

“Round and Round We Go”

The Beliefs and Practices of Hinduism

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April 12, 2015

Slide 1

1. Today we will look at Hinduism, the oldest of the world’s great religions.
2. We will explore the origins and sacred books of Hinduism and examine the most common beliefs of Hindus.

Slide 2

1. The term “Hinduism” was given to the various beliefs of non-Muslim people living in the Indian subcontinent when those beliefs first began being observed by Europeans.
2. The term “Hindus” is derived from “Indus,” a name given to the Indian civilization that developed in the Indus River Valley.
3. As one author has stated: **“Hinduism is what Hindus do and think, and what Hindus do and think is almost everything under the sun.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 135.

Slide 3

1. Hindus, like people everywhere, have added new religious beliefs on top of old ones, so today’s beliefs are an often confusing combination of beliefs going back thousands of years.
2. As one author writes: **“Hinduism has been compared to a growing banyan tree, spreading its roots on the earth and sprouting up in many directions – we may not know where it starts or ends, nor did a single person establish it.”** Badlani, *Hinduism* at 15.

Slide 4

1. A few beliefs can be traced back the Harappan civilization, an advanced agricultural civilization that began in the Indus Valley about 5,000 years ago.
2. Little is known about the specific religious beliefs of the Harappan civilization because its language has not been translated.
3. But a large number of terra cotta representations of fertile women suggest that the first representations of gods may have been women, representing Mother Earth.

Slide 5

1. In about 1500 BC, the Indus Valley came to be dominated by Aryans, who most likely came from the steppes of what is now Iran – the word “Iran” itself is related to the word “Aryan.”
2. The Aryans added to the beliefs of the Harappan civilization their own religious beliefs, which are known today because of four books called “*Vedas*.”
3. The *Rig Veda*, the most important of these *Vedas*, is a collection of 1028 hymns of praise to the gods dating back to at least 1200 BC and maybe much earlier.
4. Hindus believe the *Vedas* were divinely revealed to ancient sages and contain immutable truths.

Slide 6

1. One belief from the time of the *Vedas* is that everything that breathes is animated by an eternal spirit called *Atman*, a word related to our word “atmosphere.”
2. It is sometimes said that Hindus believe that all living organisms possess souls.
3. A better way of expressing the Hindu belief is that the eternal *Atman* possesses a body and can possess many, many bodies over time.
4. As the *Bhagavad Gita*, which we will talk more about later, says: **“As one abandons worn-out clothes and acquires new ones, so when the body is worn out a new one is acquired by the Self, who lives within.”** *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. 2, v. 2.

Slide 7

1. Most Hindus believe that the *Atman* possessing every human being first came to earth to inhabit a simple creature or even a plant and upon death of that body was reborn into a slightly more complex organism.
2. One common image is that the *Atman* for new organisms comes into existence out of nowhere, like the bubbles developing in a pan of boiling water.
3. So long as the *Atman* possesses a non-human body, the movement from one species to another is automatic, progressing from the simplest organism to the most complex over a period of perhaps thousands of life spans.

Slide 8

1. The *Vedas* taught that human beings are to conduct their lives in accordance with natural rules of behavior called “*dharma*,” a duty that is affected by the person's age, class, occupation, and gender.

2. The progress of the *Atman* after entering a human being is determined by the law of *karma*, a word that simply means “action.”
3. Under the law of *karma*, actions taken during a person’s life that are consistent with its *dharma* are positive *karma* and acts inconsistent with its *dharma* are negative *karma*.
4. At a person’s death, a positive *karma* balance causes the *Atman* or soul to be reborn into a higher or better life and a negative *karma* balance causes the soul to be reborn into a lower or less desirable life, including that of an animal or even an insect.
5. Here is one statement of that idea: **“According to Hindu philosophy, an individual’s good and bad actions are meticulously recorded in some mystic and spiritual manner, and depending upon the performance in this life, the person is allotted his station in the next life accordingly.”** Badlani, *Hinduism* at 110.

Slide 9

1. The law of *karma* does not depend on the judgment of any god, but is seen as a law imbedded in the fabric of the universe.
2. **“Just as, according to the laws of gravity, what is dropped from a tree will fall to the ground, according to the law of karma, evil actions produce punishments and good actions produce rewards.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 147.
3. The repeating cycle of life, death and rebirth is called *samsara*, a concept that is essential to the beliefs of virtually all Hindus.
4. Hindus see the operation of *karma* as a perfect system for rewarding or punishing earthly human behavior, in part because bad choices can be corrected in this life or the next and no punishment is eternal.
5. As one practicing Hindu writes: **“In Hindu theology, no sinner, however great his sins may be, is forever lost. With true penance and good deeds to resolve the karmic debt, any sinner can become pure again.”** Badlani, *Hinduism* at 84.
6. And because the soul moves up or down one or more levels depending on the precise *karma* balance, the rewards or punishments are calibrated to the exact level necessary to obtain perfect justice.

Slide 10

1. The relationship of the law of *karma* to *dharma*, the duty to act in accordance with one’s station in life, has had an enormous impact on Indian society.
2. According to the law of *karma*, **“[e]verybody gets exactly what is deserved – we have made our beds and must lie in them.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 64.

3. Consequently, “[t]he present condition of each interior life – how happy it is, how confused or serene, how much it sees – is an exact product of what it has wanted and done in the past.” *Id.*
4. For Hindus, this is a perfect explanation for life’s inequalities and how to deal with them.

Slide 11

1. The only chance to improve life is to live this life according the rules of the game (*dharma*) so that the next life will be better than the present one.
2. One Hindu author equates the process to going to school: “[L]ife is like a school; one can learn, one can graduate, one can skip a grade or stay behind. As long as a debt of karma remains, however, a person has to keep coming back for further education.” Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita* at 34.
3. A person quietly doing his or her duty may move up to an easier life.

Slide 12

1. On the other hand, failing to live according to one’s *dharma* could mean the *Atman* would live the next life as a monkey.
2. As a result, people in the lower castes, whose duty is to serve the higher castes, tend to go about their duties without complaint, with the expectation that the next life will reward them for their unquestioning actions in accordance with their *dharma* or duty.
3. One result is the extraordinary stability of Indian society, which has continued for more than 2000 years.
4. Because Hindus believe that the same divine and eternal *Atman* that animates humans also animates animals, either in the process of coming to reside in a human or after the soul of a human has gone below human existence as a result of the law of *karma*, Hindus are very respectful of all animals.
5. Animals of all kinds are allowed to roam freely in Indian cities and towns.

Slide 13

1. Many Hindus consider cows worthy of particular respect because of all that they do for Indian society.
2. In a largely vegetarian society, they provide necessary protein in the form of yoghurt, butter and cheese.
3. Dried cow chips are used for fuel and cow dung mixed with mud is an important building material.

4. Hindus no more worship their cows than they worship human beings who they also believe temporarily house the *Atman*.
5. But, they would no more restrict the movement of their cows than they would their fellow human beings.

Slide 14

1. The *Vedas* describe more than thirty gods, **“expressing many of the same values as the deities of the Middle East and presenting the forces of nature as instinct with power, life and personality.”** Armstrong, *A History of God* at 28.
2. The most important of the Vedic gods was Indra, the king of the cosmic gods and the god of thunder and rain, shown here carrying both a sword and a lightning bolt.
3. In his powers and appearance, Indra resembled the Canaanite god Ba'al, against whom the Hebrew prophets spoke, who also carried a sword and a lightning bolt.
4. Notice the almost identical headdresses.

Slide 15

1. **“Like all ancient peoples, the Vedic Indians believed that ritual could and must repair the depleted energies of the natural world.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 96.
2. So the *Vedas* describe rituals that included burnt offerings, which were carried to the gods in the smoke.
3. These rituals were presided over by the Brahmins, members of the highest caste.
4. As one author notes: **“Echoes of Vedic sacrifice can be heard today in the sacred fires that continue to burn in Hindu temples worldwide.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 141.
5. Parts of the *Rig Veda* are still recited in those rituals, although the Aryan gods are no longer very important.

Slide 16

1. In approximately 600 B.C., at about the time of the Jewish exile to Babylon, Indians began producing 200 works known as the *“Upanishads,”* sometimes called the *“New Testament”* of Hinduism because they modified the beliefs set out in the *Vedas*.
2. The *Upanishads*, considered revealed truth by most Hindus, arose in a period often called the *“Axial Age”* because of a dramatic change in religious beliefs that took place in many parts of the world – the nature gods began being replaced by gods that transcended nature.

3. A fundamental teaching of the *Upanishads* is that there is a single and transcendent god called “Brahman” representing ultimate truth and reality and beyond human conception.
4. This is one of the descriptions of Brahman: **“Oh, the wonder of joy! I am the food of life, and I am he who eats the food of life: I am the two in One. I am the first-born of the world of truth, born before the gods, born in the centre of immortality. I have gone beyond the universe, and the light of the sun is my light.”**
The Upanishads
5. Brahman is sometimes described as what is left when everything that can be conceived by the human mind is eliminated.
6. As described by the *Upanishads*, Brahman is said to be “without attributes” and is seen as the transcendent reality **“behind the façade of these many gods”** of the Vedas. Badlani, *Hinduism* at 53.

Slide 17

1. The *Upanishads* sought to move religious focus from the rituals of the *Vedas* to introspection and study by teaching that the divine essence of the transcendent Brahman can be found at the heart of every human being.
2. As one author explains: **“Underlying the human self and animating it is a reservoir of being that never dies, is never exhausted, and is unrestricted in consciousness and bliss. The infinite center of every life, this hidden self or *Atman*, in no less than *Brahman*, the Godhead.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 21.

Slide 18

1. The traditional Hindu greeting of “*Namaste*” means: **“I bow to the divine in you.”**
2. It recognizes that **“[t]he individual soul is divine. The essence of each of us is uncreated, deathless and immortal. *Atman* and *Brahman* are one and the same.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 149.

Slide 19

1. Perhaps influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and others that we will talk about next week, by about 400 B.C. some Hindus had concluded that the prospect of endless birth, death and rebirth itself creates suffering.
2. One author expresses their views this way: **“As long as we inhabit flesh and bones, we are destined to suffer. Yet death offers no release either because, after we die, we will be reborn in other bodies and repeat again and again the sorrowful cycle of life, death and rebirth.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 147.

3. Part of the suffering is simply the realization that later lives can be affected adversely by choices made today.

Slide 20

1. So, the goal of Hindus became **“not to escape from this world to some heavenly paradise, but to escape from heaven and earth altogether.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 136.

2. The end of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth is called *“moksha.”*

3. The *Upanishads* teach that **“[i]f the sage could discover the inner heart of his own being, he would automatically enter into the divine reality and liberate himself from the terror of mortality.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 149.

4. One practicing Hindu describes the process this way: **“By careful study the seeker unravels the mystery of his inner life until he reaches the core of his supreme Self.”** Parthasarathy, *The Symbolism of Hindu Gods and Rituals* at 56.

5. The process of meditation to understand the incomprehensible nature of Brahman is usually aided by a teacher and requires great mental powers, especially those of concentration and discernment.

6. The process can include repeating, either audibly or in the mind, the sound AUM, which itself is considered to be sacred.

7. When there has been a complete elimination of all demands of the ego and the truth of Brahman is finally seen, the *Atman* passes into complete identification with Brahman.

8. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says: **“They are forever free who renounce all selfish desires and break away from the ego cage of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine’ to be united with the Lord. This is the supreme state. Attain to this, and pass from death to immortality.”** *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. 2, v. 71.

9. Using the metaphor of the bubbling water, the bubble simply disappears in the water from which it came and does not enter another body.

10. The process of ending *samsara*, the continuing reincarnation of the soul, through meditation and wisdom is called *“jnana yoga.”*

11. For Hindus who practice *jnana yoga*, **“Moksha was something you achieved by yourself, not something handed to you from on high.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 152.

Slide 21

1. Relying on the teachings of the *Upanishads*, virtually all Hindus insist that they **“believe in one god – Brahman.”** Shouler, *The Everything Hindu Book* at 234.
2. But there are images all over India to which people pray and pledge devotion.
3. Hindu parents teach their children about the heroic exploits of these images and their consorts.
4. So what do Hindus mean when they say that they believe in one god?

Slide 22

1. As might be expected, most Hindus have found it difficult to relate to the conception of Brahman, set out in the *Upanishads*, as entirely without attributes and beyond human comprehension.
2. As Huston Smith writes: **“To expect our minds to corner the infinite is like asking a dog to understand Einstein’s equations with its nose.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 60.
3. As a result, **“India has been content to encourage the devotee to conceive of Brahman as either personal or transpersonal, depending on which carries the most exalted meaning for the mind in question.”** *Id.* at 62.
4. **“The notion that god is impersonal and ineffable is now confined to the rare philosopher. For everyone else God is personal, emotional, and even erotic.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 153.
5. For all but those rare philosophers, Hindus form an attachment to one of the personal manifestations of Brahman because **“God can be loved most readily in human form because our hearts are already attuned to loving people.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 36.

Slide 23

1. Ordinary Hindus pick a personal deity and build shrines in their homes so they can worship it every day, perhaps even viewing it as the supreme deity to which the others are subordinate.
2. The fire pit in this simple shrine, in which a vegetable sacrifice is made, follows a practice that goes all the way back to the Vedic traditions of a fire sacrifice by the priests on behalf of the community.

Slide 24

1. The Sanskrit word for these images is *murti*, which means “embodiment.”

2. Hindus prefer “deity” as an English translation of *murti* to avoid confusion with Brahman, whom they consider their only God in the Christian sense of a transcendent reality.
3. These deities are seen as manifestations of the transcendent Brahman, resulting in a Brahman “with attributes.”
4. One author says that Hindu sages have “**compared this phenomenon with the precious metal gold, of which many ornaments are formed even though it essentially remains unchanged.**” Badlani, *Hinduism* at 134.
5. This idea is close to the way the Cappadocian Fathers tried to explain their conception of the Holy Trinity, three expressions of the same transcendent reality.
6. They said that three copper coins could be minted from the same ingot and therefore all had the same substance, but the coins clearly had different expressions because the faces were different.

Slide 25

1. One approximation of the way Hindus view the relationships of their personal deities to the transcendent Brahman is the way some Christians view guardian angels.
2. For Hindus, their chosen deities are no less real than guardian angels are for some Christians.
3. And Hindus no more see their reliance on their personal deities as destroying their belief in Brahman as the only God than Christians see their belief in angels as meaning they believe in multiple gods.

Slide 26

1. For Hindus today, the most important manifestations of Brahman are Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, which “**represent the three fundamental powers of nature which are manifest in the world viz, creation, destruction and maintenance.**” Parthasarathy, *The Symbolism of Hindu Gods and Rituals* at 21.
2. As Karen Armstrong writes: “**In effect, Hindus developed a Trinity: Brahman [sic], Shiva and Vishnu were three symbols or aspects of a single, ineffable reality.**” Armstrong, *A History of God* at 85.

Slide 27

1. Hindu deities appear in numerous forms and have different names depending on the area in which they are worshipped.
2. Many are amalgamations of earlier deities and Vedic gods.

3. This is Shiva as “Lord of the Dance.”
4. Shiva may be derived from a combination of ancient fertility gods and Vedic gods and is one of the most popular of the Hindu deities.

Slide 28

1. Shiva is shown here combined with his consort.
2. Some people claim that the reason the Hindu deities are shown in various forms is to demonstrate that they are not intended to be anything more than imperfect representations of the divine and cannot be taken literally.

Slide 29

1. Vishnu is said to have had incarnations called “avatars.”
2. **“At times of historical crisis, Vishnu gave up the bliss of heaven to save the world. It was said that he had made ten such appearances: Krishna was the most important of these avatars, but Vishnu had also become manifest as a fish, a bear, a dwarf, and a tortoise.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 449.
3. The avatars are a way to integrate ancient gods into the *triumurti*.

Slide 30

1. One of the most popular of the Hindu deities is Ganesha, the son of Shiva who is always represented as an elephant with a broken tusk.
2. Hindus may wash their deities daily and feed them the essence of their offerings, a practice that goes back to the Vedas.
3. The practice of becoming devoted to a chosen incarnation of Brahman is called “*bhakti yoga*,” meaning devotion.
4. Unlike those who seek to identify Brahman within them, **“[t]he bhakti will strive not to identify with God, but to adore God with every element of his or her being.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 33.
5. As Karen Armstrong states: **“The bhakti religions recognized that not everybody had the same powers of concentration; some might find the disciplined imitation of Krishna in their daily lives easier than long hours of meditation. Devotees could begin by listening to talks about Vishnu/Krishna; then they could start to recite his name, while thinking of his great feats of love for humanity. They could make a simple offering before his shrine and learn to consider him a friend, until eventually they were able, without any excessive straining, to surrender to him entirely.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 448.

Slide 31

1. More than 2,000 years ago, Hindu purists claimed that those who practiced *bhakti yoga* could never experience *moksha*, the end of the cycle of rebirths of the *Atman*.
2. That all changed with the writing of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a 700 verse poem that forms the core of beliefs for most Hindus.
3. The *Bhagavad Gita* is included in the *Mahabharata*, an epic poem including 1.8 million words organized into 200,000 verse lines, making it about eight times longer than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined.
4. It was finally completed in about 400 A.D., although parts of it are from much earlier periods.
5. These shrines in southern India pay homage to the *Mahabharata*, which is as important to Hindus as the Bible is to Christians.

Slide 32

1. The *Bhagavad Gita* sought to bridge the gap between the philosophers and everyone else by teaching that the deities had been sent by Brahman to help humans achieve *moksha*.
2. It describes why Vishnu came to earth in different forms: **“Whenever dharma declines and the purpose of life is forgotten, I manifest myself on earth. I am born in every age to protect the good, to destroy evil, and to reestablish dharma.”** *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. 4, v. 7-8.
3. Karen Armstrong puts this into terms easily recognizable by most Christians: **“By making the loving ‘descent’ into his *avatara*, Vishnu revealed himself to be the savior god par excellence, who had laid aside the outward trappings of divinity to help suffering humanity.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 449.

Slide 33

1. In fact, some Hindus, including Gandhi, see Jesus as another manifestation of Brahman, whose followers are simply practicing *bhakti yoga* with their own chosen representation of the divine.
2. As Huston Smith writes: **“Indeed, from the Hindu point of view, Christianity is one great brilliantly lit *bhakti* highway toward God, other paths being not neglected but less clearly marked.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 33.
3. But Hindus reject the Christian claim that Jesus is God’s only incarnation.

Slide 34

1. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, *moksha* can be accomplished through *bhakti yoga*, devotion to chosen manifestations of Brahman.
2. As it says: **“Fill your mind with me; love me; serve me; worship me always. Seeking me in your heart, you will at last be united with me.”** *The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. 9, v. 34.
3. In fact, the *Bhagavad Gita* favored *bhakti yoga* because it is easier for most people: **“The yoga of renunciation (through spiritual knowledge) and the yoga of action (done as offering to God) both lead to supreme bliss. Of the two, however, the yoga of action (being easier to practice) is superior to the yoga of renunciation.”** *Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. 5, v. 2.
4. Ganesha is considered the symbol of someone who has obtained the power to recognize the ultimate reality of Brahman living within.
5. As a result, even Hindus who have chosen other deities to worship pray to Ganesha to overcome their egotistical desires so they can experience *moksha*.
6. Unlike those who seek *moksha* through their own mental efforts, these followers of *bhakti yoga* seek *moksha* **“through the mercy and grace of [their] chosen god.”** Prothero. *God is Not One* at 152.
7. They also pray for realization of their legitimate goals in *this* life.
8. **“Devotees ask their chosen gods to heal their arthritis, protect their harvest, and guide their loved ones through rites of passage – birth, marriage, childbirth, and death. The point of this world is not simply to get out of it, but to prosper in it, and your family with you.”** *Id.* at 153.

Slide 35

1. People in small villages tend to worship the same deity.
2. So, in the villages the only temple may be to the predominant deity of the village.

Slide 36

1. This is a Hindu temple in the country side.
2. Like churches throughout the world, its tower points to the location in the heavens of the unseen Brahman, while people go inside to worship their chosen incarnation of Brahman.

Slide 37

1. In the cities, people have more choices.
2. There are often several temples within a short distance of each other, each devoted to a different deity.
3. Groups of people who worship a particular deity tend to see themselves as different from other believers in ways analogous to how members of different denominations see each other – the ultimate God is the same, but how he is worshipped is different.

Slide 38

1. At the center of each temple is an image of a deity – this is one representation of Shiva.
2. Hindus do not agree on how the images in their temples relate to the gods.
3. Karen Armstrong describes the view of many Hindus: **“The effigy was very important in *bhakti*: the image of Shiva, Vishnu, or Krishna was their ‘embodiment,’ thought to contain a real and physically manifest divine presence. The god had descended into his statue at the moment of its consecration, so that it became the abode of the divine.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 450.
4. However, **others say that these images are symbols pointing beyond themselves to divinity.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 134.
5. Whatever their views about whether the deity is actually in the statue, Hindus coming face to face with a physical representation of their chosen deity have an undeniable spiritual experience.

Slide 39

1. After walking around the temple, they come to the statue located in the center of the temple and look it in the eyes.
2. They hand the priest an offering, such as a coconut, which has the advantage of being easily broken in half.
3. The priest divides the offering, offers half to the deity, blesses the other half and returns it to the worshipper, who goes home blessed and satisfied that he has done his duty to the deity.
4. As one author writes: **“While many prayers and offerings are made for the fulfillment of wishes, the ultimate objective is the offering of the self to become at one with the deity.”** Bowker, *World Religions* at 34.

5. Hindus do not go to temples on a regular basis, but when they feel a special need to pray or on special occasions.

Slide 40

1. For most Hindus, water is a very important part of worship.
2. For many, the Ganges River is considered a living manifestation of Brahman, capable of answering prayers and moving devotees toward *moksha*.

Slide 41

1. To the extent possible, temples are built along ponds and rivers.
2. Before entering the temple, worshippers cleanse themselves in the water, a custom common to many religions.

Slide 42

1. When Hindus could not build their temples near water; they created stepwells extending up to 50 feet underground that could serve as temples.
2. The Adalaj stepwell near Ahmedabad, Gujarat, is one of the most famous.

Slide 43

1. Hindus tend to recognize four legitimate goals of human existence, of increasing importance.
2. The first legitimate goal of Hindus is for pleasure, including sexual pleasure.
3. **“As long as the basic rules of morality are obeyed, you are free to seek all the pleasure you want.”** Smith, *The World's Religions* at 14.

Slide 44

1. That goal, called “*kama*,” is reflected in explicit scenes on the walls of some Hindu temples.
2. Hindus believe that scenes such as these remind them that the pervasive essence of Brahman is in all legitimate human activities and that, no matter what they are doing, they are close to the divine.

Slide 45

1. The second legitimate goal of Hindus is the accumulation of wealth, fame and power.

2. This goal may explain the fact that up to forty percent of all Silicon Valley companies are headed by Hindus, who are driven to succeed.
3. It may also explain why nearly half of all Hindu families in the United States earn more than \$100,000 a year.
4. Achieving this goal of worldly success, called “*artha*,” must be accomplished in this life.
5. Historically, the goal of wealth was reserved for the upper castes.
6. Lower castes were expected to serve the needs of those higher.

Slide 46

1. The third goal of Hindus is to act toward others in accordance with the sacred duty of *dharma*, a duty they see as based on natural law built into the universe.
2. Hindus act in accordance with their *dharma* to increase their *karma* balance at the end of their lives, so that they will be born again into a life that is more in keeping with their other goals.

Slide 47

1. The final goal of existence is achieving *moksha*.
2. For Hindus, obtaining release from suffering through connection with the divine, whether through *jnana yoga* or *bhakti yoga*, is an extended process.
3. It may require more than one lifetime to accomplish.
4. As one author writes: **“Hindu philosophy believes in the continuity of the soul journey through eons of birth and death cycles until it becomes perfected after becoming free from all sins and evils. The body is used as a working place to purify the soul, to make it fit for the final ascent into the Divine.”** Badlani, *Hinduism* at 122.
5. As a result, Hindus tend to view the process of connecting with the ultimate reality to be like climbing a mountain.
6. Hindus see different ways of approaching the ultimate reality, whether called Brahman or God or by any other name, as equally valid ways of climbing the mountain of spiritual truth.
7. As the *Rig Veda* famously states: **“Truth is one [but] people call it by various names.”** Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita* at 22.
8. Because Hindus believe that the mind of God is beyond human comprehension, they reject claims of other religions to be the only way up the mountain as diversions from their search for ultimate truth.

9. Here is how Huston Smith describes that view: **“Normally, people will follow the path [to truth] that rises from the plains of their own civilization; those who circle the mountain, trying to bring others around to their paths, are not climbing.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 73.

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