

Bachelor of Arts (First Year)

Subject: Sociology Paper Code: SOGE 102

Course : Religion and Society in India

Unit: 03

Module Name: Major religions in India- Hinduism

Module No: 09

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- ✓ Hinduism as a religion is the most ancient and the most major and influential one.
- ✓ Hinduism is based on and supported by abundant literature in the form of “*srutis*” and “*smritis*”.
- ✓ The Hindu religio-philosophical literature the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* have assumed importance.
- ✓ The Vedas constitute the fountainhead of the entire Indian culture, whereas the Upanishads form the basis of Indian Philosophy and socio-religious thought. They are also known as the earliest treasures of knowledge.
- ✓ The Gita which provides the philosophical basis of popular Hinduism, seems to be very influential in guiding the lives of people.
- ✓ The Hindu socio-philosophical thought also includes the theory of “*purusharthas*” which exemplifies Hindu “*life-purposes*”.
- ✓ Hinduism” is the religion of the Hindus who constitute the major religious community in the Indian population.
- ✓ Nobody knows about it’s origin. Ancient persians (while referring to the river “Sindu”) pronounced the word “ Sindhu” as “Hindus”.

The Arabs referred to it as “al-Hind”, their land “Hindustan” and their religion “Hinduism”.

GENERAL CHARATERISTIS OF HINDUISM

- ✓ Hinduism consists of several streams of beliefs, practices and socio-religious institutions.
- ✓ Hinduism is unique in certain respect- it was founded or established by no single person or prophet or angel. it is not based on the preaching and thoughts of any single person.

- ✓ Hinduism is also associated with **idol worship**. But the worshipped idol is not uniform, it varies according to the sect. Each sect keeps its idol (Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Ganesh, Hanuman, kali etc) in a separate temple and worships it on specific occasions.
- ✓ Hindus have developed over the years **two types of philosophy**: (i) Astika (Brahmanic) and Nastika (non-Brahmanic). Astika's believe in the authority of vedas whereas Nastika's reject the authority of Brahmanic. The Hindu theology is very complex and is woven around abstract spiritual concept such as atma, paramatma, punarjanma, karma, papa, punya, brahma, dharma, moksha, and so on.
- ✓ Hinduism is said to be more tolerant towards other religion. Further it does not believe in conversions. Hence it finds no reason to impose its beliefs or thoughts on the followers of the other religions.
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- ✓ Hinduism is known for its broad outlook. It allows the widest freedom to its followers in matters of faith and worship. It never prescribes any particular way of worship and never imposes any belief for the devotees.
- ✓ The concept of Ishtadevta is a unique feature in Hinduism. One an ling to one's Ishtadevta with singleminded devotion to the exclusion of all other.
- ✓ Synthesis of many sets- Hinduism is actually a collectivity of sets. Each may have its own distinct and independent origin. Vaishnavism, Shaivism and shaktism are the three famous sects found within Hinduism.
- ✓ **DEMOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF HINDUS IN INDIA:**
- ✓ Hindus constitute 82.4% of the total population of India as per the Census Report of 1991.
- ✓ Majority of the Hindus are in the States such as Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, M.P, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Haryana. The Hindu society often gains in strength by absorbing tribal people
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- ✓ Here and there, but more than that it loses heavily particularly when its members chiefly from lower ranks get converted to other religions such as Islam and Christianity.

- ✓ The Hindus have low fertility rate in comparison with tribal people, Sikhs or Muslims. This low fertility is mainly due to the fact that the Hindus have a high proportion of widows who are forbidden to remarry. Large number of people are found to be unmarried between the age of 15-32.

The **census** data, which was compiled in **2011**, says India is home to 966.3 million **Hindus**, who make up 79.8% of the **population**. There are 172.2 million Muslims (14.2% of the **population**); 27.8 million Christians (2.3%) and 20.8 million Sikhs (1.7%).