



Hinduism A Very Short Introduction

Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA

By Kim Knott

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Hinduism is practiced by about 80 percent of India's population, and by about 30 million people outside India. But how is Hinduism defined, and what basis does the religion have? In this Very Short Introduction, Kim Knott provides clear insight into the beliefs and authority of Hindus and Hinduism, and considers the ways in which it has been affected by colonialism and modernity. Knott offers succinct explanations of Hinduism's central preoccupations, including the role of contemporary gurus and teachers in the quest for spiritual fulfillment; and the function of regular performances of the Mahabharata and Ramayana--scriptures which present the divine in personal form (avatara) and provide models of behavior for everyone, from kings and warriors to servants and children, and which focus on the dharma, the appropriate duties and moral responsibilities of the different varna or classes. The author also considers the challenges posed to Hinduism at the end of the twentieth century as it spreads far beyond India, and as concerns are raised about issues such as dowry, death, caste prejudice, and the place of women in Hindu society. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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