

Practice of Hinduism

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For many Hindus, religion is a matter of practice rather than of beliefs. It's more what you do than what you believe. Behind Hindu practice is the belief that every soul is trapped in a cycle of birth and then death and then rebirth. Every Hindu wants to escape from this cycle.

Hindus aim to live in a way that will cause each of their lives to be better than the life before. Their ultimate aim is escape from the cycle altogether.

Living or acting in the right way is known as dharma, so the Indian name for their religion is sanatana dharma, (meaning "everlasting dharma").

Hindus believe the universe doesn't have a beginning and an end. It's a cyclical pattern, so once it ends, it begins again.

Samsara: The Cycle of Lives

All Hindus believe that the individual soul exists in a cycle of birth into a body, followed by death and then rebirth.

The quality of the next life depends on the soul's Karma-the goodness or badness of their deeds in this life.

Hinduism is about the sort of life one should lead in order to be born into a better life next time and eventually become free from rebirth altogether by attaining Moksha (liberation)

So when someone dies, their soul is reborn into a new body (although not necessarily a human body).

The cycle is called Samsara. The process of the soul being reborn into a new body is called Reincarnation.

The ultimate aim of the soul is to be freed from this cycle. The quality of a life that the soul is born into depends on the previous life.

Whether one is reborn into a better life, a worse life, or even to live as an animal., depends on Karma, which is the value of a soul's good and bad deeds.

Karma is not the same thing as judgement in Christianity. It is automatic and impersonal. A good analogy is a moral force of gravity.

Hindus aim to live in a way that will earn them a better life next time around, and eventually free them from rebirth altogether.

Liberation and Moksha

The ultimate aim of all Hindus is for their soul to escape from this cycle of birth and death and rebirth, and be free from Karma. This liberation is called Moksha

Each time a Hindu soul is born into a better life, it has the opportunity to improve itself further, and get closer to ultimate liberation.

One attains Moksha when one has "overcome ignorance", and no longer desires anything at all. This is not a state of knowledge, but a state of being. Paradoxically it is really a state of not-being, since when the individual soul reaches this state, it becomes aware that it is nothing more than a part of the ultimate reality, part of "God", part of Brahman, and loses its individual identity.

Hinduism is about the sort of life one should lead in order to be born into a better life next time and ultimately achieve liberation.

There are 4 legitimate goals in life (purusharthas):

dharma (appropriate living), artha (the pursuit of material gain by lawful means), kama (delight of the senses), moksha (release from rebirth).

Each Hindu has 4 daily duties:

Revere the deities

Respect ancestors

Respect all beings

Honour all humankind