

Messianic Expectations in the Eastern Religions

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In the mystical faiths of the East – particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism – there is a strong messianic expectation in spite of their polytheistic nature and the absence of a supreme being. Through the centuries, different *masters of wisdom* have emerged in these faiths, having reached a high level of deification through continued reincarnation and intense spiritual illumination. They enjoyed a big following and were worshiped as gods after their death. The big eastern religions expect the reappearance of one of these masters of wisdom to save humanity from its afflictions and lead all people to higher levels of spiritual illumination.

The Hindu messiah

Hinduism believes in the unity of everything. This totality is called Brahman and we are all part of God. By good deeds one attains enlightenment as measured by your karma, and that determines the nature of your reincarnation after death. You can be reborn at a higher or lower level.

Many deities are worshipped in Hinduism. There are religious leaders, or ascended masters of wisdom (avatars), who had various life cycles due to reincarnation, allowing them to progress to higher levels of divinity. Although the Hindus are not monotheistic they have a triad of gods who are higher in rank than the others. They are Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Brahma is regarded as the creator god. Vishnu is worshipped as saviour and is second in rank after Brahma. Thirdly, there is Siva who is associated with fertility and the powers of reproduction.

Krishna is the eighth incarnation of the god Vishnu and is one of the special avatars in Hinduism. It is alleged that Jesus was an incarnation of Krishna and lived a very similar life. It is expected that there will be a new incarnation of the avatar who, in different periods in history, was known as Vishnu, Krishna and Jesus. Any of these names can be used for him but he will also be known as the Kalki Avatar (the White Horse Avatar) as he will be riding a white horse.

The Kalki Avatar will fight the apocalyptic snake and achieve the final victory over evil on earth. He will renew humanity, enabling people to lead pure and honourable lives. The expectations of all religions will be fulfilled in him as he will be the world messiah that they all looked forward to.

On the website of Near-Death Experiences and the Afterlife (www.near-death.com/) is an article titled: *Jesus as a Reincarnation of Krishna*.

It is alleged that there is a great similarity between Jesus and Krishna, and this is taken as proof that Jesus should be regarded as an incarnation of Krishna. Some of the similarities discussed in this article are as follows:

- Krishna was miraculously conceived and born of the virgin Devaki (the Divine One) as a divine incarnation.
- He was born at a time when his family had to travel to pay the yearly tax.
- His father was a carpenter yet Krishna was born of royal descent.
- His birth was attended by angels, wise men and shepherds, and he received many gifts.
- He was persecuted by a tyrant who feared that the divine child would supplant his kingdom. The tyrant ordered the slaughter of thousands of infants in an effort to kill Krishna.
- He was baptised in the River Ganges.
- His mission was the salvation of humanity.
- Krishna worked miracles such as raising the dead and healing lepers, the deaf and the blind.
- He used parables to teach the people about charity and love.
- He lived poor and he loved the poor.
- Krishna was crucified on a tree between two thieves.
- He descended to hell, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended to heaven which was witnessed by many.
- He is the second person of the trinity, and proclaimed himself the *resurrection* and the *way to the Father*.
- His disciples bestowed upon him the title "Jezeus" which means "Pure Essence."
- Krishna is to return again riding a white horse to do battle with the prince of evil, who will desolate the earth.

That which the end-time Krishna will do, i.e. to imitate Jesus and to allege that he is a new incarnation of Jesus, is exactly what the Antichrist will do. Jesus said about the time shortly before His second coming: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5).

The Buddhist messiah

It is alleged that the first Buddha, Gautama, led a similar life to that of Jesus and also contended with a Satan's figure. In an article, *Buddhist Messianism*, in *World Religions*, Vol. 2, Dr. Young Oon Kim says that Buddhists believe in a personal devil whom they call Mara – the lord of misfortune, sin, destruction and death. He is the ruler of desire and death, the two evils that chain man to the two evils of ceaseless rebirth. Dr. Kim says, "Mara reviles man, blinds him, guides him toward sensual desires; once man is in his bondage, Mara is free to destroy him."

Kim continues: "Buddhist tradition holds that Buddha encountered Mara on several occasions.... In a famous incident similar to Jesus' temptation, Mara urges Buddha to become a famous king and establish a great empire in which men can live in peace. He reminds Buddha that he can turn the Himalayas into gold if he but wishes so that all men will become rich. Buddha replies that a single man's wants are so insatiable that even two such golden mountains would fail to satisfy him."

Mara was unable to subjugate Buddha but was more successful with Buddha's followers. As the source of evil, he caused misunderstanding between teachers and pupils and cast doubt on Buddha's sayings by calling them nothing but poetry. He also appeared in the guise of a monk or nun and tempted people to adopt attitudes that would encourage sinful pride. Mara could even appear in the form of Gautama Buddha in order to confuse Buddhists or lead them astray.

Mara has many servants and demons who are summoned to do his destructive work. Because of their actions people everywhere encounter the ten sorrows of this age: war, fire, no peace day and night, separation of man and wife, the scattering of the sons and daughters, evil men spread over the country, dead bones unburied, clothing with no one to wear it, rice with no one to eat it, and the difficulty of ever seeing a peaceful year.

According to Buddhist scripture, Gautama predicted that at some future time another Buddha will come to help men set up an ideal kingdom of righteousness and peace. He will be the fifth incarnation of Buddha, referred to as the Maitreya Buddha – *Maitreya* means *Love*.

Dr. Kim says: "The present human race will continue to deteriorate; righteousness will gradually disappear as injustice, cruelty and lust increase. This age will last for 2500 years (since the first Buddha) and then will be the dawn of a new era.

Men as we know them now will gradually die off but the remnant will provide the nucleus for a better race to come... There will no longer be any killing, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, filth or mud huts. The cities will be lighted; parks and gardens will abound. Then, man will enjoy heaven on earth.”

In Buddhist eschatology, Gautama is not expected to return. He promised that Maitreya will be the next Buddha whose success will be far greater than that of his own. Maitreya will be a teachers and holy man who will bring the Buddhist principles of life to fulfilment and inaugurate an era of cosmic bliss. According to *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Gautama said: “Maitreya will be fully awakened, full of wisdom and a perfect guide, himself having trodden the path to the very end; with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as an educator, teacher of gods and men, and the Exalted Buddha... From his own understanding of it he will proclaim the nature of this universe and of living beings. In the consummation of his teachings the higher life will be made known in all its fullness and purity... He will be the head of many thousand monks, just as in the present period I (Gautama) am the head of an order of many hundred.”

Dr. Kim concludes his articles as follows: “In the past Buddhism offered to the Orient the hope of the highest kind of individual contentment based on liberation from worldly cares. Without denying this supreme goal, Buddhists today stress the value of creating a just and prosperous social order. Only in a just environment will men have the security and leisure they need for spiritual advancement. Gautama Buddha and Maitreya Buddha actually complement each other, the first reminding us of individual self-perfection, the second challenging us to bring about the messianic age of justice and material abundance for all.”

The Shinto messiah

Shinto is the ancient Japanese religion which recognises the existence of various nature deities (Kami). The first two deities, Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to the Japanese islands. One of their daughters, Amaterasu (the Sun Goddess), is the ancestress of the imperial family and regarded as the chief deity. All people are regarded as Kami's children. Human life is sacred. Shintoists love nature and worship natural objects.

Belief in the inherent goodness of people is the common ground between Shintoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Efforts are made to associate Shintoism with these faiths, and even with Christianity, in order to promote the idea of a common messiah for all people. In a book, *Messiah, the desire of all nations*, E. A. Gordon says that

this idea has taken root in Japan and China, where there is a deep relationship between Buddhism, Shintoism and Christianity. The author comes to the conclusion that these religions are basically the same but manifest differently. They all proclaim spiritual awakening, self-discipline, love and simplicity of life.

The eastern religions are dedicated to the development of mystical powers. These powers, e.g. powers of healing, are occult in nature and associated with shamanism. A shaman is a diviner/healer or priest in religions which allow for the manipulation of occult powers. Because of their mystical philosophy, Shintoism is open to influences from various sides. In His book, *The Princess of the Dragon Palace: A New Shinto Sect is Born*, Ben-Ami Shillony says, among others:

“The religious scene of Japan is full of surprises. Recently on a visit I had the opportunity to stay for a few days with the members of a new Shinto sect. They question the legitimacy of the royal family, demand female domination, identify Susa-no-o with Jehovah, and venerate a statue of Jesus Christ in one of the sacred shrines of Shinto. The group, which is based in Osaka, is headed by a sixty-year-old shamaness, Fujita Himiko. At the age of thirty-five she felt a strong urge to dedicate herself to religion and joined the *shugendo* sect of esoteric Buddhism. She later went to India and studied Tibetan Lamaism there. On 7 October 1973, while visiting a sacred Shinto site, she underwent a forceful mystical experience. She felt the deity Ryugu Otohime enter her body and became one with her. At that moment, she says, she herself turned into Ryugu Otohime, an ancient goddess reborn in a living human body. She subsequently made a study of Shinto and shamanism, and in 1981 was recognised as divine shamaness by the Shinto Shrine near Kyoto.”

It is obvious that the Shinto faith, like Buddhism and Hinduism, has a strong dedication to spiritual illumination, self-deification and spirit possession. They all expect a religious leader who has ascended very high on the ladder of divinity, and who will have the ability to work miracles, to defeat evil, and to establish peace and justice on earth. When such a person appears on the scene, all the deceived people on earth will accept him and ascribe their messianic titles to him.

The New Age Movement

It is conspicuous that the New Age Movement, which propagates the coming of a world messiah for all faiths, draws strongly on the Oriental religions to support

its idea of the spiritual illumination of a united humanity. They assign different religious titles to the same person.

In the New Age Movement, an interfaith prayer for world peace is often repeated by supporters. Sundial House comments, among others, on this prayer: “*May Christ return to Earth* is a joyous and triumphant framing of the expectation of men all over the world that the World Teacher, the *Avatar* who will bring the next unfoldment of Divinity, will make His appearance in our crucial times. The word *Christ* embodies much more than the leader of the Christian Church. He is the World Teacher of the present cycle and is also known throughout the East as the Lord Maitreya, as the Bodhisattva and as the Imam Mahdi.”

How is Jesus of the Christian faith associated to all these other religions? The New Age Movement published the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*. It is an effort to identify Jesus Christ outside the context of the inspired, historical, biblical account. Various Eastern religious titles are assigned to the New Age Jesus, thus portraying him as the universal, cosmic christ. The account of this *Gospel* is based on the so-called lost years of Jesus between the ages of 12 and 30, which are not recorded in the Bible. It is alleged that during this time he visited India, Nepal, Tibet, Egypt, and Greece before returning to Israel to commence his public ministry there. A review is given on how he made an intensive study of the Vedas – the holy books of the Hindus. While in the Himalayas in Nepal he devoted himself to a study of Buddhism. He was regarded as a reincarnation of Buddha and the title *Issa* (Son of God) was conferred on him. In an Egyptian temple in Heliopolis (the City of the Sun) he acquired the title of *the Christ*, by which time he was suitably prepared to start his ministry in Israel.

The highest ranking deities in the New Age Movement are (1) the universal god of all faiths, (2) the cosmic christ, and (3) Lucifer. In his book *Reflections on the Christ* the head of Planetary Citizens, David Spangler, included a chapter titled: *Lucifer, Christ and God*. In it, an important role in the consciousness evolution of humans is assigned to Lucifer: “When man entered upon the pathway of self, he entered into a great creative adventure... There he can say, ‘I have fully and absolutely accepted the responsibility of who and what I am. In so doing I am free...’ The being that helps man to reach this point is Lucifer. That is his role. He is the angel of man’s evolution. He is the angel of man’s inner light. Lucifer is the spirit of light in the microcosmic world. God is the spirit of light in the macrocosm, and Christ is the bridge between the two that spells freedom in manifestation.”

Lucifer is the real force behind the New Age Movement and the non-Christian religions (1 Cor. 10:19-22). He usually disguises himself as one of the deities of other religions, but in these last days he progressively reveals his true identity.

A false world messiah

The Antichrist will be the common messiah of all the false religions. He will act on behalf of all of them to unite humanity and ensure their peaceful co-existence. After having achieved this false sense of unity, and being universally praised for it, he will advance to his following objective, which is the forced worship of himself and his father, Lucifer: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast [the Antichrist]. So they worshipped the dragon [Lucifer] who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast?" (Rev. 13:3-4). Together with David Spangler and the entire New Age Movement, the deceived multitudes on earth will worship Lucifer as the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), as well as the cosmic Christ who will be empowered by Lucifer (Rev. 13:2).

What a futile exercise this will prove to be! United humanity will still proclaim, "Peace and safety! then sudden destruction comes upon them... And they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). The reign of terror of the beast and the dragon will be short-lived as they will be destroyed when the true Christ comes:

"And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone... Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Rev. 19:19-2; 20:1-2).

That will be the tragic end to all human and satanic efforts to worship deities outside the Triune God of the Bible in order to save humanity from its incessant dilemma of sin, misfortune, hostility, violence, covetousness and power-craziness by instituting a Luciferic new world order. There is no true life outside the Son of God (1 John 5:12).