

**HINDUISM**

Hinduism is the religion followed by nearly 85% of the Indian people. The basic ideas of Hinduism were brought into India by the Aryans about 1500 B.C. Through the centuries, Hinduism Has greatly affected India's history and way of life.

Hinduism does not have one holy book, such as the Bible or Koran. Instead, it has many sacred writings which have contributed to the fundamental beliefs of Hinduism. The holiest writings are the Vedas, a collection of hymns, prayers, and magic spells. Long poems called Epics also contain many Hindu ideas. Most Hindus are more familiar with the Epics than the Vedas. The Epics are stories about famous Aryan heroes. The Epic called the Mahabharata is the longest poem ever written. It tells the story of a warrior named Arjuna. The god Krishna teaches Arjuna about man's duties and how the soul can reach God through good deeds.

Another Epic, called the Ramavana. describes the adventures of Prince Rama and his wife Siia. Sita is kidnapped by the evil king of Ceylon, and Rama has many adventures trying to rescue her. Eventually, he saves Sita with the help of a monkey general and his monkey army. The Ramayana teaches about love and devotion between husbands and wives.

Hinduism allows a person to believe in one god or in many gods. Some families worship . one god called Brahma, who they believe created the universe. Other Hindus worship gods who are different forms of Brahma. The god Vishnu is the preserver of the universe. The god Siva is the destroyer of ignorance and evil. Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva are the three most important gods, but there are over 33,000 lesser gods who are also worshipped.

Although Hindus worship different gods, they do have certain ideas in which they all believe. One idea concerns what happens to the soul after death. Christians and Muslims believe that the soul goes to heaven or hell, depending on how the person lived his life on earth. Hindus believe that when the body dies, a person's soul goes into the body of another living; thing. The soul can be reborn in another human being or in an animal. The English word for rebirth of the soul is reincarnation. Hindus call reincarnation samsara. The soul keeps being reborn until it reaches moksha. where it becomes united with the god Brahma. Once the soul reaches moksha, it does not have to go through rebirth again.

Hindus believe that a person's karma determines how his soul will be reborn in the next life. Karma means deeds or actions. If a person does good deeds in this life, his soul will be reborn into a higher or better form. If a person lives a bad life, he will be reincarnated into a lower form, maybe into the body of an insect.

A person's dharma tells him how to live properly so he has good karma. Dharma is a set of rules each Hindu must follow in order to be promoted in the next life. If a person experiences poverty and hardship, it is thought that he is getting what he deserves for having had bad karma in his previous life. He must make the best of this life, and perhaps in the next life his soul will be reborn into better conditions.

-10A-

Hindus do not have a place like the Christian church or Jewish synagogue where they worship on a certain day of the week. Instead, Hindus usually worship in their homes whenever they wish. Some wealthy people set aside a special ro.om to practice their religion. Many important religious ceremonies, including weddings, take place at home. India does have beautiful temples dedicated to particular gods. But Hindus worship as individuals rather than as congregations.

People make pilgrimages to temples in such holy cities as Benarsa along the Ganges River. At least once in a lifetime, very religious Hindus try to visit the Ganges because they believe its waters are holy and can wash away sins. Many Hindus also think that if they bathe in the Ganges, they will be cured of sickness and disease.

Hindus believe that animals have souls, and therefore cannot be killed for meat. The cow is especially sacred. Cattle roam freely through the streets unharmed even though millions of Indians do not have enough to eat. To Hindus, eating the flesh of the cow is a form of cannibalism because the cow might contain the soul of a dead friend or relative.

All Hindus follow the strict rules of the caste system. A person is born into a certain caste. or social class. His caste determines what kind of job he will have. It also has an effect on what a person can eat, who he will marry, and who his friends will be. There are four main castes, each with its own rules and regulations: (1) the Brahmans. or priests (2) the Kshatrivaa. the warriors and rulers (3) the Vaishvas. consisting of professionals, merchants, and landowning farmers, and (4) the Shudras. or servants. Each of these four castes has hundreds of subcastes that have their own rules of behavior.

There was a group of unfortunate people in India who for centuries did not belong to any caste. These people were called Untouchables, or Outcastes. They ranked below the lowest caste. They had to do the jobs that caste Hindus would not do, like handling the bodies of dead animals and sweeping the streets. Untouchables could not worship in Hindu temples or use public roads and wells. Mohandas Gandhi, who helped India gain its independence from Great Britain, tried to help the Untouchables. Finally, in 1950, the Indian Constitution did away with Untouchables. It outlawed discrimination against a person because of their religion, caste, race, or sex. Today, former Untouchables can attend schools and universities, and become lawyers, teachers, and even government officials.

In recent years, the caste system has weakened. As more and more people have become educated, caste prejudice has decreased. New jobs created by industrialization have cut across caste lines. As more and more people move to the cities, caste differences are less noticeable. The caste system, however, may never completely disappear because it is such an important part of the religious beliefs of Hinduism.

-10B-

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Period:**

**World Religions Worksheet #**

**Hinduism**

**(i) Hindu god who is believed to have created the universe**

**(2) \_\_\_\_\_\_ word for rebirth of the soul**

**(3) where most Hindus worship**

**(4) Hindus believe its waters will cure sickness and disease**

**(5) sacred animal of India**

**(6) the holiest writings of Hinduism**

**(7) it divides Hindus into social classes**

1. **\_ long poems that tell stories about famous Aryan heroes**
2. **\_ the set of rules each Hindu must follow**

**(10) he worked to help improve life for the Untouchables**

**(11) landowners who belong to the Vaishya caste**

**(12) it teaches about love and devotion between husband and wife**

**(13) Hindu god who is the preserver of the universe**

**(14) they were also called the Outcastes**

**(15) religion of most of the Indian people**

**(16) the Hindus have more than 33,000 of them**

**(17) the Hindu word for reincarnation**

**(18) it determines the form in which the soul is reborn**

**(19) people who brought the basic ideas of Hinduism to India**

**(20) where caste differences are less noticeable**

**(21) when the soul is united with the god Brahma**

**(22) the Epic that tells about the warrior Arjuna**

**(23) the god who taught Arjuna about the value of good deeds**

**(24) the caste to which priests belong**

**(25) god who is the destroyer of ignorance and evil**

**(26) it outlawed discrimination because of a person's caste**

**(27) the servant caste**

**QUT2 : HINDUISM**

**Multiple-Choice**

**(1) The basic ideas of the Hindu religion were brought to India by the: (a) Aryans**

**(b) Romans (c) Arabs**

**(2) The holiest writings of Hinduism are the: (a) Vedas (b) Varnas (c) Ramas**

**(3) Hindus believe that when a person dies, the soul goes: (a) to heaven or hell (b) to the**

**Other World (c) into the body of another living thing  
(4) Most Hindus worship: (a) in their homes whenever they wish (b) at a local temple**

**every Sunday (c) at a mosque two or three times a week  
(5) it is believed that sickness and disease can be cured by the holy waters of the:**

**(a) Brahmaputra River (b) Ganges River (c) Indus River**

**Completion Choose the term from the list below that best completes each of the following statements.**

**Karma Brahma Siva Epic Benares**

**(6) The called the Mahabharata tells the story of a warrior named**

**Arjuna and the god Krishna.**

1. **The god \_\_\_ is the destroyer of ignorance and evil.**
2. **A person's or deeds and actions, determines his condition in the**

**next life.**

**(9) People make pilgrimages to worship at temples in such holy cities as**

**(10) The soul keeps being reborn until it is united with the god**

**Matching**

**(11) reincarnation (a) unfortunate people who did not belong to a caste**

**(b) worked to end discrimination against a person  
(12) caste system because of their caste**

**(c) rebirth of the soul**

**(13) untouchables (d) social class made up of merchants, landowning**

**farmers, and professional people  
(14) Vaishyas (e) divides Hindus into four social classes**

**(15) Mohandas Gandhi**

**True-False**

**(16) The holy book of the Hindu religion is called the Koran.**

**(17) All Hindus believe in one god.**

**(18) About 15% of the people of India are Hindus.**

**(19) A person is always reincarnated into a higher form.**

**(20) Hinduism has greatly affected the history and way of life of the Indian people.**