



HINDUISM

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Overview

Hinduism is one of the world's major religions. It is the **world's 3rd largest religion**, with about 1.1 billion followers. It is around 5,000 years old.

Hindus are the people who follow Hinduism. It is a very complex religion that is followed by different people in different ways.

Many gods are worshipped in Hinduism. All of these different Gods are believed to be a part of the supreme God named '**Brahman**.'

Hindus believe in **karma** and **reincarnation** – that when you die you are reborn as something else.

Hinduism does not have one holy book, but several sacred texts. **Mandirs** are Hindu worship buildings.

Image of Holi festival, celebrating the start of spring. People smear each other with colours.



Answers to Important Questions and Key Vocabulary

Where and how do Hindus worship? Why?



-Many Hindus worship at home in their own shrine – this could be anything from a room, an altar, or simply pictures or statues.
-The Hindu building for communal worship is called a Mandir (Hindu temple). The temples are dedicated to different gods and are the focus of religious life.
-At Mandirs, Hindu people often recite the names of Gods and Goddesses. They also offer water, fruit and flowers to the Gods.

Key Vocabulary

Hindu
Brahman
Karma

What are the Hindu holy books?



-There are many different types of holy texts in Hinduism. Perhaps the most sacred are called the Vedas. The Vedas guide people in their daily lives. They are written into the Sanskrit language.

Reincarnation

Where do most Hindus live in the world?



-About 15% of the world's population are Hindus.
-India has the most Hindus by far – about 1 billion Indians are Hindus – this is around 80% of all Indians.
-However, Nepal has the highest proportion of Hindus – about 83% of its population are Hindus.
There are also lots of Hindus in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
-Most of the populous countries in the world contain a population of Hindu people.

Brahma

Shiva

Vishnu

Holi

Dewali

How many different types of Hindus are there?



-There are many, many different forms of Hinduism, as different types have developed over the thousands of years since it was founded.
-There are four main forms – Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism. These four types can be broken down many more times!
-Although they have small differences, each of the different forms follows the same rough principles.

Dhoti

Sari

River Ganges

Hindu Beliefs

Brahman and the Gods



-Hindus believe in one supreme God called Brahman. He can be found in everyone and everything, including the other Gods.

-Some of the important other Gods include 'Brahma' (the creator), 'Shiva', (the destroyer) and 'Vishnu' (the protector). These three together form the 'Trimurti' (trinity).

-Other gods include Ganesh (remover of obstacles), Hanuman (the monkey God), Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth and good fortune, and Vishnu (the God who preserves life and stands up to evil).

Karma and Reincarnation

-Hindus believe that people are born again after they die, as another living thing (reincarnation).

-In each life the person is rewarded or punished for the things that they have said and done in their last life – this is called karma.

-Hindus believe that if they live a perfect life, they will be freed from birth and death to join the Gods (Moksha).



Festivals



-Hindus enjoy many festivals as a part of their religion. Holi festival marks the beginning of spring.

-Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, is held in the Hindu month of Ashwin (September or October in the western calendar). This event marks the Hindu New Year. Oil lamps are lit and floated down rivers to welcome the Goddess of Wealth. Fireworks are set off in order to ward off evil spirits.

-Hindu people also go on pilgrimages, for example to the River Ganges, which is sacred to Hindus.

Top 10 Facts!

- Hindus believe that all living things have souls.
- Because of this, very committed Hindus are vegetarians.
- Cows are considered to be particularly sacred, as they give milk to the people.
- People clean their houses, and then decorate them, to celebrate Diwali.
- Traditional Hindi clothes include a robe (dhoti) and shawl (chaddar) for men.
- Hindu women wear a long piece of clothing called a sari.
- Singing and dancing is an important part of Hindu worship, as is chanting.
- Big Hindu ceremonies include marriage (vivaha) and cremation (antyeshti)
- Hindu wedding celebrations last for many days. The bride and groom wear red and gold.
- After death, Hindus are cremated, and their remains are scattered in a nearby river.

Hindu Timeline

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| 2500BCE: Evidence of Indus Valley Hindus. | 1500 BCE: The oldest Hindu scriptures were created. | 1300 BCE: The oldest Hindu hymns were composed. | 800 BCE: The sacred text of the Mahabharata begins to be composed. | 100 BCE: The Ramayana is written. | 600CE: Hinduism begins to grow and flourish – prayers and songs written. | 950-1050CE: A 'City of Temples' is built in India at Khajuraho – 80 still stand. | c. 1600 CE: The Hindu Renaissance begins. Many modern versions of sacred texts are found, translated and used. |
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