

Christianity vs. Everybody

Christianity vs. Hinduism

January 30, 2019

Origin/Development of Hinduism

1. Hinduism can be traced back to around **1500 BC** in what is now India. It is a polytheistic, **ritualistic** religion. These rituals were initially performed by heads of households; but as time passed a **priestly class** developed to perform the rituals regularly and correctly. During this time, the **Vedas** were written; and it means **knowledge** stemming from the Greek root *oida* (to know). It's an instructional book for the priests on how to perform the rituals. The priests subsequently gained a great amount of control over the people's lives. So around **600 BC** the people revolted; and a new form of Hinduism emerged from that revolt that focused more on **internal meditation** than external rituals.
2. Sometime between 800BC to 300BC, the **Upanishads** were written. The Upanishads, also called the **Vedanta**, are the Hindu equivalent of the **New Testament**. This Hindu holy book expounds the idea that behind the **many gods** stands one Reality, which is called **Brahman**; a force that is **impersonal** and **monistic**.
3. As time progressed, the Hindu concept of God shifted in the direction of God being **personal**, which led to the belief in multiple manifestations of Brahman. (See chart below). Beyond its principal deities, it is estimated that there are **330 million** other gods in Hinduism.
4. Besides the religion's various concepts of God, Hinduism can also be divided along the lines of whether the physical universe is **real** or **illusory**. Consequently Hinduism has spawned three other movements that have since become religions of worldwide impact: Jainism, Sikhism, & **Buddhism**.
5. It is estimated that **13% of the world's population** adhere to Hinduism; with more than **one million** being in North America alone.

Beliefs/Practices of Hinduism

1. The universe is continuous with and extended from the Being of Brahman. Therefore Hindus believe that they are in their true selves extended from Brahman. This is called **Atman**, or the Brahman/Atman Unity. Therefore humanity's primary problem, according to Hinduism, is that we are **ignorant of our divine nature**.
2. Due to our ego's attachments to its desires, we have become subject to the **law of karma**. Karma is the moral equivalent of cause-and-effect. As a

result, the effects of our actions follow us from **lifetime to lifetime**. We are reaping in this lifetime the consequences of deeds we committed in previous lifetimes. So a person's karma determines the kind of **body** he or she will be reincarnated in the next lifetime, ie **human, animal, or insect**.

3. The solution is to be liberated from the wheel of life, death, & rebirth. This liberation is attained by realizing that the concept of the individual self is an illusion and that **only the undifferentiated oneness of Brahman is real**. They call this liberation **Moksha**.
4. Hinduism offers three paths to attain enlightenment:

- A) **Karma Marga** (the way of action & ritual)
- B) **Jnana Marga** (the way of knowledge & meditation)
- C) **Bhakti Marga** (the way of devotion)

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HINDUISM

1. **Polytheism vs Monotheism** (*see notes on Buddhism*)

1. **Illusion vs Image** (*see notes on Buddhism*)

1. The Hindus see their gods and avatars (incarnations) as manifestations of Brahman; and they also view Jesus as one of those avatars. May we observe a couple of differences between these incarnations:

A) Hinduism declares at least 10 incarnations of Brahman; where as Christianity declares 1 incarnation of God.

B) The avatars pointed to a way by which to attain enlightenment over a period of many lifetimes.

“But striving zealously, with sins cleansed, the disciplined man, perfected through many rebirths, then goes to the highest goal.” (Bhagavad-Gita 6:45). On the other hand, where as Jesus pointed to *the way* by which to receive eternal life immediately (John 6:40/14:6).

C) The purpose of Vishnu's incarnation was “for the destruction of evildoers” (Bhagavad-Gita 4:8). Jesus came, however, to establish His kingdom and change the hearts of even wicked men that they might be saved. (Luke 19:10/John 3:17-21).

1. Karma vs Sin

In Hinduism, karma makes morality a law of nature. Thus its consequences are inevitable and inescapable.

In contrast, Christianity does not altogether deny karma; but Christianity affords an escape from it. Sin alienated us from God; yet He forgives sin which restores us to God and cancels the cycle of karma as He chooses. Simply put: Hinduism does not allow for the possibility of forgiveness, but Christianity does; for Christianity does not exist without it.

Quote from Bakht Singh, a convert from Hinduism and an Indian evangelist:

"I haven't ever yet failed to get a hearing if I talk to them about forgiveness of sins and peace and in your heart."