

Why don't Hindus want to be reincarnated and what do they do about it?

### Knowledge Organizer

## 1. Key Deities and Person

<b>Brahma</b>	A god, The Creator, one of the Trimurti, the creative aspect of Brahman, bringing forth life
<b>Vishnu</b>	A god, The Preserver, one of the Trimurti, the nurturing aspect of Brahman, maintaining life
<b>Shiva</b>	A god, The Destroyer, one of the Trimurti, ending life so that it can come forth again
<b>Krishna</b>	An avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu and part of the Absolute Truth, at one time Arjuna's charioteer
<b>Arjuna</b>	A great warrior who felt he couldn't fight in a battle against friends and relatives, but was advised and reassured by Krishna

## 2. You need to know...

According to Hindu traditions our difficulty is that we are ignorant of our true nature. We misperceive the value of the physical universe, assuming that it is the most important thing in life. We need to look beyond this, to **Brahman**.

For many Hindus, all animals and humans have a spark of Brahman inside them. This spark of Brahman is called '**atman**'. The atman is pure, eternal, unchanging.

The atman is tangled up with a creature's physical body, locked in the cycle of **samsara** – life, death and rebirth. When the body dies, this spark gets **reincarnated** into another physical body, dependent on how far it has been able to disentangle itself.

The law of **karma** governs how tangled the atman is with the body, and when the atman can escape the cycle of samsara to reunite with Brahman; this is **moksha**.

There are several main **paths** to moksha; **karma yoga** (unselfish action), **jnana yoga** (knowledge) and **bhakti yoga** (devotion) are some of them. With this, following one's **dharma** helps a person stay on the right path overall, the path to moksha.

## 3. Key vocabulary

**samsara**: the cycle of life, death and reincarnation, action and consequence

**karma**: "action"; actions have effects, now or in the future, and the aim is to cause good effects

**moksha**: freedom from samsara

**dharma**: religious or moral duty

**Brahman**: Sometimes called the Deity, the Ultimate Reality, Bhagawan or God, part of the Absolute Truth

**atman**: The eternal part of someone, their "self" or soul, linking them to Brahman

**Mahabharata**: an ancient epic story, sometimes called "The Story of India"

**Bhagavad Gita**: a part of the Mahabharata where Krishna explains "duty" to Arjuna

**yoga**: "path"; finding a way to moksha through deeds, learning, worship or meditation, or a combination of these

## 4. Themes

wisdom



devotion



duty



freedom



relationships



consequence



## 5. Contexts

Brahman is not a **personal god** in the way gods are explained in some other religions. It is the Ultimate Reality and all things are **part of it**. Just like a person, it has many features and these are best understood through the many **deities (holy beings)** found in Hinduism. Each deity has characteristics that enable the believer to see one part of Brahman.

Many monotheists might say that humans are created beings who are separated from the Creator through a tendency to disobey it, in need of divine forgiveness and renewal. A Hindu view sees the human problem differently. According to Hindu traditions, our difficulty is that we are ignorant of our **true nature**. We **should not** give the physical universe so much **importance**.

When Europeans first encountered the spiritual beliefs of India, they saw **many similarities** between them. They were used to religions that presented a specific set of rules and guidelines, so when they found common ideas, they thought of them as all part of one belief system, and called it **Hinduism**. However, many "Hindus" don't see things that way; they're following one of **many** paths leading to moksha.