

Introduction to Hinduism

Session 4

Hinduism

Concept of time and cosmology

- Time is circular; the cosmos undergoes continuous cycles of birth, expansion and annihilation. Each such cycle is 311 trillion human years in duration
- The solar system is in the 440 billionth year of the current cycle
- Humanity goes thru epochs in four stages (multiple sources quote different duration of each stage):
 - Satya Yuga (1,728,000 years): Age of truth and perfection
 - Treta Yuga (1,296,000 years): Age of diminishing virtues, wars, dominance of weak by strong
 - Dvapara Yuga (864,000 years): Age of discontentment, disease and conflict;
 - Kali Yuga (432,000 years): Final age – darkness and ignorance and scarcity of resources, which will end in a fiery cataclysm (death and regeneration), leading to the next epoch
- We are currently in the 5,118th year of Kali Yuga!
- Interestingly, this has parallels in the Abrahamic Eschatology: Prophets, Present time, The End Times, Messianic Age, The Hour (Judgement Day) and The Afterlife

Hinduism

Rituals – Vedic Period

- Ritual was emphasized over doctrine and belief by the Aryans in the Vedas
- The triad of World, Divinity and Humanity brought together in ritual
- *Shrautā* (someone who has deep knowledge of the *sruti* or scripture) rites (fire rite) for special occasions to persuade the gods for assistance
 - Uttering words and manipulating ritual objects the *shrauta* invokes the invisible power
 - The *shrauta* became a Brahmin. Voice – personified as goddess *Vac*.
 - Language was believed to have divine origin and it embodied spirit
- Modern Hindus – focus of ritual is at home and in the temple

Hinduism

Devas (Gods) and *Devis* (Goddesses)

- The images of gods and goddesses in Hinduism serve as pointers to the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*
- The iconography is rich in metaphor and meaning
- The devotee offers prayer in an attitude of devotion and surrender (de-emphasizing the sense of “I” or ego), taking the image to be the representation of Brahman
- Gods and goddesses in the Vedas were many. Over time some of these morphed into the current pantheon

Hinduism

Devas or Gods in Vedas

- Devas have different divine functions: nature devas; war devas; stability devas; fire, devas; etc
- Primary devas:
 - *Indra* (most important in Rig Veda). God of war (similar to YhWh in Judaism). Gave success in battles. Also, the god that controls monsoon rains.
 - *Agni* – divine fire (cognate: ignite). Heat of the world. Mediator between gods and humans. Transported dead to *svarga* (Heaven).
 - *Varuna* – guardian of *Rta* (harmony). Enforced *Rta* but did not create it. The thousand eyed one
 - *Soma* – plant whose juices used in ritual – ecstatic experience and felt presence of The Universal Essence
 - Later in Hinduism same experience was sought thru meditation
 - *Rudra*: The Howler; no friends among the gods. Dressed in animal skin. Causes misfortune. Paradoxically also a Healer. Was a prototype for Shiva
 - *Yama*: God of Death
 - *Usha*: Goddess of Dawn
 - *Kubera*: God of wealth and prosperity
 - *Surya* – God of sun

Hinduism

Devas

- Usually one god was central in rituals, but existence of other gods was accepted
- Max Muller, a Sanskrit and Hinduism scholar calls this Henotheism
 - Worship of one God without denying the existence of other gods.
 - This pluralism in Hinduism has existed from the earliest time – compared to Monotheism

Hinduism

Gods of Hindu Trinity

- The manifested Universe is in a constant state of creation and dissolution
- Three deities play determinate roles in this process and are manifested forms of the infinite Brahman, which is the substratum of everything and is formless, timeless:

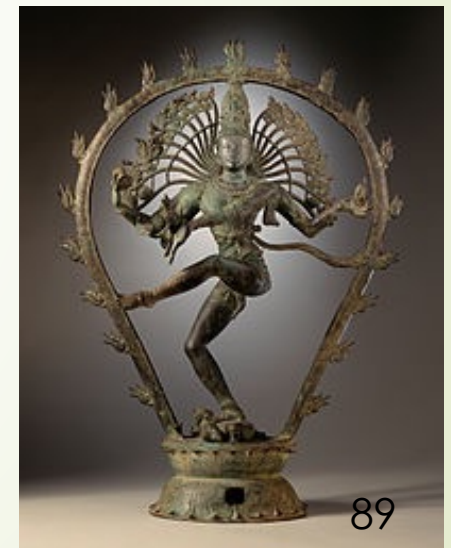
➤ Brahma – the Creator



Vishnu – the Sustainer



Shiva – the Destroyer



Pravin Soni

Introduction to Hinduism

Hinduism

Gods of Hindu Trinity - Brahma

- **Brahma Identified with Vedic god *Prajapati***
- **Iconography**
 - Four heads indicating the four cardinal directions and the four Vedas
 - One hand holds the text of the Vedas
 - One hand holds a lotus, a symbol of purity
 - One hand holds a ladle symbolizing means to feed the sacrificial fire (knowledge)
 - One hand holds a utensil with water symbolizing means of creation
 - He wears a rosary (bead necklace) symbolizing time
 - Beard attests to sagacity
- His consort is *Saraswati*, the goddess of wisdom
- Few temples are dedicated to Brahma. He does not have a big following among Hindus



India and Hinduism

Gods of Hindu Trinity - Vishnu

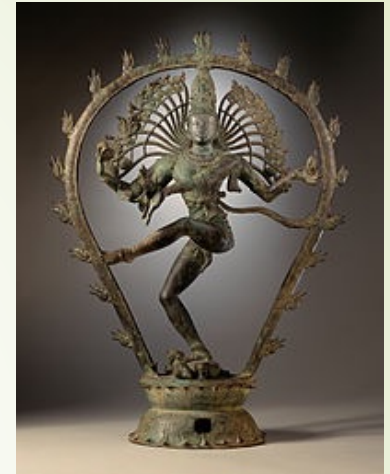
- **Vishnu identified with the Vedic god *Indra***
- **Iconography**
 - One hand holds a lotus – symbol of purity that is untouched by ignorance
 - One hand holds a club that symbolizes strength
 - One hand holds a wheel symbolizing time
 - One hand holds a conch symbolizing the destruction of evil (ignorance)
- **His consort is *Laxmi*, the goddess of wealth**
- **Vishnu has a large following among Hindus (*Vaishnavas*)**
- **Vishnu is believed to take on a manifested form (*avatara*) to come to earth in times of crises**
- **There have been nine *avataras* of Vishnu, including *Krishna* (in the Bhagavad Gita), *Rama* (in the Ramayana), and *Buddha***



India and Hinduism

Gods of Hindu Trinity - Shiva

- **Shiva** identified with the Vedic god *Rudra*. He is the God of destruction which leads to creation
- **Iconography**
 - Dancing form depicts rhythmic play – source of all movement in the universe
 - The circle of fire symbolizes the cosmic creation and destruction
 - His hair are spread behind his head indicating ecstasy in the dance – full engagement in action
 - One hand holds a drum shaped as an hourglass, symbolizing time
 - One hand holds fire symbolizing the force of creation and destruction
 - A snake is wrapped around one arm, the hand of which has the palm facing outward in a posture suggesting calmness; not to fear the snake (evil; ignorance)
 - One hand points to the lifted foot which represents liberation (*moksha*) from ignorance
 - One foot is placed on a demon which symbolizes victory over evil (ignorance, delusion)
- His consort is *Parvati* or *Sakti*, the goddess of fertility, love and devotion



Hinduism

Ganeshā

- He is the son of *Shiva* and *Parvati*, with an elephant head and a human body
- He is the God who removes obstacles and is also the God of learning and knowledge
- He has a very large following. Special activities are initiated only after offering prayers to Ganeshā
- Iconography:
 - One hand has the do-not-fear posture
 - One hand holds a bowl of sweets which signifies the sweetness of self-knowledge
 - One hand holds a lotus signifying purity of knowledge
 - One hand holds an axe symbolizing severing of worldly attachments
 - He has a large belly signifying that all universes, past, present and future reside in him



Hinduism

Goddesses of Hindu Trinity - *Saraswati*

- *Saraswati* is the consort of *Brahma* (Creator in the Trinity)
- She is the Goddess of knowledge, music and the creative arts
- Many temples devoted to her
- Iconography:
 - White saree depicts purity
 - Four arms: *mānas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkāra* (sense of “I”) and *cittā* (imagination)
 - Hands hold: rosary (inner reflection), book (knowledge), instrument (creative arts)
 - Peacock: colorful celebration of dance as an art form



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Hinduism

Goddesses of Hindu Trinity - *Laxmi*

- *Laxmi* is the consort of Vishnu (Sustainer of the Trinity)
- She is the Goddess of wealth and prosperity
- Relationship between *Laxmi* and *Vishnu* is the paradigm for ceremonies in Hindu weddings
- Many temples devoted to her
- Iconography
 - Lotus – symbol of purity regardless of surroundings
 - Elephants symbolize wisdom and strength
 - Four arms – four goals of Hindu life:
 - *Dharmā* (ethical living)
 - *Arthā* (pursuit of means of living)
 - *Kamā* (pursuit of love and fulfilment)
 - *Moshā* (pursuit of liberation through Self Knowledge)

Pravin Soni



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Goddesses of Hindu Trinity - *Pārvati*

- *Parvati* is the consort of Shiva (Destroyer in the Trinity)
- Many temples devoted to her
- She is depicted in both gentle and ferocious aspects
- Gentle aspect iconography:
 - Four arms: lotus (purity of knowledge); *abhaya mudra* (fear-not stance);
- Fierce aspect iconography:
 - Eight arms holding means for destroying ignorance (evil)
 - Stands over vanquished personification of evil (ignorance)



Hinduism

Cow as Holy Animal

- Reverence for cows is mentioned in the Vedas
- Many mythical stories have a special place for cows
 - *Kamadhenu* (cow of plenty) – sacred mother of cows and source of prosperity
- *Krishna*, the teacher in the Bhagavad Gita is depicted as tending cows when he was young (referred to as *bala gopala*, boy who protects cows)
- Consequently, cows came to symbolize *Dharmā*
- Cow is very useful as an animal – milk, cow dung (as fertilizer, fuel and for floor coating), tiling fields, when alive. Leather, glue, gelatin, etc. after death
 - This caretaker role of cow has led to it being referred to as *go mata* (mother cow)
- Killing cows and consuming beef is proscribed in Hinduism



India and Hinduism

Classical Period

- **By 600 BCE the Vedic system began to be criticized.**
 - It was not meeting the contemporary spiritual needs.
 - Elitism of Brahmins was resented.
 - Doubts expressed in value of rites.
- ***Upanishads* were composed about this time.**
 - The world of appearance was transient; focus on transcendental reality
- **The two Epics – Mahabharata and Ramayana were composed around this time**
- **This was the period of the Axial Age (800-200 BCE), a period of profound philosophical advances**
 - Milesian philosophers in Greece/Asia Minor including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle.
 - Zoroaster in Persia;
 - Confucius, Lao Tzu (Taoism) in China
 - Hebrew Prophets in the Middle East
 - Buddha, Mahavira Jain in India

India and Hinduism

Classical Period

- Before Axial Age – religion was about managing cosmic forces;
- Post-Axial Age – religion concerned with personal transformation
- Vedic rituals were preserved in Upanishad period;
 - Vedas acceptance was considered Orthodox whereas non-Vedic philosophies were called Heterodox
- Reincarnation and karma introduced in this period. These concepts are closely related
- The caste system became an integral part of society, as opposed to the original division of labor
- The concept of *Dharma*, duty or moral law, was integrated with the religious practices and the caste system
 - Codes of human conduct in the social environment

Hinduism - Epics

Mahabharata

- One of the two Great Epics of Hinduism. The other is the Ramayana
- Likely composed around 800-700 BCE
 - Myth has it that it was dictated by the Sage Vyasa to Lord Ganesha
- 100,000 couplets (*shlokas*): Roughly ten times the length of the Iliad and Odyssey, combined!
 - Longest poem ever written!
- It contains the Bhagavad Gita – which is the core of Hindu philosophical teaching
- The staging is of a metaphorical struggle between virtue and unrighteousness – an allegory of the ethical and moral struggles of human life
- Characters embody the qualities of virtue and unrighteousness – an epic drama

Hinduism - Epics

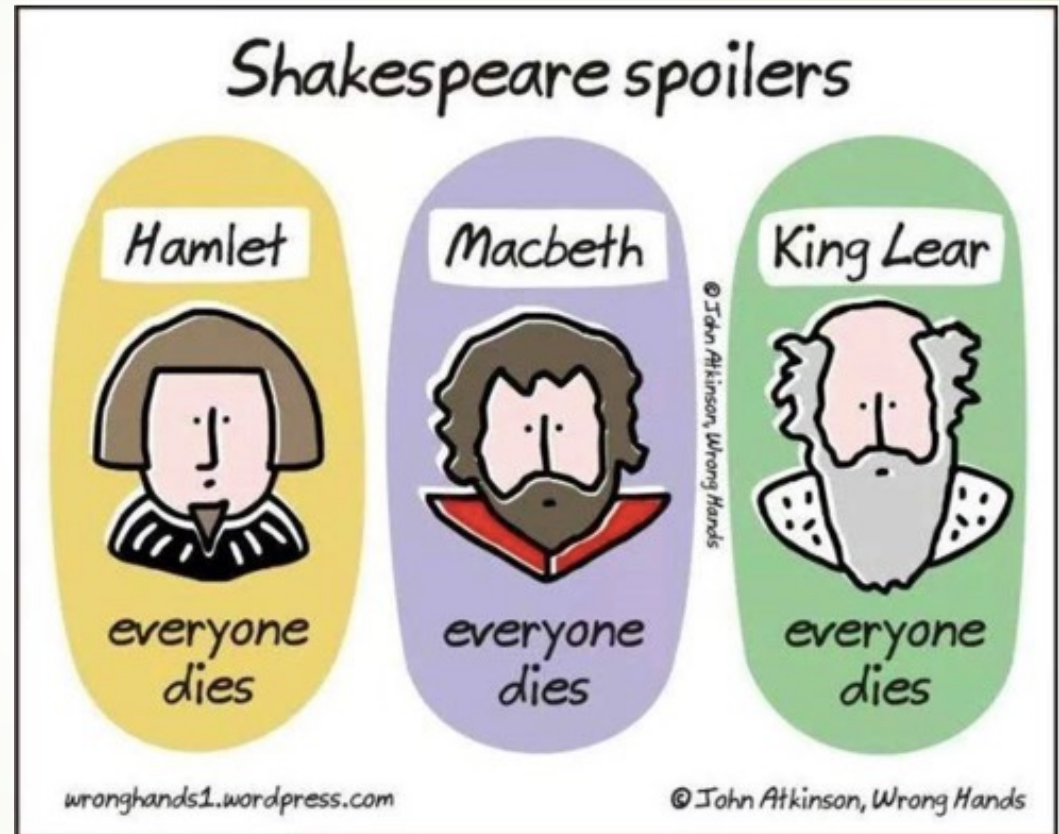
Mahabharata

- The story is about a struggle between cousins for the kingdom of *Hastinapura*
- The struggle culminates in the battle of *Kurukshetra*
- The *Pandava* clan are righteous and the *Kaurava* clan are not
- The *Kauravas* usurp the kingdom from the *Pandavas* and do not yield to the proposals of the *Pandavas* for a negotiated peaceful settlement
- The impasse leads to the battle of *Kurukshetra*
- The *Mahabharata* provides the first instance of “just war”.
 - The *Pandavas* debate about the suffering caused by war and then establish criteria for proportionality, just means, just cause, and fair treatment of captives and the wounded
- The war is eventually won by the *Pandavas*, but since they had adopted some dishonorable (*adharma*) tactics during the battle, they renounce their kingdom and retire to the Himalayas

Mahabharata

Misunderstanding by Some in the West

- Like many great plays, the Mahabharata is a metaphor for the travails, conflicts and paradoxes that are part of the human condition
- Taking it literally is missing the profundity underlying the epic



Mahabharata

Bhagavad Gita

- Bhagavad Gita is contained in the Mahabharata (the sixth book)
- The Bhagavad Gita (the Song of the Lord) compiles the teachings of Lord Krishna provided to Arjuna, one of the five *Pandava* brothers, in the course of the *Kuruskhetra* battle
- Inner conflict of Arjuna – a dramatized metaphor for our daily conflicts.
 - Arjuna's choice – refuse to fight and lose honor vs. fight, kill his cousins and invite chaos

Mahabharata Bhagavad Gita

- Arjuna, becoming despondent at the sight of his cousins arrayed against him in battle, asks his charioteer Krishna to become his Guru and teach him about the wisdom of the Vedas
- Krishna elaborates on righteousness and *dharma* and on the paths to liberation from suffering (*Gyana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*)
- The content of the Bhagavad Gita is a distillation of the philosophy contained in the Upanishads.
- It is considered a guide to *dharma* (living a virtuous life) that would lead to *moksha* (liberation) – the Holy Book of virtuous living

Mahabharata

Bhagavad Gita – essence of the teaching

- Often decisions need to be made in situations of ambiguities and uncertainty
- The important concept is the intention with which the decision is taken and the action conducted.
- Intentions based on compassion, non-ego and non-ego-centric desires are what exhaust *karmas* and eventually lead to freedom (*moksha*) from the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*)

Mahabharata Bhagavad Gita

- The original text of the Gita evolved under various reciters and authors and likely reached its final form around 4th century CE
- It is classified as a *smṛiti scripture* (that which is remembered); the Vedas are classified as *śruti* (that which is heard)
- While its content is more accessible to the lay person than that of the Vedas, it is still cryptic and requires commentaries from *Swamis* (Hindu holy men of wisdom) to unfold the meaning contained in the verses
- Commentaries can vary in what the teaching embodies: some see the principle of non-duality of the self and the infinite (*advaitā vedantā*) in it, while others see the principle of duality (*dvaitā*)
- Well known Western intellectuals were influenced by the philosophy of the Gita, among them: T.S. Eliot, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Oppenheimer, Albert Einstein, Arthur Schopenhauer

Bhagavad Gita

Ch. 2 – Samkhya Yoga (sequence of logic; knowledge)

- **Krishna speaking to Arjuna about the nature of the Self:**
 - **V12:** *It is not that at any time in the past, indeed, I was not, nor were you, nor these rulers of men. Nor, verily, shall we all cease to be hereafter*
 - **V18:** *They have an end, it is said, these bodies of the embodied Self. The Self is Eternal, Indestructible, Incomprehensible. Therefore, fight O Arjuna.*
 - **V23:** *Weapons cleave It not, fire burns It not, water moistens It not and wind dries It not*
- **V15: State of mind for self realization**
 - *The firm one whom, surely, these (pairs of opposites) afflict not. O Chief among men, to whom pleasure and pain are the same (equanimity), is fit for realizing the Immortality of the Self*

Bhagavad Gita

Ch. 2 – Samkhya Yoga (sequence of logic)

➤ V33: Righteousness

- *But if you will not fight this righteous war, then having abandoned your own duty, you will incur sin (acting contrary to one's essential nature)*

➤ V47: Action and non-clinging

- *You have the right to act but not to the fruits of your action; let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction*

Bhagavad Gita

Ch. 3 – Karma Yoga

➤ V19: Right action

- *Therefore, always perform actions which should be done, without clinging to the outcome. For, by performing actions without clinging one attains the Supreme*

➤ Veiling of wisdom by desire

- *V38: As fire is enveloped by smoke, mirror by dust and an embryo by the womb, so wisdom is enveloped and veiled by clinging to desire (by ignorance)*
- *V41: Therefore, O Best of Men, controlling first the senses, kill this sinful clinging to desires, the destroyer of knowledge and wisdom*

➤ Casting off clinging to desires

- *V42: The senses are superior to the body; superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect; and the One superior to the intellect is the Atman (Self)*
- *V43: Thus, knowing the Self, who is superior to the intellect, and restraining the self by the Self, slay you, O mighty One, the enemy in the form of desire, which is hard indeed to conquer*

Bhagavad Gita

Ch. 12 – *Bhakti* (devotion) Yoga

➤ V13, 14: Devotion to Me – qualities of devotee

- *He who hates no creature, who is compassionate to all, is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me, that one, My devotee, is dear to me*

➤ V18, 19: Devotee qualities (cont'd)

- *He who is the same to foe and friend, same in honor and dishonor, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, who is free of clinging, to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, content, steady minded, full of devotion, that one is dear to Me*

Bhagavad Gita

Ch. 7 – Gnyana (knowledge) Yoga

➤ Nature of Self – immanent and transcendent

- *V8, 9: I am the wetness in water, the light in the moon and the sun. I am the syllable OM in all the Vedas, sound in ether, virility in men. I am the sweet fragrance in the earth and the brilliance in the fire, the life in all beings, the austerity in the austere*
- *V12: All beings proceed from Me; yet, I am not in them, they are in Me*

Hinduism – Epics

Ramayana

- The Ramayana pre-dates the Mahabharata
- It is one of the largest epics, with 24,000 verses
- Like the Mahabharata it is not just a story but a drama that portrays ideal characters such as ideal brother, spouse, father, king and servant, including philosophical and ethical components
- The main characters Ram, Laxman, Sita, Bharata, Ravana and Hanuman are important figures in the cultural consciousness of India
- It also plays a significant role in the culture of Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka

Hinduism – Epics

Ramayana

- The story revolves around the King *Rama* (an incarnation of Vishnu, and Self Realized) who is banished to the woods for 14 years by the demand of his stepmother who wanted her own son *Bharata* to be King
- During his exile in the woods he encounters many adventures, including having his wife *Sita* kidnapped by *Ravana* (the one with ten heads), the king of Lanka. He is represented as an incarnation of Delusion
- Rama rescues *Sita* with the help of Hanuman, the monkey God, an incarnation of Shiva and an ardent devotee of Rama
- Rama's return from exile is celebrated by the lighting of lamps (light signifying knowledge that destroyed the darkness of Delusion). It is now celebrated as Diwali, the New Year in Hindu India
- There are many side-stories depicting the existential struggles of many of the characters, and their variable success in overcoming the struggles

Hinduism

Ashramas – Stages of Life

- **Stages of life, ashrama**
 - *shishya* (or *brahmacharya*) - study of the scriptures with the *guru* or teacher
 - *grahasta* - marriage and family
 - *vanaprahasta* - giving up of worldly possessions
 - *bhikshu* or *sanyasa* -renunciation; subsistence on generosity of others

Hinduism

Purushartha – Pursuits of Life

- The four *purusharthas*, or pursuits in life are:
 - *Dharma* (moral righteousness)
 - *Artha* (security and prosperity)
 - *Kama* (pleasure: sensual, psychological)
 - *Moksa* (liberation; self-realization)
- The *pusurhsarthas* are related to the *ashramas* or stages of life

Hinduism

Samskaras – sacraments; rites of passage

- **Sacraments – marking stages of life:**
 - Birth
 - Child's naming; first haircut
 - Initiation (second birth and introduction to student-hood)
 - Marriage
 - Death (cremation and prayer)

Hinduism

Caste System

- When Aryans arrived, society was stratified by occupation – division of labor intended to organize society:
 - Priest (*brahmin*);
 - warriors (*kshatriyās*);
 - merchants, farmers (*vaishyā*);
 - people of land , peasants (*sudrās*). *Sudrās* could have been dwellers of Indus Valley Civilization before the Aryans arrived.
- These stratification evolved into caste (*casta* or lineage, a Portuguese term) system
 - A fifth category, Untouchables, was added later

Hinduism

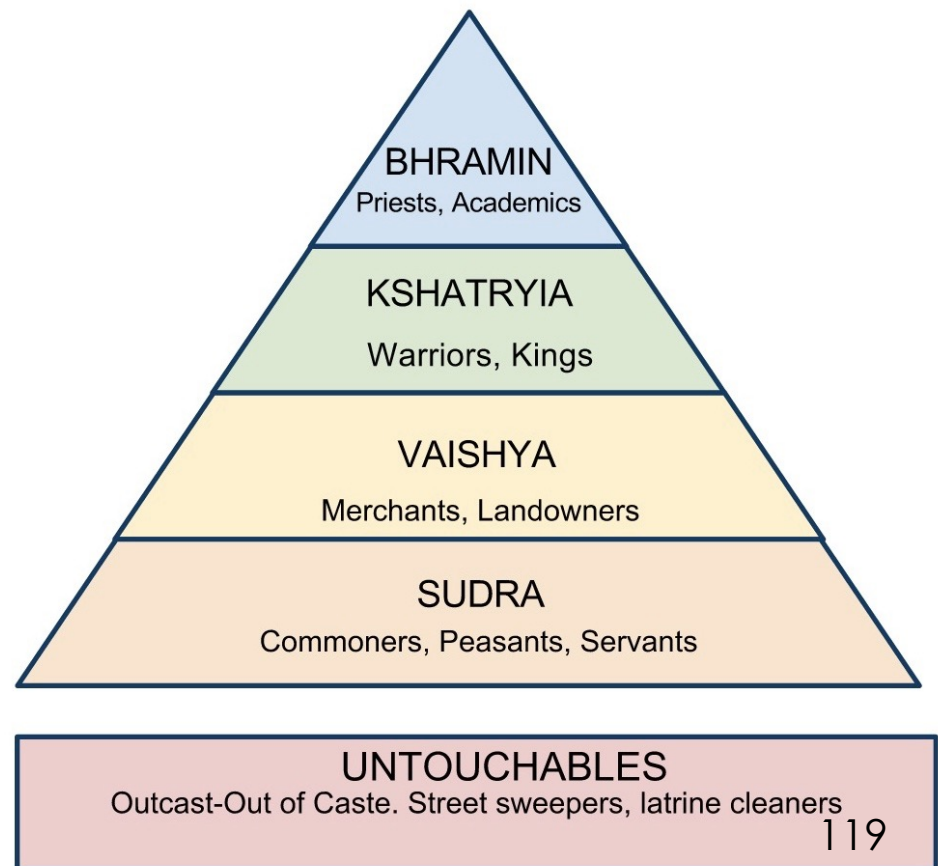
Caste System

- Caste system based on attempt to maintain the natural order of classification – disruption of which would lead to chaos.
- Bhagavad Gita, Ch 4, v13
 - The four categories of occupations were created by Me according to people's qualities (*guna*) and activities (*karma*). Although I am the creator of this system, know me to be the non-doer and Eternal.
- However, the system went through much modification over the millennia
 - The common view of caste today is as follows: people are born with different intellectual and spiritual qualities – determined from actions in past lives (*Karmā*) – which determines one's caste
 - Caste – higher level is more “pure” than lower ones

Hinduism

Caste System - Varna

- Varna means color
- The reference to Varna in the ancient texts is related to individual purification, rather than group identity
 - Bright or white was considered enlightened
 - Dark or black was considered delusional
- The hierarchy implied proximity to *moksha* (liberation from *samsara*)



Hinduism

Caste System - *Jati*

- ***Jati* means birth group**
 - Groups of clans, tribes, communities and sub-communities in India
 - This is the grouping commonly referred to as the “caste system” in India
- **About 3000 *jatis* are said to exist today**
- ***Jati* is determined by occupation and one’s position in the community**
 - There can be many *jatis* within one *varna* (caste)
- ***Jati* system is not static. Movement between *jatis* can be achieved by advancing economically and emulating social groups of other *jatis***
- ***In the US we have economic and social caste/class “jatis”! (Ref: Caste by Isabel Wilkerson)***
 - *As in India, movement between such “jatis” is achieved through economic advancement and education*

Hinduism

Caste System

- In the Indian Constitution discrimination on the basis of Caste is prohibited
- Likewise, the practice of Untouchability is prohibited
- Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, himself an untouchable, popularized the term *Dalit* (oppressed) to refer to the untouchables. He was responsible for many progressive causes that benefited the *Dalits*
- In the Indian Constitution *Dalits* are referred to as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, the normally disadvantaged indigenous people in India

Hindu symbols and symbolism

Shanti - Peace

- *Shanti* or Peace is invoked at the start or end of prayers
- It is commonly used with ॐ (Om), which represents *Brahman*, the substratum of all that is, the Infinite
- It is an expression of the desire to achieve peaceful harmony in the World / Universe
- At the individual level it represents a longing to transcend the vagaries of the agitated mind, which results from clinging to likes and dislikes, to achieve a state of equanimity that facilitates apprehension of *sat* (that which is Absolute; *Brahman*)



Hindu symbols and symbolism

Shanti – Peace, and *Ahimsa* – non-violence

- **Shanti** is the core foundation of the philosophy of non-violence (*ahimsa*)
- *Ahimsa* is one of the cardinal virtues of Hinduism. It is mentioned frequently in the Mahabharata
- In the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, *ahimsa* is mentioned as a required value for a seeker on the path of enlightenment
- *Arthashastra*, a Hindu treatise on ethics, statecraft, economic policy and military strategy (ca 2 BCE) has a strong emphasis on *ahimsa*
- *Ahimsa* covers non-violence in thought, word and deed

Hindu symbols and symbolism

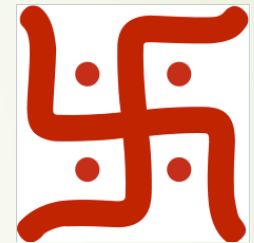
Ahimsa in action

- Mahatma Gandhi
- Martin Luther
- Nelson Mandela

Hindu symbols and symbolism

Swastika

- **Swastika – a symbol of auspiciousness**
 - Literal meaning – symbol of one that is self-existent
 - Represents the four *purusharthas* or pursuits
 - Also used in Buddhism and Jainism with similar meaning
 - Has been used as decorative element by many ancient cultures



Hindu symbols and symbolism

Aum

- ▶ **Aum (Om)**
 - ▶ Sacred sound and spiritual icon. The “Primordial Sound”
 - ▶ Widely referred to in the Upanishads
 - ▶ Sacred mantra uttered during prayers and also in meditation
 - ▶ Represents the essence or substratum (*adhistāna*) of the universe – *Brahman*



Hindu symbols and symbolism

Aum

► Aum (Om)

- Geeta Ch 17, V23: “*Aum Tat Sat* (Om is the Absolute Truth) has been declared to be the name of *Brahman* and by that name were created the Vedas and the sacrifices (Sacred Offerings)”
- The three sounds – A, U and M - are said to represent the three aspects of manifestation (gross, subtle and causal)
- The three sounds are also said to represent the cycles of manifestation - creation, sustenance and destruction -and the “silence” of non-duality between each cycle



Hindu symbols and symbolism

Yantra - Hexagram

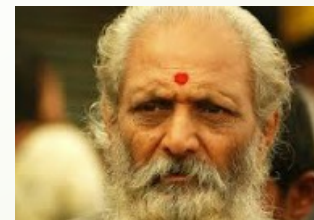
- Hexagram – Tantric Yantra
- Represents manifestation as the union of two triangles – the Essence (*Purusha*) and Matter (*Prakriti*)
- It has also been interpreted to represent the microcosm (the individual) and the macrocosm (the manifested Universe) as the two overlapping triangles
 - The space in the center represents *Brahman*, the essence and the cause-less cause underlying manifestation



Hindu Symbols

Tilaka, Bindi and Tika – Forehead Markings

- *Tilaka* is usually a religious marking on the forehead with three lines depicting creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested world;
- Bindi is a decorative marking usually worn by women on the forehead. Also seen in religious images as the third eye of wisdom
- Tika is a mark made with vermillion as a welcoming and honoring mark



Hindu Symbols

Namaste - Greeting

- *Namaste* is a composite form of *Namah* or reverential salutation and *te* or you
- It means “I bow to the divinity in you” – acknowledgement of the immanence of the divine
- Gesture commonly used as greeting, or to express gratitude
- Gesture is commonly accompanied by stating *Namaste* or *Namashkār*

