

This unit begins to introduce Hindu Dharma to pupils, building on some encounters they may have had in EYFS and Key Stage One. In this unit pupils act as philosophers considering how Hindus might see the world. They look at the concepts of Brahman to build up understanding. They use some stories, examine some Hindu texts and consider how deities exemplify qualities of Brahman.

Key Vocabulary

- Hindu
- Brahman
- Deity
- Namaste
- Shiva
- Aum
- Atman
- Lakshmi
- Vishnu
- Brahma



Lesson 1: How do many Hindus describe ultimate reality?

STEP 1: Explain that in this unit, pupils are going to be investigating Hindu worldview traditions and how Hindus might describe the divine, ultimate reality. Ask pupils to tell you what they already know about Hindu worldview traditions and what they would like to find out.

STEP 2: Show the Aum symbol – explain that for many Hindus this is a sacred symbol that describes Brahman. Tell pupils that for Hindus, Brahman is an energy in the universe – the source of everything. For many Hindus, Brahman is the divine or the supreme being. Explain that Aum is made of 3 sounds, 'A', 'U' and 'M' and can be chanted as a mantra – to enable humans to connect with this energy. If this would work in your context, play or make the sound – explain that this is a sacred sound for many Hindus. Explain that many Hindus say that before the universe began, the first thing to happen was the sound 'Aum' – it was the first sound of creation – after this, the universe began. Use the PPT to show a series of images of Aum. Encourage pupils to study and draw it.

STEP 3: Have prepared some photos of yourself (or another willing member of staff) showing the different aspects of you e.g. teacher, footballer, parent, netball player, helper, friend, computer whizz, drummer etc. Ask pupils to define which quality or skill of their teacher is being shown on each photo. Ask pupils, why one photo would not be enough to tell you about one person. Give pupils two minutes to make at least 8 'stick person' sketches of themselves as plans for 8 photos they would need if someone wanted to properly know, the 'real them'. Emphasise that, just like their teacher, they are still one person, but have different sides. Show images of several Hindu deities – explain that for many Hindus, Brahman is the divine, supreme being and each of these deities shows a side or part of Brahman. So, whilst pupils might see images of many different deities when learning about Hindu worldview traditions, they should always remember each deity is showing a part/side of Brahman. Explain to pupils that they will be coming back to this idea in later lessons so that they can understand it even better.

STEP 4: Use the Aum outline from Inspiring RE: Hindus by RE Today Services*. This outline can be found in the section entitled The Aum: Meanings of This Symbol as an e-resource, or as page 5 of the pdf of the unit. Around the outside of this symbol, pupils should add as many facts as possible that they know about Brahman and Aum.

*At the time of writing, the link to this book is: <https://www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/inspiring-re/hindus/>
On our new website look out for Inspiring RE: Hindus p8, teacher info p7

Lesson 2: How might the idea of Brahman being in everything affect how you live?

STEP 1: Recap learning from last lesson using the sticky knowledge slides. Show the words 'Aum' and 'Brahman' – can pupils remember what they mean?

STEP 2: Explain that, as philosophers, pupils are going to investigate the idea of Brahman, the ultimate reality, for Hindus. Tell the story of Svetaketu: "Svetaketu's father decided to teach his son about Brahman, the divine. He gave Svetaketu some salt and told his son to put it in a bowl of water overnight. In the morning he asked Svetaketu if he could see the salt and take it out again, but of course he couldn't! He asked his son to taste the water from to top, the middle and the bottom of the bowl – it was salty each time. 'That's a bit like Brahman – God – in the world,' said Svetaketu's father. 'God is invisible but is there in everything.'" Ask pupils to think, pair, share what this means. During the sharing, elicit that many Hindus believe Brahman is in everything and everyone – whilst people can't actually see Brahman, it is there. NB It is often useful to use a physical bowl of water and salt during the retelling.

STEP 3: Show the image of Namaste: Bowing slightly and putting hands together. Offer a meaning of this, 'The spark of God in me bows to the spark of God in you'. Remind pupils that for many Hindus, Brahman is the divine or supreme being, so a way to think of the meaning is 'The spark of Brahman in me bows to the spark of Brahman in

you'. Explain that many Hindus would say it is not just humans but the whole world which has a spark of Brahman in it. This spark of Brahman in everything is called 'atman'. Ask pupils how you might treat others if you believe that everyone has a spark of Brahman in them? How would you treat animals and the planet? Explain that some, but not all, Hindus are vegetarian.

STEP 4: Examine case study of the Ahimsa Dairy Foundation, 'the story of happy cows', that accompanies Inspiring RE: Right and Wrong by RE Today Services*. This case study is rather long, so you might wish to choose the most appropriate part(s) for your class to look at. Ask pupils why they think animals would be treated and cared for in this way? (encourage the use of words 'Brahman' and 'atman' in explanations). Explain that additional to pupils reasoning, for many Hindus the cow is a sacred creature. One of the reasons for this is because it provides nourishment, so the cow can be linked to being like a mother who provides her baby with nourishment and with Mother Earth. Also, the cow is traditionally seen as very dear to the Hindu deity Krishna.

STEP 5: Use page 29 from Opening up Hindus by RE Today Services (see PPT and additional download resource of this). With pupils, read the metaphors that are based on words Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita. Discuss with pupils what the metaphors say and ask pupils how these metaphors develop the idea of Brahman in everything. If pupils do not pick this up, point out that each metaphor shows Brahman as what could arguably be thought of as the most important aspect of each example, eg:

- out of every single light, Brahman is the radiant sun (here, Brahman is not shown as an inferior light such as a candle flame)
- out of every type of water, Brahman is the ocean (not a raindrop or river).

Pupils write their own metaphors in this style to show how Brahman is in everything using the sentences from page 29 as models.

*The link can currently be found on the NATRE website: <https://www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/inspiring-re/right-and-wrong/exploring-values-how-can-we-be-good/>
On our new website look out for Inspiring RE: Right and wrong e resources

Lesson 3: What can we find out about some Hindu deities?

STEP 1: Recap learning from last two lessons using the sticky knowledge slides, especially the vocabulary 'Brahman', 'Atman', 'Namaste' and 'Aum'.

STEP 2: Use resource sheet 4.2 from Big Questions Big Answers: God by RE Today Services (found on pp 18-19) *. If you have a physical copy of the book, this can be found as a large A3 picture/poster on the 2 middle pages, if not, it is good to show pp 18-19 together as 1 poster rather than separately. Place the class in groups of around 4 pupils each. Each group should have resource sheet 4.2 in the centre of a large piece of paper. Ask them to look very carefully and annotate what they can see on the paper around the outside of the image.

STEP 3: Discuss what groups have written down so far and where pupils had noticed similar or different features of the deities. There may be aspects that can be explained during this discussion; e.g. many arms (showing power), the colour blue (like the heavens), particular hand gestures and animals that the deities are travelling on.

STEP 4: Give out resource sheets 4.3 and 4.4**. These should explain some features of the deities pupils have been observing. In groups, one deity should be assigned to each pupil – they should look at the new information on sheets 4.3 and 4.4 to see if there are any extra facts that can be added to their group's annotation around the deity that they have been assigned.

Each pupil should try to add 3 extra facts about the deity are responsible for finding out about. Once finished, they should share their new learning with the rest of their group.

STEP 5: Bring the class together, focusing on each deity in turn: Discuss what the groups found out. If there are important facts on sheets 4.3 and 4.4 that have been omitted, ensure these are mentioned in the discussion. Look at a different image of each deity. Explain that not every image of every deity will be identical – task pupils with finding some of the key differences they have found on the new images. Remind pupils that in this lesson they were learning about 4 deities in particular, but that for most Hindu people, there are many more deities. Ask if pupils can name any (a hint might be that they looked at words spoken by a particular deity within a Hindu sacred text in lesson 2).

*This is free with your NATRE membership and can currently be found on the pdf at <https://www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-primary-big-questions-big-answers/investigating-god/what-do-hindus-believe-about-the-idea-of-a-supreme-being/>

**These can also be found on the link above. On our new website look out for Big Questions in Classrooms- Investigating God

Lesson 4: How do many Hindus understand deities?

STEP 1: Recap vocab so far: Aum, Brahman, Atman, Namaste, Brahma, Shiva, Deity, Lakshmi. Use the sticky knowledge slides to recap knowledge from previous sessions. Ensure pupils are confident that whilst Brahman can be seen as the ultimate reality/supreme being/divine, Brahma is one of many deities. Therefore, Brahman and Brahma are 2 different things. Use the sticky knowledge slides to recap learning in this unit so far.

STEP 2: Remind pupils that as Brahman is one universal energy – Hindus may access this energy or divinity through particular deities, each of which shows particular qualities of Brahman. Use resource sheet 4.1 from Big Questions Big Answers: God by RE Today Services (found on p17)*. Read the metaphor focusing on the bunch of flowers. Ask pupils to reflect on what this says and how it explains ideas about Brahman and deities within Hindu worldview traditions. In pairs, can pupils create a very quick sketch to show this idea? If useful, also watch the BBC My Life, My Religion clip on the mandir, during which a young Hindu boy named Vraj also explains this analogy.** Look at the other 2 metaphors on resource sheet 4.1. Discuss which pupils feel is the most helpful in explaining Hindu ideas about Brahman and deities.

Allow pupils time to create their own metaphor showing Hindu ideas about Brahman, deities and the relationship, using words and/or images.

Look at some as a class and discuss which work well and why.

STEP 3: Show some images of 3 Hindu deities: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Discuss what pupils know and about Brahma and Shiva, and what they both notice and speculate about Vishnu. Explain that, as a group, these deities help many Hindus understand how life works as the group contains Brahma (creator), Vishnu (sustainer and protector) and Shiva (transforms and recycles). The name often given to this group of 3 deities is the Trimurti and the Trimurti can help many Hindus understand life being a cycle.

Use some examples to demonstrate how there are many cycles in life. Eg:

A holiday – booking and packing (creation of holiday), being on it (sustaining of holiday), coming home (transforming holiday time into life back at home and maybe even getting ready for another cycle with a new holiday)

Leaves on a tree – buds, green, Autumn colours and falling.

NB Shiva is often referred to as ‘destroyer’ and pupils may have heard this. Whilst it is true, that Shiva symbolises the end of things, using the concept of cyclical time, this needs to happen so that the cycle starts again – eg the leaves on the Autumn tree may have fallen, but this is necessary for buds to appear in the Spring.

Discuss whether pupils can identify any cycles within their own lives/life in general.

*This is free with your NATRE membership and can currently be found on the pdf at

<https://www.natre.org.uk/resources/termly-mailing/bqic-primary-big-questions-big-answers/investigating-god/what-do-hindus-believe-about-the-idea-of-a-supreme-being/>

On our new website look out for Big Questions in Classrooms- Investigating God

**At the time of writing, this clip can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-s0mN5P8jo&list=PLcvEcrcF_9zL_rMIPzjyuhf7-VuPVq4yl&index=2&t=51s

Lesson 5: What can we learn about deities from Ganesh?

NB This lesson has a focus on Ganesh. Please refer to Ganesh as an ‘elephant-headed deity’ rather than an ‘elephant god’.

STEP 1: Recap vocab so far:

Aum, Brahman, Atman, Namaste, Deity, Lakshmi, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Hindu. Use the sticky knowledge slides to recap knowledge from previous sessions including that Hindus believe in one ultimate reality, supreme soul, or divinity; Brahman. Many Hindus connect to Brahman through particular deities.

STEP 2: Show an image or murti of Ganesh and ask pupils what they notice about it. Explain that in Hindu Dharma there are many symbolic things to look at on a murti of Ganesh. Look at the image of Ganesh on the slide and help pupils to list what they can see that might be symbolic. Use sheet 4.1 from Exploring Hindu Worldviews by RE Today Services.* Please note, this is different from sheet 4.1 that is used in lesson 4 as it comes from a different book, but both books are free with your NATRE membership. Allow pupils to read the labels explaining the symbolism and match them to the relevant parts of the image of Ganesh. Explain that Ganesh is seen by many Hindus as showing (personifying) divine wisdom and intelligence, as such, he is seen as a remover of obstacles in life.

STEP 3: Use resource sheet 4.2* to tell story of Ganesh and Kartikeya. Ask pupils: what did Ganesh do? How did he show intelligence?

STEP 4: Use the quotes from Hindu devotees at the bottom of resource sheet 4.3* With pupils, go through what each says. Ask pupils: What is the one energy Sunita talks about? (elicit the answer ‘Brahman’ with reasoning about how pupils know this). Ask: Is this the same as the one universal power Anil talks of? (elicit the answer ‘yes’). Ask: When and why might Hindus show devotion to Ganesh? (as remover of obstacles, a Hindu might show devotion to Ganesh before a large event or new chapter in their life that they wish to go smoothly eg a test, interview, or getting married) What qualities of Brahman might Ganesh show? Explain that Hindu Dharma is pluralist, meaning there are many ways to be a Hindu and whilst some people might try to connect with Brahman

by focusing on one deity, another might try to connect by focusing on a different deity more often. Ask which of the Hindu devotees is most likely to focus on Ganesh as a way to connect with Brahman (Sunita) and which deity it is that Anil is more likely to focus on in order to connect with Brahman (Lord Narayana, which is one of the forms of Vishnu).

*Resource sheet 4.1 can be found on page 18 of *Exploring Hindu Worldviews* by RE Today Services, resource sheet 4.2 is on page 19 and 4.3 on page 20. They can also be found on the 4th – 6th pages of the pdf at this link: <https://bit.ly/3S2Eb2M>

An accompanying PPT can also be found at the same link – you may find slides from the PPT useful for delivering this lesson.

On our new website look out for *Exploring religion and worldviews-Hindu Worldviews*

Lesson 6:

STEP 1: Recap learning so far by using the sticky knowledge slides. Ensure pupils are given the opportunity to recap the vocab: 'Hindu', 'Brahman', 'Deity', 'Namaste', 'Shiva', 'Aum', 'Atman', 'Lakshmi', 'Vishnu', 'Brahman'.

STEP 2: Pupils complete the Assessment sheet.