

Main Beliefs of Hinduism

Hindu Beliefs about Dharma

Dharma is a very important idea in Hinduism. Dharma stands for law, obligation, and duty. To follow one's dharma means to perform one's duties and so to live as one should. There are two kinds of dharma, personal dharma and common dharma.

Personal dharma is a set of duties but it is different depending on your position in life. For example, if you are a farmer, your dharma would include things like planting crops, irrigating, and tending to your animals. If you are a doctor, your dharma would include things like taking care of patients and learning about diseases and how to treat them.

In addition to the dharma of their class, Hindus are expected to follow a common dharma, or set of values. For example, Hinduism values marriage, sharing food with others, and caring for one's soul. Another basic value is nonviolence. Hindus believe that all life is connected, so part of dharma involves avoiding doing harm to either people or animals.



Dharma Question(s):

- What is dharma?
- What are the 2 types?
- What is your personal dharma?
- What is my personal dharma?
- Do we have the same common dharma?

Hindu Beliefs about Karma

The idea of dharma expresses much of what Hindus believe about the right way to live. Another idea, *karma*, explains why living well is important.

In Hindu belief, the law of karma governs what happens to people's souls after death. From ancient times, Hindus believed that souls had many lives. When a person died, his or her soul was reborn in a new body. This is called reincarnation. Hindus believe that a person's soul is reincarnated many times. However, their soul carries their karma with them to every life. Karma is a total of all the good deeds and bad deeds that a person has done. If he has done many positive things in his previous life, he will be rewarded in future lives. If a person has done many negative things in his previous life, he will be punished in future lives.

In the same way, our actions in our present lives will determine our fate in the lives that follow. Hindus therefore aim to live in a way that will cause each of their lives to be better than the life before.

Karma Question(s):

What is karma?

- What is the effect of your positive actions in your life?

- *What is the effect of your positive actions in your life?*
- Hindus believe that karma makes life fair. Why do bad things happen to good people? Do you agree?

Hindu Beliefs about Samsara

As you have learned, Hindus believe in a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. They call this cycle *samsara*. As long as people are part of *samsara*, they will know pain and death. *Samsara* ends when the soul escapes from the cycle of rebirth and is united with Brahman, the supreme force in the universe.

It takes many lifetimes before a person can be released from *samsara*. People escape the cycle of rebirth, or reincarnation, by following the basic beliefs of Hinduism. They balance their karma with good actions. They follow their dharma by behaving correctly and performing their social duties. They worship Brahman, including the gods that represent different aspects of Brahman, faithfully. They also strive for direct, personal connections with Brahman.

Samsara Question(s):

- What is *samsara*?
- *Is this cycle a good thing?*
- How are you released from *samsara*?
- *Where do you go when you are released from *samsara*?*
- How are dharma, karma, and *samsara* connected?

Hindu Beliefs about Moksha

Moksha is a term that refers to liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. Every person must strive hard and perform good deeds, so that his soul may rest in peace after his death. A person, who attains Moksha, gets freedom from all sorts of sufferings and pain. When a person gives away the materialist pleasures of life and gets involved in social activities to serve mankind, he heads his way towards heaven. Well, Moksha is a very broad term which encompasses numerous aspects like peace, knowledge and enlightenment.

How to Attain Moksha:

In Hindu religion, self realization is considered to be the best means to achieve Moksha. The Hindu Dharma preaches the path of Karma. There can be different ways of achieving salvation. In totality, there are four paths of attaining liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth, namely, selfless work, self dissolving love, deep meditation and total discernment.

Moksha Question(s):

- What is moksha?
- Is Moksha a good thing?
- How do you achieve Moksha?
- How are dharma, karma, and *samsara* connected to Moksha?