

## Christian Worldview: Hinduism and a Christian Response

**There is no such thing as \_\_\_\_\_.**

The word Hinduism presumes a religion in which the parts are consistent with one another.

### **The Vedic Period (C. 1750-500 BCE)**

The Vedic Period refers to the time in history from approximately 1750-500 BCE, during which Indo-Aryans settled into northern India, bringing with them specific religious traditions. Most history of this period is derived from the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion, which were composed by the Aryans in Sanskrit.

### **The Epic Period (C. 400 BCE-400 AD)**

It was during the Epic Period that the caste system developed in India, though its roots are much older. It most likely arose out of the need for a subsistence society to impose a division of labor to ensure the society's survival.

### **The Caste System**

Early on the castes were considered equal in importance, and one was assigned to a caste based on skills and talents. The Vedas (ancient scriptures) were written in the Sanskrit language, which contained hymns, philosophies, and rituals handed down to the priests of the Vedic religion. One of these four sacred canonical texts, the Rig Veda, described the origins of the world and points to the gods for the origin of the caste system.

### **Four Primary Varnas (Caste) Divisions**

1. **Brahamin**- consisting of priests, scholars, and teachers
2. **Kshatriyas**- the kings, governors, and \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Vaishyas**- comprising agriculturists, \_\_\_\_\_, and merchants
4. **Shurdras**- the \_\_\_\_\_ and artisans who were originally non-Aryans but were admitted to Vedic society. It is the Shurdras and the outcastes, or untouchables who belong to no caste, who traditionally have suffered the most, being denied education and opportunity.

### **Hindu Religion**

The Hindu scriptures in fact say there are \_\_\_\_\_ million gods, and at least several scores of these gods have their own sets of beliefs and practices. With this wide ranging set of gods, scriptures, beliefs, and practices it is almost impossible to say there is anything that all Hindu's believe.

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### Four things almost all Hindu's believe:

#### 1. Pantheism

Brahman is all- Basic to the Hindu worldview is Pantheism, the idea that \_\_\_\_\_ is god.

Brahman is the "single reality underlying the diversity of appearances."

The individual self is one with Brahman also, but with an important difference: In Hindu belief, you are Brahman.

#### 2. Samsara or Reincarnation

For Hindus it is a combination of \_\_\_\_\_ (literally, "deeds") and rebirth. It means that after death we are judged by an impersonal law of karma, which determines what kind of life we will be reborn into.

#### 3. The Law of Karma

The idea that actions done in this life have future \_\_\_\_\_.

Since most Hindus realize that achieving experiential one-ness with Brahman is rare, the practical goal of much of Hinduism is to improve one's situation in the next life by properly managing Karma.

#### 4. Moksha

Moksha is Sanskrit for "liberation," which in this case means liberation or release from the iron law of samsara.

Hinduism believes we are ignorant of our true Brahman nature and must overcome this ignorance.

**The four paths to moksha are: the way of \_\_\_\_\_ (jnana), the way of devotion (bhakti), the way of \_\_\_\_\_ (karma), and the way of meditation (yoga).**

#### **The Way of Knowledge: Advaita \_\_\_\_\_**

This way to moksha is called the way of knowledge because it promises that you can escape samsara if you come to \_\_\_\_\_ (know) reality in the right way.

The most famous teacher of the way of knowledge was Shankara (AD 788–820), a Brahmin priest and philosopher from south India. Shankara's system, which has become the most respected school of philosophy for Hindus, is called advaita vedanta.

Advaita is Sanskrit for "nondual." This means there are not two (or three or more) things in reality; there is ultimately only one thing. That one thing is Brahman, which is the impersonal, unchanging spirit or essence of the cosmos.

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### **Vedanta means “end of the Vedas.”**

The Vedas are the early set of Hindu scriptures, the last set of which (the “end” of them) are the Upanishads. These writings, composed between 600 and 400 BC, teach that the human self (atman) is the same as the essence of the cosmos (Brahman).

Hindus who adhere to this advaita tradition compare us in our individual selves to a drop of water, and our future in Brahman to the ocean a moment after that drop has hit the surface.

### **Shankara said that the basic human problem is \_\_\_\_\_.**

What are we ignorant of? Brahman, or ultimate reality, which of course contains no distinctions and therefore is finally only one thing.

### **How do we solve the problem? By \_\_\_\_\_ and asceticism**

Ascetism is to deprive ourselves of the pleasures of the flesh, such as tasty food and drink, a soft bed, sex and marriage, and other sensual enjoyments. Hindus seeking Brahman will often go into the forest to meditate, where they will sleep on the ground and eat the barest of foods, often fasting.

### **The Way of Devotion: \_\_\_\_\_**

Bhakti, which is Sanskrit for devotion. This path is a way to liberation from samsara (remember, this is the endless cycle of reincarnation) by means of love and surrender (devotion) to a personal god.

**Bhaktas (devotees of bhakti) believe there are really \_\_\_\_\_, and they are there at every level, if there are levels at all. Some of them are very powerful and can actually save us from samsara.**

They do this by forgiving our sins and getting rid of our bad karma, so that we can live with them forever in one of their heavens. And rather than going through many lives trying to build up good karma and getting rid of bad karma, they will do this for us after this life if we turn to them in sincere faith!

Krishna is said to be an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu, who came to earth to right wrongs and restore righteousness. If one of Krishna’s devotees serves him with love and praise, the devotee will be released from samsara and not be reborn, but enter one of Krishna’s lovely heavens.

Bhaktas believe Vishnu has come to earth in various incarnations nine times and will come again at the end of time in a tenth incarnation (avatara). His previous incarnations have been as a fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, high-caste hero, Rama (another god), Krishna, and Buddha.

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**For bhakti, the basic human problem is being stuck in samsara. What keeps us stuck is the combination of our karma and our ignorance of a personal god. The resolution to the problem is to get rid of karma by practicing love and surrender to a personal god (bhakti) and getting grace (prasada) from that god.**

Most bhaktas believe human effort and merit are necessary. Krishna and the other gods wait to see who makes good efforts before they confer salvation.

### **Hindu Practices in the way of Devotion:**

The path of ritual devotion is the oldest and most popular path to Moksha. This ritual most often goes under the name of Puja—and there is puja practiced in the \_\_\_\_\_ and puja in the \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **1. Puja at home.**

Many Hindus maintain an altar with an image of one or another of the gods (often Ganesha, the elephant-headed god) in their home or place of business. Small offerings of food are placed on this altar morning and evening. The image of the god will be regularly washed, clothed, carefully tended and even put to bed at night. The father of the household has primary responsibility for the Puja ritual, although his wife may step in if need be.

#### **2. Puja in the temple.**

Hindu temples, especially in the U.S. will have niches or sections devoted to various gods though the temple itself may be mostly dedicated to one major god. At the Ekta Mandir of the Dallas/Fort Worth Hindu Temple society, various pujas, rituals and classes are held daily. For a fee, a Hindu priest will conduct a special ritual or other service at one's home, or business, or in the temple itself.

#### **3. Festivals.**

There are numerous Hindu festivals, usually in honor of the "descent day" or birthday of one of the gods. Divali, the "Festival of Lights," is probably the best-known Hindu festival. Divali is a five day celebration that is observed by Hindus everywhere. Hindu Temples and associations in the U.S. often sponsor Divali celebrations as well as other festivals. Hindu festivals are generally open to the public as all are welcomed to discover more about Hindu beliefs and culture.

## **Similarities between Hinduism and Christianity**

### **1. Incarnation**

Avatar is a concept within Hinduism that in Sanskrit literally means '\_\_\_\_\_'. It signifies the material appearance or incarnation of a powerful deity,

There are \_\_\_\_\_ incarnations in history, unlike the one incarnation of Jesus, which did all that was needed to save human beings for all time.

These Hindu saviors are less than \_\_\_\_\_ perfect, while Jesus was sinless.

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### 2. Grace

Technically grace means God doing for human beings what they cannot do for themselves. But there are profound differences between the Hindu idea of grace and what the Bible teaches.

Christian grace is also different from bhakti grace. In the latter, grace is in the context of an impersonal law of the universe (karma) that even the gods \_\_\_\_\_ change. In Christian faith, on the other hand, Jesus Christ is the author of the law, and He has \_\_\_\_\_ the power of that law over us.

But more important, a self-indulgent Krishna forgives sins at no cost to Himself. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was sinless and gives us grace only by an infinitely painful atonement. Grace cost Him everything.

### Christian response to Hinduism:

#### Christian response to the Hindu teaching that Brahman is all.

1. While Hinduism holds the position that the only reality is Brahman, thus all is an illusion; the Bible teaches that one can live in and enjoy the creation knowing it is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Bible states that "God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1) and that "The heavens reveal the glory of God and the earth shows his handiwork" (Psalms 19:1).
3. Therefore, Christians rejoice in the \_\_\_\_\_, seeing the greatness of God in the beauty of trees, mountains, waterfalls, etc. Hindus, on the other hand, if they are consistent with their worldview, must see the creation as an \_\_\_\_\_. It is less than fully real. It is difficult to see how one really enjoys the goodness of creation.

#### Christian response to the Hindu teaching of Moksha.

1. According to Hinduism there are three paths to overcome moksha so one can become one with Brahman but offers no \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Bible teaches that man's problem is not of intellect or realization but of a moral problem called sin. Romans 5:12 explains that all have sinned and the penalty for sin is death. The remedy to man's sin problem does not come from man's reasoning ability, instead through Christ's work on the cross (Romans 5:8).
3. Christianity offers a dynamic relationship with God that is achieved only by \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness of sin by faith in God (Romans 10:9-10).
4. The Bible teaches in 1 John 5:13 that one can be \_\_\_\_\_ in their standing with God once they have placed their faith on Christ.

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### Christian response to the Hindu teaching of Karma.

1. Hinduism places a burden on its followers to do \_\_\_\_\_ works so that they may reach moksha; but the law of Karma often prevents the adherent to achieving Brahman. The adherents to Hinduism have little to no hope to ever break the law of Karma and achieving Brahman.
2. Christianity offers a radically different view in the biblical doctrine of justification and substitutionary atonement (Galatians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The only way a Hindu can overcome the law of Karma is through good works. However, the Bible teaches that while good works are a way of showing the love of God to others; the best man can offer is compared to filthy rags in God's eyes (Isaiah 64:6). A Christian's identity is not in their good works, nor do they trust in their works to obtain salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).

### A Christian response to the Hindu teaching of Pantheism/Hindu Pantheon

1. Hinduism offers a pantheistic worldview that holds that God is an impersonal force (Brahman) that is everything; whereas Christianity explains that there is only one God who is not a force but a \_\_\_\_\_ God (Isaiah 43:10).
2. Hinduism teaches that a person is and has God inside them but for them to realize their inner deity they must overcome moksha. The Bible states that with man there is "none righteous" (Romans 3:10) and all mankind has "sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
3. Furthermore, while there are \_\_\_\_\_ deities within Hinduism- Jesus taught, "you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (Luke 4:8).
4. The "Hindu Trinity" shows a skewed picture in comparison to the Trinity described in the Bible. While the Trinity doctrine cannot be fully comprehended, the Trinity is \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the Bible. The Trinity is best understood as describing God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit was coeternal, coequal and one in essence, nature, power, action and will.
5. Christians, who wishing to explain the good news of Christ to their Hindu friends, can share the forgiveness available by grace through faith in Jesus as the answer to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

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### **Persecution of Christianity in India today:**

Christians in India have faced a rising tide of hostility, aggression, legal problems, and violence ever since Narendra Modi's ascension to prime minister in 2014. Many in Modi's political party promote "Hindutva," or Hinduness, and see pluralism and secular democracy—where everyone has equal rights—as a threat to a Hindu nation.

The number of verified incidents against Christians has gone up more than \_\_\_\_\_ percent between 2015 and 2022, according to the United Christian Forum, and some experts think the group's count of nearly \_\_\_\_\_ attacks last year is too conservative. The number might be close to twice that. The worst ones have left Christians dead, churches on fire, and thousands fleeing their homes.