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of
H-I-N-D-U-I-S-M

Introduction

- *Major religion of India.
- *Also known as **Sa-naa-tha-na Dha-rma** (the Eternal Truth).
- *It represents > 5000 years of religious development in the Indian subcontinent (Oldest living religion).
- *Actually Hindu time-line dates back to trillions of years (It has always been there).
- * There are ~ 1 Billion Hindus. Majority of them live in India.
- * Hindus in small numbers are found in almost any corner of our world.
- *If we gather all the Hindus in the US, their number exceeds the population of Greater Cincinnati.

FOUNDATIONS

***Vedas** are the foremost Hindu scriptures. Vedas are a compilation of hymns in the Sanskrit language. (*Sanskrit, like Latin, is the root language for many languages. Sanskrit and Latin are believed to have originated from a common language*).

#Vedas are four in number

(Rik-, Yajur-, Sama- and Atahrvana-). The root word for Veda is **Vid** (to know); thus, Vedas, literally mean "knowledge"- a revelation as clear as seen on a video! "Video" is derived from the same root word.

***Vedas are also called Shruti**

(that which is heard). They were heard by the **Rishis** (seekers of truth) in their deep contemplation and passed on by word of mouth. It remained exclusively in the oral tradition for many generations.

#Even to this day, the Vedas are mastered by oral lessons from a teacher (Guru).

Every Hindu celebration from cradle to grave is performed as prescribed in the Vedas.

*The Vedas declare:

"Truth (God) is One, the Names are many"

"Let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere"

"World is one family"

"If we know that Lord's blessings is upon us, we become blessed"

This theme repeats in later Hindu Scriptures.

The Upanishads: Concluding portion of the Vedas (**Veda-anta**). Open discussion in close sitting (setting). There are 12 major Upanishads. Here we see full blossoming of the Philosophy enshrined in the earlier Vedic texts on the relation between our body, intellect, mind, soul, world and God.

**God in the Upanishads is
referred to as Brahman**

(not to be confused with Brahma and Brahmin)

The BHAGAVADGITA

(The Song Divine)

It is a comprehensive summary of the Vedic philosophy (Upanishads). It is among the most popular Hindu scriptures. It is the longest Philosophical song (700 verses) in the world literature. This is one of the books Hindus swear on in a court of law.

Bhagavadgita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and prince Arjuna at the outset of **Ma-haa-bhaa-ra-tha** war (*Bhaa-ra-tha, is another name for India*). A royal family feud which resulted in a wholesale war that lasted for 18 days (Nov 22- Dec 9; 3067 BCE). This war is believed to have taken place in **Ku-ru-kshe-tra** (a place near India's capital New Delhi) about 5000 years ago. Krishna says to Arjuna that He had given the same message in the great past to the patriarchs of Solar Dynasty.

The message was passed on in succession for many generations through the lineage of philosopher kings. However, with time, the essence was lost, and “*I have appeared in the human form to revive it*”

Yes, that revival of Hinduism has been happening in every generation. This makes Hinduism a Dynamic/vibrant religion (old and new at the same time!).

Gist of The Bhagavadgita

- *God is the source of everything.
- *God is the best
- *God is omnipotent and omnipresent.
- *True knowledge is to know God.
- *Death is only to the body. Soul takes new forms until it is liberated.
- *Once we surrender to God, we are free from cycles of birth and death.
- *The good wins over evil.
- *God incarnates, when needed to establish righteousness (**dharm**a).
- *The form of God we worship, God fixes our faith in that very form.
- *All pray to the same one God.
- *True believers of God never fail.

- * Action is inevitable. No one can keep quiet.
- * Sainthood, showy and lazy are human nature. Try to become more saintly in your thoughts, words, and deed (eating habits, leisure activities, charitable work, etc.).
- * Rise above the differences of pain and pleasure, good and bad, etc.
- * Do your work without greed. Don't be lazy.
- * Do the work that suits you best.
- * Dedicate all your actions to God.
- * You have control only your actions and not on the result
- * Five factors govern the outcome all actions (good or bad): Context, doer, tools at one's disposal, how the tools are used, and providence.
- * Share your fortunes with others, otherwise you are nothing but a thief.
- * Always support what is right.
- * Follow moderation. Maintain a good balance of work, rest, food and pleasure.
- * Be an example for good.
- * Be humble and tolerant.
- * Lust, anger, and greed lead to sorrow.
- * Love (faith), light (knowledge) and life (selfless work) are the ways to God.
- * Love all. See ONE in all and all in ONE.
- * You are your best friend and your worst enemy.
- * Only few people truly realize the truth.
- * December month (Christmas !) and the spring season (Easter!) are very dear to God.
- * Easy to please God. Just offer some water, or a flower, or a leaf with faith or just think of God.
- * Wisdom + Action = Success.
- * The greatest Mantra is **Om** (AUM)

The HINDU SECTS

*Hinduism has many sects, based on the Philosophy and the chosen Deity (Saguna Brahman or **Ishtadevatha**).

Some popular Hindu Deities

(Deities worshiped in Cincinnati Temple: 513-528-3714;4920 Klatte Road, Cincinnati, OH 45244)

www.cincinnatiemple.com)

Shiva (One of the Hindu Trinity)

Hanumaan (The Monkey God)

Ganesha (The Elephant headed God)

Laxmi (Goddess of prosperity)

Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge and Wisdom)

Durga (Goddess of Power)

Laxmi-Naaraayana (Vishnu and His consort)

Balaji (Vishnu)

Raama-Seeta an (incarnation of Vishnu and Laxmi)

Raadha-Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu united with a devotee)

Sreenaath (an incarnation of Vishnu)

Subramanya/Muruga) (Son of Shiva and Durga)

Jagannatha (Vishnu)

Chitragupta (Son of Brahma)

Navgrah (Deities governing the 9 Planets)

#The major sects can be broadly classified as **Vaishnavites, Saivites, Shaktas, and Smartas**. For Vaishnavites, **Vishnu** is the supreme God. For Shaivites, it is **Siva**. For Shaktas, Goddess **Shakti** is supreme. For Smartas, it is one or more or all the above.

*Also there are strict **Vedantins**, who pray to none of the above and think of only the God with no Form, or in other words, beyond attributes (**Nirguna Brahman**). There are also Hindus who pray to both the Saguna and the Nirguna Brahman.

#Each Hindu sect has a multitude of religious leaders, priesthood's, specific sacred literature, monastic communities, schools, pilgrimage centers and tens of thousands of temples. They possess a wealth of art and architecture, philosophy and scholarship.

The sects appear so divergent; yet in reality they have an underlying unity. They all regard the Vedas & Upanishads as authority. They also share a vast heritage of culture and doctrine {e.g, **Karma, Dharma**, reincarnation, all-pervasive Divinity, temple worship, sacraments, manifold Deities, the **Guru-Shishya** (Teacher-Student) tradition, etc.}.

The HINDU SCRIPTURES

*The vast body of Hindu literature is in the Sanskrit language. These include: The Vedas, Vedangas, Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Sutras, Shaastras, Aagamas, Puranaas, Ithihasas, **Epics**-RaamayaNa & Mahaabharata, etc.

Foremost scriptures are: Upanishads, Brahma Sutra, and Bhagavadgita.

#A fairly good volume of scriptures is also in the Tamil (another ancient language of the Indian sub-continent). These include: Kural, Prabhandams, Mahapuranam, Thirumantiram, Kambha Ramayanam etc.

*Scriptures in nearly every other Indian languages (Hindi/Urdu, Bengali, Maraati, Punjaabi, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Kashmiri, etc.) also exist.

Many Hindu Scriptures have been translated to English and other languages.

The essential features of Hinduism
can be summarized as

AEIOUY of HINDUISM

A nO bhadrAh kratavO yantu vishvatah ||

(R~g vEda)

May noble thoughts come to us from everywhere

E kam sat, viprAh bahudhA vadanti || (R~g vEda)

Truth is one, the learned speak of it in numerous ways

I sha avAsyam idagam sarvam

yat kinca jagatyAm jagat |

tEna tyaktEna bhunjItA

mA gridhah kasyasviddhanam ||

(Isha upanishad, part of shukla Yajur vEda)

The Lord permeates everything

Whatever in the ever-changing universe.

Relish your share with detachment

Don't be greedy after someone else's share.

For example, we just enjoy looking at Grand Canyon, or the Himalayas without thinking that we should own it!

This is relishing life with detachment.

We arrive at Hopi point in Grand Canyon to see Sunset. Many like us are also there. Some of them may have a better spot than us. We just enjoy the Sunset from whatever spot we have. Obviously, we don't stand there envying others, or worse

yet plot to knock them down to grab that spot!

This is relishing our share in life without greed or envy.

Om itIdagam sarvam ||

(taittirIya upanishad, part of kR~SHNa YajurvEda)

Om is God

Om is everything.

Om is the w**Om**b of everything!

Om represents our birth (spring), growth (summer),
fading away (autumn/fall),
and immortality (silence of Winter)

UddarEt Atmana AtmAnam

AtmAnam avasAdayEt |

Atma Eva hi AtmanO bandhuh

Atma Eva ripuh Atmanah ||

(bhagavadgItA)

Elevate your self by your own effort

Never put your self down.

(Because) You are your best friend

(And) You are your worst enemy.

A man can stand a lot as long as he can stand himself.

Self-help is the best help. Be your friend first!

The worst loneliness is not to be comfortable with
yourself!

YopAm Ayatanam vEda |

AyatanavAn bhavati ||

(aruNa prashna, Krishna YajurvEda AraNyaka)

One who knows the sustaining power of the Lord

Indeed becomes sustained.

H for **Harmony**

- **Respects all religions and thus aspires for mutual tolerance and respect (This does not mean that all religions are same- *a common misconception among many Hindus!*).**
- **Does not encourage hate or distrust (*Intolerant of intolerance!*)**
- **Does not actively seek converts.**
- **Emphasizes conduct and not creed.**
- **Has the capacity to assimilate all different Religions and diverse Philosophies.**

I for **Incarnation (Avataar)**

- **God appears on earth from time to time in an appropriate form and under any sky as may be needed to uphold Dharma (righteousness).**
- **There is no space, time, form or numerical limitation to Avataars.**
- **Rama, Krishna, and Buddha are some popular Avataars.**
- **Celebrated in dedicated Hindu festivals (Krishna Janmashtami, Ramnavami).**

N for Non-Violence (Ahimsa)

- **Hinduism recognizes that life supports life.**
- **One should avoid causing unnecessary injury (in thoughts, words or deeds) to one-self or other fellow beings including other life forms.**
- **Vegetarianism is glorified and perhaps a desired outcome, but never a prerequisite to be a Hindu.**

D for Dharma (righteousness)

- **We should always protect Dharma (support what is right).**
- **This is regarded as a necessity, because Dharma is the basis of harmonious life.**
- **If we don't support Dharma, it will be as if chopping the very branches of the tree (of life) we are taking shade under.**

U for Unity of existence

- **All life forms and everything else are interconnected and are essentially an extension or manifestation of the Supreme (GOD).**
- **The world is one big family.**

I for Inherent Value

- **God is Omnipresent & Omnipotent.**
Both the manifest & the un-manifest are a projection of God. They are supported, directed & controlled by God as well.
- **God can be worshipped in any 'Form' or 'No Form'.**

*Just as the Flag is a symbol of a Nation,
an Idol for the Hindu is symbolic of the God.*

**A Hindu worships the God enshrined in the Idol,
not the idol itself.**

S for Supreme Reality (Brahman)

- **Supreme Reality is both formless and with form, impersonal and personal, transcendent and immanent.**
- **The Supreme Reality is known by many names.**

M for Moksha & Mantra

- **Dharma (Virtue), Artha (Material prosperity), Kama (pleasures) & Moksha (liberation from cycles of birth & death, harmonious union with God) are the goals of life.**
- **The secondary objectives (Artha & Kama) are sandwiched between the primary objectives of (Dharma & Moksha).**

- Adherence to one's own inherent talents (attitudes & aptitudes) in achieving these goals is suggested.
- Moksha is the ultimate goal of Hindu life. There are numerous paths and innumerable opportunities. It can happen by one way or the other and in one life or the other.

The various paths for Moksha include: karma yoga-selfless good deeds; gnaana yoga-knowledge of Brahman; bhakti Yoga-faith or devotion; prapatti (sharNaagati) yoga-total surrender; raaja yoga-control of body, mind and intellect; mantra Yoga-union with God through repetition of a Mantra, etc.

Mantra is a sacred word or a verse used for prayer.

The most sacred Mantra of Hinduism is

AUM/OM

It represents our beginning (Spring), being (Summer), passing away (Fall) and immortality (Winter).

OM iti Brahma, OM iteedam Sarvam

(Shiksha Valli, Taittireeya Upanishad)

**OM is Brahman, All this is OM
(OM is The One - OM is The Many)
(OM is the WOMb of everything)**

**sarvE bhavantu suKhinah sarvE santu
niraamayaah.**

**May all be happy, may all be healthy.
sarvE bhadraaNi pashyantu ma-kashchit
dhuhkha-bhaag bhavEt.**

May all be prosperous, may none suffer.

Om shaantih shaantih shaantihi

Om Peace Peace Peace

Peace in all our 3 realms of existence (Surroundings,
body and mind).

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free,
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out
from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving
stretches its arm towards
perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead
habit;
Where the mind is led forward
by thee into ever-widening
thought and action--
Into that heaven of freedom,
my Father, let my country awake.

Gitanjali (Rabindranath Thakoor)