



Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU Chaplaincy:
An Introduction to World Religions

Hinduism



†SEIRBHÍS TACAÍOCHTA AGUS FORBARTHA
STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT



Hinduism

Hinduism originated and developed in India over the last 3,000-3,500 years. It is the majority religion in India and has spread throughout the world. Hindus believe in one Supreme God, **Brahman**, who is revealed in three aspects: **Brahma** the creator God, **Vishnu** the preserver God and **Shiva**, the destroyer God.

God manifests him/herself in many different forms of Gods and Goddess. Some of these include **Krishna, Durga, Ganesh, Sakti (Devi), Vishnu, Surya, Siva** and **Skanda (Murugan)**.

Hinduism has no defined structures or any set creed. The most important thing is how you live your life. You must live **Dharma** - that is, what is right and correct for you. If you do good you will receive good, if you do bad things, bad things will happen to you. This is known as **Karma**.

Sacred Texts

The sacred text of Hinduism is called the **Vedas** (the Sanskrit word for 'wisdom'). The Vedas have four parts:

- Rig-Veda: Scripture of Hymns
- Sama-Veda: Scripture of Chants
- Yajur-Veda: Scripture of Sacrifice
- Atharava-Veda: Scripture of Atharvan

The **Bhagavad Gita** is perhaps the most well known sacred text, which outlines the Hindu belief in reincarnation. Constant rebirth enables Hindus to become more perfect if they live good lives.



Place and Style of Worship

The Hindu place of worship is the temple and Hindus worship in small groups or as individuals. Larger gatherings take place during festivals. Most temples make up to five daily offerings of food to the gods. Hindus also maintain one or more shrines in their homes as the focus of worship. Worship can take place daily at any time.


Puja ('worship') usually begins with the words 'Om, Let us think about God who made the world, may he guide our minds.' Priests make the offerings of flowers and fruit in the Temples. These must be offered in love.

Hindu Festivals and Religious Dates

The most important feast is **Diwali/Deepavali**, the festival of lights. This festival symbolises both the lifting of spiritual darkness and the renewal of life. It is celebrated by the lighting of oil lamps called **diyas** in houses, shops and public spaces. It is also a time for wearing new clothes and feasting with family and friends. This festival also marks the beginning of a new year.

Makar Sankrant is celebrated on the 14th of January and marks the sun's journey into the Northern Hemisphere when darkness and light are equal.

The **Kumbh Mela** is a festival which happens every twelve years. During this time millions of Hindus gather to ritually bathe at the



meeting of the Ganges and Jumna rivers in India. This is a time of purification and transformation of life.

Hindu Practices

Traditional Hindu women wear the **sari**. Traditional male Hindus wear the white cotton **dhoti**. Women in particular may wear a dot (**tilak**) of turmeric powder or other coloured substance on their foreheads as a symbol of their religion.

The cow is considered sacred. Hindus therefore avoid eating beef. Some Hindus are vegetarian and do not eat meat, fish, eggs or products made from these foods. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods cannot be cooked together. Fasting is commonly practised on new moon days and during certain religious festivals. Yoga is practised by many. The aim is to detach from the conscious world and become 'a living soul'.

Visiting a Hindu Temple

Please remove your footwear. Wear modest clothes and be clean. Do not wear leather clothing or bring leather bags. Do not speak loudly. Turn off your mobile phone. Do not enter the inner sanctum of the temple.



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