

# Hinduism and salvation

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



India's first Vice President, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, said " Hinduism is not just a faith. It is the union of reason and intuition that can not be defined but is only to be experienced. Evil and error are not ultimate. There is no Hell, for that means there is a place where God is not, and there are sins which exceed his love. " (Hinduism, 2008). The Hindu religion focuses on four key pieces that lead one to salvation — personal gods, karma, reincarnation, and moksha (spiritual liberation). In this paper, I will demonstrate how Hinduism is a plausible religion, and how it compares and contrasts to the Christian faith that I was brought up believing. Hindus believe that there is not only one God, but many. It is estimated that there are 333 million deities in the Hindu faith. (Fisher, 2003, 79). The reason that there are so many gods is because those of the Hindu faith worship the godliness in everything. As Christians, we believe that the world was created by God, and that everything in it was developed by him with one master plan. We are taught to believe in one God, and to not worship any false idols or other gods. In contrast, Hindus believe that every living thing warrants its own worship. Ramanuja, a Hindu dualist, believed that there is always a difference between humans and god. However, he believed that we are all bodies of god, and therefore we are guardians of the world. (Carruthera, 2008). I was recently talking to a person I know of the Hindu faith, wondering how it is possible to have so many gods and how one could ever be expected to know or even be aware of so many gods. She told me that Hindus are not expected to know all of the gods — no one is. She put the Hindu's perspective of god in a much simpler form for me. For example, a Hindu person could be walking down the road and see a rock. It could be the most

beautiful rock that person has ever seen. So, that person will pick up the rock and bring it home to place on their altar. The person will then pray to that rock, considering it a personal god that is meant for them to worship. The next key piece in Hinduism is karma. In the Western World, we view karma as what goes around comes around. Although the concept of karma is similar in Eastern thinking, it is more complex than our Western view. In Hinduism, Karma is only one piece of the Hindu moral code. The moral code of Hinduism says " set thy heart upon your work, not upon its reward. " (Carruthera, 2008). The moral code consists of three key parts: dharma, artha, and karma. Dharma is righteous living. Artha is the pursuit of wealth or prosperity. Karma is defined as " the satisfaction that we derive from experience. " (Carruthera, 2008). In order to move on to the afterlife, one must live by the moral code and be able to achieve moksha. In Christianity, we are also taught to live by a moral code — the Ten Commandments. While many of the ideas are the same, we have a much different view of the afterlife. Moksha is the Hindu form of nirvana. Moksha is known as spiritual liberation. In order to achieve moksha, one must live their life by the moral code. Moksha is the ultimate goal for Hindus. Those who have learned to be at peace and have lived a righteous life are known as Brahmans. Brahman is the universal soul underlying the essence of the world. The word Brahman comes from the Sanskrit origin meaning " to grow. " It is the power at the center of sacrifice and religion, and the power or inner principle of humans and the world. (Carruthera, 2008). In contrast, Christians believe that the ultimate goal when we pass on is to go to Heaven. By living a good life and asking for forgiveness of our sins, we are allowed entry into Heaven to

celebrate for eternity with God. When a Hindu does not achieve moksha by the time of their death, they are reincarnated into another life so that they may learn the lessons that they did not learn in their current or previous lives. Reincarnation is based on how we lived our current life. " The path to rebirth consists of knowledge, action and devotion. " (Carruthera, 2008). One can move into a higher class via reincarnation by living a virtuous life, or can move into a lower life form, such as an animal, by not properly living their life. In Christianity, we do not believe in reincarnation. We are taught that if we live a morally good life and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, we will be allowed entry into Heaven. However, if we do not follow a morally just life, we will be sent to Hell for eternal damnation. I believe that the Hindu belief in reincarnation is a more optimistic view. I believe that many do not learn the lessons that they are supposed to learn in one lifetime. It is fair to believe that a person can have more than one chance to achieve liberation. When I revisit the quote by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, I like the idea that there is no Hell. He said that by believing in Hell, we believe that there is a place where there is no God. Although bad things do happen and there are bad people, I still believe that God is everywhere and that he has a plan for everything. If we were only to experience good things in our lives, we would not be able to learn the valuable lessons that come from overcoming our struggles. In conclusion, I believe that although I may not have been raised in the Hindu religion, it is a very plausible practice. I feel that the words of Klaus L. Klostermeier, a former Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Manitoba, best sum up Hinduism: Hinduism has proven much more open than any other religion to new ideas, scientific thought, and social

experimentation. Many concepts like reincarnation, meditation, yoga and others have found worldwide acceptance. It would not be surprising to find Hinduism the dominant religion of the twenty-first century. It would be a religion that doctrinally is less clear-cut than mainstream Christianity, politically less determined than Islam, ethically less heroic than Buddhism, but it would offer something to everybody. It will appear idealistic to those who look for idealism, pragmatic to the pragmatists, spiritual to the seekers, sensual to the here-and-now generation. Hinduism, by virtue of its lack of an ideology and its reliance on intuition, will appear to be more plausible than those religions whose doctrinal positions petrified a thousand years ago. (Hinduism, 2008). I believe that the idea of personal gods allows people of the Hindu faith to be more aware of the beauty in the world, and also allow them to feel a more personal connection with God. I feel that karma is a very real practice. I believe that we reap what we sow, meaning that if we live a morally just life than good things will come to us. I feel that the idea of reincarnation is more hopeful than the Christian views of Heaven and Hell because it allows someone another chance to obtain liberation or salvation. The idea of moksha is much like the Christian view of entering Heaven. When we enter Heaven, we are freed from the trials and tribulations of our human existence and are allowed to celebrate for eternity with our god.

REFERENCES Carruthera, B. & Russell, G. (Producers). (2008, August 8). Eastern Philosophy: Part 2 [television series]. New York: History Channel International. Fisher, M. (2003). Living Religions. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Hinduism. Retrieved August 30, 2008 from website: <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Hinduism>.