

Hinduism

Mark D. Harris

MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv, PhD, ThM, DBA

MD Harris Institute Inc

Major Hindu Countries

	India - 769,572,021
	Nepal - 17,904,793
	Bangladesh - 15,989,408
	Indonesia - 4,046,847
	Pakistan - 2,347,247
	Sri Lanka - 2,259,246
	Malaysia - 1,112,200

Background of Hinduism

- Hinduism is a historical accretion of ideas that arose, mixed, and developed through the interactions of the native Dasyu peoples and the Indo-European Aryan immigrants in the second and first millennia BC.
- Scholars bicker about whether the Aryans invaded or migrated from the northwestern plains, but world historical experience from the Bantus in Africa to the Europeans in the New World 2,500 years later demonstrates that invasion and migration often look the same.
- Hinduism has no known founder, unlike other world religions.

INDIAN GODS



Ganesha



Brahma



Buddha



Hanuman



Saraswati



Vishnu



Krishna



Rama



Kali



Parvati



Lakshmi



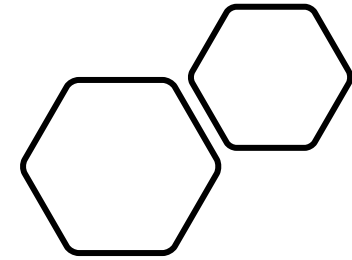
Shiva



Durga



Kamadeva



Some of the
most famous
Hindu deities



The Timeline

Palaeolithic	12,000 – 8,000 BC
Mesolithic	8,000 – 4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 – 2,500 BC
Bronze Age	2,500 – 500 BC
Iron Age	500 BC – 400 AD

Early Christian	400 AD - 800 AD
Viking	800 AD – 1100 AD
Norman	1100 - 1600
Plantation	1600 – 1922
Independence	1922 -

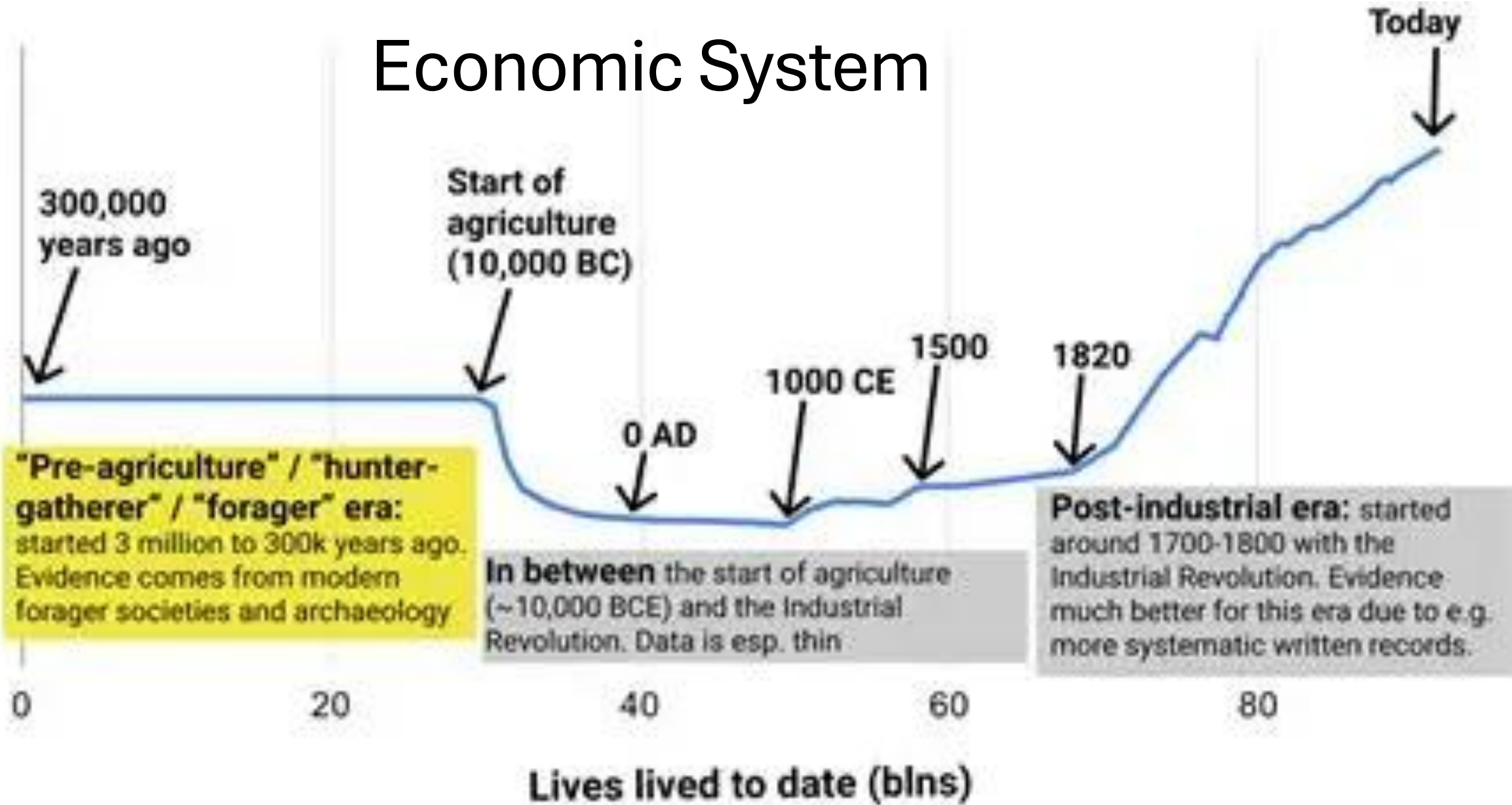


Hindu History (1)

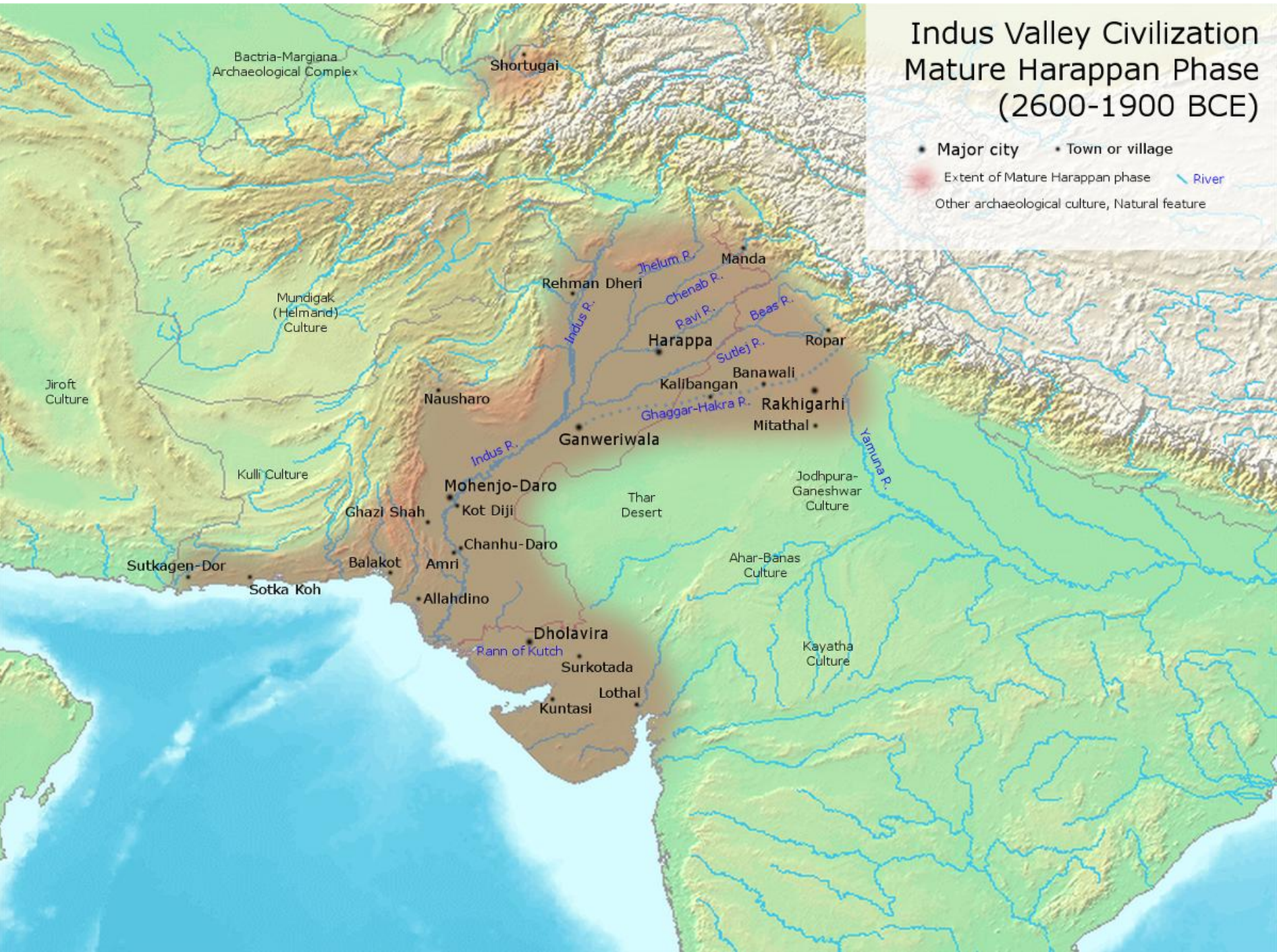
- Paleosiberian migration from 10,000 to 2,000 BC.
- The Aryan migration occurred in the centuries from 2000 to 1600 BC. Starting in the steppe culture of central Asia, Aryans passed through the Thar, Cholistan, and Thall deserts or towering mountains of Hindu Kush to arrive in modern Rajasthan, Punjab, and Gujarat.
- Encountered developed but declining cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Displacing the current residents, the Aryans pushed south and east, finding vast lightly peopled lands and scattered tribes.
- Over the centuries, Aryan and Dasyu blood and culture mixed. Brahmanism and later Hinduism developed.

Economic System

Quality of life (subj. best-guess estimate, meaningless units)



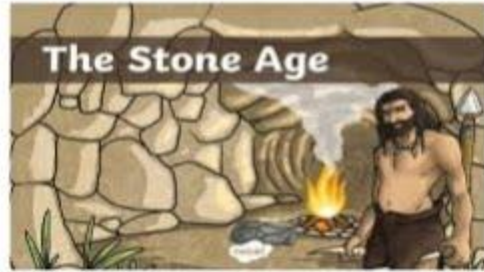
Indus River Valley Civilization



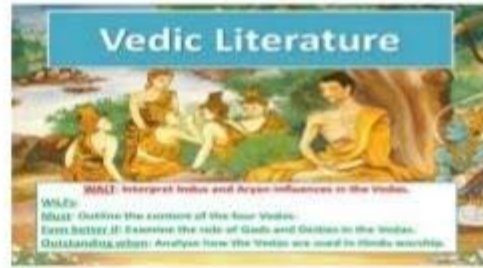
Hindu History (2)

1. Pre-Vedic (3000-1500 BC) – not much is known, but animism was prevalent.
2. Vedic (1500-700 BC) – Polytheism and the caste system developed. This was the high point of ritual Hinduism.
3. Upanishadic (700-200 BC) – Concepts of samsara, moksha, dharma, karma, and the like gained currency.
4. Post-Upanishadic (200 BC – AD 200) – The Vedas reemerged and the Bhagavat Gita was written and became dominant. Bhakti, the idea of gaining merit by devotion to the god(s) swept through to the subcontinent.

Ancient History Timeline



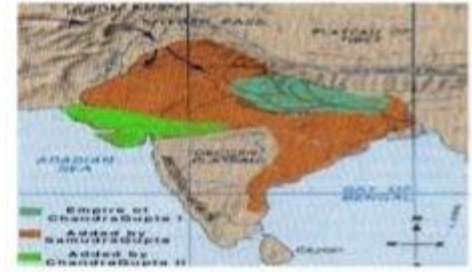
Stone Age
(2million BC – 2700BC)



Vedic Culture
(1500 BC – 600BC)



Maurya Period
(330 BC – 185 BC)



Gupta Period
(319 AD – 550 AD)



IVC

(2350 BC – 1750 BC)



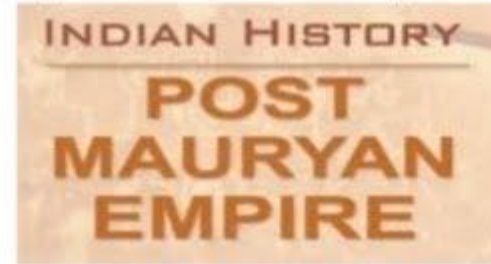
Mahajanapada Period

(600 BC – 330 BC)



Post-Maurya

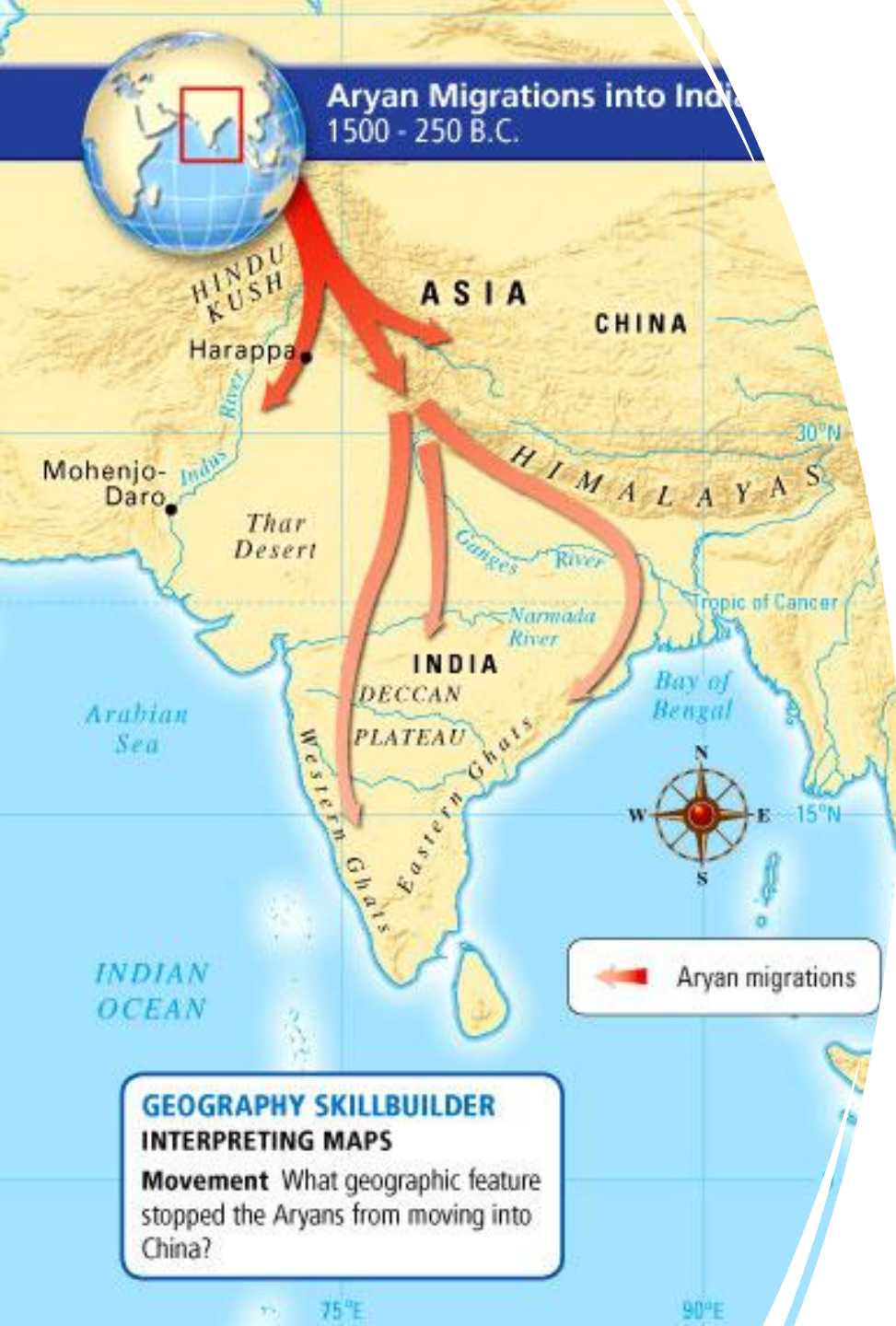
(185 BC – 319 AD)



Post Gupta Period

(550 AD – 750 AD)





Aryan Migration to India

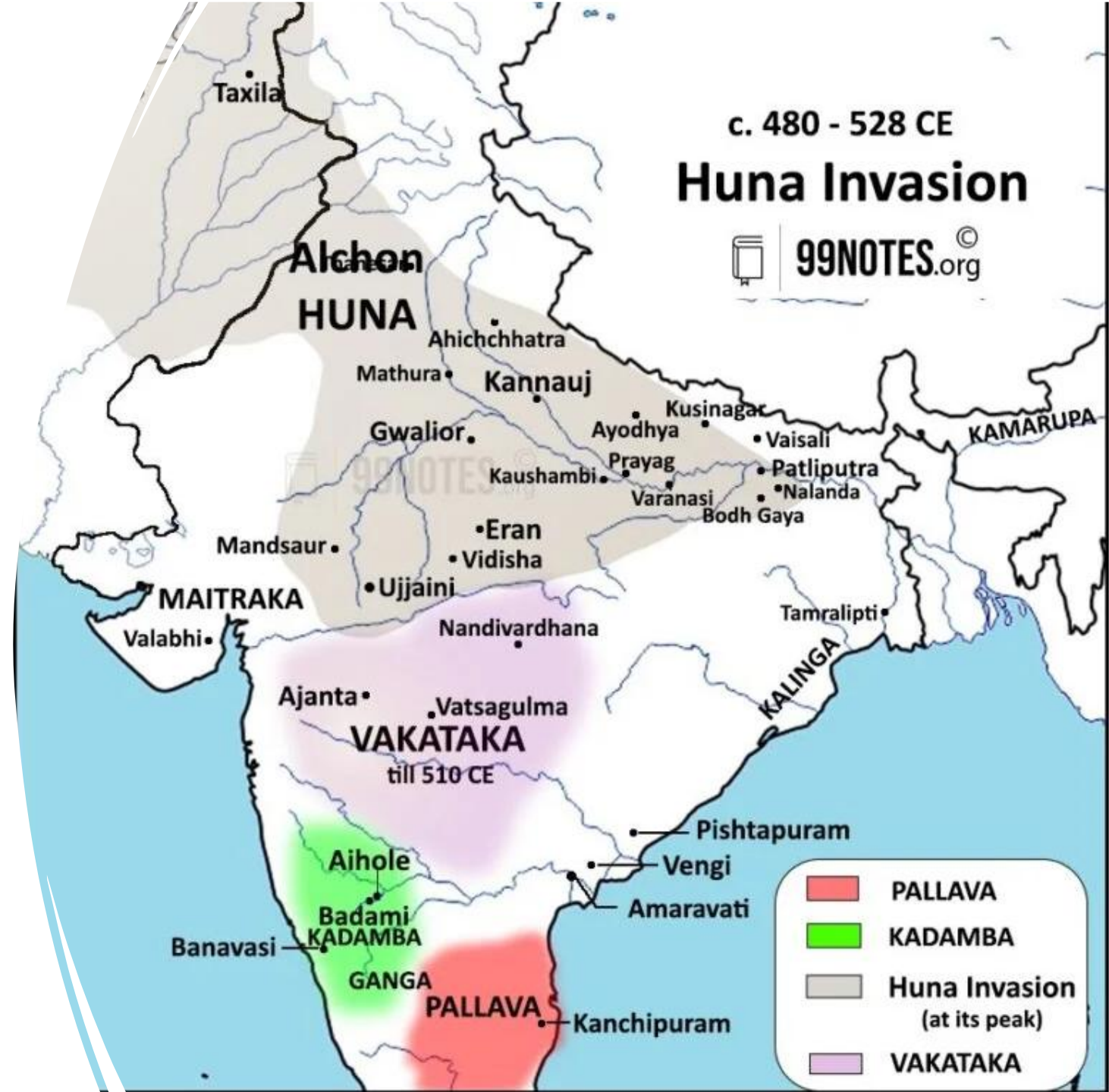
- Some say Aryan invasion and some say migration
- Either way, the Aryans got to India
- In antiquity, the line between migration and invasion is faint.
- Conflict with the native Dasyu ("darker", whether skin, culture, beliefs), or all, started early

Hindu History (3) - Ashoka

- The greatest emperor of the Mauryan Empire (322-185 BC) was Ashoka (304-232 BC). He had a reputation for cruelty and launched a devastating invasion of a neighbor...Kalinga. Tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians lie dead on the battlefield and in the ransacked capital.
- The carnage was breathtaking, and according to legend, even Ashoka was troubled. As a result, he became a Buddhist. Ashoka promoted and proclaimed non-violence, earning plaudits from modern commentators.
- However, he didn't reduce the size of his army and did expand his secret police. To summarize, Ashoka conquered what he wanted, sent Buddhist missionaries to preach nonviolence to his empire and its neighbors, trying to minimize unrest, and kept a powerful security apparatus to enforce his will.

Hindu History (4)

- Huns sack northern India under the Gupta Empire (AD 455)
- Huns forced to retreat by Indian coalition (528)



Ashoka's Empire

- Chandragupta Maurya, grandfather of Ashoka, may have met Alexander the Great.

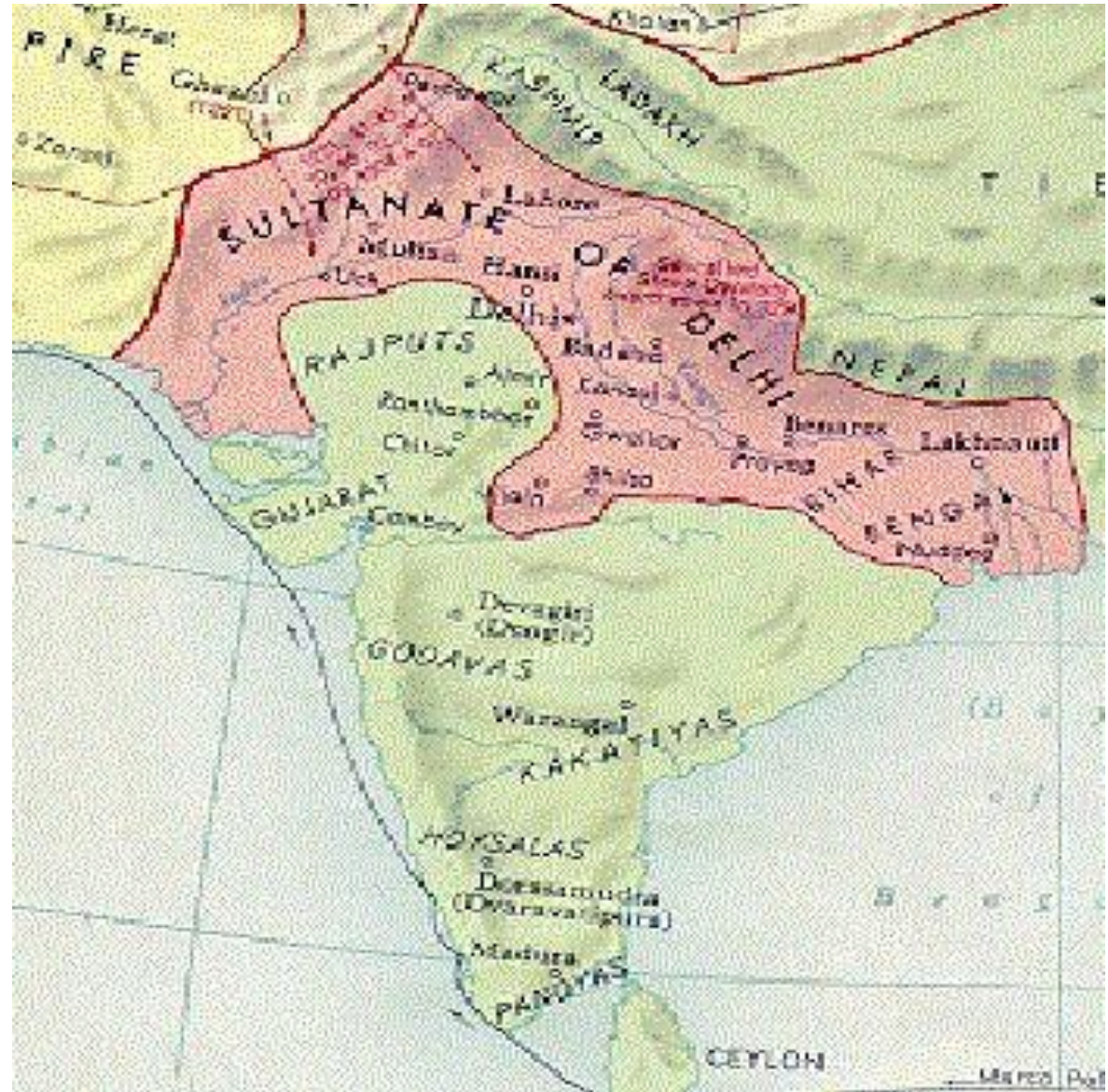


Hindu History (5)

- Trouble with the Muslim Arabs began in the mid seventh century AD when seaborne raiders attacked Thane, Debal, and Bharuch on the west coast of India. Arab raiding continued, but the Mongol invasions (1221-1327) devastated India.
- Many Mongols became Muslim and established the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526).
- The Mughal and Maratha Empires followed, until the British East India Company (mid-1700s) and finally the British Empire, after the Sepoy Rebellion, took over in the mid-1800s.
- India gained its independence in 1947, partitioned into Pakistan (Muslim), India, and East Pakistan (Bangladesh, Muslim)
- Hinduism spread to the West and became quite popular after the carnage of World War II.

Delhi Sultanate

- 1206 - 1526



Mughal Empire

• 1526 - 1857



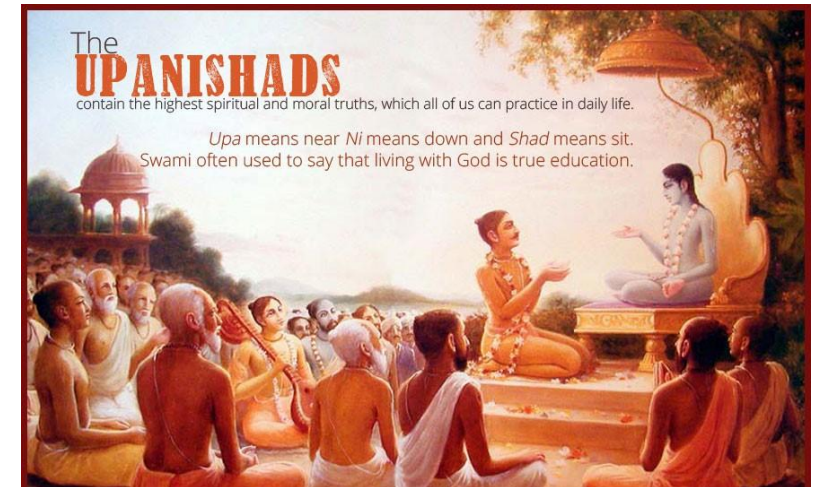
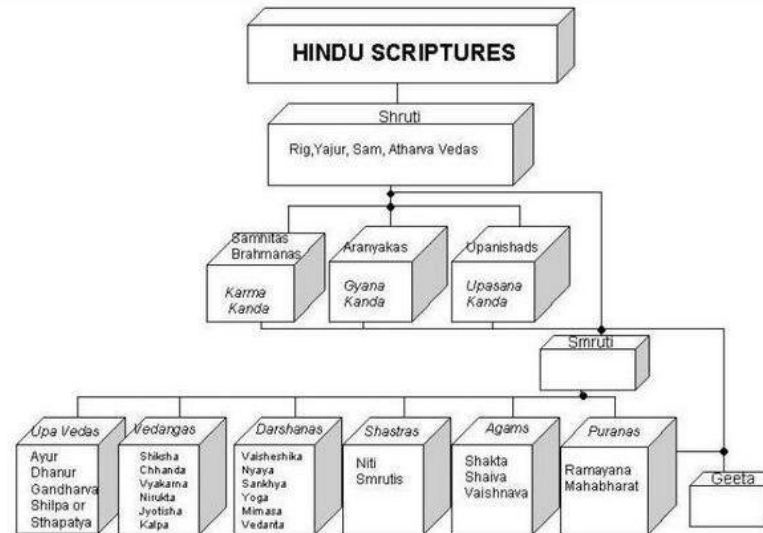
Hindu Scriptures (1) - *sruti*

- *Vedas (sruti, c. 1500 BC)* - Vedas emphasize Brahman rituals, which are transactional, between people and the gods Agni, Indra).
 - Rigveda (knowledge of hymns) - Collection of more than 1000 hymns
 - Samveda (chants)
 - Yajurveda (sacrificial formulas) – liturgies and rituals
 - Atharvaveda (spells and other priestly knowledge).
- *Upanishads (sruti, c. 500 BC)* – philosophic texts numbering in the hundreds, The 10 principle upanishads include *Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashan, Mundaka, Mandukya, Tattiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka*.

Hindu Scriptures (2) - *smrti*

- *Bhagavat Gita* (*smrti*, c. 100 BC) – Bhakti (personal devotion). The *Bhagavat Gita* is part of the epic poem, the *Mahabharata*. Though technically a *smrti* book, it is the most beloved book in Hinduism.
- Other *smrti* books include the epic poem *Ramayana*, the *Manusmrti* (Law of Manu), the sutras, and the puranas.
 - Dharma shasta – knowledge of the law
 - Mahakavyas – epics. Includes Bhagavat Gita
 - Puranas – ancient writings
 - Sutras – proverbs
 - Agamas – devotional texts of various sects
 - Dyasanas - philosophies

Hindu Scriptures



Hindu Diversity

- Hindus have a wide variety of belief systems.
- God - A faithful Hindu can believe in no god, many gods, or one god.
Three aspects:
 - Brahma – omniscient, self-existent ground of the world
 - Vishnu – sustainer and preserver of the world
 - Shiva – uniting and destroying the cosmos
- He or she can follow dietary rules or not, can emphasize ritual (Brahminism), philosophy, or devotion (*Bhakti*) in religion, and can vary in other ways.
- Hinduism has absorbed important figures in other religions, including the Buddha, Jesus, and Allah, as deities in its pantheon.
- Hinduism can be pantheistic, believing that everything is god, and panentheistic, believing that everything is in god. Restated, pantheism sees no difference between the divine and the universe, while panentheism maintains that they are co-located but ontologically separated.

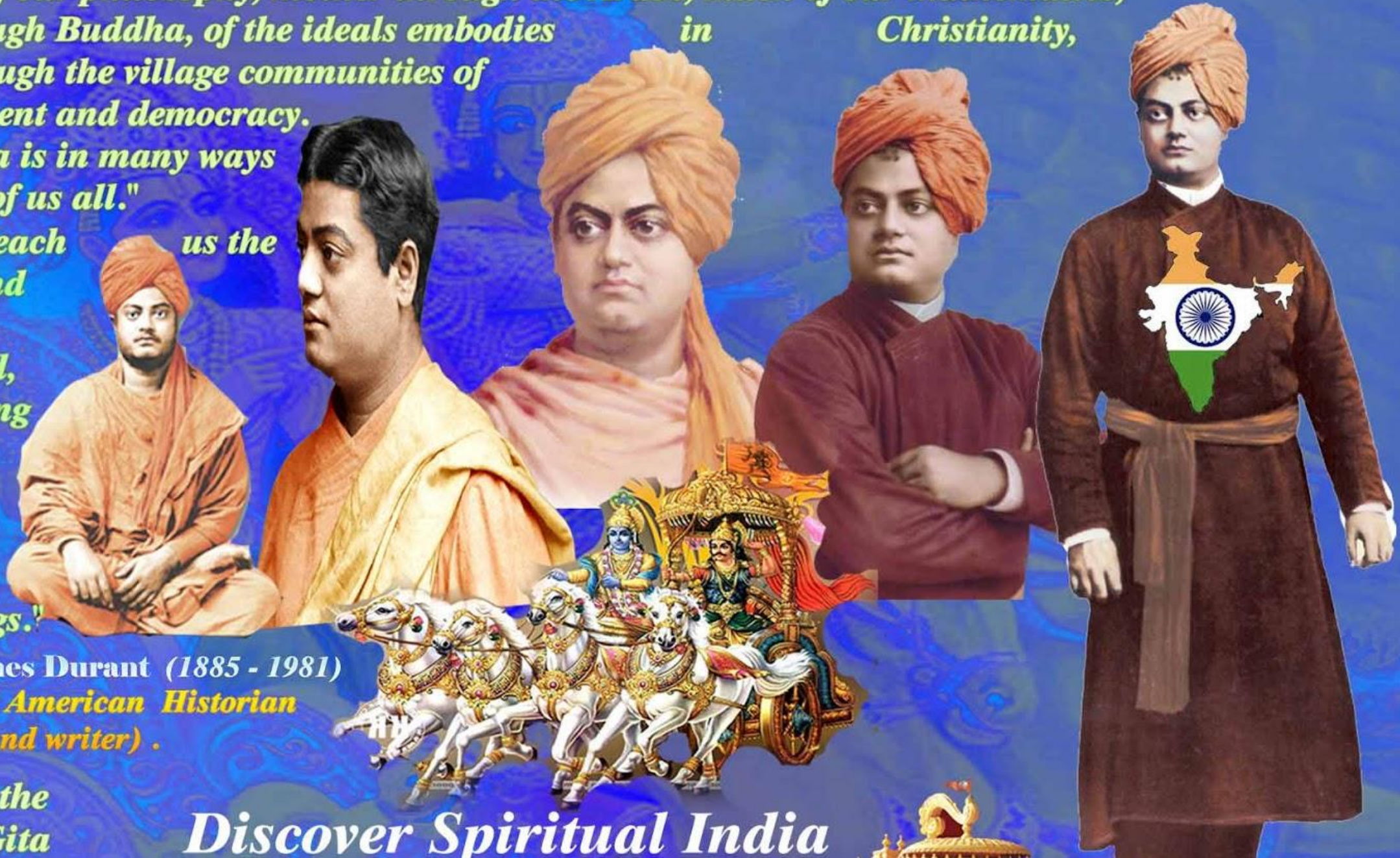
"India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages. She was the mother of our philosophy, mother through the Arabs, much of our mathematics, mother through Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity, mother through the village communities of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all."

"India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness mature mind, understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all human beings."

**- William James Durant (1885 - 1981)
(a celebrated American Historian
Philosopher and writer) .**

**When I read the
Bhagavad-Gita**

Discover Spiritual India



Hindu Belief (1)

- Over the eons, men and animals have lived innumerable lives, each including birth, death, and rebirth, called *samsara*.
- Those who lived morally good lives were reborn as higher life forms or higher rank, such as moving from a farmer in Life 12 (Vaishya) to a priest (Brahman) in Life 13.
- Those who behaved badly were reborn as a lower life form, such as moving from a thief in Life 12 to a dog in Life 13.
- Hindus believed that only a few exceptionally bad people went to hell, but by improving their morality could become a human or even a god in subsequent lives.
- A tiny minority achieved *moksha*, release from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*samsara*).
- These few merged their spirits (atman) with the universal spirit (Brahman) and so entered the Hindu version of heaven. Hinduism suggests that given enough time, anyone and everyone will achieve moksha.

Moksha

yes

Followed one of the paths:
Knowledge, meditation,
devotion, good works

no



birth



birth



death



life



life

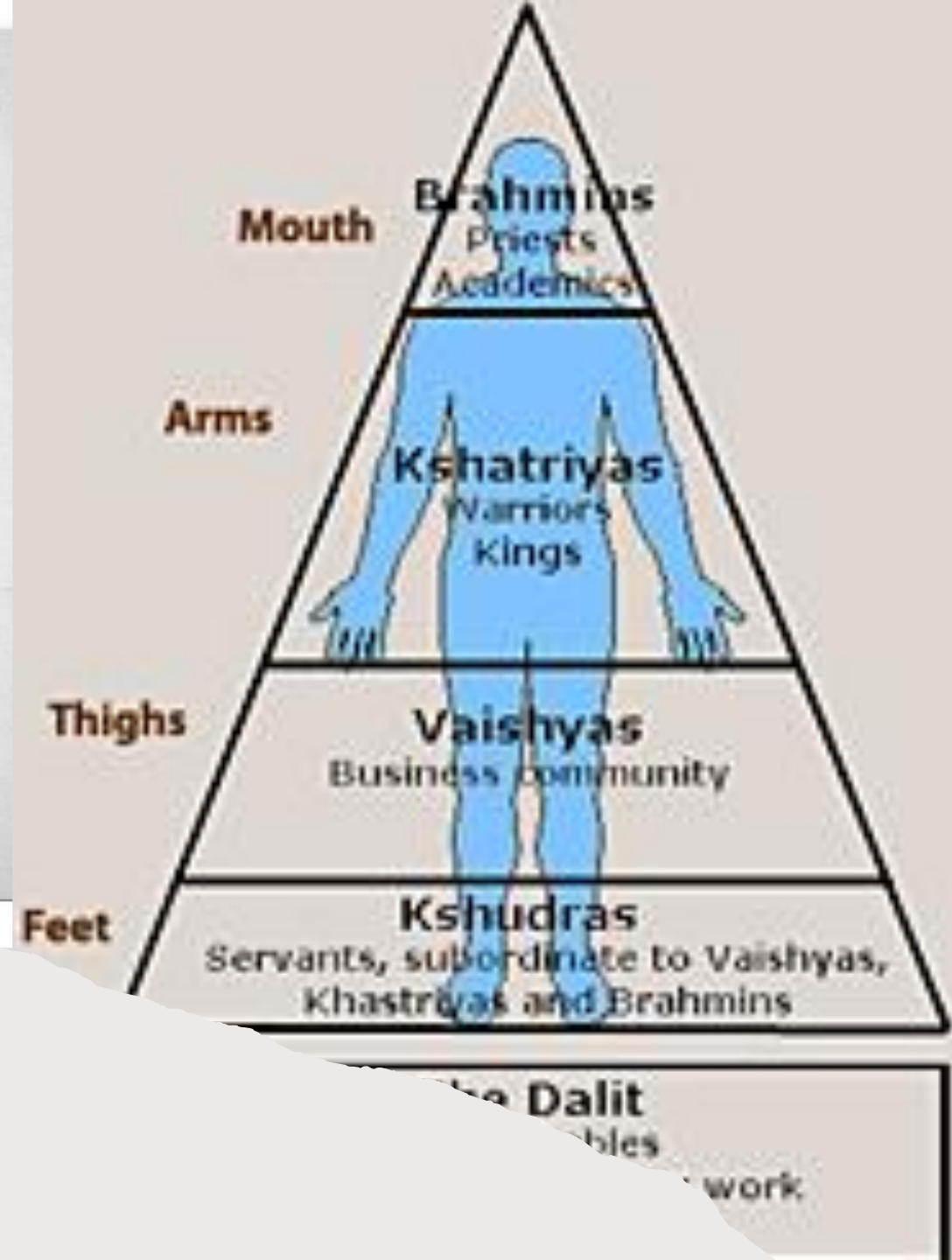
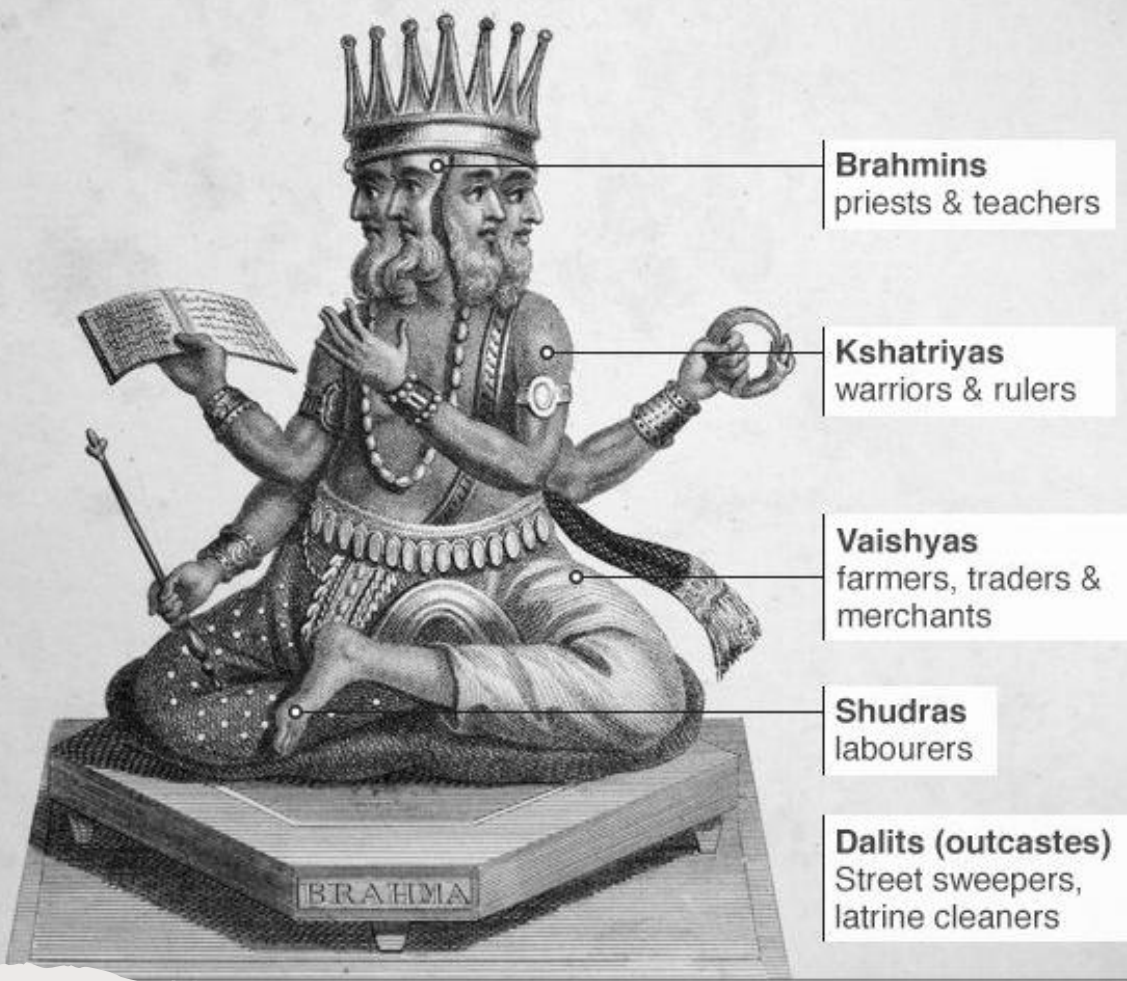


death

It is hard to believe that a bee could live a virtuous life and be reborn as a baby

Hindu Belief (2)

- The second core belief in Hinduism is the caste system. In the Rig Veda (10:90), the community of gods sacrifices the god Purusha, cutting him into pieces to create mankind.
- The Brahmin (priests, scholars) came from his mouth, the Kshatriya (warriors, administrators) from his arms, the Vaishya (farmers, merchants) from his thighs, and the Sudra (slaves, manual labor) from his feet. The only people lower than the Sudra were the Dalits, those born outside the caste system entirely.
- In India, one's caste specified one's occupation, wealth, scope of potential marriage partners, and place of abode. No one could change his life position, as he deserves in this life whatever he got through his conduct in prior lives.
- All anyone can do in their current life is practice virtue and hope to be reborn in a higher caste in the next life. Again, only the most reverent priests could achieve moksha.



The Hindu Caste System

Hindu Belief (3) - Karma

- When someone does good, particularly in accordance with their caste, their good works are a source of merit.
- When they do evil, that person's lifetime merit declines.
- The sum of merit earned over a person's life (karma) determines the state of rebirth, higher, lower, or the same, for that person.
- In Hinduism, each person ultimately gets what they deserve, no more and no less.
- In fact, to help a person avoid the consequences of his or her actions is to perform an evil act and diminish one's own merit.
- Taken to an extreme, for a judge to impose a light sentence on a drunk driver who killed someone in an accident, however repentant the driver, would be a wicked act.

Explanations on Caste

- Karma only accrues to people who do their duty in their caste. A Brahmin who taught a university class would receive karma, because that is his duty. If Brahmin begins sweeping the floor of his classroom, he loses karma, because sweeping is the duty of a Sudra, not a Brahmin.
- A Sudra may get educated, famous, and wealthy, but despite all his achievements, he is still a sudra. He behaved badly in his former life and was reborn low. Good behavior in this life will help him be reborn higher in the next life.
- Low caste is something that a person will not overcome until his next life.

Hindu Belief (4)

- Creation
 - Male (Sri Bhagavate – immutable and unending) and female (Bhagavati - creative) aspects. The ultimate creative act for a woman is to have a child.
 - Paramatma – divine energy
- Sin
 - Avidya – ignorance about reality
 - Maya – Illusion that persons are real
- Salvation – moksha (release) from samsara (cycle of existence) through bhakti marga (path of devotion) or jnana marga (path of knowledge)
- Afterlife – reincarnation or merge into universal spirit



Distinctive Hindu Practices

- **Third eye** – Hindu women sometimes wear a colored dot on their forehead signifying piety. The color of the dot can indicate marital status (black for unmarried, red for married) or simply match the woman's clothing.
- **Three debts** – Debt to God (Deva Rin), Debt to saints and gurus (Rishi Rin), and debt to ancestors (Pitri Rin). People spend their lives paying off these debts.
- **Four ends of Hindu Life** – Dharma, Artha (wealth), Kama (pleasure), and Moksha.
- **Yoga** – physical activities such as breath control, body motion, blocking out external influences, and entering an altered mental state (samadhi).



Interesting comparison to Maslow's hierarchy of needs

THE 4 GOALS OF HUMAN LIFE



Role of the Family

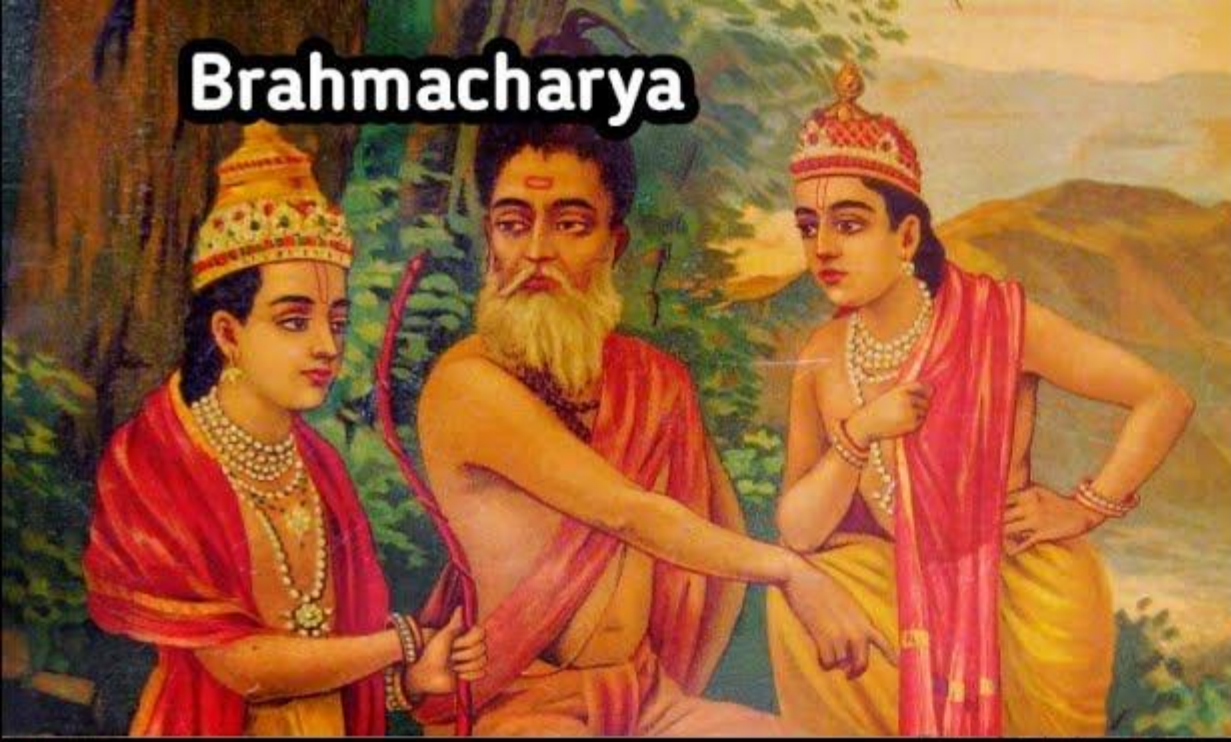
- The Hindu view of caste, ashramas, and family are inseparable
- Ashramas are the four stages of life
- When a man marries, he pays three debts he owes to his ancestors, the gods, and his guru.
- Debts are paid by having children (preferably boys), prayer, and passing along wisdom to his children. It is not possible to pay off all debts without marrying and having children. A few exceptions apply.

Stages of Hindu life

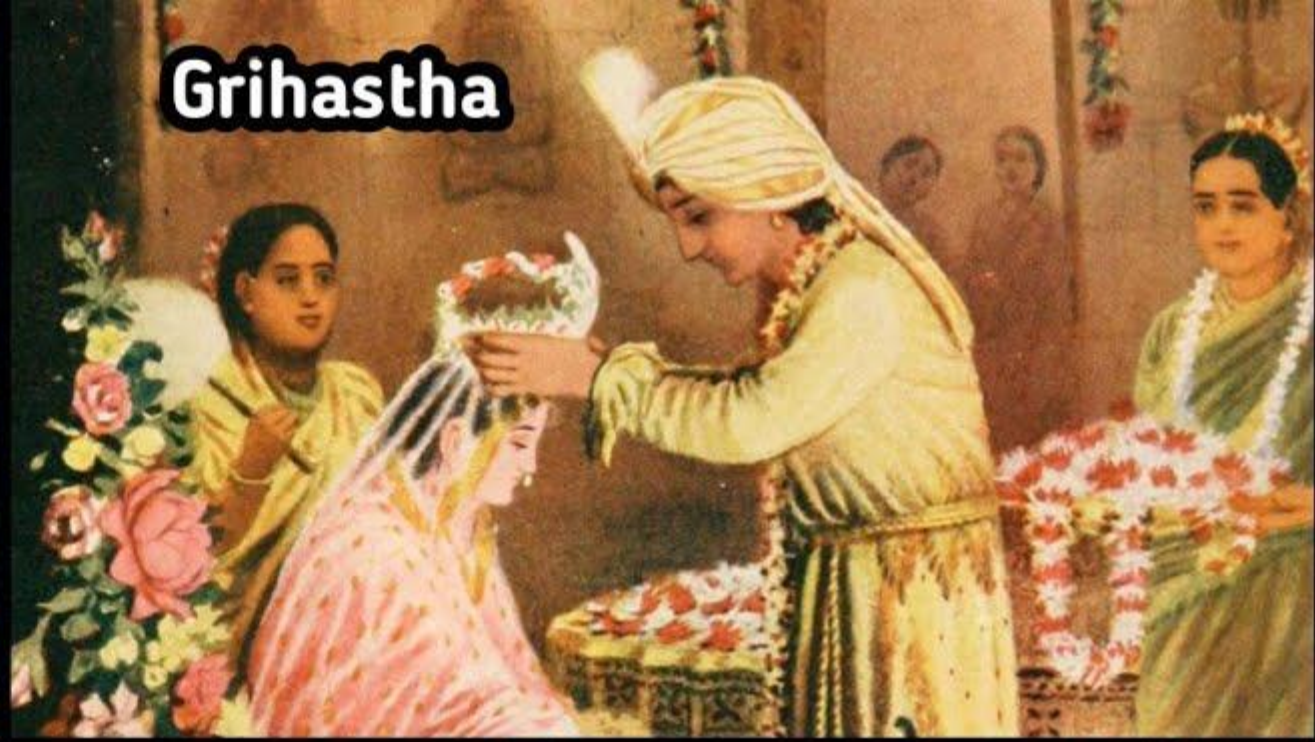
- Brahmacharya Ashrama (c. age 0-25) – the student
- Grhastha Ashrama (c. age 26-50) – the householder
- Vanaprastha Ashrama (c. age 51-75) – the period of study and recollection
- Sannyasa Ashrama (c. age 76+) – complete withdrawal from social relationships and rapid death



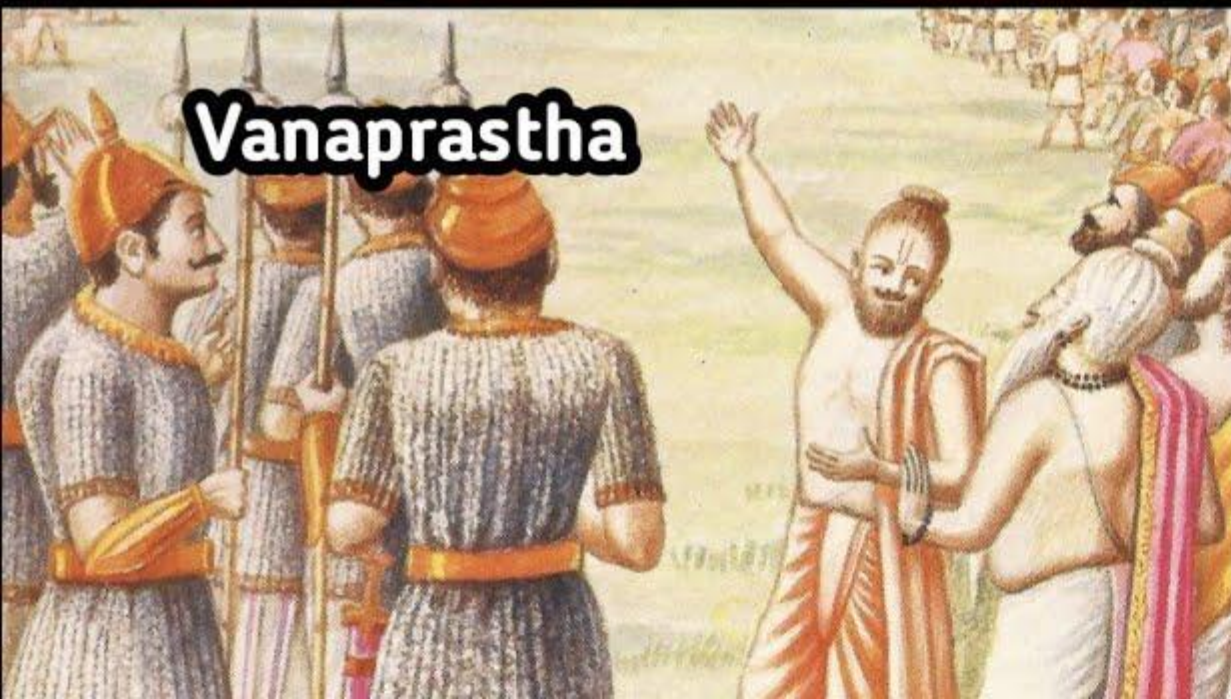
Brahmacharya



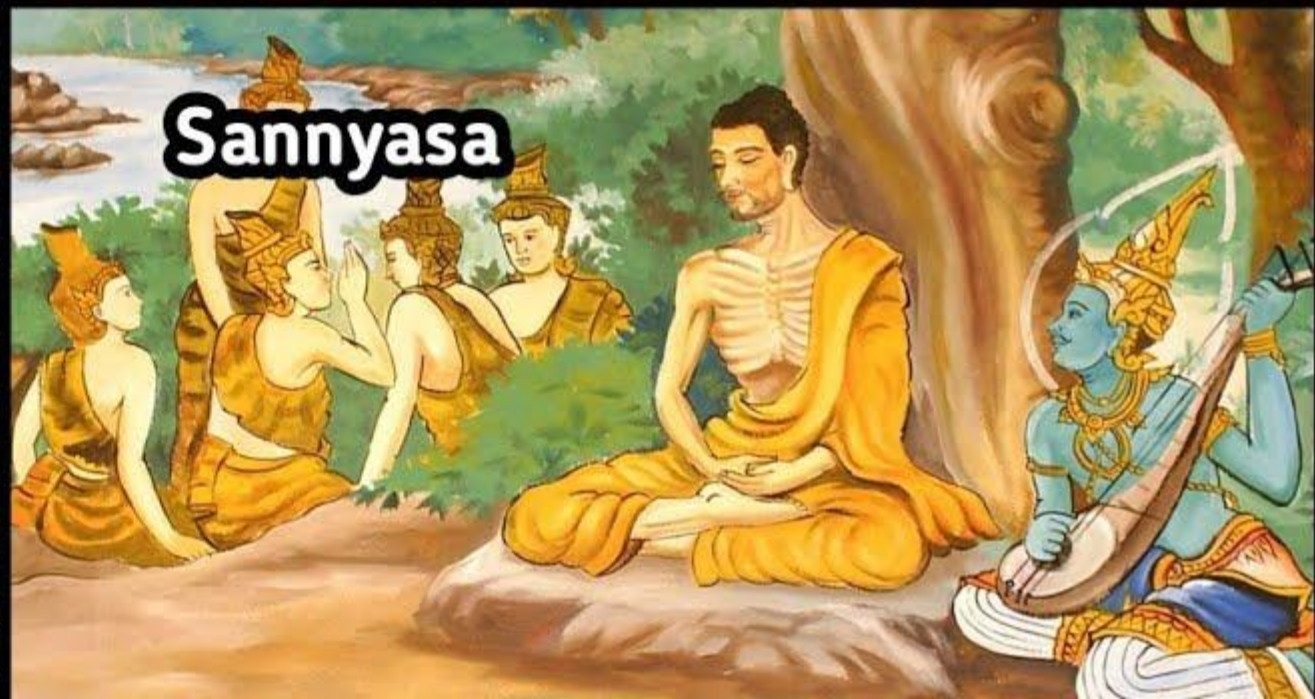
Grihastha

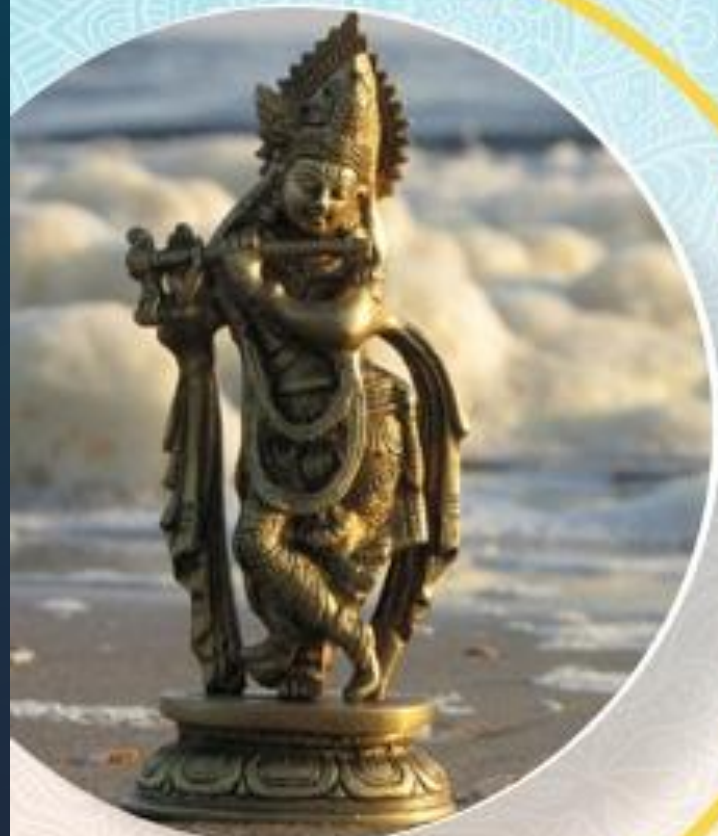


Vanaprastha



Sannyasa





1



Karma Yoga

Path of Action

Yoga of selfless-service to others.

2



Jnana Yoga

Path of Knowledge

Yoga to union with supreme through intellect.

3



Bhakti Yoga

Path of Devotion

Yoga of love to the all beings.

4



Raja Yoga

Path of Discipline

Yoga to energize the body and mind.

4 Paths of YOGA



Ten Observances

1. Akrodha – controlling anger.
 2. Asteya – avoiding selfishness and theft.
 3. Dama – contentment and self-control.
 4. Dhee – correct understanding of Hindu scriptural teachings
 5. Dhruti – courage
1. Indriya Nigraha – controlling the senses, including sensual urges.
 2. Kshama – forgiveness.
 3. Satya – social justice.
 4. Saucham – purity and truth.
 5. Vidya – knowing the divine

Conclusion



Discussion

References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006

