

# HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HINDUISM (PART 2)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In part one I introduced key Hindu concepts with much of the study revolving around familiarizing ourselves with various aspects of this religion. The study of the concept of God and amorality as an attribute comprised the fulcrum. I will delineate this present study to the topic of the three paths to salvation *moksha* in Hinduism and later compare this to the Christian Biblical perspective.

Although there are three paths to salvation in Hinduism, many Gurus today, have advocated a fourth path which essentially is an amalgam or syncretisation of the first three.

## 2. FOUR PATHS TO SALVATION IN HINDUISM.

### 2.1 Jnanayoga.

This can basically be conceived as the pursuit of liberation from *karma* and *samsara* through wisdom and knowledge. Through the act of embracing knowledge, the adherent dispels all ignorance and achieves unity with *Brahman* or ultimate reality. Religious observances like self-purification, meditation and, specifically, the study of the Hindu scriptures – like the Upanishads are germane to the task of gaining self-insight and unity with *Brahman*. Some schools also teach that deliverance can be achieved in this life (*jivan-mukhta*).

## 2.2. Karmayoga.

This is salvation through good deeds and works. The Hindu believes that work is a form of worship and mundane everyday acts can be infused with spirituality. The concept of duty is central here. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu God, Krishna, engages in a lengthy discourse with Arjuna, a warrior who was bewildered on the battlefield as he realized he had to fight against his own kith and kin. Krishna convinces him that duty is above all other attachments and considerations and is a path to salvation:

Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme. (Gita 3:19).

## 2.3. Bhaktiyoga.

This entails selfless love and surrender to a Hindu deity. *Bhakti* means a devotee or disciple. Through an overwhelming outpouring of love and intimacy with one's chosen deity, Hinduism teaches that bad *karma* can be eliminated or mitigated. At times, this intoxication may be so intense that devotees of Krishna have often been seen throwing themselves off cliffs in India.

## 2.4. Yoga and the Guru.

This fourth middle way is a random combination of the first three as prescribed by the Guru. A Guru is an enlightened spiritual teacher who is revered as a god among many Hindus. Some are considered to be incarnations of some earlier gurus like Sai Baba of Shirdi. One Guru, I once heard said that Gurus show their devotees the fastest path to salvation. Gurus often combine yoga understood not only as a physical discipline but contains an equally important mental disciplinary aspect.

It was the Gurus who ignited new interest and curiosity towards Hinduism in the 1960s chiefly through the agency of Transcendental Meditation (TM). The pop band, Beatles popularized the Guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and band member, George Harrison, who became a Hindu, wrote a hit song called "My Sweet Lord" (1971) in praise of Krishna. Notice the lyrics where he combines Christian/Jewish praise terms with Hindu ones.

Hmm (hallelujah)

My sweet lord (hallelujah)

My, my, lord (hallelujah)

Hm, my lord (hare krishna)

My, my, my lord (hare krishna)

Oh hm, my sweet lord (krishna, krishna)

Oh-uuh-uh (hare hare)

Now, I really want to see you (hare rama)  
Really want to be with you (hare rama)  
Really want to see you lord (aaah)  
But it takes so long, my lord (hallelujah)

### 3.0. THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE.

#### 3.1 Liberating knowledge.

In regards to the first path to salvation *jnanayoga* – salvation through knowledge – the Christian also places great emphasis on knowledge of God and the human condition. However, the Bible states:

**2Ti 3:14** But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned [them];

**2Ti 3:15** And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**2Ti 3:16** All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

**2Ti 3:17** That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Whereas *jnanayoga* does not specify what ignorance is, the Bible teaches that man must receive knowledge of the Original sin of Adam and Eve and be sensitized to repent of acted and inherited sin through the grace of Jesus Christ. This must be followed through with baptism in Jesus name and an invocation of His name in order to be infilled by His Spirit (Acts 2:38). However, this concept of Original sin would be non-existent in Hinduism since a soul reaps the good or bad deeds of *karma* committed in the previous life and NOT one misdeed (sin) performed in the Garden of Eden. Knowledge is perceived as a tool in extricating one from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth but Biblical knowledge has the identity and mission of Jesus at its heart as the true liberating knowledge from eternal damnation. Only Jesus can liberate the soul. This is liberating knowledge.

**John 8:32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

**John 8:36** If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

**John 8:51** Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

### 3.2 Good deeds and the Bible.

In contrast to the Hindu objective of achieving salvation through works or deeds *karmayoga*, the Bible teaches that such a belief would negate the work of Christ on Calvary for, if humans can work their way out of sin, then Christ's mission of vicarious death was in vain. In fact, we must not forget that it was the delusion of attempting to please Christ through pious works that caused the apostle Paul to write with righteous indignation to the Galatian church.

**Gal 3:1** O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

**Gal 3:2** This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

**Gal 3:3** Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

**Gal 3:10** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

A word of caution to the Christian is in order here. Keep in mind that Hindus associate the term "born again" with the repressive cycle of birth, death and rebirth which. The Hindu ontology accepts this as a sombre and fearful order of the cosmos. Of more concern, to the Hindu, is the form or body with which he will return. Their greatest hope is to escape this foreboding cycle by entering Krishna's paradise, for instance. These divergent points of reference must be accounted for before the Christian introduces the concept of the new birth which is immensely different from the Hindu's reference point.

### 3.2 Selfless devotion in Christianity.

The Christian has no contention with the idea of intensely devoting oneself to God, but Jesus must be the object of this love. This said, devotion *bhaktiyoga* is not taught as a tool of salvation per say in the Bible. Rather, only after a person is saved can he or she enter into such an intimate relationship with Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Otherwise, one can be guilty of worshipping in ignorance like the Samaritan woman in John 4 which cannot constitute true intimacy. The agency of water and spirit (John 3:5) paves an uncluttered path for the Christian to experience a beautiful pristine intimacy with Jesus.

**1Pe 1:8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see [him] not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

**Mar 12:29** And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

**Mar 12:30** And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment.

### **3.3. Gurus – the Christian view.**

Christians find the notion of a Guru foreign to the teaching and ethos of the Bible. No one is deemed to possess insights that lead to a shorter path to salvation. More importantly, the elevation of a man or woman to a divine or semi-divine status is sacrilegious in the Bible. The Bible also condemns any amalgamation or syncretisation that seeks to weave together aspects of the Bible with other religions. Separation and exclusive worship to Jesus is the sine qua non of the Christian faith. The following scriptures attest to these statements.

**1Cr 3:21** Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

**Act 14:12** And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

**Act 14:13** Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

**Act 14:14** [Which] when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard [of], they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

**Act 14:15** And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

However, the above does not mean that we do not appreciate and emulate the example of the apostles and other leaders of God. We honour them by giving their names to our children, for instance. It is biblical to honour our leaders as the Bible says but only as long as they serve Christ.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION.**

In summary, we have deliberated on the issue of salvation in Hinduism with an emphasis on the four paths to salvation through knowledge, works, devotion and the Guru-aided alternative. A Christian with a burden for the 900 million Hindus worldwide will be spurred on by the Hindu's hunger and persistent efforts to attain salvation through these manifold avenues. In fact, their beliefs and actions is evidence of the thirst for knowing God and experience His liberating power. Our duty of love to the Hindu is to introduce Jesus as the source of all knowledge; as the One who worked salvation for us; as the One who truly loved us deeply first and as our Counsellor and guide. As the scripture says:

**Col 2:9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

**Col 2:10** And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: