

# World religions, hinduism assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

World Religions Hinduism Hinduism is a way of life, not a particular belief system. Hinduism, also known as Santana Dharma, is a set of traditions and beliefs that have developed over many centuries. Dharma embraces duty, natural law, social welfare, ethics, health, and ideal realization. The foundations of Santana Dharma are the Vedas and Upanishads; the sacred texts of Hinduism. “ Hinduism differs from Christianity and other Western religions in that it does not have a single founder, a specific theological system, a single system of morality, or a central religious organization” (Robinson, 2001).

Hinduism is believed to originate in North India, and is the world’s third largest religion. Hinduism is primarily monotheistic, with many different names given to the Supreme Being. The spiritual goal of Hinduism is to become one with the Supreme Being; Brahma, the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. Hinduism is a unique religion in that God is one, yet there are also many Gods. Due to assimilation and evolution, Hinduism now has a tremendous diversity of religious traditions. Of the denominations, Smartism, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Vaishnavism are the main divisions.

Hindu beliefs include reincarnation, karma, samsara, moksha, yogas, and dharma. Rituals are a normal, daily observance, or performance, but vary among different individuals. Some of these rituals are comprised of meditation, chanting mantras, reciting scriptures, and singing devotional hymns. The purpose of these rituals is to rid oneself of impurities. There are many different aspects that make up the Hindu religion, such as the different concepts such as self-realization, the nature of reality, consciousness, the

direct path, the soul and its destiny, and worship. Hindu's personal beliefs differ between individuals.

The religion comprises of approximately 330 million different gods and goddesses, but the Hindu Trinity of gods is Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. The ultimate God is Brahman; the absolute reality. Brahman is formless and infinite, but is personified due to the limited human mind. Unlike most other religions, Hinduism does not promote the worship of one or many different manifestations of divine. One of the sacred elements that make up the Hindu religion is the Hindu philosophy, which focuses on the importance of the absolute truth and finding one's true nature.

Hindu philosophy believes that every human being is God himself, and accepts the existence of all other religions as a means to realize God. Hindu's strive to reach nirvana, the supreme state free from suffering and individual existence, and is often referred to as self realization. The attainment of nirvana breaks the otherwise endless rebirth cycle of transmigration, known as eternal bliss. The desire for liberation from earthly existence became more popular over the years. Hinduism is centered on the idea of reincarnation.

Hindu's believe that when one experiences death, the soul or spirit is re-born in a new human body or other form, such as an animal, depending on one's previous life. When one reaches self realization, or nirvana, the cycle of reincarnation is broken. Hindu's believe that Brahma is the creator of the universe, Vishnu controls the presence of the universe, and Shiva is the

destroyer of the universe. Hindu's believe that having good Dharma will result in being reborn into a person, rather than something else. Dharma is the religious conduct of each individual while one is alive.

Dharma will affect someone's Karma, which is the relationship between cause and effect. Deeds done in previous lives, good or bad, will affect the next life. Calmness, restraint, renunciation, resignation, concentration, faith, and an intense longing for liberation are spiritual virtues that Hindu's seek. Understanding that desires are burdensome directs one in the right direction towards relieving oneself of those burdens, by eliminating the cause of the burdens of the world. When these commitments are removed, the individual can be free to focus on the divine.

The ultimate and primary goal in Hindu life is to end the cycles of rebirth and be reunited with Brahman. There are different paths to achieving salvation, in which Hindus may follow. Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion, which entails worship towards a personal deity. Karma Yoga is the path of action, which involves doing good deeds to achieve salvation. Karma is the principal where one's actions in life determine their rebirth. Jhana Yoga is the path of wisdom, which involves the study of scripture, meditation and following the teachings of Gurus.

Finally Raja Yoga is the path of meditation. One Hindu belief is the caste system, in which Hindus are reborn into different castes depending on their accumulation of good and bad karma. The highest caste is the Brahmins, which are priests and teachers. The second is the Ksatriyas, which are members of governance and defense. Following are Vaishyas, the

merchants, and the Shudras, the laborers. Hindus must adhere to their Dharma, which is their religious and moral duty within their caste. There are members outside the caste system, known as the untouchables.

Although the caste system has led to protests due to discrimination, the caste system is still in use in some rural areas and small towns. “ The Bhagavad-gita categorises karma, listing three kinds of human actions: (1) Karma: those which elevate, (2) Vikarma: those which degrade and (3) Akarma: those which create neither good nor bad reactions and thus lead to liberation” (ISKCON, 2004). Karma is believed to be the ultimate basis of reincarnation, in that each individual decides his or her own fate in this life, for the next. I find the Hinduism religion to be a quite interesting and unique from my own.

After working for a doctor, Dr. Navin Singh, of the Hindu religion, I was able to gain insight on how a Hindu lives their life according to religious beliefs. Dr. Singh is a gentle man, he is caring, intelligent, and has high moral values. After working for Dr. Singh for quite some time, and learning he was of the Hindu faith, I was intrigued and curious to know if his beliefs and Hindu way of life had made him who he is today. I asked Dr. Singh if he was interested in being interviewed about his religious beliefs. Dr. Singh was more than happy to share his knowledge and experiences with me.

The interview was conducted over dinner at a local restaurant, where Dr. Singh suggested. I began the interview by asking Dr. Singh how he became Hindu, or what made him choose Hinduism as his form of religion. He was born into the Hinduism religion. Both of his parents were Hindu, so, naturally,

he was too, and continued the faith. He feels strongly that the Hindu religion is one of peace. According to him, practicing the Hindu faith brings inner-peace to oneself. Next I asked him how religion has shaped his life. I was curious to know if he thought Hinduism had anything to do with his behavior and attitude toward life.

Dr. Singh said he believes that it has shaped his life in possessing good morals and values. He said that Hinduism teaches respect, ethics, and self realization. These are acquired through Hindu disciplines. One of these disciplines is cleanliness, for example; fasting, to cleanse the body of impurities. The restraint of eating pork is considered unclean, because swine are scavengers. Worship and meditation are other forms discipline. They are used to assist in spiritual and material progress. Worship is Hindu's path for integration of the body, mind, and spirit to evolve into a higher being.

I asked Dr. Singh about the challenges that he has faced as a Hindu. He said a major challenge is there are few places of worship in North America. Many Hindu's, including himself, practice rituals and worship in their homes.

Another obstacle for Hindu's is food. Many restaurants do not have many selections or variety of food of Hindu diet, even the gravy at many restaurants is beefed up. Hindu's have to go out of their way to shop for food of their diet. Dr. Singh mentioned that he finds nutrients in other sources of food, like eating peas for protein. One sacrifice of Hindu's is fasting.

Fasting is a practice or tradition of Hinduism. Many Hindu's refrain from eating beef on holidays, and refrain from eating pork all together, because it is considering unclean. The purpose of fasting is to cleanse the body of

impurities. Many Hindu's fast two to three days a week, where only fruits and water are consumed. Fasting is also practiced on the day one is born. One of the biggest festivals of Hindus that Dr. Singh mentioned was the Diwali, or the festival of lights. This celebration is celebrated usually around the end of the year, when there is "no moon".

The festival of lights are celebrated with different, colorful fireworks are commonly used, along with candles and diyas. The purpose of the lights is to drive away the darkness of Amavasya. On this day, Hindus seek divine blessings of the Goddess of Wealth, and gifts are exchanged. This celebrates the victory of Rama, the goddess of light, after his return to the kingdom after 14 years of exile with Sita, his wife. Dr. Singh said that Hinduism teaches patience, self awareness and realization. From practicing Hindu faith, he has learned to accept people for whom they are, and has a better understanding of himself.

Dr. Singh believes there are many aspects of the Hindu religion that has shaped his life into what it is today. Hinduism, as the world religion I choose for my paper, has many different views in life than the religion that I am familiar with. I grew up in a Christian home, my grandparents being Pentecostal. Learning of the Hindu faith, I would say the main difference between Hinduism and Christianity is the interpretation of God, and how to reach God. Christianity claims to have a belief in one God, while Hinduism claims to be polytheistic. The most supreme Hindu deities are

Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the protector, and Shiva, the destructor.

Christianity claims God will give everlasting life to those who believe, and

everlasting punishment to no-believers. Hinduism claims that people are in control of their own fate by actions performed in their current life. Those actions determine their spiritual growth in order to achieve nirvana. Nirvana is usually reached through many re-births. Christianity and Hinduism have different “ rules” that are found in their texts. Christianity follows the Ten Commandments found in the Holy Bible. Hinduism relies on many sources for their faith such as the Vedas and Puranas.

Animal sacrifices are another difference between the two religions. In Christianity, animals were once used as sacrifices to God. Christianity views animals as having no souls; therefore, there is no wrong in the killing of animals. Hinduism disagrees with the killing or abusing of animals, mainly because of their belief in reincarnation. Last, but not least, a difference between Hinduism and Christianity is the view of other religions. Christianity believes there is only one God, God. If one does not possess this belief, then that person is sentenced to everlasting damnation.

Hinduism allows for believers of their faith to also have other faiths as well. Hinduism is more tolerant towards the openness of other religions. Although there are many differences between Hinduism and Christianity, there are similarities between the two religions such as prayer, the use of incense, sacred bread, alters in churches, and the use of the sign of the cross. Both religions believe there is one supreme God. The core values and philosophy of both religions focus on good virtues. Both encourage the treatment of others to be of respect and goodwill. Hinduism is a diverse body of religion, philosophy, and cultural practice.



Hinduism is the belief in a Supreme Reality, and is the religious search for the ultimate truth. Rebirth and transmigration of the soul can be obtained by human actions or endeavors that are directed towards liberation. Hinduism is considered the mother of all religions, and is a way of life that focuses on creating a perfect balance within society and the environment, living a healthy life, and self realization. Similarities along with differences are found among religions. Both Christianity and Hinduism focus on honesty, and having high ethics and morals. The differences found between the two religions are what make each religion unique.

Learning about different religions can bring openness to all faiths, so that we all can have a deeper understanding of one another. References Axia College. (2009). Chapter Three: Hinduism. Retrieved September 11, 2009, from Axia College, Week Eight, HUM/130-Religions of the World Course Web site. B. A. Robinson. (1995-2001). All about Sikhs. World Religions-Hinduism. Retrieved September 20, 2009 from [http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3085](http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3085) ISKCON. (2004). The Law of Karma. Retrieved September 20, 2009, from <http://hinduism.iskcon.com/concepts/103.htm>