

Hinduism what
makes it very
appealing theology
religion essay



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South Asia particularly, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan has billions of population who follow and practice Hinduism. Hinduism, today's oldest living religion, is practiced by most of the natives of above countries as well as the people who have migrated from these nations to other parts of the world.

Alone in India 82% people are Hindus (Moore 487). Hinduism is a unique religion without fundamentals. It is an agglomeration of religious, cultural, and philosophical ideas and practices. Thereby, Hinduism, a heterogeneous mixture of numerous traditions has its own value and set of beliefs.

Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in the history, is a blend of various cultures and is legendary for its controversial origin, religious beliefs, and multiple deities.

"Hinduism" or the "religion" of Hindus, has largely unknown origins because of its great shape and unclear authors of its sacred texts. There is always a controversy regarding the origin of Hinduism since centuries. The term "Hinduism" derives from the Persian word that refers to the Sindhu (or Indus) river which is situated in northwest India. "Hindu" was first used in the 14th century by Arabs, Afghans, and Persians to describe about the people of that region. In spite of this lack of definitive origin, there are two theories, "Out of India Theory" and "Indo Aryan Theory" that deal with the history of Hinduism.

As per "out of India Theory", Hinduism is entirely born in India. The original house of the Hindus was India; later they spread out to central Asia and thence to Europe (Modi 11). Historians, of this theory, generally hold that the origin of Hinduism can be traced to the ancient civilization of Indus Valley.

Fairly extensive archeological evidences support this theory of origin before
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4, 000 years. Found aged rock paintings and depictions in the caves at Northern India are main bases to conclude that Hindus were in India who migrated to north and west later.

The second theory or “Indo Aryan Theory” basically says that a group of nomads called Aryans moved to the India and mixed with the natives.

However, this theory of origin has been under contemporary scientists’ belief and increasing challenge. According to this theory, the Arctic, of all places was as the original home of these people who migrated to India in course of centuries. Initially, these migrants populated central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, and finally India. These pre-historic migrants or Aryans were considered as honorable and noble people, who invaded the Indus valley civilization and invented Hinduism along with the natives. These Aryans spoke a language that in its refined form came to be known as Sanskrit, which is believed to be the oldest language in the world. Due to the lack of supporting proof, this theory has now been proven to be flawed one and is considered nothing more than a myth.

According to scholars, the evolution of Hinduism may be divided into three periods: the ancient (6500 BCE-1000 AD), the medieval (1000-1800 AD), and the modern (1800 AD to present). About 1500 B. C. the Indus valley was invaded from the east by the Aryans. By the year 1000, the basic doctrines of Hinduism had been formed, and the ancient period of Hinduism gave way to the medieval period. The modern period of Hinduism began about 1800 with the introduction of British rule into India.

In addition to the unclear origin, another reason of Hinduism to be a unique is its basic tenets. Hinduism embraces a great diversity of beliefs about the universe, God and the path to liberation. In Hinduism, the cosmos is represented by the various elements which represent the mass. In Indian mythology, the whole universe is consists of strong radiation represented by the term OM which is the essence of all mantras, the highest all mantras and the divine word. OM consists of three sounds: the vowel a, the vowel u, and a nasalized m. It is said that OM of Hinduism and Amen of Christianity have similar sound and meaning as well. In case of God, for Hindus, he is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent beyond any attributes of shapes, color, and form.... In general, Hindus consider God not just as the supreme and almighty one, but also the personal one whom the individual can worship. Basically, the divine trinity of Hinduism is formed by Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh who possess the characters corresponding to creation, preservation, and annihilation. Hinduism considers diverse aspects of God, in multifarious form. Thereby, it is sometimes viewed as polytheistic or believing in many gods (Rosen 33). As, Hinduism is a cluster of diverse belief and traditions, the prominent themes of Hinduism include the authority of the Vedas (the oldest Indian sacred texts), the Brahman (the ultimate reality), law of karma, right actions, reincarnation, and liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

The Vedas are the most ancient religious texts of Hinduism-indeed; they are the oldest religious texts in an Indo- European language. All the religious realms and divine pantheons are described in the vast corpus of mythological and ritual Vedas. Vyas, a holy priest wrote all these Vedas, that

Hindus believe. Even, Lord Krishna mentions about the importance of Vedas in Bhagavad Gita (part of Hindu largest Epic Mahabharat):

I am seated in everyone's heart and from me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. By study of Vedas, the goal is to know only me; and it is only I who truly know these texts, indeed, I am the creator of the final truth (The Bhagavad Gita 15. 15).

There are four main Vedas where whole Hinduism is elaborated: the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, and the Atharwaveda. Except Vedas, Hindus believe in caste system too, where Brahmins or Brahmins lie on top. A Brahmin is a member of the highest priestly caste in Hinduism who performs priestly services. Brahmins as well as Vedas are two concepts that are fundamental to Hinduism and differentiate the faith from Buddhism and Jainism.

Hindu scriptures explain the ultimate reality as Brahman which is obviously the source of all things. It is said that Brahman is the ultimate mystery without any attributes and qualities which is behind the universe and all the Gods. It is pure, indivisible, infinite, incorporeal, and all pervading likewise the sky. To know about life, it is necessary to know the Brahman and the Atman which is the self, the soul, the principle of individual life. Some people feel that a message of Hinduism is, through meditation and contemplation; an individual must come to realize the fact that the Brahman is Atman.

The idea that human's soul transfer into a new body after death is a main theme of Hindu tenet and this process happens over and over in a

continuous cycle known as Samsara. Throughout these lives, Karma is the
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one which keeps an individual imprisoned by trans-migratory cycle and determines the quality of next reincarnation. Karma means “ deed” or “ action”. Each soul’s unique destiny is determined by the universal law of Karma. Hindus also believe that by good Karma the cycle of Samsara can be escaped when a soul reaches a stage known as moksha (liberation). One who is free from ignorance and sins is eligible for Mokshya and after this point; the soul will reside in heaven. Moreover, truth, meditation, yoga, piousness, honesty, celibacy, prayers, penance, cleanliness, non-violence are other tenets of Hindus.

Hindus perform different religious practices and rites according to the age of an individual with the help of trained priest or chaplain serving family.

Naming, weaning, hair cutting, marriage, death are different rites throughout a Hindu’s life. The most important and never a-parting relationship and most engrossing event of a Hindu’s life is marriage. It is subjected to be the most prolonged and an endless conversation however; those who remain unmarried are also treated with the upmost respect, if he has a pious motive. The bride and bride groom start their lives together where fire is taken as witness. The couples make seven rounds around the fire and each round has its specific promise which they are supposed to keep throughout their married life. In case of remarriage, the Hindu society allows a widower to remarriage however, widows are never allowed to remarry and have affairs throughout their lives. After marriage, the funeral or death ceremony comes second important and this differs from caste to caste. The closing moment of a Hindu’s life is associated with number of actions. After death, the body is destroyed, ideally on the bank of river with fire. Afterwards,

Hindu mourning lasts one year, during which a large number of ceremonies have to be performed for the Mokshya or liberation of the Soul.

Hinduism is generally associated with multiple deities and does not advocate the worship of one particular deity. Home is the center of religious practices for Hindus. Deities are represented by a complexity of images and idols symbolizing divine powers. Each home has an idol, a picture or at least an image to worship. Cleaning and sprinkling the holy water are common ways to make the house holy and livable for God. In addition, Hindus go to different temples very frequently to worship different gods. Hindus view the Supreme Being's cosmic activity as comprised of three main tasks: creation, preservation, and dissolution. These three tasks are associated with three deities Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva which are fundamental deities of Hinduism and they stand as creator, preserver and destroyer respectively. Lord Brahma brings forth the generation and represents the creative principle of the Supreme Being. Where, Lord Vishnu maintains the universe and represents the eternal principle of preservation. Lord Shiva represents the principle of dissolution and recreation. All future characters in Hinduism are connected somehow with these three deities. A Hindu deity represents a particular Supreme Being. These three deities together form the Hindu trinity. One must clearly apprehend that these three gods present the same power, the Supreme Being in three different aspects and are not independent. Bansi Pandit says, " The oneness of the three gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva or Mahesh is brought out by the mystic symbol AUM where ' A' represents Vishnu, ' U' Shiva and ' M' Brahma."

After deities, Hindus also worship planets, trees, animals, and even spirits. As per Hindu scriptures, living beings are not apart from God, since, he resides in each and every one of the creatures in the form of atman (BG 10.39). Hence, each living being is a solitary manifestation of God. In addition, Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy and contains the earliest messages for sustentation of environmental and ecological balance. Thus, Hindus worship nine planets as God because it is believed that these angelic bodies in the cosmos affect every aspect of human lives and are responsible for all the good or bad times one faces in life. Among them, the sun has a major role and is worshipped in different forms. The holy Gayatri mantra is solely dedicated to the sun:

Let us mediate on the adorable splendor of sun; may he arouse our minds with his golden beams.

After the solar system or planets, Hindus also worship animals and plants such as cow and holy basil. The priests say that just looking after a cow in itself is a form of worship. Holy basil which is often called “ Queen of herbs” is the mother medicine of nature. Generally each Hindu’s home has a basil plant in courtyard and the house is considered incomplete if it does not have a basil plant somewhere in residence. In India this plant is hallowed for more than five thousand years as a healing balm for body, mind and soul.

As Hinduism is a mixture of different castes, cultures, and is comprised of many varying beliefs such as pantheism, monotheism, polytheism, and atheism; it seems very unique in comparison to other eastern religions. Even

though philosophers and historians have controversy regarding Hinduism, Hindus do not have any contradiction among their beliefs.