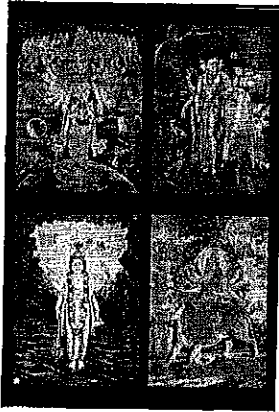


Descriptions of Hindu Beliefs



Brahman: I is the name for Hinduism's one Supreme God or Spirit. Brahman creates, maintains, destroys, and recreates the universe in a never-ending cycle. Everything in the world, including each human soul, or atman, is a part of Brahman. Just like a single drop of water in a great ocean, the atman is both separate from and one with Brahman (God). A Hindu's spiritual goal is to unite his or her soul with Brahman.



Multiple Gods: Hindus worship many Gods and Goddesses, but they believe the Gods are all aspects of the one Supreme God, Brahman. Hindus believe that the multiple Gods represent the countless different qualities and powers of Brahman. Some Hindu Gods have humanlike personalities, and others represent such things as success, good luck, and war. Each Hindu person or family may be especially devoted to a particular God or Goddess. Three of the most important Gods are Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma (not to be confused with Brahman).



Dharma: *Dharma* means "to hold or support." Part of dharma relates to sacred (holy) duty or moral responsibility. It is the system of rules and values Hindus follow in their everyday life. Another way to think of dharma is as "the right thing to do" in any situation. Hindus believe in a universal dharma that includes values all Hindus accept and practice, such as nonviolence. However, Hindus also believe they have an individual dharma that they should follow. People's dharmas are determined by different things, such as personality, age, sex, and inherited social class, or varna. Hinduism teaches that when people follow their dharma, they contribute to the harmony and balance of society and the universe.



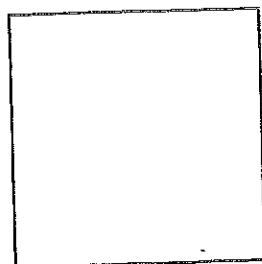
Karma: Hindus believe that *karma* is the total of good and bad actions a human soul, or *atman*, carries with it from life to life. They believe that when people die, the soul leaves the body and is reborn into another body. Hinduism teaches that people's good and bad actions in one life influence their destiny in future lives. In Hinduism, karma determines whether a soul is reborn as a human or an animal, into a rich family or a poor one, and some of the things a person will experience in each lifetime. For example, Hindus believe that a person who steals in this life may be robbed in a future life, or that someone who harms animals may be reborn as an animal.



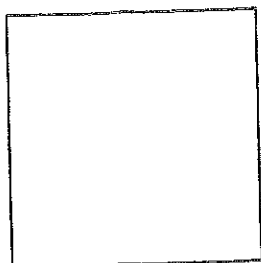
Samsara: In Hinduism, *samsara* is the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The process of rebirth is sometimes referred to as reincarnation. The goal of a Hindu's life is to be released from samsara and united with the Supreme God, Brahman. Hindus call this release *moksha* and it is achieved after a person's soul has lived through many lifetimes. Hindus achieve moksha by following the path of dharma, balancing their karma (both good and bad actions), worshipping the Gods faithfully, and having a direct and personal experience of God by following certain spiritual practices.

Follow these steps to create your mandala. Have your teacher initial each step before you continue.

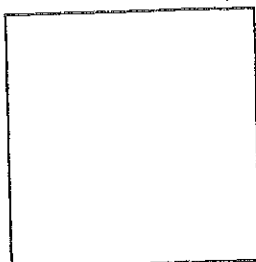
____ **Step 1:** Brainstorm symbols for the five basic Hindu beliefs. Each symbol should represent one of the beliefs and be different from those in your Reading Notes. Sketch your symbols below.



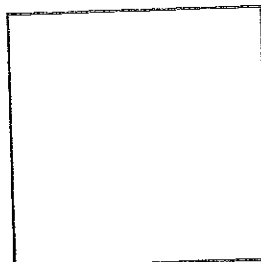
Brahman



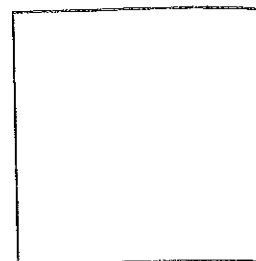
Multiple gods



Dharma

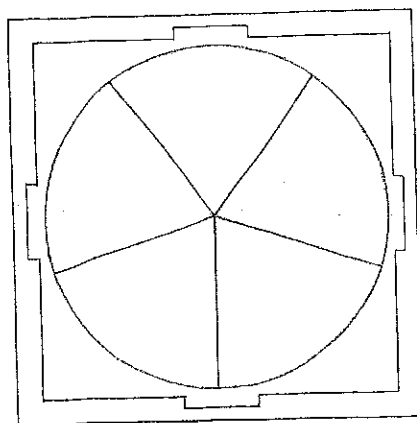


Karma



Samsara

____ **Step 2:** Get a large piece of butcher paper and markers from your teacher. Draw the shape below onto the paper, making sure it takes up about three-fourths of the paper. Leave space for a wide border around it. Next, draw and color the symbols you created above into the spaces of the mandala. Color the background behind each symbol. Make your mandala as visually appealing as possible.



____ **Step 3:** Draw at least five symbols and images around the border of your artwork. Each drawing should relate to a way that Hinduism has influenced life in India. For example, you might draw a highly decorated cow since, according to Hindu beliefs, cows are considered sacred.

____ **Step 4:** Prepare to present your mandala. Make sure you and your partner can quickly and clearly explain how your symbols relate to Hindu beliefs.