

Hinduism case study essay sample



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Here are four areas you'll need to cover.

1. Describe the origin and history of Hinduism. What cultural traditions contributed to it? How has it been handed down over time? What are some of the basic teachings and the philosophy behind them? How did the caste system work as a part of the religion?

Hinduism is classified as one of the major religions in India and influences its flowing energy that you would feel if you were to go and visit. Even though Hinduism is classified as a religion it is more along the lines of a set of beliefs one holds. Hinduism has no founder that can be identified and it has no strong organizational structure to defend it or even to spread its influence. Hinduism does not have a statement of belief to help to define and stabilize it. All of these things sound like a big negative but in fact it is the opposite, these limitations are its strength. The limitations are just what allow Hinduism to flow and develop over time becoming attractive and inviting to even the larger world. Something that is pleasing, amazing, yet fearful at the same time. Although I cannot tell you when Hinduism began, I can tell you a little about the Harappa culture that contributed significantly to Hinduism even today. Harappa is an ancient city that Archeologists uncovered along the Indus River Valley. Harappa culture, which was discovered from the evidence of the people there, had a quite complex little city compared to others of their time.

Efficient drainage systems, signs of technical development and even a form of writing system were some inventions Archeologists uncovered. Hinduism has many gods and a belief in a single divine reality. Hinduism uses many figures resembling animals to signify these gods such as Ganesha, who is

believed to help those devoted to overcome obstacles. Ganesha, if you look at a picture is a man whom has an elephant head. Harappa culture property owners marked their belongings with seals bearing images of animals, images of men and women too. Yoga is a big part of Hinduism as well. Found among the ruins were three seals that show a male sitting in yogic meditation. With just these few examples, it shows us that perhaps there is a connection between the two and many of these religious practices survived from the past and continue in Hindu culture today. Hinduism teaches many things but since Hindus do not believe in a single God, God or gods is not the main focus which separates this religion from others such as Catholicism or Christianity.

Hinduism does have other important aspects found within the authority of the Vedas. Catholicism and Christianity use the Bible, Hinduism uses the Vedas. The Vedas is the oldest Indian sacred text relied by to pass on the vision and wisdom. The Vedas were not written by any specific person but the scriptures were transmitted orally in a kind of verse form so they could be memorized. This was done for many centuries before finally being transmitted several generations after hearing them by the rishis, holy men. While the Vedas is not something that is commonly read by most Hindus, they are known of as eternal knowledge with sacred sounds and chants that help bring spiritual and benefits. The Vedas are divided into four groups. Rig Veda, hymn section which has over a thousand chants to the Aryan Gods. Yajur Veda, the ceremonial section which has the words to recite during a sacrifice. Sama Veda which is a handbook of musical details of Vedic chants, and the Atharva Veda which consists of practical prayers and charms, such

as prayers to protect from sickness. At the end of the Vedas comes the Upanishads, this is the portion that interprets the philosophy of the original texts.

Each group has an original text known as the Mantra and a commentary portion known as the Brahman. The Brahman has two portions, one interpreting ritual and the other the philosophy. The portions interpreting the philosophy of the original texts constitute the Upanishads. The caste system which was described in the Vedas, consists of four castes which are the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. An efficient human society is based on its educational system that is the Brahmins, its defense and military system that is the Kshatriyas, its economical system that is the Vaishyas, and a strong workforce called the Shudras. There were also the low status people usually not even part of society called "the children of god" and so there was a caste called dalit which was formed, meaning the untouchables.

People are born into the caste of their parents and there is no way to change across caste lines during one's lifetime. The caste system began with the arrival of the Aryans in India. The Aryans arrived in India around 1500 BC. The Aryans disregarded all of the local cultures and they began conquering and taking control over the regions. The Aryans organized among themselves in three groups. The first group was of the warriors and they were called Kshatria. The second group was of the priests and they were called Brahmans. These two groups struggled politically for leadership among the Aryans. In this struggle the Brahmans got to be the leaders of the Aryan society. The third group was of the farmers and craftsmen and they

were called Vaisia. The Aryans who conquered and took control over parts of north India subdued the locals and made them their servants. In this process the Vaisias who were the farmers and the craftsmen became the landlords and the businessmen of the society and the locals became the peasants and the craftsmen of the society.

2. Hinduism is known for a kind of open mindedness that accepts the different perspectives out of which most people are operating. Explain how the four things that people want are addressed in the religion and the reasoning behind it all. In the Hindu religion there are four things that people want. The first thing that we seek is pleasure. This is what we are born with, our five senses. Taste, touch, smell, sight and sound. It is a basic instinct of ours to use them to their fullest. To smell a beautiful rose, taste a ripe peach off of the tree, smell the fresh air after a heavy rain, see the sun setting over the ocean or to hear the sound of a new born cry. We are all drawn to naturally pleasurable things and Hinduism does not look down or shun these things, they are not scorned or condemned. If you want it go and seek it and remember like everything else, the pursuit of pleasure requires one to use good sense. Not every impulse can be followed without contradictions either. Many times small pleasures must be put aside for long range gains.

Hindus also feel that only the stupid will lie, steal or cheat for immediate profit or give into addictions. One day people realize pleasure is too small and does not satisfy their being, pleasure is evil and wicked. When a person becomes aware of this realization they switch to the next goal in life which is world success. This goal is also not scorned or condemned by Hindus.

Satisfaction will last longer, success is a social victory, and it involves the

lives of others. That is the reason which makes this much more important than just pleasure. When this time comes the individual's interests usually shift to the second major goal of life, which is worldly success¹ with its three prongs of wealth, fame, and power. This too is a worthy goal, to be neither scorned nor condemned. Moreover, its satisfactions last longer, for (unlike pleasure) success is a social achievement, and as such it involves the lives of others. For this reason it commands a scope and importance that pleasure cannot boast. . The drive for success is insatiable. A qualification is needed here, for people do get enough money, fame, and power. It is when they make these things their chief ambition that their lusts cannot be satisfied.

For these are not the things people really want, and people can never get enough of what they do not really want. In Hindu idiom, " To try to extinguish the drive for riches with money is like trying to quench a fire by pouring butter over it." The third problem with worldly success is identical with that of hedonism. It too centers meaning in the self, which proves to be too small for perpetual enthusiasm. Neither fortune nor station can obscure the realization that one lacks so much else. In the end everyone wants more from life than a country home, a sports car, and posh vacations. . The final reason why worldly success cannot satisfy us completely is that its achievements are ephemeral. Wealth, fame, and power do not survive bodily death - " You can't take it with you," as we routinely say. And since we cannot, this keeps these things from satisfying us wholly, for we are creatures who can envision eternity and must instinctively rue by contrast the brief purchase on time that worldly success commands.

World success is somewhat limited in four ways..“ Wealth, fame and power are exclusive, hence competitive and precarious” (Smith, 15). 2. “ The drive for success is insatiable...when one makes these things one’s chief ambition ...one’s lusts cannot be satisfied”.“ Poverty consists, not in the decrease of one’s possessions, but in the increase of one’s greed, wrote Plato” and “ In Hinduism ‘ To try to extinguish the drive for riches with money is like trying to quench a fire by pouring butter over it’” (Smith, 16). 3. Centers on the self and we seek something greater than ourselves to fulfill our deep desire for life. Country house, sports cars and posh vacations aren’t enough. 4. The gains of wealth, fame, power are ephemeral – they do not transcend our death. The way of pleasure and worldly success are not to be scorned. Hindus say, “ Do not turn from desire until desire turns from you”.

It is a nature stage of development to adult maturity. Path of Renunciation has greater attraction for those who have outgrown the path of desire.“ If people could be satisfied by following their impulses, the thought of renunciation would never arise” (Smith, 17). Hinduism makes distinction between chronological age vs. psychological age, and therefore it takes several lifetimes to make this journey. Renunciation for what? – for the community * Community has an importance that no single life can command...” Let us then, transfer our allegiance to it, giving its claims priority over our own” (Smith, 19). * Will-to-get is transformed into will-to-give

* Will-to-win is transformed into will-to-serve

* Duty will also leave the human spirit unfilled: respect and gratitude from peers, self-respect from doing one’s part * This goal is unfulfilling because

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community, and the history it rests within, are ultimately tragic because they refuse to be perfected, to be transformed into our greatest hopes and desires. * We desire something more...

1. What Do People REALLY Want?

* “ Is this all?” pleasure, worldly success and the community * No, life holds other possibilities.

* “ We really want being , no one wants to die.

* We really want to know ; we have an insatiable curiosity. * We really want joy , to be happy and for others to be happy too” (Smith, 20). * And we want these three things infinitely . Since science has been able to double the life of human beings people aren’t twice as ready to die, not even a little bit more ready. * Infinite being, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss is what we really want = liberation or moksha

3. Discuss the four Yogic Pathways explaining the personality type that each addresses. What are the distinct characteristics of each pathway? Which would you be likely to follow and why? Explain the various forms of Puja practiced in Hinduism.

When one decides to do yoga they are not just stretching and trying to get into some really awkward looking positions. When one does yoga they are actually doing a training trying to perfect their union with the divine, divine meaning the sacred one. Yoga takes a lot of concentration and control of one’s whole entire body, every breath, heartbeat and move. So many incredible things can be done with your body if you are willing to devote yourself. There are a various forms of yoga which all depend on the level you

are at in your religious quest. There are four different types of spiritual personality types which are introverted, extroverted, very active and emotional, and disciplined. Of course we as humans have a little of each trait but are dominate in one area. As you begin your yoga training you will fall into a specific yoga.

Jnana Yoga is the path way of knowledge; this type of person likes to spend time alone and really likes to learn. Often times they refer to themselves in the third person. For example, Sandra is hungry. If I said that I would be referring to myself in third person. The key here however is for the student to discover their truer self and not put f into the mind set that you are the lead

Karma Yoga is a lifestyle that goes with the personality of a very active person. This is a person that is busy all the time and can't stay still. This person has a focus that what is important is their attitude and providing honest service because what comes around goes around and that puts higher self expectations on oneself.

Bhakti Yoga is for people who are extroverts, people who need contact with others on a daily basis. Bhakti yoga is the most popular of the four because they have to feel the closeness. For them the god whom they choose to worship is one of whom they can relate to and most likely will have a statue of the god in their home or place of business.

Raja Yoga is the fourth. This is for the disciplined person because it entails a lot of breathing techniques as well as learning how to control every aspect of your body. Not only do you work your breath but your movements and

thoughts as well. While using these techniques you work on releasing tensions and push spiritual energy throughout your body.

I think that I would like to work the Raja Yoga, although I may not be disciplined enough. I guess that is why it is learned. I feel that to be able to discipline myself and get within like that would be very gratifying. I like the thought of being able to feel the spiritual energy throughout.

4. What are the Stages of Life in Hinduism and how do these correspond with personal individual developmental stages? What role do they fulfill in society? What is the principle conflict being portrayed in the Bhagavad-Gita and how are death and reincarnation viewed in this depiction? What is the Hindu attitude toward death and dying? When I took a psychology class a few terms ago I learned of the basic human developmental stages. They were Infancy, childhood, young adulthood, adulthood, and retirement. Hinduism has a somewhat different view on this. Hindus look at life stages in a more religious way. The first stage is the student stage. This is the stage where the religious foundations are developed for life, usually between 8 and 20 years of age. Celibacy is a big part of this training and entails a tremendous amount of studying religious works. After the student stage one is then in the Householder stage, this is where marriage occurs, traditionally arranged by parents, and the person fulfills the demands of society by raising children of their own. This happens over many years time. When your grandchildren arrive you are able to retire from the regular life of raising your children and re-devote yourself to religious practices.

This is the retiree state. It was once practiced that the retiree takes his wife and removes them from society to once again find their religious path. Time will continue to go on as we know. The final stage in the Hindu religion is optional, it is to renunciate. When a man renounces himself he completely removes himself from society, making sure his wife is cared for of course, the entire world is now his home. The retiree has nothing but his Orange Robe, which signifies his celibacy. While on this mission many times pilgrimage is made to sacred religious sites of India, or perhaps find and settle into a religious community. Who knows, he may decide to live in a cave. This renunciate begs for his food while on this journey so many of the temples offer a place for these men to come for a meal. Being more in the Western society I follow the path that I learned in school although I do think it would be nice to go off with my husband and rediscover the connection we had before our life became so hectic. When reading the Bhagavad Gita, which is a very long epic poem trying to show some balance between the practical needs of our everyday life and the ability to obtain direct communication with the gods.

The conflict between this epic and the Hindu way of life is a story of Prince Arjuana and his brothers with Prince Arjuana having to decide whether to fight against his brothers to keep the throne or to let them have it. Knowing he was correct in his reasoning to fight for what place is his as well as need to refrain from violence, made him greatly struggle for which direction to take. Coming in contact with the god Vishnu he was directed to not follow his own desires but so what was right, which was to fight. This is the conflict that is portrayed as Hinduism is a non violent religion and Prince Arjuna was

being directed by the god Vishna to create violence. Death and reincarnation are being depicted by the Karma about to take place. If one was to die defending rightfully what was his he would be dying an honorable death, come back in a higher status where dying to try and take what does not belong to him is not a noble death so when you are reincarnated you will come back in a very low status.

Hindus believe in many reincarnations. The most important event in the life of a Hindu is death. We learned that the ultimate goal is to unite with the divine, Brahman. They also belief in Karma, what comes around goes around. I would have to say that their belief is that one's current place; well being or status is a result of how they were as a person in their previous life and deserves every part of it be good or bad. In other words, being good in his present life may help him have a better life next time, but this will not by any means change the present situation. All this concepts of death remind us that life on earth is temporary. All our possessions, pride, power, and even our learning will all come to an end. Once this truth is discovered then one can turn their mind towards God. Which according to Hinduism is life's ultimate goal.