as red lentils and tomatoes are prohibited.
- Meat is not always forbidden in the Laws of Manu.
- Fasting depends on a person's caste and the occasion. Serving food to the poor and the needy or a beggar is good karma. Food is associated with religious activity and is still offered to God during some of the religious ceremonies. On specific days, food is offered to departed souls. Many Hindu temples distribute foods to visiting devotees.

Food Rituals

Several rituals are associated with food in Hindu tradition. A child's first solid food is celebrated as a **samskara**, or rite, known as **annaprasana**. The funeral rites involve serving food and offering food to the departed soul for his journey to the ancestral world. According to Manu, "Food that is always worshipped, gives strength and manly vigour; but eaten irreverently, it destroys them both."

Hindus practice some rituals before eating. They include:

- Cleaning the place where the food will be eaten
- Sprinkling of water around the food, accompanied by some mantras or prayers
- Making an offering of the food, then offering five vital breaths (**pranas**), namely **prana, apana, vyana, udana**, and **samanaya** and then to Brahman seated in the heart

Vegetarianism

People define a vegetarian diet, in general, as a diet that excludes the meat of animals but does permit eggs. Vegetarian foods include grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and dairy products.

Reasons for Vegetarianism

At present, the practice of a vegetarian diet for Hindus is based on the following categories:

- **Medical grounds:** Medical studies prove that a vegetarian diet is easier to digest, provides a wider range of nutrients, and introduces fewer burdens and impurities into the body. Vegetarianism significantly lowers risk of cancer, heart disease, and other fatal diseases. In general, vegetarian diets can aid in keeping body weight under control. This diet is typically high in carotenoids, but relatively low in long-chain n-3 fatty acids.
- **Ecological grounds:** Earth is suffering. In large measure, the escalating loss of species, destruction of ancient rain forests to create pasturelands for livestock, loss of topsoils, and the consequent increase of water impurities and air pollution have all been traced to the single fact of meat in the human diet.

- **Ethical grounds:** Many of those who have adopted a vegetarian diet have done so on the grounds of ethical reasoning. Either they have read about or personally experienced what goes on daily at any one of the thousands of slaughterhouses around the world, where animals suffer forced confinement and violent death.
- **Religious grounds:** Major paths of Hinduism hold up vegetarianism as an ethical and religious ideal. There are three reasons for adopting this view: the principle of nonviolence, or ahimsa, is applied to animals; the intention to offer only “pure” vegetarian food to a deity and then to receive it back as Prasad; and nonvegetarian food is detrimental to the mind and spiritual development. People in Tibet and Nepal, Hindu countries, are meat eaters. Cold weather warrants such a diet choice.
- **Economical grounds:** An economic vegetarian is someone who practices vegetarianism from either the philosophical viewpoint, concerning issues such as public health and curbing world starvation, or the belief that the consumption of meat is economically unsound. This may be part of a conscious simple-living strategy or just out of necessity.
- **Cultural grounds:** This involves the caste prerogatives. People from some of these castes eat meat, excluding beef, but lower-caste people (Dalits or Untouchables) will eat beef. Even Brahmins living in the states of Orissa, Maharashtra, Bengal, and Kashmir eat meat, while Brahmins from Tamil Nadu will not eat meat. In all other states, Brahmins are mostly vegetarians. All these pronouncements are to be qualified, because many Brahmins start eating meat clandestinely, outside their home, in friends' homes or at restaurants. Vegetarianism is a cultural trait; it is different from caste to caste and from state to state.
- Vegetarianism was never an essential requisite for Hinduism. Ahimsa was important especially after the influence of Buddha, and some cults were more stringent than others about being a vegetarian, but it was never a universal philosophy. Gandhi was a lacto-vegetarian, as are most of the Indian vegetarians.

Hindus and cows

Hindus don't worship cows. They respect, honour and adore the cow. By honouring this gentle animal, who gives more than she takes, they honour all creatures.

Hindus regard all living creatures as sacred - mammals, fishes, birds and more. They acknowledge this reverence for life in their special affection for the cow. At festivals they decorate and honour her, but they do not worship her in the sense that they worship the Deity.

To the Hindu, the cow symbolizes all other creatures. The cow is a symbol of the Earth, the nourisher, the ever-giving, undemanding provider. The cow represents life and the sustenance of life. The cow is so generous, taking nothing but water, grass and grain. It gives and gives and gives of its milk, as does the liberated soul give of his spiritual knowledge. The cow is so vital to life, the virtual sustainer of life, for many humans. The cow is a symbol of grace and abundance. Veneration of the cow instils in Hindus the virtues of gentleness, receptivity and connectedness with nature.

Elaboration: Who is the greatest giver on planet Earth today? Who do we see on every table in every country of the world --breakfast, lunch and dinner? It is the cow. McDonald's cow-vending golden arches and their rivals have made fortunes on the humble cow. The generous cow gives milk and cream, yogurt and cheese, butter and ice cream, ghee and buttermilk. It gives entirely of itself through sirloin, ribs, rump,

porterhouse and beef stew. Its bones are the base for soup broths and glues. It gives the world leather belts, leather seats, leather coats and shoes, beef jerky, cowboy hats - you name it. The only cow-question for Hindus is, "Why don't more people respect and protect this remarkable creature?" Mahatma Gandhi once said, "One can measure the greatness of a nation and its moral progress by the way it treats its animals. Cow protection to me is not mere protection of the cow. It means protection of all that lives and is helpless and weak in the world. The cow means the entire subhuman world."

In the Hindu tradition, the cow is honoured, garlanded and given special feedings at festivals all over India, most importantly the annual Gopashtama festival. Demonstrating how dearly Hindus love their cows, colourful cow jewellery and clothing is sold at fairs all over the Indian countryside. From a young age, Hindu children are taught to decorate the cow with garlands, paint and ornaments. Her nature is epitomized in Kamadhenu, the divine, wish-fulfilling cow. The cow and her sacred gifts --milk and ghee in particular --are essential elements in Hindu worship, penance and rites of passage. In India, more than 3,000 institutions called Gaushalas, maintained by charitable trusts, care for old and infirm cows. And while many Hindus are not vegetarians, most respect the still widely held code of abstaining from eating beef.

By her docile, tolerant nature, the cow exemplifies the cardinal virtue of Hinduism, noninjury, known as ahimsa. The cow also symbolizes dignity, strength, endurance, maternity and selfless service.

In the Vedas, cows represent wealth and joyous Earthly life. From the Rig Veda (4.28.1;6) we read. "The cows have come and have brought us good fortune. In our stalls, contented, may they stay! May they bring forth calves for us, many-coloured, giving milk for Indra each day. You make, O cows, the thin man sleek; to the unlovely you bring beauty. Rejoice our homestead with pleasant lowing. In our assemblies we laud your vigour."



Hindu Festivals

Festival	Date of Observance	Description
Makara Sankranti	January	Makar Sankranti The festival is celebrated by taking dips in the Ganges river or any river and offering water to the Sun god.
Pongal	January	<i>Pongal</i> (meaning "boiling over") is a Hindu festival to give thanks for the harvest. The festival is celebrated all over.
Vasant Panchami	January	Vasant Panchami is celebrated for the blessing of Saraswati, goddess of wisdom and fine arts.
Maha Shivaratri	March	Maha Shivaratri is the great night of Shiva, followers of Shiva observe religious fasting and the offering of Bael leaves to the Shiva.
Holi	March	Holi or Phagwah is a popular spring festival. Holi commemorates the slaying of the demoness Holika by Lord Vishnu's devotee Prahlad.
Vasant Navratri	April	Navratri is the Hindu festival of worship and dance. During this festival the forms of Shakti are worshipped.
Rama Navami	April	Rama Navami is the celebration of the birth of Rama.
Gudi Padwa	April	This is the day on which Brahma created the world.
Hanuman Jayanti	April	Hanuman Jayanti is the celebration of the birth of Hanuman; Rama's loyal devotee.
Vat Pournima	June	Women pray for the prosperity of their husbands by tying threads around a banyan tree.
Bonalu	August	Bonalu is a celebration of the Mother Goddess.
Guru Purnima	July	Guru Purnima is the day devotees offer puja (worship) to their Guru.
Mahalakshmi Vrata	August	Mahalakshmi Vrata is a puja performed by married Hindu women to seek the blessings of Mahalakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity.
Onam	September	Onam is a harvest festival.
Krishna Janmaashtami	August	Krishna Janmaashtami is the Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna.
Ganesh Chaturthi	September	Ganesh Chaturthi is the celebration of the birth of Ganesh
Navratri	September	Navratri is the Hindu festival of worship and dance.
Vijayadashami	October	Vijayadashami is the Hindu celebration of good over evil.
Diwali	October	The festival is celebrated for the return of Rama and Sita.
Prathamastami	November	Older female relatives pray for the prosperity of the eldest child.
Pancha Ganapati	December	A celebration of Lord Ganesha

Hindu Festivals

