

HINDUISM = Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion)

- 1. Veda's = sacred writings of the mixed Indus and Aryan peoples**
 - = ca. 2600 B.C.E.**
 - = Orally passed down in 4 parts:**
 - a. Samhitas = hymns of praise**
(Rig Vedas, Samavedas, Yajurvedas, Atharavedas)
 - b. Brahmanas = directions on how to use rituals**
 - c. Aranyakas = religious traditions**
 - d. Upanishads = spiritual teachings**
- 2. Brahman = Ultimate reality within and behind all things**
- 3. Caste System =**
 - a. Brahmin class...shamans & priests**
 - b. Kshatriyas class...nobility**
 - c. Vaishyas class...professional trades, middle class**
 - d. Shudras class...common people**
- 4. Ahimsa = reverence for life**
- 5. Reincarnation = transmigration (rebirth, recycling of souls from one life to another).**
- 6. Samsara = karma-run wheel of birth, death and rebirth**
 - =Nothing really changes, nothing new, nothing changes**
- 7. Karma = all our actions (thoughts, words and deeds) stay attached to our soul and have positive or negative consequences. Thus good deeds cause rebirth into higher life forms and bad deeds cause rebirth into lower life forms.**
- 8. Goal of our lives is to escape samsara, to become one with Brahman through disciplines which build good karma over many lifetimes.**
- 9. Spiritual disciplines (yogas) =**
 - a. Raja Yoga = physical and psychological concentration practices**
 - b. Jnana Yoga = service to others without reward**
 - c. Karma Yoga = wisdom and spiritual virtues**
 - d. Bhakti Yoga = devotion to a god**
- 10. Hindu's try to become one with Brahman through these Yogas by choosing one of the following aims in life:**
 - a. Kama = pleasure, especially through love**
 - b. Artha = ruthless and tough struggle for social success and power**
 - c. Dharma = search for religious and moral law, doing one's duty for the good of everyone, not just for one's family**
 - d. Moksha = salvation or release from samsara which is gained by:**
 - 1. The way of works = doing good things for people, for gods**
 - 2. The way of knowledge = through reason and much study one can attain knowledge of ecstatic union with Brahman**
 - 3. The way of devotion = passionate devotion to a specific god (bhakti)**

Characteristics of Modern Hinduism:

- 1. Syncretism**
- 2. Caste system**
- 3. Sexism**
- 4. Reincarnation**
- 5. Ahimsa**
- 6. Pacifism**

JAINISM = Conquerors of one's appetites

= ca. 500 B.C.E. Mahavira felt Hinduism wasn't disciplined enough .

1. Mahavira wanted to break out of the world through asceticism, sacrifices including renouncing the world, casting off fine clothing, pulling hair out and rejecting all bodily feelings, all meant to cleanse the soul.
2. Mahavira felt Karma was the key, so he refined and narrowed Karma into severe spiritual discipline.
3. Try to reach one individual at a time.
4. Teach the 8 karmas:
 - a. Focus on one's own personal existence, who you are and what your goal in life is.
 - b. De-emphasized nationality and caste.
 - c. Emphasized everyone can resolve and persevere.
 - d. Taught every living thing has intelligence, the power to know.
 - e. Everyone has some pleasure and some pain in their life. We can live with less pleasure and can endure more pain than we think.
 - f. Practice these ultimate attitudes, get beyond what is here and now.
 - g. Everyone has an intuitive ability to look within and follow these karmas.
 - h. Practice ahimsa = reverence for all of life.

(Jains see themselves as an extension of and a refinement of Hinduism. Hindus see Jains as a non-conforming sect, as too critical of Hinduism).

For further information see jainnet.com.

Sikhism =

SIKHISM

Sikhism is a relatively young South Asian monotheism that stresses community and loyalty. It has more than 20 million adherents, mostly in India.

- Founder: Nanak (1469–1539) was the first of ten teachers, or gurus; the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa military brotherhood in 1699 and closed the lineage of teachers—investing the scripture, the Adi Granth, with the authority of the gurus as a “living text.”
- Principal deity: The monotheistic, omnipotent, and omniscient Sikh deity is called Waheguru, “the lord” in the sacred Punjabi language.
- Worldview: Sikhism teaches the essential unity of all religious sentiment, stressing martial courage and pride in community heritage. Doctrine is based on the teachings of the Adi Granth, but emphasis is also placed on the exemplary lives of the ten gurus, as well as martyr-warriors such as Baba Deep Singh (d. 1757), who is said to have continued in battle even after his head was severed.
- Major texts: Foremost is the Adi Granth, or “Sri Guru Granth Sahib.” The Dasam Granth, by Gobind Singh, is also revered, as are the Janam-sakhis, stories about the life of Nanak.
- Schools and divisions: Contemporary Sikh identity is dominated by the ideal of the Khalsa; in practice, degrees of observance can vary greatly, even in the same extended family. Khalsa orthodoxy requires display of the five K's: kacch (undergarment), kangha (wooden comb), kesh (uncut hair), kara (steel bracelet), and kirpan (dagger or sword). A fully initiated Khalsa Sikh is called Keshdhari and may refer to uninitiated Sikhs as Sahajdhari, or “slow to adopt.”
- Practice: Regular community worship is at the gurdwara, or temple, where men and women sit separately. Other elements include abstinence from tobacco and display of the five Ks. Doctrine does not endorse devotional acts, but in practice Sikhs often venerate Sikh martyrs and the ten gurus and their relics. They may also go on pilgrimages to Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple, in Punjab, considered the center of the Sikh world; to Anandpur Sahib, the founding place of the Khalsa; or to other historical gurdwaras in South Asia.
- Membership: Sikhism welcomes to the panth (community) converts who accept the Rahit Maryada (code of conduct, formalized in 1950) and obligations of the Khalsa. For practical purposes, however, Sikhs do not proselytize, and the vast majority of the panth is ethnically Punjabi.
- History: Sikhism emerged from northern Indian bhakti (devotionalism) in the 1400s, but since the 1800s, it has defined itself as distinct from other religions, particularly Hinduism.
- Contemporary domain: After the 1947 partition of Pakistan and India split the region of Punjab, most Sikhs now reside in Indian Punjab, with worldwide minority diaspora communities in North America, western Europe, and the Australia/Pacific region.

