

Cambridge University



Hindu Cultural Society

Cambridge University



Jewish Society

Jointly Present a

Hindu-Jewish Culture-Fest and End of Term Party

Programme for the evening

- 8.00 – Introduction*
- 8.10 – Presentations and Discussion
Music and Scripture*
- 8.45 – Live cultural performances*
- 9.00 – Chill, Chat & Eat*

In association with



www.cuhcs.org.uk www.cujs.org

An Introduction to Judaism

Judaism is the oldest of the world's four great monotheistic religions. It's also the smallest, with only about 12 million followers around the world.

The essence of being Jewish is that one is part of a Jewish community, and lives one's life according to Jewish law and traditions. So Judaism is a way of life inextricably entwined with a system of beliefs.

The fundamental beliefs of Judaism are:

- There is a single, all-powerful God, who created the universe and everything in it.
- God has a special relationship with the Jewish people, cemented by the covenant that God made with Moses on Mount Sinai, 3500 years ago.

The Jewish place of worship is called a Synagogue.

The religious leader of a Jewish community is called a Rabbi. Unlike leaders in many other faiths, a rabbi is not a priest and has no special religious status.

The Jewish holy day, or Sabbath, starts at sunset on Friday and continues until sunset on Saturday. During the Sabbath, observant Jews will do nothing that might be counted as work. Among the things that they can't do are driving and cooking.

Holy Books

- The Torah or Hebrew Bible (which Christians call the Old Testament), and particularly the first 5 books.
- At least one copy of the Torah, in Hebrew, is kept in every synagogue in the form of a hand-written parchment scroll.
- The Talmud, a compendium of law and commentary on the Torah applying it to life in later and changed circumstances.

The symbol of Judaism is the Magen (shield) of David, which is often called the Star of David.

Festivals

In Judaism Hanukkah, the festival of lights, is celebrated by the lighting of candles and the preparation of traditional potato cakes. Although it is often seen today as a symbol of the survival of the Jewish people, in Christian countries where Christmas is the major festival, Hanukkah has become the Jewish equivalent with presents given to children.

An Introduction to Hinduism

Hinduism is not a term which identifies a single set of beliefs or ways of worship.

The Nature of God

Hindus believe in the universal soul (*Brahman*), as the sole reality who is present in all things. It is often believed that Hindus worship many gods, but in fact, many Hindus would claim to believe in the one eternal god (*Brahman*) which is indefinable, and the individual deities are different aspects / manifestations of the Brahman.

As we ourselves have bodies it is much easier for us to relate to God in an embodied form, and as each individual is different, the particular relationship they wish to build with God is different and hence He is worshipped through these many different forms

Karma

The Law of *Karma* is the concept that ‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’ Therefore action and reaction (on a physical, mental and spiritual level) are equal and opposite. *Karma* is what a person does, what a person thinks, and even what a person does not do.

Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives on the long journey towards *moksha* (salvation), and just as we have to change clothes when they get worn out and dirty, so we have to change our bodies. Hence the results of one’s actions in one life can also be carried over to the next, which can affect one’s fortunes depending on the individual’s past actions.

The Three Paths

Union with God (*Yoga*) can be achieved through three different means, and normally by a combination of these three:

- The path of knowledge (*jnana*).
- The path of selfless action (*karma*).
- The path of devotion (*bhakti*).

Scriptures

Since Hinduism is not confined to a single set of ideas, a vast array of scriptures exist. Perhaps the most well known of these is the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which many essential points of Hindu philosophy have been condensed by Lord Krishna. An incarnation of the preserver aspect of God.

Inter-Faith

We live in a world of difference. Yet, we are interdependent. Nowhere is learning to live with difference more important than religion. Too often, religion is misused as an instrument for division and injustice, betraying the very ideals and teachings that lie at the heart of each of the world's great traditions. At the same time, religious and spiritual traditions shape the lives of billions in wise and wonderful ways. They gather people in communities of shared beliefs and practices. When these diverse communities work in harmony for the common good, there is hope that the world can be transformed.

This is the Act of Commitment from the Inter-Faith Network UK

*We commit ourselves,
as people of many faiths,
to work together
for the common good,
uniting to build a better society,
grounded in values and ideals we share:*

- *community,*
- *personal integrity,*
- *a sense of right and wrong,*
- *learning,*
- *wisdom and love of truth,*
- *care and compassion,*
- *justice and peace,*
- *respect for one another,*
- *for the earth and its creatures.*

*We commit ourselves,
in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,
to work together
alongside all who share our values and ideals,
to help bring about a better world
now and for generations to come.*

If you would like to find out more about Judaism, Hinduism, or about inter-faith, visit the websites of CUJS and CUHCS (below), or the Inter-Faith Network for the UK at www.interfaith.co.uk.