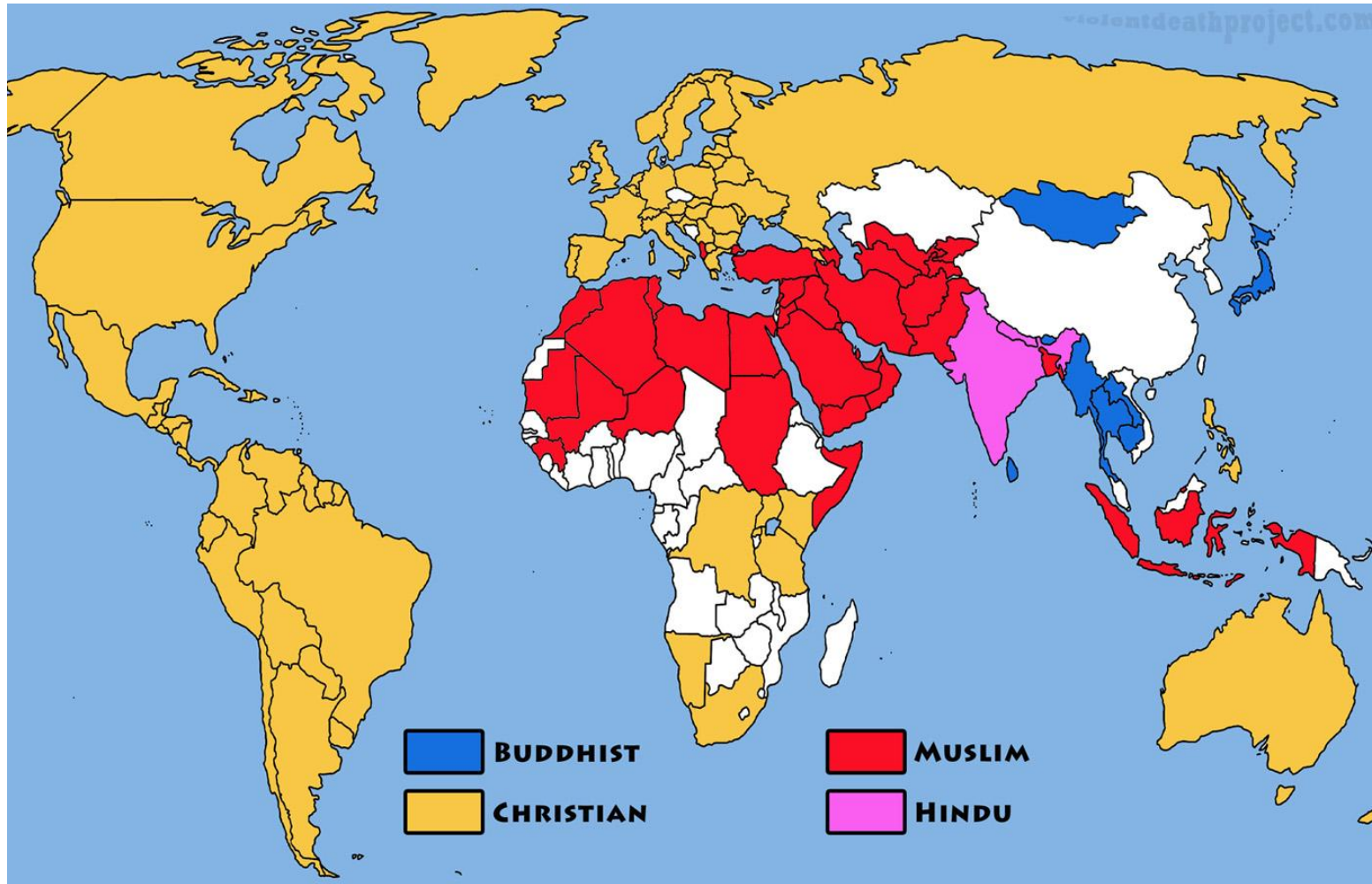


# UNIT 6: HINDUISM

Origins & Beliefs

# ORIGINS

- ◉ World's oldest religion
- ◉ Third largest in the world, after Christianity and Islam
- ◉ Dominant religion in India (85%)
- ◉ No particular founder
- ◉ Absorbed ideas and practices that suited its social and cultural framework as it evolved over thousands of years
- ◉ Product of 2 various groups of people
  - Indus Valley Civilization
  - Aryans



# INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION

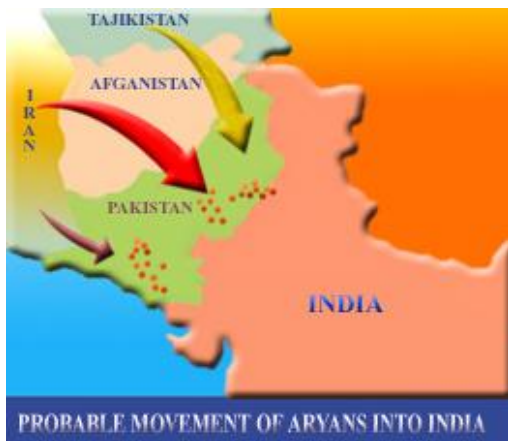
- ◉ Earliest evidence of religious thought in India
- ◉ Uncovered in 1926
- ◉ Dates back to 3000 BCE
- ◉ Present day Pakistan and Northwest India
- ◉ Stone sculptures representing Hindu gods and goddesses discovered





# ARRIVAL OF THE ARYANS

- 1500 BCE
- Aryans - from central Asia
- Thousands migrated into India from Northwest destroying the Indus Valley Civilization
- Wrote texts on rituals and philosophy called Vedas - Hinduism's earliest sacred writings



# BELIEFS

- ◉ Non-dogmatic religion - one is free to worship any set of doctrines or rules as his/her conscience dictates
- ◉ Does not impose its religious beliefs
- ◉ Does not believe in conversion
- ◉ Hindus expected to follow certain rules in their personal conduct and in their performance of daily duties
- ◉ Mutual tolerance and respect

# CONCEPT OF GOD

- ◉ Polytheistic or monotheistic
- ◉ Brahman
  - Soul of the universe from which all existing things arise and into which they all return
  - Everything and everywhere
  - Divine
  - Invisible
  - Unlimited
  - Indescribable
  - Hindus are free to imagine Him/Her in any way that is meaningful to them = they worship different deities that they consider manifestations/expressions / reincarnations of Brahman



# BRAHMAN

- ◉ Creator of universe
- ◉ 4 heads, 4 faces, 4 arms (4 cardinal directions)
- ◉ Seated on lotus or swan/goose
- ◉ Holds:
  - Book (knowledge)
  - String of beads (garland of eyes to keep track of the universe)
  - Scepter (actively involved in creating universe)
- ◉ Female counterpart: Saraswati
  - Goddess of learning and arts
  - 4 arms = 4 aspects of human personality in learning (Mind, Intellect, Alertness, Ego)
  - Holds a book and musical instrument
  - Vehicle is peacock or swan



# VISHNU

- ◉ Preserver of universe
- ◉ Loving and forgiving figure who brings salvation
- ◉ The one who supports, sustains and governs the Universe
- ◉ 4 arms
- ◉ Holds:
  - conch shell = creativity, the sound from blowing it is the primeval sound of creation
  - discus = the mind as a weapon
  - lotus = concentration of truth
  - scepter = individual existence



# VISHNU

- ◉ Blue skin: colour of infinite sky and ocean
- ◉ Wears 2 earrings to represent opposites in creation (knowledge & ignorance, happiness & unhappiness, pleasure & pain)
- ◉ Vehicle is divine eagle



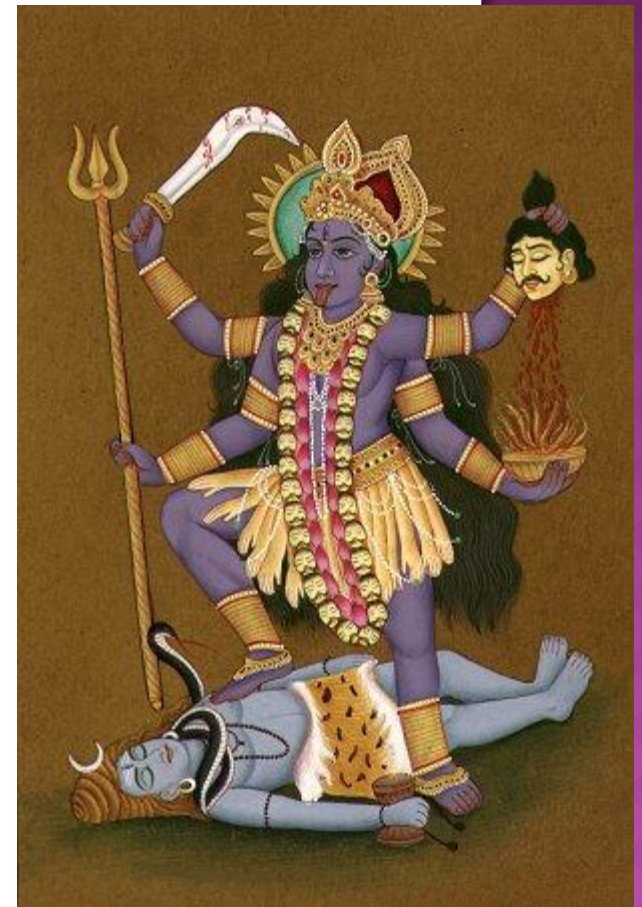
# LAKSHMI

- ◉ Goddess of wealth, happiness, good fortune and beauty
- ◉ Blesses worshippers with wealth and liberation
- ◉ Often seen rewarding worshippers with gold
- ◉ With 4 arms, on lotus



# SHIVA

- ◉ He is the destroyer and restorer of the universe
- ◉ Associated with creative energy
- ◉ Considered great yogi (spiritually evolved individual)
- ◉ Holds:
  - ◉ Trident (unity of 3 worlds - inside, immediate, broader overall world)  
At the base, the 3 forks unite
  - ◉ Garland of skulls around neck
  - ◉ Drum
  - ◉ Ax/sword



# SHIVA

- ◉ Vehicle is bull
- ◉ 3<sup>rd</sup> eye that burns desire to ashes
- ◉ Smears his body with ashes = end of all material existence, practice of cremation
- ◉ Blue neck - drank poison and was strangled in order to prevent spread
- ◉ Tiger skin - an honour reserved for the most accomplished Hindus







- Often depicted as Nataraj - god of dance
- Shown holding a drum, serpent, and sacred fire while performing the dance of creation
- Wife is goddess Parvati



# PARVATI

- ◉ Mother goddess
- ◉ Worshipped as female energy
- ◉ Takes on many forms including warrior goddess riding a tiger and holding weapons or fierce destroyer of evil

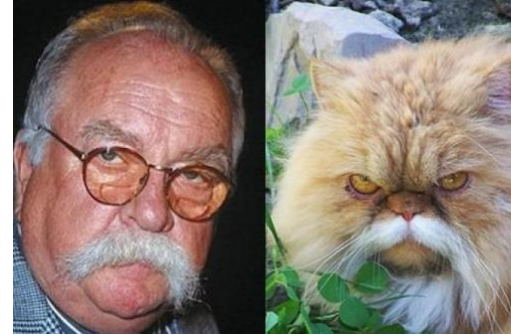


# HINDU TRINITY

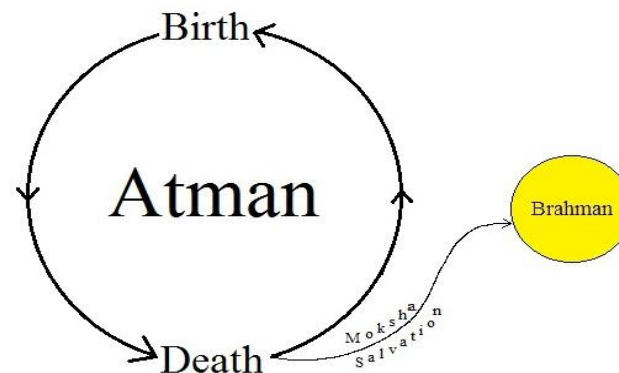
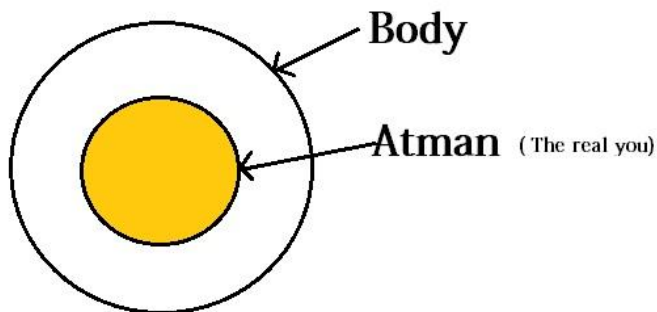
- Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva



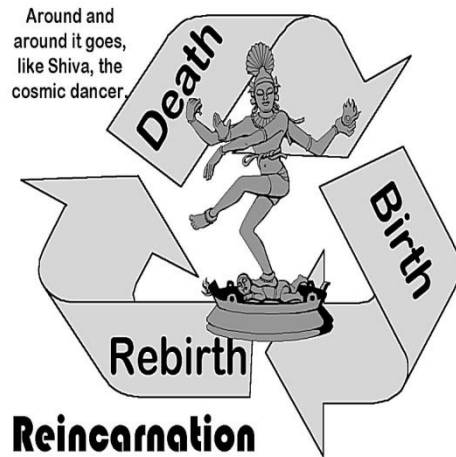
# REINCARNATION



- Atman = Human soul or spirit
- Part of our innermost self that is identical to Brahman, the universal soul
- Hindu's goal in life is to reunite the atman with the Brahman and achieve Moksha
- Soul does not die along with body but enters another body to carry on its existence



○ Endless cycle of rebirth/reincarnation -  
samsara



- Moksha = liberation from endless cycle of rebirths and unity of Atman and Brahman



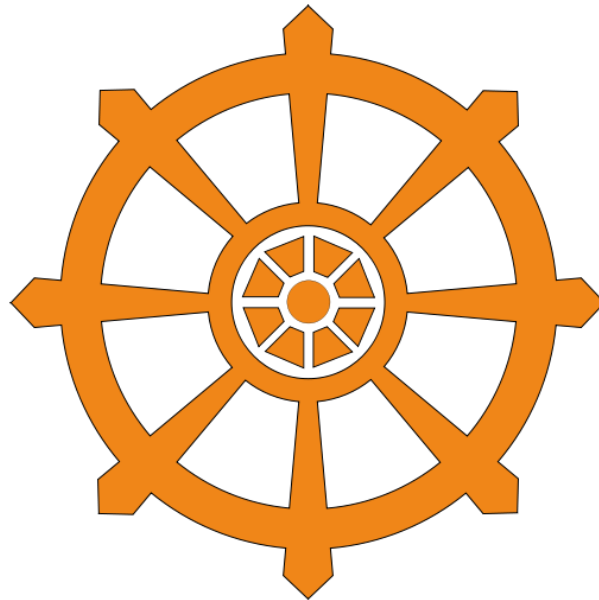
# KARMA

- ◉ Totality of one's actions in life
- ◉ Determines the form that an individual will take after rebirth
- ◉ Accumulation of bad karma = lower station in life or as lower form of life (animal)
- ◉ Accumulation of good karma = higher station in life which is closer to attaining salvation



# DHARMA

- ◉ Code of moral and righteous duty
- ◉ Duties and responsibilities
- ◉ Personal conduct and righteous living



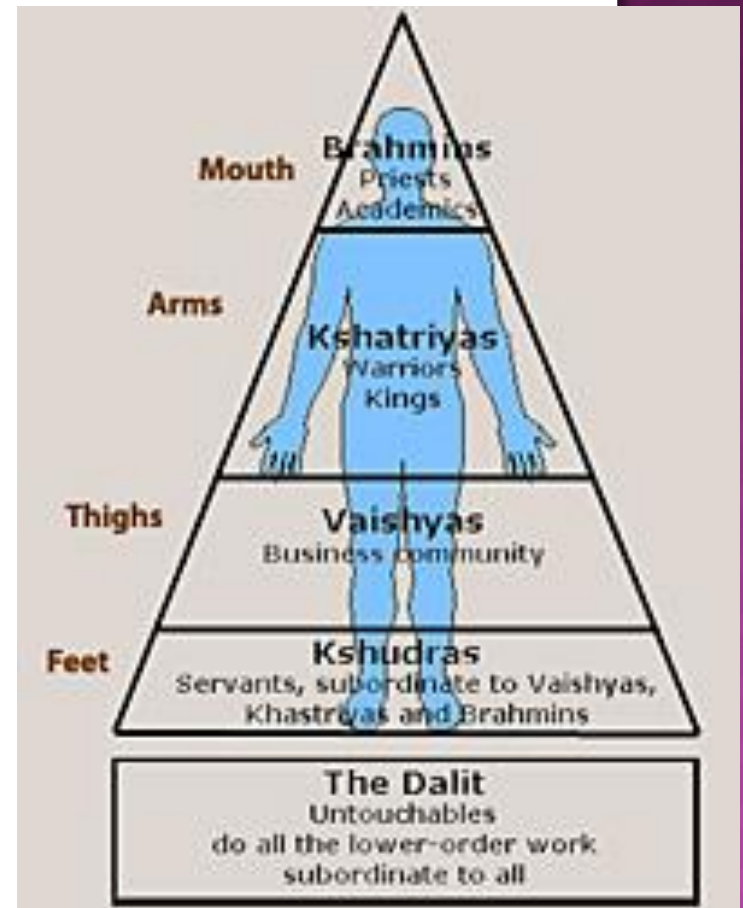


# PATHS TO SALVATION

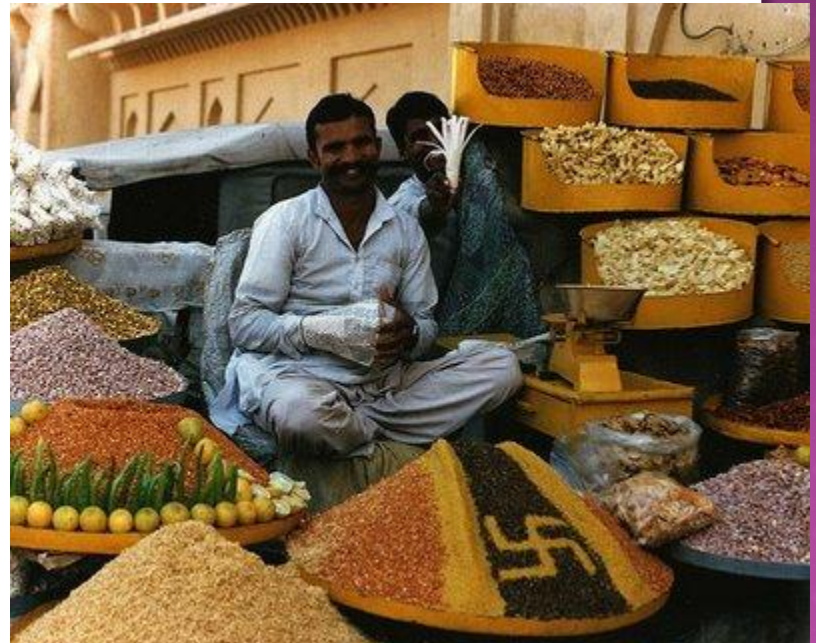
- ◉ **Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion)**
  - Devotion and love toward a personal deity through prayer and worship
- ◉ **Karma Yoga (Path of Action)**
  - Good deeds and thoughts, accumulation of good karma
- ◉ **Jnana Yoga (Path of Wisdom)**
  - Calls for the guidance of a guru/teacher, learning and following the scriptures
- ◉ **Raja Yoga (Path of Meditation)**
  - Intense meditation which leads to trance-like state in which individual acquires knowledge and becomes one with Brahman
  - Requires strict physical and spiritual discipline

# CASTE SYSTEM

- Society divided into 4 classes (Varnas)
- People are born into their caste system according to the karma they've accumulated in previous lives
- People of different castes do not associate with each other



| Caste        | Occupations   | Goals                      | Duties   |
|--------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| Brahmin      | Priests, religious teachers   | Knowledge, education       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance of rituals and sacrifices</li> <li>• Pursuit of arts, sciences, ethics, philosophy, and religious study</li> <li>• Research and teaching</li> </ul> |
| Kshatriya    | Warriors, rulers  | Political power, diplomacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Maintenance of law and order</li> <li>• Protection from foreign invaders</li> </ul>   |
| Vaishya      | Merchants, farmers  | Wealth, commerce           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of wealth</li> <li>• Trade with other societies</li> </ul>   |
| Sudra        | Servants, labourers   | Manual skills              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service to other castes</li> </ul>  |
| Untouchables | Outcasts, Unclean occupations such as tanning leather, removing dead animals, washing toilets |                            |  |



# CASTE SYSTEM

- ◉ Today, India's Charter of Rights bans discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, race, or religion
- ◉ Indian government has introduced a number of social welfare programs and economic initiatives to improve living conditions of those who have suffered as a result of caste system
- ◉ Despite laws to protect them, people still face widespread discrimination in India today



# 4 STAGES OF LIFE

| Stage          | Responsibility   |
|----------------|--|
| Student        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discipline mind and body</li><li>• Gain knowledge</li><li>• Learn rules and rituals of Hinduism</li><li>• Show respect toward elders</li></ul>                                   |
| Householder    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marry and have a family</li><li>• Provide for the family</li><li>• Give to charity</li><li>• Care for family elders</li><li>• Practice social and religious traditions</li></ul> |
| Forest Dweller | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retire and transmit household duties to wife or son</li><li>• Read and study</li><li>• Participate in religious pilgrimages</li></ul>  |
| Ascetic        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give up worldly life</li><li>• Wander</li><li>• Meditate</li><li>• Attain salvation</li></ul>  |

# 4 GOALS OF LIFE

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Kama   | Pursuing love and physical pleasures to balance life and to sanctify marriage  |
| Artha  | Earning money by honest means to provide for family<br>Acquiring wealth and power  |
| Dharma | Duty, set of standards to live by<br>Conducting one's duties with compassion toward all beings<br>Absence of jealousy<br>Purity<br>Tranquility<br>Goodness<br>Absence of cruelty and greed |
| Moksha | Leading the soul toward salvation through honest and moral action  |