Hinduism – An Introduction

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The Hindu religion is an ocean of spiritual teachings about all aspects of life and consciousness. It is the world's oldest religion, going back to the very dawn of history. It sees its origin in the cosmic mind itself. Yet Hinduism is also perhaps the world's youngest religion because it emphasizes the authority of living teachers and allows for correction and evolution over time.

Hinduism is the most diverse religious tradition in the world. It could be said that there are probably more religions inside of Hinduism than outside of it. It has numerous saints, sages, and yogis, both male and female, from ancient to modern times, and today still has what is probably the largest number of monks and renunciates (including a number of Westerners). Hindu religions gathering, the Kumbha Mela sees tens of millions of people in attendance. It is the largest gathering of any type and the largest religious gathering in the history of the world.

Hinduism is the world's largest non-biblical tradition, with nearly a billion followers worldwide. It could be called the world's largest non-organized religion as it emphasizes individual spiritual experience, the realization of the higher Self over any religious institution, book, dogma or savior. It is also the world's largest native or pagan tradition, reflecting the ancient spiritual traditions that once existed all over the world. Like native traditions everywhere, it honors God or the sacred through all of nature. It has many insights in harmony with the ecological age, as it affords reverence to the Earth as a conscious and loving presence and asks us to respect our environment.

Hinduism contains the world's oldest and largest tradition of Goddess worship – worshipping the Divine not only as father but also as mother. It recognizes all the diverse forms of the Goddess and her powers of wisdom, beauty, strength, love and compassion.

Perhaps most notably, Hinduism is the world's largest pluralistic tradition, recognizing One Truth – an eternal reality of Being-Consciousness Bliss in all beings – but also many paths to realize it. Hinduism recognizes theism (the belief in One Creator) but only as one portion of the human religious experience that includes polytheism, pantheism, monism, and even atheism. As the most inclusive of the world's great religions, Hinduism has room for all these views and yet guides us through these to Self-realization that transcends them all.

Hinduism has probably the world's oldest and largest literature of spirituality, mysticism, and yoga. It provides a complete spiritual culture including art, dance, sculpture, medicine, and science, with all these subjects explained according to a science of consciousness.

Hinduism has a view of the universe in time and space that is compatible with modern science. Aspects of the Hindu tradition such as Yoga, Vedanta, Ayurveda, and Vedic astrology are already popular in the West. Hindu terms such as guru, mantra, shakti, prana, Kundalini, and chakra have entered into the English language. Great gurus from the Hindu tradition such as Ramana Maharshi, Yogananda, Ramakrishna, Shivananda, Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi have extensive followings and much respect in the West today.

There are now nearly two million Hindus of Indian origin in the United States, as well as significant numbers in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean, with Hindu temples in most of the main cities of the United States. This Hindu group is one of the wealthiest and best educated in the West and contains many successful scientists, computer engineers, and doctors. India itself, the home of most Hindus, is the second largest country in the world and is expected to be a major superpower in the coming century.

May all the peoples of the world be happy !