

**Dr. Minal Desai**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Medical Group**  
**Patrick Air Force Base**

## **Religious Perspectives**

### **Introduction to Hinduism**

"I'm Doctor Desai. I am an internist here at the base and I've been here for 19 years and it's been a pleasure to work with the military. I represent Hinduism which is my religion. Hinduism is also known as Sanatan Dharma, which is a Sanskrit word. And yes we are polytheistic people; we are pagans. At the same time we are the oldest religion. And there is evidence that stems of 1500 years BC indicating the origin of this religion.

We have multiple deities. However the three main deities that are considered are Lord Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Each have their own specificity in the sense that Lord Brahma – the creator, Vishnu – the sustainer, and Shiva – the destroyer of all evil. There are also female deities which are of different significance; Goddess Saraswati - represents the god for knowledge, Goddess Lakshmi - who represents for money.

So different people in our religion have a deity that they believe in and that is what they follow. Even in the same family there might be one deity that is followed the father and a different by the mother. But usually the family tends to go with what the father's deity has been symbolic for that family. Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world and basically it is focused, it is concentrated mainly in India. And as you know it is almost creeping to be the largest country in the world population-wise. And because people have migrated to different parts of the country, obviously the religion has spread all over the world.

It has also diversified and there are different aspects of it. Very popular in the United States has been the Hare Krishna, Hare Rama. It is kind of a cult they think. Then we have the Swami Rain, the Vishnus, and so on. We are fortunate that the Swami Rain aspect of the Hindu religion has been very, very organized in spreading the religion as well as building beautiful temples which are the name of our holy place just like the church. So they have built beautiful temples and built the maximum number in one year and broken the record in all religions. The most beautiful one and biggest one is in Delhi. If you happen to be in Atlanta on the east coast there is a beautiful temple that you can visit. There is a big one coming up in New Jersey. But of course there are also other temples in United States. Locally we have the Brevard Hindu Mandir and we are building another one called the Mandav Mandir which is our place of religion.

From Hindu has stemmed other religions, Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism. You will also hear about Buddhism after I finish. Our religious book is called the Bhagavad Gita. There are also different, other books that are called the Vedas and the Mahabharata, these are very sacred books. But the main one is the Bhagavad Gita.

**Dr. Minal Desai**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Medical Group**  
**Patrick Air Force Base**

**Religious Perspectives**

Hinduism is more about the way of life. It divides, it is divided into four phases. The time you are born until you become a young man or woman is the first phase where you are involved, you know, growing up, learning about the world. Then comes the second phase where you're a young man or a woman and you are accomplishing the last part of your knowledge that is your studies or whatever you have chosen to be and to settle down in your life, you know, finding a spouse, having children and a family. That is the second phase in your life.

The third phase in your life is the middle life. And that, you have already established yourself, you have a family and now you are helping your children to establish themselves and also helping them to raise their family. And then the fourth phase is the old phase, old age. In that age basically, now these four aspects were considered so that the aim in each phase was to concentrate at a different thing. They tell you usually by the third phase, at least by your third phase of life you should have, you should concentrate now on getting more involved in the religious aspect trying to meditate and trying to have [budjin and cutin], what we say; get involved religiously. So that in the fourth phase you are trying to detach yourself because in Hinduism this is what they want you to reach, the atman, that is being immortal. And that you can only attain by detaching yourself.

We are human beings and we tend to get attached to minor things, to major things. And it is very hard to detach ourselves. This is my clothes, this is my car, this is my house, these are my books, this is my space. Everything is my, my, my. So, to get yourself detached from this, that's why they tell you in the third phase to start focusing on detaching yourself so by the fourth phase you are ready to give up the worldly pleasures and just focus on one thing. That is to reach god basically and liberate yourself. In Hinduism they believe in the cycle of life and death. And that's why they want you to get out of the cycle of life and death by focusing on reaching god and that is how you will get yourself out of the cycle of life and death.

Like the Christian religion and Muslim religion, in Hinduism there is no particular day of prayers. Prayers are said different times of the day, different days, but yes we do focus on certain days and there are different days in a year usually involved with the birth of one of the deities. And people who believe in that usually fast on that day and do the prayers.

Now one of our main events in Hinduism is the Diwali or the Festival of Lights. It is similar to Christmas for Christians. It is the time of celebration because one of the lords returned from 14 years of exile. It also, it also gives a message the light, or the Deepa, which we call the Diwali or Festival of Lights. The light, when it is lit, it removes the darkness. That means the light here is the knowledge. Knowledge is lighting up and it removes your ignorance. And this is what our main celebration is. I've given you just a little, I've opened up a little window for you to view about Hinduism. I'm here to answer all your questions at the end, whatever you have.

**Dr. Minal Desai**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Medical Group**  
**Patrick Air Force Base**

**Religious Perspectives**

And I'll end with a greeting, greeting sign which is very, very common in Hinduism and that's called Namaste, which is I am bowing to the lord that resides in you. Because in Hinduism we believe that the lord resides in each human being inside them. Thank you for your attention."

**Disclaimer**

The preceding individual religious awareness perspective is provided by a practicing member from a religious group for the purpose of better understanding the religious practices of others. This individual perspective is designed to orient viewers to religious aspects/beliefs for a referenced group. It should not be interpreted as official or final religious doctrine or as the official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, the Department of Defense, or the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.