

Knowledge Organiser– Y8

Hinduism

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

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 stems 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.

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).