

GCSE Revision Guide

AQA Religious Studies A



Hinduism: Beliefs,
teachings and
practices

Section One: Beliefs and teachings

Ideas about the nature of God and existence

- ❑ Brahman: different Hindu understandings of brahman; ultimate reality as divine consciousness (nirguna) and manifestation of God in form (saguna); spiritual worlds.
- ❑ Different understandings of the three features of the divine:
 - everywhere, as non-personal (brahman)
 - within the heart
 - beyond, as a personal loving God
 - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 391.
- ❑ How the divine presents:
 - the Tri-murti: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva
 - male and female deities, including Ganesha, Lakshmi, Hanuman, Saraswati
 - the concept of avatara, including Krishna, Rama.
- ❑ Matter (prakriti); the three qualities (tri-guna); illusion (maya); cosmology (Rig Veda 10.129.6-7); the cycle of four ages; many worlds and their diverse inhabitants.

Beliefs about the nature of human life

- ❑ The concept of atman, as individual, eternal inner self, distinct from material mind and body.
- ❑ Cycle of birth and death: samsara; moral action and reaction: the law of karma; types of liberation: moksha.
- ❑ Individual free will and responses to suffering; knowledge and ignorance.
- ❑ Personal virtues including ahimsa, respect, empathy, mind/sense control, humility, love.
- ❑ The four aims of human life: dharma, artha, kama, moksha.
- ❑ The meaning of dharma; sanatana dharma; varnashrama dharma.

Brahman

Hinduism is the religion and way of life of Ancient India, which has been passed down through the generations by revelation, oral tradition and written scripture. Its names come from the valley of the River Indus where it started thousands of years ago.

What do Hindus mean by Brahman?

'In truth Brahman is all.' **Mundaka Upanishad 2.2**

'He moves, and he moves not. He is far and he is near. He is within all, and his is outside all.'
Isa Upanishad 1.5

Brahman is the Hindu name for God or Supreme Being. **Nirguna Brahman** is God/the Supreme Being as a spiritual presence only. **Saguna Brahman** is God/the Supreme Being shown in form. **The Om or Aum** is the sound and symbol of Brahman.

Three aspects of the Divine

- Existing everywhere, as a non-personal God, called Brahman.
- Being within the Heart of everyone, called antaryami, meaning 'the God within'
- As a personal God or Lord, called Bhagavan and approached through many different deities, living in the spiritual worlds called Vaikuntha.

There are **three main aspects of Brahman**.

These are expressed in the **Trimurti** and are:

- Brahma, the Creator.
- Vishnu, the Preserver.
- Shiva, the Destroyer.

The Trimurti - Brahma

'Brahma was [...] the creator of all, the Guardian of the Universe [...] From him comes all life and mind [...] space and light, air and fire and water, and this Earth that holds us all [...] From him comes the moon [...] the rain and all herbs that grow upon earth [...] oceans and mountains; and all rivers...' **Mundaka Upanishad 1 and 2**

Brahma faces north, south, east and west because he is responsible for all of the created world.

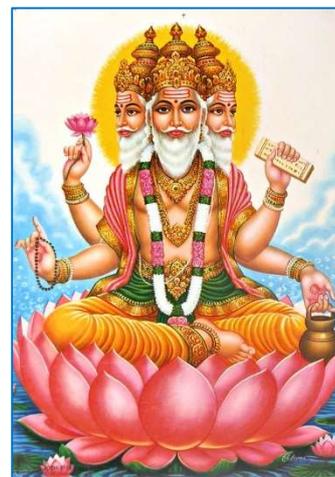
The special meaning of the four objects:

Vedas: The earliest Hindu scriptures. This shows he is guided by the Vedas – some Hindus believe he was responsible for their origin.

The spoon: Represents a sacrificial ladle used in worship. Brahma is responsible for offerings during worship.

Mala: A string of beads that are used during meditation.

The water pot: Represents the water of life, which was responsible for the beginning of creation.



Brahma is seen as the least important of the Trimurti as a punishment for poor behaviour. Some Hindus think he is worshipped less because as creator, his work is done.

Stories from Hindu tradition

1. Brahma created a female deity called Shatarupa and fell in love with her. Shiva through this obsession was wrong so punished him by making him no longer worshipped as other gods.
2. Brahma was too busy listening to the music of Saraswati to pay attention to a high-priest who wanted him to lead a fire sacrifice so the high-priest punished him.

The Trimurti - Vishnu

'Whenever there appears on earth decline of Righteousness, uprising of Unrighteousness, I send Myself to birth. For protection of the good, the wicked put to flight, I come into being age by age establishing the Right.' **Bhagavad Gita 4.7-8**



The Sanskrit word **Vishnu** means 'one who enters everywhere'. He is mainly worshipped through his incarnations or avatars, especially **Rama** and **Krishna**.

Vishnu is special in four ways

- He represents the soul of the entire universe
- He gave birth to Brahma who created the universe
- He enters the heart of every living being to become 'the lord within'
- He is worshipped through avatars

Vishnu is believed to step in to restore moral order, prevent suffering and disaster, and show kindness and generosity to his devotees.

Stories from Hindu tradition

1. Disguised as a dwarf, Vishnu tricked the demon world-ruler, Bali, into giving him everything he could cover in three strides. Vishnu covered the earth and skies in two strides. The third stride was to rest his foot on Bali's head, acknowledging Vishnu's supremacy as God.
2. Prahlada was a devotee of Vishnu but the son of a demon king who thought he was the greatest. His father repeatedly tried to kill him, but Vishnu saved him every time and remained devoted to Vishnu. He was rewarded with eternal bliss in heaven.

The Trimurti - Shiva

'He is Rudra, he alone is the ONE who governs the worlds with his powers. He watches over all being and rules over their creations and their destruction.' **Svetasvatara Upanishad 3**

Shiva is the most complex of Hindu gods. He is thought to be in charge of destruction and recreating afterwards. His symbol is the **linga**, or male sex organ, which shows his ability to recreate.

Other symbols:

Animal hides: sign of an ascetic, as well as his mastery over the tiger, which represents lust.

Trident: represents the three deities of the Trimurti

Serpents: represents Shiva's creative powers after destruction

Third eye: represents spiritual knowledge and power, is able to destroy evil

Ash: sign of an ascetic

Blue body: from when he drank poison to save the world

River Ganges: flows from Shiva's head, representing everlasting time.

Earrings: different symbols show that Shiva is both male and female.

Nandi the bull: symbolises courage and shows Shiva's calm and gentle aspects.



Vaishnavism and Shaivism

Vaishnavism is a tradition that focuses on the worship of Vishnu. Vaishnava worship is based on scriptures, and focuses on bhakti (personal devotion) through saying mantras and repetitive prayers known as japa. Vaishnavas believe that Vishnu is within them as the antaryami, and their aim in life is to serve Vishnu. Vaishnavas believe that the atman is separate from the Supreme Being.

Shaivism is a tradition that focuses on the worship of Shiva. Shaivas focus on Shiva's dancing form, Nataraja. Shaivas are often ascetics who are trying to gain liberation from the cycle of samsara. They practice astanga yoga, and some even smoke marijuana as an aid to meditation. They believe that the atman and Brahman are one and therefore there is only one reality.

Both groups use stories to claim that their deity is superior:

Stories from Hindu tradition

1. Shiva is a flaming post extending into eternity. Both Brahma and Vishnu try to find the end but cannot. Therefore, Shiva is the eternal God, more powerful than Vishnu or Brahma. He is a never-ending pillar of light.
2. Bhrigu insulted each of the gods of the trimurti to discover which was most important and influence only by goodness. Both Shiva and Brahma were furious, but Vishnu apologised for hurting Bhrigu. Vaishnavas claim that Vishnu is more filled with goodness and superior to the other members of the trimurti.

The deities

'Then Vidagdha, the son of Sakala, asked him [Yajnavalkya]. 'How many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
Yajnavalkya decided it through this [group of Mantras known as] Nivid, [saying], 'As many as are indicated in the Nivid of the Visvadevas, three hundred and three, and three thousand and three'.
'Very well', said Sakalya, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
'Thirty-three'.
Very well', said the other, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
'Six'.
'Very well', said Sakalya, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?' 'Three'.
'Very well', said the other, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
'Two'.
'Very well', said Sakalya, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
'One and a half'.
'Very well', said the other, 'how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?'
'One'.
'Very well', said Sakalya, 'which are those three hundred and three and three thousand and three?'

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 391

Hindus can be seen as both polytheists and monotheists at the same time. They usually favour one particular god or goddess, and offer sacrifices to whichever one seems right on that occasion.

The three main female deities



Saraswati: The consort of Brahma and goddess of learning. Her son is Manu. He is thought of as the father of mankind and another of the Laws of Manu, which is the book of moral laws in Hindu scriptures. The Vedas, the oldest Hindu holy text, are also thought to be Saraswati's children so she is often referred to as Veda-Mata, mother of the Vedas.

Lakshmi: The consort of Vishnu, often referred to as Sri, a word meaning beauty, prosperity and wealth. She is especially worshipped during the festival of Diwali when she is prayed to for a prosperous new year. Her marriage to Vishnu is considered the perfect union.



Shakti: Also known as **Parvati, Durga** and **Kali**.

Parvati - known to be caring for others and both patient and wise. The balance of female and male is often represented in Hinduism by images of Shiva and Parvati as halves of one person.

Durga - a warrior goddess who symbolises the 'hidden strength' of women, and divine opposition to evil

Kali: a fierce and wild goddess. She is associated with death and destruction- particularly of demons, whose blood she caught on her tongue.

Hanuman and **Ganesha** are animal gods who are believed to be born from Shiva and Parvati. Hanuman is known for strength and devotion to duty, and is the patron of wrestlers, sportsmen and soldiers. Ganesha is the god of good luck and removers of obstacles.

The avatars

Hindus believe that the god Vishnu has shown himself in many different forms at special times and for special reasons. There are 10 avatars. The most important are the seventh, Rama, and the eighth Krishna.

Matsya, the fish that kills Damanaka to save the Vedas and saves mankind.

Kurma, the turtle that helps the Devas and Asuras churn the ocean for the nectar of immortality.

Varaha, the boar that rescues the Earth and kills Hiranyaksha.

Narasimha, the half-lion half human, who defeats the demon Hiranyakashapu -nara(man), simha (lion).

Vamana, the dwarf that grows into a giant to save the world from King Bali.

Parashurama, "Rama of the battle axe," a sage who appeared in the Treta Yuga. He killed Kartavirya Arjuna's army and clan and then killed all the ksatriyas 21 times.

Rama, Sri Ramachandra, the prince and king of Ayodhya who killed Demon King Raavan.

Balarama, The elder brother of Krishna and considered the eighth avatar of Vishnu in puranic texts. In some modern interpretations, however, Krishna is considered the eighth avatar and the Buddha the ninth.

Krishna, the ninth Avatar of Vishnu and associated with the Dwapara Yuga.

Kalki, the tenth avatar of Vishnu and said to be the harbinger of the end of Kali Yuga. This is the only avatar of Vishnu that is yet to manifest itself.

Cosmology

'Well verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?

The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,

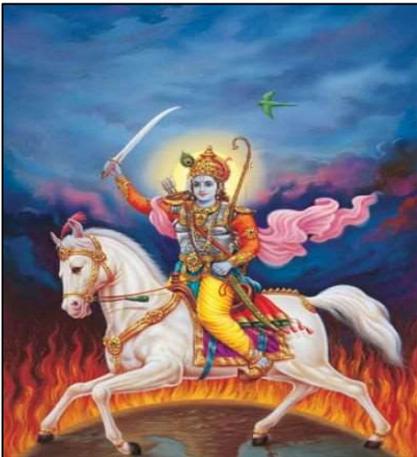
Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not'

Rig Veda 10.129.6-7

Hindu ideas about the world and how it works

- Time is cyclical
- The material world is repeatedly created
- The universe is one of many bubbles floating in space
- There are three tiers of our universe: the heavenly planets; the earthly realm; the lower worlds
- There is not a single account of creation; instead, there are many interrelated stories.
- There are two realities: spirit (**purusa**) and matter (**prakriti**)

The cycle of four ages



- Hindus believe that time is separated into four long periods of time called **yugas** totalling 4,320,000 years. These are broken down into gold (1,728,000yrs), silver (1,296,000yrs) copper (864,000yrs) and iron (432,000yrs). This current age, leaving 427,000yrs.
- Each age gets shorter and is believed to be more corrupt.
- At the end of this age, Vishnu will appear as Kalki (the 10th avatar) riding a white horse. He will kill the remaining evil and start a new birth of a golden age, and the cycle will start again.

The universe

- The universe is clusters of bubbles floating in space created from Vishnu's breath.
- In each universe, there is an upper realm of heavenly planets, an earthly realm, and a lower world full of less pleasant beings.
- Every form of creation has a place within these universes.
- In each cycle of life, humans may move into a different realm.

Matter

- Hindus believe the world is made up of spirit, **purusa**, and matter, **prakriti**, but different Hindus will interpret their relationship differently.
- When a soul reaches enlightenment, the world ceases to have matter/substance and it is shown to be an illusion, or **maya**
- Matter is believed to go through three stages: creation, maintenance and destruction.
- In human life these are seen as passion (red), goodness (yellow) and ignorance (blue), and explain how humans behave.

Atman

'Atman, the spirit of vision, is never born and never dies. Before him there was nothing, and his is one for evermore. Never-born and eternal, beyond time gone or to come he does not die when the bodies dies'

Katha Upanishad 2.18

The word **atman** is a Sanskrit word meaning 'real self' or inner self'. Hindus believe that the atman is the real and eternal 'self'. All living beings in this world have an atman inside of them.

Stories from Hindu tradition

After the universe was created, atman was created. Atman travelled through the universe and come to planet Earth; there, atman helped to bring alive new beings. As these beings were part of Earth, their bodies died but their atman remained.

All Hindus believe that the real self, the atman, is eternal and made of spirit, Brahman. Some believe that the atman is the same as Brahman, because Brahman is all-powerful and able to be everywhere at the same time. Others believe that the atman contains only part of Brahman, because if it was exactly the same as Brahman then he would not be supreme.

Stories from Hindu tradition

To explain Brahman and the atman to his son, Svetaketu, his father asked him to put a lump of salt in water overnight. In the morning, Svetaketu could not find the salt as it had dissolved. The water all tasted salty but could not be seen. His father said, 'In the same way, O my son, you cannot see the Atman, but in truth is here. Brahman, or the spirit of the whole universe, is like an invisible and subtle essence.

Chandogya Upanishad 6.12

Samsara, karma and moksha

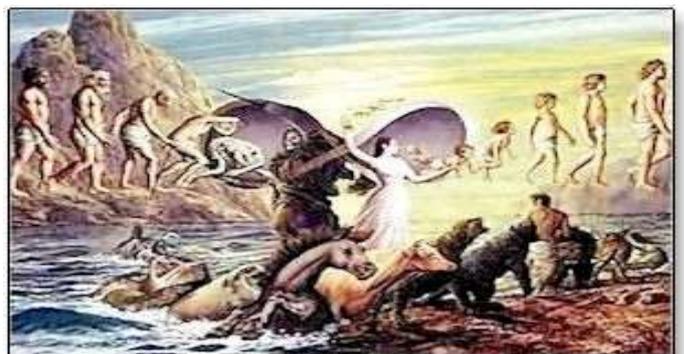
Hindus believe that the **atman** moves through a series of steps which begins in plants and animals and goes onto humans. When a man or woman dies their soul is re-housed in another person. This continual cycle of birth and death is called **samsara**.

It is the belief that when your body dies, your soul (atman) moves onto another being. The soul in everything is the same – there is no difference between the soul in a plant or animal and a human. The transferring of the atman into a new body is called **transmigration** and the taking on of a new body is called **reincarnation**.

The type of person your soul moves on to depends on how you have lived. **Karma** means action. Good karma in your last life means good karma in this life. Bad karma in your last life means bad karma in this life.

The end of the birth and death cycle (samsara) is known as **moksha**. It is what every Hindu hopes to achieve as the soul breaks out of the cycle or rebirth and joins with Brahman.

This can only happen when the soul becomes completely pure and is not affected by anything that happens on earth. Then the soul can go back to being part of Brahman where it began.



Dharma

'There is the path of joy, and there is the path of pleasure. Both attract the soul. Who follows the first comes to good; who follows the pleasure reaches not the End. The two paths lie in front of man. Pondering on them, the wise man chooses the path of joy; the fool takes the path of pleasure.'

Katha Upanishad 2.1-2

Hindus believe life involves a series of duties (dharma). Dharma isn't the same for everyone as it depends on your family background and your job. It includes lots of things like worshipping God, doing your job properly, not hurting people or living animals, being honest etc. It is up to every human to do their dharma as well as they possibly can. For Hindus, this is the first aim in life.

Purusharthas= Objectives of a human

According to Hinduism, the meaning (purpose/goals) of human life is four-fold:

1. **Dharma:** To act virtuously and righteously
2. **Artha:** To gain prosperity
3. **Kama:** To gain enjoyment
4. **Moksha:** To reach enlightenment

All of these are needed in appropriate balance in order to reach moksha. To focus on any of them and neglect the others will hinder reaching moksha

Stories from Hindu tradition

A Hindu holy man was walking through a city and gave different blessings to different people. Explaining his blessings to his disciples, he said that because the Crown Prince has led a life of luxury and thoughtlessness, he will suffer in the next life so it is better that he never dies. The student was performing a holy task so it was better that he die now whilst pure, before he could sin. The butcher lives a hellish life, with no chance of escape if he dies so it doesn't matter if he lives or dies and the worshipper will serve God no matter what so it doesn't matter if they live or die.

Suffering

'Be friendly and compassionate released from ego selfishness, patient, hate not being, the same in pain and happiness'

Bhagavad Gita 12.13

Hindus think that suffering is partly due to the bad karma in people's previous lives. They also believe that suffering comes from 'moral evil', the bad that humans causes. Hindus try to break free from suffering by reaching moksha. They believe inner peace is achieved by changing yourself, rather than your material surroundings.

Hindus believe that it is part of their dharma to relieve the suffering of others.

Sanatana dharma

Many Hindus prefer to call their religion sanatana dharma, which is a Sanskrit phrase meaning 'eternal truth' and refers to the duties that link the eternal soul to God according to ancient scriptures.

This means that sanatana dharma is timeless and the duty of all people everywhere.

Sanatana is the idea or perfect way of life that all Hindus try to follow. It consists of the following:

- Always considering what is right and what is wrong about any action
- Remembering God in your heart and mind
- Learning more about God and dharma from holy scriptures
- Trying to reach moksha
- Offering worship to God, either in the temple or at home
- Feeding animals and birds, and caring for plants and trees
- Showing respect for elders and caring for the needy

BAPS Swaminarayan Santha



The BAPS Swaminarayan Santha is based at Neasden Temple in London. Its members follow the Shikshapatri, a book of rules on moral conduct. For example, they should:

- Live according to dharma
- Never commit murder
- Never eat meat, or drink alcohol
- Be honest in all business dealings
- Respect all other deities

Members of the BAPS spend their lives doing charitable work, and trying to make the world a better place for all.

Can you answer these?

1. Explain the different ways in which Hindus think of the divine.
2. Explain Hindu beliefs about the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Refer to Hindu teaching in your answer.
3. Explain different ways in which a Hindu might fulfil his/her dharma.
4. How could a Hindu parent teach their child to follow sanatana dharma? Refer to Hindu teaching in your answer.
5. Explain two examples of female deities connected with the trimurti.
6. Explain why the avatars of Vishnu are important in Hinduism.
7. Explain what Hindus believe about the atman. Refer to Hindu teaching in your answer.
8. Explain how beliefs about the tri-guna link to Hindu ideas about matter.
9. Explain the difference between Vaishnavism and Shaivism.
10. Explain the difference between nirguna and saguna Brahman.

Section Two: Practices

Worship and festivals

- ❑ Places of worship and their importance: home; temple; outdoors (such as shrines); the space of the heart
- ❑ Different forms of worship/meditation and their significance: havan, puja, arati, darshan, bhajan/kirtan, japa/mantra; key differences in worship in Shaivism and Vaishnavism and different Hindu views about the importance of worship.
- ❑ Focuses of worship and representations of the divine and their importance:
 - one God (personal or non-personal)
 - the many deities, guru and other elders
 - holy land, hills and rivers
 - sacred plants and animals
 - the murti as a representation of God.
- ❑ Sacred festivals and their importance for Hindus in Great Britain today, including the origins and meaning of:
 - Diwali
 - Holi.

Lifestyle

- ❑ The four paths towards yoga (union with the divine), their differences and their importance:
 - action (karma yoga)
 - knowledge (jnana yoga)
 - meditation (astanga yoga)
 - devotion (bhakti yoga).
- ❑ Pilgrimage:
 - the role of pilgrimage
 - practices and purposes
 - sacred sites, including Varanasi
 - Kumbh Mela.
- ❑ The work and significance of:
 - Hindu environmental projects including 'cow protection' and their significance.
 - Charities that promote well-being, social inclusion and women's rights.

Why Hindus worship

'When a man knows God, he is free: his sorrows have an end, and birth and death are no more. When in inner union he is beyond the world of body, the the... World of the spirit, is found... Where... Man... Is one with the ONE'

Svetasvatara Upanishad 1

'With upright body, head and neck, lead the mind and its powers into thy heart; and the OM of Brahman will then be thy boat with which to cross the rivers of fear'

Svetasvatara Upanishad 2

'There are two ways of contemplation of Brahman: in sound and in silence.'

Maitri Upanishad 6.22

Some Hindu thinkers teach that atman, or the soul, is always one with Brahman. While some Hindus think that the atman and Brahman always remain separate.

Hindu thinkers debate whether the atman achieves moksha by a person's own efforts, or by the grace, through Brahman or another deity.

Stories from Hindu tradition

A king in South India failed to welcome a wise man so was turned into an elephant called Gajendra as punishment.

When Gajendra was bathing in the lake, a crocodile attacked him. Gajendra remembered a prayer to Vishnu and recited them. Vishnu came and saved him on his giant eagle, Garuda, and took him straight back to vaikuntha, the spiritual realms.

This story could show that souls are saved by God's grace, or could show that through devotion and worship Hindus can achieve moksha.

Where Hindus worship

Hindu holy books teach about ways of finding and worshipping God. The Upanishads recommend performing yoga and meditation. The Bhagavad Gita describes a path of knowledge, following through reading holy books, and a path of action, followed through exercise that focus the mind and heart on God.

All these types of worship can be performed at home, at a shrine or in any sacred space outdoors. Hindus generally agree that the way a person worships is not as important as the love and devotion in their heart when they worship.

Every village and town in India has at least one temple or mandir. The appearance of a temple is intended to create a kind of heaven on Earth, where worshippers can be still and find the truth within themselves, that is, worship in the space of the heart. A highly decorated temple is thought to drive off evil forces.

Inside the temple you would expect to find a murti (image of a deity) and a shrine dedicated to that deity. You would also find side rooms for preparing offerings, and a special room at the entrance for the guardian or vehicle of the deity.

How Hindus worship

Bhakti means loving devotion to God. It is one of the four paths of yoga and uses the emotions to reach union with God.

'A leaf or flower, water, fruit, a devotee in love may bring; I cherish from that earnest soul the love that makes the offering'

Bhagavad Gita 9.26

'Bear Me in mind, with love to me, revere Me, sacrifice, I promise you will come to Me for you are dear to Me'.

Bhagavad Gita 18.65

Puja means 'giving respect and honour' Hindu worship, be it in the temple, a shrine at home, in the open air is called puja. Prayers are said in front of the chosen deity, represented by the murti, worshippers make offerings of flowers, fruit, rice and money.

The main ceremony of worship is called **arati**. During puja, an **arati lamp** and **arati tray** will usually be used. An arati tray will usually have representations of the four elements: earth, fire, air and water. The lamp is always lit and passed round the deity with prayers and songs. Then the flame is handed round on a tray so that worshippers can pass their hands over the flame, and touch their eyes to receive the blessing of the deity.

Hindus will often touch or kiss the steps of a shrine or the feet of a deity, or offer a greeting as a sign of respect and honour. This is known as **darshan**. They will sing hymns, known as bhajan or kirtan and chant mantras. **Japa** is one way of chanting mantras, using a string of beads to focus the mind.

Havan is a fire sacrifice that is performed on special occasions to the god Agni. It is a symbol of the rituals of animal sacrifice in ancient Hindu scriptures and is often used in Hindu marriages.

Personal deities

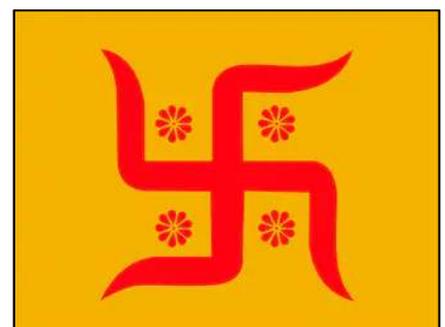
Bhagavan means a personal lord that Hindus worship to make the Supreme Being easier to access and understand. They choose personal deities based on natural affection or connections to their daily life.

Family murtis at home shrines are treated with great respect. They are washed, have their clothes changed and are offered food as a sign of care. Photographs of loved ones who have died are also put in the shrine. A bell is rung to tell the deity when worshippers are ready.

Home shrines are the cleanest rooms in the house. Hindus worship at dawn – the sound of God, OM, should be the first thing spoken each day.

The Swastika

The swastika is an ancient Hindu symbol of the sun and prosperity. Today its crooked branches symbolises that the human mind is unable to understand the truths about Brahman. It also points in every direction, to show that God is present in every place, form and life.



Sacred festivals- Diwali and Holi

Hindu festivals are considered an important part of belief. By remembering and celebrating festivals Hindus are able to make connections with the divine, as well as many other benefits.

Festivals are generally considered to fall into four main categories, though many cover more than one aspect:

- Celebrating a key event in the life of a deity
- Celebrating the birth, life and achievements of a Hindu saint
- Seasonal celebrations of life and nature
- Joyful celebrations of family relationships and the cycle of human life.

Details about the festival	Diwali	Holi	Similarity (S) or Difference (D)
Length of time it lasts	5 days	2 days	D
Time of year it happens	September/ October	February/March	D
What type of festival is it?	Celebrates a key event in the life of a deity	Celebrates a key event in the life of a deity	S
Who is remembered and why?	The goddess Lakshmi – to bring prosperity, or the story of Rama and Sita – to mark the victory of light over darkness, and good over evil. It is also the start of the Hindu New Year.	The victory of Prahlad and Vishnu over the demon Holika. It also remembers the story of Krishna and the milkmaids.	D
How is it celebrated?	Houses are spring-cleaned and decorated to welcome Lakshmi, lights are lit to light the path to the home. Gifts and new clothes are bought and exchanged. Lamps and fireworks are lit to show the victory of good over evil.	Fires are lit to remember the story of Prahlad being protected by Vishnu. People wear old clothes and throw coloured paint to remember the fun that Krishna and the milkmaids have. Everyone can join in and normal standards of behaviour are forgotten.	D/S



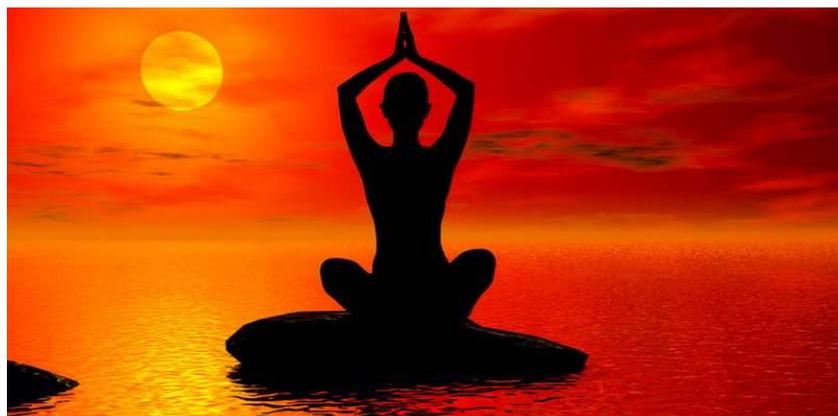
The four paths of yoga

'With upright body, head and neck, lead the mind and its powers into thy heart; and the OM of Brahman will then be thy boat with which to cross the rivers of fear. And when the body is in silent steadiness, breath rhythmically through the nostrils with a peaceful ebbing and flowing of breath. The chariot of the mind is drawn by wild horses, and those wild horses have to be tamed'

Svetasvatara Upanishad 2

There are four ways, or paths, of practicing Yoga: Karma yoga, jnana yoga, astanga yoga and bhakti yoga. Hinduism acknowledges that there are many different paths that people can take to build a relationship with God, and whichever path they choose is acceptable.

<p><u>Karma Yoga</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is the path of unselfish action by doing the daily work and particularly the duties of your stage in life and caste, without the desire for reward or selfish gain.• Talent and fulfilling your own potential for the good of society is considered to be the path of karma yoga.• Gandhi, who worked tirelessly and selflessly in campaigns for Indian independence and the upliftment of the untouchables, was seen as the ideal karma yogi	<p><u>Bhakti yoga</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bhakti is loving devotion, so Hindus who choose this path choose to express their beliefs through a loving relationship with a personal deity.• Yogis following this path will sing and chant God's name.• The yogi is surrendering to their chosen deity and feels the experience of complete peace and love of God. By doing this they get refuge from God and believe it will lead them to moksha.
<p><u>Jnana Yoga</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jnana is the path of knowledge and understanding.• This is achieved through deep meditation and an experience of oneness with the supreme spirit, Brahman.• Yogis following this path focus on the limitations of this temporary life and so instead focus on what is eternal.• They believe that through this understanding and knowledge, they will gain true wisdom, knowledge and happiness.	<p><u>Astanga Yoga</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is also known as 'royal yoga' and is regarded by many Hindus as the highest form of yoga as it is fulfillment of all of the other three ways.• This is a form of self-control over both the senses and the mind.• Raja yoga involves deep contemplation of Brahman.• When success is achieved, the yogi's personality is transformed and they are freed from anger, greed, envy and sadness



Teachers- gurus, sadhus and sannyasins

'The pearl is found in the oyster, and the oyster is in the sea. The diver brings it up. No one else has the power to do this.'

Guru Kabir

'The guru is the skilful helmsman, divine grace the favourable wind; if with such means man does not strive to cross the ocean of life and death, he is indeed lost.'

Guru Chaitanya

A **guru** is a wise teacher of religion and spirituality. There is evidence in the Upanishad that wise men are able to reveal the truths about Brahman and that the pupils of religious teachers may expect to spend many years studying.

A guru is expected to possess four qualities. He must:

- Be well versed in the scriptures
- Know about Brahman
- Have overcome all human desires
- Be honest, sincere and trustworthy.

Guru are thought to have knowledge that no ordinary human can understand. The guru passes on this knowledge by darshan or a 'gracious glance' as the disciple sits at the guru's feet.

A **sadhu** is a wandering holy man. They are often seen at Kumbh Mela, leading the procession of pilgrims into the water.

A **sannyasin** is a religious hermit who has reached the last stage of life. They give up all possessions and contact with family, and own only a begging bowl, stick and prayer beads. They are highly respected as an example of austerity, meditation and prayer.

A **swami** is a 'master of the senses'. They are known for being highly knowledgeable about the Hindu scriptures and belong to a religious order.



Mata Amritanandamayi (known as **Amma**) is a holy teacher who travels the world showing love by hugging people.

Sathya Sai Baba was a popular modern guru who had 15 million followers worldwide. He had an ashram in India where thousands of Hindus would wait daily in the hope of seeing him.

Pilgrimage

Hindu holy places are believed to be where **heaven and earth meet** and so it is easier to pass from one world to the other at these sites.

Hindus go on pilgrimage for the following reasons:

1. To make amends for something they have done wrong.
2. To strengthen their faith and become closer to God.
3. To show how committed they are to their religion or a particular deity.
4. To make a spiritual journey on behalf of someone unable to do it for themselves.
5. To ask for help or healing
6. To find out about a holy place.
7. Because members of their family have always gone on a particular place on pilgrimage
8. To say thank you for something good that has happened.
9. Pilgrimage is part of their dharma or religious duty.
10. Because pilgrimage is open to everyone and there are no division of age, class or gender.

Pilgrims do some of the following on pilgrimage:

- Make offerings to God
- Circumambulate the temple
- Say prayers
- Chant mantras
- Spend time in the presence of the deity
- Leave ashes of a loved one
- Wash in holy water
- Collect samples of water/earth etc.
- Buy and wear special clothes
- Shave heads
- Walk barefoot
- Remain celibate
- Focus on God

Hindus go to the following places on pilgrimage:

Varanasi is the point where two holy rivers meet, the Ganges and the Yamuna rivers. It is considered the 'City of Lord Shiva' It's where many Hindus go to reflect on the temporal nature of this life and the ultimate goal of Moksha. Varanasi is considered, 'the Gateway to Moksha', and death in the city is believed to bring immediate salvation. The city is famous for its ghats, where the deceased are cremated at the edge of the river.

Kumbh Mela is the site of the world's largest pilgrimage. It takes place in four different sites, every three years, with a large festival at Prayaga every twelve years. This is a very holy river crossing, where the Ganges and Yamuna rivers meet the mythical river Saraswati. The festival remembers the spilling of the nectar of immortality during a battle between gods and demons. Therefore, bathing in the water here brings purification.

If pilgrims bathe in the Ganges on the day of the new moon, they are believed to be released from the cycle of samsara. Pilgrims make offerings of garlands of marigolds by dropping them in the river for Mother Ganges. They also offer water by scooping it from the river and letting it fall back through their fingers. Traditionally, naked sadhus smeared in ashes and wearing marigold garlands, lead the procession into the river.

As well as the festivities, the Kumbh Mela is about devotion and passion. Hindus do not forget their duty to pray and receive special blessings.

The environment

If God is present in everything Hindus believe they should everything respect. This is covered by the key teaching of **ahimsa** – non-violence. Hindus believe that they should **'tread carefully on the earth'** meaning they should not use the world's resources more than needed. When Neasden Temple was built, 2,300 trees were planted in Devon to compensate for the wood used.

The Divine Goddess

Within Hinduism the most common term for 'goddess' is 'Devi', but this same power is also commonly referred to as Shakti and Durga, among other names. Shakti is seen as the female creative power **alongside Brahman** which is seen to have brought the universe into being.

The earth provides all the nourishment and medicine needed to sustain creation. For this reason, many Hindus see the earth as the Goddess Devi, the mother of us all.

Most Hindus are **vegetarians** because:

- Killing animals for meat causes them to suffer
- Their breath which is used for uttering Holy scriptures, should not be linked to the killing of animals.
- Animals are part of the life cycle and should not be harmed.

Hymn from the Devi Mahatmya

Praise to the Divine Mother, the sustaining power of the universe.

*Praise to the Divine Mother, who is terrible, eternal and **happiness** itself*

We bow to the Divine Mother,

*who is **wealth** and **success** and who takes us through difficulties.*

*We bow again and again to the Goddess who is in the **consciousness** of all beings, who is in the **intelligence** of all beings.*

*We bow again and again to the Goddess who is in the form of **peace** and **faith**,*

*We bow again and again to the Goddess who is in the form of **loveliness** and **good fortune**.*

*Again and again, praise to the Goddess who is in all beings in the form of **compassion** and **contentment**.*

Again and again, praise to the Goddess who is in all beings in the form mother.

Praises to the Mother, pervading the entire world.

"Even as the radiance of the sun shines everywhere in space, so does the glory of God rule over all his creation. In the unfolding of this own nature he makes all things blossom into the ONE, the only God who rules the universe."

Svetasvatara Upanishad 5

"He is the creator of all, ever living in the mystery of his creation. He is beyond beginning and end, and in his glory all things are."

Svetasvatara Upanishad 5

"All this universe is in truth Brahman. He is the beginning and end and life of all."

Chandogya Upanishad 3.14

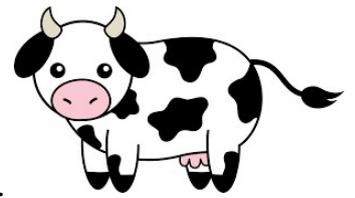
"Without beginning, midst or end, Thy might is endless and Thine arms are infinite, Thine eyes are sun and moon, Thy flaming mouth with burning radiance sets the world alight. Between the earth and sky on every side by Thee alone this space is occupied."

Bhagavad Gita 11.19-20

Cow protection

Cows are held to be sacred by Hindus for these reasons:

- Lord Krishna was a cowherd so many want to follow his example
- Cows give us enough nutrition for a complete diet.
- The cow looks after us better when alive than when died.
- The Vedas forbids the killing of cows.
- The bull is the animal on which Shiva rides and is a source of power.



Hindus look after cows that are old. In India, there are retirement homes for cows that are old called **goshallas**, and charities to care for them.

The Bhaktivedanta Manor Cow Protection Project

In the UK, there is a Hindu centre for cow protection that is run by the Hare Krishna movement in the fields around their temple. It is called the Bhaktivedanta Manor Cow Protection project. It stops cows being slaughtered unnecessarily, has a dairy farm and visitor centre, and acts as a goshala shelter for cows.

Tree conservation



The **Chipko movement** was inspired by women who hugged trees in the 1700s to try and stop them being cut down for fuel.

In 1974, a group of peasant women in India hugged trees to protest about them being cut down. The movement spread throughout India and meant that the government considered the needs of forest dwelling people when it made plans to cut down trees for profit. In 1987, the Chipko Movement won the Right Livelihood Award.

The **Vrindavan Forest** is important to Hindus as they believe that Lord Krishna (the avatar of Vishnu) lived in the forest in northern India. This means that it is a place of pilgrimage for devotees of Vishnu and Krishna.

Industrial development in India meant that the forest was under threat in the 1980s. The Vrindavan Forest Project aims to protect and restore the forest.



Charities – promoting wellbeing, social justice and inclusion

'One may amass with hundreds of hands but one should also distribute it with thousands of hands'

Atharava Veda 3.24-5

'The gift derived from Good seeks no returning grace, but gives because 'it must be done' to worthy ones and time and place'

Bhagavad Gita 17.20-22

Dana is the duty to give to others. This applies to hospitality and kindness, as well as money. Each person has a fourfold dharma, or duty, towards family, society, the world and all living things. Dana includes selfless service (sewa) to those in need.

In modern times, dana is often taken on by charities such as Sewa International, as well as smaller acts in the local community and family. Caring for the poor is an important part of Hindu dharma. One of the commonest forms of giving is sharing food with others, known as anna dana.

It is part of a Hindu's religious duty to offer food and hospitality to any unexpected guest. To refuse hospitality to those who come to your door is an unpardonable act. Some Hindus even arrange special meals for the needy, or donate to charity in memory of loved ones.

Stories from Hindu tradition

1. King Rantideva was known for his generosity. When the country was suffering a famine, he shared the suffering by fasting for 48 days. He was about to break his fast, but on hearing the cries of hungry and thirsty people, gave his own water and food to them.
2. A King that was generous and did good works had a cart-driver who did not care about wealth. He asked the cart-driver for the secret to his peace, in return for lots of gifts. The cart-driver said that he did not want the gifts as the universe is supported by the Supreme Being. This means that without having that spiritual knowledge, giving gifts can never bring inner peace.

Sewa International works to improve the status of women in India. One of its goals is to organise women workers for full employment. A festival was held on International Women's Day in 2016 to honour women who had done exemplary work. The presence of over 1200 from different areas and social castes in India illustrated the progress that the charity had made.

Can you answer these?

1. Explain how Hindu charities have tried to protect the natural world.
2. Explain why Hindus go on pilgrimage.
3. Explain the different types of Hindu teachers.
4. Explain the different ways that Hindus worship.
5. Explain where Hindus worship.
6. Explain how worship benefits Hindus.
7. Describe the different types of yoga.
8. Explain how Hindus promote social justice.
9. How do Hindus celebrate festivals?
10. Why are personal deities important to many Hindus?

Key words

Ahimsa

Non-harming; guiding principle of Hinduism (with truthfulness and non-indulgence).

Atman

Immortal self, distinct from mind, body and personality.

Avatar

Incarnation of the divine; incarnated for the purpose of protecting the good, destroying the wicked, and restoring the dharma.

Bhagavad Gita

Hindu holy book in which Krishna – avatar of Vishnu – discusses dharma.

Brahma

One of Trimurti (with Vishnu and Shiva); seen as the creator.

Brahman

Ultimate reality, all-pervading Pure Consciousness, the Divine.

Cosmology

Stories about the origins of the universe; Hinduism has many – including Purusha (a being from whom the world and all life was created).

Cow protection

The cow is a sacred animal so protected in India; seen as a gift to humans from God, as we get many benefits from them without killing them.

Cycle of four ages

'Age' is Yuga; currently we are in the Kali Yuga, which is the final (and most corrupt) of the four ages. The Cycle repeats itself endlessly.

Dharma

The ethical and moral foundations of Hinduism; God's divine law; has three guiding principles – non-harming, truthfulness, and non-indulgence.

Diwali

Festival of lights.

Environment projects

Projects to protect/conserves/repair environment; 'Mother Earth' gives to us, so we should show respect for Mother Earth.

Four aims of life

Four goals that humans should pursue in life; dharma (ethical living), artha (seeking material prosperity), kama (seeking pleasure), and moksha (seeking liberation).

Free will

The way we choose to respond to whatever we experience; the choices we make.

Ganesha

Elephant-headed deity symbolising wisdom and success.

Guru

Teacher of Hinduism; these people usually have followers, since Hinduism recommends a person find themselves a guru for a better chance of spiritual development and enlightenment.

Hanuman

Monkey king; devotee of Rama.

Holi

Festival of colours, celebrating victory of good over evil; story of Rama and Sita.

Karma

Actions; these can be positive (punya) or negative (papa); accumulation of karma leads to rebirth; all actions are a consequence of free will.

Krishna

Avatar of Vishnu; appeared on earth to restore the dharma.

Kumbh Mela

Twelve-yearly gathering of Hindus at the meeting point of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers.

Lakshmi

Deity of wealth, fortune and prosperity; wife/consort of Vishnu.

Many worlds

Multiverse; Hindu concept of many worlds and universes, with many diverse inhabitants; Tri-Loka is the belief that there are three levels of world – heavens, atmosphere, earth, or physical, astral and causal.

Maya

Illusion; the concept that what humans perceive to be real is actually an illusion, preventing each person from realising their true self.

Moksha

Liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara). A jivanmukti is a person who has achieved moksha before death; sages and gurus are able to teach others because of this.

Murti

Consecrated statue of a deity; three kinds in temples – immovable (central murti with highest status), moveable (murti found in side shrines) and festival murti. Home shrines may or may not have murti. Made to precise, scriptural design.

Nirguna

Brahman without qualities; transcendent and beyond human understanding.

Personal virtues

Qualities a Hindu should develop in themselves; linked to the three guiding principles; include ahimsa (non-harming), respect, empathy, self-control, humility and love.

Pilgrimage

Journey to a sacred place; examples include Varanasi, Ganges, Mount Kailash.

Prakriti

Matter/physical material; all matter is made up of three qualities (Tri-guna) – darkness, activity and goodness.

Puja

Act of worship; there are many forms – bhajan (hymn singing), havan (fire ceremony), meditation (one-pointedness of mind), darshan (consuming sanctified food), circumambulation (walking around the deities), japa/mantra (reciting verses), arti (taking blessing).

Rama

Avatar of Vishnu; subject of the holy scripture – The Ramayana – with his consort, Sita.

Saguna

Brahman with qualities; also called Ishwara (all-knowing, all-powerful, all-pervasive, source of the whole universe).

Samsara

Cycle of birth and death which binds the atman to this physical, illusory existence.

Sanatana dharma

Eternal dharma; Hinduism.

Saraswati

Deity of music, arts, knowledge, wisdom and learning; wife/consort of Brahma.

Shaivism

Branch of Hinduism which looks to Shiva as the supreme manifestation of Brahman.

Shiva

One of the Trimurti (with Brahma and Vishnu); seen as destroyer, bringing cycles of creation to an end; pure goodness, embodying peace and compassion.

Shrine

Sacred space which is home to a murti and/or images of deities, plus aids to worship – found in home or in work place, and – in India – at roadsides.

Social inclusion

Projects to make society more equal.

Temple

Mandir; place of worship for Hindus.

Three features of the divine

Everywhere, as non-personal; within the heart; beyond, as a personal loving God.

Tri-guna

Three qualities of all matter – darkness, activity and goodness.

Trimurti

Godhead in Hinduism; comprises Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Vaishnavism

Branch of Hinduism which looks to Vishnu as the supreme manifestation of Brahman.

Varanasi

Holiest city for Hindus; focus of pilgrimage (to bathe in river, distribute ashes, etc).

Varnashrama dharma

Dharma for specific stages in life; the idea that each stage (student, householder, etc) and each varna (social grouping) has particular duties to fulfil.

Vishnu

One of the Trimurti (with Brahma and Shiva); seen as sustainer; incarnated as an avatar 12 times.

Yoga

Four paths/practices which help a person unite with the inner divinity; karma yoga (through actions), jnana yoga (through study of scripture), raja yoga (through meditation), and bhakti yoga (through devotion to worship).