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## Constitution questions worksheet answers

With about 1 billion followers, Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world. Hinduism was born in ancient India (modern-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) more than 5,000 years ago, and 90 percent of today's Hindus still live in the Indian subcontinent. In the United States, Hindus make up 0.7 percent of the population (2 million), about the same as Buddhists and slightly fewer than Muslims. But many Americans and other Westerners remain ignorant of even the most basic tenets and methods of Hinduism. Are Hindus polytheistic? Are they all vegetarians? Do they have their own sacred scriptures and places of worship? Do they worship cows? Ad Here's a chance to dispel some of the most damaging myths about Hinduism, and to learn more about a rich and deep religious tradition that recognizes the divine nature of all creation and urges everyone, regardless of one's religious background, to go their own way of righteous life. We would like to thank Suhag Shukla, executive director and co-founder of the Hindu American Foundation, for her generous help in answering our 10 major questions about Hinduism. Content There are so many Hindu gods and goddesses — Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Lakshmi and many more — that it may seem obvious that Hinduism is polytheistic. But that's not really true. Hinduism teaches that there is a single Divine that many Hindus call Brahman that manifests itself in a variety of forms, including gods and goddesses. Brahman himself is formless and unknown, beyond words and human attributes like sex. It is the ultimate reality that exists beyond matter, thought, life and death. Ad Tour for us people, parts of Brahman are made knowledgeable and accessible to us through various manifestations. One of those manifestations is the material world —everything in the universe from the largest galaxies to the smallest insect. In this sense, all existence is permeated by the Divine. Hindus also believe that Brahman manifests through gods and goddesses and their many avatars or divine earthly forms. Each of these powerful beings represents certain aspects of the Divine that become knowledgeable by reading and recounting the stories of the gods and goddesses found in Hindu scriptures. But just because Hindus believe in the existence of many gods does not mean that they are polytheistic. Shukla says that the Western idea of polytheism better suits the Greek gods and goddesses, each of whom earned their individual desires, not that of a unified Divine. Think of clay as an analogy for Brahman, says Shukla. Clay can take the form of a pot or of a dish, but the underlying reality of all these different utensils is clay. Without clay, those forms cannot exist. The Hindu belief in an ultimate reality with different manifestations is better described as monism or one-ness. Different schools of also qualify as pantheistic (all existence is Divine) or panther(all existence is within the divine). There is a Sanskrit hymn found in Vedas, the oldest Hindu holy text, which reads: The truth is one, the wise call it by many names. And just as Hindus believe that the truth is one, called by many names, so too is the ultimate reality called by many names. So, to answer the question: Do Hindus believe in God or gods? The answer is Yes. Hinduism is rich with ancient and sacred texts that serve a role in some ways similar to the Torah in Judaism, the Bible of Christianity, and the Qur'an in Islam. Although there is no central Hindu text that carries the outstanding authority of the Bible, every book in the Hindu canon contributes to deeper understanding and worship of the divine. Advertisement For example, there are sacred Hindu texts that read like hymns of praise (the Samhitas) and others that tell stories of gods, goddesses and ancient wars (Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita). Other Hindu texts focus on clerical questions of worship and ritual (Brahmanas), while some dive deep into the mystical mysteries of ultimate reality (the Upanishads). The holy texts of Hinduism began as oral traditions passed down for centuries before being written down and codified between 1200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. The oldest texts are the Vedas, from which serve a basic Hindu text from which most other holy works expand. Hindus have a slightly different relationship to the scriptures than other religions, Shukla explains. Hinduism teaches that enlightenment is ultimately achieved through personal experience of great truths that come about through study, prayer, and introspection (realization), not through mere faith (revelation). Another difference is that Hindus believe that the words of a living, enlightened teacher as a guru are as important and valid as words found in the sacred texts. The most important thing is how you live these eternal truths and how they change you. Both Hinduism and Buddhism (as well as Jainism and Sikhism) share a belief in karma and reincarnation. Hinduism teaches that when the divine takes shape, it is encapsulated as atman or soul. This soul, which exists within every form of reality (not only humans and animals, but also nonliving things like rivers and stones), is eternal and cannot be destroyed. When one passes away – through death, decay or destruction – the soul moves on to inhabit a new form. Reincarnation, or samsara, is the continuous process of death and rebirth in which the soul repeatedly takes on new forms and new experiences. However, the kind of samsara suffers, so the ultimate goal of Hinduism is moksha, freeing the soul from the endless cycle of death and rebirth, and allowing it to return to the divine. Ad Moksha can only when a soul inhabits a human being so humans are considered to be the most spiritually developed life forms. The force that governs the transmigration of souls from one form to another is called karma. In its simplest form, karma is the law of cause and effect. Righteous and selfless thoughts, speeches and actions have a positive effect on your soul, while lying, stealing, cheating and hurting others will have negative effects. Dharma, who is often translated as duty or morality, points to a way to justify living that is most favorable to spiritual growth and the accumulation of good karma. Part of righteous living is seclusion, including seclusion from the rewards or fruits of righteousness. Only when working for the benefit of all beings without expectations of, or attachment to reward will they achieve deliverance. We'll talk more about this in the section on India's caste system, but Shukla stresses that Hinduism does not teach that people suffering in poverty or disease are punished for evil acts in a past life. For starters, a poor person can suffer on a physical level, but can otherwise have a kind and give disposition, while a rich person can enjoy physical comforts, but is plagued by meanness and jealousy. There is a serious misunderstanding about this concept, says Shukla. Karma acts as a positive driving force and does not give permission to judge the suffering of others or absolve us of helping others. We have a duty to improve the circumstances of family, society and our country. Contrary to popular belief, not all Hindus are vegetarian, but it is estimated that 30 percent of all Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in India are vegetarian because of a common belief in nonviolence. This faith is rooted in the realization that all living beings are manifestations of the Divine. Violence against any living being will therefore have a negative effect on their karma. Various Hindu scriptures teach that a meat-free diet is not required, but meritorious to the welfare of the soul. Ad The sins generated by violence curtail the lives of the offender. Therefore, even those who are anxious about their own welfare should refrain from carnivorous. - Mahabharata How can he exercise true compassion, eating the flesh of an animal to fatten his own flesh? – Tirukural Mahatma Gandhi was a famous vegetarian, and added faith (outside India, at least) that all Hindus were vegetarians. In reality, it has never been like that. Even the gods and goddesses of Hindu scripture would sometimes feast on meat. For modern Hindus, the choice to eat vegetarian or not depends largely on regional culinary traditions. For example, large proportions of Hindus in the northern Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab are vegetarian, while relatively few Hindus living in southern India keep a strict vegetarian diet. A 2014 study from India found 71 percent of the population over 15 were not vegetarian. Cows have a special reverence among Hindus, but they are not worshipped. In Vedas, the cow is associated with Aditi, who is the mother of the gods. Cows are revered because they are seen as docile creatures that give to humans more than they take from them. In India, cows roam the streets and get pieces of food for good luck. Gandhi once wrote, If anyone would ask me what the most important external manifestation of Hinduism was, I would suggest that it was the idea of cow protection. In Hinduism, sacred images of the gods and goddesses are called murti and are a central part of home and temple worship. Since murti is sometimes translated as an idol, there is a misconception (especially among Westerners) that Hindus are idol worshippers, one of the foremost sins of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Shukla says that a better translation of murti is embodiment., Much like all of existence is believed to be the embodiment of the divine, the image of a Hindu god or goddess is understood to be an embodiment of a certain aspect of the divine. A murti of the goddess Saraswati embodies learning and

wisdom, while a murti of the goddess Lakshmi embodies prosperity. Ad In a Hindu home, one or more murti are usually placed on a small altar and serve as visual tools to consider a particular characteristic of the divine. The murti are sanctified or made holy by a priest's blessing called prana prathista. When sanctified, the image is incorporated into daily rituals (nitya) of prayer and meditation. There is a specialty that comes with the form of a murti, because of the divine qualities that we seek to honor through this form, said Shukla, and also through the ceremonies conducted to elevate this material form to something even more sacred. One of the most common home-based ceremonies is called puja, where murti serves as a focal point to train all the senses on the divine. The sense of smell is stimulated by incense and fragrant flowers. The ears are awakened with the sound of traditional mantras and pungent bells. The eyes soak up the colors and contours of murti and the light of light. The sense of taste is content to eat prasad, small treats that the god or goddess offers. And touch is engaged throughout the ceremony. Again, it is important to clarify that Hindus do not worship these idols, or even worship the god or goddess represented by murti. Rather, they use murti as a sacred tool to focus their minds and spirits on righteous qualities that they desire to bring into their daily lives and interactions with others. Unlike most Western religions, Hinduism does not determine a set time or place of worship. It is largely up to the individual. While many elements of Hindu worship practiced at home, there is also community-based worship found at Hindu temples. At home, most Hindu families will have a small altar adorned with a murti and perhaps some pictures of ancestors who have moved on. In addition to the puja ceremony we just described, there are other home-based rituals that involve purifying murti by bathing the image and bedding it with crimson vermilion powder. Fruit and sweets are laid out on the altar to be blessed by the deity, and candles and incense are lit, often daily. According to different Hindu traditions, family members can sing hymns and mantras, or use prayer beads as part of home worship. Ad Hindu temples are called mandirs and are open to both Hindu and non-Hindu worshippers. Some Hindu temples are large, ornate buildings that look like their old counterparts in India, while others resemble community centers. Temple worship is similar to home worship in that there is usually one or more murti that serve as a focal point for various ceremonies and rituals. The difference in the temple is that the rituals are mostly performed by a Hindu priest and attended by members of the community. Like a church service, some rituals are scheduled to take place on specific days and times. If you are visiting a temple, it is good to know what is expected. Visitors take off their shoes before they enter to keep the temple clean. Leather products are discouraged by respect for cows. Modesty is shown by avoiding shorts and sleeveless tops. Many people also bring gifts of fruit or flowers to the temple as offerings to the deities. The word guru means dispelling the darkness. In Hinduism, a guru is an enlightened spiritual teacher who dispels the darkness of ignorance and guides his students on a path to moksha. In the Hindu tradition, the words and teachings of a guru are just as sacred and sacred as the ancient Hindu texts. While Hindus are not required to have a guru, it is considered beneficial to seek help and guidance by a wise teacher. Ad Although there is no recognized Hindu authority that gives the title guru, many gurus claim a sacred lineage. Often they were students of a well-known guru who was himself a student of other famous gurus dating back centuries. A guru is not only expected to be wise, but to have had his own direct experiences with the Divine who informs his teaching. The students or disciples of a guru called shishya, and the close relationship between a guru and his or her loyal followers has been central to transmitting Hindu truths and methods, especially when Hinduism was primarily an oral tradition. In the past, students lived with or near their guru so that their spiritual education could be individualized to their needs, but now many gurus take students remotely or publish their teaching in books Online. Although students are expected to show devotion and respect for their guru, they do not worship the teacher or follow him or her blindly. Gurus are not gods; they are still people with human weaknesses, and students are expected to use their judgment on inappropriate behavior or unethical teachings. It is also perfectly OK for Hindus to swap gurus for some reason, even if they feel that their spiritual needs have changed or would be better served by someone else. Yoga is one of the six schools of Hinduism that originate from different interpretations of Vedas, the oldest of Hindu texts. But yoga as it is traditionally understood and practiced in Hinduism is very different from what has been popularized in the West. The original Hindu yoga was not intended as an exercise regimen to increase flexibility and strength, but as a path to enlightenment by focusing the mind and controlling the senses. The word yoga comes from Sanskrit for union and is widely defined as any practice that helps an individual experience god. Yoga is not only a set of physical postures and breathing exercises, but includes moral values, ethical practices, focused awareness, scripture study, and the worship of the divine. Ad In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna describes four kinds of yoga, each representing separate but interdependent pathways to achieving moksha: bhakti yoga (devotion)jnana yoga (knowledge)karma yoga (selfless action)raja yoga (meditation) With the help of a guru, individuals can learn what kind of yoga is best for their personal spiritual growth, even if the different types of yoga are not mutually exclusive. Of the four mentioned by Krishna, Raja Yoga is closest to what Westerners would recognize as yoga. The Bhagavad Gita describes it this way: Where, with the mind actively focused on a single point, with thought and emotion activity controlled, sitting in one place, one should practice yoga for purification of the self. With a custom body, head, and neck – keep these steady, without movement; Focus the vision towards the tip of the nose without looking at in any direction. In the West, yoga has mostly been reduced to a series of poses called asanas. And while they pose absolutely have their physical benefits, including lowering stress levels and blood pressure, the practice of yoga is less about strengthening the body than strengthening the mind and changing our being. While practicing asana for improved health is perfectly acceptable, it's not the goal or purpose of yoga, says the Hindu American Foundation website. Yoga in its broadest sense is a spiritual path and practice with the ultimate goal of allowing us to soothe our minds, control our minds and go inward to recognize our divine nature and how divine nature is shared throughout existence, shukla said. Which then in turn create a shift in our behavior towards others. A transition to being more compassionate, loving and kind to everyone. There are festive and important Hindu holidays all year round, although some are primarily celebrated in specific geographical regions of India or by followers of a particular god or goddess. Hindu holidays follow the lunar calendar, so that they can fall on different days and even months each year in the West. First, there are a variety of deity-specific celebrations that may include visits to temples dedicated to the specific god or goddess, the singing of special devotional prayers, dancing, all-night vigils, and more. Some of these great celebrations are: Ad Shivaratri: a springtime festival in honor of Shiva, the divine embodiment of change and renewalGanesha or Vinayaka Chaturti: an August/September holiday dedicated to the god of wisdom, prosperity and happinessNavaratri: a nine-night celebration observed five times each year, dedicated to female manifestations of the divine, including the mother goddess Durga and Saraswati, the goddess, speech and art. Many of the rituals associated with Navaratri are there exclusively by women. Holi is a colorful and widely observed seasonal holiday. Celebrated throughout India by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, Holi is a joyous spring festival (February/March) that is celebrated by singaling colored dyes in the air and partying late into the night in an atmosphere of unity and peace. Perhaps the most popular holiday in all of India and the Hindu diaspora is Diwali or Deepawali, the Hindu festival of light. During the multi-day winter holiday, families light traditional mud lamps (or hang happy holiday lights) to celebrate the triumph of good over evil. They also gather in the homes of friends to share Diwali treats. There is no biblical or spiritual basis in Hinduism for discriminatory and oppressive caste systems developed in India, including marking the very lowest social class as untouchables. India's birth-based caste system, later codified by the British under imperial rule, was partly the result of an unfortunate distortion of the Hindu concept of warn or personality types. The Vedas taught that individuals fall generally into four different personality types, every essential to a well-functioning society: intellectuals who study and teach (brahmin) government officials who protect and lead (kshatriya) businessmen and landowners who make money (vaishya) workers who grow food and make the goods (shudra) In Vedas, none of these personality types were lower or less important than the rest, but over time the personality types got lumped together with an occupation-based social system called jati. Jati is similar to medieval European trade guilds, where people with the same profession established their own rules and societies. In India, these rules contained specific religious practices and rituals. Eventually, membership in a particular jati became a birthright passed on from one generation to the next. Every religious community in India has its own jati groups and affiliations. Over time, many Hindus mistakenly concluded that being born into the working classes was a reflection of the state of one's soul – bad karma meant you were stuck with a painful existence. When the British arrived in India, they noted a group of people whose position in society was so low that they fell outside both Varna and Jati. The British called them untouchables. Discrimination on the grounds of caste or class was officially banned in 1948 by Indian independence, but like racial prejudice in America, it is still entrenched for some Indians, regardless of religion. It is important to re-emphasize, however, that the caste system was never rooted in Hindu teachings. In fact, Vedas learns exactly the opposite, as expressed by this ancient hymn: No one is superior, no inferior. All are brothers marching towards prosperity.

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