

Component 3 – Short Course – Key Terms (Hinduism)

Learners should be able to explain and apply these terms in relation to the themes:

1. **Ahimsa** - Non-injury to living things; the doctrine of non-violence.
2. **Avatara** - The incarnations of a deity, sometimes in human form; most commonly used is Vishnu, the Preserver God, who was incarnated through Krishna.
3. **Brahman** – The supreme power in the Universe; ultimate reality; God.
4. **Dharma** – The religious and moral duty in relation to a person's status in Hindu society, determined by caste.
5. **Karma** - the belief that actions, and the consequences of these actions, determine whether the atman will be released from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. One could gain positive and/or negative karma.
6. **Moksha** – The release from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth; liberation; ultimate union with God.
7. **Murti** - An image or statue of a God/Goddess; one or more of these are often the focal point of puja.
8. **Trimurti** - The three major aspects of the Brahman, the supreme power; Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Shiva the Destroyer.

Other useful terms:

1. **Aarti** – A form of Hindu worship/prayer in which burning lamps are waved before the statues of the gods to invoke their presence.
2. **Ashramas** - The four stages of life.
3. **Atman** - The individual self or soul, which is believed to be non-physical and return to Brahman once moksha is achieved.
4. **Bhakta** - Love and devotion (to a personal God).
5. **Bhagavad Gita** - The Hindu holy book; the “Song of the Lord”.
6. **Bindis** - A red spot or mark worn on the forehead of Hindus. Usually the mark is placed on worshippers forehead after a Puja service.
7. **Brahma** - The Creator God – one of the members of the Trimurti.
8. **Brahmin** - The priestly caste.
9. **Burfi** - Milk sweets often give out during worship.
10. **Castes** - Social divisions of Hindu society.
11. **Deity** - A god or goddess.
12. **Diva** - A small lamp often used during Diwali.

13. Diwali - Hindu festival of Lights (sometimes Divali or Deepavali); this celebrates good conquering evil and invites the goddess Lakshmi into the home.
14. Guru - A religious teacher and spiritual guide.
15. Ganesha - The elephant-headed God; god of good beginnings; symbol of luck and remover of obstacles. He is often the first to be worshipped.
16. Gayatri Mantra - A very important verse from the Vedas, which is said each day in particular by the Brahmins (Priests).
17. Hanuman - The monkey God; Hero of the Ramayana, God of strength.
18. Holi - Festival of Colours; also of Fire and Water.
19. Ishtadev - A personally chosen God.
20. Japa - The repetition of a mantra or the names of God. This can be done aloud or in the mind.
21. Jati - Birth or Caste.
22. Krishna - An avatar of Vishnu, which is worshipped widely.
23. Kshatriya - the caste of warriors and rulers; the noble caste.
24. Lakshmi - The goddess of wealth and fortune and wife of Vishnu - the Preserver God. Popular at the time of Diwali when diva lamps are put in windows to attract her attention.
25. Mahabharata - One of the two epic poems of India that includes the Bhagavad Gita.
26. Mahashivratri - The Great Shiva Night. Shiva, one of the most important gods in Hinduism, has the power to create and to destroy. This is a time of fasting.
27. Mandir - A Hindu place of worship or shrine.
28. Mantra - A sacred verse from the ancient scriptures that is repeated before and during worship; usually written in Sanskrit.
29. Namaste - A greeting, usually said with hands clasped in front of the body; literally "I bow to God as you".
30. Om - A sacred syllable; said to be the first word ever lettered and the first sound heard; the most sacred mantra (sometimes Aum).
31. Prashad - Food offered to the gods and shared with the congregation.
32. Puja - Prayer/worship of the gods; offerings. Offerings are given to the murti.
33. Ramayana - One of the two great epics of India that tells the story of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu.
34. Ravana - The demon king who depicts "evil" in the Ramayana.
35. Rig Veda - The oldest of the Hindu scriptures, literally "royal knowledge".
36. Samsara - The constant change of the world through a process of birth, death and being reborn through reincarnation.

37. Samskara - Ceremonies that are rites of passage to mark key transition periods in life. These include the naming, marriage and death rites.
38. Sanskrit - Language of the ancient scriptures
39. Saraswati - The goddess of music, art and learning and wife of the god Brahma.
40. Satsang - A gathering for devotional singing/worship.
41. Shiva - The most ancient Hindu deity, the Destroyer God – a member of the Trimurti.
42. Sita - Wife of Rama and found in the story of the Ramayana which is told at the time of Diwali.
43. Sudra – The caste grouping of unskilled workers or servants.
44. Upanishads – The Hindu scriptures; final section of the Vedic scriptures.
45. Upanayana - Sacred thread ceremony
46. Varna - One of the four main groups in traditional Hindu society.
47. Vaisya – The caste grouping of skilled workers, labourers, merchants and minor officials.
48. Vedas - The oldest Hindu scriptures that reveal knowledge.
49. Vishnu - The Preserver God – member of the Trimurti.