

[slide one] Hinduism -- the gods next door [slide two]

1. [slide three and four] “It is probably correct to say that Hinduism is the oldest of the world’s major religions, but it is just as correct to say it is the newest. Some might make the case that Hinduism is not a world religion at all. There are those who would go so far as to say there is really no such thing as “a religion” of Hinduism, at least not as religion is usually defined.
2. Hinduism is not so much a single religion as a family of religions. [slide five] A Hindu might be pantheistic, polytheistic, monotheistic, agnostic, or atheist. He might live and active life or one given over only to contemplation. He might visit a temple every day or never go at all. He might be very involved in family or he might leave his family to go on a journey of self-fulfillment.
3. [slide six] The one central requirement: to live within the rules of your caste. While castes have been outlawed for years, the rules and system remains largely intact.
4. [slide seven] The central tenet is: everything is one reality – Brahmin. The cause and the substance of the universe are all one, the same thing.
5. [slide eight] [a discussion of reality, using the dropping of a book. But then again, what is a book? Ink and paper, the words written on it, or the atoms...] A lot of similarities to quantum physics (whereas much of our brains are wired to think in Newtonian-land)
6. [slide nine] Four stages of consciousness:
 - A. Ordinary waking consciousness: that’s what most of you are in right now.
 - B. Imagination, fantasy, dreams: while you might think the person you are watching is listening to the radio, or repairing a car, they might be – in their mind – on a stage, climbing Mount Fuji, or storming around like Rambo.
 - C. Prajna (Sleep without dreams): When you think of something, you are limiting yourself from thinking of other

things, therefore strive to think of nothing and everything. Be immersed in the One rather than tangled in the many.

- D. The Om State: “The Self, whose symbol is Om, is the omniscient Lord. He is not born. He does not die. He is neither cause nor effect. This Ancient One is unborn, imperishable, eternal; though the body be destroyed, he is not killed. The Self is not known through study of scriptures, nor through subtlety of the intellect, nor through much learning, but by him who longs for him is he known. Verily unto him does the Self reveal his true being. By learning a man cannot know him, if he desist not from evil, if he control not his senses, if he quiet not his mind, and practice not meditation.
7. [slide ten] This oneness can be useful and even heroic in application. Why would an adult step in front of a speeding car to save a baby he has never seen before? The Hindu would respond that, in that moment, the adult realized that he and the child were one. He “left his mind behind” and stepped forward in the understanding that each is diminished if the other dies.
8. What is the purpose of a mountain if there is no one there to see it? The mountain and the person are one, engaged in a universal dance. Someday, the person will be buried under the mountain and change form, adding to the bulk of the mountain while being reincarnated into a different form. The mountain will someday disappear. So will the person. But their essences will continue in different forms.
9. [slide eleven] A brief history of Hinduism:
- A. Around 3,500 years ago the Aryans migrated into present day India through the Khyber Pass. They brought with them scriptures (the Vedas) that described their rituals and introduced two of the three principal gods of the Hindus – Indra and Agni.
 - B. That was the Vedic period and it lasted until 300BC when the Brahmin period began. This was when the caste system, settled communities, religious temples, and ritual worship all appear.

C. This is disputed by Hindu nationalists. They say the Aryans merely conquered an existing religion. They use violence and governmental action in a quest to make India a pure Hindu state. (thousands die annually in riots and attacks)

10. [slide twelve] How many gods are there in Hinduism? There are three principle gods, and 33,000,000 million named gods in total, but since Brahmin is one, each god is merely an expression of the whole. And he isn't even a god. He is an undefined principle. So... the gods are ways of expressing or visualizing the inexpressible. [look at one of them sitting on the shelf and ask yourself if you haven't had a day that – metaphysically – looked like that]
11. [slide thirteen] The three principle gods are Brahma (the “a” ending means he is masculine; distinguishing him from Brahmin, which is neuter), Vishnu, and Shiva.
12. Brahmin is the creator, but there are only six temples built to him because he worked himself out of a job (creation is finished). Since he has nothing to do, he meditates on the lotus blossom growing from the navel of Vishnu who sleeps on the cosmic ocean made up of the remains of the last universe before this one. When he opens his eyes to look around him, a universe comes into being. One day in his life is 4,000,000,320 years.
13. Vishnu is the preserver, the god of goodness. The story is told of a sage who wanted to see who was the most powerful god. He came across Brahma and insulted him and was trounced for it. He moved on to Shiva, only to get soundly abused. So he was fed up by the time he reached Vishnu who was asleep on the cosmic ocean. He kicked Vishnu who then woke up and immediately worried that the sage might have hurt his foot. He massaged the sage's foot and showed concern so the sage was impressed and declared that Vishnu was the most powerful god.

14. Vishnu comes to earth only when he is needed. He comes via avatars and there are to be ten of them in this world cycle. Nine have already come and the tenth one, Kalkin, will appear in a very similar way to Jesus in Revelation 19:11-19.
15. Shiva is the destroyer, but only in the sense that death and change comes to all. He is pictured dancing on the back of a turtle – the Auspicious One. He is the lord of the dance and beats his drum until the world breaks apart into its primal elements, Brahma opens his eyes, and the world is reborn. His wife is Kali, the god of all material things.
16. [slide fourteen] Hindu religious and ethical thought is based on three words: dharma, karma, and moksha.
- A. Dharma is the order of the cosmos and the moral, ethical behavior of those in it.
 - B. Karma describes the effects of our actions upon this life and all lives to come.
 - C. Moksha is liberation of the soul from the illusion and suffering of our passage through life.
 - D. Each lifetime's karma determines what happens next. What you do effects what you will be. The idea is to learn your lessons in this life so you do not have to learn them in the next.
17. The way of society: kama (pleasure), artha (gain), dharma (righteousness), and moksha (liberation). These correspond to the four stages of life: student, householder, hermit, and renunciant. [walk through a life to illustrate.] In India, it is not unusual for an older person to leave behind their home, family, and possessions and hit the road.
18. [slide fifteen] There are points of convergence and divergence with Christianity.
- A. Our God is one, expressed in three, and in nature.
 - B. But our God is a personal, thinking, being, not a vague, shapeless entity.
 - C. Christianity offers a way out of the endless cycle of birth, pain, suffering, and death. It offers redemption and a home in heaven.

D. Both look for a redeemer, but we declare that the redeemer is already here and that he will work with you and walk with you.

E. We declare that doing good to all is what we are here for. We will not set their karmic clock back by being good to them.

F. [slide sixteen]