



Namste



Om



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# A Hinduism Primer

by



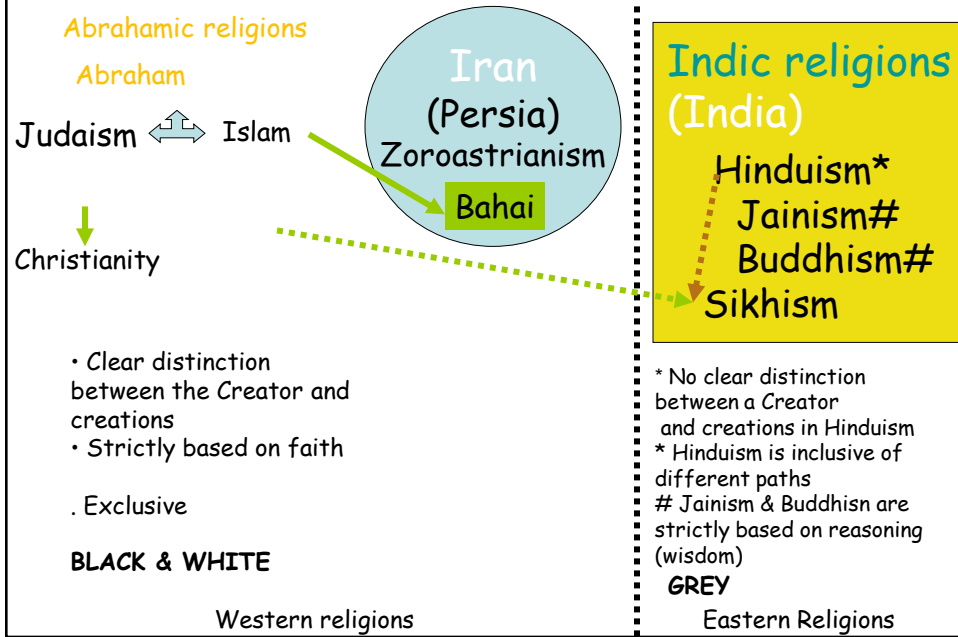
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## Original home of major living religions



## Origin of major living religions



# HINDUISM

- INTRODUCTION
- FOUNDATIONS
- HINDU SECTS
- HINDU SCRIPTURES
- A-E-I-O-U-Y  
of  
H-I-N-D-U-I-S-M

## Introduction

\*Major religion of India.

\*Also known as:

**Sa-naa-ta-na Dha-rma**  
(the Eternal Truth).

\*It represents > 5000 years of religious development in the Indian subcontinent

(Oldest living religion)

\*Actually Hindu time-line dates back to trillions of years (It has always been there)

a-naa-di & a-na-nta (without a beginning & without an end)

• There are ~ 900 million Hindus. Majority of them live in India. Hindus in small numbers are found in almost any corner of our world.

\*If we gather all the Hindus in the USA, their number is perhaps a little less than the population of Dallas city!

## FOUNDATIONS

\***Vedas** are the foremost Hindu scriptures. Vedas are a compilation of hymns in the Sanskrit language

\* *Sanskrit, like Latin, is the root language for many languages. Sanskrit and Latin are believed to have originated from a common language*

#Vedas are four in number  
(Rig-, Yajur-, Sama- and Atahrvana-).  
The root word for Veda is **Vid** (to know)

\*Vedas, literally mean "knowledge"- a  
revelation as clear as seen on a video!

\* "Video" is derived from the same root  
word

\* Vedas are also called **Shru-ti** (heard).  
They were heard by seekers of truth in  
their deep contemplation and passed on  
by word of mouth. Such thinkers are  
referred to as a **Re-SHi** or a **mu-ni**. It  
remained exclusively in the oral tradition  
for many generations.

**#Even to this day, the Vedas are mastered by oral lessons from a teacher (Guru).**

Every Hindu rite from cradle to grave is performed as prescribed in the Vedas. Actually, pre-birth and post death rituals as well!

**\*The Vedas declare:**

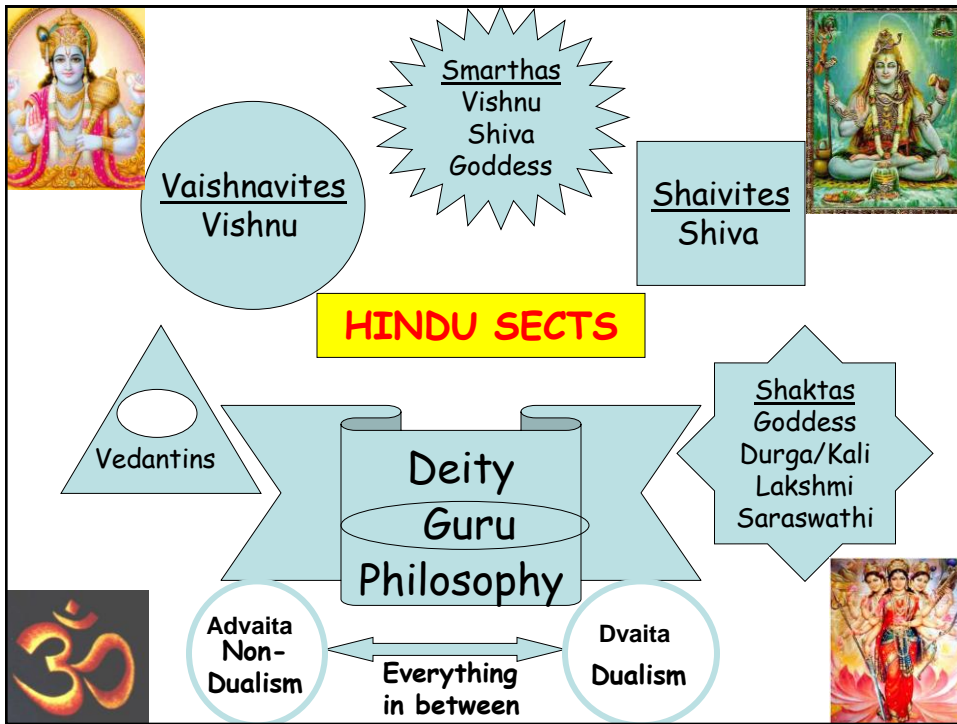
- Truth (God) is One - Names are many
- Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere
- World is one family
- If we know that God's blessing is upon us, we become blessed
- God permeates everything in this world- enjoy your share with detachment and without envy
- You are your best friend and your worst enemy

## The Upanishads:

- Concluding portion of the Vedas (**Veda-anta**)
- Open discussion in close sitting (setting)
- 12 major Upanishads
- Here we see full blossoming of the Philosophy enshrined in the earlier Vedic texts on the relation between our body, intellect, mind, soul, world and God.

**God in the Upanishads is referred to as Brahman**

**(not to be confused with Brahma and Braahmin)**



Each Hindu sect has a multitude of:

- Religious leaders
- Priesthoods
- Specific sacred books
- Monastic communities
- Pilgrimage centers
- 100s of temples.
- Wealth of art, architecture, philosophy, scholarship & sacraments

The sects though appear divergent, they have an underlying unity:

- Regard the Vedas & Upanishads as foremost.
  - Share a vast heritage of Culture & Doctrine
- (Karma, Dharma, Reincarnation, all-pervasive Divinity, temple worship, sacraments, manifold Deities, the **Guru-Shishya** (Teacher-Student) tradition, etc.....**



## Deities at the Flower Mound Hindu Temple

- \* GaNesha (The Elephant headed God)
- \* Shiva (One of the Hindu Trinity)
- \* Durga (Goddess of Power)
- \* Baalaji (Venkateshvara - Narayana as enshrined in Thirumala)
- \* Sai Baba (Saint from Western India worshipped by many as an Avatar)

## The HINDU SCRIPTURES

\*The vast body of Hindu literature is in the Sanskrit language. These include: The Vedas, Vedangas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Sutras, Shaastras, Agama, Puraana, Epics-RamayaNa & Mahabharata, etc....

**Foremost scriptures for eternal concepts:**

**Upanishads, Brahma-Sootra, and Bhagavad-Gita.**

#A fairly good volume of scriptures is also in the Tamil (another ancient language of the Indian sub-continent). These include: Kural, Prabhandams, Mahapuranam, Thirumantiram, Kambha Ramayanam etc.

\*Scriptures in nearly every other Indian language also exist (Hindi/Urdu, Bengali, MaraaThi, Punjaabi, Telugu, KannaDa, Malayalam, Kashmiri, etc.).

# Many Hindu Scriptures have been translated to English and other languages.

The essential features of  
Hinduism can be summarized as

**A-E-I-O-U-Y**  
*of*  
**H-I-N-D-U-I-S-M**

**A**nO bhadrAh  
kratavO yantu vishvatah ||  
*(R~g vEda)*  
**May noble thoughts come to  
us from everywhere**

**E**kam sat,  
viprAh bahudhA vadanti ||  
(R~g vEda)

Truth is one,  
the learned proclaim it in many ways.

**I**sha avAsyam idagam sarvAm  
yat kinca jagatyAm jagat |  
tEna tyaktEna bhunjItA  
mA gridhah kasyasviddhanam ||  
(Isha upanishad, part of shukla Yajur vEda)

The Lord permeates everything  
in this ever-changing universe.

Relish your share with detachment

Don't be greedy after someone else's share.

For example, we just enjoy looking at Grand Canyon, or the Himalayas without thinking that we should own it! **This is relishing life with detachment.** We arrive at Hopi point in Grand Canyon to see Sunset. Many like us are also there. Some of them may have a better spot than us. We just enjoy the Sunset from whatever spot we have. Obviously, we don't stand there envying others, or worse yet plot to knock them down to grab that spot!

**This is relishing our share in life without greed or envy.**



**O**m iti Brahma |

**Om iteedagam sarvam ||**

*(taittirIya upanishad, part of kR~SHNa YajurVeda)*

**Om is God**

**Om is everything.**

**Om is the wOMB of everything!**

Om represents our

birth (spring)

growth (summer),

fading away (autumn/fall),

and immortality (silence of Winter)

**U**ddarEt Atmana AtmAnam

**AtmAnam avasAdayEt |**

**Atma Eva hi AtmanO bandhuh**

**Atma Eva ripuh Atmanah ||**

*(BhagavadgeetA)*

**Advance your self by your own effort**

**Never put your self down.**

**(Because) You are your best friend**

**(And) You are your worst enemy.**

A man can stand a lot as long as he can stand himself.

Self-help is the best help. Be your friend first!

The worst loneliness is not to be comfortable with yourself!

**Y**opAm Ayatanam vEda |  
AyatanavAn bhavati ||

*(aruNa prashna, Krishna YajurvEda AraNyaka)*

**One who knows the sustaining power  
of the Lord  
Indeed becomes sustained.**

## **H** Harmony

- Respects all religions and thus aspires for mutual tolerance and respect (this does not mean that all religions are same- *a common misconception among many Hindus!*)
- Does not encourage hate or distrust  
*(Intolerant of intolerance!)*
- Does not actively seek converts
- Emphasizes conduct and not creed
- Has the capacity to assimilate all different Religions and diverse Philosophies

## **I** Incarnation (Avataar)

- God appears on earth from time to time in an appropriate form and under any sky as may be needed to uphold Dharma (righteousness)
- There is no space, time, form or numerical limitation to Avataars. Rama and Krishna, are the popular Avataars Celebrated in dedicated Hindu festivals (Krishna Janmashtami, Ramnavami).

## **N** Non-Violence (Ahimsa)

- Hinduism recognizes that life supports life. One should avoid causing unnecessary injury (in thoughts, words or deeds) to oneself or other fellow beings including other life forms
- Vegetarianism is glorified by some Hindu sects, but not a prerequisite to be a Hindu in general.

## **D** Dharma (righteousness)

- We should always protect Dharma (support what is right)
- It is regarded as a necessity, because Dharma is the basis of harmonious life
- If we don't support Dharma, it will be as if chopping the very branches of the tree (of life) we are taking shade under.

## **U** Unity of existence

- All life forms and everything else are inter connected and are essentially an extension or manifestation of the Supreme (GOD)
- The world is one big family.

## **I** Inherent Value

- God is Omnipresent & Omnipotent
- Both the manifest & the un-manifest are a projection of God. They are supported, directed & controlled by God as well
- God can be worshipped in any "Form" or "No form"  
Just as the Flag is a symbol of a Nation, an Idol for the Hindu is symbolic of the God)
- A Hindu worships the God enshrined in the idol not the idol itself.

## **S** Supreme Reality (Brahman)

- Brahman is both formless and with form, impersonal and personal, transcendent and immanent
- The Brahman is known by many names.



## **M** Moksha & Mantra

•Dharma (Virtue), Artha (Material prosperity), Kama (pleasures) & Moksha (liberation from cycles of birth & death, harmonious union with God) are the goals of life

•The secondary objectives (Artha & Kama) are sandwiched between the primary objectives of (Dharma & Moksha)

Adherence to one's own inherent talents (attitudes & aptitudes) in achieving these goals is suggested.

Moksha is the ultimate goal of Hindu life. There are numerous paths and innumerable opportunities. It can happen by one way or the other and in one life or the other.

The various paths for Moksha include:

- karma yoga-selfless good deeds;
- gnaana yoga-knowledge of Brahman;
- bhakti Yoga-faith or devotion;
- prapatti (sharNaagati) yoga-total surrender;
- raaja yoga-control of body, mind and intellect;
- mantra Yoga-union with God through repetition of a mantra

Mantra is a sacred word or a verse used for prayer.

The most sacred Mantra of Hinduism is  
**AUM/OM**

It represents our beginning (Spring), being (Summer), passing away (Fall) and immortality (Winter).

**OM iti Brahma, OM iteedam Sarvam  
(Shiksha Valli, Taittireeya Upanishad )**

**OM is Brahman, All this is OM**

**(OM is The One - OM is The Many)**

**(OM is the WOMB of everything)**



**sarvE bhavantu suKhinah sarvE santu niraamayaah.**

**May all be happy, may all be healthy.**

**sarvE bhadraaNi pashyantu**

**ma-kashchit dhuhkha-bhaag bhavEt.**

**May all be prosperous, may none suffer.**

**Om shaantih shaantih shaantihi**

**Om Peace Peace Peace**

**Peace in all our 3 realms of existence**

**(Surroundings, body and mind).**

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free,  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
-by narrow domestic walls;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arm towards perfection;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the  
-dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
Where the mind is led forward  
by thee into ever-widening thought and action-  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

-From *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore  
- Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1913

[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-bio.html)

