



# Hinduism:

## Do beliefs in Karma, Samsara and Moksha help Hindus lead good lives?

### Topic Overview

- Hindus believe in reincarnation, the cycle of rebirth.
- They believe that the soul is eternal and lives many lifetimes, in one body after another, and the next incarnation depends on how the previous life was lived.
- The soul (Atman) can be born in a human form, or that of a plant or animal, as all living things have a soul (Brahman in everything).
- Hindus try to live in a way that will cause each of their lives to be better than the life before.
- The spiritual goal of a Hindu is to become one with Brahman.
- This is called Moksha and until it is achieved, Hindus believe that they will continue to be reincarnated so that they work towards self-realisation of the truth: that nothing else but Brahman exists.
- Once Moksha is achieved, the soul (Atman) is released to be united with Brahman.
  - Karma**  
In a lifetime, Hindus believe that people build up Karma, both positive and negative, based on their actions within that lifetime.  
This Karma affects their future lives and existences.  
People must take responsibility for their actions during this time and the next.  
Believing in Karma has an effect on how a Hindu behaves.
  - Moksha**  
Moksha is linked closely to Karma, as the actions a person performs have a direct influence on their next life, so to achieve Moksha, good karma must be built up.
- The cycle of rebirth should be in a Hindu's mind each day as everything we do will have a consequence either in this life or the next.
- This belief would prompt Hindus to help others around them be the best they can be - to help them reach the best situation next time.
- Hindus believe difficulties in our present life are the result of acts we have committed in the past.
- In the same way, our actions in our present lives will determine our fate in the lives that follow.

### Links with other religions

- Heaven** (Christianity). Christians believe those who believe in Christ and live good lives will be given eternal life in Heaven with God and Jesus.
- Life after Death** (Judaism). While Jewish people believe there is a life after death, the details of this are unclear. Most Jews concentrate on living a good life today in the present, rather than what will happen when they die.
- Samsara** (Sikhism). Many Sikhs believe that all beings have a soul (atma). The atma is a part of Waheguru within them. Through a series of reincarnations, Sikhs believe they will be purified and able to return to Waheguru.
- Karma** (Sikhism). Sikhs believe in karma. Through good action and by living a good life and keeping God in their minds, Sikhs hope to achieve good merit and avoid punishment. Sikhs believe Karma determines what happens to an individual's atma in the next life.
- Samsara** (Buddhism). The Buddha taught that humans are born an infinite number of times, unless they achieve Nirvana (enlightenment).
- Karma** (Buddhism). Through good actions and by developing concentration and wisdom, Buddhists hope to either gain enlightenment or to ensure a better future for themselves. These good actions are set out in the Eightfold Path. Good actions will result in a better rebirth, while bad actions will have the opposite effect.
- Akhira** (Islam). Muslims believe in everlasting life after death. Muslims believe they will face judgement from Allah (God). The good will be rewarded with eternal life in Paradise (Jannah), while the bad will be punished by going to Hell (Jahannam).

Key Vocabulary	Definition
Karma	Actions and in particular, the consequences of our actions in this life and the next.
Samsara	The cycle of life including birth, life, death and rebirth.
Moksha	The final release from the cycle of rebirth - to join with Brahman.
Soul	The essence of a living being.
Incarnation	Being alive on Earth in a particular form.
Reincarnation	The rebirth of a soul in another body.
Sadhu	A Holy man - usually one who has turned away from ordinary life to concentrate on spiritual matters.
Atman	Eternal self. Often referred to as 'spirit' or 'soul.' It indicates our true self which underpins who we are.

