

Aim: How did Hinduism impact India?

I. Hindu Facts

- Largest single religion in India
- Hinduism is a way of life.
- describes when to wash, how to wash, when to eat, etc.
- Caste System
- No single founder & no central authority
- No main written work
- Supreme religious beings Brahma, Vishnu, & Shiva

II. Sources of Hinduism

- Brought to India by Aryans
- Vedas: prayers & religious rituals passed down orally
- Upanishads: commentary on origins of the universe
- Rig-Veda: oldest religious document in history
- Written in Sanskrit

III. Chief Religious Ideas

1. Reincarnation: cycle of rebirth in Hinduism
2. Samsara: The eternal cycle of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth.
3. Moksha: liberation from the cycle of rebirth to achieve ultimate salvation
4. Karma: A person's actions during their life determines his future rebirth
5. Dharma: religious and moral rights, duties, & obligations of each individual

IV. Religious Practices

1. Strict washing rituals
2. Faithful worship at shrines
3. Severe dietary laws (vegetarians)
4. The cow is sacred
5. pilgrimages on foot to many sacred places
6. Wash away sin & evil in sacred rivers
7. Wash feet & hands before praying
8. When Hindu's die they are cremated the same day
9. Ritual known as Sati when women committed suicide with their husbands

V. Castes System

- Introduced by Aryans ca.1500 BCE
- Five castes:
 - Brahmins: Priests & Elite
 - Kshatriyas: Warriors & Aristocracy
 - Vaisyas: Farmers, Merchants & Artisans
 - Shudras: Servants & Laborers
 - Untouchables: outcasts, lowest jobs
 - Unfit to worship at temples

- People remained in caste for life
- There is no marrying out of the caste

VI. Weakening of the caste system

A. Weakened

- Increase in education, led to a shift from villages to cities
- Castes can now mingle together
- Changes led by Gandhi

B. Castes are still strong in villages and is still very important in India