



Introduction to Hinduism



Unit Overview

This unit will introduce students to the key components of the Hindu faith.

Students will encounter the story of Ganesha, Hindu views on life and death, gods and goddesses, the importance of visual culture to Hinduism and the sacred syllable Om.



Key Facts

- Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world with roots that can be traced back over 3,000 years to modern-day India
- There are around 1,000,000 Hindu people living in Britain, many of them have roots in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh - countries that used to be part of the British Empire
- There is a great deal of diversity in Hinduism - some Hindus are monotheists meaning they believe in one God, some Hindus are polytheists meaning they believe in many gods. Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma are all worshipped as a supreme god by different groups of Hindus.
- Ganesha is a very important Hindu god who is recognisable by his elephant head which he received after a fight with his father Shiva
- Hindus believe that when they die they will be reborn in another being - either human or animal - and that this being will be the result of good or bad karma accumulated in this life.
- Visual images of gods and goddesses are very important in Hindu culture and found in many homes and temples.
- The Om is a sacred syllable which is repeated in Hindu prayers and worship.



Key Vocabulary

Atman - the soul that is at the very heart of every person - the soul that gets reborn

Brahman - the ultimate reality and truth about the universe - how everything actually is

Diversity - different beliefs and identities within a group such as different beliefs on gods in Hinduism

Moksha - a permanent escape from the cycle of life, death and re-birth.

Monotheism - belief in one god (mono = one)

Om - the sacred syllable in Hinduism which is used in prayer and worship

Polytheism - belief in many gods (poly = many)

Samsara - the cycle of life, death and re-birth which all people are trapped in unless they can reach Moksha

Symbolic - representing an idea through images or icons.

Upanishads - very old philosophical texts that are important in Hinduism