

# *HINDUISM*

No one can underestimate the impact of Hinduism in America. It is distinct from Hinduism in India in several ways: For example 1) Hindu influence in India pervades the entire culture; in America, Hinduism is one part of a larger religious culture; 2) the rampant idolatry (illustrated in thousands of temples and idols paraded throughout the streets of India) is currently lacking in America; 3) Hinduism in America is frequently “secularized,” “Christianized,” or otherwise toned down or made palatable for Western consumption. As an example we could cite; Maharishi Mashesh Yogi’s Hindu practice of Transcendental Meditation, which falsely claims it is a true science and not a religion.

The Guru Phenomenon; “Once embarked on this spiritual journey we are advised to seek the guidance of those who have been there before and know it well: teachers, gurus, roshis, swamis and experts of every description. But with common sense set aside, how can we judge the credentials of our teachers? What criteria can we use to determine the suitability of this man or this woman to guide us along the path?” (*Yoga Journal* Editorial)

Dr. John Weldon is a **former** practitioner of Eastern meditation and co-author of a critique of one of the most popular forms of Hindu meditation in America, *Transcendental Meditation*. He received a Ph.D., in the field of comparative religion, with an emphasis on Eastern religion. His dissertation, involved a 2500-page analysis of over 20 of the leading Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi gurus operating in America.

Years of research have concluded that the individual claims of the gurus should be viewed critically, particularly their spiritual claims. The American guru phenomenon constitutes a genuine threat to society, the family, morality, and the vitality of the church and her influence in culture.

## **Three major conclusions from this study are:**

1. The guru phenomenon comprises a revival of occultic practice and philosophy. Repeatedly in conversations with these 20 leading gurus themes of shamanism, spiritism, modified aspects of witchcraft practice, and other forms of paganism surfaced.

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2. The gurus themselves often constitute an anti-Christian force; their religious instruction and practice does not lead to an alleged spiritual “enlightenment,” but rather to harmful spiritual states and forces, including the distinct possibility of mental illness or demon possession.
3. The gurus are not divine incarnations as they claim, but are spiritually possessed occultists whose philosophical and occultic teachings possess serious consequences for human society and welfare.

In fact, had the average disciple of a Hindu guru known his true teachings and the potential moral, psychological and spiritual consequences of the Hindu path - it is suspected that most would never have joined.

## ***WHAT IS HINDUISM?***

In its most simple definition, Hinduism may be defined as the religious beliefs and practices common to India. In more complex terms it is defined as:

“The Way of the majority of the people of India, a Way that is a combination of religious belief, rites, customs, and daily practices, many of which appear overtly secular but in most cases have religious origins and sanctions. Hinduism is noted as being the only one of the major beliefs that cannot be defined, for any definition is inadequate, contradictory, and incomplete.”

“The name used in the West to designate the traditional social/religious structure of the Indian people. As a religion based on mythology, it has neither a founder (as do Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity) nor a fixed canon.”

“A complex product of the amalgamation of various cults and beliefs within a common social framework.”

In spite of its diversity, Hinduism in general does reveal a number of common themes. Some of these include pantheism (the belief that ALL is God, God is ALL), polytheism (a belief in many lesser gods), and a reliance upon occultic ritual and practices.

## ***HOW DID HINDUISM ORIGINATE?***

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Hinduism originated from a body of conflicting and contradictory literature called the *Vedas* (written 1500-1200 B.C.). Hindus claim that this body of literature was supernaturally given by the Hindu gods. Thus these basic religious texts “make a special claim to be divine in their origin.”

The four Vedas are the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Artharvaveda. They are divided into two parts: the “work” portion (basically polytheistic ritual) and the “knowledge” portion (philosophical speculation).

Who was it that heard and received this supernatural inspiration? It was the Hindu *rishis* or *seers* - powerful occultists who interpreted their revelations as divine communication for the gods.

## ***HOW INFLUENTIAL IS HINDUISM IN MODERN AMERICA?***

In all its forms, Hinduism has influenced tens of millions of people in America. By itself Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Transcendental Meditation, a form of advaita Vendanta Hinduism, has over three million graduates. Hinduism is influential on college campuses, in certain schools of psychology, such as the transpersonal school, and in a wide variety of religious movements.

For example, the majority of several thousand transpersonal psychologists are involved in Eastern forms of mediation, and one of the long-held goals of transpersonal psychology has been an integration of Western science and Eastern practice.

The New Age movement, with a collective following in the millions, has also been powerfully influenced by Hinduism. For example, a popular New Age “bible,” *A Course in Miracles*, is basically a “Christianized” form of the religious philosophy taught by most Hindu gurus in America.

In addition, there are literally scores of modern religious cults, and sects that have been influenced by Hinduism to varying degrees. Some examples are:

Werner Erhard is the founder of the controversial “est” and “The Forum” seminars, having almost one million

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graduates. Both est and The Forum were influenced by Hinduism through Swami Muktananda, one of Erhard's principal gurus. The occult religion of Theosophy has also been influenced by Hinduism. Many of the New Thought religions, such as Science of Mind and Divine Science, actively promote Hindu teachings. Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science and Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's Unity School of Christianity were also influenced by Hinduism. Much of the popular occultic religion of Eckankar is a plagiarism of a Hindu sect known as Radhasoami. Scientology, a powerful and controversial new religion, has also been influenced by Hinduism.

In addition, literally tens of millions of Americans have taken up Hindu practices, such as yoga, meditation, developing altered states of consciousness, seeking Hindu "enlightenment," and various other occultic practices.

If we were to combine the influence of Hinduism in the guru movements, in American colleges, in the New Age movement, in religious practices such as yoga meditation, and in modern religious cultism, no one could deny that in various forms and ways Hinduism is influencing tens of millions of Americans.

## ***WHAT IS THE DOMINANT HINDU BELIEF IN AMERICA?***

In America the dominant Hindu belief is called *Vedanta*. Of all the conflicting schools of Hinduism, Vedanta has had the most profound overall influence. Vedanta ("the end of Vedas") was the school which gave organized and systematic form to the teaching of the Upanishads. The dominant Vedantic school in America is called *ad-vaita* or the non-dual school. This belief teaches that there is only one impersonal God called *Brahman*. Brahman alone is real; everything else is considered a dream of Brahman - an illusion.

This form of Hinduism teaches that as part of its "sport" or "play" (*lila*), Brahman exuded or emerged the universe as part of itself, but then "covered" it with what is called *maya* or illusion. This illusion is the entire physical universe that we see around us, including all stars and planets, the sky, trees, rivers, mountains, and all people as well.

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However, Hinduism also teaches that Brahman exists “beneath” this illusory universe. In other words, Brahman resides “in” and “underneath” the material creation, including man. This explains why the goal of Hinduism is to go inward to allegedly discover that one’s true nature is part of God or Brahman. Hinduism aims at supposedly revealing one’s inward divine nature by “contacting” Brahman through occult practice. This idea that the world is an illusion “hiding” Brahman is a key teaching of Hinduism in America.

## **WHAT ARE THE BELIEFS OF HINDUISM CONCERNING THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE?**

Because Hinduism teaches that the world is ultimately an illusion, a dream of Brahman, the basic philosophy of Hinduism can be described as nihilism. The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines nihilism as: “1) a negative doctrine, the total rejection of current beliefs in religion or morals; 2) a form of skepticism that denies all existence.” Therefore, in the end Hindu practice leads to nihilism; e.g., The experience of *samadhi* (enlightenment) is, literally, a death to the things of this world. Nihilism is exactly what the Hindu gurus in America teach:

*Swami Vivekananda:* The world never existed; it was a dream, maya.

*Paramahansa Yogananda:* I don’t take life seriously at all. It’s all a dream.

*Ram Dass:* What responsibility? God has all the responsibility. I don’t have any responsibility.

*Meher Baba:* Mere mind and mere body do not exist.

*Da Free John:* All of this life, past and future, up and down, in and out, is just an hallucination. Birth, the world, and the whole affair of life become nonsense, no longer impinge on you, have no implication whatsoever, absolutely none. Ultimately, there is no world.

*Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh:* Your so-called society is a conspiracy against man. Whatever you call real life is not real. Society is rotten. I am not at all concerned

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with society. We are escaping from illusions and escaping into reality through enlightenment - hence it's not really escapist.

There is no purpose in life, the questions are meaningless, the answers are even more so. Life is a meaningless, a fruitless effort leading nowhere. This whole life is nonsense. You simply live. There is no purpose.

According to Hinduism, Brahman is wholly indifferent to what goes on in the world. Brahman is *impersonal*; it does not speak and is unconcerned with good or evil. It is unconcerned with men and women. It has no cares because it has no feeling. It is unconcerned with morals because it has no values. Thus the one who "knows" Brahman knows that there is no right or wrong, nor is there a world in which they actually happen. In Hinduism the truly enlightened individual is indifferent to all actions, good or evil.

Consider the description of the truly "enlightened" soul as given by the great Hindu saint Ramakrishna:

"But the man who always sees God (Brahman) and talks to him intimately has an altogether different nature. He acts sometimes like an inert thing, sometimes like a ghoul, sometimes like a child, and sometimes like a madman. He is not conscious of the holy and the unholy. He does not observe any formal purity. To him everything is Brahman. People notice his ways and actions and think of him as insane."

Any culture which adopts such a philosophy can also be profoundly affected. India is living proof that what a people are committed to inwardly is powerfully manifested outwardly. India's so-called "Wisdom from the East" carries a heavy price tag. A small part of this cost is discussed by Paul Molnar. Writing in the *National Review* he recalls his feelings after a trip to India:

"It was hard, afterward, to sort out my impressions, to pull them together. Paul Claudel once wrote to friends, during his travels and ambassadorships in the Far East, that oriental religion is the devil's invention. In these ecumenical times one is not supposed to say such things. Yet that is my inescapable conclusion.

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The faith of the worshippers is, without any doubt, sincere, even fervent. But the objects of worship are brutal, inhuman deities who know how to scare, push, avenge, mock and cheat, not to elevate and forgive; and the environment surrounding the worshippers repels rather than attracts: horrid, grimacing idols with cunning or cruel stares; incredibly gaudy vulgarity, defecating cows, mud, stench, garbage. Hippies are drawn to this witches' brew, and the reason is not far to find.

What attracts and keeps them here is the degradation: of reason, of self-esteem, of vital forces, of faith in God and man. Here they find innumerable gods and none at all; everybody may do this thing just like the monkeys and the cows, sinking slowly toward the Ganges or Nirvana. Intelligence and purposefulness dissolve on the trashheap, the body rots until it becomes one with the road, the grass, the dung. The great nothingness envelops all, and the ashes go into the river."

What gave India all this and more? No one can deny that it was the religion of Hinduism, a religion that millions of Americans are now *welcoming* with open arms.

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