**Prakriti and purusha:** Prakriti is the non-self. It is devoid of consciousness. Prakriti is unintelligible and gets greatly influenced by the Purusha, the self. It can only manifest itself as the various objects of experience of the Purusha.

Prakriti is described in Bhagavad Gita as the "primal motive force". It is the essential constituent of the universe and is at the basis of all the activity of the creation. According to Samkhya and the Bhagavad Gita Prakrti or Nature is composed of the three gunas which are tendencies or modes of operation, known as rajas (creation), sattva (preservation), and tamas, (destruction).

**Ahimsa:** Ahimsa is non-injury to all living beings, abstaining from eating meat and animal products, and the practice of forgiveness, love, and friendliness.

**Key god and goddesses or avatars:**

Ganesha is the son of Shiva and Parvati. He has a human body and an elephant’s head with only one short tusk. The other tusk is used as a pen to write the wisdom of the scriptures. Hindus worship him as the remover of all obstacles.

Subrahmanya is the second son of Shiva and Parvati. He is also called Agni (fire) and is widely worshipped by the Tamil population in southern India.

Hanuman is the monkey god. He is a model of devotion and every one's protector.

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Hindus believe that sometimes a god will appear on the earth in living form - this is known as an avatar or incarnation.

According to Hindu Mythology Rama is the seventh avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu and a king of Ayodhya. Rama is also the protagonist of the Hindu epic Ramayana, which narrates his idealistic ideas and his greatness. Rama is one of the many popular figures and deities in Hinduism, specifically Vaishnavism and Vaishnava religious scriptures in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Along with Krishna, Rama is considered to be one of the most important avatars of Vishnu. In a few Rama-centric sects, he is considered the Supreme Being, rather than an avatar.

Krishna is a Hindu deity, worshipped across many traditions of Hinduism in a variety of different perspectives. Krishna is recognized as the complete and eighth avatar of the God Vishnu or as the Supreme God in own right. Krishna is one of the most widely revered and popular of all Hindu deities.

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Shruti is what is heard (Vedas) and smriti is what is remembered (Mahabharata and Ramayana).
Festivals:

**Diwali:** The festival of lights is Hinduism’s most popular celebration. In India, it is normally celebrated over five days at the end of October or the beginning of November. In most other countries, like Canada, Diwali is observed on only one evening, but is preceded and followed by days of festivities. During this festival, Hindus set off fireworks, decorate their houses with lights, give gifts, and wear new clothes to celebrate the triumph of good and knowledge over the dark forces of evil and ignorance. Lavish vegetarian dinners are prepared, and a traditional puja is performed at dusk before the feast begins. Diwali honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune, and Vishnu, who defeated the demon Naraka. This festival also commemorates Rama’s return to his kingdom after defeating Ravana, the evil king who had abducted his wife, Sita, in the Ramayana.

**Holi:** Holi is a spring festival that Hindus usually celebrate some time in March, on the full-moon day of the last month in the Hindu calendar. The night before, worshippers light a bonfire that signifies the burning of evil. According to Hindu legend, the young Prahalad was resented by his wicked father for being pious and God-fearing. His evil aunt took Prahalad away and tried to burn him in a fire. Instead, she was burned to ashes. To mark this festival, Hindus of all ages join in the merriment of squirting coloured water on friends and family members. They distribute and eat sweets and other foods.

**Mahashivaratri:** This event takes place on the day before the new moon, during the month of February. Strictly speaking, Mahashivaratri is not a festival or feast. It is a special event dedicated to the devotion of Shiva. Devotees worship him, keep an all night fast for twenty-four hours; those who are unable to fast eat light vegetarian meals. Between midnight and sunrise, devotees worship him by repeating his name and placing flowers and grains on his image. Water is poured in a steady stream from a copper vessel suspended over the image.

**Navaratri:** This “Nine Nights” festival is held in the spring and autumn. On the first three nights of Navaratri, Hindus worship the goddess Durga, a manifestation of Parvati, who washes away laziness and evil thoughts. The next three nights, with a mind better prepared for spiritual guidance, they offer puja to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune. The final three nights are dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and learning. On the tenth day, worshippers observe Vijayadashami, or the Day of Victory.

Key milestones:

**Naming a Child:** Traditionally, in Hinduism a child is named by a priest ten days after birth. While orthodox Hindu families continue this tradition today, for most Hindus, this ceremony has become a symbolic gesture. Many parents choose a name even before their baby is born. Nevertheless, because a baby is considered a blessing and an occasion for celebration, most Hindu parents continue to hold some sort of informal naming ceremony performed by a priest.

**A Child’s First Outing:** The purpose of the first formal excursion outside the home is to expose the child to the environment and the neighbours. The occurrence of this event depends on the health of the baby as