

Full Unit Revision sheet: Hinduism

Key words:

Monotheism: Belief in One God.

Polytheism: Belief in many gods.

Hindus in Britain

1.3% of people in the UK are Hindu.

Some Hindu families came to England from India after partition of India in 1947 when British India was split into India and Pakistan. They came for work. They were promised new jobs when they arrived as there was a labour shortage after WWII. Other Hindus came to the UK from Uganda. On 4th August **1972** the **president of Uganda Idi Amin** exiled Asian Ugandans giving them just 90 days to leave. **30,000** Ugandan Asians left Uganda. 1 % of Uganda's population was Asian but they controlled 90% of the wealth, as Uganda was under British rule **Idi Amin** said it was Britain's problem. People had to leave everything but what they could carry. Some people were threatened into leaving. When they arrived in Britain the Ugandan Asians found Britain unwelcoming but did settle and built strong communities.

Key Beliefs

Hindus worship in a Mandir.

Hinduism is the oldest world religion and originated in India.

Hindus are monotheists, they are not polytheists (worshipping many gods). The gods and goddesses in Hinduism represent different parts or aspects of the ONE GOD BRAHMAN.

Hindus do not eat meat, they are vegetarian.

The word puja means worship. Hindus worship at a shrine with a murti (statue or picture) of a god or goddess.

God : The Hindu God is called Brahman. Hindus are monotheistic – they believe in ONE God.

All the gods/ goddesses that represent Brahman have a different job/ role/ characteristic. They tell us something different about the nature of God (what God is like).

The Trimurti represents 3 main aspects of Brahman

Brahma - the creator 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 - The Preserver is usually shown either lying on a snake or with a snake behind his head. This symbolises cosmic time and energy. His 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 – The Destroyer. 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. Shiva wears a cobra necklace. This signifies Shiva's power over the most dangerous creatures in the world. Some traditions also say that the snake represents Shiva's power of destruction and recreation. The snake sheds its skin to make way for new, smooth skin. Main Symbols: Sacred Ganga – holds it on his head – allowed an outlet to the holy river to bring purifying water to humans. Crescent – shows Shiva holds the powers of procreation as well as destruction. Matted hair – represents the Lord of Wind – Vayu. Cobra – Shiva is beyond the power of death. Trident – shows the 3 functions of God and an instrument of punishment. Tiger skin – symbolises victory of every force.

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

Ganesh: The story of how Ganesh gained his elephants head. Once while Parvati was going for her bath, she rubbed off the dust and oil from her body and out of it created the figure of a young boy. She infused life into the figure and told him he was her son and should guard the entrance when she went down to bathe. Soon after, Shiva came to see Parvati but the young boy blocked his way and would not let him in. Shiva, unaware that this lad was his son, became furious fought with the boy whose head got severed from his body in the ensuing battle. Parvati, returning from her bath, saw her headless son and threatened to destroy the heavens and the earth, so great was her sorrow. The gods and Shiva tried to help and Shiva his ganas, or hordes, to bring the head of the first living being with his head towards the north (the auspicious direction associated with wisdom). They did so and the first living creature they found sleeping with its head to the north was an elephant. They brought the head of this animal and Shiva placed it on the trunk of Parvati's son and breathed life into him. Parvati was overjoyed and embraced her son, the elephant-headed boy whom Shiva named Ganesh, the lord of his ganas. Ganesh is worshipped first as the remover of obstacles. He is the god of wisdom.

Puja: Hindu worship is called **puja** – whether it is at the temple or at home. Puja means '**giving respect and honour**'. The deity (god or goddess) is treated as an honoured guest,

One of the most important duties of all Hindus is to show loving devotion to God. This is known as **bhakti**. It encourages devotees to show their love by focusing on the **deity**. A family will often have a favourite deity who they will worship at a shrine in their home. They will make simple **offerings** of a flowers or a leaf. Prayers are said in front of the murti which is an image of the god or goddess in the shrine. The Bhagavad Gita 9:26 says '**A leaf or flower, water, fruit, a devotee in love may bring; I cherish from that earnest soul the love that makes the offering**'

The main worship ceremony is called arti which is an offering of light to the deity through a murti. The image of god is 'awakened' by the lighting of a flame – this is known as **Agni**, and by the sound of a **mantra** – holy words. An arti lamp is lit and passed round the deity with prayers and songs. A **bhajan** is a hymn to God. Then the flame is handed round on a tray so that worshippers can pass their hands over the flame and touch their eyes and head to receive the blessing of the deity. The arti tray includes 4 or 5 lights representing the elements of fire, earth, air, wind and water.

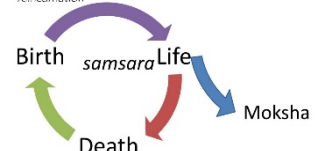
When Hindus worship they will give **offerings** of flowers, fruit, rice or money. Hindus will often touch or kiss the feet of a deity or offer a greeting as a sign of respect and honour. They then ask for the deity to bless them in return. This is known as **darshan**. They will sing hymns, known as bhajan. They will also chant mantras. A mantra is a series of holy sounds or words. **Prashad** is distributed at the end of an act of puja. This is blessed food that has been offered to the deity. During puja the **picca** mark is placed on the forehead as a symbol of blessing.

Worship will involve all 5 senses. In a shrine an offering of WATER is often given, INCENSE is burnt and the smoke raises prayers to Brahman, a BELL is rung to gain the attention of the God, a CONCH shell is often in the shrine as well as FRUIT as an OFFERING.

Reincarnation and Samsara:

SAMSARA IS THE CYCLE OF LIFE. It can be called the wheel of life. It refers to the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Hindus aim to escape Samsara by gaining good

• The ultimate goal of Hindus is to achieve Moksha, which is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation



Karma to achieve Moksha which means that they are not reborn and are united with Brahman.

REINCARNATION – BEING REBORN. This literally means ‘again’ ‘in’ ‘flesh’. THIS IS A RESULT OF PREVIOUS KARMA. If a Hindu gains lots of bad Karma they will have a worse rebirth. If they gain good Karma they may be born into a Higher Caste or may even achieve Moksha.

KARMA RELATES TO ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES. It can be good or bad depending on a person’s actions.

MOKSHA IS LIBERATION OR FREEDOM FROM SAMSARA. It is when a person becomes one with Brahman and their atman or soul returns to be a part of Brahman. This is a good thing as it stops you suffering when you are reborn.

DHARMA IS DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE. A Hindu has different responsibilities at the different stages of their life. If they complete their dharma this will help them gain good karma.

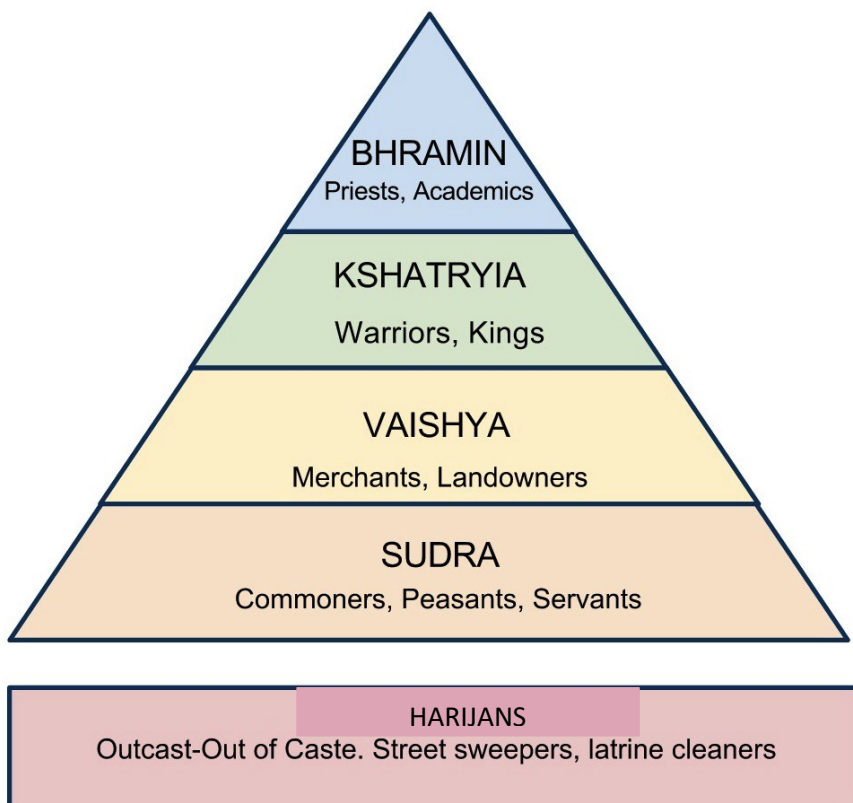
ATMAN IS THE TERM FOR “SOUL” IN HINDUISM. Hindus believe that there is a little part of Brahman in each of us – this is what is united with Brahman when Moksha is achieved.

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.

According to the Hindu Scriptures a human life can be mapped out into important stages or ASHRAMAS. There are 4 main stages of life

1. The student stage: This is when a person is old enough to take their spiritual education seriously.
2. The Householder stage: When a person gets married and is setting up home.
3. Recluse stage: When a person becomes a grandparent.
4. The Spiritual Stage: Entered into voluntarily

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.



The Ganges: The river Ganges is a sacred river to Hindus. Many Hindus hope to visit Vananasi and bathe in the Ganges on a sacred journey called a pilgrimage once in their life time. They are believed to purify the atman or soul and this will help a Hindu gain moksha. It is a life giving river. Many Hindus have their ashes scattered in the Ganges after their body is cremated.

The story of the River Ganges: Long, long ago, when the great god Lord Brahma was looking down upon the earth, he saw that a terrible fire had spread over all the land. Horrified, he watched the hungry flames destroying everything in their path all over the world. The goddess Ganga, full of purity, leapt to offer her help: "Send me to earth Lord Brahma, I will quench the fire." The mighty Ganga was strong and passionate; her beautiful hair and clothes flowed around her in watery splendour. Lord Brahma told her to take the form of a rushing mighty torrent of water, because water puts out fire the best. She swiftly leapt to help, and transformed herself into a cascading river in full flow, and she dashed down to earth. Lord Shiva, another of the gods, watched as goddess Ganga dashed to the rescue. He realised at once that she was so strong that she would not just put out the fire: she would destroy the whole earth as well. Shiva wanted to help too, so he jumped down to the burning earth even faster than Ganga, and stood firmly on the ground. Ganga's torrents of water hit Shiva with full force on the head. Her mighty waterfall splashed through his long hair, and cascaded down to the earth below in seven fast flowing streams. Instead of destroying the earth, the waters of Ganga splashed off Shiva's tangled hair and quenched the fires that burned. Ganga spread out across the hot dead lands, bringing life wherever she flowed. The rivers of Ganga filled with fish, who played in the water. The banks and plains flooded with water, and plants grew fast, animals came to drink, people to bathe.