

HINDUISM

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Hinduism

‘Hinduism’ 19th cent. term invented
 by the British

India,
 Indus
 River,
 Hindu,
 Sindh,
 Bharat,

Hindus:
Worldwide:
 As at 2010 (approximate figures)

2.2 billion Christians (32%),
 1.6 billion Muslims (23%),
 1 billion Hindus (15%),
 c. 0.5 billion Buddhists (7%),
 14 million Jews (0.2%).

Australia:

Religion	'000	Population (%)	born o/s
Buddhism	529.0	2.5	69.4
Islam	476.3	2.2	61.5
Hinduism	275.5	1.3	84.3
Judaism	97.3	0.5	48.9
Other non-Christian	168.2	0.8	57.2

Hinduism: a plethora of beliefs and rituals that cannot be reduced to any coherent system. Yet, a family resemblance.

<u>Christianity</u>	<u>Hinduism</u>
Creed	No creed
Founder	No founder
Magisterium	No magisterium
Hierarchy	No hierarchy
Moment of revelation	No beginning
Mission	No proselytism

Hinduism is polytheist, monotheist and atheist, all at once.

Polytheist:

Innumerable gods and goddesses, 'the 33 million gods', each with its mythology, its own temples and rituals.

Monotheist:

The devotion to some of these is more widespread: Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, Shiva, Parvatī, Ganesh, Kālī. Durgā, Each has its devotees who consider their chosen deity (*ishtadevatā*) to be supreme, and therefore the others to be its lesser manifestations. So there is a sort of monotheism.

Atheist:

Ordinary people as well as the elite conclude that the gods represent different aspects of the impersonal, transcendent Absolute.

Hinduism moves between two tendencies

a/

Cosmic order, duty Individualism

Sense of community living outside
renunciation,
individual salvation

b/

Castes: Rejection of castes

1. *brahman*, priests,

2. *kshatriya*, warriors, rulers,

3. *vaishya*, workers, traders

4. *śudra*, servants,

c/

Outcaste, Untouchable
Foreigner (*mleccha*)

Hinduism moves between two tendencies

d/

Time is cyclical: All is illusion (*māyā*)

4 ages (*yuga*)

1. *Satya Yuga*, Golden Age

2. *Treta Yuga*, Age of Ritual

3. *Dvapara Yuga*, Age of Doubt

4. *Kālī Yuga*, Age of Conflict

Hinduism moves between two tendencies

e/

exact performance of duties

v. doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*)

rituals maintain the cosmic order

v. prestige of meditation and yoga

Tutelary deity: Vishnu who maintains order

v. tutelary deity: Shiva, the 'erotic ascetic'

Some ideas and practices

karma, (action): Wrong actions have consequences which bear 'fruit', which must be expiated either in this life or another life.

saṃsāra (reincarnation): Cycle of rebirths into another existence, higher or lower,

moksha (liberation): Freedom from the cycle of rebirths

tapas (austerity): A spiritual practice

Guru: gives instruction, initiation and mantra

Mantra: a sound, word, a sentence, the phonic form of one's deity, it has power and efficacy.

avatar (incarnation): Vishnu has several incarnations of which the Buddha is one, Jesus is now another.

tilaka: the sign traced on the forehead,

c. 3300–1300 BCE

Indus Valley Civilisation (Harappan culture)

of Pashupati seal

c. 2000-1500 BCE Aryan migrations (*arya* 'best', 'noble')

1500-500 compilation of the *Vedas* by the Aryans

1. *Rig Veda*

2. *Yajurveda*

3. *Samaveda*

4. *Arthavaveda*

• **Creation hymn** *Rig Veda*, 10.129

• **The Primal Man** *Rig Veda*, 10.90.

c. 600 start of *Upanishads*
 c. 600-500 rise of Buddhism and Jainism

The *Upanishads* contain the earliest emergence of some of the central religious concepts of Hinduism, some of which are shared with Buddhism and Jainism.

The *Upanishads* are sometimes referred to as *Vedānta*, variously interpreted to mean either the "last chapters, parts of the *Veda*" or "the object, the highest purpose of the *Veda*". The central ideas of the *Upanishads* are at the spiritual core of Hindus.

More than 200 *Upanishads* are known, 13 of them are classed as 'principal'.

From the *Isha Upanishad*.

This is everything (*pūrṇa*).

That is everything.

Everything comes from everything.

When everything is taken from everything, everything still remains.

c. 600-300 BCE *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali

Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali consist of 196 *sūtras* (aphorisms) compiled around 400 CE by taking materials about yoga from older traditions.

The text fell into obscurity for nearly 700 years from the 12th to 19th century, and made a comeback in late 19th century due to the efforts of Swami Vivekananda. In the 20th century the corporate Yoga subculture elevated the *Yoga Sūtras* to a status it never knew previously.

"Yoga is the stilling (*nirodhaha*) of the modifications (*vṛtti*) of the mind (*citta*)"
Yoga Sūtras 1.1.

There are many other 'yogas' such as

Hatha yoga

Karma yoga,

Bhakti yoga,

Jñāna yoga

Raja yoga etc.

1st cent. CE, Rise of Shaivism

pantheism?

Nataraja,
Lord of the
dance

c. 1st cent. expansion of Hinduism into
South East Asia
(Indochina, Indonesia)

c. 200-400 CE, compilation of the Epics:
Ramāyana and *Mahabharata*

The *Ramāyana* recounts the banishment of Rama (an *avatar* of Vishnu), Prince of Ayodhya, the abduction of his wife Sitā by Ravana, King of Lanka, the battle led by Hanuman, the monkey warrior, and their triumphant return to Ayodhya. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people illuminated the kingdom with earthen oil lamps and fireworks.

Diwali (or Deepavali, the "festival of lights") is the biggest and the brightest festival in India. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness as well as the return of Rama and Sita and Hanuman. In the Gregorian calendar Diwali falls between mid-October and mid-November.

Diwali in Melbourne

"From the sheer numbers alone attending over one week period of the festival, Diwali at Federation Square has now been recognized as the biggest celebration in Australia."

The *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata* recounts the Kurukshetra War and the fates of the Kaurava and Pandava princes. It also contains philosophical and devotional material such as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The *Mahabharata* consists of over 200,000 individual verse lines, and long prose passages. The importance of the *Mahabharata* is comparable to that of the Bible, the works of Homer, or the Qur'an.

c. 300-400, compilation of the *Purāṇas*

These consist of narratives of the history of the universe from creation to destruction, genealogies of kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, and descriptions of Hindu cosmology, philosophy, and geography.

There are traditionally 18 major *Purāṇas* (totaling 429,000 verses) and 18 ancillary *Purāṇas*.

2 stories from the *Purāṇas*

1. Kumba Mela ('gathering at the pot')

When the gods and demons were fighting over the nectar of immortality, Vishnu flew away with the pot of nectar spilling drops of nectar at four different places: Prayag (Allahabad), Hardwar, Nasik, Ujjain. Kumba Melas are celebrated there.

10 Feb 2013 was the biggest day at the Maha Kumba Mela at Allahabad and probably constituted the largest human gathering on a single day when over 30 million devotees bathed at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers where the third hidden river, the sacred Saraswati, is supposed also to flow.

2. Ganesh

Ganesh is one of the best-known and most worshipped deities in Hinduism. His elephant head makes him easy to identify. He is widely revered as the remover of obstacles, the patron of arts and sciences and the god of intellect and wisdom. As the god of beginnings, he is honoured at the start of rituals and ceremonies. Ganesh is also invoked as patron of letters and learning during writing sessions.

c. 600-700 rise of Tantrism

The four purposes of life:

1. 'right living' (*dharma*),
2. 'wealth' (*artha*),
3. 'pleasure' (*kāma*),
4. 'liberation' (*moksha*).

The essence of tantra is

"to place *kāma* – pleasure – (in all the meanings of that term) and the values which are associated with it, at the service of liberation."

(M. Biardeau)

Kālī

c. 900 CE

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a 700-verse scripture that is part of the great epic *The Mahabharata*. It is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between a Pandava prince, Arjuna, and his guide and charioteer, the god Krishna. Facing the duty as a warrior to fight the war between Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna is counselled to "fulfill his duty as a warrior and so establish righteousness."

Bhagavad Gita is a synthesis:
of impersonal spiritual monism with personalistic monotheism,
of the *yoga* of action with the *yoga* of transcendence of action,
and these again with *yogas* of devotion and knowledge.

"Those who make me the supreme goal of all their work and act without selfish attachment, who devote themselves to me completely and are free from ill-will for any creature, enter into me." (11.55)

Poetry:

1. Basavaṇṇa (South India, 12th cent. CE)

The rich will make temples for Shiva.
What shall I, a poor man, do?
My legs are pillars, the body the shrine,
the head a cupola of gold.
Listen, O Lord of the meeting rivers,
things standing shall fall,
but the moving ever shall stay.

2. Kabir (+1518)

O servant, where dost thou seek Me?
Lo! I am beside thee.
I am neither in temple nor in mosque;
I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash;
Neither am I in rites and ceremonies,
nor in Yoga and renunciation.
If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me,
thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

“... What is God?
He is the breath inside the
breath.”

“A drop melting into the sea,
Everyone can see.
But the sea absorbed in a drop —
A rare one can follow!”

900-1000 first Muslim invasions
1526 -1858 Mughal Empire

1857-1947 The British Raj

Ramakrishna
(1836-1886)

Vivekananda
(1863-1902)

Chief disciple of Ramakrishna.
Among other organisations, he
founded the Ramakrishna
Mission.
He created a sensation at the
first Parliament of the World's
Religions, in Chicago in 1893.
He wrote: "One,
infinite, pure, and holy,
beyond thought, beyond
qualities: I bow down to
Thee".

Tiruvanamalai

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)

“There is
nothing but the
thought ‘I’.”

North India style of Temple

Temple
at Puri

Today!