World Religions Discussion of Bhakti Marga

Discuss these questions with your partner:

1. To warm up- just briefly share whatever you are comfortable with sharing- what is your own personal background in religion and/or spirituality?
2. Do you know- or can you guess- what is one of the main criticisms Islam and Muslims make about Christianity and Christianity’s conception of God?
3. How do you think a faithful believer of Christianity would respond to this criticism?
4. Do you know- or can you guess- what is one of the main criticisms Christians make about Hinduism and Hinduism’s conception of God?
5. How do you think a faithful believer of Hinduism would respond to this criticism?
6. How come in general 99.99% of Hindus do not criticize other religions or their conceptions of God? How come in general there are no Hinduism missionaries trying to convert other faiths to Hinduism?
7. What are your thoughts and opinions about questions 1-6?
8. Now I want you to read the last page of Huston Smith’s World Religions Book in his chapter on Hinduism. Open my website: www.mricambarellaclass.com

Click on ‘Religion 1st Sem” Click on “Week 4 Hinduism Text Chapter Final Pages”

-ONLY READ THE VERY LAST PAGE- Page 56 “Many Paths to the Same Summit”

-After you read page 56 only discuss the main ideas on this page.

-How does this relate to how Hinduism understands ‘God’?

-What are your thoughts and opinions about this?

1. Let’s try to go into more detail on how Hinduism understands ‘GOD’. As discussed last week, Hinduism believes there is 1 SUPREME GOD usually referred to as ‘BRAHMAN’. Hinduism believes GOD/BRAHMAN is real.

Hinduism believes our human minds may have trouble truly comprehending ‘GOD/BRAHMAN’. So maybe it is useful to think of GOD/BRAHMAN using analogies our human brains can better understand…

-One useful analogy is to conceive of GOD/BRAHMAN as ‘ENERGY’.

-One theme I introduced on the first day of class and we will explore further this year is the connection between this analogy and modern science and quantum physics.

-Let’s together re-watch the first 5 minutes of the movie ‘Inner Worlds; Outer Worlds’ which is also on my website under ‘Religion 2nd Sem’

-Let’s watch the first 5 minutes again and then discuss WHAT IS THE ANALOGY/CONCEPTION of GOD explained in the video? What are your thoughts and opinions about it?

1. So we are beginning our understanding of how Hinduism view’s GOD with the analogy of 1 SUPREME ENERGY that creates and destroys everything and that permeates everything.

-For Hinduism this creating, destroying, and preserving ENERGY is real.

-But since this is ‘energy’ there are different ways of knowing this energy.

-Relating to this class and IB themes of ‘Ways of Knowing’ what are different ways of knowing this SUPREME ENERGY?

1. Perhaps Hinduism’s great contribution to this question of HOW TO KNOW THE 1 SUPREME ENERGY of GOD- is that the best (and perhaps only place) to find and experience it is WHERE? How does Hinduism explain this concept?
2. Before we jump into the 330,000,000 Hindu gods and goddesses we must mention one more very important point about Hinduism’s conception about GOD and the goal of bhakti marga.

-Open my website: [www.mrciambarellaclass.com](http://www.mrciambarellaclass.com)

-Click on ‘Religion 1st Sem”

-Click on “Week 3 Bhakti Yoga Readings”

-Only read pages 28-29 and then discuss the main ideas with your partner.

1. So let’s summarize a little.

-Hinduism believes in 1 SUPREME GOD/BRAHMAN.

-Hinduism believes that Atman is Brahman and Brahman is Atman.

-Hinduism believes there are 3 MARGAS or PATHS to your atman realizing Brahman:

1) Jnana Marga- physical ‘raja’ yoga, meditation, and philosophical study of sacred texts

2) Karma Marga- selfless service to others

3) Bhakti Marga- ritual devotion to GOD.

- the purpose of bhakti marga is for you to FEEL the real SUPREME ENERGY of God

-the best way to ‘understand’ this ENERGY of God is to use the emotion of unconditional LOVE

1. Now- for some people in Hinduism this is enough. There is no need to try to further comprehend GOD with more analogies for our brains. However, Hinduism also agrees that some people DO need more analogies for their brains to better understand God and there is no problem with that. Therefore, we now come to the part of bhakti marga trying to conceptualize GOD in more details.

-You may remember from last week- how does Hinduism try to conceive of the 3 aspects of this 1 Supreme Energy as

a. God the Creator?

b. God the Destroyer?

c. God the Preserver?

1. You may also remember from homework reading that ‘God the Preserver’ has a special relationship with humanity. To refresh your memory re-read our textbook page 97. Explain this with your partner. What are your thoughts about this?
2. How would a Hindu understand who was Jesus or Buddha or Muhammad?
3. Now let’s start to introduce some of the most important of the “330,000,000” gods and goddesses that exist in Hinduism (always remembering that for Hindus each of these gods is only a representation or specific manifestation of 1 SUPREME GOD)
4. Open my website to “Week 3 Hindu Gods & Shiva Reading”
5. Read the assigned parts and discuss
6. One thing you will discover in Hinduism is that many Hindus would say they have “a natural affinity” to one specific Hindu god or goddess. Therefore, some Hindus will primarily worship Shiva, or some will primarily worship Kali. For Hindus this is no problem since they all realize that they are all worshipping the same 1 GOD- but are just drawn to this 1 GOD thru this particular manifestation (as Shiva or Kali, etc.)

-One of the most popular gods to worship in India in Shiva.

-Let’s learn some more about how Hindus worship Shiva:

1. Open my website to “Om Namah Shivayah Reading”
2. Open “Om Namah Shivaya Chanting”
3. What do you think about the movie “Mystic India” so far?
4. What have you learned about Hinduism and India from it?
5. How have you seen all 3 margas in the movie and Neelkanth’s life so far (jnana, karma, and bhakti)
6. How can Neelkanth’s life-story be interpreted literally and also SYMBOLICALLY?