

JESUS AND THE KARMA OF THE HINDU by Don Hooton

Series: Jesus Among Other Gods

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Intro: One reason that folks mistakenly believe all religions are same is “they all seem to promote the same thing”: system of self-improvement-good enough to meet God. Not Christianity.

I. Overview of Hinduism.

- a) Hinduism is an ancient eastern religion with many different sects. You can believe almost anything and still be a Hindu.
- b) Hinduism and God
 - i) Some believe in a supreme god while others believe there are many gods. One estimate is that there are over 300 million Hindu gods to choose from. There are even some Hindus who are atheists. It's hard to pin down what the “typical” Hindu would believe, but there are some concepts that are true of most.
 - ii) God is a pantheistic. “It is God Himself (Brahman) who has become all this – the (physical) universe, maya (the illusion) and the living beings. It is God alone who has become everything.” . [The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Nikhilananda, 395] “There is nothing that is not God”. [Vivekananda, the Yogas and Other Works, Swami Nikhilananda, 355].
 - iii) God is unknowable. “No one has ever been able to say what Brahman [God] is” (Gospel, 102). “The nature of Brahman can not be described.” (218). The common phrase used to describe Brahman is “Neti, Neti” and means “not this, Not that”.
 - iv) God is impersonal. “The idea of a personal God is not a true generalization. We have to go beyond to the Impersonal . . . The personal God is not absolute truth” (Vivekananda, 740)
 - v) God cannot be worshipped. “God in His absolute nirguna nature is not to be worshipped. Worshipping such a God would be nonsense. It would be a sin to worship that God” (quoted in Facts on Hindusim, John Ankerberg & John Weldon, 19).
 - vi) God is “unknowing.” God is “an impersonal, omnipresent being who cannot be called a knowing being... He cannot be called a thinking being because that (i.e. thinking) is a process of the weak only. He cannot be called a reasoning being because reasoning is a sign of weakness. He cannot be called a creating being because none creates except in bondage” (Teachings of Swami Vivekanandu, 91-92).
- c) Hinduism and Jesus.
 - i) Just another guru of Hinduism is their view, greatly “misunderstood” by Christians.
 - (1) Rajneesh teaches, “To tell you the truth, Jesus is a mental case... He is a fanatic. He carries the same kind of mind as Adolf Hitler. He is a fascist. He thinks that only those who follow him will be saved... And the fools are still believing that they will be saved if they follow Jesus. Even Jesus is not saved. And he knew it.” (The Rajneesh Bible, Vol. I, 9-10).
 - (2) “Every worm is the brother of the Nazarene... The range of idols is from wood and stone to Jesus and Buddha” (Vivekananda in Yale, *Religion*, xii).
- d) Hinduism and karma. The thing that they all have in common is the belief in karma and, related to it, reincarnation.

- i) The influence of Hinduism has even made it to the western world. According to the late Dr. Walter Martin, 58 percent of Americans “either definitely believe in [reincarnation] or believe it to be a distinct possibility.” Dan Story, *Defending Your Faith: How to Answer the Tough Questions*, p. 180
- ii) What is karma? Basically, karma says that you pay a price for all your bad deeds. You may think you’ve gotten away with some evil, but it will find you out eventually and you will pay the consequences.
 - (1) To many people it sounds a lot like the Christian teaching of “sowing and reaping.” At first glance the Bible seems to affirm karma:
 - (a) Don’t be misled. Remember that you can’t ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! Those who live to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. Galatians 6:7-8 (NLT)
 - (b) The Bible agrees that you reap the consequences of your actions. Karma is different in its idea of when you pay for your deeds.
 - (2) The teaching of karma (literally translated the word means “action”) indicates that karma is something negative, the acting is wrong. Karma is something you must be released from. Karma is the reason for the poverty of the beggar; the illness of the sick, and the hopeless situation of the oppressed. They reap what they have sown in past lives. Karma is the reason for the prosperity of the rich, the good health of the robust, and the fortunate position of the oppressor. They are well off because they sowed well in the past. Thus, everyone is well off or bad off as he or she deserves.
 - (a) According to their philosophy [the Indian scriptures], the good karma is a result of the fact that man avoids polluting himself, that he avoids desecrating objects and associating with people without caste. Good karma is a result of what you have avoided, rather than what you have actually done. “Vital Information on: Reincarnation and the Transmigration of Souls,” c. Dialog Center, www.dci.dk/engelsk/elefant/reincarnation.html.
 - (b) Karma differs from the Christian concept of sowing an reaping in that you are continually reincarnated in an endless series of lives until you’ve paid off your debt. There are consequences to this belief system.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF KARMA

A. Removes responsibility.

Soul-transmigration at death means you do not go to heaven or hell but you are reborn into another body on earth. This next body could be an animal, vegetable or human depending on whether you were good or bad. Your past behavior catches up with you in your present life due to the law of karma. You could in your next reincarnation end up a clam, a carrot, a bush or a human being. The highest rebirth you could wish for was to be born as one of the white-skinned Brahmins who by virtue of their color were considered the “higher class.” Dr. Robert Morey, “Hinduism Exposed.” According to the law of karma you could totally dodge responsibility in your present life. You could live and die and never pay for the actions of your present life. Sure, it will catch up to you in another life, but you could live this life totally devoid of moral responsibility.

B. Implies injustice.

The karma which I reap now has been sowed in a previous life. The body, the family, the nation, and caste into which I was born have been determined by actions carried out in previous lives I have lived. “Vital Information on: Reincarnation and the Transmigration of Souls,” c. Dialog Center, www.dci.dk/engelsk/elefant/reincarnation.html. Karma is inherently unfair. You had nothing to do with the person or thing you were in a past life, but now you’re having to pay for it. You have no memory of that past life, but it’s your burden to bear nonetheless.

C. Promotes prejudice.

The caste system: highly structured society. At the top, the best and the elite are known as the Brahmin, the religious/priestly class. At the bottom are the dregs known as the untouchables. The belief is that the caste you were born into is the caste you are to remain a part of. You only associate with those in your caste. If you attempt to associate with those above or below you you’re setting yourself up for some bad karma. The concept comes from Hindu scriptures:

The caste system is a unique feature of the Hindu religion. The account of its origin is an interesting story.

Brahma created Manu, the first man. From Manu came four different types of people, as the creator Brahma determined. From Manu's head came the Brahmins, the best and most holy people. Out of Manu's hands came the Kshatriyas, the rulers and warriors. The craftsmen came from his thighs and are called Vaisyas. The remainder of the people came from Manu's feet and are known as Sudras. Therefore, the structure of the caste system is divinely inspired. The caste system became more complicated as time went on, with literally thousands of subcastes coming into existence. Today the caste system is still an integral part of the social order of India, even though outlawed by the Indian government. Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Understanding Non-Christian Religions*, pp. 26-27

Karma locks faithful Hindus into a kind of sacred racism.

Some of may know that Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu. He disagreed with the caste system and almost left Hinduism because of it. In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India. So one Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby church and talk to the minister about becoming a Christian. When he entered the sanctuary, however, the usher refused to give him a seat and suggested that he worship with his own people. Gandhi left the church and never returned, "If Christians have caste differences also," he said, "I might as well remain a Hindu." (Contributed by David Yarbrough at sermoncentral.com)

The skeptic might point at that story and say, "There, you see, Christians are just as prejudiced as Hindus." To that I'd say, serious Christians, those who know and believe the Bible, do everything in their power to eliminate racism or sexism or prejudice and discrimination of any kind. Galatians 3:28 tells us "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." James 2:1ff CONDEMNS Christians for acting that way! Unfaithful Christians promote prejudice. Conversely, faithful Hindus should only promote the caste system.

D. Counteracts compassion.

In his sermon, "Hinduism Exposed," Dr. Robert Morey writes: The poor, the sick, the disabled, the dark-skinned, etc. are what they are because of their own fault. They deserve their suffering because they did something bad in a previous life and their karma has caught up with them. We should not interfere with their suffering because if we do, we will doom them to experience it in the next life. Thus the kindest thing to do is let them alone so they get their suffering over and hopefully have a better rebirth the next time around. On the other hand, if you are born with white skin to Brahmin parents, your life of wealth and pleasure is your reward for good deeds done in your previous life. You deserve to be rich and white. You earned it. Thus you have no moral obligation to help those less fortunate than you. The Hindu belief in karma is the reason why the late Mother Teresa had such a powerful ministry in Calcutta. Those at the bottom rung of the caste system, the untouchables, when they became sick or were dying, no one would take care of them. Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Mercy took the dying rejected people in and either nursed them back to health or offered comfort to those going through the dying process. True Hinduism with its adherence to the law of karma is devoid of compassion.

E. Leads to lunacy

If people can potentially be reincarnated as other kinds of organisms you have to treat them with great care. Because of this bizarre belief pests are not often killed. Crops can be devastated because you don't want to kill a bug and possibly deal with the bad karma in another life. Some animals are actually considered sacred. There's at least one shrine dedicated to rats. Worshipers come and offer sacrifices of food to the rats. They're given large dishes of milk and you can benefit if you drink the milk from the same dish with them. You've probably heard of the sacred cow. This comes directly from the Hindu culture. Cows are allowed to wander and graze wherever they please. People may starve on the streets, but the cows can't be touched.

According to the karma of the Hindu you've got to pay your way out of debt by reincarnation. How different Christ and his message are.

III. THE CONTRAST OF CHRIST AND KARMA

If you are a Christian who has toyed with the idea of karma and reincarnation or if you are not a believer and have assumed that Hinduism and Christianity are fundamentally the same, think again. The Bible rejects the idea of the individual undergoing further rebirths.

1. Life is a one-way trip.

A single verse makes this abundantly clear. It is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment Hebrews 9:27 (NLT). This life is it! It's a one-way trip. You live. You die and then you face God. Each of us will give an account of what we did with this life. Now, just in case you're hoping that your good deeds will outweigh your bad deeds, let me give you this bit of insight:

2. No good deed is good enough for God.

"No one is good – not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10-12 (NLT). Let's assume for a moment that you could do some good things to impress God. Even if this were the case, what could you possibly do about your sin debt? You owe God and you do not have the ability to repay him.

In his book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, author John Bunyan describes our plight like a woman sweeping her house with the doors and windows closed. She can sweep furiously. She can hid the dirt under rugs or in closets, but unless she opens the door it's still there. Our sin against God is the same way. We can't get rid of it by ourselves. Trying to do good is the equivalent of sweeping dust piles around, but never sweeping them out.

The situation is even worse. The good things that we try to do are repulsive to God. For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; Isaiah 64:6. That's the bad news. God has a way around it.

3. We need transformation, not improvement.

Every world religion except Christianity teaches this idea of improvement. You've got to work your way to God somehow. Jesus and the authors of the New Testament tell us that we don't need to improve. We need to be transformed. It's not enough to turn over a new leaf. We must have a totally new life.

To a very religious man Jesus once said, "You must be born again to have access to the kingdom of God." He wasn't talking about reincarnation. We must have a spiritual rebirth. God must do the work himself. He does it by drawing us to himself and revealing Jesus Christ to us. He brings us to the point of decision about his Son. If we step across the line of faith and affirm that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and that he rose from the dead, God recreates us. God draws us by his grace and transforms us when we believe. ...those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

4. Let Christ be your karma.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

A man was terribly disturbed about his sin, so he wrote to Martin Luther. The reformer, who had agonized much over his own shortcomings, replied, "Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him and say – Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness. You took on you what was mine; You set on me what was Yours. You became what You were not that I might become what I was not." The means to this spiritual rebirth is quite simple, but often hard to take.

The fact is that no amount of reincarnation could ever make you right with God. You can't save yourself no matter how many good deeds you do or how many lives you live (if that were even possible). You need transformation, not improvement.