

Dharma Curriculum Overview

Elementary School (Levels 1–6)

Goal: Provide a working knowledge of major Hindu beliefs, practices, shaastras, and festivals.

1. [Satyam Shivam Sundaram \(Bhagwan is Real, Holy, and Beautiful\)](#)
2. [ABC of Dharma: Dharma Vocabulary](#)
3. [Practical Hindu Wisdom for Kids](#)
4. [The Ramayana](#)
5. [The Puranas](#)
6. [The Mahabharata](#)

Middle School (Levels 7–9)

Goal: Develop sound understanding of Hindu values, ethics, and the first three purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, and Kama.

7. [Hindu Ideals and Values](#)
8. [Inspirations from the Lives of Great Hindus](#)
9. [Hindu Dharma 101](#)

High School (Level 10+)

Goal: Achieve mastery of key concepts and personal understanding of Sanatana Dharma.

10. [Meeting Bhagwan through the Bhagavad Gita](#)

Additional topics may include:

- Divine in Hindu Dharma, Ceremonies, and Festivals
- Sacred Shaastras
- The Heart of Hindu Dharma (Adult-level topics)

Dharma 1 - Satyam Shivam Sundaram

This class offers a colorful and engaging introduction to Hindu deities, dharmic values, festivals, and stories. The focus is on visual learning, storytelling, and participation in rituals appropriate for younger students.

Ages: 4-5 / **Grades:** PreK-K

Throughout the year, students will explore the following topics and stories:

- Bhagwan Ganesha
 - Story of Ganesha and Kubera
 - Ganesha and his brother Karttikeya
 - Ganesha eats the Demon Sindoor
 - Prayer to Ganesha
- Bhagwan Shiva and Devi Parvati
 - Shiva and Ravana
 - How Markandeya became Immortal
 - Parvati and Ganesha: God lives in Everyone
 - Saint Poosalar builds a Temple in his Heart
- Devi Durga
 - Stories of courage and devotion through Durga's form
- Bhagwan Brahma and Devi Sarasvati
 - The Secret of Success: Knowledge and wisdom through learning
- Bhagwan Vishnu and Devi Lakshmi
 - Gajendra Moksha
 - Dhruva sees Bhagavan Vishnu
 - Dashavatara (Matsya to Rama)
 - Clever Hanuman
 - Stories of Krishna: Birth, childhood leelas, Sudama, lessons on food and cleanliness

Class activities include:

- Group storytelling and visual aids
- Arts and crafts related to the stories
- Singing Aratis like "Om Jai Jagadish Hare" and "Sukhakarta Dukhaharta"
- Simple rituals such as Om recitation, hands-folded Namaste, and classroom altar visits
- Occasional short videos (in English) to reinforce topics

Dharma 2 - ABC of Dharma

This class introduces students to foundational Hindu values through a unique and age-appropriate “ABC of Dharma” framework. Each week, students focus on one letter of the alphabet and explore a dharmic concept or Sanskrit term beginning with that letter.

Ages: 5-6 / **Grades:** K-1

Each letter is taught through:

- A short story or real-life example
- Simple discussion questions
- Fun activities, coloring pages, or crafts
- Reinforcement through repetition and interaction

Sample Weekly Topics:

- A – Atma: Learning that the soul is divine and present in all
- B – Bhakti: Expressing love and devotion to God
- C – Cleanliness: Practicing external and internal cleanliness
- D – Dharma: Understanding one’s duty and moral values
- E – Environment: Respecting nature and all living beings
- F – Forgiveness: Letting go of anger and being kind
- ... and continuing through Z – Zeal or a similar concluding value

Key Learning Goals:

- Introduce core Hindu values in a playful, age-appropriate way
- Build familiarity with Sanskrit terms and their meanings
- Encourage good behavior through moral stories and examples
- Begin cultivating spiritual habits and awareness of dharma
- Provide engaging, hands-on ways to internalize lessons

Each class includes:

- Opening and closing with Om and prayer
- One ABC value lesson with story and discussion
- Optional short activity or craft to reinforce the week’s theme

This level gently guides students to connect with Hindu teachings, develop moral awareness, and engage with values in daily life.

Dharma 3 - Practical Hindu Wisdom for Kids

This class draws upon classic tales from the Panchatantra, Puranas, Hitopadesha, Jain scriptures, and other dharmic sources to help children learn practical life lessons through story-based learning. These stories are easy to understand, culturally rich, and convey timeless values such as truthfulness, courage, kindness, self-control, and respect.

Ages: 6-7 / **Grades:** 1-2

Key Themes and Sources:

- Panchatantra & Hitopadesha: Moral fables using animals and nature
- Jataka and Jain Stories: Teachings on nonviolence, compassion, and self-discipline
- Puranic Tales: Stories from Hindu mythology that explore deeper meaning behind tradition and festivals

Each class features:

- A storytelling session with guided discussion
- A core value or teaching drawn from the story
- Follow-up activities such as group sharing, drawing, or mini skits

Sample Topics:

- The Foolish Lion and the Clever Rabbit (Panchatantra)
- The Wise King and the Jackal (Hitopadesha)
- Stories of Tenali Raman or Birbal's wit
- The Jain tale of the Elephant and the Rope
- Puranic stories explaining Hindu customs or festival significance

Additional Learning Elements:

- Hindu etiquette and temple behavior
- Daily shlokas used during prayers and liturgy (e.g., Bhojan Mantra, Shanti Mantra)
- Basics of respectful behavior at home, temple, and school

This level helps children internalize moral reasoning, begin identifying ethical dilemmas, and develop a personal relationship with dharma through culturally rooted storytelling.

Dharma 4 - The Ramayana

This class introduces children to the Ramayana, one of the most beloved and foundational epics of Hindu Dharma. Students explore the story of Bhagavan Rama, learning key events, characters, and values through storytelling, discussion, and hands-on activities. The emphasis is on moral development, decision-making, and ideal behavior as demonstrated by Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and others.

Ages: 7-8 / **Grades:** 2-3

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Overview of the Ramayana and its cultural significance
- Key episodes from Bala Kanda to Yuddha Kanda
- Lessons from the lives of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman, and Ravana
- Ethical dilemmas and dharmic choices faced by the characters
- Virtues like truthfulness, humility, devotion, loyalty, and duty

Learning Approach:

- Weekly storytelling of sequential episodes from the epic
- Discussion and group reflection on the dharmic values in each scene
- Creative activities (e.g., drawing, dramatizations, crafts, character maps)
- Emphasis on comparing Ramayana values to real-life situations children face

Sample Topics:

- The Birth of Rama and his brothers
- Rama breaks Shiva's bow
- Kaikeyi's two boons and Rama's exile
- Panchavati and the golden deer
- Hanuman's leap to Lanka and burning of Lanka
- The bridge to Lanka and Rama-Ravana battle
- The relationship between Hanuman and Rama
- Rama's return to Ayodhya

Shlokas and Practice:

- Introduction to simple Ramayana-related bhajans or shlokas
- Memorization of key values or quotes (translated into simple English)
- Practice and learn the Hanuman Chalisa

By the end of the year, students gain not only a strong narrative understanding of the Ramayana, but also a deep respect for dharma as a way of living.

Dharma 5 - The Puranas

This class introduces students to foundational stories and symbols found in the Puranas, focusing on the Dashavatara (10 incarnations of Bhagwan Vishnu) and major episodes from the Shiva Purana. Students will learn about key deities, their roles in upholding dharma, and how these stories are still relevant today. Emphasis is placed on understanding divine qualities, reciting basic mantras, and building reverence and connection to Hindu traditions.

Ages: 8-9 / **Grades:** 3-4

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Overview of the Puranas as a genre of sacred Hindu literature
- Dashavatara: the 10 avatars of Vishnu – from Matsya to Kalki
- Introduction to Shiva's stories, symbolism, and family
- Stories of Ganesha and Kartikeya, and their spiritual meanings
- Understanding divine forms as representations of universal truths

Learning Approach:

- Weekly sessions cover one avatara or deity per lesson
- Storytelling with visual aids and follow-up reflections
- Bhajans, mantra practice, and group chanting
- Drawing connections between Puranic stories and modern challenges children face

Sample Topics:

- Matsya and the Great Flood
- Narasimha and the power of faith and protection
- Krishna's playful wisdom and divine mission
- The Birth of Ganesha and the significance of his form
- Shiva's Tandava and the symbolism of destruction and renewal
- Kartikeya's leadership in the battle with Tarakasura

Shlokas and Practice:

- Introduction and practice of simple mantras:
 - Om Namah Shivaya
 - Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya
- Recitation of short stotras:
 - Nirvana Shatkam
 - Dashavatara Stotra
 - Lingashtakam

By the end of the year, students will have a foundational understanding of key Hindu deities, their stories, and how those stories inspire values like courage, compassion, wisdom, and devotion.

Dharma 6 - The Mahabharata

This class provides a connected narrative of the Mahabharata, the great Indian epic that explores dharma, duty, loyalty, and the consequences of one's actions. Through key episodes and characters, students will gain a deep appreciation for the moral dilemmas, ethical teachings, and timeless wisdom contained within the epic—presented in an age-appropriate way.

Ages: 9-10 / **Grades:** 4-5

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Introduction to the Mahabharata as Itihasa (epic history)
- Overview of major characters and family lineages
- Exploration of pivotal episodes with moral teachings
- Understanding the dangers of greed, jealousy, ego, and revenge
- Emphasis on values like courage, honesty, humility, and forgiveness

Learning Approach:

- Weekly storytelling of key Mahabharata episodes
- Guided discussions on lessons and takeaways
- Use of timelines, diagrams, and family trees to track story arcs
- Group reflections on dharma-related decisions characters make
- Modified/adapted content to ensure age-appropriate understanding

Sample Topics:

- The Birth of the Pandavas and Kauravas
- Drona, Karna, and the importance of fair opportunity
- Dice Game and the dangers of ego and attachment
- Draupadi's vow and Bhima's loyalty
- Arjuna's hesitation and Krishna's guidance
- The Kurukshetra war and the lessons from key moments
- Yudhishtira's trials and the final ascent

Shlokas and Practice:

- Introduction to selected verses from the Vishnu Sahasranama
- Practice of group recitation for memory and rhythm
- Exposure to bhajans and verses related to Krishna and Arjuna

By the end of the year, students will have developed a strong understanding of right vs. wrong, decision-making under pressure, and the long-term consequences of actions, all framed within the epic's engaging stories and spiritual insights.

Dharma 7 - Hindu Ideals and Values

This class is designed to help students internalize and apply Hindu values in real-world situations. While a reference textbook is available, the class is primarily discussion-based, interactive, and centered on practical application of dharmic principles. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and critically think through how Hindu teachings apply in modern life.

Ages: 10-11 / **Grades:** 5-6

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Developing personal character grounded in Hindu ideals
- Understanding the foundation and impact of Internal Enemies
- Exploring key values such as truth (satya), compassion (daya), self-control (dama), and non-violence (ahimsa)
- Understanding one's duties and responsibilities (svadharma)
- Engaging with real-life dilemmas and ethical decision-making
- Respect for elders, teachers, nature, and all living beings

Learning Approach:

- Weekly class discussions led by guiding questions or themes
- Interactive activities like debates, journaling, role plays, and group projects
- Student-led reflections and presentations on values in action
- Real-world examples from school, home, and peer relationships
- Emphasis on self-awareness, respect, and empathy

Sample Discussion Topics:

- What does it mean to live dharmically in everyday life?
- How do we make choices aligned with Hindu values when faced with peer pressure?
- What is the role of discipline, prayer, and gratitude in building character?
- How can we honor our parents and teachers in daily life?
- What does Hinduism teach us about managing anger or conflict?

Textbook Use:

- Teachers may assign optional readings, stories, or concepts from the book
- The primary focus is student engagement, self-reflection, and dialogue

Key Takeaways:

Students will leave this class with a deep, personal understanding of Hindu ideals, not just as abstract principles, but as practical tools for living with integrity, compassion, and confidence. The goal is to help students become grounded, value-driven individuals who are proud of their heritage and ready to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

Dharma 8 - Inspiration from the Lives of Great Hindus

This class introduces students to inspiring biographies of saints, sages, leaders, and changemakers across Hindu and Jain traditions. Through these stories, students reflect on values like Ahimsa, Bhakti, compassion, courage, and integrity, and learn how these timeless principles apply to their own lives.

Ages: 12-13 / **Grades:** 6-7

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Understanding Hindu dharma through real-life role models
- Exploring the lives of revered figures such as:
 - Mahavir Swami, Tulsidas, and Adi Shankaracharya
 - Shivaji Maharaj and other Dharmic rulers
 - Mahatma Gandhi and modern Hindu thought leaders
- Reflecting on values such as:
 - Ahimsa (non-violence)
 - Bhakti (devotion)
 - Satyagraha (truth and firmness)
 - Seva (selfless service)
 - Dharma as moral responsibility
- Drawing comparisons to Rama and Krishna as ideals of dharmic living

Additional Curriculum Elements:

- Introduction to Puja Vidhi:
Students will learn the 16-step Hindu Puja procedure (Shodasha Upacharas), gaining a better understanding of temple rituals, symbolism, and the purpose behind each offering.
- Core Concept: Saadhaarana Dharma / Sanaatana Dharma
Focus on general ethical and moral precepts applicable to all stages and roles of life.

Learning Approach:

- Weekly storytelling, reflection, and discussion
- Activities may include: skits, journal writing, group presentations, and art projects
- Connecting historical and scriptural stories to modern life
- Emphasis on personal growth, community awareness, and cultural identity

Key Takeaways:

Students leave this class with a deeper appreciation for Hindu ideals in action, inspired by real people who lived with purpose and dharma. The course encourages them to see themselves as part of a long lineage of thoughtful, courageous, and compassionate Hindus who make a positive impact on the world.

Dharma 9 - Hindu Dharma 101

Dharma 9 is part of a two year course- This class is designed to serve as a foundational overview of core Hindu teachings, concepts, and practices—ideal for middle and high school students seeking to deepen their understanding of Hindu Dharma as a whole. The class emphasizes clarity, structure, and discussion while reinforcing student identity and pride in Hindu heritage.

Ages: 12+ / Grades: 8+

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Fundamentals of Hinduism
 - What is Hindu Dharma?
 - Key ideas: Karma, Dharma, Moksha, Rebirth
 - Hindu worldview: unity in diversity
- Scriptural Overview
 - Vedas, Upanishads, Itihasa (Ramayana & Mahabharata), Bhagavad Gita
 - Overview of key teachings and styles of each
- Sacred Symbols and Rituals
 - Om, Swastika, Puja, Arti, Temple customs
 - Role of sacred geography (Ganga, Himalayas, etc.)
- Major Deities and Forms of the Divine
 - Understanding Brahman, Ishta Devata
 - Ganapati, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, and more
- Spiritual Paths
 - Bhakti (devotion), Jnana (knowledge), Karma (action), Raja Yoga (discipline)
 - Significance and symbolism in celebration
- Modern Applications
 - Clearing up confusion and misconceptions; defending with confidence What it means to be a Hindu American
 - Living Dharma in school, social life, and community

Learning Approach:

- Thoughtful discussion and Q&A
- Reading and interpretation of scripture excerpts
- Student presentations and reflection prompts
- Emphasis on understanding AND expressing Hindu Dharma clearly and respectfully

Key Takeaways:

By the end of this course, students will be able to confidently articulate core Hindu beliefs and practices, draw connections between tradition and modern life, and represent their heritage proudly. This class prepares them for higher-level study, interfaith dialogue, and community leadership rooted in Sanatana Dharma.

Dharma 10 - Meeting Bhagwan through the Bhagavad Gita

Dharma 10 is part of a two year course- This is a capstone-level class that introduces students to the Bhagavad Gita, one of the most important scriptures in Hindu Dharma. This class encourages personal connection with Bhagwan (the Divine) through the lens of the Gita's timeless teachings. It serves as both a spiritual guide and a practical handbook for life as a young Hindu in the modern world.

Ages: 12+ / Grades: 8+

Core Curriculum Themes:

- Introduction to the Gita
 - Historical and spiritual context within the Mahabharata
 - The Gita as a conversation between Krishna and Arjuna
 - Purpose and structure of the 18 chapters
- Key Concepts and Teachings
 - Dharma (duty), Karma Yoga (selfless action)
 - Jnana Yoga (knowledge), Bhakti Yoga (devotion)
 - The immortal Atman and concept of the eternal soul
 - Surrender to Bhagwan and finding peace through wisdom
- Understanding God in the Gita
 - Krishna as both teacher and Divine
 - Seeing Bhagwan in all beings
 - Visvarupa Darshan (the Universal Form)
- Personal Connection and Reflection
 - How to bring Gita teachings into daily life
 - Overcoming confusion, fear, and doubt
 - Building strength, discipline, and humility

Learning Approach:

- Select reading of Gita verses (in English with simple Sanskrit exposure)
- Class discussions and real-life application
- Journal reflections on dilemmas and insights
- Chanting of key verses with meaning
- Group projects and end-of-year presentation

Key Takeaways:

Students will walk away with a stronger relationship to Hindu wisdom, a deeper understanding of their own spiritual identity, and tools to navigate life's challenges with clarity and compassion. The class aims to cultivate both inner strength and devotion, grounded in the eternal truths of the Bhagavad Gita.