



A Journalist's Guide To  
**Hinduism**

## FORWARD

For over two thousand years, Western scholars have struggled to understand Hinduism. They are simply overwhelmed by its mind-boggling diversity. They conclude that Hinduism has no set creed like Christianity, Judaism or Islam, and its followers arbitrarily worship any one of the countless strange looking gods and goddesses. Some consider it polytheistic while others have even coined new terms, like henotheism, to describe this baffling variety of Hindu spiritual traditions. These traditions range from worshipping natural forces- sun, moon, wind and rivers- to meditating on a formless, omni-present Universal Spirit or *Brahman*. This genuine problem is further augmented by a well-financed and highly organized campaign waged by evangelical, proselytizing Christian missionaries that have been using disinformation about Hinduism and enticement have been their major tools to convert economically vulnerable Hindus.

With this backdrop, it is not surprising that an average Canadian has a very skewed understanding of Hinduism, which has long been a great source of distress to Hindu Canadians. Television documentaries or articles in newspapers and magazines about some gaudy and horrific rituals that are still practiced in some remote area of India, make good entertainment for mainstream Canadians, but Hindu Canadians squirm in their seats and feel humiliated. A correct media portrayal of Hinduism as understood and practiced by educated, modern Hindus in India, has been a very rare treat for Hindu Canadians. Reading Mark's final script of the 'Guidelines on Hinduism for Canadian Media' is indeed such a rare treat.

I was immensely delighted when Mark first contacted me about the Guidelines he was commissioned to write for Canadian media people. This is a highly commendable, much needed endeavor undertaken by the Institute for Faith in Media. This effort will go a long way in fostering inter-faith understanding and harmony.

Mark's writings gives me the impression that he has the spiritual bent which is a pre-requisite for understanding and interpreting Hinduism; a historical approach by non-Hindu writers has always failed. Marks has demonstrated a good grasp of spiritual underpinnings of Hindu concepts and beliefs that may be beyond the reach of a historian.

***Ajit Adhopia, author Hinduism In Canada [Note: his title needs confirmation]***

## ***Preface***

My moment of enlightenment about Hinduism came in the summer of 2003 when, along with a group of international journalists, I visited the magnificent Rama Temple outside Chicago, Illinois. Like Adela Quested's disorienting experience at the Marabar Caves in E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, I was feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the jangle of smells and the unfamiliar sight of what appeared to be idols of gods dressed in brightly-coloured fabrics, wearing garlands of marigolds.

And then it hit me: if I was asked to create a representation of the Divine, or the nature of the universe, what would I show? Suppose an entire people were asked to describe their relationship to Ultimate Reality, to All That Matters, to express the Inexpressible – what would that look like?

What I was seeing amounted to an ancient vision of the divine, lovingly nourished and devotedly refined for thousands of years: rich, intense, as detailed as the human imagination can conceive, as sacred as the human heart can hold . I had taken my first step toward an understanding of Hinduism.

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## **Introduction**

If you are the sort of journalist who likes territory that is comfortingly familiar, Hinduism will be a major challenge. Consider some of the first words of the Rig Veda, perhaps the oldest living scripture known to humankind:

*"Ekam Sat, Viprah Bahudha Vadanti"* - There is only one truth, but people describe it in different ways.

In some ways this captures the impossibility of capturing Hinduism itself: not only is it described in many ways, there is no Ultimate Authority to consult, no Pope to obey, no council of mullahs or rabbis to defer to. Perhaps no religion on the planet is so wondrously democratic, and yet this extreme form of spiritual laissez-faire poses significant problems for the journalist-in-a-hurry.

Here's just one example: if you need to quickly locate the Canadian Hindu Association, you're out of luck – it doesn't exist. There is no Hindu equivalent of the Canadian Jewish Congress, nothing like the Council on American-Islamic Relations CANADA. There is no convenient website like that of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops with its extensive lists of churches, and easy-to-find links to names and phone numbers of people who are authorized to give you the official line.

If the story is about or involves Hinduism in Canada, it will be easy to find yourself on your own, in unfamiliar territory where even prominent adherents have differing opinions on a wide range of theological issues. The truth of the matter is that there is no "official" Hinduism anywhere: not in India, and certainly not in Canada.

For starters, there isn't even agreement on where the name came from. Some claim the term was first used by the medieval Muslim invaders to describe the dwellers of the Indus valley. Others blame the Persians who called the land of India "Sapta Sindhu", meaning the land of the seven seas. And still others believe that it all began with a place called "Hindustan", a contraction of the words *Himalaya* (the mountains) and *Bindu Sarovara* (the southernmost tip of India) to describe the vast Asian subcontinent.

Regardless, perhaps a more descriptive term that Hindus use themselves is *sanatana dharma* – the everlasting, universal truth.

And what most experts do agree on won't make your job easier: that it's not named after a central figure - no Buddha, no Jesus Christ, no Abraham; no key prophet or guru. And: no catechism, no vows, no seminaries turning out Hindu priests into a uniform, recognized spiritual hierarchy.

Here's another baffler: although there is a certain degree of sectarianism within Hinduism, there is absolutely no competition amongst them (as there is in Christianity) for adherents. Worse yet for a journalist habituated to conflict as a source of news events: Hinduism holds no brief against *any* of the world's major religions. Out of the credo that "truth appears differently" what follows is respect for all the world's religious teachings as pathways to the one, universal truth: dharma.

This explains to some degree why Hindus and Hinduism rarely make news in Canada: they're not in the spiritual marketplace contending for customers. And here is another: *ahimsa*, or harmlessness. As Gandhi – perhaps the best-known of all modern Hindus – said about *ahimsa* (which he translated as non-violence): “It means that you may not offend anybody; you may not harbor uncharitable thought, even in connection with those who consider your enemies. To one who follows this doctrine, there are no enemies.”

Are you getting the hang of it? Good – because you're in for quite a ride trying to wrap your mind around a religion that has been defined as set of beliefs “practiced by Indians who aren't Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, or Christian”.

For all its vagueness there is a lot of solid ground from which to begin this journey: Hinduism certainly refers to an ancient – and perhaps the world's oldest – religion that arose in India some 5000 years ago (with roots that are certainly much older) and now is reckoned to have over 900 million adherents, making it the third largest in the world.

And yes, it is clearly one of the most complex and sophisticated systems of belief and philosophy the world has ever seen, providing rich perspectives and concepts that are now firmly part of the modern world. You know the words: *Karma*. *Dharma*. *Yoga*. And you're acquainted with its ideas: Reincarnation. The endless cycles of Time. You've heard about its deep psychological notions, such as egolessness, and universal consciousness, and you certainly know how much modern western culture has been impacted by its Gurus and their teachings: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation, Hare Krishna, even Deepak Chopra (the New Age movement borrows very heavily from Hindu philosophy of Vedanta).

So don't despair. This guide will provide you with some basic understandings of Hinduism, its history in Canada, a glossary of useful terms and concepts, and a list of resources including key celebrations, a Who's Who of Gods and Deities, useful websites, and important contacts you can call when the occasion warrants; so that if you do need to reach someone by mobile phone, at least you'll have someone knowledgeable to call.

And one last piece of comfort: if you're reading this just before heading out on a story dealing with Hindu Canadians, you are most certainly about to be treated with sincere courtesy – and some of the most genuine hospitality this reporter has ever encountered.

## ***Modern Impacts***

While Hinduism has had an incalculable impact on the lives of hundreds of millions of people in Asia, shaping other religions such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism, it has only been in the last hundred or so years that its ideas began to percolate through the west. In 1893 in Chicago at the first-ever Parliament of the World's Religions, an Indian guru made his way to the podium and electrified religious leaders from around the globe. Swami Vivekananda thus began a dialogue with the west, introducing concepts that are now part of our modern environment. Here are a few of them:

**Karma:** A belief that justice prevails throughout creation (similar to the scientific concept that every action produces an equally strong reaction). Everything one does has a

consequence, and follows one not just through this life, but in future lives. In other words, there is no such thing as chance, fate or luck; your life is written based on your own karmas, thus you create your own script/ destiny.

**Samsara:** The belief that the soul does not die, but is incarnated over and over again until liberation is achieved. While we would call this reincarnation, samsara also contains the notion that what we perceive as absolute reality is actually a form of pointless wandering, and we are condemned to wander until we awake to true reality (moksha).

**Maya:** What we see in this world is actually just the appearance of reality, the material. But there is a higher reality that all souls crave.

**Kalpas:** A unit of time demarcating the birth and destruction of the universe, said to be some 4.3 billion years long. The notion that time and space are cyclical has strong resonance within the world of modern physics.

**Guru:** What does it take to escape suffering and the endless round of birth and death? It requires the assistance of a “realized” teacher. The notion that we require this assistance is fundamental to Hindu spirituality.

## ***A Quick Orientation***

A Hindu religious temple is called a *mandir*. *Mandirs are often* consecrated to the worship of a particular deity, or manifestation of God. For example, the Toronto Sri Durga Temple gives a prominence to the female deity Durga (see below). Others may be organized around a particular religious organization, such as the Edmonton Vedanta Society, or around a highly esteemed teacher (a *sat-guru*), and finally, around one of the main Hindu sects, such as Vaishnavism (for Vishnu) or Shaivism (for Shiva).

The main deity’s idol may be bigger or centrally placed, but you will also find idols of all other major deities as well, to cater to the worship needs of all. Very few Hindus staunchly follow any one particular deity or sect.

Modern Hindus can be divided in to two broad categories of faith. The more orthodox, who describe themselves as *sanatanis*, worship God through the manifestation of deities, believe in *Avatara* (God comes to earth in human form, or *avatars*) and engage in ritual worship (*pooja*) in temples or home.

The other category, the more reform-minded *Arya Samajis*, believe in an “undivided” One, Formless God and eschew idolatry, deny the existence of avatars, and do not engage in *pooja* at temples or at home. Their practice is to just meditate on God at home (or congregationally), and attend public discourses.

Given the fact that there are 18 official languages in India, you will often encounter temples and Hindu cultural centres where the dominant language might be Tamil, Gujurati, Sindhi, Hindi, Punjabi, even English. Generally speaking, those from Trinidad, Guyana, South Africa, Fiji (***add Mauritius***) and other countries have their own separate temples, but even at these you will find that some of the worship will be recited in ancient Sanskrit (and Hindi), and sometimes explained in English.

Historically, basic worship service has not been congregational in the western sense. Instead of pews, you will generally find open areas fronted by shrines to a particular male deity (*devata*) or female deity (*devi*). At *sanatani* temples worship takes the form of *poojas* – devotional practices including the offering of flowers, food, etc., chanting of mantras, and sometimes bathing and dressing statues. You may be offered food to eat following a service (*prasad*). The food is delicious and you show respect by eating what is offered.

However, there is much evidence that a more congregational form of worship is developing in Canada. According to academics like Harold Coward and Hugh Johnston, Canadian Hindus have adapted to a western social environment by building multi-use temples with fixed times for worship.

In addition to *prasad*, many temples in Canada offer a freshly cooked full vegetarian meal called “Preeti-Bhoj” or love feast; some believe that this idea is borrowed from the Sikh tradition of *langar*, the communal meal common to all gurdwaras, which tends to attract bigger crowds and produce more revenue to run the temple.

These activities may or may not be led by a priest. You can address the priest by the honorific, *Pandit-ji* or Swami-ji (“respected teacher”). Generally, you can identify a priest by the saffron robe he might wear.

Appropriate attire in a temple is loose, casual dress (to make it easier to sit on the floor; in Canada chairs/benches provided for seniors/handicaps). Remove your shoes in the foyer of the temple. The Indian custom of greeting someone by placing the palms together and bowing slightly (*anjali*) would be deeply appreciated. You can also utter the universal Hindi greeting, “Namaste” or “Namaskar”. You should also know that the smell of liquor on one’s breath is considered defiling. Do not smoke or bring tobacco inside the temple.

By the way, women are not required by Hindu faith to wear the sari the wondrously colored flowing wrap of silk or cotton; there is no dress code. The coloured dot on the forehead of women, often red, is called the bindi. It is a sign of piety, and it reveals to other people that the wearer is a married Hindu woman (although these days unmarried women wear the bindi too). Men can also wear the *bindi*, but it is less common. Generally, men may wear long vertical one, called *tilak* or *teeka*; but, among orthodox South Indian men, the design or shape of a *tilak* signifies the sect he belongs to; e.g., three parallel horizontal lines of gray ashes or sandalwood paste for Shaivites and “u” shape for Vaishnavites.]

### ***The Hindu Community in Canada***

The most important fact you need to digest from a demographic point of view is that the population of Hindus in Canada is experiencing incredibly rapid growth. Between 1991 and 2001, Statistics Canada reports that the population of Hindu Canadians has almost doubled. It now represents exactly one percent of the total - just about 300,000. That puts it on par with Buddhists, somewhat smaller than the population of Jews, larger than Canada’s Sikhs. And new immigrants from Hindu backgrounds are becoming a larger slice of the total. Of the 1.8 million new immigrants who came during the 1990s, Hindus now account for almost 7% of the annual tide arriving on Canada’s shores. This is remarkable considering that back in 1961, there were so few Hindus coming that Stats Canada reported their percentage of the total as almost zero.

So who are the Canadian Hindus? one interesting statistic: they certainly are not farmers. In fact, Statistics Canada reports only 90 Hindus living on farms in the entire country – the smallest number listed in its survey of farm populations by religion.

Clearly, Canadian Hindus are urban and well educated, but this wasn't always the case.

The first handful of South Asian immigrants landed in British Columbia just over 100 years ago, ready to work in its forests and mines. Their presence immediately created a stir. Even though these first arrivals were actually Sikhs from the Punjab region of India, the subtle distinction between Sikhs and Hindus was lost in a hostile, racist environment. In 1906, the Vancouver Daily World newspaper carried this lurid headline, "Horde of Hungry Hindoos invades Vancouver: Starving coolies roam in streets, menace to women and children - homeless and destitute wanderers camp in park and beg for their food."

By 1908 about 5000 South Asians had made BC their home, including the first true Hindus. One of them, Devi Chand, set up an employment agency to encourage Indian men to migrate (at the time Canadian law prohibited Asian women from entering). His evident success brought him to the attention of the local authorities who began campaigning for Ottawa to pass laws "to keep Canada white."

In 1907 a Vancouver alderman, H.H. Stevens, became the leader of the racist Asiatic Exclusion League. "We contend that the destiny of Canada is best left in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon race...As far as Canada is concerned, it shall remain white, and our doors shall be closed to Hindoos as well as to other Orientals. "

Rather than combating racism, Ottawa responded with measures to restrict immigration from India. The infamous head tax applied to all Asians: unlike Europeans, who were required to have at least \$25 in their pockets upon debarkation, Indian immigrants had to have at least \$200. And worse: it created an impossible double-bind with its Bill of Direct Passage which stated that Indian immigrants had to come by "continuous passage". Since there were no direct sailings from India to Canada, it effectively shut the doors to South Asians.

In May, 1914 these policies were to be tested by an amazing act of civil disobedience, when the steamship Komagata Maru arrived in Vancouver with 357 Indians (12 were Hindus; rest were Sikhs) aboard. Except for a couple of returning residents, all were refused permission to land and for two months, under squalid conditions, prohibited from taking on water or food, the ship sat in the harbour as people began to die. Just as the ship exhausted all legal avenues, a Canadian naval vessel arrived to force it back out to sea on July 23.

As Ajit Adhopia writes in his book, *The Hindus of Canada*, "Indo-Canadians consider the Komagata Maru affair as the most blatant and despicable act of racism, and the darkest episode in the history of Canada."

The Komagata Maru episode however was a turning point: despite official opposition and political demagoguery, the shores of Canada had been discovered by South Asians, its "whiteness" challenged, and a new concept of social harmony – multiculturalism - en route to becoming the law of the land.

These days new Hindu immigrants face a radically different welcome than their country-folk did 100 years ago. For one thing, Indians are now one of the largest groups of arriving immigrants - only slightly surpassed by those from China. And Hindus will be among the best educated of those accepted worldwide. They will be joining a Hindu Canadian community that is thoroughly urbane, modern in its outlook, and as integrated in the Canadian social fabric as is possible. Generally speaking, Hindu Canadians do not create ghettos, feel secure living anywhere as most speak English

Hindu Canadians tend to be over-represented in medicine, engineering, academics – especially in the sciences.

However they tend to be under-represented in one key but essential area: numbers elected to public office. Currently there is only one Hindu Member of Parliament – Deepak Obhrai representing the Conservative Party in Calgary East.

There has never been a Hindu appointed to the Senate of Canada. And even in Ontario, with 73% of the Hindu population in Canada (in 2001), none of the sitting MPPs are Hindu. Why?

According to Mr. Obhrai, MP, the key to this mystery lies both in history and culture. “Hindus do not like to promote religious division,” he said. “We want to live in peaceful co-existence, we do not seek to convert others to our religion, and when it comes to political life, we’d prefer to look at Indian interests rather than Hindu interests.”

And he pointed to one other factor – a cultural predisposition towards success in private, not public life. “In the broader social context Hindus are well-settled in Canada, but we have a preoccupation with business and professional success.” And even in the rare occasions that Hindus do enter public life, religious interests will take a back seat, Obhrai says. “In my case, I do not tend to discuss Hindu issues within Parliament. I see myself as part of the wider, secular, Indo-Canadian community at large.”

But there are other reasons as well, according to Canadian author and columnist Ajit Adhopia. “There is no Hindu ghetto, no Hindu vote bank for politicians to draw on: Hindus are very individualistic with little “sheep mentality”. As well, there are numerous linguistic sub-cultural groups - Bengal, Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Tamil etc.; this makes it hard to speak with one voice.” Adhopia notes that the Hindu Canadian community is far from lacking influence in public policy matters: “There are many, many Hindu senior civil servants in Ottawa and Toronto; for example, Dr Bhausahab Ubale - the first Indian to become the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner (and later a commissioner of the federal HRC)”. One Hindu elder in the Toronto area told him: “Politics is a dirty game played by dirty people using dirty tricks, for dirty aims.”

And yet there are significant community issues that crop up from time to time, often generating news stories. Further on in this guide you’ll find a discussion of some of the most prominent of them, such as racial discrimination, the impact in Canada of politics in India, and others. But before jumping into that it’s time to dig into the basics: what is a Hindu?

## **The Hindu Religion and Culture**

So what is a Hindu? In 1995 the Supreme Court of India dealt with this very question and actually came up with a fairly succinct definition, but one that will of course not satisfy everyone:

"Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the truth that the number of gods to be worshiped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion."

One principle aspect of this definition goes straight to the heart of the most perplexing aspect of Hinduism: whether it is polytheistic or monotheistic. From an uncritical western point of view, the matter is beyond dispute: Or is it?



## **Core Beliefs**

There is something indeed vast and imposing about Hinduism, with its entire library of sacred texts, epic poems, mantras, meditations, cosmologies, philosophies, medical knowledge, etc. Compounding this, especially in its transmission to the West, much of the simplicity and elegance of the Hindu religion proper has become muddled and confused with certain Indian cultural traditions, such as the caste system as it exists today (see below), sati (the practice of self-immolation by a wife upon the death of her husband) and other difficult issues.

But the basic, underlying beliefs of Hinduism are very straightforward, and easy to grasp.

1. The belief that the central sacred scriptures, the four Vedas, are divine in origin
2. The belief in an uncreated, unborn, changeless, singular and unseen, formless, Omni-present, Omnipotent, Omniscient holy God – the Brahman (not to be confused with the Brahmin caste) - which is manifest in many forms, including individual human souls - every human soul represents Divine manifestation.
3. The belief that every being is part of the essence of the divine, and as such, holy (this gives rise to the belief in non-violence and its universal, non-sectarian approach to God. Every human soul has its origin in the same Universal Soul, Divine Energy, Universal Truth, God, Allah, Father in Heaven, etc.
4. The belief that the universe is constantly being created and destroyed over countless cycles, mirrored by the endless birth and death of individual souls
5. The belief in karma - that every human action has consequences, which follow the soul through reincarnation – and that spiritual discipline is the source of happiness and moral behaviour
6. The belief that through knowledge of the divine, and the essential assistance of an awakened teacher (guru), all humans can awake and be released from suffering
7. And finally, the belief that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding.

## **Core Practices**

### **1. The four goals of life**

*(I have change the order as I know it)*

**Dharma:** Multiple meanings. Duty, Absolute Reality, Spiritual/moral Duty, Truth, The Law of Being. All people desire (and perhaps require) absolute meaning in their lives; hence, it is included as a major goal.

**Artha:** Wealth. To be wealthy is not a crime (as long as earned honestly). Unlike the biblical injunction regarding wealth and camels and the difficulty of getting them through the eye of a needle, Vedic scripture holds that good fortune is evidence of good karma in previous lives. Again, balance is the key; attachment the danger.

**Kama** (not karma): Worldly Desire. Despite its reputation as a culture that promotes harsh forms of renunciation, Hinduism holds that pleasure-seeking is a valid and foundational aspect of human life. However it is only when one becomes enslaved, or attached, to pleasure do problems arise.

**Moksha**: Liberation, Enlightenment. “Moksha - the ultimate goal of human life on earth, after resolving karmas, good or bad is not an ideal to be experienced and obtained in the next life after we die. It can be experienced and obtained through spiritual enlightenment here and now,” writes Ajit Adhopia.

## 2. The Four Paths (Yogas) to Liberation

**Dhyana** (or **Raja**) Yoga: The Path of meditation. Patanjali, the great Guru of the third century BCE, is sometimes credited with codifying and explicating the discipline of “taming the mind” through meditation, in order to “weaken the forces of corruption” and to bring one to communion with God. In the West, yoga is better known by the physical discipline of hatha yoga, a subset of Dhyana yoga.

**Karma** yoga: The Path of Action. Remember? The belief “that every human action has consequences, which follow the soul through reincarnation”. Karma yoga is the practice of living selflessly, without thought of reward or interest in the results. Your complete focus should be on selfless actions, not on results; the result is bound to come, and thereby extinguishing karma. In the Bhagavad Gita, the great epic poem of war and deliverance, Lord Krishna, disguised as an ordinary charioteer, tells the main hero of the story,

“The wise man whose insight is firm,  
relinquishing the fruits of action,  
is freed from the bondage of rebirth  
and attains the place beyond sorrow.”

**Jnana** yoga: The path of Knowledge. What is the true nature of reality? How are we to know it? Jnana yoga is a practice of enquiry and study. Often considered to be the most difficult of all the yogas, it has spawned a huge spectrum of philosophies.

**Bhakti** Yoga: The Path of Devotion. Go to any Hindu temple and you will find people praying before statues of the Hindu pantheon, offering incense, fruits, sweets, and money. If devotees find the other yogas too demanding, or their lives too busy with work, here is a way to establish a direct connection with God. Examples: *Japa* (constantly reciting His name with or without a rosary or a holy Mantra; hearing His glory by attending discourses or recitations of sacred books or devotional songs/music (*Keertan*); and singing His glory alone or in congregation (*bhajan*). Requires total surrender to God. This is an emotional path.

**NOTE: a practicing Hindu usually starts with one of the above 4 paths. As she spiritually progresses, she eventually starts following all 4 of them, i.e will gain spiritual knowledge, meditate, do selfless humanitarian service and worship a personal deity & sing his/her glory (bhajans)**

### 3. The Many Manifestations of God

Over the centuries, Hinduism has been attacked in the monotheistic west as an idolatrous, polytheistic religion. This is a source of deep hurt and frustration to many Hindus. They point to the trinity in Christianity as evidence that God has multiple aspects, but is absolutely unitary and indivisible at the same time. In fact, a key concept in God's divinity in Hinduism is the **trimurti** – the Holy Three:

**Brahma:** God as the king-creator of the universe. Depicted with four faces and four arms, he can look in all directions and act in every dimension. Carrying a water-pot, the Vedas, prayer beads, and standing on a lotus blossom, his message is one of the perfection of all life, attainable through devotion, purity, and spiritual practice.

**Vishnu:** God as Protector. In one traditional form, his blue body evokes the limitlessness of the sky. Some observers note that Vishnu most resembles the Western notion of God, the benevolent father-figure who intervenes in human history. Vishnu does this through several manifestations called avatars, such as Lord Krishna (the god-charioteer in the epic Bhagavad Gita) and Lord Rama. One popular sect that believes Vishnu is the ultimate deity is called Vaishnavism.

**Shiva:** God of Dissolution. Perhaps the best-known manifestation of God in the West, Shiva is often portrayed as a dancing figure, leading the universe in its wild gyrations towards dissolution and the next cycle of re-creation. In fact, many Hindus do not associate Shiva with destruction at all, but worship him as the regenerator of Life. Although Vishnu was a minor god in more ancient times, these days a popular sect that believes Shiva is the ultimate deity is called, naturally, Shaivism.

## Other Manifestations

In addition to the trimurti, there are several other key manifestations of God. Also note that every deity is paired with a female deity as his consort, in order to complete the concept of God. Symbolically, a male is incomplete without a consort; without this energy He is powerless. Shiva's consort is Parvati; Vishnu's is Lakshmi; Brahma's is Saraswati. It also explains the status of woman in Hinduism. Every deity holds some object in each hand, denoting some useful, moral/ethical message for his or her worshipper.

**Lakshmi:** God as female form of abundance. The consort of Vishnu, Lakshmi has four arms, holding an object in each hand. She is worshipped as a protector of life and the bearer of material wealth. However she also represents the wealth that comes from spiritual practice: the ultimate protection from evil.

**Durga:** (literally, it means a 'fortress, metaphor for security/protection). Another manifestation of God in female form. Often represented with eight arms, each arm holding a weapon. Durga is a warrior goddess, riding a tiger, and clearly not someone to trifle with. Durga can be represented in a form of angelic beauty, or also as a frightening deity, Mother Kali.

**Ganesh:** Son of Shiva. A very popular manifestation of God throughout India, he is represented with the head of an elephant, but missing one tusk (lost in battle, apparently). Ganesh is much loved as a bearer of wisdom and good fortune. All Hindu rituals/ceremonies begin with worship of Lord Ganesh.

**Saraswati:** Consort of Brahma, goddess of learning/arts/music and worshipped by students and artists. She represents the union of power and intelligence from which organized creation arises.

## 4. Ceremonies, Festivals and Rituals

It is fair to say that the foundation of Hindu life is the home. Most traditional Hindus maintain shrines to God within the home and practice spiritual sacrifices.

### Five Daily Duties

There are five daily duties, but you don't necessarily need a shrine for discharging them. A faithful Hindu has duties to:

1. The scriptures by reading
2. God by doing prayer/Pooja etc;
3. Parents/ancestors by serving them
4. Human society by donations/volunteerism/charity work
5. Creatures by offering food

## The Temple

In Canada, the temple is the centre of community life, and provides a focus for the major worship practices, rituals, and festivals. However, unlike Western churches, synagogues, and masjids, a Hindu temple is not necessarily one large building, and generally there are no pews where worshippers pray en masse. Often a Hindu temple is a complex of shrines, each one devoted to a particular deity. Most temples in Canada have a large prayer hall with idols of major deities on a platform/altar; the worshipper first goes to the altar offers personal prayer and offerings, and then sits down on the floor, to show humility, and listens to ongoing discourses/devotional music/ recitation of scriptures etc.

**Pooja:** Ritualistic Worship. A complex series of offerings and services performed in the presence of one's favorite deity, represented as an idol. Sometimes the idol is washed with holy water, and then dressed in fresh garments. Flowers and incense may be offered. At the conclusion of the puja, food is presented to the deity, and then shared with fellow worshippers. The offering of food is called *prasad*.

**Kirtan:** Devotional music, hosted at home or at the temple. These can take the form of concerts where donations are collected and sweets are distributed. These are very popular concert among North Indian Hindus, and is called *Jagran* - all night continuous devotional concert dedicated to Durga Devi.

**Yajna** (Hawan): A fire ritual. A small fire is made in a canister with an open top, and fed with herbs and clarified butter called *ghee*. Usually a priest officiates at the yajna ceremony. Usually done to celebrate an occasion, i.e. naming/welcoming of newly born baby, a birthday, graduation, communion or wedding; orthodox ones combine it with Pooja.

## The Sanskaras – 16 Milestones of Life

Hindu tradition also specifies ceremonies to mark significant life passages. Each one has its own forms of worship and practices. They are:

*(I have changed order, added one and deleted one)*

**1. Garbhadana :** Performed by a married couple when conceiving a child, raising the act of conception to a sacred occasion, purifying and uplifting for the unborn child.

**2. Pumsavana:** Performed between the second and fourth month of pregnancy, traditionally to promote the birth of a male but often these days a benediction of health for the fetus.

**3. Simantonoyana:** Its purpose is to continue to protect the foetus—especially its newly forming mind—from all negative influences, and also to stimulate the development of the unborn child's intellect.

**4. Jatakarma:** Birth celebration. It awakens the child's intellect, gives it strength, and promotes

long life for the child.

**5.Namakarana:** On the eleventh day after the child's birth, the child receives its name.

**6.Nishkramana:** The baby's first outing into the world

**7.Annaprashana** - The first feeding of solid food to the baby, usually in the sixth month after birth

**8. Choodakarma:** At the end of the first year after birth, or during the third year, the child's hair is shaved

**9.Karnavedha:** Usually performed in the sixth or seventh month after birth, consists of the piercing of the baby's ear lobes, so earrings may be worn.

**10.Upanayana:** Initiates the formal study of the Vedas. It is one of the most important and esteemed of the samskaras.

**11.Vidyarambha:** Begins a student's primary education by ceremonially introducing the child to the alphabet

**12.Samavartana:** Graduation from studies, prepares the young adult for family life

**13.Vivaha:** Wedding ceremony, considered by many to be the most important of all the samskaras.

**14.Vanaprastha:** Celebrates the third and final stage of life. Here, a man leaves behind his life in the world and retires to the forest (with or without his wife), to live an ascetic life devoted to study of the scriptures and to meditation.

**15. Sanyasa:** This marks the beginning of the last phase of life when a Hindu renounces all worldly attachments and directs all his energy towards God.

**16.Antyeshthi:** The final sacrament, the funeral rites.

## Festivals and Celebrations

There are hundreds of Hindu holy days, celebrations and festivals, many of which trace their origins to local and regional customs in India. Since festival dates are based on Hindu calendar, they do not fall on the same exact Western dates every year; to complicate matters, the same festival (like Diwali or Holi) is celebrated for different reasons in different regions. Here is a list of some of the more prominent:

**Diwali** The Hindu festival of lights, commemorating the slaying of the demon-king, Narakaasura . The Gods called on Lord Krishna to come to their rescue. He marched from the western end of the country to its eastern end, destroying Narakaasura's army and then cutting off the demon-king's head . Some also celebrate the marriage of Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu on this festival. In North West India, it is celebrated for Lord Rama's return to his Kingdom after completing the 14

years of exile given by his father, by lighting their homes, giving sweets and doing 'thanksgiving' Pooja. (Sikhs celebrate it too, of course for a different reason - a cruel Muslim ruler released one of their Gurus from jail on Diwali day. Jains celebrate it too).

**Hanuman Jayanti** – Day of worship of Hanuman, chief devotee of Lord Rama. Hanuman is visualized as a humble, brave and wise god manifested with the head of a monkey. Deeply revered throughout the Hindu world. He was extremely strong and courageous like the Hercules; when a Hindu is fearful or needs extra-ordinary physical strength for any reason/danger, they invoke him for help by constantly repeating his name loudly; sportsmen invoke him during competitions.

**Holi** – Celebrating the destruction of the cannibal demons, Holika and Putana. Lord Krishna is said to have destroyed the demon, thus signifying the salvation of all little children. On the festival day, people clean their homes, remove all dirty articles from around the house and burn them. Holi is the occasion of much mirth and merry-making; marked by pranks by kids, singing dancing in the streets, distributing sweets, throwing coloured water/dye on each other and rubbing coloured powder called 'Gulal' or 'Abeer'.

**Krishna Janmashtami** The birthday of Lord Krishna, the eighth Divine Incarnation. It falls on the 8th day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September). This is one of the greatest of all Hindu festivals. Lord Krishna was born at midnight. A twenty-four hour fast is observed on this day, which is broken at midnight.

**Navaratri** (aka Durga Puja) This festival lasts for nine days in honour of the nine manifestations of Durga (see Gods & Deities below) . Observed twice a year, once at the beginning of summer, the other at the beginning of winter, during Navaratri devotees of Durga observe a fast. Prayers are offered for the protection of health and property.

**Ramnavami** - The birthday of Lord Rama (March-April). (see Gods & Deities). An occasion for reading and narrating the *Ramayana*, the epic account of Lord Rama's great victories over evil.

**Shivaratri** - "The night of Shiva". (February-March). This is a festival observed in honour of Lord Shiva. Shiva was married to Parvati on this day. Fasting, all-night vigils mark this occasion.

**Raksha Bandhan** – July/August ("Protection Rite") For centuries, it has been celebrated as brother-sister day: every sister ties a special, colourful bracelet made of silver and gold threads called RAKHI on her brother's wrist, reminding her brother his 'duty to protect' her. He reciprocates with gifts – a very sweet holiday. This holy festival is noted for the "protection cords" or threads that are tied on the arms of devotees, as a reminder the victory of Indra over a group of very bad demons. A consort had tied a holy thread or amulet around his wrist before a battle, and the victory is attributed in part to the power of this protection.

## 6. The Sacred Canon

"If someone asks me to show them the Hindu holy book, I would have to wave a library at them" – Ajit Adhopia, author, The Hindus of Canada

Without a doubt, the oldest sacred scriptures still being read today are the Hindu Vedas. Although written in Sanskrit (the word itself means “perfect”), by tradition the Vedas were never actually “written” but have always existed, and in fact, all existence derives from the Vedas themselves, manifest as a song issuing directly from Brahman.

There are two classifications of sacred texts.

**Shruti** or “heard” divine revelations received by ancient sages during the climax of deep meditation. There are four of these, the Vedas. Since these derive directly from God, they are the only Shruti, therefore primary, ultimate source. Vedas were passed orally to specially chosen disciples until written language appeared.

**Smriti** or man- made, divinely-inspired, sacred literature. These comprise a huge variety of mythological narratives, schools of philosophy, codes of ethics, and commentaries. They are sacred literature, but secondary to Vedas.

**Rig Veda:** Consisting of ten books and 1,028 hymns to a variety of gods, it is filled with lovely, inspiring poetry

*WITHIN the waters runs the Moon, he with the beautiful wings in heaven. Ye lightning with your golden wheels, men find not your abiding-place. Mark this my woe, ye Earth and Heaven. Surely men crave and gain their wish*

**Yajur Veda:** Rites of transformation. The Yajur Veda has a multidimensional sense of providing instruction on the external form of ritual practice, but functions as well on an inner, mystical practice for purifying the mind and awakening consciousness.

**Sama Veda:** Similar in many respects to the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda also includes melodies that permit priests to sing the mantras in a consistent manner.

**Atharva Veda:** Contains some 732 hymns, spells and charms for a variety of purposes including attracting lovers, regulating the weather, curing diseases, etc. One of the more charming is this chant to peace:

May we agree in mind and thought, may we not struggle with one another, in a spirit displeasing to the gods! May not the din of frequent battle-carnage arise, may the arrow not fly when the day of Indra has arrived!



**The Upanishads:** These sometimes take the form of a Socratic-like dialogue between teacher and student. In fact, the title comes from the Sanskrit meaning “to sit near”, as a student would sit at the feet of a teacher. The concepts dealt with are richly philosophic in tone, such as this epistemological discussion:

THE Pupil asks: 'At whose wish does the mind sent forth proceed on its errand? At whose command does the first breath go forth? At whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye, or the ear?'

THE Teacher replies: 'It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the breath of breath, and the eye of the eye. When freed (from the senses) the wise, on departing from this world, become immortal.'

**The Bhagavad Gita** Perhaps the best loved, and most well-known of all the Hindu sacred texts, it is a terrific read all on its own, requiring little knowledge of Hinduism. In form it is an epic, military poem, somewhat similar to the Iliad, but it is far more philosophic than anything Homeric. Imagine a moment of calm before a titanic battle is to ensue. The hero, Arjuna, asks his charioteer to drive him to the no-man's land between the arrayed armies just moments prior to the start of the war. Little does he know that his driver is actually God in the form of Lord Krishna. Frozen in time, they begin a dialogue, which takes the reader through the mysteries of karma, duty, and the meaning of all life.

## **Current Community Issues in Canada**

For the most part, the Hindu Canadian community has relatively few settlement issues compared, for example, to the other large South Asian community, the Sikhs. That is not to say that Hindus are universally welcome. As with other visible minorities, Hindu families have suffered their share of discrimination. And there are still Hindus alive today who remember that it took until 1947 for them to win the right to vote in Canada.

Still, there are significant political and cultural issues that are of deep concern, some of them relating to how they are perceived in Canada by the mainstream culture, others relating to the maintenance of Hindu values and customs in a postmodern, pluralistic society, and still others relating to issues still boiling in India.

## ***Racism***

Problems of perception were clearly evident in the days following the September 11 tragedy, when a Hindu temple in Hamilton was torched by arsonists, who, police said, mistook it for a mosque. In 1998, the community was deeply upset by the treatment of Dr. Shiv Chopra, a prominent scientist with Health Canada. After being passed over for promotion for a top job within the bureaucracy, Dr. Chopra launched a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, claiming race discrimination. His complaint was dismissed, even though the tribunal agreed that Dr. Chopra was not treated fairly. Seven years later, the issue still has not been resolved, despite the ruling of the Federal Court of Canada that the Human Rights Tribunal was wrong.

Another set of issues surround the difficulties of maintaining Hindu values in a hyper-secular western culture. And no issues are more troublesome than intermarriage and child-rearing. According to Dr. Ravi Shrivastava, a volunteer priest at a Mississauga Hindu temple, three out of every four wedding ceremonies he performed in 2002 were 'mixed' marriages: young Hindus marrying mostly white Christians. To many Hindu parents, this is a worrisome trend.

Traditional arranged marriages do happen, but are less and less common in Canada. What appears to be taking the place of traditional arranged marriages is a hybrid often referred to as "Middle Path Marriages" whereby children are allowed to socialize with persons of their choosing, but when it comes time for courtship, parents provide in essence a dating "agency" service: conducting discrete background checks, scouring the territory for suitable partners, and consulting Hindu marriage consultants.

However, even given all the compromises Hindu Canadian parents are facing, the whole issue of providing suitable mates for their children is still one fraught with peril, since arranged marriages have been the norm in India for centuries. But it exposes a larger issue: the caste system, upon which arranged marriages depend.

## The Caste System

The subject of caste is the cause of some discomfort and soul-searching for Canadian Hindus. While some of the foundations for this system of social stratification are scriptural, dating back to the oldest Vedas, the progressive, educated approach is to condemn the caste system as a cultural and historical perversion of the original spiritual insight.

In modern urban India, the caste system is the subject of vigorous social policies attempting to undo centuries of abuse. Despite continual efforts on the part of the Indian government to eliminate it, the system persists. Ancient traditions do not simply vanish because they have become politically incorrect.

And yet when it comes to the choice of a life partner for one's child, some Hindu Canadians would still prefer their children to marry within it.

But clearly, even if Canadian Hindus wanted to maintain the caste system, practicalities militate against it. Because of the relatively small population here, it's not possible or easy to find a suitable match within a caste or linguistic sub-group. In fact, it is probably the case that only a tiny minority may marry within their caste in Canada. Hindu parents here are very happy if the son or daughter marries within the Hindu community; what really is difficult to accept is a mixed-marriage.

What is the tradition surrounding the caste system? The classification of humanity into four classes (*varna*) comes directly out of the Vedas. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "The four divisions of human order were created by me according to differences in quality, activities, and aptitudes..."

These divisions (*varna*) are:

**Brahmin:** The priestly class, intellectuals, writers and teachers.

**Kshatriyas:** Those who govern. Warriors, police, politicians

**Vaishyas:** The business class. Shopkeepers, bankers, traders

**Shudras:** The working class. Farmers, laborers, artisans

Anyone born outside of these classes was considered **achoot**, untouchable. They were condemned to live on the outer pale of society, scavenging for a living as best they could (in current political discourse they are termed the **dalit** – literally, “broken people”).

According to some observers, the *varna* classifications were never intended to be passed on by birth, but were attributes derived through *karma* as one journeys from lifetime to lifetime. And theoretically one's caste could change. For example, the son of a Brahmin might sink to the level of a Shudra. But all that is theoretical. In practice, the *varna* you are born into becomes your world until you die.

Out of the *varna*, the caste system arose as a rigid system of social stratification, where one was expected to marry, eat and find work within it. Over time some 3,000 distinctive sub-*varna* called *Jati* classes arose: this is the caste system that still persists.

True Untouchability is being swept out of existence in India, and for the most part exists unmolested in rural areas.

## ***The Impact of Indian Politics in Canada***

Often the cause for a news assignment dealing with the Indo-Canadian community is based on something happening in India. Currently, the conflict over Kashmir between Pakistan and India can give rise to low-level tensions here. The dispute over the Ayodhya temple – a site holy both to Hindus and Muslims – has several times plunged India into crisis. And even national and regional elections can have consequences here.

But in recent times no issue has had such an impact on the Hindu Canadian community as the terrorist attack on Air India Flight 182 in 1985, resulting in the death of 329 passengers and crew, the majority of them Hindu. The terrorist attack followed a period of great instability in India, which then spilled over into Canada. Sikh militants had been fighting an armed campaign to create an independent Punjab during the early 1980's. When the Indian army confronted the rebels at the holy Sikh shrine of Amritsar in June of 1984, violent demonstrations broke out in many Canadian cities. In October, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards.

In 2003, after 18 years of investigation, charges were brought against three Vancouver Sikhs. The trial reopened painful wounds for many in the South Asian community. And yet, there has been no overt demonstration or manifestation of hostility towards Sikhs. After the crash, Hindus held a large rally and peace march to pray for the departed souls and families, but there has been no violence or hostility. Culturally and socially, Hindus and Sikhs are intertwined; they marry each other in India and Canada. Hindus still consider Sikhs as part of the Hindu fold

## ***Equality of Women***

Like many other patriarchal societies, Indian culture presents a familiar array of issues for postmodern feminist discourse. You can go through Vedic literature and find support for and against equality of the sexes. But the actual experience of Indian women through history is fairly clear-cut, and the bias towards male dominance beyond challenge. Ajit Adhopia claims that while Hinduism originally supported sexual equality, women's status “decayed over the centuries,” subject to a culture that increasingly subjected women to the subservience of men. But the situation is changing.

When Indira Gandhi was elected as Indian Prime Minister in 1967 she became the first female leader of a major democratic country in the history of the world. These days there are women fighter and commercial pilots, senior police officers, scientists, MPs, judges, cabinet ministers; and all major political parties have quotas for women candidates in federal Indian elections.

Sexism continues to be attacked through legislative and educational means, but these have most impact in urban centres and especially within the middle-class. In rural areas circumstances can be quite dire. One of the most troubling are the “dowry deaths”, attributable directly to the Indian dowry system in which the bride's family must pay for marriage. Dowries were outlawed in India in 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act, which provided for jail terms and heavy fines for those engaged in the practice. And yet, 40 years later, UNICEF issued a report claiming that an estimated 5,000 Indian women are still being killed each year.

## Modern Religious Movements

### Brahmo Samaj

This Hindu revivalist, reformist organization was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828 in Calcutta. Roy opposed what he saw as a growing polytheistic tendency in Hinduism, and condemned other practices such as *sati*, the ritual suicide of women when their husbands predeceased them. He railed against the caste and dowry systems and campaigned for social reforms and education for women. Although an influential movement, schism weakened its momentum. The Nobel prize winning poet and writer Rabindrath Tagore was a leader of a Brahmo Samaj spin-off movement, the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

### Arya Samaj

Started in April, 1875 in Bombay, the main objective of Arya Samaj was to develop a society of noble, righteous character. Its founder, Rishi Dayanand Saraswati, was appalled by the social conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the corruption of the Brahmin priests. Like the Brahmo Samaj, Saraswati also campaigned to eliminate injustices like child marriage, sati, dowry and mistreatment of widows. Arya Samaj, well known for its community development and social welfare work in North India, has its local chapters in almost major cities of the world with Hindu population, including the USA and Canada.

### Ramakrishna Mission (R.K. Mission)

The Ramakrishna Mission is one of three modern Hindu institutions in the Vedanta tradition. (Vedanta is a philosophical approach to Hinduism that emphasizes a universalistic, non-sectarian monotheism.) Its founder, the highly charismatic Bengali teacher by the name of Swami Vivekananda. As a young man he became active in the Brahmo Samaj movement (see above). He became a disciple of the famed Indian guru, Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa, a saintly teacher renowned for his spiritual powers, and created an international organization named after his master when Ramakrishna died in 1897. The Mission now has 139 centres in India and abroad. Under the able guidance of its swamis(monks) its centers run a multi-faceted program of social welfare and development in underdeveloped areas: emergency relief work- medical services; youth activities and social and economic advancement of women. It sees itself now as a separate, universalistic religion.

## **Vedanta Society**

Vivekananda also created the Vedanta Society after he attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Seeing the thirst for a religious practice that was available to all people and not just Indians, he encouraged the founding of the Vedanta Society in Chicago and London. It has now spread to almost every major city in North America and , providing instructions in meditation; discourses and other spiritual practices; promoting literature on Vedanta philosophy; holding study circles; cultural program for children.

## **Chinmaya Mission**

This spiritual movement is based on the teachings of – are you ready for this – one of India’s most prominent journalists! In 1947, Balkrishan Menon, a cynical but successful reporter for one of Indian’s main newspapers, The National Herald, went out to interrogate a noted spiritual leader, with the notion of pulling off a dramatic exposé. Instead, he had a life-changing experience, and became known as Swami Chinmayananda. His followers established the Chinmaya Mission in 1953, and it has since spread worldwide. [www.chinmayamission.com](http://www.chinmayamission.com)).

## **Hare Krishna Movement.**

Known for its chanting and singing devotees in public places, this movement is a source of pride for many Hindus around the world. True, it has been caught up in many controversies and described as a cult, but its origins are quite respectable and it fits well within the range of Hindu theology and practice.

It traces its roots back to a fifteenth-century teacher, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who was devoted to the veneration of Lord Krishna (hence, the other name for the Hare Krishna movement, “Krishna Consciousness”). It was introduced to the west in the early 1960’s by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977). In founded the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* (ISKCON). Lately it has fallen on difficult times owing to a variety of lawsuits; hence its reputation as something of a problematic organization. However ISKON leadership has acknowledged the difficult issues it faces.

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14225-133 Ave. Edmonton, Alberta T5L4W3  
(403) 451-5130

Hindu Society of Calgary  
2225 24th Avenue, N. E.,  
P.O. Box 2951, Station M, Calgary, Alberta,  
Tel: (403) 291-2551

Maha Ganapathi Temple  
1403-111th St. Edmonton, Alberta T6J 6T5,  
Phone : (403) 988 5161

Radha Madhava Cultural Centre,  
313, 4th Street, N. E. Calgary, Alberta, T2E 3S3  
Tel: (403) 265-3302

### **British Columbia**

Fuji Hindu Temple  
5460 Gladstone St. Vancouver, BC V5P4C7  
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Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Burnaby, B.C.  
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Hare Krishna Temple, Burnaby, B.C.  
5462 S. E. Marine Drive, Burnaby, B.C., V5J 3G8  
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Shiv Mandir, Vancouver, B.C.  
1795 Napier Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2N1  
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Maha Lakshmi Temple Vancouver, B.C.  
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485 Maryland Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 1M4

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485 Cosburn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M4J 2N6

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5 Winterset Crescent, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9R 4A1

Devi Temple, Pickering, Ontario  
2590 Brock Road, Pickering, Ontario, L1V 2P8

Satya Sanatan Dharma Cultural Sabha, Weston, Ontario  
19 Crane Avenue, Weston, Ontario, M9P 1V1

Hindu Solidarity Mission, Maple, Ontario  
262 Barnhill Road, Maple, Ontario, L0J 1E0  
Swaminarayan Bhakti Mandal, Markham, Ontario  
Canadian Council of Hindus, Markham, Ontario  
71 Forbes Crescent, Markham, Ontario, L3R 6S7

### **South Western Ontario**

Radha Krishna Mandir, Cambridge, Ontario  
67 Old Mill Road, Cambridge, Ontario, N3H 4R8  
tel: (519) 650-1575

Hindu Samaj Temple of Hamilton, Hannon, Ontario  
6297 Twenty Road East, Hannon, Ontario, L0R 1P0  
(905) 679-6935

Bramha Rishi Mission, Kitchener, Ontario  
448 Lancaster Street W., Kitchener, Ontario, N2H 4V9  
(519) 579-1486

Niagara Hindu Samaj, St. Catherines, Ontario  
18 Golden Boulevard, St. Catherines, Ontario, L2N 7L9

Hindu Cultural Centre of London, London, Ontario  
138 St. Bees Close, London, Ontario, N6G 4A6  
London Arya Samaj, London, Ontario

43 Beachmount Crescent, London, Ontario, N6E 2J2  
Vedic Study Circle of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario  
315 Cabana Road East, Windsor, Ontario, N9G 1A1

### **Ottawa and Carlton**

Hindu Temple of Ottawa - Carlton, Gloucester, Ontario  
4835 Bank Street (Hwy #31), Gloucester, Ontario, K1G 3N4  
tel: (613) 822-6008

Hare Krishna Temple, Ottawa, Ontario  
212 Somerset Street East, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6V4  
tel: (613) 565- 6544

Arya Samaj of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario  
149 Sai Crescent, Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 5P2

Quebec  
Subramanya/Ayyappa Temple  
8th Avenue. Val Morin, Quebec JOT 2R0 .

Telephone : (819) 322-3226; (819)-322 1379; Fax : (819) 322-5876  
E-mail : [isyvc\\_hq@nordnet.intlaurentides.qc](mailto:isyvc_hq@nordnet.intlaurentides.qc)

Hindu Mission Of Temple, Montreal, Quebec  
955 Belle Chasse Street, Montreal, Quebec, H2S 1Y2

Montreal Tirumurugan Temple / Quebec Saiva Maha Sabai, Montreal Qubec  
1611 St. Regis Boul., Des Ormeaux Quebec, H9B 3H7  
Telephone : (514)683-8044

Hare Krishna Temple, Montreal, Quebec  
1626 Pie IX Boulevard, Montreal, Quebec, H1V 2C5

Montreal Arya Samaj, Montreal, Quebec  
307-5311 Sherbrook West, Montreal, Quebec, H4A 1V3

Durkai Amman Koyil Society (Montreal Durkai Amman)  
271 Jean Talon West, Montreal, QUEBEC. H2R 2X8  
Phone : (514) 272 2956

### **Saskatchewan**

Sri Laksmi Narayana Temple  
107 Law Range Rd.,  
Saskatoon, SK.  
Tel: (306) 781-2381

Hare Krishna Temple, Regina, SK  
1279 Retallack Street, Regina, SK S4T 2H8  
Tel: (306) 781-2381

## **Websites**

Hinduism Today - [www.hinduismtoday.com](http://www.hinduismtoday.com) - High-quality magazine and gateway to academic resources

The Hindu Universe - [www.hindunet.org](http://www.hindunet.org) - Like its name suggests, a massive compendium of all things Hindu

Free India - [www.freeindia.org](http://www.freeindia.org) - A sister site to The Hindu Universe, it has a terrific collection of online resources, including a guide to prominent Hindu sages and biographies of famous Indian leaders, guides to the gods, etc.

Hindu Resources Online - [www.hindu.org](http://www.hindu.org) - a vast guide to organizations, temples (including Canadian) teachers, events, even news.

Sacred Texts Online – [www.sacred-texts.com](http://www.sacred-texts.com) - Online versions of the major Vedic texts. Some of the translations are quite stodgy but useful in a pinch.

Hindustan Times Online – [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com) - English-language online version of the large Indian newspaper

Tamil Canada - [www.tamilcanadian.com](http://www.tamilcanadian.com) - Website devoted to the culture and history of the Tamil people from the island of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), specifically in regard to those Tamil's who are currently living abroad in Canada.

Hindu Temples - [monishrai.tripod.com](http://monishrai.tripod.com) One of the best listings of Canadian temples **I have been able to find**

Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce - [www.iccc.org](http://www.iccc.org) - Doesn't really belong here but it might be a good place to start if you're looking for a story about Hinduism and business.

The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute - [www.ucalgary.ca/~sici](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~sici) - prominent academic organization established by the Canadian government to promote mutual awareness and understanding between India and Canada

The Weekly Voice - [www.weeklyvoice.com](http://www.weeklyvoice.com) - National weekly newspaper for Indo-Canadians.