

Hinduism has the Ultimate Reality Brahman, and the trifold godhead Brahma (creator), Vishnu (sustainer) and Shiva (Generator and destroyer); and thirty three Gods, and millions of Gods. Some Hindus believe in Ultimate Reality, some follow Vishnu or his manifestation Krishna, and some follow Shiva and this mysticism as part of the trifold God. For others there are many choices of a God or Gods in homes and temples. Others follow a combination.

Vivekananda attended the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 at Chicago, USA, and gave the response to the Welcome (11th September).

I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions...

...I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe in not only universal toleration but we accept all other religions as true.

I will quote you a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings:

*As different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which we take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to thee.*

Beckerlegge, G. (1998), *The World Religions: Reader*, Routledge, 296.

Gandhi said: Religions are different roads converging on the same point. What does it matter if we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many different religions as there are individuals.

- 1 Why do you think Hinduism by its nature encourages tolerance and acceptance of other religions?
- 2 What did Vivekananda regard as the teaching qualities of Hinduism? What is the main point of the hymn he remembered?
- 3 How many religions did Gandhi say there are?
- 4 Is it wrong for someone to promote religion to other people, from the point of view of the believer and unbeliever (consider any religion).