
Diwali As One Of The Hinduism Religious Traditions In Australia

If Hinduism's religious traditions illustrate the significance of rituals expressed in the lives of the adherents, then it does so at the exclusion of the balance of society, who despite Australia's pluralism, fail to understand both the faith and tradition.

The practice of rituals has connected the human race throughout centuries. The ancient ancestors used rituals to survive in a world abounding with dangers with the oldest known practice of human ritual dating back to approximately 70,000 years to a cave in Botswana. In this cave, archaeologists' uncovered evidence of humans sacrificing spear heads to a stone python based on the San people's belief that humankind derived from a python (Bone, A, 2016). Due to sociohistorical changes, these ancient rituals were revolutionised into new practices with modern religious leaders realising that rituals shape and unite communities, especially plural societies. A plural society is a group of citizens consisting of different cultural practices or ethnicities. Often in plural societies, despite the help of religious rituals, many citizens struggle to adapt to and live amongst a variety of different religions and their individual practices. Hinduism is one of the many religions which exists in Australia's pluralistic society, and represents 2% of the Australian population (McCrindle, M. 2017). Despite this, the Hindu rituals, such as Diwali, are rarely carried out in public which is significantly influencing the society and culture of Australia. Religious rituals are also closely connected to the religious calendar in which certain rituals occur every year on the same date, usually to celebrate a particular time of the year or a historical event; these are known as calendrical rituals. Calendrical rituals give social meaning to the course of time, forming a continuous cycle of years. It is through calendrical rituals that days and years are differentiated. If these rituals did not exist, time would be homogenous. Hinduism uses calendrical rituals to celebrate and remember the historical events that formed their beliefs and religion. Diwali, the festival of lights, is one of Hinduism's most significant calendrical rituals.

As a result of migration, Australia has become the most plural society in the world over the past 25 years (Bouma, G. 1995, pg. 285). Australia provides citizens with religious freedom, however, the religious groups remain as divided communities. As a result of this, the smaller religions are not as prominent in the Australian society and culture. Hinduism is Australia's second smallest religion consisting of only 2% of the population according to the 2017 census (McCrindle, M. 2017); however, this number is slowly rising every day. Melbourne-based scientist, Sharabhang Giri, is among the many people converting to Hinduism. Giri stated on his conversion to the faith, 'I found answers to all kinds of things that I'd been thinking about for a long time' (Heanue, S. 2019). This statement demonstrates that the Hindu beliefs and religious traditions are inspiring more people to convert to the faith. Despite this, the Hindu religious traditions and rituals are still misunderstood by many Australians. University student Sanjana Madhyasta stated to SBS News that, 'Being in Australia there is a bit more of a twist and a different understanding to the things we do. For example, when we come to the temple, it's not just about coming to pray to God but it's more about the idea of meditating and being in that peaceful state of mind' (O'Brien, A. 2018).

This account made by a second generation Hindu displays that from the perspective of the

Hindu, Australians do not fully understand the faith and its traditions. The faith is less about preaching to a divine being, and more about finding inner peace and connection to the world. Similarly, to other religions, Hindu's use religious traditions to illustrate the significance of their rituals. Due to the pluristic characteristics of Hinduism, the rituals are carried out based on the age, time, gender and geographic and social location of the individual. This forms various perspectives which results in the significance of rituals existing as different for each adherent; however, all Hindu's, regardless of their individual characteristics, see the rituals as a way of life rather than just a religious practice. Amongst the rituals that are practiced in many Hindu households every day (such as reciting scriptures like the Bhagavad-Gita, meditation or visiting temples), some rituals are practice once a year to celebrate an important historical event or religious worship, these are called calendrical rituals.

Calendrical rituals celebrate and act as a remembrance of the foundational beliefs of each religion's traditions. These yearly rituals create a connection between the present and past. Hinduism has many calendrical rituals, one of the most significant ones is Diwali.

Due to traditions conserved in sacred texts from the Vedas, Hinduism is able to correctly recall historic events and beliefs and celebrate them annually. The Hindu calendrical rituals are carried out due to a certain astronomical alignment occurring every year which links to a historical religious event which is believed to have occurred at this time (Singh, K. 2015). Diwali is an example of a Hindu calendrical ritual. The festival, which overlaps with the Hindu New Year, celebrates new beginnings and was formed from the tradition which symbolises the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. Many understand how the religious traditions demonstrate the significance of rituals (such as Diwali) for the Hindu, however, the Australian society continues to misunderstand both the faith and tradition. The relationship between religion and society can have direct impacts on the individuals within the tradition as well as other Australians. The Hindu's may encourage different viewpoints from society, however, with Australia being predominantly Christian (59%) (McCrinkle, 2017), the Hindu beliefs and rituals are often dismissed. If rituals, such as Diwali, are celebrated in public, for all Australian's to see, it will improve the religious plurism and understanding of the Hindu faith and traditions.

Diwali is a festival of lights that takes place over five days during the end of October (according to the Gregorian calendar). The climax occurs on the third day, which is known as Lakshmi Puja. This is significant to Hindu's as they worship the Goddess Lakshmi who is believed to enter households and bless adherents with prosperity and good fortune. During this night, homes, properties and temples are illuminated with lights, candles (earthen diyas) and lanterns symbolising the 'victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance'. The story behind Diwali are surfaced from the Hindu scriptures, known as the Vedas; however, the perspective and story behind the scripture differs between regions. Some believe that Sita, Lakshmana and Rama returned to Ayodhya after overpowering Ravana, and celebrated Diwali. Whereas others state that the festival marks the day when Krishna and his wife Satyabhama killed the demon Narakasura, which is celebrated the day before Diwali. Although the story differs between regions, the principle is the same: to celebrate personal, internal light and recognise the fundamental truth of all things (Soni, A. 2018). The pluristic culture of Australia allows many different religious adherents, such as the Hindus, to call Australia their home. A diverse range of calendrical rituals are accepted in the Australian society; however, even some of the most significant calendrical rituals, such as Diwali, are almost unheard of in Australia.