



Hindu Chaplaincy @ USyd

Basics

<http://sydney.edu.au/chaplains/chaplains/hindu.shtml>

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Regular programs:

- One-on-one consultation
- Yogic Breathing for Health
- Guided Meditation Practice & Principles
- Spiritual Concepts made easy with Vedic Scriptures

The Essence of Hinduism

Hinduism is like a confederation of many religions with a variety of religious traditions and schools of thoughts all blended harmoniously and bound by the common bond of 'Dharma', its characteristic attitude towards life. From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta Philosophy to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the apparent

atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the religion of the Hindus. All believe, **“Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, 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”**.

The Main Tenets

The common centre towards which the divergent schools of thoughts & practices converge can be found by examining the main tenets.

The Hindus have received their religion over thousands of years through revelations, the *Vedas*, the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws experienced in different times by different *Rishis*—the perfected beings and the seers of truth (some of the rishis were women). These laws governing moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirit and God are eternal and ever fresh.

1. Relation between God and His Creation: The Creation and the Creator are without beginning and without end. God is ever active providence, by which power, systems after systems are being evolved, made to run for a time and again destroyed. As to God’s nature, He/She is all-pervading, almighty, all-conscious, immutable, pure, eternal, attribute-less and incomprehensible. It is the very source of the universe. He may be worshipped in the form of *Isvara*, the personal God with form, or *Brahman*, the formless impersonal God, the Universal Soul. The spiritual practice, therefore, may take a **dualistic** approach that considers *Jivatma* and *Brahman* as eternally separate, or the **non-dualistic/monistic** approach that considers *Jivatma* as essentially the same as *Brahman* or God, or a third approach that considers *Jivatma* as qualitatively the same as *Brahman* but quantitatively infinitesimally smaller.

2. Jivatma: The Individual Soul: The Vedic answer to the eternal question “who am I” is “I am a spirit living in a body”.

3. Theory of Karma & Transmigration: Our everyday life’s experience testifies that people are born with different tendencies with different mental traits and physical appearances. Since tendencies are created by habit and habits are acquired through repetitions in action. The tendencies in a new-born then must have come down from past lives. Apart from the body and mind, which are subject to change, there is the

individual soul (*Jivatma*) that does not change. The soul, in association with these tendencies, is passed on to a new body which is best suited to express that tendency. This is how **reincarnation** takes place following the laws of *Karma* according to which there is a cause behind every effect, i.e., the present is determined by our past actions, and the future by the present. The reason we don't remember our past lives is because our consciousness operates only on the surface of the mental ocean, and within its depths (in the sub-conscious) are stored all our experiences. If we learnt how to calm the surface waves of the mental ocean, the various depths of the ocean of memory would be revealed to us and we would get a complete reminiscence of our past lives.

4. Maya: The Concept of Basic Ignorance: Even though each person is in essence a spirit—eternally free, pure and perfect—somehow or other it finds itself tied down to matter and thinks of itself as matter. This mistaken identity is *Maya*.

5. Liberation: The Vedas teach us that the soul is divine but held in bondage to matter. One can break this bond and achieve perfection, come out of the chain of *Maya*—the prison of “Cause and Effect”—and be free. This bondage falls off by the grace of God Who reveals Himself to the pure in heart.

6. The Spiritual Practices: Spiritual practices may take a path of devotional love, or of detachment from the fruit of one's action, or of discrimination between what is permanent and what is not, or of one-pointed concentration on an idea of God to the exclusion of all other ideas—this with love and purity in heart. Beginning with external worship using a special sound *Mantra* and a holy image *Murti*, one progresses to the next stage of mental prayer & contemplation towards the highest stage when the Lord has been realised. In this state, one's consciousness of oneself melts away and merges into the universal consciousness. Then all multiplicity and duality merge into ultimate unity, and one sees that the Personal God (*Isvara*) and the Impersonal Absolute (*Brahman*) are one and the same—Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, and Bliss Absolute. **Religion in Hinduism is being and becoming—not just believing.**

7. Relationship to Other Religions: The Vedas declared, “Reality is one, but the sages call It by different names”. The Bhagavad Geeta says, “In whatever manner humans approach Me, I favour them in that very manner. In all ways humans follow My path”; “Whichever form (of a deity) the devotees want to worship with faith, that very firm faith of theirs I strengthen.”

Naturally, the Hindus view all religions to be valid paths leading to the feet of the Lord

for the sincere spiritual aspirants. “Devotees follow these diverse paths—straight or crooked—according to their different tendencies. Yet, O Lord, thou alone art the ultimate goal of all men, as the ocean is the goal of all rivers”.

Selected Temples in Sydney

Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Soc. NSW

15 Liverpool Road, Croydon

(02) 9745 4320, 0408 029 336

admin.saradavedanta@bigpond.com

Vedanta Centre of Sydney

144A Marsden Rd, Ermington

(02) 8197 7351; vedasydney@gmail.com

Hare Krishna ISKCON Temple Sydney

180 Falcon St, North Sydney

(02) 9959 4558; info@iskcon.com.au

Shree Swaminarayan Temple

1-3 Tasha Place, Kings Park

(02) 8814 8597; info@sydneytemple.org

Sri Venkateswara Temple

Temple Rd, Helensburgh

1300 626 663; enquiry@svtsydney.org

Mukti-Gupteshwar Mandir

203 Eagleview Road, Minto

(02) 9824 7886; info@muktigupteshwar.org

Sydney Murugan Temple

Great Western Hwy, Mays Hill

(02) 9687 1695 217; info@sydneymurugan.org.au

Sai Mandir Sydney

420 Liverpool Road, Strathfield South

1300 524 724; saimandir@gmail.com

Sri Durga Temple

21 Rose Crescent, Regents Park

(02) 9644 6682; contactus@sydneydurgatemple.org

Chinmaya Mission

38 Carrington Road, Castle Hill

(02) 8850 7400; chinmaya.sydney@gmail.com