

# Common Ground

Hinduism is open source faith

## CORE OF HINDUISM

**Brahman**---Supreme existence or absolute reality

**Avatar**---the notion of incarnation

**Karma and Samsara**---Fatalism and Reincarnation

**Nirvana** – A state of non-beingness, non-becoming

**Moksha** – many pathways to heaven, ultimate release from self

**Yoga**---the union of the human spirit with the divine spirit

## KEY ARTICLES OF FAITH

**God and goddesses** – Brahman and devas (over 330 million gods and goddesses)

**Pantheism**--- God is in all, material and non-material

**Books** – Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata

**Messengers** – Several incarnations of gods and goddesses

**Caste System** – "Brahmins": the priestly class; "Kshatriyas": warriors and rulers; "Vaisyas": Farmers, merchants & lawyers; "Sudras/dalits": the lowest humans.

**End of Days**---Pralaya, cyclical destruction of the world

### What is Hinduism?

A conglomerate of diverse beliefs and traditions. Grown out of Vedas (perhaps the world's oldest scriptural texts originated in ancient India). Differs from Christianity and other Western religions in that it does not have a single founder, a specific theological system, a single system of morality, or a central religious organization, but it is the world's third largest religion, with about a billion followers worldwide.

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“I have never yet failed to get a hearing if I talk to [Hindus] about forgiveness of sins and peace and rest in your heart” **Bakht Singh**---India’s foremost church planter, pioneer of the Indian church movement.

“Religions are like soups, he said. Some, like consomme, are thin and clear (Unitarianism, Confucianism, modern Judaism); others, like minestrone, are thick and dark (paganism, "mystery religions"). Only Hinduism and Christianity are both "thin" (philosophical) and "thick" (sacramental and mysterious). But Hinduism is really two religions: "thick" for the masses, "thin" for the sages. Only Christianity is both.”

**C S Lewis**, Christian philosopher and apologist

## **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

Learn to use the Sanskrit greeting, “Namaste” . . . which means “I respect the divine in you”.

### **Fun questions**

What do you mean by the word God?

Why is the animal sacrifice mentioned in the Hindu scriptures?

Do you know that the Bible refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God, the final one to be sacrificed for the sins of humanity?

Do you personally believe that all your sins can be forgiven?

Do you have the assurance of going to heaven?

Would you like to hear my story?

## **RESOURCES:**

Ravi Zacharias, **Jesus Among Other gods: The absolute claims of the Christian message**, (Word Publishing, 2002)

To understand Hindu influence in America

Philip Goldberg, **American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West**, (Harmony, 2013)

To understand the reality of Yoga

Stefanie Syman, **The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America** (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010).

Online tool: <http://www.gotquestions.org/witnessing-Hindus.html>

<http://www.jmanjackal.net/eng/enghindu.htm>