More than 5,000 years ago, the faith known as **Hinduism** began in India. It evolved out of the many different practices of the Ancient Indian people. So, Hinduism is not a single religion, but a family of religious traditions. Although they show their faith in different ways, most Hindus believe in God, who is worshipped in many forms. They also believe in rebirth in a new body.

**God’s Different Names and Forms**

Most Hindus believe that God is everywhere. Everything in nature is part of God, as are the hundreds of gods and goddesses (who look like people or animals) that Hindus may choose to worship. One way in which God is revealed is as a trio of gods: **Brahma**, who creates life; **Shiva**, who makes room for new life; and **Vishnu**, who keeps things alive. Today, Brahma is not worshipped in the same way as other gods because his work – the world’s creation – is done.

**Holy Book**

The oldest Hindu sacred writing are a set of four books called the **Vedas**. Veda means “vision” or “wisdom” and Hindus believe that prayers and hymns contained in the Vedas are revelations from gods.

**Holy Rivers and Pilgrimage**

Rivers are sacred places to many Hindus. The act of bathing in a river cleans the body as well as the spirit, helping to wash away sins. In India, the most famous holy river is the **Ganges River**. Thousands of Hindus come to this river on a pilgrimage, a special journey to a sacred place.

**How Hindus Worship**

Hindu worship is called ***puja***. Hindus believe that God is in everything, so they honor and worship God in every aspect of life. They also worship at shrines or temple is an image of a god or goddess. Hindus believe that the gods live within the shines and viewing their image is the same as being with them. Hindus pray, sing, and make offerings to their favorite god.