



# ॐ Hindu Dharma

## Common Questions and Answers

### Secondary Schools

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#### 1. Is Hinduism a religion with lots of gods?

Hindu Dharma is based on the concept of **Brahman – the one, eternal, unchanging reality that exists beyond time and space**. The many deities worshipped in Hinduism are seen as different aspects or expressions of this one divine source. This approach allows Hindus to understand the infinite nature of the Divine in personal, relatable forms, such as Vishnu the preserver, Durga the goddess of strength and empowerment, or Shiva the god of renewal. This inclusive vision of the Divine helps believers connect spiritually in a way that suits their personality and life stage.

#### 2. Do Hindus worship idols?

Hindus worship through **murtis** (sacred images), not to them. The murti is a visual and symbolic representation of the deity. It is consecrated through sacred rituals, making it a medium through which devotees can experience the divine presence. This practice is rooted in the Hindu understanding that the Divine can be experienced in all forms – physical, mental and spiritual. Just as a photograph reminds us of a loved one, a murti helps focus devotion and make worship more meaningful. This tradition celebrates the

idea that the sacred is not confined to the abstract but is also immanent and accessible in daily life.

### 3. Do all Hindus believe the same things?

Hindu Dharma values **spiritual diversity** and **freedom of thought**. It is not a rigid, dogmatic system but an evolving tradition that welcomes multiple paths to truth. This is reflected in the Sanskrit saying: '*Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*' – '**Truth is one; wise people describe it in many ways.**' (Rig Veda) Whether one follows the path of devotion (bhakti), knowledge (jnana), action (karma yoga), or meditation (raja yoga), **all are respected**. Hindu Dharma encourages **individual exploration and recognises that different people may approach the Divine in different ways**, depending on their temperament, karma and stage of life.

### 4. Is Hindu Dharma only about rituals and going to Mandirs?

While puja and temple worship are important aspects of Hindu life, Hindu Dharma is much broader. It is a **comprehensive way of life guided by the principle of dharma** – **living ethically, fulfilling responsibilities and striving for spiritual growth**. Daily practices include meditation, yoga, reading scriptures, acts of charity, caring for the family and environmental stewardship. Hinduism teaches that seva (selfless service) is a form of worship and that the Divine can be found in every person and every action done with love and humility.

### 5. Do Hindus value animals more than people?

Hindus do not place animals above humans but believe that all living beings are sacred, because they are **expressions of the Divine**. The idea of Ahimsa (non-violence) teaches compassion and care for all creatures. Cows, for example, are honoured not because they are gods, but because they symbolise gentleness, motherhood and the selfless giving of nourishment. This respect for animals flows from a deep ecological and spiritual awareness – recognising the unity and interdependence of all life. It promotes kindness, sustainability and ethical responsibility – values urgently needed in today's world.

## 6. Are all Hindus vegetarians?

Many Hindus follow a vegetarian diet as a spiritual discipline and as part of ahimsa. However, dietary practices differ among regions and communities. Some Hindus eat meat, often with religious restrictions (e.g. avoiding beef or only eating meat prepared in a specific way). The goal is to promote purity, self-control and compassion. Food is not just physical nourishment but has a spiritual impact (called guna). Sattvic (pure, light) food is encouraged for spiritual clarity, while rajasic (spicy, stimulating) and tamasic (heavy, dulling) foods are avoided when seeking inner peace.

## 7. Why do Hindus believe in reincarnation?

Belief in reincarnation (samsara) is rooted in the understanding that the soul (Atman) is **eternal** and does not die with the body. Life is seen as a journey in which the soul learns, evolves and works through karma. Rebirth is not viewed as something to fear but as an opportunity for growth and liberation. The ultimate goal is to achieve moksha, freedom from the cycle of birth and death, and **union with Brahman**. This concept encourages individuals to live ethically, with purpose and awareness of their actions.

## 8. Is Hindu Dharma only for Indian people?

Hindu Dharma began in the Indian subcontinent, but its philosophical insights are **universal**. It teaches that all beings are spiritual in nature and capable of realising the truth, regardless of their background, culture, or nationality.

In the UK today, Hindu communities have made significant contributions to society in areas such as education, medicine, law, business, and the arts. British Hindus actively engage in interfaith dialogue, community service, and cultural preservation. Temples across the UK are not only places of worship but also centres for charity, learning and environmental awareness.

Moreover, non-Hindus in the UK have embraced Hindu practices such as yoga, meditation, vegetarianism, and Ayurveda for their mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. These practices are increasingly recognised in mainstream health and

wellness sectors. Hindu Dharma's inclusive message that '*truth is one, though it is called by many names*' resonates deeply in a multicultural, diverse society like the UK, promoting tolerance, **mutual respect and peaceful coexistence**.

## 9. How is Hindu Dharma still relevant in the modern world?

Although Hindu Dharma is one of the world's oldest spiritual traditions, its teachings are highly relevant today. Its **core principles** – such as **non-violence** (ahimsa), **respect for all living beings**, **personal responsibility** (swadharma), **inner peace** through yoga and meditation, and **care for the environment** – address many of the challenges we face in the 21st century. Modern science increasingly supports Hindu ideas about mental wellbeing, mindfulness, **interconnectedness and sustainable living**. The fact that Hindu Dharma continues to inspire people across generations and cultures shows its ability to adapt and remain meaningful in a rapidly changing world.

## 10. Do Hindus believe in God?

Yes – but in a broader and deeper sense than many Western faiths. Hindus believe in **Brahman, the one supreme reality that is beyond name, form, and personality**. Brahman can be worshipped in impersonal or personal forms – as Krishna, Shiva, Rama, Durga, or others – depending on the devotee's path. This non-dualistic vision of God allows for deep personal connection without limiting the Divine. Hinduism is one of the few traditions that supports both monotheistic devotion and mystical unity with the Divine, making it a rich and complex spiritual system.

## 11. Why do Hindu deities have animal forms or features?

Deities may take on part-animal forms to **express spiritual qualities and cosmic truths**. For example: Ganesha's elephant head represents wisdom, memory and the ability to overcome obstacles. Hanuman's monkey form signifies strength, loyalty and pure devotion. Rather than worshipping animals as gods, Hindus use these images to remind themselves of important spiritual lessons – often drawn from nature.

These animal forms are **not worshipped as animals**, but as **embodiments of divine characteristics**. They reflect the Hindu belief that spiritual truth can be communicated through nature and that **all life is sacred and interconnected**. By incorporating animals into divine imagery, Hindu Dharma promotes **reverence for the natural world** and teaches moral and spiritual lessons through familiar symbols.

## 12. Do Hindus respect nature and the environment?

Absolutely. Hindu Dharma teaches that **nature is not separate from the Divine** – it is pervaded by Brahman. Rivers like the Ganga, mountains like the Himalayas, and trees like the Peepal are revered because they are expressions of sacred life. Texts such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Atharva Veda promote care for the Earth, emphasising **harmony with the natural world**. Worship of nature is not superstition, but a reflection of deep ecological ethics, inspiring a lifestyle of sustainability, gratitude and stewardship.

## 13. Why do Hindus do aarti?

**Aarti is a deeply symbolic and devotional act within Hindu worship, where light, usually in the form of a flame or lamp, is offered to a deity.** At its core, aarti represents the removal of darkness—both literal and metaphorical—and the offering of one's innermost devotion to the divine. The lamp's flame symbolises **the light of consciousness (chaitanya)** and **the eternal presence of the divine (paramatma)**. By circling the flame before the deity, devotees symbolically acknowledge that all light, wisdom and power originate from the divine source.

Spiritually, the act of performing or witnessing aarti is a way of aligning oneself with the divine will. The flame, which consumes the ghee or oil in the lamp, is seen as a symbol of **sacrifice and self-offering**. Just as the oil is given up to create light, devotees are reminded to let go of ego, desires and attachments in order to experience inner clarity. The light is also symbolic of the **atma (soul)** within every being – pure, undying and radiant. When the flame is waved in a circular motion, it mirrors the cosmic cycles and reminds us that **the divine is at the centre of all existence**.

The singing of aarti hymns during this ritual adds another dimension. These bhajans or shlokas are often full of poetic expressions of love and surrender. As the aarti progresses, a spiritual atmosphere is created – with the sounds of bells, cymbals and conch shells – which awakens the senses and draws the mind away from worldly



distractions. In that moment, the devotee is completely present, heart open and absorbed in divine remembrance.

At the end of the aarti, participants pass their hands over the flame and bring the warmth to their eyes and forehead. This is not just a physical act but a **gesture of receiving divine energy and blessings**, as if taking the light of God into oneself. It serves as a personal reminder that God's light should guide one's thoughts, actions and vision.

In essence, aarti is not just a ritual—it is a **moving meditation**, a spiritual offering and a moment of transformation. It bridges the external act of worship with the internal longing of the soul to merge with the Divine.

#### 14. Why do Hindus wear Tilak markings on forehead?

In Hindu tradition, many people wear a **tilak**—a symbolic mark on the forehead—as part of their spiritual practice. It is usually made from sacred substances such as sandalwood paste, ash, turmeric, or red powder (kumkum), and is worn during daily worship, religious festivals or temple visits. For many non-Hindus, the tilak may appear as a cultural or decorative mark, but it holds deep **spiritual and philosophical meaning** in the Hindu faith.

One of the most important reasons Hindus apply the tilak is because of its location. It is placed between the eyebrows, at a point known in yogic and Hindu philosophy as the **ajna chakra**, or the "**third eye**" centre. This is not a physical eye but a spiritual energy point that is believed to govern **intuition, insight, and inner wisdom**. It is sometimes called the "seat of consciousness," because it is where a person is believed to experience deeper levels of awareness beyond everyday thoughts and emotions.

Applying a tilak to this spot is seen as a way of **activating or awakening this chakra**, bringing clarity, focus and spiritual awareness. Just as one might train the body for strength or flexibility, Hindus believe it is also important to train and awaken the mind and soul. The tilak, then, becomes a **reminder to look inward**, to develop self-control and to see life not just through the physical eyes but with spiritual understanding.

Different styles of tilak represent different Hindu traditions. For example, a vertical U-shape often identifies a devotee of **Vishnu**, while three horizontal lines of ash represent dedication to **Shiva**. A red dot or vertical line might indicate devotion to the **Goddess (Shakti)**. These symbols not only reflect personal faith but also mark the body itself as sacred—a place where God is remembered and worshipped.

The tilak also functions as a **spiritual commitment**. It is a visible sign that the wearer is trying to live a life based on dharma—righteousness, compassion, truth and discipline. It may serve as a daily reminder to keep one's thoughts pure and actions guided by higher values. In this way, the tilak can be seen not only as a connection to the divine, but also as a tool for personal growth.

In addition, many Hindus believe that the tilak offers **protection from negative energies** and helps maintain inner balance. Just as temples are marked as sacred spaces, the human body is considered a temple of the soul and the tilak marks it as a place of divine presence.

The tilak spiritual symbol that represents **devotion, spiritual awakening, inner vision and protection**. For many Hindus, wearing a tilak is a sacred act—a reminder to live with awareness of the divine within and around us.

## 15. Why do Hindus wear a kalava thread on their wrist?

Hindus often wear a red and yellow thread called **kalava** or **mauli** around their wrist during religious ceremonies and festivals. This sacred thread may seem simple but it holds deep spiritual meaning. It is usually tied on the right wrist for men and boys, and the left wrist for women and girls. The thread is tied while mantras (sacred prayers) are recited by a priest or elder, asking for blessings and protection from the divine.

One of the main reasons Hindus wear the kalava is for **protection**. It is believed to act as a **spiritual shield** that guards the wearer from negative energy, bad luck or harm. The thread is often blessed during prayer rituals and wearing it is a way to carry that blessing with you in daily life. The colours themselves are symbolic—**red represents strength and energy**, while **yellow stands for purity, wisdom and good fortune**.

The kalava is also a **sign of devotion**. Wearing it shows that the person has taken part in a religious ritual or puja and is carrying the blessings with them. It reminds the wearer to stay focused on good thoughts and righteous actions throughout the day.

The kalava or mauli is not just a decorative thread—it is a **symbol of spiritual protection, blessings and commitment to living a good and meaningful life**.