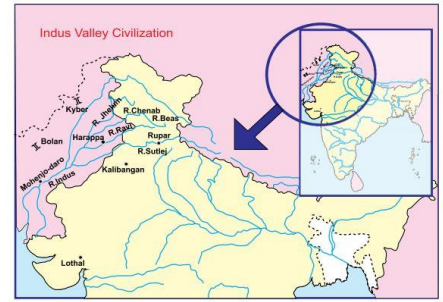


WE ARE HINDUS

1. Our faith is called Hindu Dharma. It was founded around 2,500BCE and probably the first known religion of man. It has no known founder, teacher nor prophet.
2. The word HINDU comes from the Sanskrit word 'SINDHU' meaning the valley of river Indus hence the people of this region came to be known as Hindus. This is a geographical term so the faithful prefer the faith to be known as 'HINDU SANATAN DHARMA' [Eternal faith].
3. At the time of its formation, language and means of communication were less developed hence it is presumed imagery in the form of figurines and statues (*Murtis*) to describe god in his various qualitative manifestations were created. This tradition continues to date with paintings and pictures of various deities. Following a sacred ceremony of *Pran Prastishtha* (consecration) the murtis are placed in temples or home shrine that became deities to worship. Trimurti is one of the many murties that symbolises god's holy trinity: *Braham* [creator], *Vishnu* [preserver] and *Shiva* [destroyer].
4. Our faith is based on Vedas which is divine revelation to man, hence also known as Vedic-Dharma. There are various scriptures based on Vedas. The Bhagavad Gita being the foremost, consists of Lord Krishna,s counsel of conscious to Arjun on the battlefields but has been relevant to life for evermore. The study of Vedas and its sections dealing with Brahma [God] is called Vedanta. It is studied in Ashrams through Yoga and deep Meditation.
5. We believe in one god - Brahma (*Parmeshwar*) who has divine power. He is all-pervading (*Sarvniyasi*) all-knowing (*Sarvagn*) and all-powerful (*Sarvshaktiman*). There is only one God but is worshiped by Hindus under various deities that define his qualities and capability.
6. We believe in providence of Prayer (*Prarthana*) for spiritual unity with divine power of god. Prayers, worship (*Puja*) and disciplined living helps us to build unanimity with God. All prayers and meditation start and finish with the prolonged proclamation of "A-U-M" (ॐ) [sounds like Oohhmm]. This sacred symbol ॐ and assertion calls for audience with god followed by *Gayatri Mantra* [main prayer for Hindus]. "A-U-M" (ॐ) is also accompanied with *shanti* [peace] (*A-U-M Shanti*). Hindus pray when and where ever convenient. In the morning before start of the working day or evening after the work is the norm. Visiting the temple (*mandir*) and offering prayers, performing rituals of puja with family and friends becomes an exceptional and spiritually uplifting experience.
7. We believe in Reincarnation (*Punarjanma*). The spiritual life does not end upon death as the immortal Soul (*Atma*) then relocates on to another new born. The body dies but the Soul continues its spiritual journey until its liberation (*moksha*).
8. We believe *Karma* [action/deeds] (*Purushartha*). Rule of Karma, your deeds envisages that what we sow, we shall reap. We are creators of our own fate.



WE ARE HINDUS

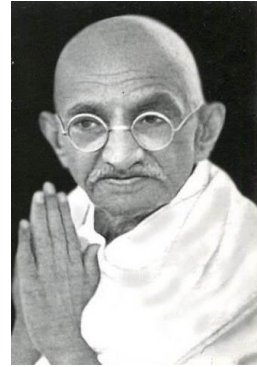
9. We believe that the Soul (*Atma*) is the conscience of a being or creature during their lifetime of worldly action-pursuit (*Samsara and Karma*). Under the rule of reincarnation, Hindus believe that upon death their Soul relocates on to a new born. That new life could be a creature or a human being. This cyclical repositioning of the Soul continues until its liberation (*moksha/mukti*) is granted by the grace of god. The liberation of the Soul can only ensue when that Soul-benefactor life has been a sincere devotee of god and has lived a spiritual, unselfish and benevolent existence. **The Lotus flower is symbolic of both Karma and Atma. A Lotus flower despite growing in murky waters in not soiled and remains a preside bloom. It also carries seeds inside itself for next generation while it blossoms.**



10. We believe in peaceful state of mind (*Prasanti*) and joy of life. It is only through pure thought and joy that we can appreciate the immense magnificence and spirituality of God. We rejoice in this spirituality with prayers and recital of devotional songs and music (*Bajans and Kirtan*).



11. We believe in non-violence, compassion and reverence of all living creatures (*Prani-daya or Ahimsa*). To hurt any living creature, by deed, thought or expression is to deny the presence of God. It is only through pure thought deed and joy that we can appreciate the immense magnificence and spirituality of God.



12. We believe in living a life of respect and reverence for all of God's creations, with love for all and hatred for none and special respect for our elders, parents and teachers (*Gurus*).

13. Hindu festivals are an important aspect for the faithful to fast, pray and celebrate: Birth anniversaries of the spiritual deities (*Ramnavmi, Krishna-Asthmi, Maha-Shivratri, Saraswati-puja*). Lunar/astrological events of full moon (*Purnima*), new moon (*Amavasya*), Eclipse (*Grahan*), Start of spring (*Holi*), harvest-time (*Navratri and Durga puja*), end of year (*Diwali*) and New-year. Reaffirmation of family or special bonds for brother-sister/couples/priest-congregation (*Raksha-Bandhan*), brother-sister (*Bhai-bij*), for teacher-student (*Guru-Purnima*).



14. For Hindus their faith is one of personal choice, an article of intimate faith in god who resides in each one of us as our Soul (*Atma*) to provide a moral compass and guidance in everyday life activity. The teachings of the faith above reinforces that relationship with god. As their faith is an integral part of one's Soul (*Atma*) there is no particular need for external expression. Prayers are a means of one-to-one with god. Hindus tend live a family or communal way of life maintaining links with their extended family, community and friends. Attendance at the temple or taking part in any ceremonies is of personal choice and there is no coercion except etiquette, respect and regards for others present. Beyond faith the focus is on personal and family development, enrichment of life through arts, culture, music and work, self-respect and contribution into the wider community.

