

# Teachings Hinduism – Core Knowledge



## Banyan Tree

- “Hinduism” is a European term for a range of spiritual and cultural traditions which have developed from Prehistoric times in the Indian Subcontinent.
- It is experienced as a **way of being** rather than declared as a doctrine of belief.
- Because it is **prehistorically indigenous**, it is **evolved** rather than prescribed
- Thus there is no founder, no specific Book or set of commandments. It has been likened to a **Banyan Tree**
- The native term for this general way of being is not Hinduism but **Sanatan Dharma** meaning ‘The Eternal or Ever-flowing Way’. This is every human being’s journey to connect with and ‘Know’ Absolute Truth and Reality, **Brahman**, the Universal, Collective, interconnected Consciousness.
- This ‘Knowing oneself to be interconnected’ is a way of **being** and quite different to **Believing** as accepting rational argument or indeed **Accepting** on ‘Blind faith’.

## Teacher’s own notes and questions:

# Hindu Philosophy

## Origins



Ancient Indian Philosophers meditated until they **saw** these insights.



## Sacred Vedas



Hinduism is therefore not a 'belief system' based on one scripture – but the **ongoing** participation of humanity with an evolving set of Indian 'user manuals' extended over millennia of advanced 'Experimenters' revered as Sages and **Rishis** (Seers) 'in the field', sharing direct personal revelation (**Sruti**). More can be revealed TODAY, hence it is Sanatan, ever-flowing, not 'contained' as a set of tenets or belief in the divinity or message of a particular Individual.

Thus whilst there is a sense of custodianship of tested/directly experienced wisdom and responses to the big questions recorded in ancient texts called the **Vedas**, people do not see the big questions as separate from the pursuit of daily life; i.e. we are not a body with a spirit but a spirit currently expressing itself in a body, here to express its unique experience in answer to the big questions, often unique to each member within the same family.

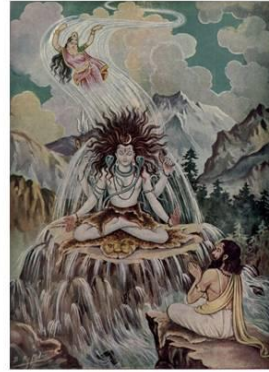
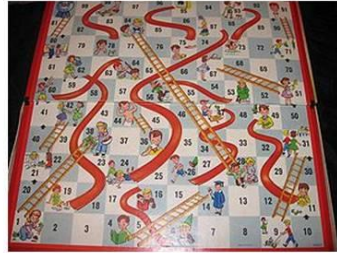
Your lived experience is both your opportunity and responsibility for yourself, your family, your community and the world.

**Teacher's own notes and questions:**

# Hindu Philosophy

## Origins

They used Images,  
Stories & Games to  
help explain.



Brahman is before everything that is finite, comprehensible and measurable, including time. Thus time is not a function of absolute reality but a relative concept. Time is cyclical (Four Ages). Each cycle is initiated by a cosmic event (Big Bang) – time begins and **Brahman** comes into physical manifestation as matter to expand and flow through the four ages to be dematerialised to begin again.

The **Trimurti** symbolises the agency in play at key points in this cycle. **Brahma** initiates manifestation – the Creator Archetype. Shiva dematerialises as a signal of regeneration at the end of a cycle and **Vishnu** is the preservation energy that maintains **Dharma** or Divine Design/Flow throughout a cycle.

Hence Vishnu and his physical manifestations or **Avatars** are those most engaged with Human history and endeavour! When humanity is drifting away from 'Dharma' it is Vishnu's Energy in the form of **Rama**, **Krishna**, **Buddha** in India, and other notable divine incarnations in other parts of the world which manifest as a 'corrective factor' wherever and whenever needed for individuals and often whole societies and countries to be transformed.

**Teacher's own notes and questions:**

## Dharma – Natural Blueprint



**Dharma** Is a foundational concept in Hinduism without a direct English translation. It is both **divine design** and **intrinsic purpose**, often more crudely stated in textbooks as 'Duty' but this is a distortion of the concept, to attempt to capture it as a fixed framework. It is more precise to say Dharma is fulfilling one's own purpose in an interconnected field of existence, respecting all life, minimising harm to, and living in appreciative harmony with, the Natural world.

**Teacher's own notes and questions:**

# Karma – Choices & Consequences



The Hindu word for acting from personal preference, without attention to Dharma is called **Karma** and it always impacts on ourselves and others, resulting in consequences that have to be experienced. This is known as the Law of Karma. At the individual level, the law of Karma says for the consequences of his actions each is accountable. Whilst there are no 'commandments' as such there is ALOT of guidance enshrined in Hindu Stories, Art, Iconography and Texts, on how to minimise harmful/painful Karma. Since unresolved Karma prevents the individual Atman returning to realisation of God.

**Teacher's own notes and questions:**

## How Hindus seek **Wisdom** Stories – Bhagavad Gita



Many stories exemplify Hindu teaching that whilst we are responsible for our choices, we need to seek wisdom from a wider field of intelligence than our individual perspective, however rational or skilled that may be. This useful story describes an incident from the sacred Mahabaratha.

When war became imminent between royal cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, they started assembling their forces. They also sought the support of their respective friendly kings. Since Sri Krishna, an Avatar of Vishnu, had equal ties with both family branches, Princes Duryodhana and Arjuna each went to seek his support.. Both princes reached Dwaraka at the same day. But Krishna was fast asleep when they reached his palace. So, they waited for him to wake up.

When Krishna woke up, his eyes fell upon Arjuna standing respectfully by his feet, first and then on Duryodhana. He welcomed both and asked the reason for their visit. They both requested Krishna's support for their side in the war. Duryodhana argued that he should get first preference since it was he who came to the palace first. But Krishna defended Arjuna saying even if it was Duryodhana who came first, his eyes fell on Arjuna first. Krishna further argued that while distributing favours, it is a tradition to begin with the junior most recipient. Having said that, Krishna offered Arjuna two choices and asked Arjuna to choose.

As the first option, Krishna offered his entire army, which was gigantic and almost invincible. As the second option, Krishna offered his assistance. But he said that he will not wield any weapon nor fight in the war.

Arjuna chose the second option saying that with Krishna by his side, he will be able to face all the princes of the land and their hordes single handed in the battle. Arjuna also requested Krishna to be his charioteer and Krishna granted his wish.

Some key metaphors and messages in this story

# How Hindus 'Tune-In'

## Reflection– Puja – Whole Being



Explaining the significance and usage of the Puja thali and how and why Mandir – means 'Still Mind'.

A traditional daily practice to give Hindus (or anyone!) the opportunity to 'hear' the wisdom that is available in the universal field of intelligence for ourselves, is to step back from the noise and distraction of everyday life for a brief period and 'tune in' by engaging the senses and quieting the mind so we can 'listen'.

**Teacher's own notes and questions:**

# Many paths up the mountain

## The Mountain is for all not only 'Hindu'



Four 'ways' of traditionally pursuing this re-merging with the universal knowing or Brahman are described in Hindu scripture as four types of yoga. Note these are not reserved for Hindus but are open source for Humanity. Hence people of every nationality and religious background have travelled to India for thousands of years to learn these **disciplines**. The four are as follows:

1. Connecting within Self (Meditation, Renunciation, Fasting) 'Realising' that God is not 'out there' but resides within as Universal Spirit; taking on spiritual practices designed to illuminate your inner connection. Raja Yoga
2. Connecting through Vedic Knowledge and Rituals, synchronised to the lunar calendar/seasons, etc) – Jnana Yoga
3. Connecting with Unseen Spirit (its different aspects symbolised through deities), performing daily acts of concentrated devotion (Puja) often before a Murti, thus a personalised connection - Bhakti Yoga
4. Connecting through right or dharmic action as service (sewa) to family or society – Karma Yoga. Thus the deities that are most often associated with Hinduism are in fact only one of the four paths to self-realisation.

**Note it is not necessarily 'God-realisation' as a separate being or personality, so may be atheist.**



# Understanding Hinduism – what next?

## Teaching Hinduism

This handout highlighted some key Hindu themes. Depending on the age of the children and the teacher's requirements, this material can be accessed in a variety of ways and a wide range of levels. Some guidance with planning is available for download in the accompanying 'Activity Planning Support – Hinduism' handout.

## Would you like Sushma to work with your Teachers or Students?

Many teachers say it can be tricky to teach Hinduism as it is not a religion or faith as children may understand that term. **Sushma Sahajpal** the Hinduism presenter of this workshop, has years of experience writing Hinduism Syllabuses and resources as well as supporting Teachers in creating memorable RE Days and workshops, learning not just about Hinduism, but also about what it might mean to have a spiritual component to your life and how to live well with others irrespective of religious or non-religious worldview.

## What Teachers say about Pupil workshops designed and delivered by Sushma

Good mix of deep thinking, practical activity and creative expression Short of going to India, this was a great enhancement to the children's previous learning! **Year 4: 'Hinduism, Living the Philosophy Day'**

There was a great feeling of togetherness and mutual respect and we were all relaxed, happy and inspired throughout! A really exciting inclusive, spiritual experience.

**Head Teacher, First School after 'Maths & RE Day'**

RE is not always an easy subject to motivate & inspire our pupils but Sushma's organisation, planning, knowledge, skills, expertise & enthusiasm ensured a fun & exciting day. The children's knowledge and understanding as well as mine has increased significantly. She was an inspirational leader for the day, completely engaging ALL the children in developing their understanding whilst treating the children's own needs and beliefs with such respect and sensitivity. Some powerful self-expression produced through Art and fantastic learning about Journeys which had a huge impact on the children. A real treat of a day, **Year 6 after 'Faith & Belonging Day'**.

## What Teachers say about Sushma's CPD Events

Mind-blowing and Fabulous!

**Deputy Head at CPD Session: 'Hinduism - A Way of Being and How to Teach it'**

Brilliant! Informative, Creative and Energising.

**RE Co-ordinator at CPD Session: 'Hinduism: Creativity & Literacy in the Classroom'**

## Contacting Sushma

Sushma travels to schools of all sizes and age-ranges and has designed many workshops, day events, festivals and enrichment programs. Learn more about her work at [www.connectar.co.uk](http://www.connectar.co.uk) or email on [Sushma\\_sahajpal@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Sushma_sahajpal@yahoo.co.uk) if you would like a no-obligation discussion and quote for your school's requirements.

# Free Resources

## Online



### Suggested Weblinks

#### **Free Facebook groups: Save RE and RE Teachers Forum**

These are the first two National Facebook groups with an extensive membership of RE professionals ranging from National subject leaders to NQTs as well as consultants and resource providers. The common thread is a passion for RE and mutual support with resources and advice when requested. Most questions or requests get a response within moments by a range of RE practitioners. In addition there are new regional groups popping up all the time so worth searching for those too.

#### **Free resources Website: RE: Online <http://www.reonline.org.uk/>**

Lots of support for RE Coordinators and Teachers; including blogs, articles, discussion forum and links to classroom resources; as well as immediately useful ideas for lessons across a range of faiths and worldviews. Sushma has written many Hinduism resources for RE Online as well as regularly hosting their RE Café discussion forum.

#### **Free direct support: RE: Online: Email a Believer <http://pof.reonline.org.uk/>**

Opportunity to ask your own (or your students!) specific questions of a faith practitioner. Many of these are of an educator background and so accustomed to articulating their views and beliefs in a clear classroom-friendly manner. You can read lots of answers to children's questions already published, including on Hinduism by Sushma, but also on Humanism and other worldviews.