

Hinduism



Introduction

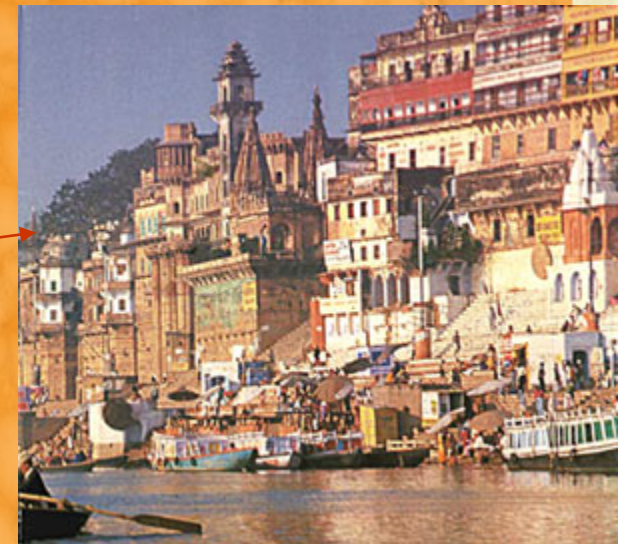
What is Hinduism?

Hinduism is the oldest 'living' religion today. Some say as it originates as far back as 4500 years ago!

It originated in the Indus Valley Civilisation in North West India. Today that region is known as Pakistan.

The religious beliefs of the Indus mixed with later invaders to form an early form of Hinduism as it is practised today.

This is a picture of Varanasi - Which is known as the 'Eternal City' This religious capital of India is situated on the banks of the holy river Ganges. Hindus believe that it is presided over by Lord Shiva.



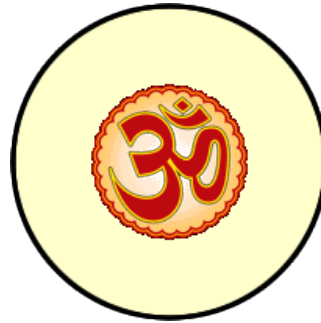
A Map of Hindu India



What Hindus Believe

- Hindus believe in one God.
- They believe God is everywhere and in everything.
- Hindus believe that he created the world and everything in it.
- The Supreme Soul is called Brahman.
- Hindus believe that Brahman has many forms.
- They believe that these forms represent the different aspects of Brahman's power.
- These forms are the thousands of gods and goddesses of Hinduism.
- Many Hindus choose more than one of these deities to worship.

Mandir



- The temple is a special place for Hindus.
- It is known as the Mandir and is regarded as God's home on Earth.
- A murti is a deity or image of a Hindu god or goddess and are to be found in the Mandir.
- The Murti is made according to the instructions of the *shilpa shastra*. The priest then installs them through the *establishing of life ceremony* - known as the *prana pratistha*.
- They are treated as living beings and are washed, dressed and fed during the day.
- Hindus visit the mandir for darshana, or a 'sight' of the deity.

Puja



- Puja is the name given to the Hindu act of worship.
- Sweets, flowers and fruit are made and through the priest, to the deity to be blessed.
- These offerings are shared amongst the worshippers.
- This bestows a blessing by God and is known as prashad.
- The priest who performs the puja in the temple (mandir) is called a pujari.
- After the puja, he places a red mark on the worshippers foreheads.
- This is called tilak.
- Hindu women wear a red bindi / mark on their foreheads to show that they are married.

Where do Hindus worship?



- Hindus worship at the Mandir – but they may also worship at home
 - A family shrine may be created.
 - This shrine may be a shelf or a corner of the room
 - The family may come together and pray.
- At the end of the puja, a tray of five lamps is circled in front of the deity.
- Our five senses are represented by these five lamps.
 - The ceremony called '**Arti**' is when the worshippers hold their hands over the flames and touch their heads and eyes in order to gain God's blessing.

Some Questions...?



1. Whereabouts in the world did Hinduism originate?
2. What have you learned so far about what Hindus believe?
3. What is special about Varanasi?
4. Where do Hindus worship?
5. Can you describe the ceremony of Arti?
6. What is a tilak?
7. What symbol do some married Hindu women wear?

