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Hinduism and Comparative Religion

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ABSTRACT

The Hindu faith has been around for many centuries. Such a custom originated on the Indian subcontinent and greatly influenced Indian civilization. Most Indians' sense of self is deeply intertwined with their Hindu religious beliefs. However, the genuine meaning of the word "Hinduism" is frequently lost on many individuals, including those who identify as "Hindu." It has been described as both a religion and a way of life. In this essay, we'll explore the origins of Hinduism as a "way of life" and its subsequent evolution into a "religion" in an effort to address this issue. Hinduism is considered to be an ancient faith. It is not known for certain how long Hinduism has been around, although its history is said to go back more than 4000 years. Almost every country on Earth now has at least some Hindu residents, with India accounting for 90% of these believers. Almost 900 million people worldwide identify as Hindu, making it the third largest religious group after Christians and Muslims. There is also a direct link between the origins of Hinduism and the spread of Hindu principles and the Sanskrit language. Many scholars believe that Sanskrit was the language from which both proto-Indo-Aryan and proto-Indo-European developed.

Key Words: *faith, religion, origin, group, belief, dharma, culture, doctrine, truth, cosmos*

INTRODUCTION

The river Indus, which flows across northern India, is the inspiration for the name Hindu. Before the Persian invasion, this river was known as the Sindhu; nevertheless, the newcomers to India gave it the name Hindu, along with the new name Hindustan and the new name Hindus. Similarly, the word "Hindu" was first used in the sixth century BC to describe a region of India rather than a religious or ethnic group. In the Chinese literature "Record of the Western Regions," the term Hinduism appears for the first time in the context of designating a religious group. However, the use of the English word "Hinduism" to represent religious activities or beliefs is thought to be very recent. It is believed that Rajaram Mohan Roy first utilized it around 1816–17. Around the year 1830, a subset of Indians began identifying as Hindus and adopting the religion of Hinduism as a means of protesting British colonialism and differentiating themselves from other religious groups. It was a moment of great introspection among Hindus. Hindus refer to their faith as Sanatan Dharma (Eternal Faith), and unlike Christianity and Islam, they don't attribute its founding to a single person. Some such evidence exists in the Hinduism of the Indus Valley Civilization or strongly affects it. Various elements of modern Hinduism, such as the Proto Shiva seal, terracotta goddess figurines, Swastik, holy animal representations, etc. It is thus postulated that Hinduism existed in some form from that period forward.

It is widely accepted that Vedic culture marks the institutional beginnings of Hinduism. The Vedas, the Hindus' holy literature, dates back to this historical period, suggesting that this is where the earliest written evidence of Hinduism may be found. Therefore, it is evident that neither a single person nor a single date can be credited with the founding of Hinduism. However, Hinduism may be summed up in a few central tenets. Hinduism is not a religion in that its members do not submit their beliefs and actions to a higher authority. Local, regional, caste, or community based behaviors inform Hinduism's core ideas. However, there are certain fundamental concepts that may be shared by all variants.

The first major tenet of Hinduism is the notion of Brahman (Supreme being). Hinduism's core beliefs include reincarnation (Punarjanma), the soul (Atma), and liberation from rebirth (Moksha). All living things, according to the notion of Soul (Atma), possess souls (Atmas) that are like a miniature version of God.

According to Hinduism's central doctrine of karma, a person's deeds both in the past and the present and future shape their ultimate destiny. Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha are the four goals of life according to Hinduism. Once one achieves nirvana, reincarnation comes to a stop and the Atma (soul) returns to its home in the ultimate soul. The Hindu practise of yoga, whose name means "connection with God," is likewise highly significant. The question is whether or not the people are familiar with Yoga but not Hinduism. Since June 21 was designated as International Yoga Day in

2015, its popularity has increased and more people than ever before recognize yoga's tangible benefits to their overall health and well-being on all levels.

Hindus, by the way, believe in a higher power. For supreme creatures, 'Brahman' is a synonym for the nameless God, the ultimate truth, and the all-pervasive energy of the cosmos. This idea of several manifestations of a deity is where polytheism gets its start in Hinduism. In Hinduism, all things are manifestations of the divine, and it is for the benefit of humanity that various "Avatars" (Incarnations) assume various shapes and sizes. In addition, 'nature' is another deity that Hindus revere. Everything in nature, from plants to animals, is sacred in Hinduism. Nature worship has a rational scientific basis. For instance, the banyan tree is revered in Hinduism because it provides oxygen around the clock. This suggests that adherents of the Hindu faith recognized the significance of this tree. The medical Tulsi plant and the delicious Indian Goose Berry are both revered in this manner. Around the time Corona was recommended, most of us started consuming Indian Goose Berry in adequate quantities in order to meet our vitamin C needs. According to Ayurveda, it is a super food and should be consumed on a regular basis. However, the notion of the Trinity was formed much later, after the Vedic era, during which Indra was worshiped as a significant God. There are three primary deities in this view. The Hindu trinity consists of the creator Brahma, protector Vishnu, and destroyer Shiva. Goddess Shakti represents the feminine principle venerated in Hinduism. Worshiping a female version of God is not a central tenet of any other major religion. Furthermore, many gods and goddesses are associated with a wide variety of characteristics. For instance, the term "Vighnaharta," which refers to Lord Ganesha, means "remover of barriers," and "Devi Saraswati," which means "Goddess of Knowledge." For the same reason that the 'Bible' and the 'Kuran' don't have a common founder with Hinduism, there is no 'Hindu Bible' or 'Hindu Koran'. However, many books are revered in Hinduism. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda are the four earliest of these Vedas. These, in Hindu thought, stand for the unchanging truth that God imparted to the sages. Major Hindu scriptures include the Upanishads, Puranas, and the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Bhagavad Gita. There are several Hindu sects, just as there are in other faiths. Within Hinduism, the Vaishnava, Shaiva, Smartas, and Shakta schools of thought are the four most prominent. Smartas worship five deities, termed a "superior being," whereas Vaishnavas worship "Lord Vishnu." Hinduism also has several sects and sub-sects. All forms of violence are completely absent from the various Hindu traditions. There has been steady coexistence amongst all religious groups. This is because all religions share the same fundamental principles and provide no conceptual opposition to one another. Because 'tolerance' is fundamental to Hinduism, all religions freely acknowledge each other's existence.

Hindu social system

The 'Purushukta' of the 'Rig Veda' is the source of the 'Varna system,' which is the basis of social order in Hinduism. Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra are the four castes (Varnas) that make up Indian civilization. Based on their Karma, persons were classified as either Brahmans (those engaged in intellectual and spiritual pursuits), Kshatriyas (those engaged in public protection), Vaishyas (those engaged in skilled production), or Shudras (those engaged in menial labor). As time went on, the system became more rigorous, and birth order came to determine which social strata were deemed untouchable and so excluded from Varna. The lesser Varnas and the untouchables were then handled differently due to the development of 'Jatis' or 'Caste' in the Varna system. All of these bad actions damaged the social fabric. Each Varna had its own set of norms and rites specific to its hamlet. Jainism and Buddhism, which offered a less complicated alternative to Hinduism, were growing in popularity in the sixth century. Even while Buddhism and Jainism once dominated the whole Indian subcontinent, Hinduism now appears to be on the decline.

Periodic changes in Hinduism

Hinduism has survived for such a long time despite its antiquity. The most important factor is the periodic introduction and revival of reforms within Hinduism. Even whether it was the 'Bhakti movement' in southern India or the work of a variety of Acharyas. 'Alvars' and Naynar's saints were among those who spoke out against the caste system during the Bhakti movement. The continued existence of Hinduism may be attributed to innovations in the religion, such as the Bhakti movement led by Alvars and Naynar. Hinduism gradually assimilated other local cults and deities over time, including the "Naga cult," the "Yaksha-Yakshini" cult, and the famous "Jagannathpuri," who is considered a tribal god. In time, Buddha became a deified figure in Hinduism, representing a manifestation of Vishnu. Adi Shankaracharya must be mentioned whenever the religion of Hinduism is discussed. The 'Advaita philosophy' was developed by 'AdiShankaracharya' in the eighth century AD, when he first began to publicly acknowledge Hinduism. Only Brahman (the supreme deity) is real; all else is an expression of it. Shankaracharya is credited for spreading Hinduism across India. A number of Hindu pilgrimage sites—including Sringeri's Sharda Peeth, Dwarika's Kalika Peeth, Badrikashram's Jyoti Peeth, and Jagannath Puri's Govardhan Peeth—were established by him. The four 'Dham' are the most sacred places in Hinduism. By doing so, he also created a geographical link between Hindu communities. He also spread the 'Panchayatana', the cult of the five gods, where the Hindu pantheon of Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, and Shakti is venerated as one. All of them, it is said, are manifestations of Brahman. By doing so, Sankaracharya was able to bring together previously separate religious groups. He did more than only bring Hinduism's many factions together; he also streamlined the text. Besides Sankara, two more major figures in the evolution of Hinduism were Ramanuja and Madhavacharya. In addition to this, several 'Nirguna' and 'Saguna' saints did great work to keep Hinduism alive throughout the dark ages. Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Meerabai, and Tulsidas were all well-known saints with significant

parts to play in this story. The modern age saw further praise for Hinduism from "Raja Ram Mohan Roy," "Swami Dayanand Saraswati," and "Swami Vivekananda." These social and religious reformers in the 19th century made it harder for Christian missionaries to convert Hindus compared to their success in Africa and other colonies. By delivering an inspiring address at the 1893 World Religion Conference in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda helped bring Hinduism to a wider audience. A newspaper in the United States responded to Swami Ji's talk by asking, "What is the need to send Christian missionaries to such a rich religious traditional country?"

Hindu scriptures provide support for religious change at this opportune moment. In addition, Hindus believe that anytime faith is threatened, God incarnates to save the day. Thus, Hindu thought might provide further justification for these reform initiatives. Because of its flexibility and willingness to change, Hinduism has endured for so long. They pronounce him immortal, which is a translation of the Sanataname namahuhutaadyah syat punarnavah explanation of the phrase found in the Atharva Veda. But he still has a chance to start again today. What sets Hinduism apart from other religions is its diversity.

Hindu Philosophy

Because Hindu philosophy is so malleable, it welcomes all ideas, even if the Hindu faith contains multiple Gods, texts, religious traditions, etc. Hindus hold the view that there are many paths to the same ultimate goal. Hinduism recognizes the validity of other faiths as well. There is no idea in Hinduism that there is no other path to God save Hinduism. Since Hinduism is accepting of different faiths and spiritual practices, the idea of coercive conversion is foreign to the religion. Hinduism has never waged religiously motivated war against other faiths. Both the 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam' and 'Sarvebhavantsukhina' tenets and the Hindu commitment to 'dharma' prioritize the collective good. A similar idea of universal human equality at birth may be found in Hinduism. An old song, "Ajyesthasoakanishthasoetesambhratarovahduhusaubhagya," which translates to "no one is superior, none is inferior," demonstrates this to us plainly. We are all brothers on the same march to success. For this reason, it doesn't matter whether you worship Shiva, Krishna, Shakti, or nobody at all; you may still call yourself Hindu. To be considered a devout Hindu, one need not regularly attend religious services, read the holy books, or even visit a temple. Everyone is sacred in Hinduism. No matter how many differences there exist in the world, if you consider yourself a Hindu, you will always be one with the other 900 million Hindus.

However, the cross-cultural method is a useful tool for anthropologists interested in studying cultural adaptations, cultural development, and cultural migration. To determine the extent to which one group's beliefs, practices, and values vary from those of another, the cross-cultural method examines and contrasts many cultural examples. As we've seen in this class, anthropologists don't give much more weight to the world's largest religions than they do to those followed by tiny, obscure, or ancient communities. In our attempt to catalogue and make sense of human religious diversity, it seems only fair that we investigate the complete gamut of that diversity rather than limiting ourselves to the most popular manifestations. While we acknowledge the significance of identifying the similarities throughout the world's main faiths, we also acknowledge the significant variances that have arisen as a result of environmental conditions, historical events, etc. In an effort to provide an exhaustive overview of the world's dominant belief systems, this course will examine the similarities and differences between the teachings of the world's main religions.

The ability to examine religions objectively and independently of one's own religious views will serve you well throughout this session and the rest of the course. Try to adopt an anthropologist's perspective and attitude by recognising all of the religious belief systems we'll be studying as equally valid, rather than imposing your own culturally constrained definition of ultimate "truth" on all.

Any ancient religion is comparable to the attic of an old house, according to Swami Bhaskarananda in "The Essentials of Hinduism." If the attic is not cleaned often, it will eventually become useless. Similarly, if a religion isn't periodically refreshed and modernized, it will become irrelevant and unable to connect with modern society.

In this paragraph, Swami Bhaskarananda makes a crucial point: for faiths to retain their adherents, they must adapt to the times, the environment, the political climate, and the social climate. This module will focus on exploring this question in depth. We're going to examine the cultural contexts that have contributed to the survival of the world's major religions from their earliest days.

To comprehend how global religions have evolved through time, keep in mind that anthropologists subscribe to two main theoretical frameworks:

- According to proponents of the evolutionary theory, religions throughout the globe grew and changed over time to accommodate various groups' spiritual and moral aspirations. Edward Burnett Tylor is the original proponent of the evolutionary method, arguing that all religions inevitably progress along a single linear path. While it's true that religions don't develop progressively, it's also true that they undergo shifts and modifications throughout time.

- Diffusionism is the other main concept. Some individuals, known as "diffusionists," believe that humans are responsible for the worldwide dissemination of religion. We do this through imparting our ideas and customs to others, who may then take them up as their own. When we relocate to a new area, we also take our traditions and ways of life with us. The world's faiths are expanding like never before in modern times due to factors like globalization and widespread migration. The spread of religious and spiritual ideas is facilitated by modern communication technologies. The diffusionist theory is frequently criticized for oversimplifying the spread of religion. Diffusionism, in its most severe version, denies the possibility of any type of spiritual innovation at all. Instead, only a small number of ancient civilizations were responsible for spreading their religious concepts across the world. However, originality is a reality.

Both points of view have some validity since religion is dynamic and constantly spreading over the world.

Origin of Religion

A question that's frequently asked in educational settings is "Who were the first humans to have religion?" Religion, however, may have existed long before modern humans. How do we know this? Hominins refer to our primate forefathers. Burial evidence was found with two hominid remains that date back between 500,000 and 30,000 years. *Homo heidelbergensis* peoples buried their deceased in shallow graves with symbolic objects like a pink handaxe that would break if used. The bodies of the deceased were placed in predetermined placements, and symbolic art and burial gifts were also left with the bodies. It has been suggested that the earliest concepts of spiritualism or an afterlife may have been held by these hominins [1] due to their large brain size, linguistic ability, and dreaming abilities. Because of this, archeologists and anthropologists wonder whether the burial rites were an early kind of religion.

This might be a way of showing respect for the departed or an indication of the belief that those who have passed on would need material possessions in the next world. As you likely already know, religious beliefs and cultural practices revolve heavily on burial rites (death rites). Religion, therefore, may have been present on Earth long before the appearance of modern people.

Due to the cultural evolution of every aspect of the word "religion" across human and pre-human history, identifying the "first" religion may be next to difficult. This is why we should go on to discussing the earliest form of written religion. Anthropologists and archaeologists have a wealth of data to work with because to the fact that, with the advent of the first written language, mankind started recording their religious tales and ceremonial instructions.

The ancient Mesopotamians were the first people to establish a written language. They lived in what is now Iraq. Cuneiform is the name for this writing system, which was created about 3200 BCE. The cuneiform text is partially preserved on clay tablets, which are continually being unearthed. The spiritual worldviews of the ancient Mesopotamians have been documented in writing, providing anthropologists and archaeologists with valuable insight into the origins of human religion.

The *Enuma Elish* was a sacred book for the ancient Mesopotamians. As James [2] points out, the *Enuma Elish* is the ancient Mesopotamian world's version of "The Bible," and it narrates the account of a supreme deity who created mankind to serve the divine. In the polytheistic religion of Mesopotamia, ziggurats, or large communal temples, were regarded as the true residences of the gods (the belief in multiple divine entities). The Mesopotamians built these gigantic, ornate towers because they believed that the ziggurats were where their gods lived.

Remember that anthropologists analyze myths to learn about a culture's worldview, and that we use myth comparison to find universals and uniques among societies. Written in epic form about 2100 BCE, "The Epic of Gilgamesh" is perhaps the most famous of all Mesopotamian myths. Gilgamesh, the demigod hero of "The Epic of Gilgamesh," embarks on several adventures throughout the epic. The account of the great flood inside the epic is, nonetheless, of special significance. The story of Noah's Ark as related in ancient Hebrew writings, which are still highly revered by modern Jews, Muslims, and Christians, has remarkable resemblance to the great deluge as it is depicted in the epic. The epic's English translator, Assyriologist Andrew George, asserts that the biblical story of Noah and the Mesopotamian flood myth have remarkable similarities.

How then could two such divergent faiths have the same myth? Both faiths may trace their origins to the same geographical region and about the same era. Let's take a good look at this. We refer to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity as the "Abrahamic religions" since its founding figures, Abraham, have common ground in the sacred scriptures of all three. It is widely held that Abraham established Judaism by establishing a covenant between God and his people. Some academics believe he existed in real life, while others think he was only a fictional creation meant to represent the experiences of many individuals from his historical period. Either way, the tale of Abraham informs us that he was born in the Mesopotamian city about 1700 BCE. Given that Abraham was born, raised, and implemented as a religious leader in Ancient Mesopotamia (Instead, if he was created by a group of authors, they were based in Ancient Mesopotamia at the time of writing.), it's safe to assume that this culture had a significant impact on Abraham's religious ideals. Early Hebrew

authors would have been intelligent upper-class individuals, thus they would have been acquainted with common Mesopotamian tales whether Abraham was a single person or a community of people living nearby.

The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Tanakh, are very similar to accounts from ancient Mesopotamia. The two faiths have a lot of similar principles. Look about the parallels among:

- A "primeval sea" before creation is mentioned by both religions,
- Think that people were created out of clay.
- Both depict disastrous floods
- Both depict accounts of the epidemic

The tower of Babel myth is the Judeo-Christian explanation for the origin of so many tongues. Ziggurats are the architectural inspiration for the Tower of Babel fable. In the tale, protagonists construct a tower to the heavens in an effort to convey their plight to the almighty. God becomes enraged by their arrogance and destroys the tower as a result. People tumble out of the tower and into a variety of languages. That way, they'd be cut off from one another and unable to construct another tower to the heavens. Scholars from Mesopotamia believe that this was written by persecuted Jews during their period in Mesopotamia. Jews were a small religious minority at the era. They endured discrimination because their faith was labeled "cultish." The Jews saw the Mesopotamians investing cash into what they thought were fraudulent prophets and false gods. Ziggurats are a terrible waste of time and resources, according to the political perspective of "Tower of Babel."

Hinduism

Hinduism is unique among major global religions in that neither its founder nor a single sacred scripture are known. In contrast to Catholicism, which is governed by a central authority (the Vatican), Hinduism lacks a single defining body. As a result, Hinduism is seen as a very malleable faith, since it allows for localized recognition, celebration, and worship of the divine throughout India. Hinduism, the world's third-largest religion, is the oldest of the world's major religions.

Central to both Hinduism and Buddhism is the belief in reincarnation, or the cycle of life, death, and rebirth known as samsara. Karma, according to Hindu belief, decides whether or not a person will have another human or animal life. The way one is reincarnated in the future life depends on the choices and deeds taken in this one. "Moksha" in Hinduism refers to the ultimate objective of escaping samsara, the cycle of rebirth and death, and therefore the suffering of this world.

The dharma, or ultimate cosmic truth, is the standard by which every Hindu should live their lives. Everyone in this faith has responsibilities that must be met if they are to follow the dharma. Hinduism stands apart from other faiths because of its emphasis on introspection. Private acts of devotion like contemplation, renunciation, and selfless service are typical manifestations of religious belief.

Although Hinduism has several sacred texts, the oldest is known as the Rig Veda and was composed about 1500 BCE. The Rig Veda describes how to conduct hymns of adoration to the deity and is primarily concerned with ritual practise.

The "Bhagavad Gita" is another Hindu religious text that is often cited. The "Bhagavad Gita" recounts the adventures of a historical prince named Arjuna, who was about to lead an army into battle against a rival state. The Bhagavad Gita is an epic poem about a man named Arjuna who is on the verge of a great conflict with himself. Arjuna had a vision in which the Hindu deity Krishna arrives and teaches him the dharma as he gets ready to go into war in his chariot. Arjuna insists he has no intention of hurting anyone, but Krishna insists that peace in the universe is impossible unless he does something. Krishna then reassures Arjuna that everyone's destiny is determined by their karma and that all souls survive physical death. The "Bhagavad Gita" is essentially a discussion between God and humankind, or a spiritual dialogue. Krishna assures Arjuna throughout the epic that human life is everlasting and that humans were designed to aid the gods. It is for this reason that Krishna instructs Arjuna to go to battle[3].

Hindus accept the possibility of fresh incarnations of their gods and goddesses. Hindus have shown exceptional tolerance for the gods of other faiths, such as the Buddha and Jesus, because they understand that the divine may take many forms.

Pharaohs ruled Ancient Egyptians because they were worshipped as deities. The religion of the locals was characterised by polytheism (the worship of multiple gods). The reign of Akhenaten (also known as Amenhotep IV), who temporarily converted Ancient Egypt to monotheism, is the most intriguing instance to examine from an anthropological perspective. This event, say some anthropologists and archaeologists [4], marks the birth of permanent monotheism in other major global religions.

After his father's death, Akhenaten took his place as Pharaoh. Even though Akhenaten the Elder worshipped the sun god Aten, he led the Egyptians in polytheism until his death. Cults dedicated to Amen-Re, also known as the Sun God Re, appeared during the Old Kingdom. When Akhenaten became Pharaoh, he banned the worship of any gods but Aten.

Temples dedicated to gods other than Aten were demolished, and priests who worshiped them were dismissed, by Akhenaten. This is one of the first instances of widespread monotheism in antiquity. Since it had such far-reaching effects on culture, religion, traditions, and the economy, the majority of the population did not welcome this revolution with open arms. After his death, polytheism and conventional religious practices were reinstated by Pharaoh Tutankhamun [4].

Notably, some say that modern Jewish monotheism owes a debt to Akhenaten's monotheism (and, by extension, modern Christianity and Islam). Moses, a major person in the Bible (and hence in the three Abrahamic faiths of today, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), is traditionally placed in Egypt during the period of Akhenaten. We have no idea whether Moses was a single individual in history or a composite of numerous people who lived at the same time. This is true of many religious leaders. Regardless, the events in Egypt had an impact on the emerging worldviews of the time.

It is often held that Moses came across the 10 Commandments (a code of conduct and set of guidelines for worship in the Abrahamic faiths). It's worth noting that the first commandment stresses the need of believing in a single deity. This monotheistic proclamation served as the foundational tenet upon which the Abrahamic faiths were built. The Ten Commandments' inclusion of the phrase "thou shalt worship no other gods before me" implies that polytheism gave way to monotheism. Egyptian wisdom teachings and the books of Proverbs (from the Instructions of Ptah-hotep), Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Psalms, and Job have been connected by scholars [5]. The Hymn to the Aten, for instance, has many themes with the biblical Psalm 104.

Extensive commercial exchange between the ancient Persians and the ancient Hindus influenced the growth of both civilizations. Interestingly, the concepts of Ancient Persian culture also traveled far and wide to profoundly impact the Abrahamic faiths.

The arrival of the prophet Zoroaster is often placed in Ancient Persian civilization around the year 2000 BCE. The legends about Zoroaster tell us that he was a strong critic of the social inequalities of his day and a proponent of a more equal society.

Zoroastrianism is still followed by certain people today, with the highest concentration in Iran and the second largest in Los Angeles. Since its adherents believe in and pay homage to a single, all-good and all-knowing deity, members of this faith classify it as monotheistic. Zoroastrianism, on the other hand, holds that the all-good divine being is engaged in conflict with a very strong evil entity. We call the belief in two mutually incompatible powers "dualism" [6].

The concept of an all-good deity and an all-evil entity that the all-good god battles is credited to Zoroastrianism. This worldview expands on the idea that good and evil are at war in the cosmos and that humans must choose a side.

Scholars from a variety of faiths have traced the origins of the word "Satan" back to this Zoroastrian idea. The concept of a wholly wicked creature who is external from God first appears in Biblical scriptures during a time when Ancient Persian civilizations were having an impact on the Bible.

Zoroastrians, like Hindus, hold to a notion of "dharma" that is very similar to the Hindu one. Zoroastrianism, in contrast to Hinduism, emphasizes morality via deeds rather than deeds alone.

Buddhism

The start of the Buddha's life is said to have occurred in Nepal, which was a part of Ancient Hindu civilization, around the year 560 BCE. According to legend, Queen Maya found out she was expecting through a dream in which she encountered a white elephant. She sought the help of a ruler, who told her she would have a son who would become either a revered religious figure or a powerful emperor[7]. They said they hoped their child would grow up to be a great king like his or her dad, who was already a king. The diviner informed the parents they must protect their kid from any pain if they don't want him to follow in their footsteps as a spiritual leader[8].

After delivering birth to her son Siddhartha, Queen Maya passed away soon thereafter. When Siddhartha was a little kid, he wanted to leave the palace and experience the world after being nurtured by the monarch and an adopted mother who kept him fully safe from harm. In the short time he was permitted outside the castle by his parents, he observed four things: [9]

1. Siddhartha witnesses an ill and suffering individual. Siddhartha has no prior experience with illness.
2. The first old person Siddhartha encounters opens his eyes to the reality that individuals get older than he thought was possible.
3. The first dead body Siddhartha sees shocks him because he has been sheltered from the reality of mortality.
4. After experiencing so much trauma, Siddhartha finally comes upon a monk who is quietly meditating. To find a way to end human suffering, Siddhartha decides to embark on a spiritual quest.

According to legend, this leads Siddhartha to abandon royal life in favor of investigating competing spiritual systems. He tries the austere lifestyle (one without luxury or relaxation) but ultimately fails to achieve enlightenment. He then embarks on a life of gluttony but ultimately fails to achieve enlightenment. Siddhartha sits under a Bodhi tree and comes to the conclusion that he must choose "The Middle Way" between extremes of sacrifice and enjoyment in order to find liberation from his suffering. Siddhartha transforms into the Buddha at this point[10].

The Four Noble Truths are central to Buddhist doctrine.

1. Suffering is a part of existence.
2. Because we hold on to things, people, ideas, etc., we suffer.
3. The only way to ease our pain is to let go.
4. The Eightfold Path is a set of instructions for eliminating addiction.

The Eightfold Path encourages:

1. Right understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

If the legends about The Buddha are to be believed, he never put any of his teachings in writing. He also never made any claims to deity. Buddhism, the religion founded by the Buddha, has deep ties to Hinduism due to Siddhartha Gautama's upbringing in that faith[11].

Christianity

The birth of Jesus is often placed around 560 CE, or exactly 2,500 years after the birth of the Buddha. It's interesting to remember that the Silk Road served as the nexus for the legends of Jesus and Buddha (a commerce route that spans all of Eurasia and played a role in the diffusion of culture and ideas across countries).

Jesus' life narrative reveals that he was born and reared in a culture marked by extreme suffering and rigid social distinctions, known at the time as Palestine and governed by the Roman Empire. Jesus, seeing that many people were being oppressed by the Romans, pushed for a more equal society and was ultimately killed for his efforts to undermine Roman authority[5].

One of the revolutionary notions that emerged at this time was the notion that individuals may have direct communication with God outside of institutionalized religious structures like temples. The belief that is central to Christianity, originated in the life of Jesus. The fundamental Christian concept of forgiveness was also formed at this time, according to which Christians should forgive one another as a sign of God's kindness since Jesus died to atone for the sins of the whole world[12].

Christianity's unshakeable devotion to monotheism necessitates that its saviour become flesh and blood (Christians may continue to adore Jesus but still only praising one heavenly being since God and Jesus are the same person).

Weber and the Protestant Work Ethic

Religion has a profound effect on many areas of a society and culture. Anthropology, which adopts a more comprehensive perspective on society, may be used to evaluate how Christianity has impacted other parts of modern

Western culture. According to sociologist and economist Max Weber (1864–1920), capitalism and Protestantism, a mainline form of Christianity, complement one another so well that their effects on Euro-American civilization mutually reinforce one another and help to establish both as defining characteristics of much of the "western" world. His publications, such as "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," served as the foundation for the Protestant Work Ethic[13].

We need a quick explanation of the various Christian denominations before we can begin to go through Weber's points. Catholicism is a subset of Christianity, despite the fact that the terms are commonly used interchangeably to designate completely different faiths. And in informal speech, the term "Christian" usually refers to Protestants.

Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians are the three largest branches of Christianity (Beverly 47). Although Christianity has changed in many ways throughout the years, perhaps the most significant shift occurred when Martin Luther published his 95 Theses in 1517. As a critique of the Catholic Church, the sole Christian denomination at the time, Martin Luther wrote the "Ninety-Five Theses." Luther's critiques of the Catholic Church in 1517 focused on the following, however the church has altered much since then:

- The act of donating money to a church in the hopes of gaining Divine pardon.
- Celibacy is a requirement set by the church.
- The worship of holy figures to the level of deity
- The powerful position held by the Pope (Beverly 126–127)

The Protestant Reformation, which resulted in the formation of numerous Christian denominations, began in the 16th century as a direct consequence of Luther's widely publicized call for reform. Evangelical Protestantism, Lutheranism, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostalism, and Anglican Christianity are only some of the Protestant denominations that emerged as a direct consequence of the Protestant Reformation.

According to Weber, poverty was seen as a virtue in pre-Reformation religious life. Seeking riches is seen as greed in most religious traditions, and most faiths oppose greed. This is also true of orthodox Christianity. In the Christian faith, greed is considered a serious moral failing.

Weber argues that the Protestant Reformation partially decentralized authority and sanctified all occupations as "callings" from God. That is to suggest, prior to the Protestant Reformation, only those working in religious roles (priests) were considered to be doing "God's work," but after Christianity began to view faith as more accessible to all types of people, all those who worked hard were considered to be using their gifts and talents bestowed upon them by God. Therefore, gaining financial success came to symbolize God's blessing. It was reasoned that if one were to become wealthy, it was due to God's approval of their efforts.

This perspective is consistent with the principles of capitalism, which hold that the greatest ideas will ultimately prevail in a free and open market. Hard labor will always be rewarded financially under a capitalist system, so long as its adherents believe it.

Weber claimed that the cultural shifts brought about by the expansion of Christianity and the emergence of capitalism as the main economic system in Europe and the Americas were mutually reinforcing. Both of promoted the idea that one's efforts would be rewarded monetarily and that wealth was an indication of one's moral character.

To summarize, Weber's argument follows the following steps:

- People who are deeply committed to a religion typically renounce material wealth and items.
- The Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, elevated the value of labor. Knowledge, power, and spirituality were all viewed as outdated by this societal gap.
- Any work considered to be "sacred" or a calling
- The value of one's work as a contribution to society has suddenly emerged.
- The new attitude made it possible to want financial success.
- This concept solves problems with pay and efficiency that have existed in the past.
- Pre-capitalist staff were not willing to put in extra time once they had reached their financial goals.
- Workers in a capitalist economy will put in extra time for a higher salary.
- Weber argued that this phenomenon was not unique to the "Western" world, and that the compatibility of Protestantism with capitalism allowed for the success of both. Both the United States and Europe came to see these two powers as their primary competitors.

There is no one way to describe Christianity, despite the fact that it has a massive worldwide following and a wide variety of interpretations. On the other hand, the growing number of "prosperity preachers" is a good example of what Weber is talking about. Prosperity preachers are religious leaders who teach that God rewards virtuous and devout people

with prosperity and success. According to this theological viewpoint, those who are afflicted with illness or financial hardship may turn their lives around by strengthening their faith, at which point their deity will bless them monetarily and restore their health. Some members of these groups are led to believe that they would be financially rewarded for their contributions to the leader or the church.

Islam

In Islam, believers hold that God constantly reminds us via signs to fulfil our duties as decent and pious human beings. According to this faith, God has sent several prophets and teachers to Earth to assist steer mankind toward the good, but we keep blowing it by neglecting our responsibilities to one another, the environment, and the divine. Thus, God has sent a large group of individuals to Earth to set things right again for mankind. Muslims hold that Abraham was the first prophet to accomplish this, and that many more did so after him, including Moses (a belief they share with Jews) and Jesus (a view they share with Christian). Muslims also believe that Muhammad, the last prophet, gave humanity a full and final set of guidelines intended to exalt God. Muhammad was born in Saudi Arabia around 571 C.E. Perhaps he was a simple man who went to pray in a cave and was told to "recite!" by the angel Gabriel. For the next 23 years, the words that Muhammad wrote ultimately became the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Many Muslims think that since God spoke to Muhammad in Arabic, reading the Qur'an in Arabic is akin to reading God's own words (unlike most other global religious writings, which have been translated into numerous directions throughout the years)[5].

There are 5 pillars of Islam:

1. The monotheistic position, which holds that there is only one God.
2. The most important aspect of both Sunni and Shia faiths is prayer, which followers are expected to perform three or five times daily.
3. Muslims are obligated to give alms as part of their belief in Allah.
4. Muslims are required devout Muslims to fast from dawn to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan.
5. Hajj, the required journey to Mecca that all devout Muslims must perform once in their entire lives.

Muhammad cannot be portrayed in the Muslim tradition, as is often debated. Islamic tradition upholds this principle as a means of avoiding the glorification or caricature of their sacred person. In the same way, depicting or constructing sculptures of Jesus, Mary, Moses, etc. is banned and seen as idolatry in the Islamic faith.

Comparing and Contrasting Religious Influences

To wrap up, let's evaluate the similarities and differences between the tenets of the many faiths we've discussed. The stories of both Jesus and Buddha appeared within a span of 500 years of one another, and their parallels provide light on the needs of their respective cultures. To reactivate your memory, the hero archetype is a storytelling pattern present throughout civilizations; naturally, the tales of Jesus and Buddha follow this form as well.

- There are many parallels between their beliefs and tales, such as how the "Golden Rule" is introduced as Jesus' first teaching in the "Sermon on the Mount." Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, says the Golden Rule." Under the Bodhi tree, Buddha teaches his first sermon, which essentially boils down to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
- The teachings of nonviolence were revolutionary when first introduced to Buddhist and Christian communities that existed inside violent contexts.
- Both Buddhism and Christianity criticized societal authority figures and condemned financial prosperity.
- The widespread belief that both Buddha and Jesus had prostitutes as companions reflects a shared cultural oppression of women and an innovative strategy for combating entrenched power dynamics.
- At the age of 30, both religious leaders began their search for knowledge.

The origin narratives of Jesus and Buddha are also quite comparable:

- An creature (an elephant in Buddhism and the Archangel Gabriel in Christianity) announced the birth of their respective heroes to their mothers, just as in the legends of Jesus and Buddha.
- Both Mary and Buddha's mother, who was returning to her village, gave birth on a trip, with Mary making her way to Jerusalem.

The diaries of Jesus and Buddha parallel each other in many respects, yet their tales have quite different endings. Consider each:

- Jesus was probably crucified when he was 32 years old.
- Some say that at the age of 90, Buddha died of food poisoning. One of Buddha's disciples brought him fish that was undercooked by mistake. Rather than dying in a spectacular fashion, it is said that Buddha simply communicated to his grieving disciples the lesson that everything dies in the end.

Buddhism and Hinduism have a common ancestry, thus it seems to reason that they both seek release from suffering through introspection and sacrificial service, and that they both hold to the doctrines of rebirth, karma, and samsara.

The three Abrahamic faiths owe a great deal to Zoroastrianism. The Zoroastrian idea of "good against evil" and the idea that there is a cosmic battle between good and evil are adopted by Christianity. Also, similar to how Hinduism was shaped by Zoroastrianism, the two faiths were connected by their shared emphasis on moral obligation (dharma).

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Hinduism is unlike other faiths in that it does not center on a single guiding book or deity. The traditional Hinduism is so hard to comprehend. Hinduism is more of a way of life than it is a religion. Hinduism, on the other hand, emerged as a religion in reaction to the spread of other beliefs and the difficulties they presented for conventional Hindu culture. In Hinduism, dharma is referred to as Sanatana Dharma, and its meaning is distinct from that of religion. Dharma is a code of conduct, and Sanatan dharma refers to the eternally applicable code of conduct. Durkheim [14] argues that religion promotes integrity, cohesiveness and solidarity in the society.

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