

Sacred elements characterize hindu religious traditions

Religion



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Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the history. With all of the religions out here, Hinduism has been able to hold itself against repeated assault by other religious extremist who have tried to destroy it. Maybe the reason why Hinduism has been able to stay is major a religions in the world is because, Hinduism is more a way of life than a restrictive and organized religion. Actually, the core of Hinduism is the consciousness of the Indian society, and infuses in the every day life. Although sacred elements that describe the Hindu religious traditions are difficult to identify, because of the absorption of the Hindu culture and traditions that have evolved and changed throughout thousands of years. The Hindu religion is strongly dependent on the Hindu philosophy and rituals and practices. The Hindu religion has many Gods because the Hindu philosophy believes that every human being is God himself. The Hindu religion allows religious freedom and does not infer the proclamation of the religion on anyone. Actually, Hinduism teaches in order for a person to attain liberation from the worldly bondage, that person must select the religion that he is comfortable in. The Hindu way of life has many beliefs that offered social balance in the society. For example, the norm of sacrifice and the mandatory rules on feeding others helped to provide food for the needy. Similarly, the social practices were seen as the physical manifestations of the philosophical edicts that Hinduism preached. For example the practice of sacrifice to the fire is a physical manifestation of the philosophic ritual of giving up everything for the sake of understanding the truth. Similarly, the belief that the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi is holy, is due to the Tantric belief that the meeting point of the three nerve centers in the body awakens the Kundalini, which is

the seat of power in the human body. The Hindu religion has over the years become very ritualistic. The Hindu religion offers many ways to realize God. Therefore there is a way of attaining liberation in which the practitioner have to undergo severe self-punishment to understand the God. The rituals that are performed in the Temples in India are in fact, the reflection of the Tantra (sacred text that teaches followers the traditions on how to honor the feminine divine). Rituals are performed by Brahmins, the priest class of the caste system, who use mantras or specific sound syllables that are believed to have specific powers. The Hindu society is caste based, which was originally devised for the division of labor. Hence the Hindu society has the Brahmins, the highest class who performs rituals and is supposed to be the most educated in terms of religion. Then comes, the warrior and ruling class (Kshatriyas). Following Kshatriyas comes the business class (Vaishyas). Last comes those people who serve the upper class (Shudras). People who do not come in these four classes were previously classified as the untouchables. The untouchables had to do unskilled jobs in the society and were looked down upon. In Hindu society, women are given important position in the family even though her importance in public affairs was greatly reduced during the later years of Hindu history. The Hindu Religious literature is very vast. The main foundations of the Hindu literature are the four Vedas, which is thought to have been provided by the Gods themselves to the benefit of mankind. The Vedas have many subcategories of hymns that explain diverse aspects of human life like rituals, social norms, way of living, dharma or the social codes of righteousness etc. There are many other associated literature likes the Shashtras, Puranas etc that goes into specific subjects of interest.

Three works of religious literature that have similar importance to the Vedas and are widely read in the Indian subcontinent are The Ramayanam, The Mahabharatam and the Bhagavatam. All the three books are philosophic in nature and explains how a man must conduct himself in the society, how to attain liberation and how to balance between personal life and a life that would ultimately lead him to understand the Supreme Being. The Hindu religion has given rise to many scientific branches that are very important. For example Astrology, Astronomy, Ayurveda (Hindu medicine), Economics, Politics, Geology etc are very important scientific branches that were very important in the ancient Hindu society and is still relevant.