

World Religions and False Cults

Part 2 - Hinduism

The History of Hinduism

Hinduism is believed to have roots dating as far back as 2,500 BC. There is no one individual who founded the religion, rather its beliefs originated with early civilizations in India. It is the primary religion in India, but has spread to other countries where people from India have immigrated. It has also gained interest among younger generations in Western cultures due to its embrace of mankind's basic "goodness," its acceptance of other beliefs, and its focus on the spiritual world over the material world. Hinduism has about 900 million followers, with 1.2 to 1.5 million in the US and Canada.

Core Beliefs of Hinduism

It is difficult to determine the exact beliefs of Hinduism because Hindu teachings do not hold to a "set truth" and therefore their beliefs vary greatly from sect to sect. Their main scriptures are the Vedas and Upanishads (among others), and their society is broken into a caste system which identifies people in one of four classes: Brahmin - most privileged, priests; Kshatriya - warriors, governing class; Vaishya - commoners, middle class workers; and Shudra - slaves, manual laborers. Their actions result in good or bad karma which determines which class they will be born into in their next life. Key views:

- God: 330 million gods/goddesses exist, though a Hindu may worship one, many or none at all. The main "god" is Brahman, viewed as a principle or the "World Soul".
- Mankind: There is no God we have sinned against. Good karma is sought, mainly through works (giving offerings to gods), knowledge (meditation), or devotion to a certain god.
- Salvation: The goal is to escape the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (reincarnation) by reaching nirvana, at which time an individual becomes one with Brahman.

Keys for Evangelism

- Since Hindu beliefs are so diverse, when speaking to a Hindu, begin by asking what they personally believe.
- Focus on Jesus Christ as God's revelation of Himself, emphasizing the fact that He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life". Explain an accurate understanding of sin toward God, and the good news of salvation by grace through faith.