

WHAT IS HINDUISM

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If you travel from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin – Kanyakumari – and ask all the Hindus, “Tell me what is Hinduism,” they cannot tell you. They will say, “We are Hindus.” “But tell me what is Hinduism.” That they cannot answer because they are floating on the surface of religious outer performance and ritual, and the in-depth significance of it has not gone into their minds. You will find this problem everywhere. You will find it perhaps in every religion. He is a Muslim; he is a Christian; he is a Hindu; he is a Buddhist. If you ask him, “What essentially is the essence of your religion?” he will scratch his head twenty times, and he will not answer anything. He cannot give a reply. They will never be able to answer that question because they have not given time to think properly.

Ask a man who is a Hindu, “How do you know that you’re a Hindu? Prove it.” Let him prove that he is a Hindu. He will look up and say, “What is the matter?” It is very difficult to prove. What proof have you got that you are a Hindu? You cannot answer this question by any amount of scratching the head. He will say, “I know that I am a Hindu.” “But how do you know? You have not put a label

on your face that you are a Hindu.” If you say, “I believe in the Vedas,” does it mean that whoever believes in the Vedas is a Hindu? There are great German scholars who believe in the value of the Vedas. Do you call them Hindus? So, that definition is not good. “I pray to Narayana.” Then, whoever prays to Narayana becomes a Hindu? There are Muslim saints who worship Lord Krishna, and yet they are not Hindus, so that definition is also not good. You will find it is such a comprehensive interrelated complex that any straightjacket answer will not be sufficient. It is called a straightjacket answer – stereotyped. It is not possible to answer like that. It is a highly involved thing.

In Hinduism you will find the essentials of every other religion also, in some level. There are levels of Hinduism; it is not one compact thing. At one level, you will find the idea of Christianity is correct. In another level, you will find even Islam is correct. In another level, you will say Zoroastrianism is correct. In another level, you will find Judaism is correct. In another level, Taoism is correct. It all depends upon the layers of religion; and all the levels, Hinduism accepts. The only thing is, it will not consider any level as final. This is why it is a very comprehensive religion and, therefore, you cannot even call it by the name Hinduism. It has no name at all. They call it Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma means eternal religion.

Hinduism is only a post-European concept. Europeans have given that name. We do not call ourselves by that name. ‘Hindu’ comes from the word ‘Sindhu’. When Greeks and Persians came to India some years before Christ – Alexander and Jerious, and other Persian kings and Greek invaders came – they crossed the Sindhu, and they wanted

to know who these people staying in this country are. They did not know their name. They said that river is called Sindhu, and all those people who are on the other side are Sindhus. In Persian, 's' is pronounced as 'h', so 'Sindh' becomes 'Hind', so they pronounce it as 'Hindu'; and in Greek it has become 'Ind'. The word 'India' has come from the word 'Sindhu' only. 'Sindh' becomes 'Hind', 'Hind' becomes 'Ind'. So the words 'Hindu' and 'India' have both been created by these historical conditions, historical circumstances.

Really, this is Bharatvarsh. We call it Bharatvarsh. Even now they say 'Bharat'. It is not India. 'India' is a historical exigency. Similarly, the word 'Hinduism' – there is no such thing as that. It is Sanatana Dharma – eternal religion. It is eternal religion because it accepts every level of religious thought. It does not reject any level, but it does not consider any level as final. That is the whole point.