

If Hinduism Is "Universal Truth"

A structured reading series distilling the DawahWise discussion on whether Hinduism can sustain a universal truth claim.

Contents

1. 1. Hinduism and the Universal Claim
 2. quick read
 3. reading path
 4. 2. Defining Hinduism
 5. quick read
 6. 3. Birth, Caste, and Belonging
 7. quick read
 8. 4. Mission and the Problem of Spread
 9. quick read
 10. 5. Karma and Moral Agency
 11. quick read
 12. 6. Advaita and the Non-Dual Problem
 13. quick read
 14. 7. Scripture and Selective Reading
 15. quick read
-

1. Hinduism and the Universal Claim

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 571 | READ TIME ~3 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

1. Hinduism and the Universal Claim

quick read

- Hinduism is the third largest religion by number, but almost entirely concentrated in India. Outside South Asia, there is not a single majority Hindu country.
- The question is, "what structural features of Hinduism prevented it from becoming a universal religion in the way that Christianity and Islam did?"
- These chapters break said question into six categories. Definition, caste, mission, karma and rebirth, Advaita, and scriptural authority.

reading path

2. Defining Hinduism
3. Birth, Caste, and Belonging
4. Mission and the Problem of Spread
5. Karma and Moral Agency
6. Advaita and the Non Dual Problem
7. Scripture and Selective Reading

Hinduism has been around for three to four thousand years by its own reckoning. It had a head start and a civilisation. It had philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, grammar and poetry. It had everything that other

religions used to spread. And yet, it stayed in India.

Well, not entirely. The Chola dynasty spread east. Hindu temples appeared in Cambodia (Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world), Thailand, Bali, Indonesia. But even in those places, Hinduism morphed. Some communities eat cow. Some worship local gods alongside Hindu ones. Some have a version of the Ramayana that looks nothing like the Indian original. The question is whether a religion that changes this much in transit, is still the same religion (readers are reminded of the *The Ship of Theseus*), or whether it has become something else entirely.

And the western spread never happened at all.

Six problems explain why.

Definition

Sanatan dharma (the "eternal way") is not a stable label. It can mean Hinduism, or it can widen to absorb Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It can centre on Krishna, or Shiva, or the goddess. The supreme god changes depending on whom you ask. See [2. Defining Hinduism](#).

Caste

The **jati** (birth-caste) system is inherited. The [Chandogya Upanishad 5.10.7](#) links good past life karma to birth as a Brahmin and bad past life karma to birth as a dog, pig, or **Chandala** (outcaste). Converts enter at the bottom. Crossing the ocean could destroy your caste (**kalapani** taboo). In essence, this is indeed a birth gated system, and said systems do not produce universal religions. See [3. Birth, Caste, and Belonging](#).

Mission

Hinduism has no consensus missionary tradition. ISKCON is an exception, and the fact that it is an exception proves the rule. There is yoga which has spread far, but its more along the lines of technique rather than theological per say. See [4. Mission and the Problem of Spread](#).

Karma and agency

The **Padma Purana** teaches 8.4 million life forms before human birth. The [Srimad Bhagavatam 11.9.29](#) treats human birth as uniquely privileged. **Bhagavad**

[Gita 3.27](#) says the [gunas](#) (material qualities) perform all actions and the soul is merely a witness. See [5. Karma and Moral Agency](#).

Advaita

The non dual school says only Brahman (absolute reality) exists, then uses multiple levels of reality to explain everything else. Every time a contradiction appears, the system retreats to a "second layer". [Bhagavad Gita 16.8](#) associates "the world is unreal" with demonic nature. See [6. Advaita and the Non Dual Problem](#).

Scripture

Hindu texts are vast, but there is no stable hierarchy for resolving contradictions between them. And, among these scriptures like the [Shrimad Bhagavatam](#) , [Valmiki Ramayana](#) , and [Manusmṛiti](#) , various filters occur through a guru, school, mode, or era. See [7. Scripture and Selective Reading](#).

2. Defining Hinduism

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 619 | READ TIME ~3 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

2. Defining Hinduism

quick read

- **Sanatan dharma** (the "eternal way", Hinduism's self name, meaning a truth that has always existed rather than one founded at a specific point in history) can mean Hinduism, or it can widen to include Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. The centre can be Krishna, or Shiva, or the divine feminine. The supreme god changes depending on whom you ask.
- The Bhagavad Gita says you can worship any god and you will still be worshipping Krishna in the end.
- Before asking whether Hinduism is universally true, you have to ask what Hinduism actually is.

Sanatan means eternal, without beginning or end. **Dharma** means the natural order, duty, the way things actually are. So, Hindus say this is not a religion that was founded by someone. This is how reality has always worked.

Sometimes the category is narrow. Hinduism, the religion of India, rooted in the Vedas (the oldest Hindu scriptures, considered **shruti**, meaning "that which is heard", divine revelation), the Puranas (later mythological and

devotional texts, considered **smriti**, meaning "that which is remembered"), the great epics, the temple traditions, and the caste system.

Sanatan dharma includes Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism too. They are all "dharmic" faiths. They all aim at the same liberation, whether called **moksha** (release from the cycle of rebirth), **nirvana** (Buddhist term for the same concept, literally "blowing out" of desire), or **kaivalya** (isolation of the pure self, used in Jainism and Yoga philosophy).

So, if someone asks why Hinduism did not spread globally, and the answer is "well, we are actually five religions under one umbrella," the umbrella has not produced unity, because, it has produced a label under which people disagree about almost everything important. A Sikh can say, "I am from the dharmic tradition, but I am not a Hindu," and the label gives him no reason to stay.

The instability keeps recurring at a deeper level too. One moment the supreme authority is the Vedas. Then it is the Bhagavad Gita ("Song of God" — a 700-verse philosophical dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and the god Krishna, often called the most practical Hindu text). Then it becomes a specific school: ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the Hare Krishna movement, a Gaudiya Vaishnava missionary organisation), or Advaita Vedanta (the non-dual school founded by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century, which says only Brahman — the absolute, impersonal reality — truly exists). Then someone else's school is rejected for teaching the wrong thing. The boundary between legitimate diversity and plain contradiction becomes hard to hold.

The sectarian landscape deepens this. Vaishnavites (followers of Vishnu and his avatars like Krishna and Rama) treat Vishnu as supreme. Shaivites (followers of Shiva) treat Shiva as supreme. Shaktas (followers of the goddess Shakti in her many forms — Durga, Kali, Lakshmi) worship the divine feminine. Smartas (a tradition that worships five major deities equally) try to hold everyone together. Sometimes one sect's supreme god is demoted to a servant of another's. The system holds internally if you accept that different people need different paths. But it does not hold well externally, when you are asking a stranger to believe that this is the one universal truth.

The Bhagavad Gita 4.11 says: "In whatever way people surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects." That line has been read as the philosophical basis for Hindu inclusivism – worship anyone, you worship Me. But the inclusivism collapses under its own weight. If worship of any entity counts as worship of the supreme, then the concept of "supreme" stops meaning anything. And if there is no way to distinguish correct worship from incorrect worship, the religion has no public criterion of truth at all.

3. Birth, Caste, and Belonging

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 861 | READ TIME ~5 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

3. Birth, Caste, and Belonging

quick read

- **Jati** (birth-based social group) comes from the Sanskrit root **jan**, meaning "to be born." The word literally means birth. The etymology is not disputed – Wiktionary, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and standard Sanskrit lexicography all confirm it.
 - **Chandogya Upanishad 5.10.7** – one of the principal Upanishads (ancient philosophical texts forming the concluding portion of the Vedas) – states plainly: those who did good work in their past life are born as Brahmana, Kshatriya, or Vaishya; those who did bad work are born as dog, pig, or Chandala (the outcaste). That is a birth-based system, not a qualities-based system.
 - The **kalapani** taboo (literally "black water" – crossing the ocean could make you casteless) and the convert problem (you enter Hinduism at the bottom) explain why Hinduism stayed geographically concentrated. A religion that penalises outward movement and places the outsider at the lowest rung will struggle to become universal.
-

The caste question is not a side issue. It is one of the clearest reasons Hinduism never became a global religion in the way Christianity or Islam did. Not because individual Hindus are bad people — that would be a cheap argument. But because the system itself builds inequality into its structure of belonging.

Start with the language. **Jati** — the word often translated simply as "caste" — comes from the Sanskrit **jan**, meaning "to be born." Wiktionary lists its meanings as: "birth, production; the form of existence fixed by birth; position assigned by birth, rank, caste, family, race, lineage." Encyclopaedia Britannica states: "The term is derived from the Sanskrit *jata*, 'born' or 'brought into existence,' and indicates a form of existence determined by birth." You do not choose it. You arrive into it.

The four **varnas** are arranged into a hierarchy: the **Brahmin** (priestly and scholarly class) at the top, then **Kshatriya** (warriors and rulers), then **Vaishya** (merchants and farmers), then **Shudra** (labourers and servants). Below all four sits the outcaste — historically called **Chandala**, treated in some texts as spiritually equivalent to dogs and pigs.

That last point is not invented polemic. The **Chandogya Upanishad 5.10.7** puts it plainly: "Among them, those who did good work in this world [in their past life] attain a good birth accordingly. They are born as a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya. But those who did bad work in this world [in their past life] attain a bad birth accordingly, being born as a dog, a pig, or as a casteless person (Chandala)." The text does not say "by qualities." It says "by past-life karma" — and that past-life karma determines your birth station. That is a birth-based system.

Now, modern apologists often cite **Bhagavad Gita 4.13**, where Krishna says the fourfold order was created "according to the divisions of **guna** (qualities) and **karma** (actions)." That verse has been used to argue that caste is about abilities, not ancestry. But notice the tension: the Gita verse says qualities and actions; the Upanishad verse says birth. For centuries before the Gita was written down, the Upanishad reading was the operative one. And for most of Hindu history, birth was how caste worked in practice. Commentarial and

secondary literature acknowledges this tension openly – many contemporary authors read varna as ideally based on qualities, while historical practice and some texts treat social status as inherited.

The practical effects are not limited to ancient India. Caste discrimination has appeared in diaspora communities too. In places like California, it has been severe enough to require specific anti-discrimination laws – because caste could not be covered under existing racism frameworks. Workplace hiring and promotion disputes have been documented in court records.

But the deeper structural problem is [kalapani](#) – literally "black water," a term for the ocean. Crossing the ocean could make one casteless. Even Ramanujan, the great mathematician (Srinivasa Ramanujan, early twentieth century), faced a major family dilemma when invited to Cambridge: if he left India, his entire family risked being ostracised. That taboo may have had practical origins (people who left often did not return), but its long-term effect was devastating for spread. A religion that penalises outward movement will struggle to become universal.

The [Manusmṛiti](#) (the Laws of Manu, an ancient Dharmasastra – law text – considered authoritative in many Hindu traditions; A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada himself cited it as "a law book for mankind" in five places in his Bhagavad Gita commentary) reinforces these patterns. Its passages on sacrifice ([Manusmṛiti 5.39-42](#)) state that the Self-existent created animals for sacrifice and that sacrificed animals are "reborn into higher existences" – an idea used to justify animal killing in ritual contexts. Its passages on caste reflect the same birth-based hierarchy seen in the Upanishads.

The convert problem sharpens it further. What happens when someone from outside – a European, an African, a South American – decides to become Hindu? They enter as casteless. They are placed at the bottom. One Ukrainian convert was told by his gurus that he was a "dog eater" (Chandala). He accepted it. The system does not give the stranger an equal starting position. That is not a universal invitation. That is a civilisational inheritance with a guest list.

4. Mission and the Problem of Spread

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 666 | READ TIME ~4 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

4. Mission and the Problem of Spread

quick read

- Hinduism does not have a clear missionary tradition. Some schools say it does not need one. One notable exception — ISKCON — is actively missionary, but that only highlights how unusual it is within the wider Hindu world.
- Yoga, meditation, and breathwork have spread much further than the creed behind them. The techniques travel. The theology stays behind. [Bhagavad Gita 3.13](#) says that food not offered in sacrifice is "eating sin" — the framework requires ritual context, but what gets exported is technique stripped of that context.
- A religion that influences the world without plainly naming itself is exporting atmosphere, not conviction.

If [sanatan dharmā](#) (the "eternal way") is true for everyone on earth, why was so little of it clearly offered to everyone on earth?

Some traditions hold that Hinduism is not missionary by nature. It does not proselytise. It does not send preachers. You are born into it or you are not. That position has a certain dignity to it — truth does not need a sales team.

But it also means that a religion calling itself universal has never developed a stable, consensus mechanism for crossing cultural borders. That is a structural weakness, not a virtue.

The exception proves the problem. ISKCON — the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, founded by Swami Prabhupada (who left India in 1965 and travelled the world fourteen times) — is explicitly missionary. It has temples in over 170 countries. It has a clear method: distribute books, chant the [maha-mantra](#) (the "great chant" — Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare), invite people to temple life. That works. But notice what it means: the only stable Hindu missionary movement comes from one sect, one lineage, one founder. The wider Hindu umbrella has no equivalent. The missionary impulse is not pan-Hindu. It is a sectarian exception.

And then there is yoga.

Yoga is the real story of Hindu export, and it is a complicated one. Yoga has reached everywhere — offices, gyms, wellness retreats, stress management programmes, military training. Breathwork exercises drawn from yogic principles enter professional development spaces under the label of "mindfulness." Meditation enters corporate culture as a productivity tool. These are genuinely Hindu in origin. But they travel as techniques, not as theology. They arrive without the Vedas, without the Bhagavad Gita, without the caste system, without the temple traditions, without the 84 lakh yonis (the traditional Hindu teaching from the [Padma Purana, Sisti-khanda 36.7-8](#) that the soul passes through 8.4 million forms of life before reaching human birth). The yoga arrives. The religion does not.

That is why the word "Trojan horse" keeps appearing. The pattern is not always conscious deception. But the effect is that Hindu influence spreads through fragments — posture, breath, a vague sense of "oneness" — while the full metaphysical system remains behind. [Bhagavad Gita 3.13](#) is relevant here: "The righteous who partake of the remnants of sacrifice are freed from all sins; but those sinful ones who cook food for their own sake verily eat sin." The framework requires ritual context, sacrifice, and surrender. What gets exported is stripped of all that.

Islam and Christianity did not spread by technique. They spread by invitation — a single God, a single message, a single path, walked across borders with a clear statement: this is for you. Hinduism has not done that as a whole. Where it has been offered abroad, it has usually come wrapped in a school, a guru, a sect — not as a clear pan-Hindu public message.

The [Srimad Bhagavatam 11.9.29](#) says: "After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection." That text treats human life as the unique window for [Krishna consciousness](#) (focused devotion to God). But if the religion built on that teaching never clearly offers itself to the humans it claims to serve, the window stays shut for most of the world.

5. Karma and Moral Agency

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 880 | READ TIME ~4 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

5. Karma and Moral Agency

quick read

- The [Padma Purana](#) (Srsti-khanda 36.7-8) teaches there are 84 lakh (8.4 million) [yonis](#) (forms of birth): 9 lakh aquatic species, 20 lakh plants, 11 lakh insects, 10 lakh birds, 30 lakh animals, and 4 lakh human forms. The soul wanders through all of them before reaching human birth.
 - Human birth is treated as uniquely privileged – the [Srimad Bhagavatam 11.9.29](#) says sense gratification is available in all species, but [Krishna consciousness](#) is possible only for humans. [Vivekacudamani 3](#) (attributed to Adi Shankaracharya) says: "Of all creatures, human birth is rare; rarer still is desire for liberation; rarest is the company of a realised soul."
 - The problem: if non-human births cannot choose between good and bad, most of the karma cycle is morally empty. And if even humans lack true free will – [Bhagavad Gita 3.27](#) says the [gunas](#) (the three fundamental qualities of material nature – goodness, passion, ignorance) perform all actions while the soul merely witnesses – the whole system becomes a machine without moral accountability.
-

The karma and rebirth framework is not a decorative doctrine. It is the engine of Hindu ethics. Every action produces a result. Those results accumulate across lifetimes. Your current birth — your family, your caste, your body, your fortune — is the fruit of past-life karma. Your current actions determine your next birth. The system is vast, detailed, and internally coherent on its own terms.

But there is a crack in the foundation, and it is the question of moral agency.

The traditional teaching lists the number of life forms. The [Padma Purana](#) (Srsti-khanda 36.7-8) catalogues them: 9 lakh aquatic species, 20 lakh plants, 11 lakh insects, 10 lakh birds, 30 lakh animals, and 4 lakh human forms. That is 8.4 million yonis total. The soul wanders through all of them before reaching human birth. The [Srimad Bhagavatam 11.9.29](#) puts it vividly: "After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life... After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Krishna consciousness is possible only for a human being."

So human birth is privileged. Human birth is the window. But what are the other 8.4 million life forms doing?

The honest answer, supported by expositions drawn from the [Narada Purana](#) and [Garuda Purana](#), is that in non-human births the soul largely "exhausts" previous karma. The animal does not generate new significant karma. It cannot choose between [dharma](#) (righteous duty) and [adhama](#) (unrighteousness). It just lives, suffers, enjoys, and dies. The [swadhama](#) (personalised duty — one's natural role) of a tree is to grow. It cannot commit a crime. It cannot pray. It cannot choose.

That raises an uncomfortable question. If the karma cycle is a moral system — if birth as a dog or a pig is a punishment for past bad karma — then the punishment is inflicted on a being that cannot understand why it is being punished. The animal cannot learn from the punishment. It cannot reform. It cannot improve. It simply endures. That is not morality in any recognisable sense. That is process without purpose.

The free will problem goes deeper. [Bhagavad Gita 3.27](#) says: "All actions are carried out by the three modes of material nature. But in ignorance, the soul, deluded by false identification with the body, thinks itself the doer." [Gita 14.19](#) reinforces this: "When a man of insight beholds no agent other than the gunas, and also knows Him who is beyond the gunas, he attains My being." The message is consistent: the [atman](#) (individual soul) does not act. [Prakriti](#) (material nature) acts. The soul watches.

[Bhagavad Gita 18.14](#) adds a nuance: five factors produce any action — the body, the doer, the senses, the effort, and the divine ([daiva](#)). Individual will is one of five, not the sole cause. That is closer to what philosophers call [compatibilism](#) — the view that free will and determinism can coexist because "free will" just means acting according to one's nature, not acting without any prior cause.

But even compatibilism requires some moral agency. And the Upanishadic "two birds on one tree" metaphor — found in the [Rig Veda 1.164.20](#), [Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.1-2](#), and [Shvetashvatara Upanishad 4.6-7](#) — shows the tension clearly. One bird eats the fruit. The other merely watches. The eating bird is the [jiva](#) (the individual self bound by karma). The watching bird is [Ishvara](#) (the Lord, the higher Self). If the eating bird eats, it acts. If it acts, it has agency. But Gita 3.27 says the soul is not the doer. The tension is real.

The practical consequence is this. A moral universe is easier to defend when moral agency is available to all beings in the cycle. If only humans have agency, then the vast majority of the cycle is morally empty. And if even humans do not truly have free will, then the whole system becomes a machine producing outcomes without genuine choice — which makes the concept of "deserving" your birth position meaningless.

6. Advaita and the Non-Dual Problem

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 814 | READ TIME ~4 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

6. Advaita and the Non-Dual Problem

quick read

- Advaita Vedanta says only Brahman (absolute, impersonal reality) is ultimately real. Everything else – the world, the body, the individual self, karma, time, space – is **maya** (illusion) or **mithya** (empirically real but ultimately not absolute). Liberation (**moksha**) means realising that the atman was never separate from Brahman.
- The core problem: Advaita says only Brahman exists, but it still needs karma, individual souls, multiple states of consciousness, and different "levels of reality" to make its system work. Every time it needs multiplicity, it retreats into a second layer. But that second layer is precisely what Advaita says is not ultimately real.
- **Bhagavad Gita 16.8** associates the claim "the world is unreal and without God" with **asuric** (demoniac) nature. Whether that applies to sophisticated Advaita is debatable, but the textual tension is real.

The Advaita section of any serious examination of Hindu philosophy is where the question stops being about history and geography and starts being about internal logic. And the logic, under pressure, begins to buckle.

The core claim of Advaita Vedanta – literally "non-dual end of the Vedas," the school founded by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century – is simple and radical. Only **Brahman** (the absolute, impersonal, undifferentiated reality) exists. Everything else is **maya** (illusion) or **mithya** (empirically real but ultimately not absolute). The **atman** (individual soul) is not really individual. It is identical with Brahman. The sense of being a separate person with a separate will is **avidya** (ignorance). Liberation means realising you were never separate from Brahman in the first place.

That sounds profound. But when pressed, it runs into immediate trouble.

The first problem is karma. The karma system needs actions, consequences, moral choices, rebirth across different bodies. But if Brahman alone is real, then karma cannot be real – it is not Brahman. The Advaitin must say karma exists in a "vyavaharika" (empirical/transactional) sense, not in a "paramarthika" (ultimate/absolute) sense. Karma is real enough to matter, but not real enough to be Brahman. That is a two-layered reality. And a two-layered reality is, by definition, not non-duality.

The second problem is the self. **Bhagavad Gita 3.27** says the **gunas** (material qualities – goodness, passion, ignorance) perform all actions. The soul merely thinks "I am the doer" through **ahankara** (ego, literally "I-maker"). **Gita 14.19** says one must see no agent other than the gunas and know the Lord beyond them. The "two birds" metaphor from the **Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.1-2** and **Shvetashvatara Upanishad 4.6-7** shows one bird eating, the other watching. If the soul is the watching bird, there is a distinction between observer and observed. That is duality within a system claiming non-duality.

The third problem is **Bhagavad Gita 16.6-8**. Krishna describes two kinds of created beings – divine (**daiva**) and demoniac (**asuric**). In verse 16.8, the demoniac ones say: "This world is unreal (**asatyam**), with no foundation, no God (**anishvaram**) in control. It is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust." The resemblance to Advaita's "the world is unreal" is uncomfortable. A sophisticated Advaitin will immediately say that Advaita does not deny God or say the world is sheer non-existence – it says the world depends on Brahman, like a pot depends on clay. Fair enough. But the textual association is there, and it is not easy to shrug off.

The fourth problem – and this is the one that matters most in practice – is what happens during argumentation. When pressed, the Advaitin keeps shifting between levels. "Does karma exist?" – "In the empirical sense, yes." "Is the self the doer?" – "No, the subtle body is." "What about different states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep?" – "Those are three perceived realities; the fourth ([turiya](#) , the transcendent state) observes them all." "Is perceived reality different from absolute reality?" – silence, or a change of subject.

That pattern – of retreating into a second level every time a contradiction appears – is the core of the problem. It is not that layered language is always false. Philosophers use it all the time. The problem is that in Advaita, the second level is defined as not-ultimately-real, yet it is the level on which all moral, social, and practical life operates. A system that dismisses ordinary reality as illusion and then relies on ordinary reality to make its own arguments is a system that eats its own foundation.

The [Bhagavad Gita 18.14](#) adds another layer: five factors produce any action – the body, the doer, the senses, the effort, and the divine ([daiva](#)). That text insists on real causal plurality. If only Brahman is real, then these five factors are either illusory (in which case the Gita is teaching illusion) or they are real (in which case Advaita is wrong about non-duality). Either way, the system does not close cleanly.

7. Scripture and Selective Reading

AUTHOR Mohammed Efaz | CHANNEL  DawahWise | IDEA Hinduism |

WORDS 916 | READ TIME ~5 min

SOURCES

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 1](#)

 [If Hinduism is "Universal Truth", Why Did the World Reject It? · Part 2](#)

7. Scripture and Selective Reading

quick read

- Hindu scripture is vast — the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, epics, Dharmasastras (law texts), and thousands of commentary traditions. The problem is not scarcity. It is the lack of a stable hierarchy for deciding which text wins when two texts disagree.
- The [Gita-mahatmya 6](#) says all the Upanishads are cows and the Gita is their milk. But if the cream can override the cow, what is the cream actually made of? The hierarchy is circular.
- The [Shrimad Bhagavatam 4.25.42](#) purport by Prabhupada recommends marrying girls before puberty. The [Shrimad Bhagavatam 8.12](#) narrates Shiva chasing Vishnu's female form and ejaculating. The [Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya-kanda 96.1-2](#) shows Rama eating meat. [Manusmṛiti 5.39-42](#) treats animal sacrifice as elevating the animal. These are not polemic inventions — they are in the texts, and the interpretive method for handling them is the real test.

The later material runs into passages that are genuinely difficult for modern Hindu apologetics. Not because the passages are hard to read — they are often quite clear. But because they are hard to reconcile with what many modern

Hindus want their religion to say.

Take the [Shrimad Bhagavatam 4.25.42](#) purport by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (the founder of ISKCON, widely respected within his tradition as a bonafide guru). The purport says: "As soon as a woman attains the age of puberty, she immediately becomes very much agitated by sexual desire. It is therefore the duty of the father to get his daughter married before she attains puberty." That is a clear statement recommending pre-puberty marriage. Prabhupada wrote it. His followers accept him as authoritative. Yet the immediate response, when this is raised, is: "That was for a different time," or "He didn't personally do that." But he wrote it in a commentary he claimed was guided by Krishna. You cannot accept a guru as divinely guided and then dismiss his inconvenient statements as products of their era.

Take the [Shrimad Bhagavatam 8.12](#) — the Mohini-murti episode. Vishnu takes the form of a naked woman (Mohini). Shiva becomes sexually aroused, chases her, and ejaculates. Verse 8.12.33 says that wherever Shiva's semen fell, mines of gold and silver appeared. Verse 8.12.35 says Shiva realised he had been "victimized by the illusion created by the Supreme Personality of Godhead." The apologia offered is that this episode demonstrates Shiva's supreme devotion — only God could captivate the mind of the greatest yogi. But the plain reading involves a god taking a naked female form to sexually arouse another god. Whether that reading is fair or not, it is the reading the text invites.

Take the [Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya-kanda 96.1-2](#). Rama, the ideal man of Hindu tradition, sits with Sita on a hillside "in order to gratify her appetite with a piece of flesh." He says: "This meat is fresh, this is savory and roasted in the fire." For modern vegetarian Hinduism, this is deeply uncomfortable. The response usually involves reinterpretation — "meat" might mean something else, or the context was different. But the Gita Press Gorakhpur edition (the most widely used Hindi/Sanskrit edition) translates it as meat. The Sanskrit says [mamsa](#) (flesh). [Ayodhya-kanda 52.102](#) further describes Rama and Lakshmana hunting four species of deer and eating the portions that were pure.

Take animal sacrifice. King Dasharatha, Rama's father, performed the [Ashvamedha](#) (horse sacrifice). The [Manusmṛiti 5.39-40](#) says the Self-existent created animals for sacrifice, and that animals offered in sacrifice are reborn into higher existences. The Vaishnava tradition adds that the animal is whispered to: "by this sacrifice you will immediately get a human birth." This is not a polemic invention. It is in the texts.

The pattern is the same everywhere. A troubling passage appears. One or more of these filters is applied:

1. This was for an earlier age.
2. This applies to people in [tamas](#) (the mode of ignorance), not the highest teaching.
3. You need a [guru](#) (spiritual teacher in an unbroken lineage) to interpret this correctly.
4. This school reads it differently.
5. The [Gita](#) overrides this, because it is the "cream of the Upanishads."

Filter five is particularly interesting. The [Gita-mahatmya 6](#) (a devotional text praising the Gita) says: "All the Upanishads are the cows, the milker is Krishna, Arjuna is the calf, the wise are the drinkers, the great nectar of the Gita is the milk." This is used to say the Gita clarifies and trumps ambiguous Upanishadic passages. But the Gita is supposed to be the distilled essence of those Upanishads. If the cream can override the cow, what is the cream actually made of? The hierarchy is circular: the Gita depends on the Upanishads for its authority, yet it can also overrule them.

Each person picks whichever text supports the position they already hold, and the hierarchy shifts to match. That is the deeper problem. It is not that Hindu texts contain difficult material — every religion has difficult passages. It is that Hinduism lacks a single, agreed-upon method for resolving contradictions between texts. In Islam, the Quran is primary, hadith secondary, and scholarly consensus ([ijma](#)) tertiary. In Christianity, creeds and councils settled major disputes. In Hinduism, you can reject one text because another text says something different, and your choice of which text to favour depends on your school, your guru, your sect, or your personal inclination. That is not a stable foundation for a universal truth claim.