

VI Hinduism

A. Origins of Hinduism

1. Hinduism claims more than 900 million adherents, with most living in India.

2. It evolved in the Indo-Gangetic Heartland about 2000 BCE before Buddhism.

3. Hinduism is considered an ethnic religion because of its close identity with its Indian origins.

B. Diffusion of Hinduism

1. Hinduism spread from its Indo-Gangetic Hearth eastward via the Ganges and south through India.
2. Hinduism also spread to Sri-Lanka and to a lesser extent the British possessions during the era of colonial rule.
3. Also prominent in the UK, U.S., and Canada, Uganda.

C. Primary Branches of Hinduism

1. No formal branches in Hinduism, although among its believers there are definite variations in practices.
2. Hinduism is believed to be a polytheistic religion by some but a monotheistic religion by others.
3. Some Hindus argue that there is only one supernatural being reflected in Hinduism's many deities.

D. Cultural Landscape Features of Hinduism.

1. Instead of one holy book, Hinduism has a collection of ancient scriptures called Vedas.
2. One of Hinduism's principal beliefs is reincarnation, or the rebirth of souls from one generation of life to another.
3. Alongside reincarnation is Hinduism's connection to India's tradition of a caste system, or a social hierarchy, into which people are born.
 - a) According to the caste system, some people are born into power.
 - b) In recent years, India's caste system has been lessening in influence due to political pressure.

4 The most famous Hindu Mahatma Gandhi who worked to help free India from England's colonial rule in the 20th century.

5. Hindus believe temple builders receive divine reward, the Hindu landscape is dotted with countless shrines and temples to Hindu gods, often adorned by food offerings from believers.

6. Hindus believe in cremating their dead, so corpses are sometimes found burning alongside streets or beside rivers in Hindu areas.

7. It is considered holy to bathe in the Ganges River in India, so many Hindus make a pilgrimage to the rivers banks to bathe.