

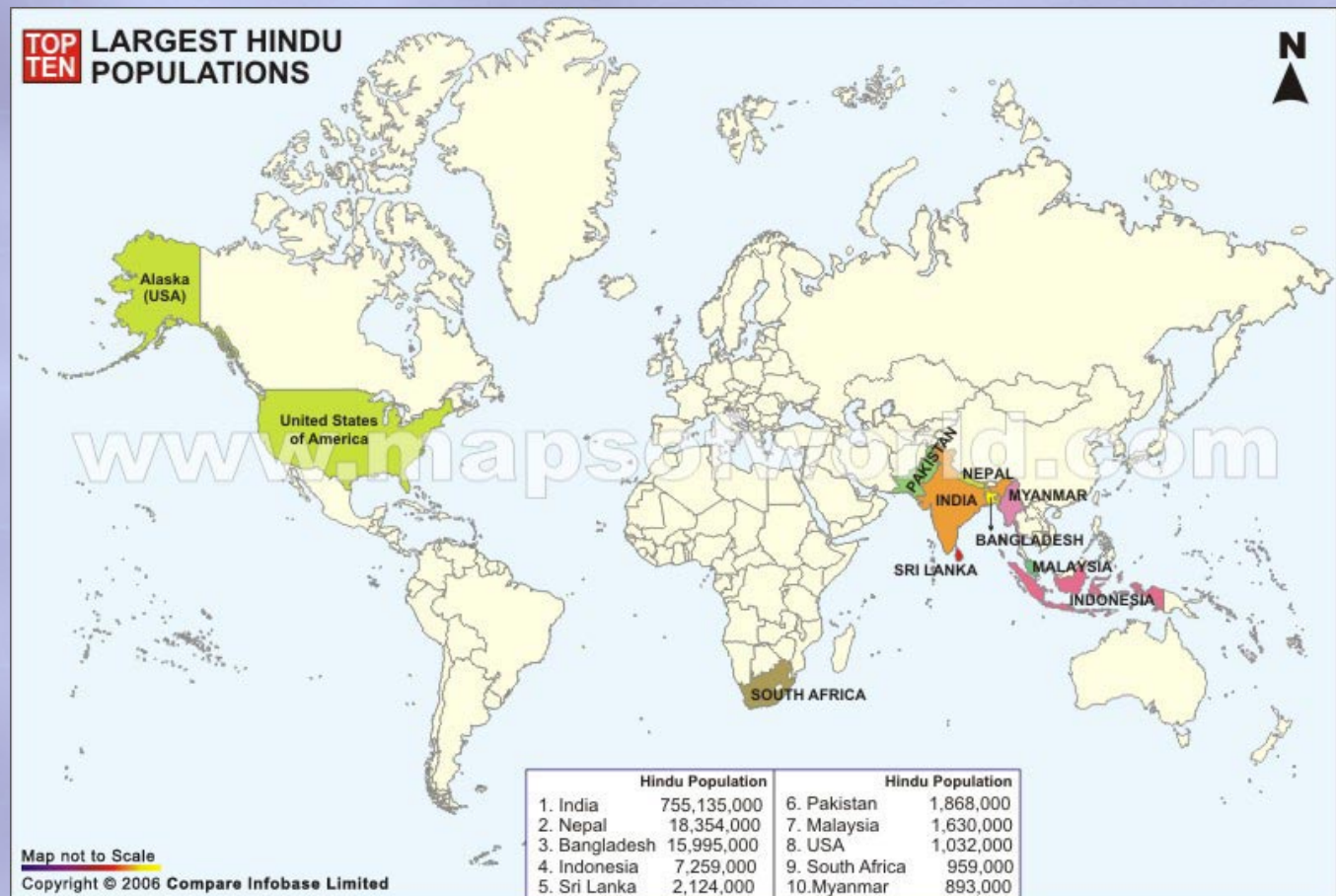
Hinduism



Hinduism Video

World Population

900 million



origins



- Hinduism is made up of a variety of different religious beliefs and practices which originated near the river Indus in India.
- The name 'Hindu' comes from the word Indus.
- The religion dates back over 4,000 years.
- World's oldest major religion

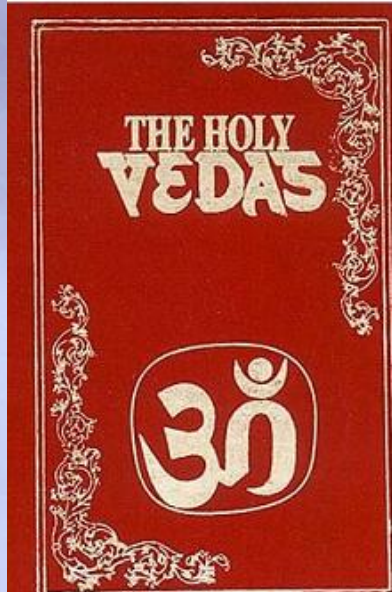


Founder of Hinduism?

- Hinduism does not have any founder or any prophets.



Sacred texts



- the Vedas, a collection of hymns praising the Vedic gods
- Upanishads : holy book from 8th century BC
- the Ramayana, long epic poems about Rama and Sita
- the Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita
- the Puranas, a collection of stories about the different incarnations and the lives of saints.



Question from your reading:

- What was written first the Vedas or the Vedic Text?

The Vedas



Major beliefs

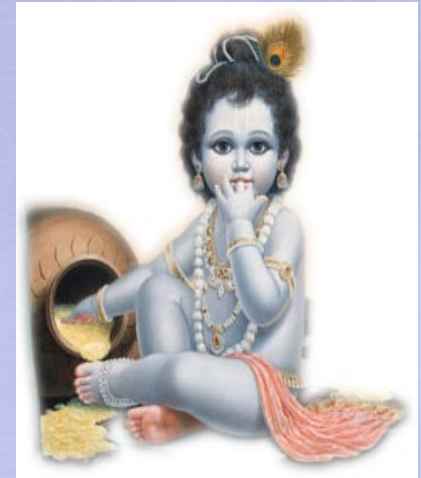
- the belief in **Brahman**, the universal soul, or God, which is found in everything. Brahman is worshipped in a variety of forms, including Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Shiva and several others
- salvation is achieved through a spiritual oneness of the soul, **atman**, with the ultimate reality of the universe, **Brahman**
- To achieve this goal, the soul must obtain **moksha**, or liberation from the **samsara**, the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth – to obtain **moksha** is the main goal of all Hindus
- Thus, Hindus believe in **reincarnation** (after someone dies, their soul lives on and starts a new life in another body – not necessarily a human one), which is influenced by **karma** (every action has an effect and there is a cause for everything), and **dharma** (fulfilling one's duty in life)
 - This means that, depending on how you have behaved in the previous life (generating good or bad Karma), you will be reborn into a better or worse life



Who do Hindus worship? – the major gods of the Hindu Pantheon

Brahma, the creator god





**All these deities are but
Manifest forms (attributes
and functions) of the
impersonal Brahman**



The 3 most important Hindu gods are:

- **Brahma** - known as the Creator.
- **Vishnu** - Known as the Preserver
- **Shiva** (Siva)- known as the Destroyer.



Brahma



Vishnu



Shiva

And we too are manifest forms of God!

**“We are not human beings
having spiritual experiences;
We are spiritual beings
having a human experience!”**



“That art Thou”

Hinduism is about recognizing the all pervasiveness of the divine

How do Hindus achieve Moksha

- There are four different paths to achieve Moksha which a Hindu can take.

The Hindu can choose one or all four of the paths they are:

- **1 The path of knowledge** - Jnana-Yoga

Spiritual knowledge -leading to the knowledge of the relationship between the soul (atman) and God (Brahman)

- **2 The path of meditation** - Dhyana-yoga

The idea is to concentrate so you can reach the real self within you and become one with Brahman

- **3 The Path of Devotion** - Bhakti-yoga

Choosing a particular god or goddess and worshipping them throughout your life in actions, words and deeds.

- **4 The path of good works** - Karma-yoga

This involves doing all your duties correctly throughout your life.



Question from your reading:

- What does the term Karma mean?

The effects that good or bad actions have on your soul



Everyday practices



- **Puja**: worship either at temple or shrine at home
- **Arti**: worship that takes place in front of statues of the gods – offerings given
- **Ahimsa**: all life is sacred – so many are vegetarian
 - Cows are especially sacred – give freely of themselves (work, milk)
- **Holy Place** – river Ganges (used for spiritual cleansing, funeral rites, and other Hindu rituals) – city of Varanasi
- Festivals – Holi, **Diwali**
- Belief in reincarnation, karma, and dharma provides the religious justification for the existence of the rigid social structure known as the Caste System



Diwali



- Hindu festival of lights “row of lights” lasting five days.
- b/c there are many regions in India, there are many forms of the Diwali festival
- In at least one region, the “row of lights” are lit on the new-moon night to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth (In the Indian culture, wealth is not viewed as a corruptive power. Instead, a wealthy person is considered to have been rewarded for good deeds of a past life).
- homes are thoroughly cleaned, windows are opened candles and lamps are lit to welcome Lakshmi. Gifts are exchanged and festive meals are prepared during Diwali. Celebration means as much to Hindus as Christmas does to Christians.



Dharma or Daily Duties



1. **Worshipping God:** Hindus must devote part of their day to worship. This ensures spiritual contact.
2. **Reciting scripture:** By reciting from a sacred text, the faithful learn the lessons of worldly and religious life.
3. **Honoring to parents and elders:** Hindus are very loyal family members. Parents and elders are honored for their wisdom and self-sacrifice.
4. **Helping the poor:** Even the less fortunate try to obey this commandment. Guests, in particular, are given special attention in a Hindu home.
5. **Feeding animals:** Because Hindus consider all life a sacred part of one God, animals are respected and cared for.

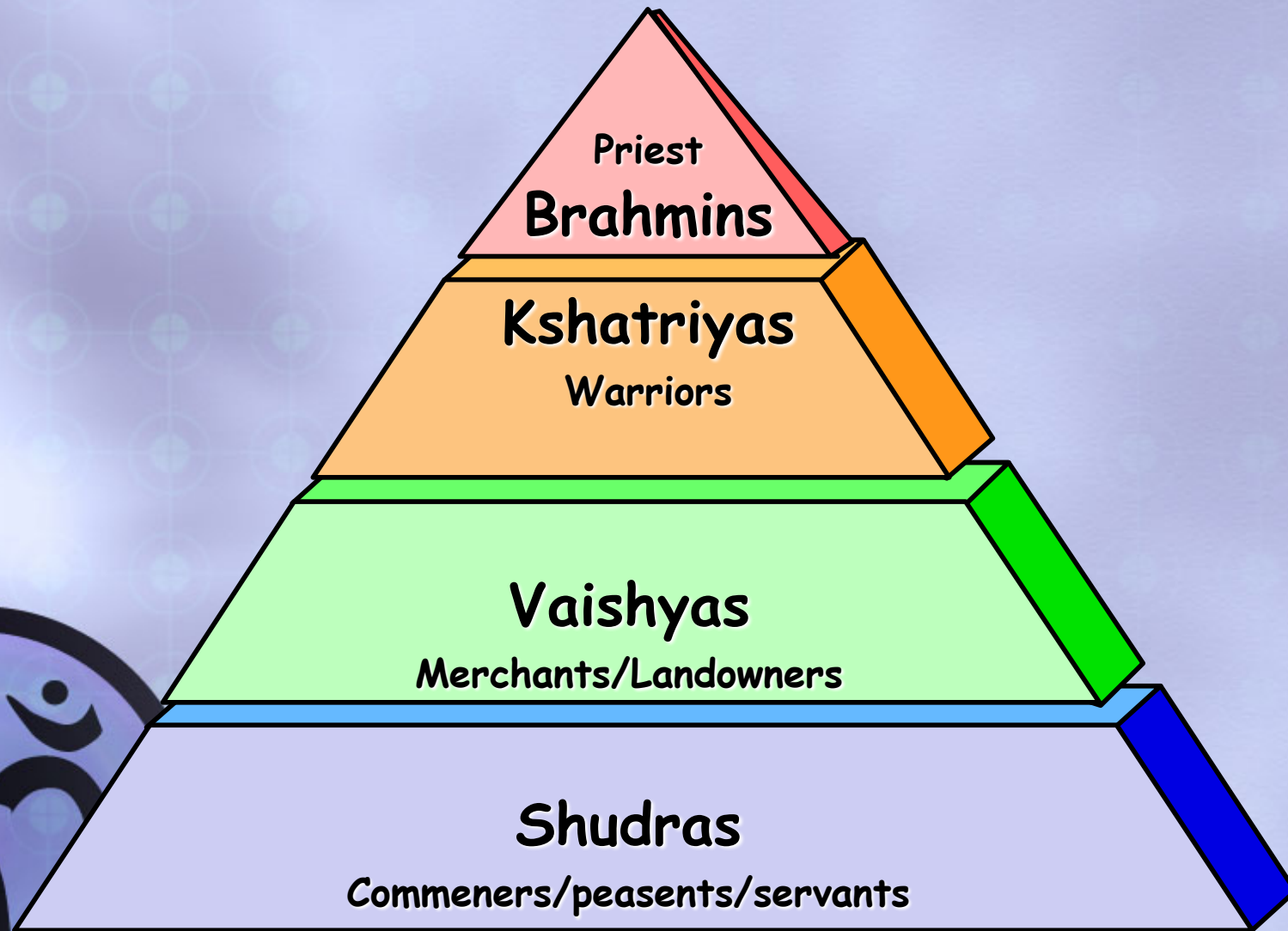
Question from your reading:

- What is the act of being reborn over and over known as?

Reincarnation



Varna (Social Hierarchy)



Pariahs [Harijan] → Untouchables

The Caste System

WHO IS...

- The mouth?
- The arms?
- The legs?
- The feet?





Untouchables (Dalits) of India

The Hindu religion prescribes that the Dalits themselves accept their own oppression. Belief in reincarnation demands that they conform to their religion if they are to progress to higher status in another life.



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The system persists outside India too. In Western countries and in Africa, wherever Indian populations exist, so does caste.

Question from your reading:

- What factors determine if a person is reborn?

A persons actions
during his/her
lifetime-Karma



Ashrama: Four Stages of Life

1-20 Years Old

The student, who is devoted and obedient
to his teacher

The householder, who supports his
family and the priests and fulfills duties
to the gods and ancestors

The hermit, or retiree who withdraws
from society to pursue ascetic and
yogic practices

The guru, who
renounces all
possessions and
wanders from place
to place begging for
food



Place of worship



- Worship takes place in Mandirs (temples)
- There are formal gatherings for worship but people can also visit the Mandir at any time to pray and participate in the bhajans (religious songs).
- Hindus will also worship at home and often have a special room with a shrine to particular gods.





Home Shrines

- Almost all Hindus keep a shrine in their home, regardless of their caste or economic status.
- Shrines are dedicated to a particular god,
- Vary in size. Some families can afford to leave aside an entire room while others can devote only a corner of the bedroom. The sacred space, like the shrine of a temple, is tended to religiously.
- family members worship collectively or individually.
- common features of a family shrine:
 - On a table or shelf rests a photograph of the chosen god. The fragrance of fresh flowers and fruit mixes with incense and perfumes in the air. A bell, which is rung for prayer, stands nearby. An oil lamp, lit during worship, sits beside the scripture from which prayers are read. Other symbols, gods, and gurus may also appear in the shrine.



Religious Divisions

- Sikhism - elements of Islam & Hinduism
- Jainism - concern for life is extended to all creatures, even minute microbes that are not visible

