

# Hinduism



## What is Hinduism?

**Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world.** It began about 5000 years ago, linked to the people who lived near to the Indus River in about 2500 BC. Hinduism has no single founder or prophet. The Hindu faith draws on a number of sacred texts and there is no standard set of beliefs, so it is **a religion which is followed in different ways by different groups of people.**

Hinduism has grown to be the world's third largest religion, after **Christianity** and **Islam**.

1

Om or Aum is a symbol and a sound that is associated with Hinduism.

2

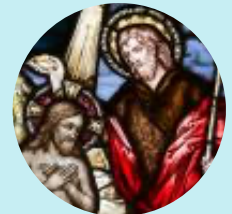
Hindus call their religion sanatana dharma, which means eternal teaching.

3

In Hinduism one supreme God called Brahman ("the Absolute") can be found in everything and everywhere and shows himself in many different ways.



Hindus believe that people can be born again after death; this is known as reincarnation. In each life the person is rewarded or punished for what they have done in the previous life (karma).



Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, is held in the Hindu month of Ashwin in September or October and marks the Hindu new year. At Diwali Hindus celebrate light driving away darkness.

People prepare for Diwali by cleaning their house before they decorate it. In every house and temple, oil lamps are lit as well as floated down rivers to welcome the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. Fireworks are also let off to ward off any evil spirits.

## Facts about Hinduism

Hindus believe in one supreme God who created everything and contains every characteristic in the universe. The supreme God is made up of many different gods who can take the form of humans or animals. Each has different powers and Hindus choose specific gods to worship in specific situations and areas of the world.

The building where Hindus worship is called a mandir. There are mandirs all over the world and they can be large buildings or small shrines in someone's home.

Most mandirs have a statue of the god Ganesh, who has an elephant's head and a man's body. He is a good luck symbol for Hindus. When Hindus begin their prayers or start something new, they pray to Ganesh. For Hindus, time does not run in a straight line but in circles. The universe is created, exists and then is destroyed, and the same cycle applies to all living things.

Hinduism has several Holy Books. The oldest are called the Vedas and are written in Sanskrit. The word 'Veda' means knowledge.

Cows are sacred to Hindus, who don't eat beef. Cows are the holy animals of transport for Shiva, one of the Hindu gods, and are also respected because they produce enough milk for everyone, not just their own offspring.

Nature is also important to Hindus as they believe things around us are forms of God too. The River Ganges in India is said to be Holy and people go there to bathe and wash away their sins.

## Websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zh86n39/articles/zmpp92p>

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### TOP TEN FACTS

- Although the majority of Hindus live in India where the religion began, there are large Hindu communities all over the world.
- Today more than a billion people in the world are Hindus.
- All Hindus believe that life, death and rebirth are a continuous process that we are all part of.
- Many gods are worshipped in Hinduism. Each Hindu god is said to be a different part of the supreme God 'Brahman'.
- Hindus believe that God can be seen in a person or an animal. They believe that God is in everybody.
- As well as visiting temples, Hindus worship God in their own homes and most houses have either a room or corner in which there is a family shrine.
- **Hindu temples look very different** depending on where they are in the world, but they always have an orange flag outside.
- Hindus believe that certain rivers are sacred and have the power to wash away sins (actions that are wrong in the eyes of God). **The Ganges River in Northern India is especially sacred to Hindus.**
- Hindus believe that all living things have souls, which is why very committed Hindus are vegetarians.