

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD: HINDUISM

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RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD: HINDUISM

Viewing Time: 20 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the world's most ancient living religion. It has 700 million followers, nearly one in every eight people on Earth is a Hindu.

Hinduism has made a profound contribution to the religious and philosophical history of the world. It has spawned other religions, Buddhism and Seikism in particular, and has contributed the concept of non-violent resistance as a means of political change.

This program traces the development of Hinduism from its inception to the present day. Shot at numerous locations in India, it demystifies many of the concepts of the faith, including: the many gods of Hinduism, the transmigration of the soul, the Guru, the sacred cow, the caste system, the music and rituals. It also covers the conflict between Hindus and Muslims and the other religions that have sprung from Hinduism.

Since religion has always been such a vital part of life in India, this program is more than simply an introduction to Hinduism. It provides an intimate look at Indian history, culture, and daily life, leaving the viewer with a sense of an expanded understanding of the mysterious part of the world.

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURE

1. Preview the program and read this guide to determine how best to present this program to your class.
2. A map of the world and a large regional map of India will be useful both before and after viewing the program.

3. This program contains a large amount of information; therefore, it is important to have already presented at least an outline of the events contained in the program in advance of the actual viewing.

4. Preview the blackline masters and duplicate the ones you intend to use.

TOPICS PRESENTED IN THE PROGRAM

1. The history of Hinduism as the world's oldest living religion.
2. The beliefs of the Hindu faith - how they changed over time.
3. The British colonial era and the Indian independence movement.
4. Features of the religion: rituals, the concept of the Guru, sacred cows, holidays, places of importance.
5. Muslim invasion
6. Siefism - an outgrowth of Hinduism and Islam.
7. Buddhism

USES FOR THE PROGRAM

1. Social Studies classes
2. Comparative religion classes
3. Church groups
4. Community groups

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing *Hinduism* and participating in the activities, students should be able to do the following:

- The early development of Hinduism
- The Hindu concept of many deities
- Transmigration of the soul.
- The concept of the Guru.
- The caste system.
- The possible effects of Hinduism on other religions.

INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM

1. Ask a few leading questions. Encourage students to discuss their answers.
 - a. What ideas do you have about Hinduism?
 - b. What information have you seen about people who are Hindus?
 - c. Why do you think it is important to study Hinduism?
 - d. How might the religion of Hinduism affect people who are not Hindus?
 - e. What similarities or differences do you see between Hinduism and Christianity? Judaism?
 - f. Can you think of any way that Hinduism might be different from other religions?
 - g. What appeals to you about the religion of Hinduism?

2. Distribute **Blackline Master 2** to determine the level of understanding of the program to determine the level of understanding of the program to determine the level of understanding of the program to participating in this lesson. An answer key is provided at the end of this guide.

3. Distribute **Blackline Master 3** to give students an opportunity to read and discuss the program. They may be asked to answer after viewing the program. This activity may require additional reading.

4. Distribute **Blackline Master 3, Vocabulary**. The list contains key words which may be unfamiliar but which are important to understanding the program.

5. **Present the program**. The viewing time is 30 minutes.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

1. Immediately after viewing this program, ask for questions and comments.

2. Have the students answer the questions on **Blackline Master 1, Viewer's Guide**. Use the Guide questions as a basis for discussion of the information presented in the program. If the discussion leads to details that were not covered, you might want to have the students, or groups of students, research the subjects and report back to class.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Distribute **Blackline Master 4, Map of India and Surrounding Area**. Have students locate the places listed and indicate them on the map using the number given them on the list. Example: Write a 1 on India, a 2 on Africa, 3 on the Indian Ocean, etc. They will need to refer to political maps in an atlas or their textbooks.

2. Distribute **Blackline Master 5, Map of India**, and have the students locate the places indicated. They will need to refer to a political map. Upon completion, go over the maps with them.

3. **Blackline Masters 7 and 8, Post-Test**, is a check on what the students retained from their lesson. Collect the post-test so you can read and comment on the essay question. When you return the papers, go over the answers with the class.

EXTENDED ANSWERS

Have the students give oral or written answers to the following questions.

1. Reincarnation
2. Caste
3. Mahatma Gandhi

ANSWERS

Blackline Master 1, Viewer's Guide

Answers will vary but should include the following:

1. Because it is very complex, because most people have had little or no contact with followers of Hinduism.

2. The earliest inhabitants of India and Southern Russia who conquered the area.

3. Following the path of an ascetic.

4. Non-violent resistance.

5. The river Ganges.

6. To better understand the principles of Hinduism. To intensify one's spiritual life.

7. To produce a meditative state.

8. To renounce worldly life. To become a monk or nun.

9. By birth.

10. Answers will vary.

Blackline Master 2, Pre-Test

1. India
2. Reincarnation
3. Meditation
4. Ganges
5. Caste

Blackline Master 4, Map of India and Surrounding Area



Blackline Master 5, Map of India



6

Blackline Masters 7 and 8, Post-Test

Part 1 - Multiple choice

1. a.
2. c
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. b
7. a
8. a
9. a
10. c

Part 2 - True or False

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. T
7. F
8. T

Part 3 - Essay

9. Answers will vary
10. Answers will vary

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stretch back to before the dawn o

To the Indian sub-continent, wit
defined organization, Hinduism
through Muslim invasion, British
of social change from within.

7

Hinduism was born of a civilization that existed nearly 5,000 years ago, round 3,000 B.C., in the Indus valley of India.

The earliest there were known as Dravidians. They worshipped the Mother Goddess and the Bull, and believed that gods lived in the mountains, streams and other places in nature. By the year 2,000 B.C., the Dravidian culture had all but vanished, replaced by that of Aryan invaders, who came to India from southern Russia and central Asia.

The Aryans brought the Sanskrit language and a religion known as Brahmanism, or Vedism, which like many other religions of the time involved animal sacrifices. What little we know about the Vedic period comes from the Rig Veda, a collection of Sanskrit hymns and poetry composed between 1500 B.C. and 450 B.C.

With time, the religion of the Dravidians and that of the Aryans combined into the earliest form of Hinduism.

"In Tantrasara, which is a scripture of Sanskrit philosophy there is a verse which says - "Who abhors violence in every form, who strives for harmony in every behavior, who loves wisdom, who respects all teachers of wisdom, who practices some form of meditation, such a one may be said to be Hindu."

The gods of Hinduism number in the millions, reflecting the infinite complexity of life. But this vast pantheon is seen as only the parts that make up the one divine being, known today as Brahman.

"Hindus believe in one God because the Vedas are saying that the Truth is one but scholarly people call Him by different names. So Truth is one, God is one, but we interpret that aspect of God differently. Nothing is wrong with that. So God is one and He incarnates differently at different times according to peoples need. So He is one and He multiplies in different forms to comfort people."

All of the other deities simply represent aspects of Brahman. Hindus believe that the deepest essence of the human soul - the

true Self - is identical with the infinite universe itself. The true thing in the infinite universe is the human life.

The priests of Hinduism, also called Brahmins, maintained power by performing rituals to please the deities.

As the religion developed, new deities appeared. The most important of these was that of Krishna, the belief that all things must be done for the life after life, by following one's dharma. It was possible to ascend to higher and higher planes of existence.

"I believe in reincarnation which gives me hope to do better and which makes me realize that there is no reincarnation, I have to do something. I don't have to repay. So I do something."

After many births, one could find liberation from the pain of earthly existence. The Hindu god, Krishna, represented the quickest way to liberation. People, both Brahmans and others, went to the forest to meditate, or wandered through the woods in an austere life.

Hinduism, as we know it today, was developed between 300 and 300 A.D. The earliest deities were represented here and Vishnu, who grew to be the most important deities. Slowly, public sacrifice became a private ritual, called puja.

THE PRACTICES

There are approximately 700 million Hindus in the world. Although most live in India, Hindus live in other countries. In India, where the Hindu religion is the most important part of daily life, the most important part of Hinduism.

Many people begin their day by visiting a temple to pray, to meditate, to make sacrifices, to give money, to the deities.

"Meditation has a great role in a Hindu life, though not many people practice nowadays meditation. Due to lack of time and a lot of responsibilities their priorities have been shifted to modernization."

"Meditation is the practice of the skill of paying attention. And through practicing meditation we learn how to learn, we learn how to love, we learn how to respect, we learn how to worship, we learn how to commune, how to become one with whatever it is that we chose to meditate upon. We learn to enter into union. So meditation is not so much a practice of Hindu philosophy as it is an essential ingredient for life."

There are many places considered especially holy, and people go on pilgrimages to do their puja in these places.

While most people in India have little material wealth by western standards, their lives are enriched by their belief in God, as evidenced by their frequently performed spiritual practices.

Among the most sacred features of the Indian landscape is the river Ganges. Hindus believe that this river poured from heaven to cleanse the earth of sin.

"Ganges is the purest river for Hindus and it is said that if you take bath on a specific day - so that will give you peace of mind and relieve you from the sins you may have accumulated."

On the banks of the Ganges, no place is more holy than the city of Varanasi, also called Benares, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities on earth. Established by Aryan settlers, it was a center of religious life over 3,000 years ago. Here, millions of Hindu pilgrims come each year to bath in the sacred waters, to make sacrifices, and to pray. Hindus believe that if death comes in Varanasi, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth will break, allowing the soul to achieve eternal bliss. Here one of the fortunate is carried to the riverbank to be cremated.

THE GURU

A guru is a spiritual teacher, one who has achieved perfect understanding of the principles and teachings of Hinduism. The

Guru has mastered the inner world. An individualized being has reached the top of the ladder.

"A Guru is an example of what a person can be. He demonstrates, to those who wish to follow, how to be with God in the center and how to know that God stays in the center. And he shows how that can be done. So the Guru is the example. The meaning of the word 'Guru' is 'one who dispels darkness - they illuminate the light.' 'Ru' means darkness, 'gu' means who takes away darkness, illuminates the light. Without a Guru, without the inspiration, how do we proceed in life?"

The Guru can intensify an individual's spiritual life, hastening their karmic journey.

This young man, initiated into the path of devotion, spent his life in the service of his Guru. In an ashram, the Guru's home and spiritual center in Varanasi. The Guru gives his disciples the path to repeat while meditating, as the Guru leads on. Other monks perform a sacred ritual in the temple of the ashram where images of the Guru are kept.

THE TEMPLE

The Hindu temple is a place of devotion. Temples are dedicated to specific deities of individual character. This is a reflection of the goddess Lakshmi is the goddess of abundance. The temple reflects that.

"Temple provides a place where people can come to know their gods, where people could come to know their gods, celebrations and of course we Hindus come to worship their chosen deity. The temple provides a place for them for different purposes."

Hanuman, the monkey god, was

Indian mythology. Hanuman temples usually have large populations of monkeys which run free. Great care and respect is given to the images in the temple, since they represent the aspects of God. Offerings of food, incense, flowers and money are made by the faithful in order to show their reverence for the deity.

With so many deities to honor, there are frequent holidays and festivals in the Hindu faith. Some of these are serious and some are playful. One of the most playful is Holi, spelled HOLI. This festival is held to welcome the spring season with its fertility and abundance. People buy colored powder and water from street vendors and throw it on each other with great good nature.

In a more serious ceremony, the deity from a temple is paraded through the streets of Pushkar with great fanfare.

MUSIC

Music permeates the practice of Hinduism. The sitar is one of the instruments most often associated with Hindu sacred music. It is descended from the Vena, a three-stringed instrument associated with the goddess Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of learning and the arts. The sitar is often accompanied by the tabla, a drum which takes great skill to master, as it is used to produce very complex rhythms.

The sacred compositions for these instruments, called ragas, are intended to be played at certain times of the day. There are morning ragas, afternoon ragas, and evening ragas, and they should not be played at a time other than the one they are intended for. Ragas are designed to produce a meditative state in the listener, and thus to deepen spiritual practice.

Chants honoring the names of God are also performed at different times during the day. Sunrise is thought to be a particularly auspicious time for prayer and chanting. Pushkar Lake, or Brahm Kund, in the state of Rajasthan, is a holy place where the lotus petals of Brahma are said to have fallen to Earth. Here, two men greet the rising sun with an ancient sacred chant. At the same time, a priest performs puja for a visiting pilgrim.

There are fifty-two temples on the island dedicated to a different deity.

Ritual bathing in its sacred waters purifies the spirit and winning the favor of the deity. Puja in a shrine such as this one is a common practice.

Many Hindu holy men, or ascetics, wander through the countryside. At temples, they are always welcome. In India it is common for men, who have left their homes and begun the path of a monk, to have abandoned worldly life. These men have been businessmen, or doctors, or younger - during the householder stage of life - and have renounced worldly life and sought a life of contemplation as they wander through the countryside.

THE BELIEFS

Hindus believe all life is sacred, and that all life forms, including humans, refrain from eating meat, and avoid using any animal products. The cow is especially sacred because it is the most giving animal. It helps to till the soil, and to transport goods. The cow gives milk, and provides transportation. The cow gives help in many ways, including giving food, which can be used in many ways. Cows are protected in India, and are found on streets as well as on farms.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system, which developed in India, has also been part of the Hindu faith. It divides the four orders of society that existed in ancient India into traders or merchants, and serfs. The caste a person is determined by birth. In reality, the caste system has existed for thousands of years. A person's caste is passed from generation to generation and is not changed by marriage within one's own caste. Untouchables are excluded from the caste system altogether, and perform the most menial tasks, such as washing clothes and performing funeral rites.

fort and pleasure. At the age of twenty -nine, he renounced worldly life and became a holy man, wandering for many years in search of spiritual enlightenment. In his search, he came to the realization that enlightenment could be obtained without the harshness of an ascetic life. He founded Buddhism, the middle way, which teaches that the way to enlightenment is to be found neither in the pleasures of the world, nor in the extreme mortification of the flesh, but on a more gentle path of compassion. The Buddha preached his first sermon here, in the deer park in Sarnath, near Varanassi.

Hinduism is a complex and often misunderstood faith. It is as much a way of life as a religion. Hinduism's belief in the sacred nature of all life, and indeed of every part of the natural world, is of unequalled value and support to its followers at a time when there is a global crisis of both the spirit and the environment.

With its great age and wisdom, Hinduism serves as a link between the past and the future. Its principles may help to establish the world in an age of reawakening and healing.

HINDUISM**Viewer's Guide**

Directions: Answer the following questions immediately after viewing the program. If you need extra space, use the back of this sheet.

1. What are some of the reasons that Hinduism is misunderstood by many people?

2. Who were the Dravidians? The Arians?

3. What do Hindus consider the quickest way to achieve release from the pain of earthly existence?

4. What was one of Mahatma Gandhi's main teachings?

5. Name one of the most sacred features of the Indian landscape.

6. What is the purpose of following a Guru?

7. What is one of the intentions of the raga?

8. Why do many Indian men leave home after their children are grown?

9. How is a person's caste determined?

10. What is one reason for the violence between Hindus and Muslims?

HINDUISM**Pre-Test**

Directions: Answer the following questions as directed by your teacher.

1. In what country did Hinduism originate? _____
2. The Hindu belief in more than one birth is called _____.
3. One of the practices of Hinduism which involves sitting quietly and repeating a mantra is called _____ .
4. The river that is considered most holy by Hindus is the _____ .
5. The social system which developed as part of Hinduism in which a person's station in life is determined by birth is called the _____ system.

HINDUISM**Vocabulary**

ascetic - A person who leads a life of contemplation and self-denial.

austere - Stern, harsh, morally strict.

Brahman - The one divine being of Hinduism - God.

dharma - One's proper path in life.

guru - Spiritual teacher.

karma - The effect of actions of past and present lifetimes, both good and bad on one's present life.

mantra - A word or phrase to be repeated while meditating to quiet the mind.

proselytize - To make converts from one religion or opinion to another.

puja - Worship.

raga - Sacred musical composition usually for the sitar and tabla.

transmigration - The passing of the soul into another body at death.

Vedas - Ancient sacred texts of Hinduism.

HINDUISM**Map of India and Surrounding Area**

Directions: Use the number of each of the following locations to identify it on the map.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. India | 5. The Arabian Sea |
| 2. Africa | 6. Saudi Arabia |
| 3. The Indian Ocean | 7. Central Asia |
| 4. The Bay of Bengal | |



HINDUISM**Map of India**

Directions: Label the following areas on the map below:

1. The Valley
2. Delhi
3. Varanasi
4. The Ganges
5. Pushkar



HINDUISM

Background Information

Caste System

The first scriptural reference to the cast system is found in the Rig Veda. It speaks of four social orders: the Brahmans or priests; the Kshatriyas or princes, rulers and warriors; the Vashyas, or traders and merchants; and the Shudras, or serfs.

In modern times, caste has come to be divided not into four groups, but into several thousand linguistic and regional subgroups. One's caste is acquired by birth and determines what profession one may follow and whom one may marry.

Much of the idea behind the caste system has to do with a sense of hierarchy and beliefs about purity and pollution. The Brahmans are at the top of the hierarchy and follow the strictest rules, for they must be pure to serve the gods. For example, it is believed that a Brahman may be polluted by contact with one of a lower caste, or even by eating food prepared by one of a lower caste.

Modern Hindu reformers have all taken the view that caste is a purely social phenomenon. While the caste system is in fact still strongly tied to religious aspects of Hinduism, the increasing political power of some of the lower castes has helped to improve their social and economic standing.

Membershsip in the Hindu Faith

Traditional Hindus believe that one must be born into the faith. Based on the laws of dharma and karma, if one is intended to be a Hindu, one will be born into a Hindu family in order to follow one's dharma, otherwise it is not one's karma to be a Hindu. At the same time, the flexibility of modern Hinduism has allowed it to spread from India to other parts of the world.

HINDUISM**Post-Test**

Part 1 - Multiple Choice

1. Hinduism is:
 - a. The world's most ancient living religion.
 - b. The youngest of the world's major faiths.
 - c. Not really a religion.
2. Hinduism was begun:
 - a. As a branch of Judaism.
 - b. By the followers of Mohammed.
 - c. By no single known founder.
3. Hinduism began in:
 - a. India
 - b. The Middle East
 - c. Northern China
4. Hindus believe:
 - a. There is one God who takes many forms.
 - b. There could not possibly be one God because they have so many deities to worship.
 - c. There is one God who appears in only three forms.
5. Mahatma Gandhi was a famous Hindu because:
 - a. He saved the economy in India.
 - b. He taught non-violent resistance and was a leader of the Indian Independence movement.
 - c. He taught everyone how to use a spinning wheel.
6. Most Hindus:
 - a. Eat meat whenever they can get it.
 - b. Are vegetarians.
 - c. Are careless about their diet.
7. The river Ganges is:
 - a. One of the most holy natural features of the Indian landscape for Hindus.
 - b. Visible only to faithful Hindus.
 - c. Too swift to bathe in.
8. A Guru is:
 - a. A spiritual teacher of Hinduism.
 - b. Just a myth, they don't really exist.
 - c. A keeper of the main books of Hinduism.
9. Ragas are:
 - a. One of the forms of sacred music in Hinduism.
 - b. Played by large orchestras.
 - c. Usually played on electronic instruments.
10. One of the most sacred animals for Hindus is the:
 - a. Dog
 - b. Monkey
 - c. Cow

(Continued on Blackline Master 8)

HINDUISM**Post-Test (Continued)**

Part 2 - True or False

Directions: Place a "T" before the true statements and an "F" before the false ones.

- _____ 1. Hinduism began around 3000 B.C. in the Indus Valley of Egypt.
- _____ 2. We know a lot about the Vedic period because many books survived.
- _____ 3. The multiple deities of Hinduism represent different aspects of the one god Brahman.
- _____ 4. Most Hindus migrated to India after the "Punitive Wars" with the Muslims.
- _____ 5. Varanasi is a very modern city on the banks of the Ganges.
- _____ 6. The Guru is a very important teacher in Hinduism.
- _____ 7. There are no other religions that have developed from Hinduism.
- _____ 8. Music is a very important part of the practice of Hinduism.

Part 3 - Essay

Directions - Answer the following questions in the space provided or on the back of this sheet.

9. Explain why Hinduism is very important in the lives of its followers.
10. Why would the Hindu idea that all life and every part of the natural world are sacred, be important today?