

## Further Reading

### NOTES ON RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN THE FOUR FAITH HRE

In Hindu Religious Education, symbols play an important role in conveying the teachings, concepts, and practices of the faith. Sanatan/Vedic is a diverse religion with many deities, traditions, and schools of thought, but certain symbols hold deep spiritual meaning across various sects. Here are some of the most prominent religious symbols in Sanatan/Vedic faith, categorized within four key faiths or traditions that are often studied in Hindu Religious Education:

#### 1. Vaishnavism (Devotion to Vishnu and His Avatars)

- The Conch (Shankha): A symbol of the divine sound 'Om' and the cosmic order, the conch is often associated with Lord Vishnu and is used during rituals and prayers.
- The Discus (Chakra): Symbolizing the mind, the discus is also linked to Lord Vishnu, representing the power of destruction and creation in the universe.
- The Lotus (Padma): The lotus flower is often seen as a symbol of purity, beauty, and spiritual enlightenment. It is associated with several deities, including Vishnu, Lakshmi, and Brahma.

#### 2. Shaivism (Devotion to Shiva)

- The Trident (Trishul): A powerful weapon of Lord Shiva, the trident represents the three fundamental aspects of existence: creation, preservation, and destruction. It also signifies the balance of mind, body, and spirit.
- The Crescent Moon: Shiva is often depicted with a crescent moon on his head, symbolizing the cyclical nature of time, and representing serenity and control over time and emotions.
- The Lingam: The Shiva Lingam is a symbolic representation of Lord Shiva, often used in temples. It signifies the formlessness of the divine, embodying both creation and destruction.

#### 3. Shaktism (Devotion to the Divine Mother, or Shakti)

- The Trishul (Trident): Also important in Shaktism, the trident represents the three Gunas (qualities) — sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance). It also reflects the power of the Goddess Durga or Parvati.
- The Lion (Simha): In Shaktism, the lion is often depicted as the vehicle of the goddess Durga, symbolizing power, courage, and divine strength. It represents the victory over evil forces.
- The Bell: The bell is used in Shakti worship and is associated with invoking the goddess's presence. The sound of the bell is thought to chase away evil spirits and invite purity and divine vibrations.

#### 4. Smartism (Philosophical Traditions and Worship of the Five Deities)

- The Om (Aum): Om is the most sacred and widely used symbol in Sanatan/Vedic. It represents the ultimate reality, the sound of the universe, and the essence of the divine. It is commonly used in meditation and prayer.
- The Kalasha (Sacred Pot): A symbol of prosperity, well-being, and divine blessings, often used in rituals and ceremonies. It represents abundance and the sacredness of water.
- The Swastika: An ancient symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune, the swastika is often used in rituals and festivals to invite prosperity and peace.