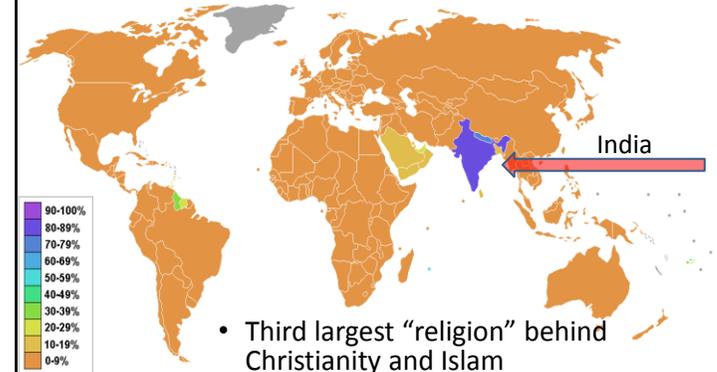


World Religions:

Hinduism – More of a Philosophy
than a Religion.

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Hinduism Worldwide



- Third largest “religion” behind Christianity and Islam
– Approximately 1 Billion Worldwide

Important facts:

- “Hinduism” – ancient Sanskrit word meaning “to run”, or “flow like a river”.
- Does not trace itself to a founder.
- Does not have a starting point in history.
 - Organized largely after Aryan's conquered the Indian peninsula in 1500 BC.
- Intentionally vague doctrines.
- Believe in over 330 million gods.

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Hinduism is a philosophy first.

- Hinduism is a way of life, “*dharma*”, and an ethic.
 - Hinduism does have a religious undercurrent that guides their philosophy of life.
- Believe in a two-pronged belief concerning existence.
 - Sin and evil are illusions.
 - Time is cyclical.
- Because evil is not real, one must spend life fighting against anything that is related to this illusion. If you fail in this life, then you must try again.

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Seven Core Beliefs of Hinduism

1. All evil is *maya* (an illusion).
2. There is an equanimity among the gods, and the number is beyond comprehension.
3. All existence is infused with god, and every living being has a god-soul, called the *atman*.
4. Time is cyclical, and reincarnation is the fate for every single living thing until the person has climbed the ladder of existence, reaching *nirvana*.

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Seven Core Beliefs of Hinduism

- A word about *nirvana*: when the Hindu is able to release themselves from all desire they achieve *moksha*, and have reached *nirvana*.
 - *The end result is that the essence of man combines with Brahman, the impersonal and pantheistic form of god.*

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Seven Core Beliefs of Hinduism

5. Nirvana is a state of nothingness.
6. Not only is time cyclical, but so are ethics. What a person does will return to him.
Karma
7. Hindu's believe in a *caste* system. (More on this later!)

This is what all agree on, but Hinduism is a very diverse, complicated philosophy of life.

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Four Goals of Life

- While Hinduism clashes over rituals and what gods to worship they do agree on the four goals of life:
 - Pleasure (*kama*)
 - Wealth (*artha*)
 - Harmony (*dharma*)
 - Liberation (*moksha*)
- } The four goals are at war with one another.

The first two goals are the general task of young Hindus all the way through raising children. After children have left the home Hindus focus on reaching the last two goals which if fulfilled lead to nirvana.

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Spiritual Texts of Hinduism

- Believe in an open canon. This means new holy books can still be written. This makes it hard to know what Hindu's actually believe.
- Texts fall under two categories:
 - *Shruti* – “heard” holy books. Translated more closely and valued as most authoritative.
 - *Four Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva)*
 - *Brahmanas* – outline the rituals of Hinduism
 - *Upanishads* – commentaries on the Four Vedas

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Spiritual Texts of Hinduism

- *Smriti* – “remembered” sacred books.
 - Include national histories and epics of the gods.
 - Bhagavad Gita (Song of God).
 - Also includes all contemporary writings and additions accepted by scholars and different groups of Hindus.

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Hindu gods

- The gods a Hindu worships are not just gods, they are identifiers. Whichever god is worshipped tells you what sect and people a Hindu belongs to.
- All Hindus worship Brahman. Brahmanism though is more of a political and social movement.
- Brahman Hinduism believes in the three main Hindu gods loosely working together.



Brahman

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Hindu gods

- Vishnu: the god of space and time.
- Half of all Hindu people follow Vishnu.
- Followers are called Vaishnavites.
- Believe Vishnu incarnates himself, which are known as *avatars*.
 - Believe in a final incarnation of Vishnu as a man coming on a white horse. (Sound familiar?)



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Hindu gods

- Shiva: called the destroyer. Known as destroying evil.
- Followers are Shaivites.
- Worship can be harsher, including self-inflicted extremes of devotion. Known to have a fiery temper.



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Hindu gods

- Brahma: personal, creator god.
- Not a major Hindu god.
- Legend says that Shiva cut off one of his faces.



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Hindu gods

- Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma make up a kind of a divine trinity called a *Trimurti*.
- Brahman manifests itself as these three gods.



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Hindu gods

- Each male god has a female deity called a *shakti*.
- *Shakti* means: the god's wife.
- There is a complete school of Hinduism that worships the *Shakti* directly. Called *Shaktism*.

The possibility of Hindu gods is endless. These are just the main objects of their worship.

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Hindu Practices

- Worship in temples and also the home.
 - In the home, Hindus must care for their god just like a person in the family.
- Temple service is called *puja* meaning sacrifice. Rituals, meditation (*yoga*), dancing and music make up their service.
- A priest and assistant lead the worship with music.
- Service is closed as heads are marked with ashes and flower paste.
- Worship is offered to appease the gods and lead Hindus into victory over *maya*.

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Hindu Practices

- Hinduism celebrates the new year, birthdays for their various gods, and *Dipavali*.
- *Dipavali* is the festival of lights. Hindus light lamps in their homes to bring prosperity.
- Hindus also celebrate the life cycle in numerous rites of passage.
 - Marriage is prearranged, and only allowed within their caste.

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Hindu Practices

- *Caste System*: Came from the Vedas. Originated with light skinned Aryans, trying to retain superior status over dark-skinned native Indians.
 - *Brahmins* – priests, scholars
 - *Kshatriyas* – warriors, rulers
 - *Vaishyas* – merchants, land owners
 - *Shudras* - Workers

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Hindu Practices

- The lowest caste, *shudras*, make up the majority of people in India today. They have no standing in society and cannot intermingle with other *caste* groups.
 - Mahtma Gandhi referred to them as “children of God” which began to increase their status.
- The goal in the other three is to be reincarnated up the ladder to become a part of the *Brahmins* which will lead to *nirvana*.

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So you meet a Hindu person...

- Most are strict vegetarians.
 - Believe that an animal may be an ancestor reincarnated at a lower level.
- Most professional Hindu's in America today have abandoned their Hindu roots. They may still respect certain aspects of tradition.
- Most function at a strictly philosophical level. To them, Hinduism is way to live a better life.

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So you meet a Hindu person...

- Relating the gospel is very difficult.
 - They have no absolutes.
- Hinduism is a very tolerant religion.
 - Surface level conversions to Christianity abound, but they shutter at the fact of the exclusivity of the Gospel Message.
- Ministry to the lowest *caste* is very effective. Freedom is found in Christ!

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So you meet a Hindu person...

- Hinduism is based on fear. Fear of continual reincarnation with no certainty of reaching *nirvana*.
 - Share the certain hope of Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is another incarnation of God, He has many times before.
 - The resurrection of Christ is a huge stumbling block due to reincarnation.
- Many cannot cope with sin. They know it is more than an illusion
 - Trusting in Christ's sacrifice for sin provides genuine redemption.

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