

# Hinduism - The Cycle of Life: Reincarnation, Karma and Samsara



## Learning Objectives

To consider Hindu beliefs about life after death.  
To reflect on the concept of reincarnation.



# KEY WORDS

Reincarnation

RE

RE

Karma

RE

Samsara

RE

Moksha



# Key Word Definitions

## Reincarnation

The belief that the soul, upon death of the body, comes back to earth in another body or form.

## Karma

The principle that people are rewarded or punished in one incarnation according to their deeds in the previous incarnation.

## Samsara

The endless series of births, deaths, and rebirths to which all beings are subject.

## Atman

The World Soul, from which all individual souls derive, and to which they return as the supreme goal of existence.

# Starter

What do you think happens when we die?

Write few sentences or start a mind map using illustrations and words. This can be extended throughout the lesson.

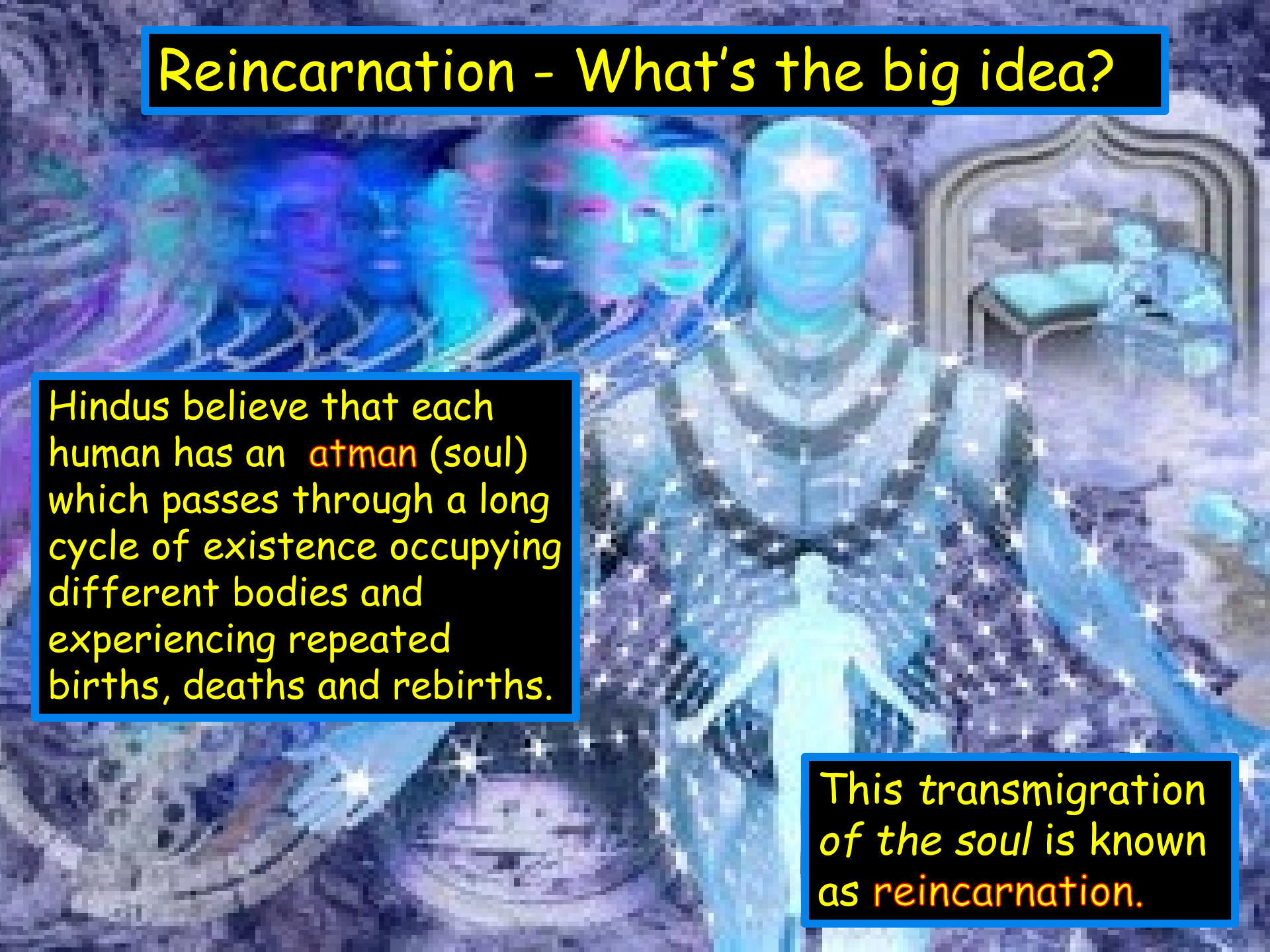




# Reincarnation - What's the big idea?

Hindus believe that each human has an **atman** (soul) which passes through a long cycle of existence occupying different bodies and experiencing repeated births, deaths and rebirths.

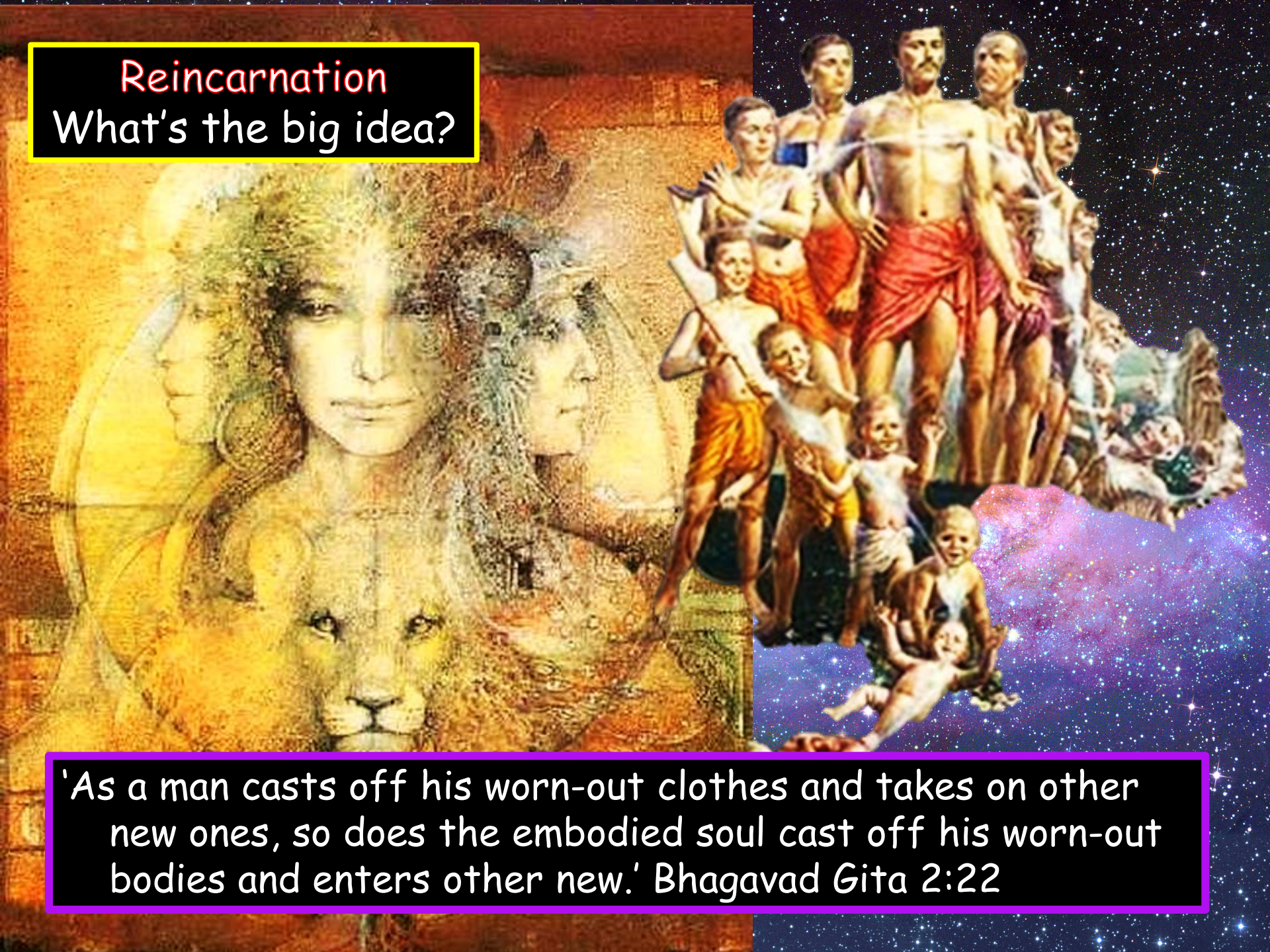
This transmigration of the soul is known as **reincarnation**.





# Reincarnation

## What's the big idea?



'As a man casts off his worn-out clothes and takes on other new ones, so does the embodied soul cast off his worn-out bodies and enters other new.' Bhagavad Gita 2:22



# Reincarnation - Infinity

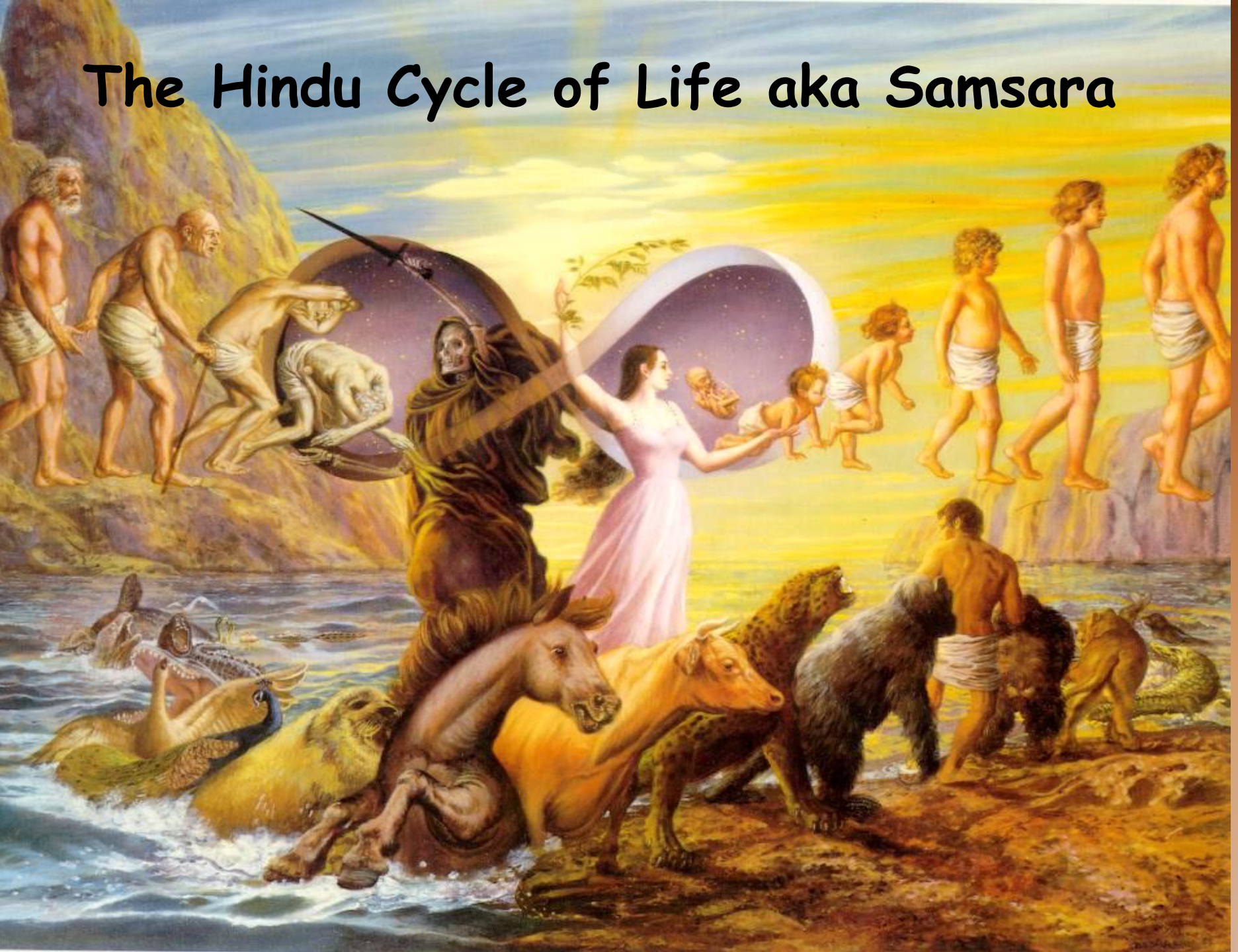


Infinity means endless, in Hinduism. This symbol represents the endless cycle of Samsara, (reincarnation).





# The Hindu Cycle of Life aka Samsara





# Reincarnation

REFUSAL  
OFTEN OFFENDS

**Re'** means 'again'  
**'in'** means 'in' (!)  
**'carn'** means 'flesh'  
Meaning, 'again in flesh'.

Rebirth might sound like a good thing but actually, Hindus believe that going around and around in the cycle of samsara is keeping humans souls (atman) trapped in the material world away from the sublime spiritual one .



# THE MATERIAL WORLD



Okay! So what's keeping us trapped?



# Karma

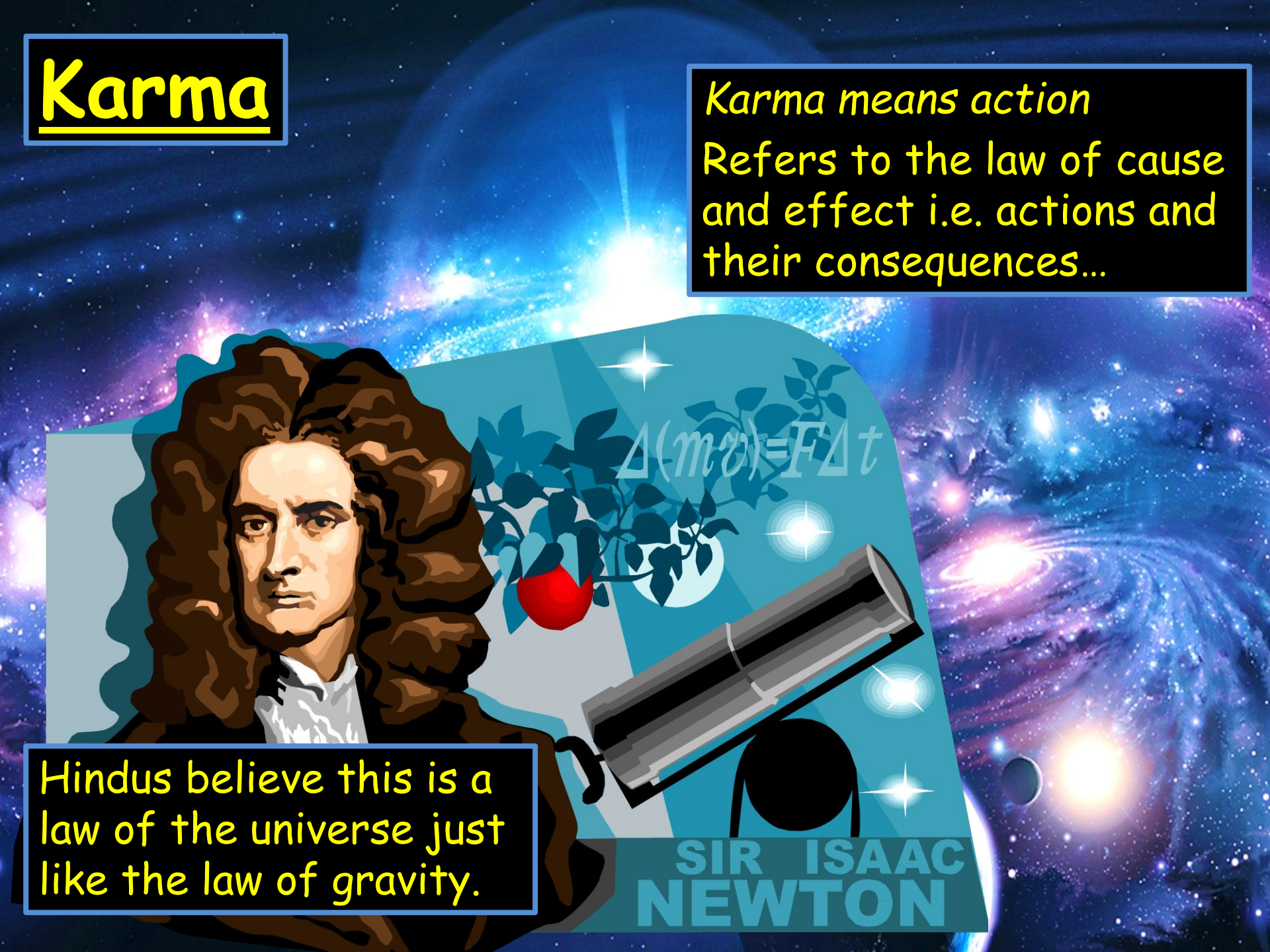
*Karma means action*

Refers to the law of cause and effect i.e. actions and their consequences...

Hindus believe this is a law of the universe just like the law of gravity.

$$\Delta(mv) = F\Delta t$$

SIR ISAAC  
NEWTON

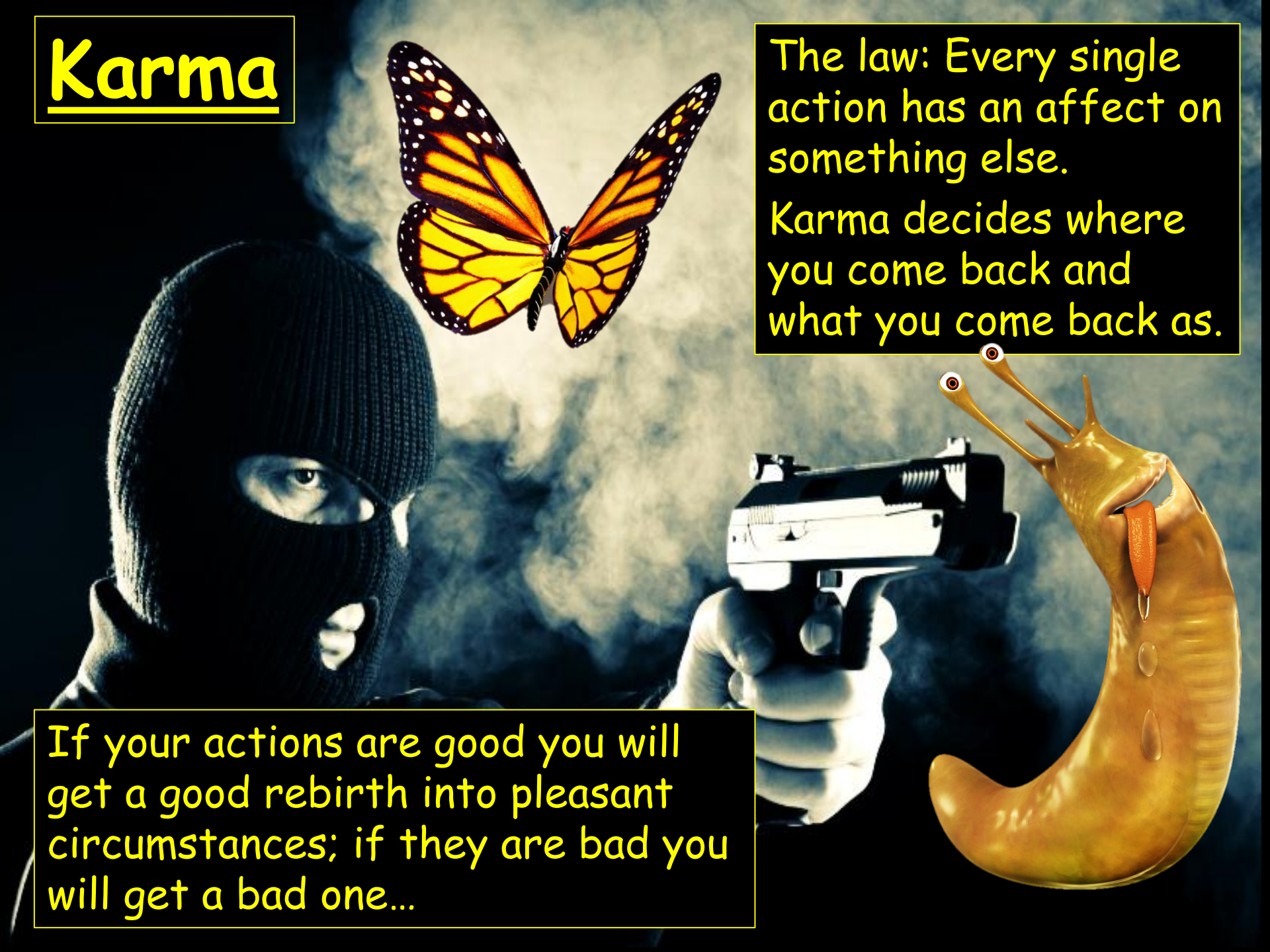


# Karma

The law: Every single action has an affect on something else.

Karma decides where you come back and what you come back as.

If your actions are good you will get a good rebirth into pleasant circumstances; if they are bad you will get a bad one...





# Karma

## Dung Beetle



In a lifetime people build up karma, both good and bad, based on their actions within that lifetime. This karma affects their future lives and existences...



# Karma



There are lots of different types of rebirth in **Samsara**. You can come back as a human or a pig; as a god or a ghost; in heaven or in hell.

Some Hindus believe you can even come back as a flower!



A low-angle shot of a man in a white button-down shirt, with his arms outstretched and head tilted back, looking up at a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

# Moksha is ...

**Liberation** - from samsara: the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.



The background image is a composite. It features a woman in a dark, flowing dress floating in a turbulent, blue-tinted sky with swirling clouds and rain. In the foreground, on the right, is a close-up profile of a woman's face. Her skin is semi-transparent, revealing a white skull underneath. She has a contemplative or pained expression, with her hand near her head. The overall color palette is dominated by shades of blue and white, creating a dramatic and ethereal atmosphere.

# Moksha is ...

**Salvation** – of the soul which is rescued from the material world and delivered into the spiritual.



A photograph of three children in the foreground, their faces and hands covered in vibrant, multi-colored powders (red, yellow, blue, green, and black). They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The child on the left is a girl with long dark hair, the middle one is a boy with short dark hair, and the one on the right is a girl with dark hair. They appear to be at a festival or a cultural event. In the background, other people are partially visible, also with colorful face paint.

Moksha is ...

The Goal - of Hindus  
is to eventually  
achieve moksha.

Though many accept this might not happen for their next  
carnation they aim to build up positive karma in the hope  
of a good rebirth that might be a little closer to moksha.



# In a nut shell

**SAMSARA** IS THE CYCLE OF LIFE.

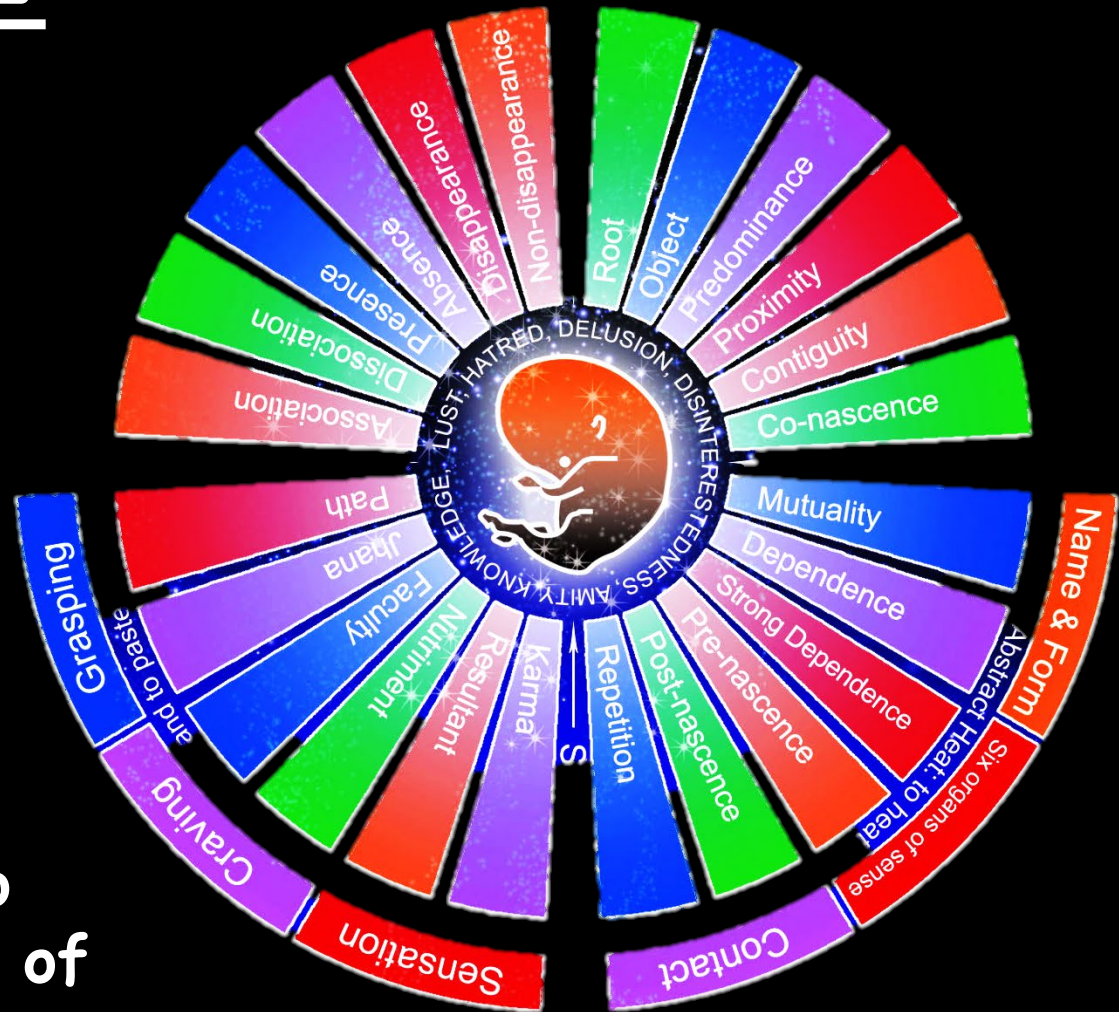
REINCARNATION IS A RESULT OF PREVIOUS  
**KARMA**.

KARMA RELATES TO ACTIONS AND THEIR  
CONSEQUENCES.

**MOKSHA** IS LIBERATION FROM SAMSARA.



# Exercise 1



Draw a diagram to illustrate the idea of reincarnation.



## Exercise 2 Answer these questions

What would be the worst thing you could be reborn as and why?

How do you think a belief that they will live again affects Hindu's attitudes and actions?

What about the belief that they have lived before? How would this affect the way Hindus viewed the good things and bad things that happened to them in life?

If you thought that this life was only one of many, do you think it would make life less important or more important? Why?





# Plenary

In quiet before we leave, I want you to reflect in silence about how you conduct yourselves.

If karma is real what sought of karma are you building up?

What can you change?

Focus on the candles I am about to light or simply sit with your thoughts.

*YOU MUST SIT IN SILENCE  
WTHER YOU WISH TO  
PARTICIPAT OR NOT!*