

## Hinduism



### Hindu Belief in God

Many Hindus believe that there is one God (monotheistic view monotheism belief in one God) who is worshipped in different forms, an idea which stem from the very earliest Hindu scriptures. This one 'supreme' being is called **Brahman**.



We can try to understand God if we think about light passing through a prism and coming out the other side. Light entering the prism (Brahman) splits into the colours of the rainbow when it leaves the prism (the many gods and goddesses). Of course, there are only seven colours in the rainbow, but there are said to be more than 200 million gods in Hinduism. Each of these gods is still part of the one god, Brahman. Hindus use the sacred symbol Om to stand for Brahman.

### The Trimurti

The life force of Brahman is represented by the Trimurti (three-form), which is made up of three main deities. These are Brahma (the creator of the universe), Vishnu (the preserver of the universe) and Shiva (the destroyer – although some Hindus believe he also has a role in re-creation).

The murti of Brahma is usually pictured with four faces, each one pointing towards one of the four points of the compass. This symbolises that God created the whole universe. Brahma is only worshipped in Pushkar, India.

Vishnu is usually shown either lying on a snake or with a snake behind his head. This symbolises comic time and energy. He colour blue represents his endless spiritual power. He has four hands which often hold a conch shell (symbolising the music of the universe, calling people to live a pure life). He also has a lotus flower (symbolising purity and spiritual enlightenment).

Shiva may seem to many people to be dangerous and frightening because he is the destroyer God. However, destruction is necessary to allow new things to happen. Shiva is not to be feared because he destroys but should be worshipped for allowing new things to happen. Shiva is seen in different forms.

### Avatars within Hinduism

Hindus believe that sometimes a god will appear on the earth in living form.

Such an appearance is called an avatar. Perhaps the best English translation of avatar is 'incarnation', however avatar also conveys the belief that God has the ability to take any form and will descend to earth at times when there has been a decline in goodness, and evil is influencing human actions

### Hindu Belief in Life and Death

#### Karma

Karma means action

Refers to the law of cause and effect i.e. actions and their consequences...

The law: Every single action has an effect on something else

Karma decides where you come back and what you come back as

If your actions are good you will get a good rebirth into pleasant circumstances; if they are bad you will get a bad one...

It is your actions determining whether you will be rewarded or punished.

In a lifetime people build up karma, both good and bad, based on their actions within that lifetime. This karma affects their future lives and existence. There are lots of different types of rebirth in samsara including; animals, plants and humans.

**Dharma:** Duties or responsibilities. Hindus believe that at each stage of life and in each varna there are different responsibilities. Hindus should aim to fulfil their dharma.

**The Ladder of Varna:** is another name for the Caste system. Hindus believe that you can move up and down the ladder in future lives according to how good or bad you have lived. If you gain good Karma you will get a better rebirth and move up the ladder. If you have not fulfilled your dharma and have gained bad karma then you will move down the ladder.



#### Key Terms

**Monotheism**—Belief in one God

**Polytheism**—Belief in many Gods

**Atheist**— Someone who doesn't believe in God

**Theist**—Anyone who does believe in God

**Agnostic**— Someone who is unsure of Go's existence

**Brahman**—Supreme god in Hinduism

**Trimurti**— 3 main aspects of Brahman (Brahma / Vishnu / Shiva)

**Reincarnation**—Literally means "again in flesh"

**Wheel of Samsara**—Cycle of life and death

**Karma**— Relates to action and Consequences

**Atman**—Term for Soul in Hinduism

**Dharma**—Duties in life

**Moksha**—Freedom from the wheel of Samsara

**Ladder of Varna**—Another name for the Caste System

**Ganges**—Sacred (special) river in India

#### Worship in Hinduism

Hindu worship, or puja, involves images (murtis), prayers (mantras) and diagrams of the universe. Central to Hindu worship is the image, or icon, which can be worshipped either at home or in the Mandir (Hindu Temple)

**Individual rather than communal**—Hindu worship is primarily an individual act rather than a communal one, as it involves making personal offerings to the deity.

Worshippers repeat the names of their favourite gods and goddesses, and repeat mantras. Water, fruit, flowers and incense are offered to god. A bell is rung just before Puja begins to tell the deity's that it is time for worship to begin.

#### Worship at home

The majority of Hindu homes have a shrine where offerings are made and prayers are said. A shrine can be anything: a room, a small altar or simply pictures or statues of the deity. Family members often worship together. Rituals should strictly speaking be performed three times a day. Some Hindus, but not all, worship wearing the sacred thread (over the left shoulder and hanging to the right hip). This is cotton for the Brahmin (priest), hemp for the Kshatriya (ruler) and wool for the vaishya (merchants).

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## Halloween

the Halloween holiday has its roots in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, a pagan religious celebration to welcome the harvest at the end of summer, when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III designated November 1 as a time to honour saints. Soon after, All Saints Day came to incorporate some of the traditions of Samhain. The evening before All Saints Day was known as All Hallows Eve, and later, Halloween. Here is a look at the origins of some of the classic Halloween traditions we know today.



## Day of the Dead

The Day of the Dead (el Día de los Muertos), is a Mexican holiday where families welcome back the souls of their deceased relatives for a brief reunion that includes food, drink and celebration.

l Día de los Muertos is not, as is commonly thought, a Mexican version of Halloween, though the two holidays do share some traditions, including costumes and parades. On the Day of the Dead, it's believed that the border between the spirit world and the real world dissolve. During this brief period, the souls of the dead awaken and return to the living world to feast, drink, dance and play music with their loved ones. In turn, the living family members treat the deceased as honoured guests in their celebrations, and leave the deceased's favourite foods and other offerings at gravesites or on the *ofrendas* built in their homes. *Ofrendas* can be decorated with candles, bright marigolds called *cempasuchil* alongside the dead's favourite foods and drinks.



## Diwali

Diwali is the five-day Festival of Lights, celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Jains across the world.

Diwali, which for some also coincides with harvest and new year celebrations, is a festival of new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. The festival is usually some time between October and November, with the date changing each year.

This year Diwali takes place over five days from 2 November to 6 November, with the main day of celebration on Thursday 4 November.

Rama and Sita story - In the forest Sita was abducted by Ravana, and Rama gathered an army of monkeys and bears to search for her. The allies attacked Lanka, killed Ravana, and rescued Sita.



## Hanukkah

Hanukkah is the Jewish eight-day, wintertime "festival of lights," celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting, special prayers and fried foods.

The Hebrew word Hanukah means "dedication," and is thus named because it celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple.

The Holy Temple was returned to Jewish/Hebrew control by Judah Maccabee.



## Christmas

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, although many dispute the 25<sup>th</sup> being Jesus' actual birthday. Christians celebrate the day by attending church, praying, giving and receiving gifts and giving thanks. The Nativity (the story of Jesus' birth) is remembered and often acted out by Christian children in schools and churches.

