

HINDUISM



INTRODUCTION:

Hinduism is among the most ancient of the eastern religions, and one that has had a profound influence on western civilization. Over the years, it has given birth to other cults and religious movements. Buddhism started as an offshoot of Hinduism. Today, the New Age Movement, Transcendental Meditation, Wicca, and many forms of pagan worship are offspring of Hinduism.

We present this information in an effort to explain the general beliefs of Hinduism, and contrast them with biblical Christianity. We do our best to explain some rather nebulous concepts, and may make some mild generalizations. If you are Hindu, please understand that we bear no hatred or malice to the good people that practice this religion. We only wish to show how the Hindu religion differs from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our goal to present the truth with love.

OVERVIEW:

Hinduism is rooted in the merging of two basic religious systems: that of the ancient civilization residing in the Indus River Valley from the third millennium B.C., and the religious beliefs brought

to India by the Aryan (European) people who began moving into the Indus Valley sometime after 2000 B.C. Today, Hinduism claims over 750 million followers worldwide – that's 1/6th of the world's population! That number does not include the followers of New Age and other religious movements that share a common bond with the Hindu religion from which they developed.

BELIEFS:

It is difficult to assign a dogmatic orthodoxy to Hinduism. Many variations have developed from Hinduism over the years, and many non-Hindu cults and religious movements gained their inspiration from Hinduism. Even in India today, the most orthodox divisions of Hinduism have changed significantly over the last three thousand years. There are however, several principles that share a commonality among the various sects.

- The three-in-one god known as “Brahman,” which is composed of: Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (the Destroyer).
- **Karma.** The law that good begets good, and bad begets bad. Every action, thought, or decision one makes has consequences – good or bad – that will return to each person in the present life, or in one yet to come.
- **Reincarnation.** Also known as “transmigration of souls,” or “samsara.” This is a journey on the “circle of life,” where each person

experiences as series of physical births, deaths, and rebirths. With good karma, a person can be reborn into a higher caste, or even to godhood. Bad karma can relegate one to a lower caste, or even to life as an animal in their next life.

- **Nirvana.** This is the goal of the Hindu. Nirvana is the release of the soul from the seemingly endless cycle of rebirths.

Hinduism is both polytheistic, and pantheistic. There are three gods that compose Brahman – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Hindus also worship the “wives” of Shiva, such as Kali, or one of Vishnu's ten incarnations (avatars). This is only the beginning. There are literally millions of Hindu gods and goddesses – by some counts, as many as 330 million!

At the same time, Hinduism teaches that all living things are Brahman in their core. In other words, all living things are Brahman, or god. Enlightenment is attained by becoming tuned in to the Brahman within. Only then can one reach Nirvana. The release from the wheel of life that allows access to Nirvana is known as “moksha.”

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE:

The differences between Hinduism and Christianity are vast. Having read numerous stories of people who have left Hinduism for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I've identified that a common theme runs through their stories. These people left a life of hopelessness, where they were dependent on

their own works to escape from samsara, to a life of hope and assurance of their salvation. They left their millions-in-one impersonal gods, and found the one true God of the universe, who cares intimately for each one of them. For this reason, it is important to identify the most basic differences between Hinduism and Christianity.

GOD:

Hinduism: *A vast plurality of gods and goddesses exist as part of the impersonal Brahman.*

Christianity: *There is one God, who cares deeply for each one of us (Deuteronomy 6:4, Psalm 50:15).*

MAN:

Hinduism: *Humans, as with all living things, are just manifestations of Brahman. We have no individual self, or self-worth.*

Christianity: *God created mankind, and gave us free will. He cares deeply for us, and places a great deal of worth on His creation (Genesis 1:27, John 3:16).*

SIN:

Hinduism: *Sin is committed against oneself, not against God.*

Christianity: *God gave us rules because He cares about us. He also gave us free will – we can choose to disobey. Disobedience (sin) is an offense against God (Psalm 51:4, Romans 3:23).*

PENALTY OF SIN:

Hinduism: *Since “sin” is committed only against oneself, the penalties are accrued only against the self. The penalty is the repeated cycle of rebirths, until one can escape to Nirvana.*

Christianity: *Sin cannot exist in the presence of God. Therefore, the penalty of sin is spiritual death, or separation from God (Romans 6:23a).*

SALVATION:

Hinduism: *Salvation is the release from the wheel of life, the cycle of rebirths, through which we must work to better ourselves, and realize our oneness with Brahman. It must be worked out by each individual through successive lives.*

Christianity: *Salvation is a free gift to us from God. We must only accept it. We cannot earn it. Jesus bought our salvation by taking all our sin upon Himself on the cross, dying as a sacrifice for us, and then rising from the dead three days later. Salvation means spending eternity in heaven with our Almighty God! (Romans 6:23b, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8,9).*

If you are a Hindu man or woman reading this, please know that a greater hope exists. Indeed, it is more than a hope – it is an assurance. You are not relegated to rebirth after rebirth in an attempt to “get it right.” There is a personal God, who cares deeply for you. He knows how many hairs you have on your head, yet he controls every facet of the universe. He loves you, and desires to redeem you unto Himself. All you have to do is accept! Indescribable joy awaits you!

CHRISTIAN ANSWERS TO HINDUISM



A factual presentation of the basic doctrines and beliefs of Hinduism, and how they compare with Biblical Christianity.

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