

Skills: finding supporting details-what does the text say? Text structure-how does it say it?

Directions:

- Read the article once
- THEN read the questions
- Go back and re-read the article, **annotating** for **main idea AND textual evidence to support your answers** (underline and mark Q#1, Q#2, etc.)
- Answer all questions.

The Rise of Hinduism

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Level 7 Word Count 738

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are the three main Hindu deities that represent the life cycle. Photo from Wikimedia.

Not many things have endured without interruption or major transformation for over 5,000 years. Hindu traditions such as dharma, karma and reincarnation are exceptions. Arguably, Hinduism is the oldest religion on Earth.



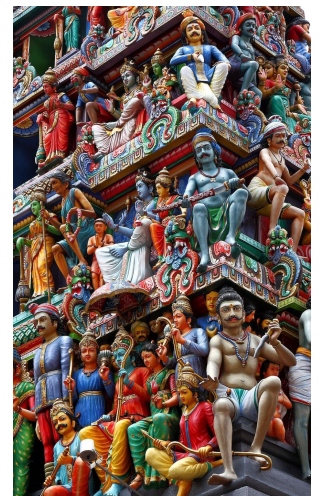
To understand how Hinduism has lasted so long, it is important to know the beliefs of Hindu. Those are closely tied to its historical foundations.

Archaeologists say highly developed civilizations grew throughout the Indus Valley between 4000 and 1500 B.C. Archaeologists have found many items tied to Hinduism in the ruins of the ancient Indus Valley civilization. They include statues of gods and goddesses. They also include temple tanks for bathing and sculptures of people doing yoga.

But for still unknown reasons, the people in the valley appear to have moved suddenly and resettled among new neighbors in northwestern India. These people who were living in northwestern India had actually moved from central Asia and settled in India, and worshiped a religion called Vedism. Thus, it is likely that the Indus Valley tradition and Vedic gods and beliefs combined. When they did, they formed Hinduism.

"A code of life" Hinduism stands apart from other religions for several reasons. It has no single founder, no single book of law and truth, and no central religious organization. Also, there is no definition of absolute beginning and end.

Hinduism is a code of life — a collection of attitudes, personal experiences and religious practices. That code is defined by behaviors rather than beliefs. Hindu teachings say there is one divine way of being, and all religions are interpretations of it. Because of this, Hinduism allows and even encourages individuals to choose a religious path that best suits their social, intellectual and emotional needs.



Caption: Various deities outside a Hindu temple in Singapore. Photo from Wikimedia.

One Hindu devotee might worship well-known gods such as Vishnu and Shiva in a large, public temple. Another might worship less common deities in a private shrine within his or her own home. Yet they would both be considered good Hindus. But they would have to honor each other's choices.

This tolerance makes Hinduism difficult to understand and define. But it does explain why so many gods, goddesses and rituals are described in the numerous Hindu scriptures.

The cycle of reincarnation Hindus believe and do different things, but several concepts and traditions bind them together. Many of these beliefs were compiled in a set of scriptures written around 1300 B.C. known as the Vedas. It is believed that the Vedas are the eternal truths that were heard, then written down by holy seers.

The Vedas say time and life are cyclical. After death, one's soul leaves the body and is reborn, or reincarnated, into a new form, which could be another person, an animal or even a plant. This constant cycle of birth and rebirth is known as samsara. What body or form the soul is born into is determined by karma. Karma is the accumulated result of one's actions in various lives, and can be good or bad. Righteous and moral conduct, known as dharma, is the road to good karma.

Good conduct is defined in many ways, including marrying within one's caste, revering upper castes and doing good deeds. It also includes refusing to eat meat, particularly that of cows. The writings known as the Upanishads appeared 600 to 800 years after the Vedas, and they focus on how to escape the cycle of rebirth. The Upanishads explain how to leave Samsara through moksha, a release and ultimate enlightenment. The appearance of the Upanishads marked the beginning of a period known as the Vedantic Age.

A religion based on tolerance Literally, "Vedantic" means "end of the Vedas," but the Vedic beliefs never disappeared. Gods of the Vedic tradition became less commonly worshiped, but the Vedic philosophies were not forgotten. The principles of karma and dharma were too popular (especially among members of the lower castes) to fade away.

Scholars debate the beginnings of Hinduism, but most agree that during the Vedantic Age (between 800 and 400 B.C.) there was a shift to the widespread worship of the gods Vishnu and Shiva. They also agree that this happened during the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, two other religions that sought enlightenment. Over time, Hinduism became divided into many sects. But true to the foundations of Hinduism, the new sects' beliefs and practices were accepted. Because of such tolerance, Hinduism still thrives today.

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1. ____ Read the following statement: *There is no single path Hindus must take to practice dharma and achieve good karma.* Which sentence from the section "The cycle of reincarnation" provides the BEST support for the above statement?
- A Hindus believe and do different things, but several concepts and traditions bind them together.
 - B After death, one's soul leaves the body and is reborn, or reincarnated, into a new form, which could be another person, an animal or even a plant.
 - C Karma is the accumulated result of one's actions in various lives, and can be good or bad.
 - D Good conduct is defined in many ways, including marrying within one's caste, revering upper castes and doing good deeds.
2. ____ What is the **MAIN** reason the author includes the section "A code of life" in the article?
- A It explains why many are still confused about the origins of Hinduism.
 - B It introduces the uniqueness of Hinduism due to its emphasis on acceptance of individuality.
 - C It describes the way in which all Hindus practice their religion with similar beliefs.
 - D It suggests that the most important practices of Hinduism are still unclear to its followers.
3. ____ **Re-read** the introduction of the article [paragraphs 1-4]. How does the introduction introduce the main idea?
- A by suggesting that the unique beliefs of Hinduism are shaped by its history and contribute to its persistence
 - B by explaining the core principles of Hinduism and asserting their importance to the origins of the religion
 - C by describing the mysterious origins of Hinduism that continue to make the religion difficult to understand and confusing to practice
 - D by encouraging readers to practice Hinduism because it is a tradition that has lasted for so long and is so tolerant of other traditions

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1. D
 2. B
 3. a