

HINDUISM

Why should we as believers learn about cults and religions? (Eph. 4:14-15; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15)

A. Defining Hinduism

“Hinduism” is generic term referring to a variety of RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS native to India along with their PHILOSOPHICAL counterparts.

“Sanatana Dharma” means ETERNAL WAY and is the preferred term used by Hindus to describe their belief system.

B. History & Development of Hinduism

- a. **Origins** are the Vedic and Puranic Periods of Indian History Between 2300 BC-500 AD
 - NO FOUNDER and NO SURE DATE OF ORIGIN
- b. **Tower of Babel** (Migration of the sons of Joktan)
 - SONS OF SHEM
 - The Vedas describe Narratives and Gods like that of THE BABYLONIANS
- c. **Pluralism & Syncretism**
 - Pluralism is the theory that there is MORE THAN ONE truth or reality
 - Syncretism is the AMALGAMATION different religions and cultures
- d. **Current Statistics**
 - Hinduism is the 3RD LARGEST religion in the world (15%)
 - The vast majority of Hindus LIVE IN INDIA

The Vedas	Moksha
Brahman	Dharma
Yugas	Karma
Samsara	Yoga

A Hindu Prayer

Lead me from the unreal to the real,
lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to eternal life, Om peace, peace, peace

A. Common Hindu Beliefs

- a. **Hindu Sacred Scriptures:** Vedas are the ultimate AUTHORITY in Hindu belief and are divided into two categories (1) SHURTI and (2) SMIRTI. The most referenced portion is called the BHAGAVAD GITA
- b. **Hindu Beliefs Concerning God:** Brahman, The Trimurti, and The Pantheon
 - 1. **Brahman:** THE SUPREME SOUL:
 - 1. **Brahman** is only thing real in the universe. All else is “maya.” Note: many Hindus place a high value on truth and the pursuit of it (see prayer above).
 - 2. **Brahman** is “Nirguna” – Transcendent, Unknowable, Unchanging. Universal
 - a. MONISM is the theory that all is one.

- b. **PANTHEISM** is the belief that equates god with the universe
 - c. **NAMASTE**: “The divine in me bows to the divine in you.”
 - d. **AHIMSA** is the doctrine of non-violence.
 - e. **OM** is the divine vibration which elevates consciousness
3. Brahman is “Saguna” – Imminent, Knowable through “Devas” and “Devis”
 - a. **POLYTHEISM** is the belief that there are many gods.
 - b. **DEVAS & DEVIS** are innumerable and a means of enlightenment
2. **Trimurti**: The Hindu Trinity
 1. **Brahma – THE CREATOR** His consort is SARASWATI
 2. **Vishnu – THE SUSTAINER** He has 10 avatars most important KRISHNA
 3. **Shiva – THE DESTROYER** He had avatars too KALI MATA & NATARJA
 3. **The Pantheon**: Popular God’s of India
 1. **GANESHA**– The Remover of Obstacles
 2. **HANUMAN** – The Giver of Health and Strength
 3. **KALI MATA** – The Destroyer of Evil and Protector
- c. **Hindu Beliefs Concerning Life**: Atman, Samsara, Moksha
1. **The soul**: **ATMAN** is the real you behind all the distractions which come from the current identity you are wearing in this life. Atman is like Nirguna Brahman as opposed to the Ego which is like Saguna Brahman. The realization that Atman is Brahman is the Hindus greatest aim and greatest achievement.
 2. **: The Cycle of Life**
 1. **SAMSARA** is the cycle of death and rebirth and is a kind of “laboratory” for enlightenment. Ideally the cycle is moving in an “upward” fashion to Moksha.
 2. **MAYA** is that which distracts, confuses, and deceives us from understanding our true selves (Atman). It is the illusion of the world as we perceive it to be through our senses. It is the only apparent reality of the material world. It fosters ignorance (ajnana) which is the cause of all wrong action and suffering.
 3. **DHARMA** is in essence the way in which something is supposed to be or act. When it comes to humans Dharma is one’s duty to perform according to his caste, stage in life, occupation, and culture.
 4. **KARMA** is in essence the effect of your actions on your own life and future.
 5. **REINCARNATION** is the transmigration of the soul into a new body (rebirth).
 3. **The Goal of Life**: **MOKSHA** is the height of self-awareness that releases us from the cycle of life and death (samsara). Once “atman” realizes divinity and lays aside all connection to the material world, the soul is then free to lose itself back into the eternal consciousness of Brahman where there are no distinctions, no distractions, no limits, and no boundaries — no you. This is a poetic description of annihilation.

B. Common Hindu Practices

a. Spiritual Leaders

1. **GURU** – “Weighty Ones” or “remover of darkness” could apply to anyone who has knowledge or wisdom. From Preacher-man to Businessman, to congressman.
2. **SWAMI** – “master” is a guru in philosophy belonging to an “order.” They often have “ashrams” which are secluded schools/retreat centers to learn yoga, meditation, and natural medicine (Ayurveda).
3. **MAHARISHI** – “great seer” is a title bestowed on a great sage of the Brahman Caste
4. **YOGI** – is a master yoga practitioner who has reached *samadhi* (supra-consciousness)
5. **PRIEST** – is a specialist in all things related to temple worship and rituals.

b. Famous Historical Gurus

1. **Ramakrishna (1836-1886)** Reached a constant state of “samadhi,” was androgynous, worshiped Shiva who is often depicted as being merged with Parvati in a manifestation called “Ardhanarishvara” (half male and half female). He was disciplined

by a Guru named Tota Puri – “the naked one” Ramakrishna is still a favored religious figure and images of him/her can be found in many Hindu Homes.

2. **Vivekannada (1863-1902)** is famous for brining Hinduism to the United States. He was the only representative of Hinduism to appear at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. He was a kind of traveling evangelist for Hinduism.

c. Famous Modern Gurus

1. **Sathya Sai Baba (1926-2011)** – over 100 million followers in 133 countries around the world. Regarded as a “living god” by many of his followers. Believed to be the reincarnation of the original Sai Baba of 19th Century. He ran a multibillion-dollar charitable trust. He “manifest” jewelry for his devotees, unfortunately he was accuses of various sex crimes and ultimately died from a cardiac arrest.
2. **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008)** is famous for introducing famous people like the Beatles to Hinduism, specifically, transcendental meditation.
3. **Too many too list**

d. The Caste System: VARNA – The importance and relationship between **varna** (Caste) and **dharma** (duty) was developed in the **Bhagavad Gita**. This system was later codified in the “**Laws of Manu**.” Originally the castes were more like a guideline to bring order to society, but they became much more. Even though discrimination based on Caste is outlawed in India it still plays an important role in a Hindu’s way of life.

Brahmin	Priestly Class
Kshatriya	Warriors Class
Vaysha	Business Class
Shudra	Servant Class

e. The Path to Salvation: YOGA

1. Karma Yoga (Action) – Serving Society through Selfless Service
2. Jnana Yoga (Knowledge) – Seeking Higher Knowledge of Self
3. **Bhakti Yoga** (Devotion) – Surrender to a Deity
4. Raja Yoga (Self-Mastery) – Discipline of life
5. **Hatha and Ashtanga Yoga** (Balance) – Balancing Energy
6. Kundalini Yoga (Serpent Energy) – Union with Shiva and Shakti

f. Worship

1. **Daily worship: Upasana** is expected for serious Hindus, they are raised from childhood to worship at the **family shrine**. Thus, the rituals, disciplines, chants, yoga, and religious study are all handed down from one generation to the next.
2. **Rites: samskara** – there can be as many as 16 ritual which are like sacraments during the life of a Hindu. They have rituals for seemingly everything, the is a ritual for the first hair cut, first solid food, first ear piercing, a ritual for first day of school, a ritual for becoming an adult, and on and on.
3. **Holy Days: Utsava – Festivals and holydays** are celebrated throughout the year either at home, a holy place, or a temple. These special days are seen as opportunities to have sweet communion with the gods being worshiped through them.
4. **Pilgrimage: Tirthayatra** – Many Hindus seek to take a pilgrimage once a year to gaze (darsana) at things considered to be holy. These could be people, statues, images, temples, or places. It is an effort to detach form “maya” by setting aside the normal worldly affairs of life and making a god or guru or holy thing the focus of their attention.

g. Denominations

1. **Saivism** is the worship of Shiva
2. **Vaishnavism** is the worship of Vishnu normally as Krishna or Rama
3. **Shaktism** is the worship of Shakti the consort of Shiva “magical”
4. **Smartism** is the worship of the Supreme in any form.

F. Biblical Response to Hinduism

How should we respond to those in Hinduism?

In you personal life:

**Don't Be Insnared by
Pluralism**

-Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life and no one gets to Father except through Him.

The Need for a Guru for your Spiritual life

-God gave us His Word which is sufficient, plus He gave us the Holy Spirit to be our teacher.

Be wary of self-help books that teach you to look inward

- Focusing on ourselves will not ultimately make us into better people

Be wary of alternative medicine practices that require alter states of consciousness

-Is your physical health really worth the risk of opening yourself up to unknown spiritual forces?

Be wary of exercises and health clubs that use yoga beyond stretching techniques

- Excise can make you feel great, but if your yoga studio has got you saying mantras then maybe you should drop out and take up cross fit or join a spin class. If that's to much, get a dog and take it for a walk every day.

Don't practice transcendental meditation

- God wants to fill you mind with you mind with His Word not empty it

Simply said we should reject Hinduism as a whole because it is contrary to the Bible

Unlike the Brahman of Hinduism, the Bible teaches that God thou all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present still has a unique personality and is also knowable and desires to be known. That is why He gave us the His Word, that is why He sent the Word.

Unlike the Devas and Avatars of Hinduism, the Bible teaches that God is Pure, He is not fickle, not rash. He is to be feared because of His holiness not recklessness. He took on flesh and became a man not just to enlighten us but to offer Himself as substitutionary sacrifice once and for all for our sins. Our God, Jesus Christ brings forgiveness and reconciliation, not endless cycles of mind games and magic tricks.

Unlike the doctrine of Maya found in Hinduism, the Bible teaches that God created everything, and it was very real and very good. Life is not an illusion; it is a corruption brought on by the Sin of Mankind and our only hope is not going to be found in altered state of consciousness. No. Our hope is found in Jesus Christ.

Unlike the doctrine of Moksha found in Hindusim, the Bible teaches that God has prepared an eternal dwelling place for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ. Our ultimate end is not to be consumed by the "supreme consciousness" and lose all sense of personal identity. We won't be annihilated! We are going to disappear. No. we are going to be transformed, glorified, and enter eternal joy. We will finally be the people, the individuals, the persons we've always longed to be. No more lies, no more hurt feelings, no more confusion and misunderstanding, no more suffering, no more tears. This is all because of the work Christ did on our behalf not our vain attempts to do our duty or show our devotion. Salvation is a Gift not a reward.

Jesus said I am the way, not yoga is the way

Jesus said I am the truth, not brahman is the truth

Jesus said I am the life, not moksha is the life

In your witness to others:

Listen for the Language of The Gospel

If you have a friend or a coworker who is Hindu, it would be foolish for you think you truly understand their beliefs, especially given the diversity represented in the Hindu faith. Instead of trying to teach them what they believe, take on the position of a learner and use this information as a launching pad for spiritual conversation. Ask them to confirm some of the things you have heard about Hinduism. Then after having learned their beliefs seek to contrast them with what the Bible teaches. Focus on the big questions of life:

How should we respond to those in Hinduism who may be saved? (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Gal. 1:8-9; 4:8-9; Eph. 5:11)