

# Hindu (Sanatan) Dharma

(also called Hinduism or Vedic Religion)

at a glance

सनातन धर्म – एक सम्यक दृष्टि



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<https://sanatancentre.com/>



# Embracing Hindu Heritage to Enrich Canada's Cultural Mosaic

- Welcome to Hindu Heritage Month! Celebrated every November, to recognize the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Canada's social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual fabric.
- The purpose of this presentation is
  - to share the rich, ancient knowledge of the Sanatan Hindu culture with fellow Canadians to strengthen understanding and enriching the Canadian mosaic, and
  - to pass it on to the next generation so the young people may take pride in their deep cultural roots and support building a strong Canada.
- Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate people about Sanatan Hindu values and the important role they have played and continue to play in strengthening Canadian mosaic.
- It will give community an opportunity to share their stories that are fundamental to Hindu civilisation.



# Objectives:

- **Educational Objective:** To educate Canadians about the fundamental principles, philosophies, and spiritual practices of Sanatan Dharm / Hinduism.
- **Cultural Appreciation:** To foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Hindu culture, art, rituals, and the rich tapestry of traditions.
- **Interconnectedness:** To highlight the interconnectedness of Sanatan Hinduism with the diverse mosaic of Canadian society promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism.
- **Community Engagement:** To provide a platform for the Hindu community to share their inspiring stories, celebrate their cultural heritage, and contribute positively to the wider Canadian cultural landscape.



# Key Themes

- **Diversity and Inclusivity:** Exploring the diversity within Hinduism and how it reflects the multicultural society in Canada, promoting inclusivity.
- **Philosophy and Spirituality:** Delving into the core principles of Sanatan Hindu philosophy and spirituality, which promote harmony and peace.
- **Art, Culture, and Festivals:** Showcasing the rich tapestry of Hindu art, culture, and festivals, which are a testament to the creativity and traditions of the Hindu civilization.
- **Contributions to Society:** Highlighting the valuable contributions of Hindu Canadians to various sectors, including science, technology, medicine, arts, and more.



# Understanding Sanatana Dharma सनातन धर्म: The Eternal Path to Righteousness

- Sanatana Dharma, often referred to as Hinduism, originates from the Sanskrit term "Sanatana" which means 'Eternal, beyond time, or Universal Righteousness.'
- The word "Dharma" is complex, with no direct English equivalent. It encompasses values, virtues, moral duties, ethical laws, truth, codes of behavior, and righteous actions that sustain human life in peace and harmony.
- Sanatana Dharma is rooted in a divine-centered perspective, emphasizing personal experiences over reliance on prophets or beliefs. It asserts that the universe itself is the manifestation of the Divine, reflecting the idea that something cannot come from nothing.
- Just as natural laws govern physical phenomena, Sanatana Dharma provides the spiritual laws that guide human life. It offers a comprehensive worldview and a way of life, presenting a coherent and rational view of reality.
- Importantly, Sanatana Dharma embraces other religions and **does not seek to convert individuals.** Namaste" is used as a common salutation.



# Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism - सनातन धर्म

- Sanatan Dharma can also be interpreted as Vedic Culture or traditions which recognizes that there is **one Supreme Being 'Brahman'** with no beginning or end, the all in all, the unlimited Absolute Truth. It is described "ek onkar ॐ", which can expand and manifest into many forms. The often quoted proverb that conveys this attitude is, "*Ekam sat anekah panthah*," which means, "Truth is one, paths are many."
- This tradition recognizes that the individual soul is eternal, and **offers personal freedom** for one to make his own choice of how he/she wants to pursue his spiritual journey.
- Hinduism is one of the world's oldest belief systems, representing the indigenous people of the Indian subcontinent, with distinct and diverse cultures, languages, and philosophies. It emphasizes inclusivity, environmental care, and a steadfast commitment to its core beliefs. Hinduism allows individuals to seek and realize their own paths to the divine, while also respecting and embracing other religions.
- In Canada, Hindus constitute a minority group, comprising approximately 2.3% of the country's population. They have immigrated from various countries, including India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Caribbean, and others.





# Understanding the Concept of God in Hinduism?



- In Hinduism, God is described as the infinite Supreme Reality, the Absolute Truth, and the source of divine conscious energy, from which all energies flow. God is believed to be the sole cause of everything and the creator of the entire universe.
- Hindus view God as omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and self-evident, with no beginning or end. This perspective aligns with concepts in quantum physics and the elements found in the periodic table.
- Hindus believe in One Supreme Being that permeates the entire universe. While God is considered formless, to provide a more tangible focus for prayer and worship, various forms and names have been assigned to represent God's major attributes, functions, and aspects. For instance, Brahma is seen as the creator, Vishnu as the sustainer, and Mahesh/Shiva as the regenerator.
- Additionally, Hindus often have an Ishtadevta (favourite deity), which is their chosen or favorite deity, such as Krishna, Ram, Ganesh, Shiva, or Shakti.



# Namaste नमस्ते – Hindu way of Greeting



- Hindus greet each other by saying **Namaste**. Palms are held together in prayer position in front of the heart area while bowing the head down slightly. Namaste is a Sanskrit word which means- ***I bow to the divinity in you***. The bowing down of the head is to show one's humility, love, respect and readiness to include others in one's circle.





# Core Beliefs and Values that unite all Hindus

- Hinduism embraces the concept of a single divine essence that can manifest in countless forms.
- Hindus uphold the belief in the law of karma, where actions have consequences, and in the cycle of reincarnation (पुनर्जन्म), where the soul undergoes rebirth. The ultimate goal is to attain Moksha (मोक्ष), liberation from the cycle of rebirth, through the pursuit of truth, surrender, and selfless service (सेवा).
- Dharma encompasses moral obligations and righteous behavior, emphasizing living in swadharma (स्वधर्म). Key virtues include patience, forgiveness, self-control, cleanliness (Shauch), contentment (Santosh), restraint over the senses (Yam and Niyam), wisdom, truthfulness, selfless service, and non-violence. Without these qualities, humans are like beasts.
- Hindus regard all life as sacred, emphasizing love, reverence, and meaningful actions in thought, word, and deed. The belief in a common soul (आत्मा) underscores equality, with a commitment to personal growth, love, peace, and harmony among all human beings.
- Hinduism reveres the four Vedas as the world's most ancient scriptures and acknowledges the existence of divine beings in unseen realms. Divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments and personal devotionals create a communion with these Gods.



# Hinduism having Feminine form of Divinity

- One of the most profound attributes of Hinduism is the recognition and worship of God as feminine (Divine Mother माँ).
- Scriptures extol the qualities of the feminine divine as well as the spiritual sameness of male and female deities, while highlighting their differences in nature.
- God is worshipped as a 'Divine Couple' with a masculine and a feminine component.
- Wisdom/Knowledge (Mata Saraswati), Prosperity (Mata Laxmi), Power (Mata Durga) etc., represented symbolically by feminine Hindu deities.
- Only major religious tradition in which God is equally 'Goddess'.
- Women have played prominent roles in Hindu society from ancient time till now.



# Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam वसुधैव कुटुंबकम

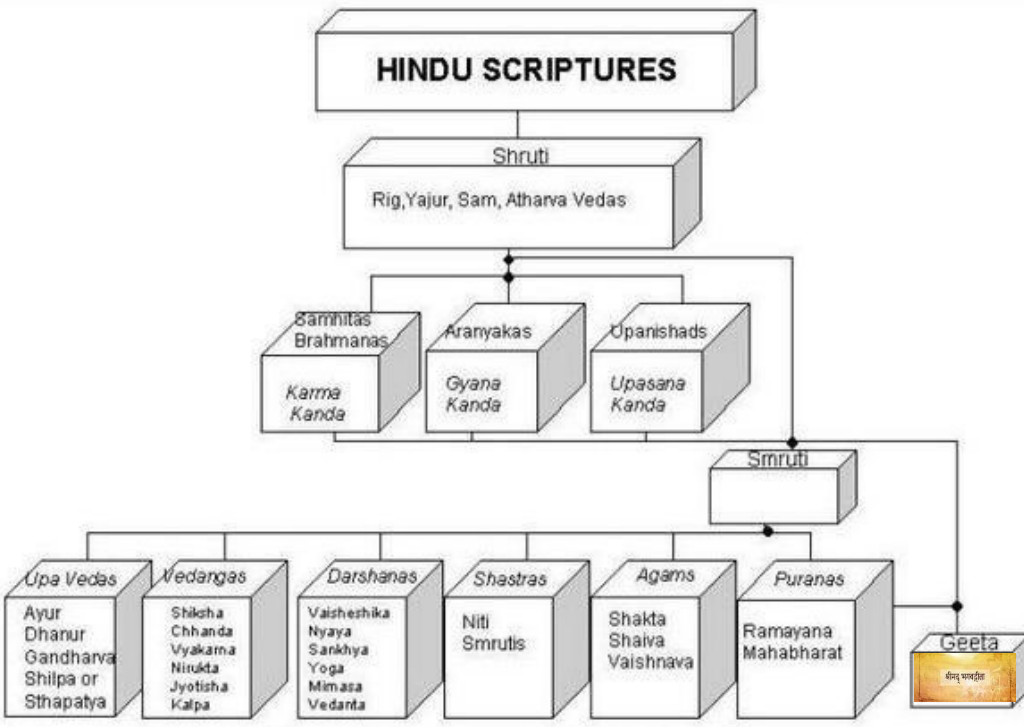
- Hindus hold the belief in the interconnectedness and oneness of all living beings and everything in the universe. To them, everything is interconnected, and All is One.
- Many Hindus seek spiritual guidance from a Guru, someone who has realized God, or they turn to ancient wisdom for answers about life and dharma.
- The history of Hinduism is unique and has inspired various other religions while positively impacting the lives of countless individuals.
- Hindus strongly believe in the strength of unity within diversity, aligning with principles in Canada that encourage sharing and learning from different cultures, traditions, and histories.
- Hindu Sanatan Dharma not only promotes tolerance for other religions but also emphasizes respect. It upholds the idea that everyone is entitled to their own spiritual path, and **no one should be mocked, persecuted, or subjected to any form of prejudice or phobia** (e.g. Hinduphobia)

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam  
(The Earth is a Family)



# Scriptures – Sacred Texts

## शास्त्र



- Hindu sacred texts are classified into two categories: Shruti (श्रुति) and Smriti (स्मृति).
- Shruti encompasses the Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva Veda) and Upanishads. The Vedas consist of hymns, Brahmanas (ritual texts), Aranyakas (forest texts, the basis of rituals), and Upanishads (philosophical texts).
- Smriti includes various texts, such as Itihas (history), Puranas (mythological stories-18, Bhagvat is the most predominant), Shastras, Agams, UpVedas, and Darshanas (philosophical texts).
- Notable historical texts within Smriti are the Mahabharata (which contains the revered Shrimad Bhagavad Gita) and the Ramayana (Maharshi Balmiki in Sanskrit & Tulsidasji, s in Hindi are the most predominant).
- The Vedas and Upanishads, written over 10,000 years ago, impart timeless knowledge and universal wisdom, addressing core spiritual philosophy applicable to all.
- Among the most beloved sacred texts are the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana, which feature avatars like Sri Krishna and Sri Ram, embodying divine qualities that Hindus seek to emulate.
- These sacred texts are predominantly composed in Sanskrit and, for generations, were transmitted orally.



# Sacred Symbols in Hinduism

- "Om" (ॐ or "Aum") is the most sacred sound and symbol in Hinduism, representing the sound of the universe and universal consciousness. It appears at the beginning and end of many Sanskrit prayers and is closely associated with yoga (योग), where its chanting has a profound effect on the body and mind.
- The Swastika स्वास्तिक symbolizes auspiciousness, peace, prosperity, and universal brotherhood. "Swasti" in Sanskrit conveys the wish for well-being. The Swastika's arms pointing in all directions symbolize the eternal nature of the Brahman, signifying the omnipresence of the Absolute. In Sanskrit, "Su" means good, "asti" means to exist, and "ka" or "tika" signifies a mark of good luck. Additionally, it represents the cyclic return of the four celestial periods: Sat (Golden), Treta (Silver), Dwapar (Copper), and Kali (Iron, when divine guidance diminishes) Yuga.





# Understanding Karma कर्म



- **Karma** refers to deeds or actions and is based on the cosmic law of cause and effect, where every action has a corresponding consequence. It emphasizes personal accountability for one's deeds, thoughts, and words, often interpreted as destiny.
- Hinduism recognizes four spiritual paths to realize God: **Karma**, **Gyan** (knowledge), **Bhakti** (devotion), and **Raja** (royal or meditative) **Yoga**. Each path is suitable for individuals with different temperaments.
- **Karma Yoga** involves selfless actions and is suitable for those with an active temperament. **Bhakti Yoga** is for the devotional, **Raja Yoga** for the mystical, and **Gyan Yoga** for the rational and philosophical individuals.
- There are three types of karma: **Sanchit** (accumulated past actions +/- ledger), **Prarabdha** (fate, the portion of Sanchit karma affecting the current life), and **Kriyaman** (new actions that lead to future experiences, both joyful and painful).
- At present, we control only actions and execution of actions, not the results.



# The Significance of Divine Language Sanskrit संस्कृत

- Sanskrit is the most ancient language of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, and it holds a vast reservoir of knowledge spanning Science, Mathematics, Medicine, Botany, Chemistry, Art, Humanities
  - Sanskrit is the root of many Indian languages and has influenced some European languages. It's words are believed to possess a unique vibrational quality, and sacred chants in Sanskrit are considered cosmic sounds that can have a healing effect on the body and mind.
  - Sanskrit is an inflected language and shares affinities with computer languages (Sanskrit & Artificial Intelligence — Rick Briggs)
  - India's linguistic diversity is a strength and a symbol of unity, as many ancient scriptures are written in this divine language.
  - The Vedas are the primary source of sacred law, followed by tradition, virtuous conduct of those who understand the Vedas, the customs of holy individuals, and finally, self-satisfaction—all of which are documented in Sanskrit.
- वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलं स्मृतिशीले च तद्विदाम्।आचारश्चैव साधूनामात्मनस्तुष्टिरेव च ॥

असतोमा सदगमय ।  
तमसोमा ज्योतिर् गमय ।  
मृत्योर्मा मृतं गमय ॥  
ॐ शान्ति शान्ति शान्तिः ॥

Asato ma sadgamaya,  
tamaso ma jyotirgamaya,  
mrytor ma amritamgamaya  
Om śhānti śhānti śhāntiḥ

From the non-being to the true being  
From darkness to Light  
From death to immortality  
Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

[Brihadaranyaka Upanishad]



# Progressive Four Stages of Life and Values

Hindu life is structured into four phases or Ashramas, which are complemented by a division into four social classes based on occupation. This framework guides individuals toward a balanced and meaningful life, ultimately leading to liberation (moksha मोक्ष). The four life stages are:

- **Brahmacharya (Learning):** The student phase, focused on learning and preparing for life's responsibilities. This includes acquiring knowledge and skills, both worldly and spiritual, to walk the path of self-realization.
  - **Grihastha (Earning):** The householder's stage, characterized by marriage, career development, and the pursuit of desires and wealth (kama and artha). Hinduism encourages monogamy in an ideal society, and dowry practices are not mentioned.
  - **Vanaprastha (Returning back to society):** The gradual detachment from the material world, often considered as a form of retirement. During this stage, individuals engage in charity work, contemplate truth, make holy pilgrimages, and selflessly share divine knowledge with society without ego.
  - **Sanyasa (Returning to the Source):** The renunciant stage, where individuals detach themselves from materialism and worldly relations to unite with God through practices like yoga, meditation, bhakti (devotion), and gyan (knowledge).
- Hinduism teaches that children do not belong to their parents but are a gift that comes through them. Therefore, individuals are encouraged to perform their duties without attachment or expectation.
  - The stages align with life's natural progression: adolescence is dedicated to learning, adulthood leans towards material pursuits, old age shifts toward saintly activities, and the end of life aims to unite the mind with the Absolute and attain moksha, the ultimate liberation.

शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम् वार्धके मुनिवृत्तीनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम्॥



# Purpose of Life (Purushartha) पुरुषार्थ

- The affirmative attitude of Hinduism towards life has been emphasized by its recognition of four legitimate and basic desires: Dharma or righteousness, Artha (wealth or prosperity), Kama (pleasure or fulfillment of righteous desires), and Moksha or freedom through union with God (Yoga). Therefore, the ultimate goal of life is self-realization, attainment of salvation/moksha.
- Purushartha provide Hindus with opportunities to act morally and ethically and lead a balanced, blissful and meaningful life.
- All humans righteously seek **kama** (physical and emotional pleasure) and **artha** (power, fame, respect and wealth), but soon, with maturity, learn to govern these legitimate desires within a higher, pragmatic framework of **dharma**, or moral harmony in all to achieve the main goal of life to attain absolute happiness, i.e moksha.
- Throughout their lives, Hindus attempt to end the cycle of Sansara and behave in a way that provides good **karma** in this life and the next. **The law of karma states that as you sow shall you reap.**



# Division of Labour - Varn System वर्ण व्यवस्था

- Varnashram is an architectural and organizational arrangement (व्यवस्था) in order to keep check and balance in the society and seek the ultimate goal of Moksha. All of this framework is a consequence of the philosophy of Generation, Sustenance, and Destruction (Srishti-Sthithi-Laya) and their interrelations.
- Division of Varn are classed according to their natural qualities and work and **not from birth** (Bhagvad gita 4/13 & 18/41). This can be seen as the professional distribution of labour in Corporate lives.
- In the Vedic ages, people could move from one varn to another however over a period of time, one was stuck in the varn, one was born into. The different Varnas are:
  - **Brahmins** - Priests, pure, wise, and understanding path of Brahman and the universe ecosystem and are ready to live life with austerities. Act as a mentor and provide advice to other varnas.
  - **Kshatriyas** are warriors, and leaders, who hold power and ready to fight and sacrifice for the security and safety of society, dharma, and country.
  - **Vaishya** are skilled craftsmen, and risk takers, lead in wealth and farming activities in a righteous way and are willing to share their wealth for the welfare of dharma and the community.
  - **Shudra** are mostly in service and entertainment sectors having mix skills, are contented with what they get, and can be directed to perform tasks based on other's interest.





# Rituals and Traditions रीति रिवाज

- Rituals in Hinduism hold deep meaning as they help in controlling the mind and provide an opportunity to introspect and connect with the inner self. These rituals are designed to understand the purpose of life and uphold righteousness through virtuous actions.
- Hindu rituals serve the vital purpose of preserving and passing down values from one generation to the next, thus maintaining cultural heritage. There are three main categories of rituals in Hinduism:
  - **Nitya**: Daily rituals, including Panch dev pooja and Panch Yajna (devotional offerings).
  - **Namitya**: Occasional rituals performed on special occasions such as birthdays, marriages, and other significant life events.
  - **Kamyā**: Rituals performed according to personal desires or specific intentions.
- These rituals teach the importance of tapa (austerity) for righteousness, help in achieving a balanced state of body elements (earth, water, fire, sky, air), and foster harmony within the mind and soul.
- Hinduism offers a rich menu of spiritual practices and yoga to enrich life, catering to diverse temperaments, capacities, tastes, spiritual development, and life circumstances.
- To navigate life and make ethical choices, Hindus turn to sacred texts and the wisdom of great personalities, exemplified in verses like Shrimad Bhagvadgita 16/24: "The essence of dharma is hidden within the hearts of great beings. They are the pathfinders."

धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायाम्। महाजनो येन गतः स पन्थाः।



# Love for Nature and Environment in Sanatan Dharm

- Believe that every living thing has an “atman” and obliges to defend our environment.
- Hindu and First Nations cultures share a deep reverence for nature, emphasizing our interconnectedness with the natural world. They consider the sun, moon, air, trees, shrubs, mountains, and rivers as sacred.
- Recognizes that nature and ecosystems holding fabric of the planet together create a climate ideal for human life.
- Hindus believe all living things are sacred, and accepting responsibility for the natural world will bring good karmic consequences for everyone.
- River Ganges is life, purity, and goddess to the people of Indian Hindus.
- The Kumbh Mela, held on the banks of the sacred Ganges River, stands as one of the world's largest gatherings, renowned for the remarkable self-management demonstrated by attendees driven by their faith. For instance, the 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela saw an estimated 49 million visitors over a 49-day period, setting a record as the largest peaceful gathering of people in one location.



# Pooja (पूजा) - Divine Prayer

- Puja refers to rituals and prayers done at home or at a **temple**. The Puja ceremony usually involves the lighting of a diya (candle or lamp), chanting of mantras (sacred cosmic sounds) to express gratitude and seek blessings.
- Puja is a way for Hindus to connect with the divine spark within and with the personal deities they love, referred to as Satchitananda.
- Most rituals are performed in alignment with nature and material available in one's ecosystem (similar to the First Nation).
- Yagna is key part of prayer and refers to appreciate and gratify the contribution of ecosystem through prayer and charity.



# Mandir (Temples) मंदिर

- A Mandir (देवालय), often referred to as a lighthouse of philosophy and knowledge, serves as a sacred public space for worshipping the Supreme, upholding Dharma (righteousness), and attaining bliss through the cultivation of moral and spiritual values. मंदिर वही जहां मन विश्राम पाए ।
- To thrive, a Mandir needs to grow through companionship and selfless service (सेवालय ), deeper through passionate devotion, stronger through worship (पूजालय ) and unconditional love, broader through a clear vision, and larger through the dissemination of wisdom and arts (विद्यालय&कलालय).
- Achieving this balance doesn't happen naturally, so it's our responsibility to establish a deliberate system and structure to ensure that our Mandir supports the ultimate purpose of life, which is moksha.

An ideal Mandir envisions a harmonious blend of:

- Meditation (Dhyan Yog) for inner contemplation
  - Actions and Selfless Service (Karm Yog) for selfless deeds
  - Knowledge (Gnan Yog) for spiritual understanding
  - Dutiful Devotion (Bhakti Yog) for unwavering devotion
  - Individual's Spiritual Growth and Wellness
  - Residence of Gods and association with authentic प्रमाणिक individuals (those firmly established in swadharm with a balanced and meaningful lifestyle).
- As a result, a Devalay serves multiple purposes, encompassing the religious, spiritual, cultural, educational, and social realms, allowing devotees to focus on spiritual insight, achieve holistic well-being, and experience peace and bliss.



# Who founded Sanatana or Vedic Dharma ?

- Hinduism is a diverse and non-prophet faith with no single individual or founder, and it lacks a single holy book or prescribed way of worship. However, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita serves as a significant guide to living in accordance with one's swadharma.
- Hindu Dharma is based on divine revelations experienced by Rishis (Guru) during deep meditation on God. According to Puranic stories, the Vedic knowledge was first given by Lord Vishnu to the first living being, known as Brahma.
- Hindus are distributed around the world, with 95% residing in India. They speak over 22 different languages, such as Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, and more. While customs and traditions may vary due to this linguistic and cultural diversity, core beliefs in Brahman, Vedas, the Karmic theory, ways of worship, and fundamental life principles remain consistent.
- The traditional Vedic education system is based on Guru Shishya tradition. A Guru (गुरु), derived from "gu" (darkness) and "ru" (light), is a person of great knowledge, wisdom, and authority in a specific area who selflessly guides others.





# Sanskars (sacraments) and Rituals? संस्कार

- Sanskars help Hindus in their spiritual evolution and include actions that purify, refine, and reform.
- Like traffic signs on roads, it gives them directions / milestones at every crucial stage of life development (Brahmcharya – Learning, Grihastha – Earning, Vaanprastha - Returning, and Sanyas - union with the Self).
- Sixteen sanskars/ceremonies are prescribed for Hindus starting from conception and ending at death.
- In present time most Hindus follow the six sanskars: Jatakarma (welcoming the newly born child to this world); Namkaran (name giving); Choodakaran (first head shaving); Upanayana (initiation of learning); Vivah (wedding) and Anteshti (funeral rites).



# The Essence of Yog: A Path to Harmony and Health



- Yog, an ancient practice originating in India, finds its roots in the Sanskrit word 'Yuj,' which means to unite. According to Patanjali Yog Sutra, Yog leads to the union of individual consciousness with Universal Consciousness, symbolizing a perfect harmony between the mind and body, and humans with nature.
- The practice of Yog aims to enrich life, maintain physical fitness, prevent and cure diseases, and uncover the hidden divinity within to realize peace (connect within). This spiritual path to infinite bliss requires determination, dedication, and devotion.
- The International Day of Yog has been celebrated worldwide on June 21 since 2015, following the recommendation of Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the United Nations Assembly.
- In this philosophy, the body is regarded as a vessel to navigate the challenges of the material world joyfully. The Ashtanga (8 limbs) of Yog are:



- **Yam:** Outer control, upholding principles of truthfulness, non-violence, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-greediness.
- **Niyam:** Inner purification through purity, contentment, austerity, study, and worship.
- **Asana:** Postures to strengthen the body.
- **Pranayam:** Breath control, leading to the management of vital energies and the subtle and astral bodies.
- **Pratyahar:** Achieving calmness, where the senses are under control, preventing uncontrolled intake.
- **Dharna:** Concentration, where the mind is under control.
- **Dhyan:** Achieving perception of the self, with prana merging with the soul.
- **Samadhi:** The attainment of a superconscious state and eternal peace.



# Festivals – त्यौहार

- Hindu festivals have deep spiritual import, which has religious, cultural, environmental, hygienic and social elements in them.
- Festivals bring people together, teach lessons for life in joyous way and give rest and peace to people. Everyone forgets and forgives the wrongs done by others. There is an air of freedom, festivity and friendship everywhere. The festival brings about unity and instils charity and love in the hearts of people. The most important commonly celebrated Hindu festivals are **Deepawali** (festival of light) and **Holi** (festival of colours), occur in fall and spring.
- Hindus around the world celebrate **Deepawali (दीपावली)**, festival of lights, which celebrates the victory of good over evil. People light oil lamps called diyas to invite the light of peace and knowledge into their lives and homes. They wear new clothes, share sweets with friends and family and offer prayers to mata Lakshmi, for wealth and prosperities. Hindus celebrate Sri Ram and his wife Sita's return from exile. Deepawali also celebrates the killing of tyrant demon-king Naraksura by Sri Krishna. There are several other legends and stories behind this auspicious celebration.





# Festivals: Holi and Navratri

- **Holi** is celebrated every spring and is also known as the festival of colours. This ancient tradition marks the end of winter and honours the triumph of good over evil, as told in the story of Prahlad. Celebrants light bonfires, throw colorful powder called gulal, eat sweets, and dance to traditional folk music. It's a day to forgive and forget past grievances and renew old friendships.
- **Navratri**, a Sanskrit word for nine auspicious nights, celebrates the nine forms of Devi Shakti or feminine divinity. The first 3 days honour Durga, who embodies valour and self-confidence. The next 3 days honour Lakshmi, who embodies wealth and the last 3 days honour Saraswati, who embodies knowledge. Navratri reminds Hindus to imbibe these good qualities and establish themselves in swadharma.
- Rangoli is an art form, that originated in India and they are usually made during Deepawali and other auspicious occasions. These beautiful patterns are created on the floor using different materials such as coloured sand, quartz powder or flower petals. Traditionally rangoli powder was made of rice in order to feed ants and birds as part of expressing unity with nature.



# Music – Kirtan कीर्तन

- Bhajans / Kirtan, are part of a rich tradition of music in Hinduism. **Music is essential to the worship experience, because it arouses the senses and creates spiritual vibrations that enhance devotion.** Repetition and chanting help connect devotees to humankind and to their spirituality.
- The chanting and hearing of sustained musical notes has been linked to the Divine in Hinduism from early Vedic times. The Sama Veda contains Vedic verses set to pre-existent melodies.
- Just as Christian church music has strongly influenced the development of Western classical music, these various traditions of Indian religious music in India, which developed in specific sacred places and within religious lineages, have been a rich source of material for Indian classical music.



# Dances नृत्य

- Dance is a central practice in Hinduism across a variety of contexts, mythological narratives, and time periods. Gods such as Śiva and Krishna are dancers, and humans also dance, often embodying these gods as part of *bhakti*, or devotion.
- Indian classical dances such as **Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, and Mohiniattam** can be traced to the Sanskrit text *Natya Shastra*. They are a traditional drama-dance expression of religion, related to Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, pan-Hindu epics and the Vedic literature.
- The Vedas integrate rituals with performance arts, such as a dramatic play, where not only praises to gods were recited or sung, but the dialogues were part of a dramatic representation and discussion of spiritual themes
- The criteria for classical dance and performance arts that has survived is the Hindu text *NATYASHASTRA*, attributed to sage Bharat Muni. Brahma also created *Natya-veda* by taking the word from the *Rigveda*, melody from the *Samaveda*, mime from the *Yajurveda*, and emotion from the *Atharvaveda*.
- A performance is considered accomplished if it manages to evoke a *rasa* (emotion) among the audience by invoking a particular *bhava* (gesture or facial expression).
- The eight classical dances of India have roots in Hindu arts and religious practices

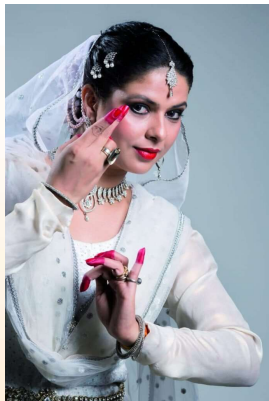




# Dances



Dating back to 1000 BC, **barathanatyam** is a classical dance from the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, practiced predominantly in modern times by women. The dance is usually accompanied by classical Carnatic music. It originated in the Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu and neighboring regions.



**Kathak** is traditionally attributed to the traveling bards of ancient northern India (Benaras, Lucknow & Jaipur), known as Kathakars or storytellers. Kathak evolved by incorporating childhood and amorous stories of Hindu god Krishna, as well as in the courts of north Indian kingdoms, integrating the tastes and Persian arts in the 16th and 17th century.



**Kathakali:** *Katha*, “story”; *kali*, “performance” is a highly stylized classical dance-drama form which originated from Kerala in the 17th century. This classical dance form is another “story play” genre of art, but one distinguished by its elaborately colorful make-up, costumes and face masks wearing actor-dancers.



**Kuchipudi** originated in Andhra Pradesh. It has roots in antiquity and developed as a religious art linked to traveling bards, temples and spiritual beliefs. In its history, the Kuchipudi dancers were all males, typically Brahmins, who would play the roles of men and women in the story after dressing appropriately.



# Dances



**Odissi** dance is originated in the Hindu temples of Odisha, was performed predominantly by women, and expressed religious stories and spiritual ideas, (e.g. Vishnu as Jagannath). Spiritual message from the Hindu texts, using symbolic costumes, body movement, *abhinaya* (expressions) and *mudras* (gestures and sign language).



**Sattriya** is a classical dance-drama performance art with origins in the Krishna-centered Vaishnavism monasteries of Assam, and attributed to the 15th century Bhakti movement scholar and saint named Srimanta Sankardev.



**Manipuri**, also known as Jagoi, is named after the region of its origin – Manipur, a state in north-eastern India bordering with Myanmar. It is particularly known for its Hindu Vaishnavism themes, and performances of love-inspired dance drama of Radha-Krishna called Rass Lila.



**Mohiniyattam** developed in the state of Kerala, gets its name from Mohini – the seductress avatar of Vishnu, who uses her charms to help the good prevail in a battle between good and evil.



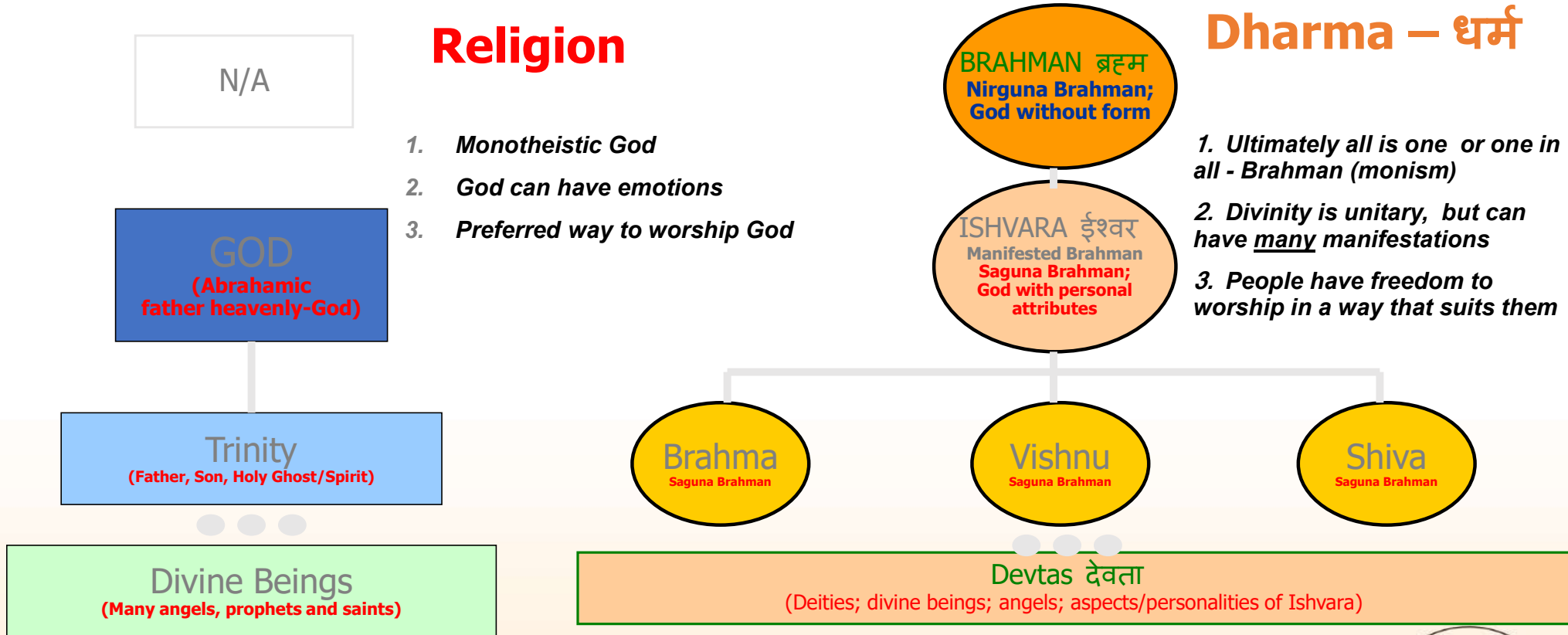
# Simplistic way to understand - God and Ishvara

## Religion

1. Monotheistic God
2. God can have emotions
3. Preferred way to worship God

## Dharma – धर्म

1. Ultimately all is one or one in all - Brahman (monism)
2. Divinity is unitary, but can have many manifestations
3. People have freedom to worship in a way that suits them



- The Abrahamic definition of God is typically described with human attributes and is often considered in a male context.
- The Dharmic definition of Brahman is broad, transcending gender and human attributes. It is often referred to as the Ultimate or Absolute Truth.
- Ishwar represents the conditioned aspect of Brahman and is associated with epithets like Bhagwan and Nath (Lord).
- The Dharmic concept of Atma (jiva-atma, atma, param-atma) is intricate and all-encompassing. There is no direct one-word equivalent for आत्मा or धर्म in English, as these concepts encompass a range of meanings and ideas (ultimate liberation from all desires).



# How far back can you trace Hinduism?

- The legends as well as Archaeological studies reveal that the first signs of human inhabitants in Indian continent date back to the primitive age, about 1,750,000 years ago. This information is a crucial aspect for an insight into the ancient Hindu epic Ramayana, which happened in Treta Yuga.
- This is also supported by the space images that reveal a mysterious ancient man-made bridge in the Palk Strait between Bharat (India) and Sri Lanka. This bridge currently named Ram Setu (Adam's Bridge) is made of a chain of shoals and is about 30 km long.
- Thousands of years ago, ancient Hindu sages discovered the idea of infinity known as Ananta. They also had the opposite idea of Shunya or void which refers to space.



# Hinduism's contribution to the World

- Hinduism is not just a religion but a way of life practiced daily, and it has made significant contributions to the world. Hinduism ranks as the third-largest religion globally.
- It introduced practices like Yoga, Meditation, and Ayurveda, a holistic health system aimed at harmonizing the body, mind, and emotions. Hinduism also made substantial contributions to science, mathematics, and the promotion of nonviolence.
- The concept of Ahimsa (Nonviolence), which means doing the least harm, originated from Hinduism and has been embraced worldwide, inspiring figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King in the US, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.
- Ayurveda, known as the mother of indigenous health knowledge, led to the cataloging of medicinal plants and herbs, essentially contributing to the field of botany. Notably, Charaka and Susruta performed intricate surgeries, even comparable to modern plastic surgeries.
- Hindu mathematicians were pioneers in discovering mathematical concepts like zero, Algebra, infinity, square roots, cube roots, Geometry, Trigonometry, and calculus. Mathematicians such as Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Ramanujan, and Bose made significant contributions in this field.
- Hindu civilization gave the world games like Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Playing Cards, and Polo, which were later adopted and adapted by various countries.





# Hindu Identity: Embracing Diversity & Spirituality

- Acceptance and Reverence for Glorious History: Hinduism holds the Vedas as the foundation of its philosophy, embracing a rich historical heritage.
- Spirit of Tolerance and Understanding: Hindus value tolerance, appreciate different perspectives, and respect other religions and faiths. They recognize that truth has multiple facets, just as paths to salvation do.
- Cycles of Creation, Maintenance, and Dissolution: Hinduism acknowledges the belief in vast cosmic periods of creation, maintenance, and dissolution that continuously recur.
- Belief in Reincarnation, Karma, and Brahman: Hindus embrace the belief in reincarnation, the soul, the karmic theory (the law of cause and effect), and the concept of the Brahman .
- Flexibility-Multiplicity of Deities and Worship: Hinduism allows the worship of numerous gods and goddesses, without the requirement to worship through idols.
- The Significance of the "Bindi" and "Tilak": The "bindi" is a colored dot worn by females on the center of the forehead, symbolizing the third eye of spirituality. Similarly, men wear a "Tilak" in the same spot. These marks serve as reminders to center one's thoughts on spirituality and are believed to activate consciousness.
- Cultural Diversity and Heritage: Hindus take pride in their rich and diverse cultural heritage, including a wide range of art forms, music, dance, festivals, and traditional practices.



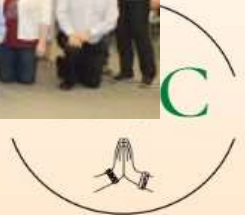
## Are there any community groups in the Huron Grey Bruce area dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Hinduism ?

- Yes. Welcome to the **Swajan Samanvay Sanatan Centre (SSSC)**! We are a dedicated non-profit organization committed to fostering a vibrant community in the Grey-Bruce and Huron regions of Canada. Our mission revolves around blending spirituality, diversity, environmental consciousness, and education to weave together a rich tapestry of inclusivity, personal growth, and shared values.
- "Swajan Samanvay Sanatan" is derived from Sanskrit and signifies "Oneness, Harmony, and the Eternal." This concept underscores our commitment to unity, coexistence, and the timeless wisdom found in various cultures, rooted in the Hindu philosophy of "Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam" (वसुधैव कुटुंबकम्), which translates to "The world is one family." <https://sanatancentre.com/>



# How SSSC or Sanatan Centre works?

- Firmly rooted in the belief of cherishing diversity and morale values, we serve as a dynamic hub for the community enrichment. Our core philosophy is celebrating your uniqueness and exploring the rich tapestry of our shared humanity. Sanatan Centre community is built on four solid pillars: Sanatan Dharm & Spirituality, Environment, Diversity, and Education. These pillars come together to create a well-rounded, balanced approach to community building and individual well-being.
- Our exciting projects encompass a wide range of aspects, including cultures, languages, traditions, rituals, spiritual practices, and even cuisine. Join us in vibrant events, celebrations, and outreach initiatives that breathe life into our commitment to diversity and bring joy to our community!



# How SSSC or Sanatan Centre works?

SS Sanatan Centre finds expression through: (for details please visit <https://sanatancentre.com/> )

- **The Kincardine Multicultural Festivals:** A vibrant platform where diverse cultures harmoniously converge.
- **Hindu Culture Open House:** Explore the richness of ancient Hindu traditions.
- **Meet and Greet:** Extend a warm embrace to new comers, fostering a sense of belonging.
- **Social and Religious Festivals:** Celebrate occasions like Holi Deepawali, Janmashtmi, Navratri, Teez, and more making Hindu cultural and spiritual milestones while fostering unity and awareness.
- **Environmental Clean-up & Awareness:** Take proactive steps to nurture and safeguard our environment.
- **Yoga Day & Sports:** Promote holistic well-being and physical, mental & emotional harmony through ancient practices.
- **Tree Plantation Drive:** Contribute to greener and sustainable future.
- **Volunteering with local Charitable & Social Organizations:** Engage and vocal with local causes to uplift our community.
- **Activities that Enhance the Education:** Empower our youth and women through educational and cultural initiatives.
- **Regular Spiritual Satsang/Meetings:** Nurture spiritual growth, preserve and promote Sanatan Hindu Dharm (Weekly Satsang is held at 6:30 pm every Thursday (Currently Online)) .



# How can you Participate in SSSC?

- You're a vital part of our inclusive community, and your active involvement can spark positive change:
- Join us at events to have fun, showcase your skills, and expand your horizons while making new friends.
- Volunteer in any working groups, contributing by taking photos, writing news, organizing events, or simply offering honest feedback.
- Lead with Integrity: Champion fairness, empathy, and respect as a leader, shaping a harmonious and equitable community while living with Sanatan values and promoting Hindu culture. All are welcome to participate and contribute.
- **Contact Information?**
- **Website:** <https://sanatancentre.com>





# Call for Actions

## School Boards, Schools, Municipalities, Businesses and Community Leaders

- Advocate for the inclusion of Hindu culture, history, values and contributions in education and training material.
- Invite local Hindu community leaders to discuss and present about Hindu Culture.
- Request that schools/groups organize events, workshops, or presentations during Hindu Heritage Month to educate students/people about Hinduism (e.g. celebration of Diwali).
- Encourage cultural exchange programs that allow students/participants to learn about Hindu traditions, art, and festivals.
- Suggest school visits to local Hindu temples or community events and foster Interfaith Dialogue.
- Encourage interfaith dialogues and events to promote understanding among different religious and cultural groups.
- Organize panel discussions or workshops that address common misconceptions about Hinduism.
- Raise awareness about common stereotypes and prejudices related to Hinduism.
- Request that schools implement anti-bullying programs and policies to address discrimination based on religion or ethnicity (e.g. speak against any form of phobia like Hinduphobia) .
- Request local leaders and schools to actively participate in Hindu Heritage Month celebrations, showing solidarity with the Hindu community.



# Call for Actions Cont.

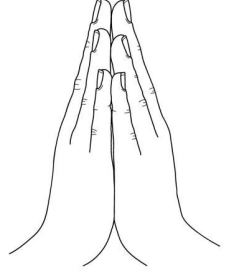
## What Parents and Hindu Community Members Can Do during Hindu Heritage Month:

- Assist children in preparing for announcements or poster presentations by providing them with relevant information, resources, and guidance on Hinduism.
- Encourage them to express their pride in their cultural heritage, share valuable insights about Hindu traditions and values with their peers, and consider wearing traditional dresses during festivals.
- Offer support in organizing their thoughts and crafting engaging and informative messages, ensuring that the school community gains a better understanding of Hindu culture during Hindu Heritage Month.
- Collaborate with local community leaders to coordinate educational events and workshops.
- Recommend that schools provide resources and training for educators to gain a deeper understanding of Hinduism and its cultural significance.
- Advocate for inviting guest speakers or experts to conduct workshops on cultural diversity for teachers.
- Suggest the establishment of a feedback mechanism within schools to evaluate the impact of their efforts in promoting Hindu heritage and culture.
- Promote scholarships or grants that assist students from diverse backgrounds, including those with an interest in Hindu studies or culture.
- Ensure active participation from the Hindu community in shaping school initiatives.





धन्यवाद



Thank You