

Hinduism

A Brief Overview

The background picture is of Oum Parvat, a mountain in Himalayas . It is a mountain with a naturally formed ॐ with snow.

ॐ Hindu Dharma / Hinduism introduction

OUM the sacred symbol in Hindu Dharma/ Hinduism which represents the cosmic force.

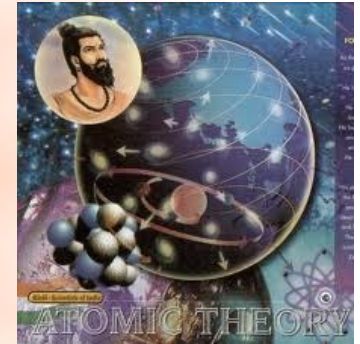
- The three sounds/syllabus in OUM represent divine energy: Creation/ Beginning (Brahma Shakti), Sustenance (Vishnu Shakti), and Dissolution / becoming one with nature (Shiva Shakti).
- The saffron color in the Hindu symbolism is derived from the 'Ushas' (sunrise) representing the dawn of knowledge, creative power, and 'Agni' (fire), as a symbol of purity, equality, and renunciation.



ॐ Hindu Dharma / Hinduism introduction-2

The classical name of Hinduism is “*Sanatan Dharma*” or “*Hindu Dharma*” which means eternal or universal righteousness.

- Just as we cannot trace the origin of physics or chemistry to a specific person or a given intellect, Hinduism cannot be traced to a specific person or a given intellect.
- Hinduism is an ancient religion whose origins predate recorded history. It has evolved over a period of many millennia. Many enlightened individuals have enriched the message of spirituality throughout the ages.
- As per the Hindu Dharmic world view : “God is in everything” (Ishopanishad), hence the question of discrimination does not arise at all.



ॐ Hinduism – way of life

- Dharma means “to hold or support”. Part of Dharma relates to religious practices, like festivals and methods of worship. It also includes universal values such as truth, compassion, non-violence etc. which Hindus accept and strive to practice.
- Thus Hinduism is not just a religion, rather, it provides its followers with, way of life and with a coherent and rational view of reality.
- In Hinduism, Karma is the law of action and its consequences. Hindus believe that they have to bear the consequences of their actions or Karma in their present or subsequent lives.



Sri Ram enforcing
Law of Karma

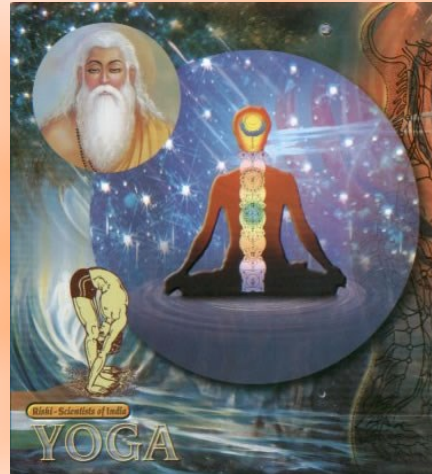


Sri Krishna
Teaching Law of
Karma to Arjuna

ॐ Hinduism – Yoga – Guidelines for a healthy and prosperous life

The great masters of Hindu Dharma, like Sri Krishna, Veda Vyas(around 3000 B.C.E), Patanjali (around 400 B.C.E), and many Yoga Gurus, have given the knowledge Yoga to the world.

Yoga is derived from Sanskrit root ‘yuj’ which means "to add", "to join", "to unite", or "to attach.



Yoga is an integrated system that promotes healthy and prosperous living, control of body and mind, which helps the realization of God.

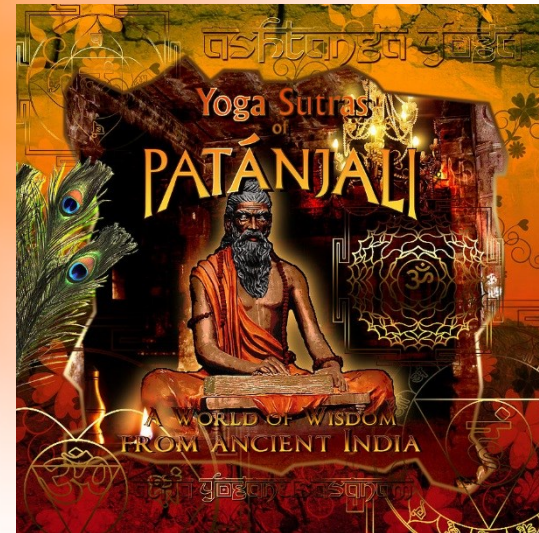
The physical exercise portion of Yoga called “Asana” many times called just yoga, is practiced around the world as a popular form of exercise.



ॐ Hinduism – Eight branches of yoga for achieving success in life

Now, the oldest available book about Yoga Sutras are written by Patanjali. It classifies the Yoga Sutras into Eight parts, which are needed to control the body and mind for healthy living, achieving success in life, and perfecting yourself physically, mentally and spiritually. The ultimate goal is to reach divinity or the realization of God. The 8 parts are as follows :

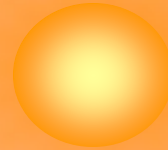
- Yama** [moral codes]
- Niyama** [self-purification and study]
- Asana** [posture]
- Pranayama** [breath control]
- Pratyahara** [sense control]
- Dharana** [concentration]
- Dhyana** [meditation]
- Samadhi** [absorption into the Universal]





Hinduism – Festivals

- Hindus celebrate many festivals to commemorate the heroic deeds achieved by Avatars of God, Saints, and great heroes, which have benefitted humanity.
- Hindus also celebrate festivals centered around respecting and preserving nature and cosmic energy (Like Sankranti, Ugadi etc).



People Celebrating **Diwali** with Lights (above); People Celebrating **Navraatri** with Puja and variety of delicious food (below) (above); and classical dance (below)





Hinduism – Festivals 2



People Celebrating **Rakhi** (above);
Sankranti Holy bath and kite festival(below)

People Celebrating **Sri Krishna's birthday**(above);
Sri Ram's birthday(below)



Hinduism – FAQ

Does Hinduism have Many Gods ?

As said in Rig Veda, (one of the main Hindu scriptures) “Ekam sat vipraha bahudha vadanti” – ‘Truth is one, the wise call it by many names’. Hindus believe in this concept. Consequently, they also believe that God, the ultimate truth can manifest in different forms, and can be called by many names. In Hinduism, you can worship God in your own personalized form.

Do Hindus Have a Bible ?

Hinduism does not rely solely on the spiritual experiences of a single human founder or a book. Many enlightened individuals have enriched the message of spirituality throughout the ages. Its most sacred scriptures are the Vedas, which means “knowledge” Other sacred writings include the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Both of these epics narrate and emphasize the victory of good over evil. The main character Rama, in Ramayana and Krishna, in Mahabharata serve as excellent role models.

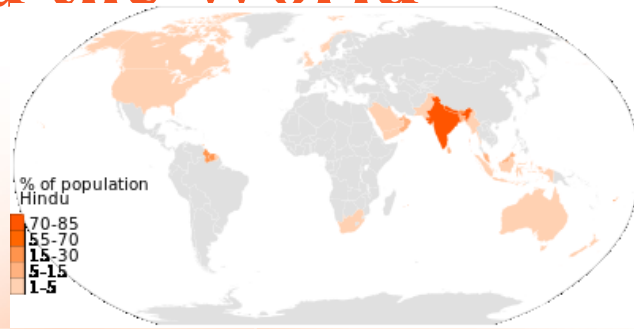
Does Hinduism prescribe a caste system ?

The ‘caste’ has no basis in Hindu scriptures (Vedas). The ‘caste’ ascribed to the Hindus is not a religious institution but a socio-economic one, visible in every society. The word 'caste' is derived from Portuguese word 'casta' and a recent classification based on ‘caste’ was introduced in the 1877 census conducted by the British in India.



Hinduism – Around the World

Hinduism has over 1 billion adherents worldwide (15% of world's population).



<u>Hinduism</u> by country/Region				
Region	Country	Total Population (2011 est)	Hindu % of population	Hindu total
South Asia	Nepal	28,901,790	81.3	23,294,843 – 23,410,450
South Asia	India	1,210,569,573	78.35% (2011 Census)	947,800,00
Asia		3,903,418,706	26.01%	1,014,348,412
Americas		883,197,750	0.281%	6,481,937
Australias		30,564,520	1.348%	411,907
Europe		728,571,703	0.278%	2,030,904
Africa		885,103,542	0.225%	2,013,705

Source : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_by_country (Year 2014)

ॐ Hinduism – Quotes of some famous personalities

- “Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some unearthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is no touch of sectarianism. It is of all ages, climes, and nationalities and is the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge. When I read it, I feel that I am under the spangled heavens of a summer night.” - **Henry David Thoreau, American Thinker & Author:**
- "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made." - **Albert Einstein, famous scientist.**

ॐ Hinduism – “Namaste” We bow to God in you.



Namaste could be just a casual or formal greeting, a cultural convention or an act of worship, depending on circumstances.

Some good and standard references on Hinduism :

- Explaining Hindu Dharma: A Guide for Teachers (ISBN 978-0953435418)
- Encyclopedia of Hinduism (In 11 Volumes).by IHRF ISBN : 9788129115881