

# ***“Five Questions if you’re a Hindi”***

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# 1. Introduction

## The Character of God

*(Actual Hindu quote by an Indian student studying in the USA): "What I believe now is that Hindus and Christians are the same, we believe in the same god. Hindus are in actual fact Christians and Christians are Hindus...as our god is one. I know Christians are not ready to believe that, but it's true that Jesus, Lord Shiva (Hindu God), Lord Krishna (Christ Na)(Hindu God) are re-incarnation of the same god (a.k.a. Vishnu, Mahesh and Brahma (Abraham) - the trinity in Hinduism)."*

The first difference between the two religions is in the nature of what is considered divine, and therefore worthy of worship. Christianity has a belief in one God, although that God is seen as a Trinity: the father (God), the son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the [Deut 6:4](#) principal. Hinduism on the other hand, is and claims to be polytheistic. Their Gods are Brahma (Creator), Vishnu, a friendly form of Krishna (a preserver God, too), and Shiva, an evil God (a destructor.) While Christianity would never claim God or any part of the trinity to be tyrannical and evil, he (the Christian god) will punish evil.

## All Paths Lead to God

The first difference between Hinduism and Christianity is that Hinduism embraces Christianity as a valid religion whereas the Bible does not. Hinduism is a religion that advocates tolerance. It teaches that all religions are different paths leading to one goal; all religions are a different means to one end. Hinduism is not exclusive and accepts all religions as valid. Christianity, however, teaches that Christ is the only way to God. [John 14:6](#) says, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" Philosophically, it is impossible for religions with mutually-exclusive doctrines to be equally valid. Where we find contradiction, we must find error. Either Christ was wrong or He was right when He claimed to be the only path to God. It is simple arithmetic, not spiritual elitism.

A comparison between Christianity and Hinduism reveals ancient practices which appear similar. In all ancient religions, Hinduism included, we find reparation for sins being done through sacrifices to an enraged God. In Hinduism and Judaism, this sacrifice is an animal sacrifice. Both theologies preach a divine commandment of righteousness, and failure to comply requires a penalty. This ancient instinct to make reparation for wrong doings suggests that [Romans 2:14-15](#) is true: "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law. . .they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."

The culmination of these sacrifices for sin is found in Christianity. We have all done things we know are wrong. Both Hinduism and Christianity preach a divine commandment of perfect righteousness and that we are held accountable for our actions. The difference is that Christianity preaches the penalty for our sin has already been paid by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. To become a Christian is to accept the ultimate sacrifice to avoid the ultimate penalty.

## **2. Denial of Sin, Salvation and Hell**

Since individuality is illusion for the Hindu, so is free will. If free will is illusion, so is sin. And if sin is illusion, so is hell. Perhaps the strongest attraction of Eastern religions is in their denial of sin, guilt and hell.

Thus the two essential points of Christianity — sin and salvation — are both missing in the East. If there is no sin, no salvation is needed, only enlightenment. We need not be born again; rather, we must merely wake up to our 'innate divinity'. If I am part of God. I can never really be alienated from God by sin.

### **Issue of Mysticism**

Body, matter, history and time itself are not independently real, according to Hinduism. Mystical experience lifts the spirit out of time and the world. In contrast, Judaism and Christianity are essentially news, events in time: creation, providence, prophets, Messiah, incarnation, death and, resurrection, ascension, second coming. Incarnation and New Birth are eternity dramatically entering time. Eastern religions are not dramatic.

The ultimate Hindu ideal is not sanctity but mysticism. Sanctity is fundamentally a matter of the will: willing God's will, loving God and neighbor. Mysticism is fundamentally a matter of intellect, intuition, consciousness. This fits the Eastern picture of God as consciousness — not will, not lawgiver.

When C.S. Lewis was converted from atheism, he shopped around in the world's religious supermarket and narrowed his choice down to Hinduism or Christianity. "Religions are like soups", he said. "Some, like consommé, are thin and clear (Unitarianism, Confucianism, modern Judaism); others, like minestrone, are thick and dark (paganism, "mystery religions"). Only Hinduism and Christianity are both "thin" (philosophical) and "thick" (sacramental and mysterious). But Hinduism is really two religions: "thick" for the masses, "thin" for the sages. Only Christianity is both.

### **Issue of Yoga**

Hinduism claims that all other religions are yogas: ways, deeds, paths. Christianity, the Hindu would say, is a form of bhakti yoga (yoga for emotional types and lovers). There

is also jnana yoga (yoga for intellectuals), raja yoga (yoga for experimenters), karma yoga (yoga for workers, practical people) and hatha yoga (the physical preliminary to the other four). For Hindus, religions are human roads up the divine mountain to enlightenment — religion is relative to human need; there is no “one way” or single objective truth.

There is, however, a universal subjective truth about human nature: It has “four wants”: pleasure, power, altruism and enlightenment. Hinduism encourages us to try all four paths, confident that only the fourth (enlightenment) brings fulfillment. This is best achieved through the act of yoga.

### **3. Scripture**

In Christianity, the Word of God comes from only one source - the Holy Bible. The Word of God has a strict code of morals and basic life for humans to follow, just as the Hindu Gods in the Hindu scriptures do. However, the Hindus rely on many written sources for their faith: the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Manu Smirti.

#### **Issue of Life**

Another area of difference between the two religions is the treatment of animals. Hinduism frowns upon the killing or abusing of animals, while Christianity sees such treatment as appropriate, at times. In Hinduism on the other hand, an animal could be the soul of one of your deceased family members or friends. The biblical God allows animal sacrifices, or at least, never seems to condemn it. For example, there is the story of the prophet Elijah and his servant Elisha: “He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate.” ([I Kings 19:21](#)).

Several extremely popular gods, such as Ganesha and Hanuman, have animal features and gods such as Shiva and Vishnu are regularly portrayed in the company of their animal companions.” As well, they believe that all pre-human beings, such as animals, will eventually become humans themselves, as we are all reborn, according to Hindus. Yet it must be said that when there have been recent conflicts in India, the Hindu’s have not hesitated to kill Muslims, Sikhs and Christians when it pleased them!!

## **4. Issue of intolerance**

Another difference between Hinduism and Christianity is the tolerance towards the views of other religions. A Protestant would only be a good Protestant by following the tenants of the denomination he belonged to.

Any deviation would be seen as sinful and apostate. So, if I, as a Christian wanted to include some Hindu practices into my religion, I would be functioning outside of GOD's declared order for me. On the other hand, if I were a Hindu, my Hindu religion would gladly allow me to be a Catholic or Protestant as well. However, despite such differences, there are some similarities. Both religions think that we should take the focus off the self, and on to something higher.

### **Issue of God in Everything (Good and Evil)**

If God is in everything, then God is in both good and evil. But then there is no absolute morality, no divine law, no divine will discriminating good and evil. In Hinduism, morality is practical; its end is to purify the soul from desires so that it can attain mystical consciousness. Again, the Jews are unique in identifying the source of morality with the object of religion. Everyone has two innate senses: the religious sense to worship, and the moral sense of conscience; but only the Jewish God is the focus of both. Only the God of the Bible is absolutely righteous. A distinctive belief in Hinduism is that they believe that everything possesses a part of God, therefore God persists in both good and evil. Christians believe that God did not create evil, but instead, He created mankind free to choose, and that freedom includes the possibility of doing wrong.

## 5. Idol worship

How can Hinduism and the Bible agree, when God says do not make any carved images of anything? “Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.

**Exodus 20:4** "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **Leviticus 19:4** "Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God. **Deuteronomy 4:16** so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, **Deuteronomy 16:22** and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates.

**Deuteronomy 27:15** "Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol--a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of the craftsman's hands--and sets it up in secret." **John 4:24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

### Issue of Re-Incarnation

The next distinction between Christianity and Hinduism are the beliefs of what happens once we die. While Christians believe in salvation of the soul and Hindu's in 'freedom' of the soul, the Hindu believes this is achieved through rebirth (re-incarnation). While most of us here in the west would say, "you only live once," such a saying would be viewed as odd for a Hindu. If you mess up in this life, the Hindus believe you get another chance. You might be reborn to a lower form of life (a lower caste even), but at least your punishment is not eternal. Christianity is quite different. Only those who are 'born again' will inherit eternal life through Jesus Christ. Those who are outside of GOD's protection in Christ will be subject to an eternal destruction in a lake of fire. This may explain why the Hindu God(s) are more tolerant than the Christian God. If there is reincarnation and if there is no hell, Hindus can afford to be patient and to learn the long, hard way: by experience rather than by faith and revelation.

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