

Year 5&6 Key Stage 2



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Resource File

**Year 6** units of work - Hinduism - Dharma and karma





# Lesson 8 Dharma and karma

## The big picture

Dharma and karma are two key concepts within the Hindu religious tradition.

Dharma is fulfilling the duties of a Hindu, both those that are religious and those that relate to the extended family. There are many important duties such as looking after your dependants, avoiding arguments, ahimsa and puja.

Karma is the law of cause and effect. This is the idea that everything we do has a positive or negative effect. Karma is inextricably linked with the belief that many Hindus have in the cycle of reincarnation. If they lead a good life and fulfil their duties their next life will be better than their present one. If they lead a bad life and do not fulfil their duties they will be reborn into a life less comfortable. Eventually Hindus hope they will be able to step off the wheel and achieve moksha, spiritual freedom, when the soul is no longer reborn.

In this lesson people will consider what their duties are, what happens if those duties are not performed and how it affects the people around them. It also considers the duties of a Hindu person and how those duties affect the community.

## Learning objectives

### Learning about:

- To understand the concepts of dharma and karma and explain the effect that these concepts might have on Hindu communities.

### Learning from:

- To consider the idea of duty and cause and effect within one's own life.

## Success Criteria

### Learning about:

- Pupils will have explained the concepts of dharma and karma and will have exemplified some ways in which these concepts have an effect on the Hindu community.

### Learning from:

- Pupils will have given examples of duties they have to undertake and reflected on how these duties affect the community they live in.

## Religious education council requirements

A1, A3, B2, B3, C2, C3

## Resources

- **Resource sheet 8:** 'Snakes and ladders'

## Vocabulary

Atman, dharma, duty, karma, moksha, reincarnation

## Key questions ?

*What duties and responsibilities do we have?  
What do the terms dharma and karma mean and what effect do they have on the life of a Hindu?*

## Introduction

Introduce the learning objective: 'In this lesson we will learn about the two key Hindu ideas of dharma and karma, meaning that everyone has duties to perform and that if you don't perform your duties there is an effect on your own life and the lives of those around you.'

Ask people to think about the duties they have to fulfil or perform in their lives. You may want to give some examples such as visiting relations or doing their homework.

Ask people to discuss with a partner and note down their duties on their whiteboards. Ask them to also note down why they think it is important to fulfil them. Discuss the responses.

### Key questions

*Are they all the same?  
Where do differences occur?*

Repeat the activity, but this time think about the duties of parents or carers. Again ask people to discuss with a partner and note down on their whiteboards the duties of their parents and why it is important that these duties are fulfilled. Discuss the responses. Are they all the same? Where do differences occur? Are the duties of the people who look after them different from their own duties? Why do they think this is?

## Activities

### Stimulus

What duties do people in the class think a Hindu child may be expected to perform? Create a class list and then consider the similarities and differences with their own duties. Consider the reasons why Hindus might think it is important to fulfil these duties. There should be few differences. Bring people's attention to the religious and family duties that a Hindu child may be expected to perform, such as taking part in puja and their relationship and responsibility to the extended family.

Create a class list of the duties of a Hindu parent. How are the duties similar to or different from the duties of a Hindu child or a non-Hindu parent?

Discuss with the class the different stages of life, for example, child, married person, parent, old person and how duties differ during each of these life stages. The sort of duties that should be upheld by Hindus are: not getting angry, being truthful in speech, working for justice, forgiving people,

having children when you are married, trying not to quarrel, living a simple life, looking after your family and fulfilling religious duties such as worship.

Explain that another important idea for Hindus is karma, the law of cause and effect and the idea that everything we do has an effect. Ask the class to imagine they are horrible to a friend at playtime; they might then come into school upset and not concentrate in the next lesson and end up getting told off. Ask them to imagine someone helps the teacher move some chairs back after the lesson; this cheers up the teacher because she manages to get a cup of coffee at break time and is in a good mood all day. Every action we do affects something else.

Hindus believe that after death their souls are reborn into another life and that keeps on happening until their soul is pure and it can attain moksha, where the soul goes to live with God. If a Hindu fulfils their duty and behaves well, their life goes well and when they are reborn they will be born into a better life. However, if a Hindu does not fulfil their duty, their life will go badly and they will be reborn into a worse life and have to be reborn more often before their soul can be with God.

Show the class the picture of a snakes and ladders board (**Resource sheet 8**). You can either enlarge the version on the CD-ROM with a whiteboard or a digital projector, or you might want to enlarge the printed version on a photocopier. Ask someone to explain how the game is played. Tell them that this idea is a bit like the Hindu concepts of dharma and karma. If they fulfil their duties and act well, their lives will improve and they will be reborn in a better life. If they don't fulfil their duties their lives will get worse and they will be reborn into a worse life with more lives to live through until they are able to stop the cycle of rebirth.

Ask people to work in pairs to create a situation that could go on the game square at the top of a snake or at the bottom of a ladder. Give them an example such as, 'a Hindu mother performs puja every day for the family', could go at the bottom of a ladder. Ask people to write their ideas on the class board game.

## Response

Divide the class into small groups to perform a role-play about a Hindu parent or child not performing a duty and the effect this has. Once people have had chance to practise their role-play, arrange for the class to perform to one another. Ask each group to freeze-frame their role-play at the most significant point and allow the rest of the class to question the main characters and explore the characters' feelings and understanding of the terms dharma and karma.

## Plenary

Ask people to write about their understanding of the terms dharma and karma. What do they think is good about the idea of fulfilling duty? What is difficult about having to fulfil duties?

## Differentiation

These are difficult concepts to understand, and a less able group may want to study these ideas over a longer time period, tackling the idea of dharma first and then moving on to karma.

## Extension

More able people could find out about the festival of Raksha Bandhan and make a presentation about its relevance to the idea of duty.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Snakes and ladders

30	19	18	7	6
29	20	17	8	5
28	21	16	9	4
27	22	15	10	3
26	23	14	11	2
25	24	13	12	1