

3 R's of CHRISTIANITY

Gun shots disturbed the silence I had been experiencing for more than a week at this isolated cottage 1 1/2 hours west of London, England in the countryside of the Cotswolds. This was where I went for solitary retreats to escape the stress of living in crowded London. As I looked out the window I could see that hunters were in the field shooting at pheasant. I was horrified that they were killing these innocent creatures.

I then realized that the over 100 hours I had spent studying Hinduism over the previous weeks had effected my perspective. My study had been done in order to teach a course on Hinduism and the New Age at our church's school of missionary orientation. One must be careful when they study cults or false religions. I had become so immersed in the thought pattern of spiritual mysticism and Hinduism, that my thinking had been effected. I had also been reading of the spiritual experiences of Harvey Cox, a Harvard theologian who had gone to Mexico to learn about the spiritual experiences of the shamans. They enter altered states of consciousness either through deep meditation or through psychedelic drugs and practice divination and healing. He wrote a book, *Turning East: Why Americans Look to the Orient for Spirituality*.

India is the most religious nation in the world with 330 million gods. Around 1 billion persons in India (80% of the population) practice Hinduism. The goal of a Hindu is moksha, to be liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth and to reach oneness with the ultimate reality and full enlightenment. This will take time, which includes many lifetimes, thus the necessity of reincarnation. One could come back as a human or even as an animal. That is why Hinduism leads to fatalism and passivity to suffering and evil. One does not interfere with another person or animal, because you may be tampering with their karma. Karma is the sum of a person's actions in this life and in previous lives. It is seen as deciding their fate in future existences. You cannot achieve liberation as a woman, you must first be reincarnated as a man to have any chance for freedom from the endless cycle death and rebirth.

Back to the cottage. As I resumed thoughts of Hinduism I remembered C.S. Lewis and his remarks that there were two main religions to consider....Christianity and Hinduism (Islam is the greatest of Christian heresies and Buddhism the greatest Hindu heresy. All that was best of Judaism and Plato survives in Christianity).

It was then that God brought to my mind the words of the Apostle Paul.

'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 1 Thessalonians 5:23

As I pondered that truth, it suddenly came to me that Hinduism and Christianity were totally opposite. It was even evident in the order of how each comes to full salvation. **For us Christians, our salvation begins in our spirit, and continues to our soul and then to our body.** For a Hindu, it is the opposite. It begins from the body, to soul and then to the spirit. Christianity is straightforward, Hinduism is very complex as we shall briefly discuss.

Hinduism has 3 or 4 paths to liberation from the reincarnation cycle and into full self-realization and enlightenment. They all include various forms of yoga. Yoga means union....becoming one with god. A Hindu can choose the path they will pursue out of the following:

1. Karma Yoga - The way of action. Do good deeds and your duty in life without any selfish expectations.
2. Jnana Yoga - The way of knowledge. This is the most difficult path. One reads and learns from wise masters.
3. Raja Yoga (Royal yoga) - The way of meditation. One goes to secluded locations to leave the material realm and to focus on the god within and achieve a state of higher consciousness. Some of these yogis go through unusual manipulations of the body and seek to control it. Some yogis can control their own heart beat and even their breathing to almost the point of cessation. They hope to enter into the psychic and spiritual realm. They may do this for a great number of years. This path starts with body positioning, then an emptying of the mind in order to get into the spirit world.
4. Bhakti Yoga - The way of devotion. This is the most popular path among Hindus. Each Hindu home has a deity they have chosen to be devoted to. They have a shrine in their home with the image of their god which they honor with offerings of flowers, incense, food, hymns and prayers. It is common to light a small lamp near the god, then pass ones hands above the flame and draw its light to ones forehead in expressing ones hope for enlightenment. India has over 600,000 rural villages. One can see little shrines set up throughout the land where devotees can briefly stop to honor a deity.

There are many other other types of yoga and many diverse expressions in Hinduism. Hopefully this snapshot of Hindu beliefs will give you an appreciation of the blessing we have in knowing Christ Jesus. (Note: I did not just say Christ....for even the new agers and others are expecting a Christ figure to show up again, but it is not the Lord Jesus Christ. In another message sometime I will describe an experience I had the first the summer in London in 1983 which relates to that topic)

The 3 R's of Christianity. The true and living God is complex but he has made the way to Himself very clear and simple. In Christianity there is only **one God expressed in 3 persons... Father, Son and Holy Spirit.** The way to God is not many ways but one way. Jesus did not say that He was a way to God but that He was the only way.

'I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me.' - John 14:6

In many religions such as Hinduism, Jesus is accepted but only has just an addition to their many other gods. We will have a another message on the uniqueness of Jesus. The way to our salvation does not take years or many lifetimes as some people believe. It just requires an encounter with Jesus Christ which leads to the first R.

1. **Regeneration.** This takes place in our spirit. It happens in an instant. We pass from death to life. - John 5:24 (the new birth discussed in another message)

This includes 3 R's.

- a. **Repent** of sin and the old way of living and thinking...
- b. **Receive** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord ...put on the new man!
- c. **Rest** in the work of Jesus at the cross and beyond

2. **Renewal** This takes place in our soul which includes the mind and is a process of putting on the mind of Christ and thinking like him. - Romans 12:1-2
- Colossians 3:1-2

3. **Resurrection** This refers to us receiving a new body when Jesus returns to earth a second time.

This whole salvation process could be described like this in spirit, soul and body respectively.
I am saved. I am being saved. I will be saved.

In all other religions, there is no assurance of salvation. Thus, most of their time is focused on somehow reaching their god or gods and achieving favor and peace with them. In Christianity, we rest in the work that Jesus has already done.

In Hinduism, the word yoga can also mean yoke. Their path is long, hard and uncertain. It is all about striving. Also, when one finally reaches oneness with god, they lose their individuality and are merely blended into the ultimate impersonal one.

The way of Jesus is not hard. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. Through Jesus Christ we are all special as individuals. We will enter his glorious presence and be given a new and special name. All of this is more reason to rejoice in knowing Jesus. He is the only one who makes sense in history and as the one to rule in our lives.

‘Man complicates..... God simplifies’ - Joy Dawson

Thank God for the simplicity of Jesus Christ. He truly is The Way, the Truth and the Life! No more striving. We rest in him.

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