Hinduism: History And Main Ideas

Intro

Hinduism has had a very rich history since its founding. Ever since prehistoric times, dating back to near 2000 BCE, a people have lived in the Indus River Valley that had many similar characteristics to modern Hinduism. Artifacts from the time show that the people worshipped a goddess of fertility in the form of a bull. By the 2nd Century CE, temples were being built and religious sects were being founded, including Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism. These sects were more devotional parts of Hinduism that worshipped Vishnu, Shiva, and the goddess Shakti, respectively. In the last couple centuries, Hinduism has become a massive evangelical religion spread around Asia, Europe, and the Americas, and there have been multiple reform movements recently, such as gaining independence from Britain. The spread of Hinduism to these foreign areas caused changes in culture due to the foreign people not being a part of the caste system in India. The legacy that Hinduism has is the backbone of most culture in Southern Asia.

The backbone of everyday life for Hindus involves worshipping deeply near ten times a day. Throughout the day, the household will make five sacrifices to the gods, to all beings, to the spirits of the dead, for hospitality, and while reciting the Vedas. There is a written process for committing the sacrifices, but it is not required to do them. Every spring, Hindus hold a festival called Holi, which celebrates victory over sacrilege. Although tradition varies from region to region, the main focus of the event is Prahlada, who worshipped Vishnu even though his father refused it, so he was saved by Vishnu from the fire. Hinduism also involves many rituals which include dancing and theatre performance that display mythical or historical events. In some temples, there are halls and rooms dedicated to dancing in honor of past events or gods. Hinduism's practice of vibrant worship through sacrifices and festivals emphasize its particular individuality among other religions.

Hinduism's individuality is also expressed in its ethical procedures and psychological understandings. Conduct is how a person behaves, whereas character is how one's behavior is expressed. Conduct is often determined by the surroundings, such as being professional at a job, but there are also a few guidelines about how one's conduct should be. There are also ethical codes of conduct and character that have been implemented for everyone by great religious leaders of the past. These leaders made the codes for those who do not have the capability or the time to interpret the scriptures. Hindu ethics states that all improper behaviors are the cause of hardship, and the only path out of hardship is through Sadachara. Sadachara is performed when one observes their actions carefully. The regulations for behavior Hinduism imposes can lead to an improved lifestyle, morally and physically.

Dharma is another factor in improving lifestyle of individuals and communities. Anything that creates unity in some way is Dharma, and Dharma is different for every person or group at any time. Dharma can also change in an instant due to certain and extreme situations. The Vedas are the only true source about Dharma and are composed of the conduct of those who constructed the religion. This can be compared to the Bible containing all that God has revealed to humans. Dharma has two major parts, Samanya and Visesha, and many other smaller

sections. Samanya is the Dharma common to all, while Visesha is specific to only one individual. The Vedas and Dharma have existed since the beginning of Hinduism, and they are essential to Hindu life to this day.

The Hindu Tenets are another vital element which have been around for millenia. Karma encapsulates both the action committed and the effects of that action, and there are three types, Sanchita, Prarabdha, and Agami, which are completed, producing, and current works, respectively. The effects of one's karma can either cause great pain or great happiness, depending on the actions of the person. Reincarnation is the migration of one's soul into a new physical body, which their Karma decides whether their new body will be better or worse. Reincarnation is nessecary as there is not enough time in one life to enjoy or suffer the accquired karma, so it extends into the next life. Avatara is a god descending into humanity so humanity may be lifted up. Avatara is displayed in multiple myths, such as the Ramayana, where Vishnu descends down to earth to become Rama who is to save his wife, Sita. The Tenets of Hinduism is one of the most important parts of Hindu culture from its founding to now.

The deities of Hinduism are equally as important and were one of the first elements of Hinduism. Vishnu is the preserver of all creation, and Brahma is the offspring of Vishnu and the creator of the whole world and universe. Vishnu appears in many stories in human form, such as in the Ramayana, but Brahma only appears in few creationary stories. Shiva is the exact opposite of Vishnu and Brahma, as he is the destroyer of all creation. Shiva is seen in myths more often, usually as the savage parts of nature. Most Hindus also worship the Goddess Devi, who orders the gods in their acts of creating and destroying. Devi exhibits similar characteristics to Shiva and other gods in stories about the goddess. The gods and goddesses of Hinduism are rather similar to the divine beings of other religions, but its culture is distinctive nonetheless.

A surprising fact about Hinduism is the practice of devotional yoga throughout the day. Karma yoga is doing work to help others, such as cleaning dishes or helping the poor, and Bhakti yoga is the extraordinary love for a god or gods. Karma yoga is traditionally diminished as people believe such works are small and useless, but the opposite is true. Raja yoga is gaining harmony through the self-direction of the mind, which requires extreme concentration. Insight. Jnana yoga is performed to gain understanding and become one with Brahman. Insight. Conclusion.

Works Cited

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