

[Who Then Are the Hindus?](#)

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IDENTITY

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How organizations categorize themselves

To find out which organizations with prominence in the West call themselves Hindus, we tapped the massive power of the Internet's World Wide Web. Many major Hindu, not exactly Hindu and non-Hindu organizations have a web site, and a search of each usually locates a statement of identity, aims and purposes. The results of our search are summarized in the table below, including an excerpted statement on their position.

The method isn't perfect, and perhaps some organizations don't quite mean what they say (or don't say) on their web site. The clearest distinction is between those who declare up front they are Hindus, and those who never use the word "Hindu" anywhere--despite their teaching of Hindu scriptures, worship of Hindu deities, etc.

The organizations which are firmly in the Hindu camp are those that share responsibility for all Hindus. Those who have set themselves apart are not necessarily concerned with the promotion, protection and renaissance of our religion. Hindus need to educate themselves about organizations, and

especially distinguish in their minds those, such as ISKCON, the Brahma Kumaris and TM, who have completely forsaken the Hindu fold to pursue an independent path.

ORGANIZATION: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Arya Samaj "move Hindu dharma away from all factitious beliefs, back to Vedas"

Chinmaya Mission "Chinmayananda's ... primary aim was 'to convert Hindus to Hinduism'"

Gitananda Ashram (Italy) "If you are really interested in the Hindu culture and spirituality, click here"

Hindu Students Council "Learn about Hindu heritage and culture"

Hindu Temple Society of North America "Everything in Hinduism begins with worship of Ganapati"

International Swaminarayan Satsang (ISSO) "Our sampradaya in Hinduism is called Swaminarayan"

Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam "propagation of Sankara's advaita based on Vedic tenets"

Nityananda Institute "Trika Yoga, an Indian Tantric tradition of Kashmir Saivism"

Ramakrishna Mission (New York) "based on Vedanta, both the religion and philosophy of the Hindus"

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) "[Our] supreme task ... is to consolidate the Hindu society"

Saiva Siddhanta Church "a traditional Hindu fellowship"
[Subramuniaswami, publisher Hinduism Today]

Swaminarayan Hindu Mission (BSS) "a socio-spiritual organization with its roots in the Vedas"

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) "foster Hindu unity, consolidate Hindu society, work for Hindu interests"

Yoga-Vedanta

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam "Institute for the traditional study of Vedanta..."

Divine Life Society "Disseminate spiritual knowledge [by] yoga, and revival of true culture"

Ramanashrama (Ramana Maharshi) "ashram confers on devotees of all religions mental peace, bliss and happiness"

Siddha Yoga Dham (Chidvalasananda) "Wisdom of India's ancient sages ... welcomes people of all faiths and cultures"

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centers "Yoga can be practiced by individuals with any set of beliefs"

Social Service and/or Universalism

Ananda Marga "an international social service organization"

Gayatri Pariwar "charitable and educational organization ... integrating sciences with spirituality"

M.A. Ashram (Mata Amritanandamayi) "infused devotion to God, love for fellow beings and spirit of selfless service"

Sadhu Vaswani Mission "non-sectarian, non-political, non-communal body"

Integral Yoga Institute (Satchidananda) "a spiritual center based on principles of yoga and ecumenism"

Satya Sai Baba "not come to speak on behalf of any particular religion, e.g. Hindu religion"

Self-Realization Fellowship "reveal the basic oneness of original Christianity and original yoga"

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar "engaged in community services and spreading Vedic knowledge"

New Religions or Non-Religious

Brahma Kumaris [Designated their organization as a new religion at Global Forum meetings]

ISKCON "is neither Hindu religion nor any other religion."

Transcendental Meditation "purely a practical technique ... a science ... does not depend on any faith"

Veerashaivite "Veerashaivas call Veerashaivism a separate religion"

Note: Information here is based upon statements on each organization's World Wide Web sites. See www.hindu.org/teachers-orgs/identity/ for a complete listing of URLs to the complete original documents. Organizations

wishing to clarify the information given on their web sites, or those not listed at all, may send their position statement to the editor of Hinduism Today.