

So What's The Difference? By Fritz Ridenour

Chapter Six: Hinduism: We are all Divine

Introduction



<http://scraps.punjabihungama.com/2013/04/hindu-gods-godesses-1-hinduism.html>

- The Bible teaches that the infinite God is **personal**, that He loves people and, because He is their creator, He has the power to make moral demands upon them.
- The Bible teaches the dignity and worth of each person, created “in the image of God,” has the power of reason, the ability to make choices and the capacity to relate to God (Gen. 1:26-27).
- The Bible teaches that time and history are progressing to a definitive **judgment** day. (Heb. 10:26-31)
- Eastern thought teaches that Ultimate Reality is thought of as attainable **within** each individual by realizing intuitively that the “self” is Divine, or at least part of the Divine.
- God is, for the most part, seen as an impersonal, unifying force who takes no personal interest in individuals.

- The idea of a creator having authority over the universe and making universal moral demands is, by and large, **rejected**.

Origins and background of Hinduism

- The word “Hinduism” comes from the **Indus River**, which flows through what is now Pakistan.



<https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/india>

- In the third millennium B.C., the great civilization of Mohendo-jaro flourished there, populated by the dark-skinned **Dravidians**.
- From what archaeologists have been able to discover, the Dravidians had a **polytheistic** fertility religion that centered upon worship of the forces of nature and use of rituals, merging human sexuality with the hope for abundant crops.

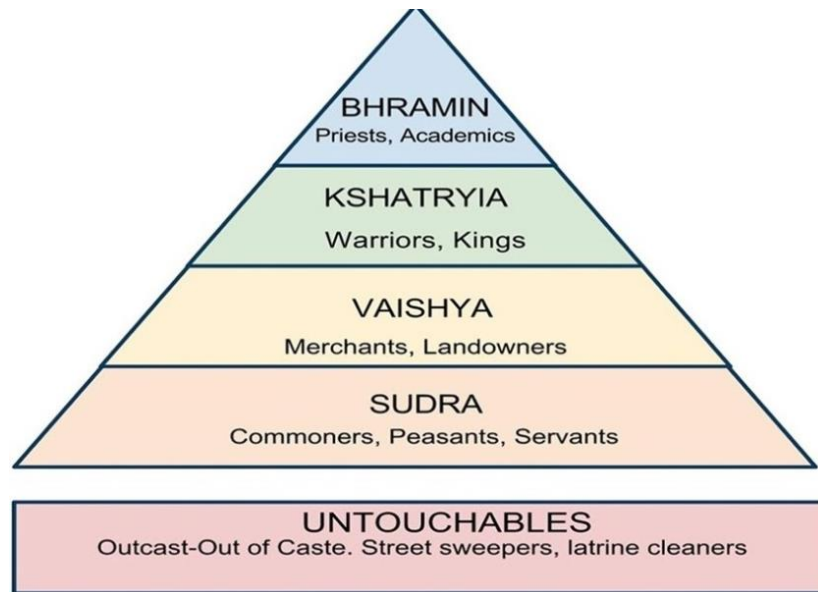
About 2000 B.C., the light-skinned and warlike **Aryans** came over the Caucasus Mountains and conquered the people of the Indus Valley.



<https://wallpapercave.com/asia-map-wallpapers>

- The Aryans also had a polytheistic religion, and some of the most popular Dravidian gods received new Aryan names but retained their old functions.
- The Aryans wrote down their hymns, prayers, mythic stories and chants into the ***Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads***-this is known as the ***Vedic*** literature.
- These writings are considered by Hindus to be supernaturally inspired and are as sacred to them as the Bible is to Christians.
- The highest goal is to be in union with ***Brahma***, the impersonal absolute.
- The priests of Brahma became known as the Brahmins.
- They eventually became the highest social class. (Heb. 13:5-6)
- Around 500 B.C., more writings were added to the Hindu scriptures.

- Their purpose was to establish *Varna*, a rigid **caste** system, or social hierarchy: *Brahmins* (priests); the *Kshatriyas* (warriors and nobles); *Vaisyas* (merchants and artisans); and *Shudras* (slaves).



<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/402720391681352116/>

- The Shudras were not allowed to hear the Vedas or to use them to try to find salvation.
- The **Untouchables** were even lower than the Shudras. When India became a nation in 1947, the government officially outlawed discrimination against Untouchables (Matt 11:28-30)

Two Core Beliefs of Hinduism

- **Reincarnation** – A person’s uncreated and eternal soul is called the ***atman***.
 - The atman must repeatedly be recycled into the world in different bodies.
 - This recycling or reincarnation is the process that takes the Hindu through the great wheel of ***samsara***, the thousands or millions of lives (all full of suffering) that each atman must endure before reaching *moksha*-liberation from suffering and union with the infinite. (Luke 23:43)
- **Karma**-("action") has to do with the law of cause and effect.
 - For the Hindu, karma means merit or demerit, which attaches to one’s atman (soul) according to how one lives one’s life.

- Karma from past lives affects a person's present life, and karma from this life will determine a person's station in the **next** life.
- The Bible contradicts Hindu ideas of reincarnation and karma.
- Hinduism teaches that the atman (soul) is uncreated and eternal.
- The Bible teaches that each person is created by **God**, will die once and then be resurrected once at the judgment (John 5:17-30; 1 Cor. 15:1-58; Heb. 9:27).
- Hinduism teaches that the atman is **perfect**, free and unlimited, and no matter how many lives it takes, eventually each and every atman will realize its divine nature.
- The Bible teaches that each person has one life to live, and after this comes the **judgment** (Heb. 9:27)

Paths To Moksha

- Moksha-the liberation from reincarnation and reunion with **Brahma**. In Hinduism, there are basically three paths to moksha: works (*dharma*), knowledge (*inana*), passionate devotion (*bhakti*)



<https://www.slideserve.com/katen/introduction-to-hinduism>

- The path of works (***dharma***)-A person has a set of specific social and religious obligations that must be fulfilled.

- He must follow his caste occupation, **marry** within his caste, eat or not eat certain foods and, above all, produce and raise a son who can make a sacrifice to his ancestors and perform other sacrificial and ritual acts.
- The path of works may help one attain a better reincarnation and perhaps, after thousands or tens of thousands of reincarnations, achieve moksha. (Heb. 17:7-9)
- A more difficult way to achieve moksha is the path of knowledge (**inana**).
 - This includes self-renunciation and meditation on the supreme pantheistic reality of Hinduism.
 - This path is open to **men** only in the highest castes.
 - The world as we experience it is mere **illusion** and Brahma is the only thing that really exists and has meaning.
 - This path most often includes the practice of **yoga**.



- Yoga is the attempt to control one's consciousness through bodily posture, breath control and concentration, to the extent that one comes to understand experientially that one's true self, one's undying soul is identical with **Brahma**.
- The path of passionate devotion to a god (**bhakti**) is the most popular way to achieve moksha.
 - A devotee may choose any of the 330 **million** gods, goddesses or demigods and passionately worship that particular god.
 - Most Hindus worship Vishnu or Shiva. Vishnu is most popular of the gods and has appeared as *avatars* (saviors- the incarnation of deity). Vishnu is believed to have appeared as a giant **turtle**.

Vishnu



<https://www.hindudevotionalblog.com/2015/05/vishnu-with-kaumodaki-mace.html>

- Vishnu and Shiva have many sexual wives.
- The path of bhakti appeals to the lower classes (the vast majority of the inhabitants of India) and offers a much easier path for their souls to progress to higher forms of birth through reincarnation in reaching moksha.

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Hindu “Evangelization” of the West

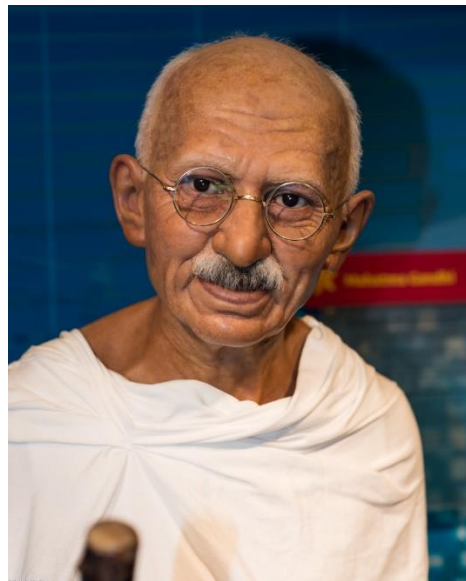
- Hindu ideas began to influence Western thought in the mid-nineteenth century when **Ralph Waldo Emerson** and Henry David Thoreau, followers of transcendentalism, took on Hindu teachings.
- Hindu teachings spread when the *Vedanta* Society of Southern California was established.
- Ramakrishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, stated “many faiths are but different paths leading to the one reality, God” (Matt. 7:13-14).
- Vedanta played a major role in the **New Age** movement, which befriends all religions.
- In the 1960’s, the **Beatles** went to India and were taught transcendental meditation (TM). They brought TM back to the United States and other nations, where it became popular.

Beatles in India



https://www.reddit.com/r/OldSchoolCool/comments/9n7n32/the_beatles_in_northern_india_at_the_ashram_of/

- Certain Hindu teaching have spread throughout Western culture-all approaches to God are true and valid.
- Teachings of Vedanta cannot accept Christ as the *only* Son of God.
- Mohandas K. **Gandhi** stated, “It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate Son of God. And that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life.”



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasbecker/8118225710>

- Gandhi also said that he could not believe there was any “mysterious or miraculous virtue” in Christ’s **death** on the cross.

- Gandhi, like other Hindus, could not accept the Christian answer to the problem of **sin**, yet he felt a deep hunger for real salvation from sin.
- He wrote, “For it is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from Him, who, as I fully know, governs every breath of my life, and whose offspring I am.”

Hinduism Versus Jesus Christ

- Hindus believe that God has become incarnate many times whereas Christians believe that God became incarnate only **once**-Jesus Christ (John 1:14).
- Jesus came not to teach humanity various “ways” to **salvation**, but to be “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6) and “to take away the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28)

Why The Hindu’s God Is Too Small

- The Hindus seek God within **themselves**.
- For the Hindu, each person is “god” (or at least part of “god”).
- 1 John 5:11-12, states that God has given us **eternal** life, and this life is in His Son.
- If we have the Son, we have eternal life.

Summing Up Major Differences Between Hindus and Christians

- Hindus do not believe in a personal, loving God, but in **Brahma**, a formless, abstract, eternal being without attributes, who was the beginning of all things.
- They believe that Jesus is not God but just one of many incarnations, or avatars (saviors-incarnation of deity) of Vishnu.
- Christians believe that God is an eternal, **personal**, spiritual Being in three persons-Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
- Jesus Christ is God as well as sinless man and He died for our **redemption** (see John 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:24).
- Hindus call sin “**utter illusion**” because they believe all material reality is illusory.
- They seek deliverance from reincarnation to union with Brahma, which is achieved through devotion, meditation, **good works** and self-control.
- Christians believe that sin is prideful rebellion that leads to eternal **separation** from God after living only one life, not many (Rom. 2:23; Heb. 9:27).
- Christians believe that salvation is gained only through **believing** in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 15:3).

- How refreshing to read John 8:31-32, "...If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples.
- Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you **free**."