

HINDUISM

The World's (3) third largest religion Hinduism differs from **Christianity** and other monotheistic religions in that it does *not* have:

- a single founder,
- a specific theological system,
- a single concept of deity,
- a single holy text,
- a single system of morality,
- a central religious authority,
- the concept of a prophet.

Hinduism is not a religion in the same sense as Christianity is; it is more like an all encompassing way of life - much as is Native American spirituality and Buddhist (Spiritualism).

Hinduism is generally regarded as the world's oldest organized religion. It consists of "thousands of different religious groups that have evolved in India since 1500 BCE." ¹ Because of the wide variety of Hindu traditions, freedom of belief and practice are notable features of Hinduism.

Most forms of Hinduism are henotheistic religions. They recognize a single deity, and view other Gods and Goddesses as manifestations or aspects of that supreme God. Henotheistic and polytheistic religions have traditionally been among the world's most religiously tolerant faiths. As a result, India has traditionally been one of the most religiously tolerant in the world.

However in 1998, a Hindu nationalistic political party the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) controlled the government of India. The linkage of religion, the national government, and nationalism led to a degeneration of the separation of church and state in India and a decrease in the level of religious tolerance in that country. An escalation of anti-Christian violence was one manifestation of this linkage. With the subsequent change in government, the level of violence has diminished, and India is once more a country of relative religious tolerance and peace.

Hinduism has grown to become the world's (3) third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. It claims about 950 million followers - about 14% of the world's population. It is the dominant religion in India, Nepal, and among the

Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Referenced information below in blue is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_and_other_religions, Reference for informational purposes only.

There has been some debate on historical connections between Christianity and Indian religion, although this has focused on Buddhism and Christianity (via Greco-Buddhism) more than on Hinduism proper. While it is well known that a number of Indian sages visited Constantinople in Classical Antiquity, claims of significant influence in either direction failed to gain wide acceptance. The study of **Jesus Christ** in comparative mythology has pointed to Krishna in particular. "Krishnology" is a term coined to express theological parallels between Krishnaism and the dogmas of Christology in Christianity. There is some pseudo-scholarly literature postulating that Jesus travelled to India after surviving his crucifixion, beginning with Nicolas Notovitch's *La vie Inconnue du Jesus Christ* (1894) and *Jesus in India* (1899, 1908, see Roza Bal, *Jesus in Ahmadiyya Islam*) and revived in 1980s esotericism (Holger Kersten 1981, 1983).

There also exist notable similarities in Christian and Hindu theology, most notably in that both religions present a trinitarian view of **God**. The Holy Trinity of Christianity, consisting of the Father, Son, and **Holy Spirit**, is sometimes seen as roughly analogous to the Trimurti of Hinduism, whose members -- **Brahma**, **Vishnu**, and **Shiva** -- are seen as the three principal manifestations of Brahman, or **Godhead**. In Hinduism (also in Jainism and Sikhism), the concept of moksha is akin to that of Buddhism's nirvana, as well as Christianity's doctrine of salvation.

Swami Tripurari states:

... in theory the sinners of the world are the beneficiaries of **Christ's** sacrifice, but it is **God** the father for whose pleasure **Christ** underwent the crucifixion, even when the father's joy in this scenario lies in the salvation of sinners. **Christ** represents the intermediary between **God** and humanity, and his life aptly illustrates the fact that it is sacrifice by which we come to meet our maker.

Thus in **Christ** the Divine teaches us “the way” more than he does the goal. The **Christ** conception represents “the way” in the sense that the way is sacrifice, out of which love arises. The Krishna conception represents that for which we not only should, but must sacrifice, compelled by

the **Godhead's** irresistible attributes, etc. depicted therein.

Vedanta from the 19th century has influenced some Christian thinkers (See also: Pierre Johanns, Abhishiktananda, Bede Griffiths).