

HINDUISM

Hinduism goes back to about 2000 BC., about the time of Abraham. It began in India. It is still practiced today in India, East and South Africa, Southeast Asia, the East Indies, and some in England and the Americas. Hinduism is a major world religion with many followers.

About 1500 BC, about the time of Moses, it was influenced toward the 'pantheon of gods' and by the 6th century BC Buddhism had an interaction with Hinduism. Over the course of time, it has absorbed parts of many religions, and has a wide variety of beliefs and practices. It induces whatever all the people have believed and practiced and has become a social system extending into every aspect of life. Hinduism is defined by what people do, rather than what they think. Very few practices are shared by all.

Most Hindus worship Shiva, Vishnu, or Devi the goddess, but they also worship many other minor deities peculiar to a particular family or village.

They worship some major gods and like the Egyptians also have a wide variety of lesser gods. Magic spells and the belief in reincarnation are important to this religion. People are born into classes and have to try to achieve a better class the next time they live. They also may return as animals or plants, or even as a mineral.

Hindus believe the universe is a large enclosed sphere, within this sphere are concentric heavens, hells, oceans, and continents, and of course, India at the center. Time is first degenerative, going from the golden age, through two periods of decreasing goodness, to the present age. Time is cyclic, and at the end of each age, the universe is destroyed by fire and flood, and a new golden age begins. Human life is also cyclic. After death, the soul leaves the body and is reborn in another form, a person, animal, vegetable, or mineral. The quality of life in the new birth has been determined by the merit or demerits resulting from all the actions that the soul has performed in its past lives.

Their writings, in the form of 'Epics,' are from 200 BC to AD 500. There are hymns written around 1300 to 1000 BC to a pantheon of gods still used today. There is a textbook for sacrifice and a book of magic spells added around 900 BC. There are writings on the mystical and philosophical meditations about the meaning of existence and the nature of the universe.

The Vedas; these old writings are the original authority for all Hindus regarded as what has been heard from the gods. The Smriti, 'What is remembered' is orally preserved. There is no prohibition to making variations, rewording, or challenging the Smriti. There are other epics or stories which were written at much later dates, probably between 300 BC and 300 AD.

There were 3 classes of people (Brahman) -priestly, warrior, and general populace. A fourth class was added around 600 BC, the 'renouncer' whose goal is to be released from the stages the others have as goals and debts. The Brahman denotes the priest who speaks with cosmic power.

Vishnu is the supreme god, from whose navel a lotus sprang, giving birth to the creator who is called Brahma. Vishnu created the universe, separating heaven and earth. He has rescued it on a number of occasions. He is worshipped in various forms of incarnations, such as fish, the tortoise, or the boar. Other forms are the dwarf, a man-made lion, the Buddha, and some who were originally human heroes. There are gods and goddesses.

Our question has been, "Where did that come from?"

There was, about 2000 BC, in the area now called India a people referred to as the 'Vedic Civilization'. About 1500 BC, IndoAryan tribes invaded India and brought with them their European pantheon of gods with a

warrior ethic, very worldly, yet religious. By the 6th century BC Buddhism began to have an interaction with Hinduism.

There is no connection to the 'seed of the woman' of Genesis here, no promised savior, and life after death is conditional to past lives, yet there is no remembrance of the past life to base a knowledge of what it takes to gain a better afterlife. There is the same evidence of religion based on the works of that third party, and the host of fallen angels that follow him.

Jude in his little epistle tells us that we should *"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, for there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God in lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels, which kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, despise do minion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you. But these speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain saying of Core."*

The works of the devil are everywhere in religion, yet we must be careful in reviewing various religions that we do not bring accusations, or make judgments which are not ours to make. If Michael the archangel would not bring accusation against the devil; we had best not do it either. His works we can see, his pattern of leading men like Cain, those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the religions of the world on a path opposing God, distorting the original truth and the commandments of God as he did with Adam and Eve; providing alternative gods and rules of life, will lead us to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire as well.

Transcendental Meditation is a religion based on Hinduism. It was founded in 1959 in California by Maharishi Mahesh. It has its headquarters in Washington, D. C. USA. It uses Hindu writings and the book, 'Science of Being and the Art of Living', and other writings by the founder.

Also based on Hindu teaching is **Hare Krishna**, a religion variation found by AC. Swami Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada. The variation was founded in 1965 in New York, N.Y. USA. Prabhupada distributed 'Back to the Godhead' magazine, his commentaries on Hindu scriptures.

Our question is **"Is one religion as good as another?"** Is Hinduism as good as those religions that were practiced in Chaldea and Egypt. Many aspects of pantheism and polytheism look very similar here. Of course, they did add a few features, but is this religion as good as what we need to find eternal life with God?