

Garuda is a Hindu deity who is primarily depicted as the mount (vahana) of the Hindu god Vishnu. This divine creature is mentioned in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain faiths. Garuda is also the half-brother of the Devas, Gandharvas, Daityas, Danavas, Nagas, Vanara and Yakshas. He is the son of the sage Kashyapa and Vinata. He is the younger brother of Aruna, the charioteer of the Sun. Garuda is mentioned in several other texts such as the Puranas and the Vedas. Garuda is described as the king of the birds and a kite-like figure. He is shown either in a zoomorphic form (a giant bird with partially open wings) or an anthropomorphic form (a man with wings and some ornithic features). Garuda is generally portrayed as a protector with the power to swiftly travel anywhere, ever vigilant and an enemy of every serpent. He is also known as Tarkshya and Vainateya. Garuda is a part of state insignia of India, Indonesia and Thailand. Both Indonesia and Thailand has Garuda as their coat of arms, the Indian Army uses the Garuda on their Guards Brigade Regimental Insignia. The Indian Air Force named their special operations unit after him as the Garud Commando Force. It is often associated with the Greater adjutant stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*). In Hinduism, Garuda is a divine eagle-like sun bird and the king of birds. A Garutman is mentioned in the Rigveda who is described as celestial deva with wings. The Shatapatha Brahmana embedded inside the Yajurveda text mentions Garuda as the personification of courage. In the Mahabharata, Garutman is stated to be same as Garuda, then described as the one who is fast, who can shapeshift into any form and enter anywhere. He is a powerful creature in the epics, whose wing flapping can stop the spinning of heaven, earth and hell. He is described to be the vehicle mount of the Hindu god Vishnu, and typically they are shown together. He is the younger brother of Aruna, who is a charioteer of the sun god, Surya. According to George Williams, Garuda has roots in the verb gri, or speak. He is a metaphor in the Vedic literature for Rik (rhythms), Saman (sounds), Yajna (sacrifices), and the atman (Self, deepest level of consciousness). In the Puranas, states Williams, Garuda becomes a literal embodiment of the idea, and the Self who attached to and inseparable from the Supreme Self (Vishnu). Though Garuda is an essential part of the Vaishnavism, he also features prominently in Shaivism, Shaiva texts such as the Garuda Tantra and Kirana Tantra, and Shiva temples as a bird and as a metaphor of atman. The Hindu texts on Garuda iconography vary in their details. If in the bird form, he is eagle-like, typically with the wings slightly open as if ready and willing to fly wherever he needs to. In part human-form, he may have an eagle-like nose, beak or legs, his eyes are open and big, his body is the color of emerald, and his wings are golden-yellow. He may be shown with either two or four hands. If he is not carrying Vishnu,

he holds a jar of amrita (immortality nectar) in one hand in the rear and an umbrella in the other, while the front pair of hands are in anjali (namaste) posture. If he is carrying Vishnu, the rear hands provide the support for Vishnu's feet. According to the text *Silparatna*, states Rao, Garuda is best depicted with only two hands and with four bands of colours: "golden yellow colour from feet to knees, white from knees to the navel, scarlet from navel to neck, and black above the neck". His hands, recommends the text, should be in abhaya (nothing to fear) posture. In *Sritatvanidhi* text, the recommended iconography for Garuda is a kneeling figure, who wears one or more serpents, pointed bird-beak like nose, his two hands in namaste posture. This style is commonly found in Hindu temples dedicated to Vishnu. In some iconography, Garuda carries Vishnu and his two consorts by his side: Lakshmi and Bhumi.^[20] Garuda iconography is found in early temples of India, such as on the underside of the eave at Cave 3 entrance of the Badami cave temples (6th-century). Garuda's mythology is linked to that of Aruna, the charioteer of the Hindu sun god Surya. Both Aruna and Garuda developed from an egg. According to one version related by George Williams, Kashyapa Prajapati's two wives Vinata and Kadru wanted to have children, and Kashyapa granted each of them a boon.^[22] Kadru asked for one thousand Nāga sons, while Vinata asked for just two, but each an equal to all of Kadru's thousand sons. Kashyapa blessed them, and then retreated to a forest to meditate. Later, Kadru gave birth to one thousand eggs, while Vinata gave birth to two eggs. After incubating them for five hundred years, Kadru's eggs hatched and out came her 1,000 sons. Vinata, eager for her own sons, impatiently broke one of her eggs. From this egg emerged the partially formed Aruna, looking radiant and reddish as the morning sun, but not as bright as the midday sun as he was promised to be. Aruna chided his mother Vinata for her impatience, and warned her to not break open the second egg, cursing her to be a slave until his brother rescued her. Aruna then left to become the charioteer of Surya, the sun god. Vinata waited, and after many years, the second egg hatched and Garuda was born. After losing a bet to Kadru through trickery, Vinata was forced to become her slave. Garuda later asked his brothers to free his mother from her slavery, to which they demanded Amrita from heaven. Garuda waged a war against gods with his extraordinary might and abilities, and defeated all of them, including Indra. He then took Indra's nectar vessel and flew back to earth. Vishnu then came to Garuda, and asked him to be his ride, to which he agreed. Indra requested that Garuda not give the Amrita to the Nagas though, as it would bring great trouble later, so they forged a plan. Upon reaching his brothers Garuda placed the vessel before them, and asked them to first purify

themselves before drinking. Meanwhile, Jayanta (the son of Indra) stole the vessel back. On returning, the nagas were all devoured by Garuda. Some myths present Garuda as so massive that he can block out the sun.^[25] The text Garuda Purana is named after him. Garuda is presented in the Mahabharata as one who eats snake meat, such as the story about him planning to kill and eat Sumukha snake, where Indra intervenes. Garuda in anger, vaunt about his feats and compares himself to Indra's equal. Vishnu teaches a lesson to Garuda and cured his pride on might. Garudas are also a race of birds who devour snakes in the epic. The Suparṇākhyāna, a late Vedic period poem considered to be among the "earliest traces of epic poetry in India," relates the legend of Garuda, and provides the basis for a later, expanded version which appears within the Mahābhārata. Garuda's links to Vishnu – the Hindu god who fights injustice and destroys evil in his various avatars to preserve dharma – have made him an iconic symbol of kings' duty and power, an insignia of royalty or dharma. His eagle-like form is shown either alone or with Vishnu, signifying divine approval of the power of the state. He is found on the faces of many early Hindu kingdom coins with this symbolism, either as a single-headed bird or a three-headed bird that watches all sides. Throughout the Mahabharata, Garuda is invoked as a symbol of impetuous violent force, speed, and martial prowess. Powerful warriors advancing rapidly on doomed foes are likened to Garuda swooping down on a serpent. Defeated warriors are like snakes beaten down by Garuda. The Mahabharata character Drona uses a military formation named after Garuda. Krishna carries the image of Garuda on his banner. Garuda, also referred to as Garula, are golden-winged birds in Buddhist texts. Under the Buddhist concept of saṃsāra, they are one of the Aṣṭagatyah, the eight classes of inhuman beings. In Buddhist art, they are shown as sitting and listening to the sermons of the Buddha. They are enemies of the Nāgas (snakes) and are sometimes depicted with a serpent held between their claws. Like the Hindu art, both zoomorphic (giant eagle-like bird) and partially anthropomorphic (part bird, part human) iconography is common across Buddhist traditions. In Buddhism, the Garuda are enormous predatory birds with a wingspan of 330 yojanas. They are described as beings with intelligence and social organisation. They are also sometimes known as suparṇa (Sanskrit; Pāli: supaṇṇa), meaning "well-winged, having good wings". Like the Nāgas, they combine the characteristics of animals and divine beings, and may be considered to be among the lowest of the devas. The Garudas have kings and cities, and at least some of them have the magical power of changing into human form when they wish to have dealings with people. On some occasions Garuda kings have had romances with

human women in this form. Their dwellings are in groves of the simbalī, or silk-cotton tree. Jataka stories describe them to be residents of Nagadipa or Seruma. The Garuda are enemies to the nāga, a race of intelligent serpent- or dragon-like beings, whom they hunt. The Garudas at one time caught the nāgas by seizing them by their heads; but the nāgas learned that by swallowing large stones, they could make themselves too heavy to be carried by the Garudas, wearing them out and killing them from exhaustion. This secret was divulged to one of the Garudas by the ascetic Karambiya, who taught him how to seize a nāga by the tail and force him to vomit up his stone. The Garudas were among the beings appointed by Śakra to guard Mount Sumeru and the Trāyastriṃśa heaven from the attacks of the asuras. In the Qing dynasty fiction *The Story of Yue Fei* (1684), Garuda sits at the head of the Buddha's throne. But when a celestial bat (an embodiment of the Aquarius constellation) flatulates during the Buddha's expounding of the Lotus Sutra, Garuda kills her and is exiled from paradise. He is later reborn as Song dynasty General Yue Fei. The bat is reborn as Lady Wang, wife of the traitor Prime Minister Qin Hui, and is instrumental in formulating the "Eastern Window" plot that leads to Yue's eventual political execution. *The Story of Yue Fei* plays on the legendary animosity between Garuda and the Nagas when the celestial bird-born Yue Fei defeats a magic serpent who transforms into the unearthly spear he uses throughout his military career. Literary critic C. T. Hsia explains the reason why Qian Cai, the book's author, linked Yue with Garuda is because of the homology in their Chinese names. Yue Fei's courtesy name is Pengju. A Peng is a giant mythological bird likened to the Middle Eastern roc. Garuda's Chinese name is Great Peng, the Golden-Winged Illumination King. The Garuda is a yaksha or guardian for Shantinatha in Jain iconography and mythology. Jain iconography shows Garuda as a human figure with wings and a strand-circle. Garuda is found in Nepalese traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The first sounding rocket of Nepal is named Garuda. The central bank, Nepal Rastra Bank uses Garuda in their official logo. Ancient palaces in Kathmandu Valley use statue of Garuda at their gates.