

## ***Hinduism***

**Hinduism** is the third largest world religion with about 900 million Hindus worldwide. In 2001 there were about 559,000 Hindus in the UK, most of whom came originally from Gujurat and Punjab in India.

The religion dates back over 4,000 years.

Hinduism is made up of a variety of different religious beliefs and practices which originated near the river Indus in India. The name 'Hindu' comes from the word Indus.

### **Beliefs**

Central to Hinduism is the belief in a supreme God **Brahman**, the universal soul, which is found in everything.

Brahman is worshipped in a variety of forms, including Vishnu, **Krishna**, **Rama**, Shiva and several others. Hinduism does not have any founder.

Hindus believe that life is a **cycle of birth, death, and rebirth**, governed by **Karma**.

Hindus believe that every action has an effect and there is a cause for everything. This is called the law of Karma.

Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of lives and



that the next life is dependent on how the previous life was lived.

## Holy Books

The main Hindu scriptures are:

- the Vedas, a collection of hymns praising the Vedic gods. Veda means 'knowledge'
- the Ramayana, long epic poems about Rama and Sita
- the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita
- the Puranas, a collection of stories about the different incarnations and the lives of saints.

## Worship

Puja (worship) takes place in the Mandir (temple).

Mandirs vary in size from small village shrines to large buildings, surrounded by walls.

People can also visit the Mandir at any time to pray and participate in the bhajans (religious songs).



Hindus also worship at home and often have a special room with a shrine to particular gods.

## Festivals:

Hindus celebrate many holy days

- **Diwali** (the festival of lights) is the best known
- **Holi**
- Navaratri (celebrating fertility and harvest),
- Raksha Bandhan (celebrating the bond between brother and sister)
- Janmashtami (Krishna's birthday)