



Welcome to the Vedanta Society of Portland

Let us start with a prayer

Sri Gurubhyo Namah Salutations to Gurus (Teachers), it is because of them we are progressing.

ॐ oum saha nAvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | saha vIryam karavAvahai |
Tejasvi nAdhItam-astu mA vidvisAvahai | om shAntih shAntih shAntih ||

Meaning: 1: Oum, (may God) protect us both (the Teacher and the Student), 2: May we both get nourished, 3: May we strive together with energy and vigour, 4: May our study be enlightening and not give rise to hostility, 5: Oum, peace, peace, peace.

ॐ oum asato mA sad-gamaya | tamaso mA jyotir-gamaya |
mrtyor-mA amrtam gamaya | AvirAvir-ma edhi | oum shAntih shAntih shAntih ||

Meaning: 1: Oum, lead me to the Reality, not to the unreality (of the bondage of the phenomenal world), 2: lead me to the Light (of spiritual knowledge), not in the darkness (of ignorance), 3: lead me to the Immortality, not in the (fear of) Death (due to the bondage of the mortal world), 4: Let the knowledge of the Self-manifest Atman grow in me, oum, (May there be) peace, peace, peace (at the three levels - Physical, Mental and Spiritual).



What is the name of your religion?

- Popularly my religion is called Hinduism.
- The real name of my religion is **Sanatana Dharma or Vedic Dharma**.
- **Sanatan**= eternal, and **Dharma** = inherent spiritual principles.
- **Spiritual principles** are **eternal** therefore, the religion is called **Sanatana Dharma**
- These principles were recorded and taught in Vedas, so it is called **Vedic Dharma**.



What is the meaning of Dharma?

- **Dharma** = inherent quality
- Wetness is present in water inherently, so wetness is dharma of water.
- Humanity is inherent in humans, so humanity is dharma of humans.
- If the traffic rules are followed, the follower will be saved from accidents.
- Similarly, if the inherent Divine principles present in humans are followed humans will be saved from disintegration and will have sustained growth.



Why is it called Dharma and not religion?

- **Dharma** is not an 'ism' as communism, because it is not an opinion of people.
- **Dharma** is not religion or faith or belief system. It is living principle distinct from religion.

Religion is a

- a) faith-based organization, asks to believe in a set of doctrines and dogmas, questions are not welcomed,
- b) originated in a single canon,
- c) one divine secluded or separate from cosmos and us,
- d) depends on the authority of a particular church for those doctrines,
- e) only one way of propitiating God dictated by some clergymen and no freedom of choice.

Dharma is a

- a) exploration-based organization, any number of questions can be asked, belief in any preconceived doctrines is not necessary,
- b) originated in multiple canons,
- c) All are inherently Divine
- d) independence from authority of the church, and depends on life principles of well-being, if followed, the follower will be held and sustained on righteous path like traffic rules
- e) multiple ways to reach God, not dictated by any clergyman.



Why then people call your religion Hinduism?

- There is a river named **Sindhu**, Arabs could not pronounce '**S**' so, they called it river **Hindu**, Greeks called it river **Indus**. (Indus valley civilization)
- The country was called by Arabs **Hindustan** and by Greeks and later, Europeans called it **India**.
- Original name of India is Bharatavarsha or **Bharata** (Maha-bharata)
- So, the religion followed by people who live near the river Sindhu is called by them Hinduism. Hinduism name was given by others.



Where did your religion originate?

- In India or Bharat, the original name is Bharatavarsha
- It is explained in the previous slide the cause.
- River Sindhu was called Hindu by Arabs, Indus by Greeks.
- Bharat was called by Arabs **Hindustan**, Greeks and later Europeans called it **India**.



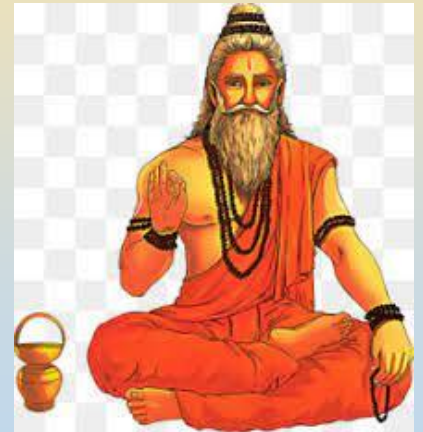
How old is your religion?

- How old are the **scientific principles** such as light, gravity etc.?

They are eternal, not started by someone. They were discovered later by scientists, right?

- Similarly, the spiritual principles are eternal and were discovered by seers or **Rishis** at the beginning of the Indian (Hindu) civilization and were recorded in the Vedas later.
- A Rishis, seers of Truth are pure totally dedicated souls.

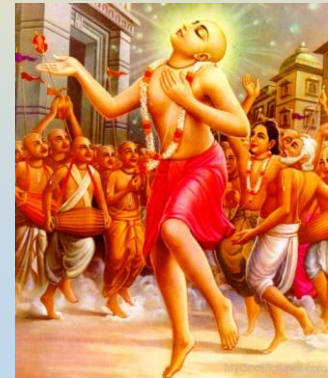
- The oldest scripture (book) **Rik Veda is about 8,000** years old.
Vedic knowledge was transmitted orally in the beginning and later written.





Are there any significant prophets or spiritual leaders in your religion?

In Hinduism many Incarnation of God incarnated. They are called **Avatar**, examples- Rama, Krishna, Sankaracharya, Chaitanya





What does your religion teaches/believe in?

“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.”

— Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Delivered a famous lecture in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 9/11/1893

- 1) The Divinity of the Soul,
- 2) The Oneness of Existence, and
- 3) The harmony of religions.





Are you part of a particular sect of your religion?

- India has 22 fully grown official languages and about 1650+ dialects.
- Similarly, there are **innumerable sects** in Hinduism. Some follow Vishnu, some Shakti, Shiva, Ganapati, Sun etc. These are personal Gods.
- They are categorized as **1 Dualists** - Existence of two Creator-Created),
2. Qualified monist (though two but connected like our limbs, head etc. are different but belong to one body) and
3. non-dualists (Like there is one energy in the whole universe though look different similarly the Existence is one though It may look different)
I follow mainly **Advaita=Non-dualism** and accept all views of God.



Are we and the world distinguishable from this God?

God has created this world and is present in and through His creation, that is why He is within it and all pervading and not extra terrestrial.

Who is God in Vedanta? The Pure Self within

What attributes does this God have? Existence Absolute, Awareness Absolute, and Bliss Absolute. Truth, Knowledge, Effulgence, Compassionate Being.

If I ask you- Do you exist? You will say yes because you a) feel your existence and b) you know it. God's presence is this consciousness, existence and awareness.

Can this God be seen? Impersonal God can be realized like scientific truth is realized. Personal God can be seen and interacted.



What is the most important part of your religion?

- **“The Goal of life is to realize God” says Sri Ramakrishna.** We have hands (Power to do work), head (intellect), heart (emotions), and power of concentration. So, there are 4 ways to realize God.
- **Bhakti (devotion) Yoga:** Leading a moral and ethical life, Chanting the names of God and **praying with utmost yearning and sincerity and weep for His realization.**
- **Karma (serving) Yoga:** Our work should be without attachment and expectations of results, and they should be offered to God
- **Raja (concentration) Yoga:** One should concentrate his mind on his own innermost Self without thinking anything else.
(Eight-limbed Yoga- Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi)
- **Jnana (knowledge) Yoga:** Hearing the truth from Guru, Merging multiplicity into Unity with intellectual understanding and meditation. (Viveka, Vairagya Shama Dama, uparati titiksha, shradhha Samadhan Mumukshutvam)



What was it like growing up in your religion?

1. Life has four pursuits- **a) Dharma** (Righteousness), **b) Artha** (Resources, money), **c) Kama** (Enjoyment), **d) Moksha** (Freedom). These pursuits can be achieved through disciplined life. So, life has been divided into **2.** Four Ashramas, institutions-

- a) Up to 25 years-** one should be a student (**Brahmacharya**), **have knowledge**
- b) 26-50 years-** lead a householder's life (**Grihastha**), earn money, raise children
- c) 51-75 years-** Retired, (**Vanaprastha**), share knowledge and experience with seekers and children
- d) 76-100 years-** Life of renunciate, monkhood (**Sannyasa**), try to realize God **leaving home and relatives**

3. Society has four **classes** based on inherent qualities and accepted duties- Teacher class (**Brahmana**), Warrior class (**Kshatriya**), Business class (**Vaishya**) and service holders (**Shudra**). It is true that some atrocities happened due to this division because it became birth based with time. But now that defect has almost gone from the Indian society.

One should also know that this system provided **social security, training, entrepreneurship, also new start up** for thousands of years to the Indian society when there was no system anywhere in the world. This system worked as trader's guild.

Being a **(d) monk** I am beyond class distinction and pursuing **(d) total freedom** with Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. And trying to serve all, love all, therefore, it is fulfilling and full of bliss, joy.



Is there a specific reason you believe in your religion?

Because it teaches- “Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing, or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming what it believes.”

Swami Vivekananda

Hinduism is all-inclusive, holds Universal principles in its core with Scientific temper and accepts Unity in diversity and varieties.





How do your beliefs affect your everyday actions?

- When you are open you learn and grow.
- When you love others and do not hate, you expand and not limited by man made barriers.
- So, it helps to grow, expand, and accomplishing greater heights.



Why do you practice your religion over other world religions?

- It is being and becoming. It is achievable here and now
- It does not promise a post-dated check in so called imaginary heaven.
- This is not a make-believe system.
- It is not dogmatic.
- It is open to questions.
- It includes all.



Based on your belief system, how do you view other world religions?

- We hold all religions are true and are so many ways to reach God. So, we do not hate any path. We do not proselytize/convert anyone in our religion.
- **Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) said “As many faiths so many paths.”** Water has various names Water= H_2O =Aqua=Jal =Pani. All denote the same water
- There are many ways to reach the same destination
- Rig Veda says- ekaM sad vipraah bahudhaa vadanti

That which exists is One, the sages describe Him variously.





How does your religion view misfortunes?

- **Karma Vada** – It is said- “whatever you sow so will you reap”. Karmavada says whatever one does he/she gets its result for that work. If someone eats chilies, he will experience its burning sensation.
- Sometimes fruits are not immediate. To get apples there is some gestation period.
- Our bad Karma comes to us as Misfortune to give the fruits of our past bad actions. So, we are to suffer it out or forebear the consequences.

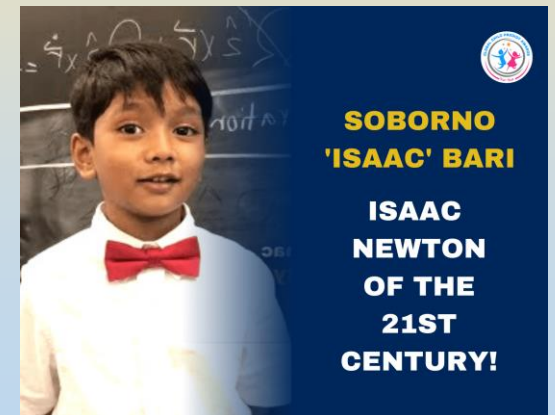


What do you believe happens after you die?

- Of course, the bodies will be casted off when it is old and inefficient but we, the indweller in body don't die. Bodies are like houses. They crumble when old then we change them and take a new house. This is called **reincarnation**.
- You can find in the net lots of child prodigy who carry their impression from their previous births. Have you heard of Soborno Isaak Bari?

Reincarnation is like you were somewhere before attending this class and will go somewhere after the class.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeSDuXOKibw&ab_channel=GlobalChildProdigyAwards





Does your religion follow any dietary restrictions?

- There is no restriction on food because the constitutions of human beings are different. The food that may help me may be harmful to someone else.
- However, most Hindus like and take vegetarian food.
- Some even fast on eleventh day, and new and full moon nights of the lunar calendar.



Are there significant relics in your religion?

- It is not necessary to have any relics in my religion, but we have some relics of our Gurus to remind ourselves their presence.
- Relics are like some symbols. They remind us important ideals to uphold. Humans like and required to have some symbols like National flag.
- Similarly, deities are living symbols of God.





What type of places of worship does your religion have?

The place of worship is called Mandir (Temple) where a deity or deities are installed, and the **life/vital-force** is consecrated into the deity with some ceremonies. Therefore, our temples are living spaces for the deity/deities.

Sri Ramakrishna Temple

And the deity is being worshipped
in the picture





Does your religion have any deities?

Yes, innumerable. It is said Hindu Dharma has 330 million of deities. Most probably each had one deity.

But these deities are manifestation of the same Almighty God as the sun is reflected in due drops.
Each citizen is a potential part of Government.



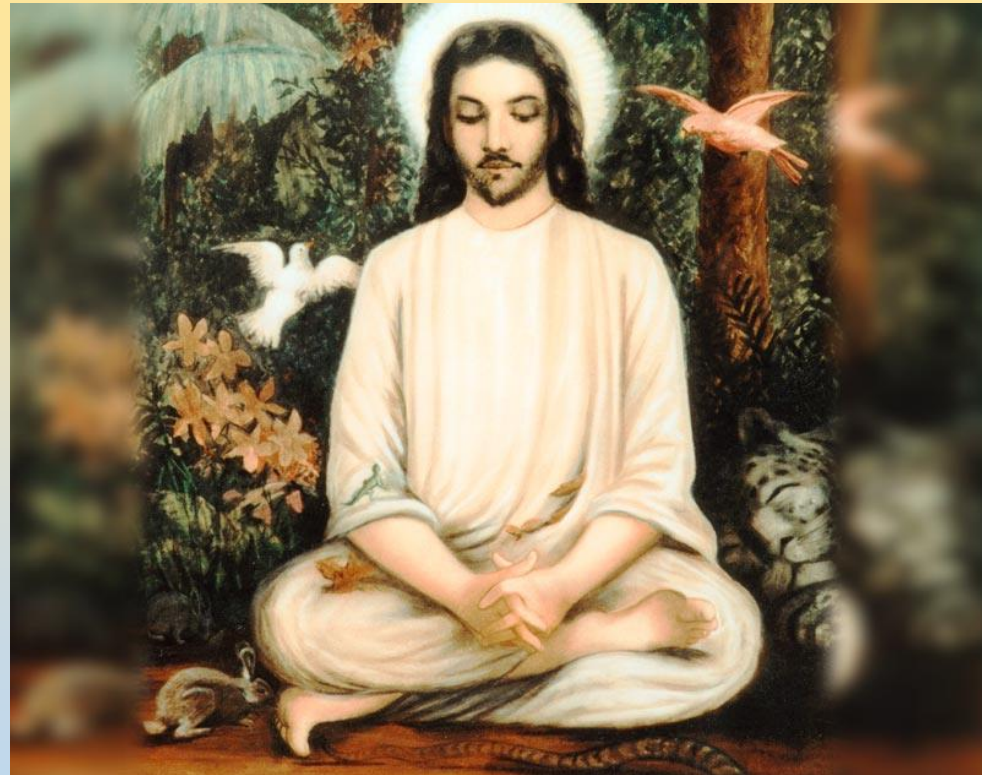


How does your religion view Jesus Christ?

As an Incarnation of God

Jesus as a Yogi

Painted by one of our American Monk





What spiritual/religious texts are important in your religion?

Vedas are the roots of Hindu/**Vedic Dharma** from where came the essential teachings, **Prasthanatrayi** (literally, three sources or axioms), refers to the three canonical texts of theology having epistemic authority, especially of the Vedanta schools.

1. **The Upanishads**, Upadesha prasthanana (injunctive texts), or the Śruti prasthāna (the starting point or axiom of revelation), especially the Principal Upanishads.
2. **The Brahma Sutras**, known as Sutra prasthanana or Nyaya prasthanana or Yukti prasthanana (logical text or axiom of logic).
3. **The Bhagavad Gita**, known as Sadhana prasthanana (practical text), and the Smriti prasthāna (the starting point or axiom of remembered tradition).



How has your religion affected historical events?

Immensely. Why Columbus came to American shore? Why are the Native people of America are called Indian?

Because Columbus wanted to find a sea route to India, a cultured and then rich country and landed in American shores in 1492.

Hindus are peace loving people and contributed knowledge, wealth, culture to the world in almost all fields for millenniums.

Invaders destroyed almost everything and killed in millions, India again regenerated time and again and still doing.



Do you feel your religion separates you from society at all?

No, rather my religion integrates me with the society. Because according to my religion this world is objectification of God. So, we try to see God in all being.

See God with open eyes.



Does your religion view women/children differently from men?

Women are revered by Hindus even small girls are affectionately called mother. In the picture Goddess Durga is being worshipped in a small girl.

All the principal deities are feminine

Durga - Goddess of power

Lakshmi - Goddess of wealth and fortune

Saraswati - Goddess of learning

Kali - Goddess of creation, sustenance and destruction





Are there any specific clothes related to your religion?

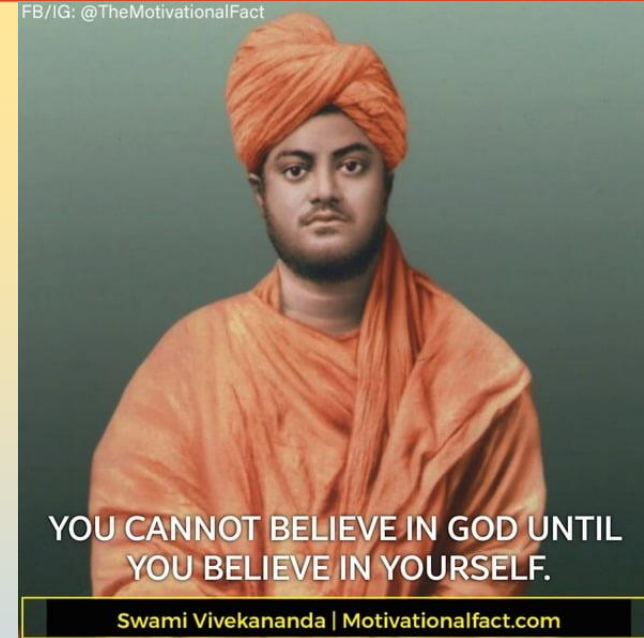
No, but I am a monk, so I wear ochre cloth.

Are there any practices you have a
hard time following in your religion?

No, not at all.

Do your beliefs affect your view on the government?

No. Government is a system and runs the country by the Will of God.





Has your religion affected your views on Covid?
Are there any notable common views about it that you have noticed among people who share your beliefs?

No. Probably you know the usual greeting in India is Namaste, meaning I offer my respects to the Divinity within you.

Hindus wash their hands frequently long before COVID.

These practices helped Hindus to stop spread COVID 19, a contagious disease.





Na-mas-te, I pay obeisance to the Divinity in you



“I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides. I honor the place in you the light, love, truth, peace and wisdom.” M.K. Gandhi’s explanation of the meaning of Namaste given to Albert Einstein