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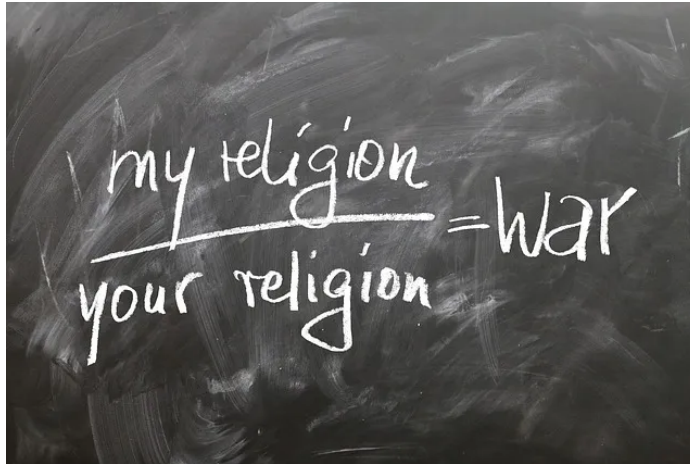
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**ICM MOVES UP IN WORLD'S TOP 100 CATHOLIC MEDIA SITES**

Bengaluru-based Indian Catholic Matters (ICM), a leading online Catholic publication, has been ranked 51st in this year's Feedspot top 100 Catholic websites in the world.

Feedspot – a leading global ranking website – rates blogs, podcasts and youtube channels in several niche categories. [Read more](#)

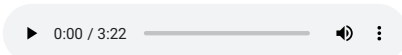
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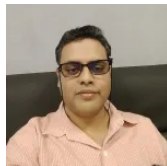


**Summary:** God is a merciful God. Weeping will turn into laughter. Thursday reflection on readings Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23 & Gospel of John 16:16-20. Please click below to listen.



## Growing Out of Nonage: Reclaiming God for Both Practising Hindus and Christians

April 19, 2022 Team ICM Catholic Culture 53 SHARES [Share](#) [Tweet](#)



By Dr. Subhasis Chattopadhyay –

The object of interreligious dialogue between those who follow the Sanatana Dharma and Roman Catholicism has to begin with our understanding of God. God is the foundation of both Hinduism and Christianity. If one denies God, then one is anything but a Hindu or a Christian. In this blog-post, we will try to understand That which cannot be understood. Ours is a fallible theology. We are certain that God IS; but due to the nature of the Godhead we cannot fully understand God through mere ratiocination which will only lead to the errors of logical positivism. So what are the attributes of God which we both as faith communities agree upon?

1. God is self-originated. That is God, has the attribute of aseity. There cannot be something beyond God or, God has no prior cause for Being. This God is known within Advaita Vedanta, or non-qualified non-dualism as Brahman and in Samkhya as 'Purusha' and within the Tantras as Shakti. Therefore, it further follows that God is beyond time. This will be discussed in the next point.
2. God being beyond time and history, is the creator of time and the source of history. So we both concur that God is the ontic point of history. We will discuss this further when we set out our differences regarding the Supreme Godhead.
3. God is both Impersonal and Personal. We agree on this but with reservations which will be discussed momentarily.
4. God is both strong and weak. It is easy to understand how God is always powerful in both our religions but hard to understand how God is weak within both Hinduism and Christianity.
5. God has no known categorical gender. God simply IS.
6. God is both passible and impassible. That is, God can be understood partly because God wants us to know God. But being God, it is not possible for us, finite human beings, to even begin to interpret the Godhead. We can and want to understand more about God, but eventually God will remain the only mystery worth knowing even when we as a race someday colonise other planets.
7. God is external to us but within us too. Hinduism says God is everywhere and in everything. Christ had said that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us.

Now we come to the differences between Hinduism and Christianity since if we wash under the carpet these differences, then no meaningful dialogue is possible. They will continue to remain superficial and based on realpolitik.

1. Christianity forbids the worship of idols. Christians offer dulia and hyperdulia to their representations of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God. Further, God as IS, is not represented through any image. Christ is represented by the Cross and the Holy Spirit by doves. The Christian conception of the Supreme Godhead is triune; God is conceived as the Father, the Holy Spirit and as the Son. The followers of the Sanatana Dharma do not agree with monotheism. Neither do we agree with this triune nature of God except within the Trika. Nor do we agree that the Incarnation was a one off event. Our main modes of liturgical praxes are all Tantric. We believe that one shirt does not fit all. So someone might think of God as a great artificer, so that Hindu will worship Lord Vishwakarma. Someone else might feel attracted to academics and that person will worship Mother Sarasvati, also a Tantric Deity. We hold that worshipping our Deities through treating them as living beings close to us, will slowly over aeons, make us understand the nature of God or, Brahman. The *Rig Veda* teaches us to be gods to worship God. But this cannot happen in one lifetime. We hold that it takes many aeons of evolution and involution to realise that we are not parts of God, but Brahman. So this brings us to our differences regarding time. As a cautionary note, we must warn that the notions are not so simple as presented here. Sri Avinavagupta's understanding of Advaita Vedanta is quite different from Sri Shankaracharya's understanding of what constitutes the real and what is the unreal or, 'asat'.
2. Time within Christianity is linear. We agree that it is linear in this life and as it appears through miscognition. But for Hindus, these cycles of regenerations, Incarnations and apocalyptic destructions will always happen. In this sense, time is not created by God but is a quality of God since everything including time is God. So, we do not exclude historical time but we have the concepts of aeons. And except for a rare few, we hold that many millennia will pass and then we will realise that we are One. Till then we have to be born over and over again, not in endless cycles but as soon as we realise that this world is dross, whether we are married or celibate, we will no longer return.
3. Our soteriologies are different. Christ saves humanity. We do not hold that any external Being will save us. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that by our own selves are we raised and by our own selves are we degraded. According to Hinduism, finally it is for us to decide whether we want to know we are God. There is no concept of salvation as understood by any of the Abrahamic religions within any branch of Hinduism. Yoga and Tantra are methods (*upaya*) of gradually realising our true natures. While classical Yoga is best represented by the *Yoga Sutras*, classical Tantric Yoga is best understood through the *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra*.
4. For us Hindus, Christ is another Incarnation in the long line of Incarnations which were in the past and which will be in the future. But they come to establish righteousness in the here and the now and it is finally up to us whether we desire to know ourselves. When infinity descends within finite time, then the strong God (Shakti) become a weak personal God who hangs powerless from the Cross. Lord Krishna became intensely personal to the Hindu saint Mira Bai.
5. Like Christians, Hindus pray. But the point of prayer is not seeking mercy from our sins. There are indeed absolute wrongs which had been discussed earlier in this website but there is no concept of eternal damnation or eternal bliss within Hinduism. We hold that because of wrong cognition we tend to suffer. Prayers and worship clears the mind of dross and finally we realise that the external Deity is within us. The aim is to become mystically one with the One.

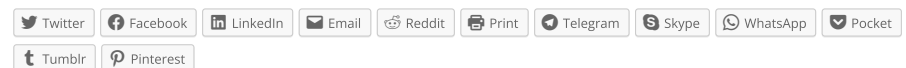
So till when both Christians and Hindus agree to disagree and respectfully study each others' religions, no interreligious dialogue can happen. It is futile to have celibate men of both religions arguing non-issues dismissing the pulsating hearts of Christians and Hindus who faithfully struggle to live their respective faiths in the here and the now. It is important to not sanitize Hinduism to either serve Hindu monastic ends and monastic conceptions of Hinduism or, to give in to Christian interpretations of Hinduism which are invariably in rarefied Vedantic terms. Ordinary Hindus do not read the Vedas as ordinary Christians do not study the Church Fathers. Ordinary Hindus have their rituals and liturgies which have little to do with what passes off as Hinduism in Christian seminaries and higher educational institutions. Contemporary Hindus do not read the Codes of Manu as no sane Catholic will agree with the torture of Galileo by the Inquisition.

I have written this because increasingly the Hindu voice is being interpreted by either radicals or wo/men of other faiths. The Laws Eternal are not the patrimonies of Hindu alone, a Christian can follow natural justice and interpret Hinduism. Similarly, Christianity is not the heirloom of only Christians. Christ can and does speak to whoever He chooses to speak. If any Christian has problems with it, they need to reread the Bible again. If any Hindu has problems with my views they should read the *Tantras*, the *Agamas* and the *Upanishads*. And, unfortunately, I find Catholic voices stifled by Catholic clerical voices. It is time that following Immanuel Kant we all grow out of nonage.

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*Subhasis Chattopadhyay has a Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta on Patristics, Theology and Theodicy in Cormac McCarthy and Stephen King. He has further qualifications in Biblical Theology and separately, in Hindu theology.*

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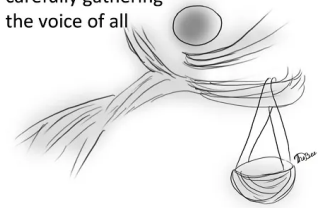
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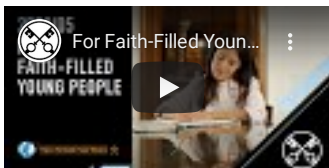
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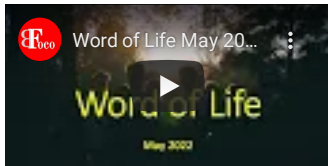
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