

Introducing Hinduism
Essay Questions
Chapter 10 – Chapter 18

Chapter 10

1. Explain the metaphysics of Śaiva Siddhānta.
2. Explain the metaphysics of Pañcarātra philosophy.
3. Explain the character of the Great Goddess, and what its constituent elements are.

Chapter 11

1. What are the Purāṇas, and why and how is bhakti such an important part of them?
2. Describe the scheme of Kṛṣṇa's avatāras, and briefly outline the central myth associated with each of them.
3. What brought about the decline of the Vedic deities, and which deities emerged to take their place? Choose one of these “newer” deities from the Purāṇic literature and describe them in detail.

Chapter 12

1. In what ways did Hindu bhakti ideology begin to embrace women and lower-caste participation?
2. In what ways does domestic worship differ from temple worship, and in what ways are they similar?
3. Who is allowed to perform the rites of worship at homes and in temples, and what qualifications, if any, must they have?

Chapter 13

1. In what ways does the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy synchronize more closely with the actual beliefs and worship practices of the majority of Hindus, than does Śaṅkara's radical non-dualism?
2. Who is Śaṅkara, what is his philosophy, and why is he important to the tradition of Vedānta?
3. How does Śaṅkara's philosophy of non-dualism differ from that of Rāmānuja's?

Chapter 14

1. What is a yantra, and why is it important to Tantra? Give an example of a yantra in your answer.
2. How did Tantra originate, and what are some of the key characteristics of this tradition?
3. What is Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, and how does it relate to the Tantric tradition?
4. Explain the metaphysics of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism.

Chapter 15

1. How did Islam arrive in India, and what changes did it bring to the Indian people, and particularly to the religion of India?
2. What impact did Britain have on India, and how did this impact India's religious culture?
3. What are the Brāhmo Samāj and the Ārya Samāj, who are the important figures associated with them, and in what way are they related to Hinduism?

Chapter 16

1. Discuss the religious significance of the structure known as Angkor Wat?
2. How does Balinese Hinduism differ from Hinduism in India?
3. Discuss the processes that shape the character of Cambodian religion today.

Chapter 17

1. Choose two of the important figures discussed in this chapter and explain who the figures are, and how they were important in bringing Hinduism to the West.
2. Choose two of the important organizations discussed in this chapter; describe the organizations, the individuals associated with them, and what impact each had in bringing Hinduism to the West.
3. What events took place that allowed for the spread of Hinduism to the West?

Chapter 18

1. Why is the cow considered sacred in the Hindu tradition, and how is it honored?
2. Hinduism has numerous themes that nurture ecological awareness and reverence for the creation. What are these themes and how are they established within the tradition?
3. What are some of the important moral and ethical issues Hinduism is facing with regards to modernity? Discuss these issues in detail.