

# Fact Sheet

## Hinduism



The Scout Association of Australia includes Members of every faith, background and religion. The following fact sheet has received the approval of the heads of the leading religious bodies.

- In Australian Scouting, we use an inclusive approach to 'Duty to God', focusing on exploring spiritual beliefs and the use of reflection as a tool for development. You will notice this approach to Duty to God, including spiritual development, reflected in our Promise.
- Members should develop their relationship with the spiritual values of life by adhering to their spiritual principles, whilst respecting the spiritual choices of others.

### The beginnings

The word 'Hindu' was originally a Persian word meaning people who live beyond the River Indus. It came to mean Indians who were not Muslim or Buddhist. In this way 'Hinduism' connected with people from many different cultural traditions, and as a result it does not have a rigid set of beliefs.

Hinduism is not based on any one person's life and teachings and there is no acknowledged founder of Hinduism. The roots of the religion can be traced back to between 1700 and 1500 BCE when light-skinned Aryan invaders destroyed the civilisation that then existed in northwest India, before taking over central and southern India.

### How Hindus live

Most Hindus follow the Vedanta tradition, which is a system of beliefs derived from ancient writings called the Veda. Within the Vedanta system there are two main schools of thought, the Advaita and the Dvaita.

The Advaita tradition perceives Brahman (the universal cosmic soul) as the ultimate reality; that from which everything emanates, in which everything resides and into which everything is ultimately dissolved. Brahman has no personal name or gender and is seen in terms of all pervading energy than of personality.

In the Dvaita view, the aim of life is seen as the merging of Atman (the individual soul) with Brahman. When fusion happens, a person is released from the round of life, death and rebirth and achieves Moksha (ultimate liberation).

Hindus believe in one central Godhead which is manifest in many ways. There are many different Gods and Goddesses each of which embodied a different aspect of the Divine.

- The energy associated with Brahman is manifested in the three deities:
- Brahma is the manifestation of the force of energy that creates and brings things into being.
- Vishnu is the manifestation of the force or energy that sustains the created order.
- Shiva is the manifestation of the force or energy that destroys everything.

Despite the diversity of beliefs and worship, Hindus are connects by collective concepts.

### Key beliefs

There are two key beliefs in Hinduism.

- Dharma - A Hindu's duty to behave rightly and to fulfil their obligations to their family, society and God.
- Karma - The law of cause and effect, where every action had an effect, even upon a person's future lives.

Hindus have four main paths to achieve Moksha.

- Bhakti-yoga - the path of devotion to God;
- Karma-yoga - the path of good works;
- Jnana-yoga - the path of knowledge;
- Yoga - Spiritual practices such as meditation.

Every Hindu is born into a caste which is a social group with its own duties and place in the social hierarchy. Below the traditional castes are the untouchability.

Ghandi renamed the caste 'Harijans' or 'Children of God' in an attempt to improve their status.

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