

CULTS AND FALSE RELIGIONS

Hinduism

REVIEW:

- What are the 3 assumptions that form the JW world view? (Divine guidance comes only through the WT Society; JW's alone have the truth about God; every other church is false and controlled by Satan.)
- What is the goal of Mormons? (To attain godhood on the basis of good works)
- What did we learn about Allah, the god of the Koran? (he is really Allah, the pagan moon god)
- What is the key belief of Buddhism? (Reincarnation, or the circle of life)
- What is the major problem of the Roman Catholic religion? (Human tradition is elevated above the Bible)

READING:

Isaiah 45:4-6 “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.”

INTRODUCTION:

Hinduism as it exists today is not the same as the Hinduism of five thousand years ago, because Hinduism has evolved over thousands of years of Indian religious history. It is a religion that seeks to represent the ideas and influences of hundreds of separate cultural, social and tribal groups.

Hinduism has grown to become the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. It claims about 800 million followers - 13% of the world's population. It is the dominant religion in India, Nepal, and among the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Hinduism is becoming very influential today as we see the growth of its daughter, the New Age movement. This Satanic hybrid of ancient mysticism, eastern religion, and modern philosophy is ensnaring many in its powerful grasp. **E.g.** Bro. Morris and his friend Thomas Liddle.

What is Hinduism really all about?

I. FOUNDER: None.

II. HISTORY / ORGANISATION:

- 1) Hinduism is regarded by many as the world’s oldest organized religion.
- 2) Hinduism differs from Christianity and other Western religions in that it does not have a single founder, a specific theological system, a single system of morality, or a central religious organization. It consists of thousands of different religious groups that have evolved in India over the last few millennia.
- 3) The development of Hinduism was influenced by many invasions over thousands of years.
- 4) Categorizing the religion of Hinduism is somewhat confusing:
 - i) Hinduism has commonly been viewed in the west as a **polytheistic** religion - one which worships multiple gods and goddesses.
 - ii) Some have viewed it as a **monotheistic** religion, because it recognizes only one supreme God: the pantheistic principle of Brahman, that all reality is a unity. The entire universe is seen as one divine entity who is simultaneously at one with the universe and who transcends it as well.

iii) Some view Hinduism as **Trinitarian** because Brahman is simultaneously visualized as a triad:

- (a) **Brahma** the Creator who is continuing to create new realities.
- (b) **Vishnu**, (Krishna) the Preserver, who preserves these new creations.
- (c) **Shiva**, the Destroyer, is at times compassionate, erotic and destructive.

iv) Some view Hinduism as a **henotheistic** religion - a religion which recognizes a single deity, but which recognizes other gods and goddesses as facets or manifestations of that supreme God.

v) Most urban Hindus follow one of two major divisions within Hinduism:

- (a) **Vaishnavism**: which generally regards Vishnu as the ultimate deity
- (b) **Shivaism**: which generally regards Shiva as the ultimate deity.

III. PURPOSE:

1) Hindus organize their lives around certain activities or "purusharthas." These are called the "four aims of Hinduism," or "the doctrine of the fourfold end of life." They are:

- i) **Dharma**: righteousness in their religious life. This is the most important of the three.
- ii) **Artha**: success in their economic life; material prosperity.
- iii) **Kama**: gratification of the senses; pleasure; sensual, sexual, and mental enjoyment.

IV. SOURCE OF AUTHORITY:

- 1) Key literature (see below) including the Vedas.
- 2) Oral traditions passed down through the generations.

V. CLAIM: To be the ancient religious and philosophical system that encompasses and absorbs all others.

VI. KEY LITERATURE:

- 1) Among the most important of all Hindu sacred texts are the **Vedas**.
 - i) They contain hymns, incantations, and rituals from ancient India.
 - ii) The Hindu belief is the Vedas are transcendental, because they represent the Absolute Truth and therefore, have neither beginning nor end.
 - iii) The Vedas formed the Education system in ancient India.
- 2) Another group of primary texts are the **Upanishadas**. They are "a continuation of the Vedic philosophy, and were written between 800 and 400 B.C. They elaborate on how the soul (Atman) can be united with the ultimate truth (Brahman) through contemplation and meditation, as well as the doctrine of Karma - the cumulative effects of a persons' actions."
- 3) The **Mahabharata**, were written 540 to 300 BCE, and have been attributed to the sage Vyasa. It is a poem describing a conversation between a warrior Arjuna and the God Krishna. It is an ancient text that has become central to Hinduism and other belief systems.
- 4) Another important text is the **Ramayana**. It is "a moving love story with moral and spiritual themes."
- 5) Other texts include the **Brahmanas**, the **Sutras**, and the **Aranyakas**.
- 6) The Bible of the Hindus is, in a sense, the "**Bhagavad Gita**" or "Divine Song".
 - i) The Bhagavad Gita is a collection of God's answers to man's questions about life, as envisioned by the Sage Vyasa.
 - ii) In the Gita, God is represented by "Krishna", a pivotal character in the Mahabharata, who is believed by Hindus to be an incarnation of God. Mankind is represented by "Arjuna", an Indian Prince, who along with his four brothers was unjustly banished from his own Kingdom and went to war to win back what was rightfully theirs.

VII. ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY:

- 1) Tolerant, yet rejecting the absolutism of fundamental Christianity.

- 2) Hinduism has a reputation of being highly tolerant of other religions. Hindus have a saying: “The truth is One, but different Sages call it by Different Names.”

VIII. DOCTRINAL SUMMARY:

1) **GOD:**

i) The Vedas say, “What is Whole - This is Whole - What has come out of the Whole is also Whole; When the Whole is taken out of the Whole, the Whole still remains Whole.” This is their “succinct” description of God!

ii) “God is Infinite. The Infinite can be represented in Infinite ways and does manifest in infinite ways. This, in short, is the essence of the Hindu belief in God. That He is everywhere, around us and within us. In fact, Hinduism takes the bold step of proclaiming that ‘**we are God**’.” Hindu web site.

2) **JESUS:** One of many sages, or manifestations of the Supreme One.

3) **MAN:** “Clearly, all forms of life on earth do not undergo the same experiences and are not at the same level of existence. Man is the most superior form of life, but there are also billions of life forms which are far less superior than him.” Hindu web site.

4) **SALVATION:** By works (of course!). There are 3 major paths to “salvation”:

i) **Karma marga** – the way of disinterested action.

ii) **Bhakti marga** – the way of devotion.

iii) **Jnana Marga** – the path of knowledge, mystical insight or self-realisation.

“A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.” (**Proverbs 18:2**)

5) **WORSHIP:**

i) Meditation is often practiced, with Yoga being the most common. Other activities include daily devotions, public rituals, and *puja*, a ceremonial dinner for a God.

ii) “A popular misconception is Hinduism is polytheistic - believes in multiple Gods. At the end of the day, Hinduism is monotheistic (Believes in One God). However, Hinduism believes not only in One God, but also in His Infinite manifestations around us and within us perpetually. Realizing that it is impossible for mankind to visualize the Infinite, Hinduism presents us with His forms to help us visualize him. This belief of Hinduism is often confused with polytheism. That the Supreme can be worshipped in any form is a concept unique to Hinduism. Such worship is truly a tribute to His greatness.” Hindu web site.

iii) “Another popular misconception is that Hinduism promotes idol worship. Hinduism does not promote idol worship. To the contrary, Hinduism urges us to transcend all physical aids to worship, in our spiritual progress. Realizing that it is impossible for the mortal human to visualize the Infinite and instead of sustaining false hopes of such achievements, the religion urges us to slowly and steadily continue our progress in pursuit of the Truth. For such steady progress, the religion asks us to start with physical aids such as temples and idols, and through practice and devotion, ultimately succeed in visualizing God without the aid of temples and idols.” Hindu web site.

6) **LIFE AFTER DEATH:**

i) Hindus believe in the repetitious **Transmigration of the Soul**. This is the transfer of one's soul after death into another body. This produces a continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth through their many lifetimes (reincarnation). It is called **samsara**.

ii) **Karma** is the accumulated sum of ones good and bad deeds. Karma determines how you will live your next life. Through pure acts, thoughts and devotion, one can be reborn at a higher level. Eventually, one can escape samsara and achieve enlightenment. Bad deeds can cause a person to be reborn as a lower level, or even as an animal. The unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, suffering are thus seen as natural consequences for one's previous acts, both in this life and in previous lives.

IX. DISTINCTIVES:

1) **Vegetarianism:** “From a philosophical perspective, a “Yogi” or one who has known and seen the Infinite cannot and will not kill to eat meat. Why? Because he sees God in every form of life. How can he hurt anything or anyone when he loves everything and everyone?” Hindu web site.

- 2) **The caste system:** “The caste system, originally described in the Vedas, but much abused and maligned over the years, is nothing but a representation of an efficient human society. The four castes described in the scriptures are - the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. According to the Vedas, an efficient human society is based on the strength of its educational / knowledge-pursuit system (Brahmin), its military and defense system (Kshatriya), its economical and business system (Vaishya), and a strong, happy, productive workforce (Shudras). This noble representation was misinterpreted, exploited, and abused by a few in the Indian society, leading to the indiscriminate creation of thousands of castes and sub-castes, including the so-called "upper" castes. Fortunately, the caste system has been more or less abolished since Indian independence and the distinctions are beginning to disappear, although not significantly.” Hindu web site.
- 3) **The enemies of man:** “Hinduism tells us that lust and anger are mankind's worst enemies. All great saints of the religion have preached this. Lust is a degrading evil that leads humans astray from the path of all goodness. It defiles the mind, contaminates the spirit and wastes our energy and time. Sex within the boundaries of Dharma (through marriage) is not considered evil but righteous by the religion. However, sex as a pastime, as an occupation, or as an obsession destroys mankind. Anger deludes the human mind and distorts rational thinking. We witness several examples of this truth in today's world. Anger manifests in wars around the world, resulting in the death and maiming of millions of people.” Hindu web site.
- 4) **Yoga:** “In Hindu philosophy, Yoga is a means to attaining the Supreme State of mind. It is a skill, an art and a separate branch of knowledge. There are countless Yogas.” Hindu web site.
- 5) **Yogi:** An enlightened One. “While good actions cause us to be reborn to experience the good effects, bad actions cause us to be reborn to undergo pain and suffering. "Yogis", however, are free of karmic actions and reactions, therefore not bound by the cycle of transmigration. Such a state of everlasting freedom from samsara is known as "Moksha". Again, the means to achieving such a state of mind cannot be prescribed in a "cook book" manner.” Hindu web site.

X. TALKING WITH MEMBERS:

- 1) There is one true God, Jehovah, the creator of the universe. Isaiah 45:4-6.
- 2) Jesus is the ONLY way to God and to Heaven, not just A way. John 10:9, 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.
- 3) Resurrection, not reincarnation. Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:14-15.
- 4) How do we know that the Bible is true? Apologetics, especially fulfilled prophecy.
- 5) Refute salvation by works. Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; Romans 4:5

CONCLUSION:

Thank God that we are not forever trapped in a cycle of pain and death – we look forward to a glorious resurrection, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:54-57)

REVIEW / QUESTIONS: