

Seminar 1

Brief history and beliefs of Hinduism & Sikhism

A. Hinduism

(1) Facts and figures

- Hinduism has approximately 900million followers throughout the world, which makes it the third largest religion in the world.
- There are 558,342 Hindus in G.B, (1% of the total population of the country 2001 census)
- In Surrey 97.2% of the population is white and 0.7% is Indian, the largest Hindu communities in London are in Wembley and Harrow

Things we need to be clear on before we begin

What does the Bible say about other religions?

- God alone is to be worshipped, no other god, no other religion. Salvation is to be found in Christ alone (Ex 20:3-4, Dt 5:7-8, 6:13-7:6, 13:1-18, John 14:6)
- Salvation is for all cultures (Gn 12:3, Matt 28:19, Rev 7:9)
- No syncretism (mixing of religions) cannot be tolerated (2 Kings 17:7-41)
- All false religions ultimately are inspired by Satan himself who has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4).
- False gods are denounced as “wicked stumbling blocks” (Ez 14:3) “detestable” (Dt 29:17, 32:16, 1 Kings 11:5), “shameful” (Amos 8:14, Hosea 9:10, Jer 11:13), “gods that cannot save” (Dt 45:20, “less than nothing” (Is 41:24), “worthless”

Without Christ people are lost

(2) Brief history of Hinduism

- In about 2000BC there was the collapse of an advanced civilization in India, the “Dravidian”(people) or “Harrapan”(place) civilization. Then 500 years later it fell to invading Aryans. .
- Eventually the Aryans mingled with the Dravidians and the two races formed one belief, that of Hinduism.
- There was also the formation of the caste system. The caste idea fitted with their religious thinking at the time. There were 4 main categories of caste, but now it is estimated that there are 6,000 castes in India today.

(3) The Beliefs of Hinduism

Hinduism has no founder, there is no single body of doctrine, instead there is great diversity of belief and practice.

(a) Belief in Brahman

In Brahman are found

- a) pure being (sat) b) pure intelligence (cit) c) pure delight (ananda)

The gods are manifestations of Brahman.

(b) Three principal gods

Brahma - He is the Lord of creatures and beyond worship

Vishnu - He is the preserver, he controls human fate

Shiva - He is the source of both good and evil

(c) Religious books

- The **Veda** the contents were gathered about 1200 BC
- The “**Upanishads**” these are concerned more with mysticism, individual piety and sacrificial rituals
- **Mahabharata** that contain the “Bhagavad-Gita” which is popular with the ordinary folk
- **Ramayana** - contains the Rama & Sita story of Diwali

(d) What is the purpose or goal of Hinduism?

The goal is to achieve union with ultimate reality, to be one with Brahman. This is called “Moksha” which means deliverance.

Hinduism sees life as a cycle of reincarnations from which we need release.

The way of escape, there are 4 basic yogas, or paths to escape

- 1) the path of **Knowledge** (Jnana yoga)
- 2) the path of **action** (Karma yoga)
- 3) the path of **devotion** (Bhakti yoga)
- 4) the path of **mental exercise** (Hatha yoga)

B. Sikhism

(1) Facts and figures

- There are 20 million Sikhs in the world today. 12 million live in the Punjab in India
- There are 336,000 Sikhs in the U.K (0.6 % of the population based on the 2001 census)
- In Surrey 97.2% of the population is white and 0.7% is Indian, but 32% of the Sikh population live in London i.e. 104,215 Sikhs in London.
- Sikhs are especially concentrated in West London and they make up 10% of the population of Ealing, Hounslow & Slough in South East.
- Southall has the highest concentration of Sikh temples in the U.K

(2) Brief history of Hinduism

Guru Nanak lived between 1469-1539, he was dissatisfied with Hinduism for three reasons

- Hindu rituals
- Hindu idolatry
- Caste system
- He claimed to have an experience where he was taken to a heavenly court.
- After this experience Nanak rejected Hinduism and Islam and travelled to propagate his message. He told Hindus and Muslims to reject rituals. He began to teach everyone, even the low caste and even outcastes.
- A community grew up around him

After Guru Nanak there were 9 other gurus

(2) Guru Angad (1504 – 1552)

- (3) Guru Amar Das (1479 – 1574)
- (4) Guru Ram Das (1534 -81)
- (5) Guru Arjan (1563 -1606)
- (6) Guru Hargobind (1595-1645)
- (7) Guru Har Rai (1630-61)
- (8) Guru Har Krishan (1656-64)
- (9) Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-71)
- (10) Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) the last of the Gurus gave Sikhism its identity as we know it today

- In 1699 he ordered Sikhs to gather for Vaisakhi
- Panj Pyare (Beloved five)
- Founded the 'Khalsa' (brotherhood of Sikhs)
- Also gave the Sikhs an identity

They changed their names, for the women they had 'Kaur' as a surname meaning princess and for the males 'Singh' meaning Lion.

The five outward signs of Sikhism

1. Not to cut their hair (Kesh)
2. To keep it tidy and fastened with a comb (Kangha)
3. To wear a steel band on their wrist (Kara)
4. To carry sword (Kirpan)
5. To wear a trouser instead of a loose Hindu Skirt (Kaccha)

Other sects and groups within Sikhism and the Punjab

- Nirankaris – Baba Dayal Das (1783-1854)
- Namdharis – Baba Ram Singh
- Radha Soami – Master lives in Beas
- Ravidassis – Based on teaching of Ravi Dass
- Valmikis – Turned to teaching of Ramayana

(3) What do Sikhs believe?

The Sikh holy book

- Called the Guru Granth Sahib
- It includes the hymns of the gurus as well as Hindus and Muslims who taught similar ideas
- There is no history as in the Bible

- There are no mythological stories
- Granth declares right living
- Granth is regarded as the voice of God

God

There is one God who cannot be known or understood, he does not become a man but we can experience, worship and love Him

Man

Man is the crown of God's creation and is good. Pressures outside make him do evil

Spiritual teachers

God's Spirit was present in the 10 gurus. They were God's mouthpiece, now God's mouthpiece is the Granth

Reincarnation (Samsara)

The soul goes through 8,400,000 lives. Your Karma in the previous life determines what you become. Human existence is the best and you have a chance to go into God's presence

Salvation (Moksha)

By meditating on God's word (Shabad) and name (nam or character)

As you meditate you go through 5 stages

- Dharam Khand
- Gian Khand
- Saram Khand
- Karam Khand
- Sach Khand (At this stage your Karma is suspended)

Meditation

Meditation is to be practiced daily, not using mantras but by reflecting on God, it keeps us from evil

Service (Sewa)

To have God centred lives is not like Hinduism, in Sikhism it means being practical and serving people & family

Community

The Sikh community is very strong and they stick together. They are told not to steal, commit adultery or murder. They should not be violent except to prevent evil. They say men and women are equal and a Sikh should not smoke, drink or use drugs. They do not eat beef.

C. What are the dangers of Hinduism & Sikhism today?

New Age Movement

Toleration

The influence of yoga and environmentalism