

Creating a Mandala of Hindu Principles

Purpose/Learning Target: Introduction to some principles of Hinduism, the third largest religion in the world from India.

Success Criteria: I can read and annotate text about principles of Hinduism. I can explain some aspects of Hindu beliefs. I can work with my peers to present my understanding of Hindu beliefs in a mandala. I can explain verbally or written about some Hindu principles.

Evidence of Learning/Outcomes:

- Record key points, and create a symbol(s) to represent Hindu principles(s).
- Design a mandala to demonstrate the relationships among the principles.
- Participate in a gallery walk to discuss Hindu principles with your peers.

Engage: Greet and comment: People in India sometimes greet each other with, "Namaste" (na-MAH-stay), "I bow to the Divine in you." *What is meant by "the Divine in you?"* Discuss with a partner and/or write a two-sentence response.

Steps:

1. Watch "Introduction to Hinduism" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EICcU9oN-s>
2. Read "Introduce Students to Hinduism" pg. 2
3. Review [Slide](#) #5 with students. Pairs read about "Brahman" and record key ideas on "Creating a Mandala of Hindu Principles." They will also sketch a symbol for the belief.
4. Repeat Step 3 for the principles on [Slides](#) 6-10.
5. Read [Slide](#) 11 and groups of 3-6 will brainstorm ideas for a "Mandala of Hindu Principles."
6. Now, group works on a poster and one person will work on the 8 ½ x 11" replica of the poster, including the paragraph explanation (may need multiple class periods).
7. Gallery Walk: 1-2 group members stay at their posters and the rest of the group members take the 8 ½ x 11" replica of the poster to visit another group's poster. The group members who completed the poster will explain the Hindu principles and how they connected them. Then, the others will share their poster's content using the 8 ½ x 11" replica of the poster. After 5-7 minutes, the class rotates and repeats the process. By the end of the gallery walk, after visiting and/or meeting with all other groups, students should have a strong foundation of some of the principles of Hinduism.

Introduce Students to Hinduism

Hinduism is an ancient religion whose origins predate recorded history. It has no single human founder, and it has developed over thousands of years. Its most sacred scriptures are the Vedas, which means “knowledge” in Sanskrit, the ritual language of Hinduism. The Vedas began as an oral tradition, and modern scholars have speculated that they date back as far as 6500 B.C.E. Historians believe that the Vedas were written down around 1000 B.C.E. or earlier. Other elements of Hinduism--such as sacred symbols and the worship of certain gods--can also be traced back to the seventh century B.C.E.

The word Hindu was first used by the ancient Persians to describe the practices and beliefs of people who lived east of the river Sindhu, or the Indus River. Hindus call their religion “Sanatana Dharma” (the eternal religion) or “Vedic Dharma” (the religion of knowledge).

Over the millennia Hinduism has continued to evolve, and in modern times it incorporates a wide variety of religious beliefs and practices. Hinduism has historically been tolerant of other religions, believing that all religions can be legitimate paths to God. As of 1997, there were nearly one billion Hindus in the world, more than 900 million of them living in India.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are often referred to as the “Dharma traditions” or “Indic traditions.” The Dharma traditions share many concepts such as dharma, karma, samsara, and moksha (see later), though each religion understands and interprets them differently. Over many centuries, Hinduism’s pluralistic ethos was reflected through India’s embrace of other religious groups such as Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians when they were persecuted elsewhere.

<https://www.hafsite.org/>

TCI WH-6-3, Activity 2.1



Symbols of the four religious traditions indigenous to India (starting at the top, clockwise) -- Hindu, Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist.

Hindu Principles

Brahman	Annotate
The deepest spiritual truth gleaned through the Vedas is that Brahman, or the Absolute (used interchangeably with “the Divine”, “the Absolute,” and “God”) <u>pervades the entire universe</u>. This divine reality or its essential nature is present in all living beings, eternal, and full of bliss. Moreover, Brahman is understood as the <u>cause of creation</u> -- <u>its creation, its preservation, and its dissolution</u>. In Hindu lore, these three functions, of creation, sustenance, and dissolution, are often depicted to be the work of what is commonly referred to as the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, respectively. Within Hinduism, there is a broad spectrum of understandings about the nature of Brahman. Some Hindus believe that Brahman is infinite and formless and can be worshiped as such or in different forms. Other Hindus believe that the Divine is infinite and has a transcendental form. For example, some Vaishnavas believe that the one supreme form is Krishna, while Shaivites understand this form as Shiva.	• Exists throughout the universe • Cause of creation • Creation, maintains, and destroys Some Hindus believe Brahman is infinite and formless and some believe Brahman has a shape Some believe there are three forms of Brahman
Multiple Gods	Annotate
Because Hindus believe that Brahman can appear in form, they accept that there are a variety of ways in which all human beings connect with the Divine. In Hinduism, God is worshipped in both male and female forms. The female form is known as devi, which is a manifestation of shakti and means energy. Other forms resemble animals or birds. Each of these forms of God has symbolic meaning. Hindus enjoy telling stories about the various forms to inspire love of God and instill ethical values. Hindus pray to different forms of Brahman as individual manifestations who represent particular divine qualities or powers. For example, Ganesh is the God of Wisdom is honored by Hindus and followers of other Indian religions as the remover of obstacles. He is revered for his great wisdom and is invoked before any undertaking. Other commonly worshipped Hindu Gods include Saraswati, who Hindus believe helps with learning and wisdom. Lakshmi is worshipped as the Goddess of Prosperity. God is believed to have taken the human form of Rama to show people how to live the path of Dharma. Krishna is said to have come to eradicate evil and protect good. Shiva is worshipped as the lord of time and change.	

What are Reincarnation and Samsara?	Annotate
Hindu teachings state that every birth is the result of an individual's unique karmic circumstances. Thus, when a person or living thing dies, their soul is attracted to circumstances that will help balance out their karmic needs and debt in order to advance spiritually. People may be born into circumstances where they suffer in order to reap the consequences of bad decisions from this and previous lives. Others might be born into circumstances in which their suffering is minimal as the reward for following their <i>dharma</i> well in this and previous lives. Hindus also believe that people can be reincarnated as other living things based on their previous actions. This process of reincarnation and the presence of souls in all living things is the basis for respect that Hindus are encouraged to show for all people and forms of life. Suffering, as understood in Hinduism, is not necessarily just physical or material; it also refers to an individual's state of mind. For example, a woman might be born into a wealthy family, but she may have a disposition that never allows her to fully enjoy her prosperity. On the other hand, a kind man who finds himself handicapped after an accident could remain kind, caring, and helpful in spite of his physical limitations. <u>The woman's wealth, but inability to enjoy it, and the man's ability to endure physical difficulty, yet continue to live joyfully are both understood to be results of their past and present karma. In other words, karmic needs and debts manifest not only as an individual's life circumstances, but the way in which they deal with them.</u> On the other hand, it's also said that the response to circumstances is always open to choice -- karma generates an outcome, but not the response to that outcome. According to Hindu teachings, a person's response to suffering should be informed by wisdom. Hindus hold that a key component to karma and spiritual advancement is acting in ways to alleviate the suffering - be it physical, material, or mental - of other living things. The cycle of reincarnation (birth, death, and rebirth) is called samsara. While the concept of karma acts as a positive motivator for leading a spiritual life, samsara is, in some ways, a negative reinforcer, and Hindus strive to be free of this cycle. Many Hindus believe that samsara is a feature of life based on the individual's deluded belief (<i>maya</i>) that one's existence is independent of everything and everyone else. Others define <i>maya</i> as the state of forgetfulness of the complete dependence of existence on the Divine, and as a result, also forgetting the need for all actions to be selfless and in loving devotion of God.	

What is <i>Karma</i> ?	Annotate
<i>Karma</i> is a term that you may have heard before. It probably brings to mind the idea of “what goes around, comes around.” To some extent, this is accurate, but the Sanskrit word “<i>karma</i>” simply means “action” or “deed.” According to Hindu philosophy, every action (<i>karma</i>) has a reaction or outcome. When an individual’s actions are positive or selfless, and righteous (<i>dharmic</i>), they will experience positive effects or rewards. If their actions, on the other hand, are negative (i.e. lying, stealing, hurting, etc.), the results will be negative. The <i>karma</i> of an individual’s actions, positive or negative, may be experienced immediately, later in their present life, or possibly in a future life or lives. It is important to remember that an individual’s <i>karma</i> is based on their thoughts, words, and actions and the choices they make. There are three types of <i>karma</i>: • <i>Kriyaman karma</i> - These are actions performed in the current life that may produce results in the same or subsequent life. • <i>Prarabdha karma</i> - This is <i>karma</i> whose effects have already begun. It takes longer to manifest, but occurs at some point in an individual’s present lifetime. • <i>Sanchita karma</i> - This is accumulation of all past <i>karma</i>, and the results of this usually occur in a future lifetime. Hindus believe that the soul, <i>atman</i>, is eternal. When this physical body dies, the soul is reborn in another body (<i>samsara</i>, or continuous cycle of life, death, and reincarnation). Rebirth is governed by the Law of <i>Karma</i>: that every action has a result, like cause and effect. According to the Law of <i>Karma</i>, what an individual experiences in this life is the result of their past actions, either from this birth or previous births; and in the converse, how an individual acts today will impact the future, the effects of which will be experienced either in this and future births. How an individual deals with the problems he or she faces in this life determines whether they create good or bad <i>karma</i> for his or her present and future lives. Human beings are believed to have four goals in life: 1. <i>Dharma</i> - A mode of conduct most conducive to spiritual advancement 2. <i>Artha</i> - The material prosperity one pursues 3. <i>Kama</i> - Enjoyment of the material world 4. <i>Moksha</i> - Liberation from suffering caused by dependence on the material world and from the cycle of birth and rebirth	

What is Dharma?	
Dharma is often described as one's duty. However, a more accurate way of explaining dharma is as a mode of conduct and being that helps spiritual advancement. Hindus believe that dharma is both the guide and foundation for all aspects of life. Dharma can also be seen as defining an individual's essential nature. Just as sugar is sweet by nature and fire is hot, the essential nature of every individual is divinity or goodness, and thus their duty to always act in accordance with our essential nature. Understanding an individual's dharma can be a difficult task, but the scriptures, stories, and epics of Hinduism are meant to guide each individual toward that discernment. These stories highlight three guiding principles of dharma: • Ahimsa (non-injury): Avoiding harmful actions, harsh words, and malicious thoughts. Violence or harm has its roots in ignorance, intolerance, jealousy, greed, anger, and fear. Overcoming such negative emotions and cultivating an all-encompassing love and forgiveness is the goal and the means of practicing ahimsa. • Satya (truthfulness): Being truthful to oneself and to others in thought, word, and deed. Speaking only when necessary and adhering to promises are aspects of this practice. Satya is seen as the judicious and discretionary use of language, a recognition that words are powerful. • Brahmacharya (self-restraint): Abstaining from any excess that depletes vital energy. The key to living a meaningful life involves disciplining an individual's senses to minimize the harm caused by material over-indulgence to the earth, others, and themselves; and redirecting vital energy towards spiritual endeavors. A relatively simple approach to dharma is to consider the need to eliminate material or worldly debts. Hindu scriptures identify five categories of debt owed by all humans and fulfilling these obligations can be seen as a basic requirement of a dharmic life. 1. Debt to God: This debt is cleared by maintaining an awareness of God through prayer and worship and ensuring that the individual acts in harmony with the forces sustaining the universe. 2. Debt to the sages: Since Hindus believe that sages have preserved ancient wisdom and their teachings guide individuals in every aspect of their lives, the study and practice of the scriptures is how this debt is cleared. 3. Debt to parents and ancestors who have cared for each individual: Respecting parents, preserving their memory, and bringing up children to be good human beings is an individual's obligation to them. 4. Debt to humanity: Caring for fellow human beings, engaging in community service, and supporting community infrastructure are some of the ways in which this fourth obligation can be met.	

What is Moksha?	Annotate
Most schools of Hindu philosophy conclude that the ultimate goal is for the individual to work through their reservoir of <i>karma</i> in order to attain <i>moksha</i>. Hindus typically believe that when a soul completely balances its “karmic bank account,” by reaping the consequences of all actions, good and bad, it is ready to attain <i>moksha</i> (though there are situations in which <i>moksha</i> can be attained before this balance). <i>Moksha</i> is, therefore, liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (<i>samsara</i>). For many Hindus, this translates to the perfected ability to live in the present moment, detached from desire and the fruits of action (consequences or rewards), and experience absolute peace and the awakening of pure compassion towards all. As such, <i>moksha</i> can be achieved in this lifetime through self-realization (<i>atma-jnana</i>) or realization of an individual’s true, divine nature. In this state, the soul stops creating the karma that binds it to the physical world, and finds liberation. For others, the path to <i>moksha</i> is one that is paved by loving devotion to God and selfless service, where every action is viewed as an offering to God. <i>Moksha</i>, in this view, can only be attained upon physical death. It is described as experiencing bliss and closeness to God, the depth of which is dependent on the innate nature of the individual soul and their <i>karma</i>. Since Hindus believe in <i>karma</i> and reincarnation, the concept of heaven and hell as worlds of eternal glory or damnation do not exist for them. Hindus also do not ascribe to the concept of Satan or a devil that is in eternal opposition to God. Some Hindus may believe in what is described in Hindu scriptures as two planes of existence called <i>svarga</i> and <i>naraka</i> that can be likened to heaven and hell, respectively. However, both are intermediary planes of existence in which the soul might exhaust a portion of its <i>karmic</i> debt or surplus before taking physical birth once again to strive for <i>moksha</i>.	