

Hinduism; The Power of the Pagan gods; Hinduism's Assault Upon Christianity

All the gods of the pagans are demons (Psalm 95:5).

The following article comes from the experience of a woman who, after attending high school in a Roman Catholic convent, practiced Hinduism for twenty years until finally, by God's grace, she was converted to the Orthodox Faith, finding the end of her search for truth in the Russian Church Outside of Russia. She currently resides on the West Coast. May her words serve to open the eyes of those Orthodox Christians who might be tempted to follow the blind "Liberal" theologians who are now making their appearance even in the Orthodox Church, and whose answer to the assault of neo-paganism upon the Church of Christ is to conduct a "dialogue" with its wizards and join them in worshipping the very gods of the pagans.

The Attractions of Hinduism

I was just sixteen when two events set the course of my life. I came to Dominican Catholic Convent in San Rafael (California) and encountered Christianity for the first time. The same year I also encountered Hinduism in the person of a Hindu monk, a Swami, who was shortly to become my guru or teacher. A battle had begun, but I wasn't to understand this for nearly twenty years. [Next...](#)

At the convent I was taught the basic truths of Christianity. Here lie the strength of the humble and a snare to the proud. St. James wrote truly: God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (4:6). And how proud I was; I wouldn't accept original sin and I wouldn't accept hell. And I had many, many arguments against them. One Sister of great charity gave me the key when she said: "Pray for the gift of faith." But already the Swami's training had taken hold, and I

thought it debasing to beg anyone, even God, for anything. But much later, I remembered what she had said. Years later the seed of Christian faith that had been planted in me emerged from an endless sea of despair.

In time the nature of the books that I brought back to school with me, all in plain covered wrappers, was discovered. Books like the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedantasara, the Ashtavakra Samhita... In part my secret was out, but nothing much was said. No doubt the Sisters thought it would pass, as indeed most of the intellectual conceits of young girls do. But one bold nun told me the truth. It's a very unpopular truth and one that is rarely heard today. She said that I would go to hell if I died in Hinduism after knowing the truth of Christianity. Saint Peter put it this way: For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than the former. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them (2 Peter 2:19-21). How I despised that Sister for her bigotry. But if she were alive today I would thank her with all my heart. What she told me nagged, as truth will, and it was to lead me finally to the fullness of Holy Orthodoxy.

The important thing that I got at the convent was a measuring stick, and one day I would use it to discover Hinduism a fraud.

The situation has changed so much since I was in school. What was an isolated case of Hinduism has developed into an epidemic. Now one must have an intelligent understanding of Hindu dogmatics if one is to prevent young Christians from committing spiritual suicide when they encounter Eastern religions.

The appeal of Hinduism is full spectrum; there are blandishments for every faculty and appeals to every weakness, but particularly to pride. And being very proud, even at sixteen, it was to these that I first fell prey. Original sin, hell, and the problem of pain troubled me. I'd never taken them seriously before I came to the convent. Then, the Swami presented an "intellectually satisfying" alternative for every uncomfortable Christian dogma. Hell was, after all, only a temporary state of the soul brought on by our own bad karma (past actions) in this or in a former life. And, of course, a finite cause couldn't have an infinite effect. Original sin was marvelously transmuted into Original Divinity. This was my birth right, and nothing I could ever do would abrogate this glorious end. I was Divine. I was God: "the Infinite Dreamer, dreaming finite dreams."

As for the problem of pain, the Hindu philosophy known as Vedanta has a really elegant philosophical system to take care of it. In a nutshell, pain was maya or illusion. It had no real existence — and what's more, the Advaitin could claim to prove it!

In another area, Hinduism appeals to the very respectable error of assuming that man is perfectable: through education (in their terms, the guru system) and through "evolution" (the constant progressive development of man spiritually). An argument is also made from the standpoint of cultural relativity; this has now assumed such respectability that it's a veritable sin

(with those who don't believe in sin) to challenge relativity of any sort. What could be more reasonable, they say, than different nations and peoples worshipping God differently? God, after all, is God, and the variety in modes of worship make for a general religious "enrichment."

But perhaps the most generally compelling attraction is pragmatism. The entire philosophical construct of Hinduism is buttressed by the practical religious instructions given to the disciple by his guru. With these practices the disciple is invited to verify the philosophy by his own experience. Nothing has to be accepted on faith. And contrary to popular notions, there aren't any mysteries — just a tremendous amount of esoteric material — so there simply is no need for faith. You are told: "Try it, and see if it works." This pragmatic approach is supremely tempting to the Western mind. It appears so very "scientific." But almost every student falls right into a kind of pragmatic fallacy: i.e., if the practices work (and they do in fact work), he believes that the system is true, and implicitly, that it is good — This, of course, doesn't follow. All that can really be said is: if they work, then they work. But missing this point, you can understand how a little psychic experience gives the poor student a great deal of conviction.

This brings me to the last blandishment that I'll mention, which is "spiritual experiences." These are psychic and/or diabolic in origin. But who among the practitioners has any way of distinguishing delusion from true spiritual experience? They have no measuring stick. But don't think that what they see, hear, smell and touch in these experiences are the result of simple mental aberration. They aren't. They are what our Orthodox tradition calls prelest. It's an important word, because it refers to the exact condition of a person having Hindu "spiritual experiences." There is no precise equivalent to the term prelest in the English lexicon. It covers the whole range of false spiritual experiences: from simple illusion and beguilement to actual possession. In every case the counterfeit is taken as genuine and the overall effect is an accelerated growth of pride. A warm, comfortable sense of special importance settles over the person in prelest, and this compensates for all his austerities and pain.

In his first Epistle, Saint John warns the early Christians: Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God... (4:1).

Saint Gregory of Sinai was careful to instruct his monks on the dangers of these experiences: "All around, near to beginners and the self-willed, the demons are wont to spread the nets of thoughts and pernicious fantasies and prepare moats for their downfall..." A monk asked him: "What is a man to do when the demon takes the form of an angel of light?" The Saint replied: "In this case a man needs great power of discernment to discriminate rightly between good and evil. So in your heedlessness, do not be carried away too quickly by what you see, but be weighty (not easy to move) and, carefully testing everything, accept the good and reject the evil. Always you must test and examine, and only afterwards believe. Know that the actions of grace are manifest, and the demon, in spite of his transformations, cannot produce them: namely, meekness, friendliness, humility, hatred of the world, cutting off passions and lust — which are the effects of grace. Works of the demons are: arrogance, conceit, intimidation and all evil. By such actions you will be able to discern whether the light shining in your heart is of God or of satan. Lettuce looks like mustard, and vinegar in color like wine; but when you taste them the palate discerns and defines the difference between each. In the same way the soul, if it has discernment, can discriminate by mental taste the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the fantasies and

illusions of satan."

The misguided or proud spiritual aspirant is most vulnerable to prelest. And the success and durability of Hinduism depends very largely on this false mysticism. How very appealing it is to drug using young people, who have already been initiated into these kinds of experiences. The last few years have seen the flowering and proliferating of Swamis. They saw their opportunity for fame and wealth in this ready-made market. And they took it.

A War of dogma

Today christianity is taking the thrusts of a foe that is all but invisible to the faithful. And if it can, it will pierce to the heart before declaring its name. The enemy is Hinduism, and the war being waged is a war of dogma.

When Vedanta Societies were founded in this country, around the turn of the century, first efforts were directed to establishing that there was no real difference between Hinduism and Christianity. Not only was there no conflict, but a good Christian would be a better Christian by studying and practicing the Vedanta; he would understand the real Christianity.

In early lectures, the Swamis attempted to show that those ideas which seemed peculiar to Christianity — like the Logos and the Cross — really had their origin in India. And those ideas which seemed peculiar to Hinduism — like rebirth, transmigration of the soul and samadhi (or trance) were also to be found in Christian scripture — when it was properly interpreted.

This kind of bait caught many sincere but misguided Christians. The early push was against what might be called "sectarian" dogmas, and for a so-called scientific religion based on a comparative study of all religions. Primary stress was always on this: there is no such thing as difference. All is One. All differences are just on the surface; they are apparent or relative, not real. All this is clear from published lectures that were delivered in the early 1900's. Today we are in great danger because this effort was so very successful.

Now common parlance has "dogma" a derisive term. But this scorn could not have originated with those who know that it refers to the most precious heritage of the Church. However, once the bad connotation became fixed, the timid, who never like to be associated with the

unpopular, began to speak of "rigid dogma," which is redundant but bespeaks disapproval. So the attitude was insidiously absorbed from "broad-minded" critics who either didn't know that dogma states what Christianity is, or simply didn't like what Christianity is all about.

The resulting predisposition of many Christians to back down when faced with the accusation of holding to dogma has given the Hindus no small measure of help. And aid from within had strategic advantages.

The incredible fact is that few see that the very power that would overturn Christian dogma is itself nothing but an opposing system of dogmas. The two cannot blend or "enrich" each other because they are wholly antithetical.

If Christians are persuaded to throw out (or what is tactically more clever) to alter their dogmas to suit the demand for a more up-to-date or "universal" Christianity, they have lost everything, because what is valued by Christians and by Hindus is immediately derived from their dogmas. And Hindu dogmas are a direct repudiation of Christian dogmas. This leads us to a staggering conclusion: What Christians believe to be evil, Hindus believe to be good, and conversely: What Hindus believe to be evil, Christians believe to be good.

The real struggle lies in this: that the ultimate sin for the Christian, is the ultimate realization of good for the Hindu. Christians have always acknowledged pride as the basic sin — the fountainhead of all sin. And Lucifer is the archetype when he says. "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will ascend above the clouds; I will be like the Most High." On a lower level, it is pride that turns even man's virtues into sins. But for the Hindu in general, and the Advaitin or Vedantan in particular, the only "sin" is not to believe in yourself and in Humanity as God Himself. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (who was the foremost modern advocate of Vedanta): "You do not yet understand India! We Indians are Man-worshippers after all. Our God is Man!" The doctrine of mukti or salvation consists in this: that "Man is to become Divine by realizing the Divine."

From this one can see the dogmas of Hinduism and Christianity standing face to face, each defying the other on the nature of God, the nature of man and the purpose of human existence.

But when Christians accept the Hindu propaganda that there is no battle going on, that the differences between Christianity and Hinduism are only apparent and not real — then Hindu ideas are free to take over the souls of Christians, winning the battle without a struggle. And the end result of this battle is truly shocking; the corrupting power of Hinduism is immense. In my own case, with all of the basically sound training that I received at the convent, twenty years in Hinduism brought me to the very doors of the love of evil. You see, in India "God" is also worshipped as Evil, in the form of the goddess Kali. But about this I will speak in the next section, on Hindu practices.

This is the end in store when there is no more Christian dogma. I say this from personal experience, because I have worshipped Kali in India and in this country. And she who is satan is no joke. If you give up the Living God, the throne is not going to remain empty.

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by Seraphim Rose