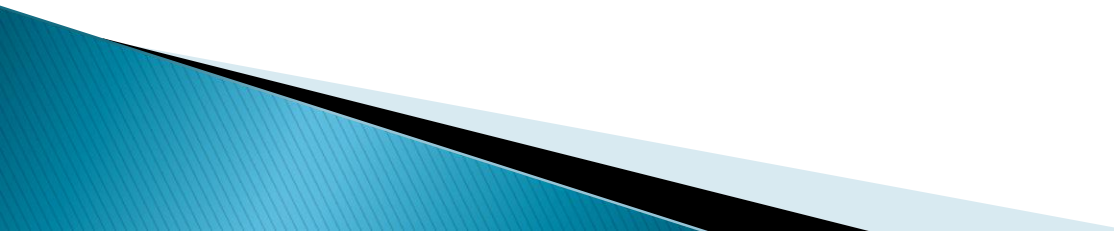


Classical Age India

- ▶ Culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse
 - ▶ 14 major languages (most Indo-European)
 - ▶ Indian culture synthesis of Harappan, Aryan, and other influences
- 

We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.

Albert Einstein.

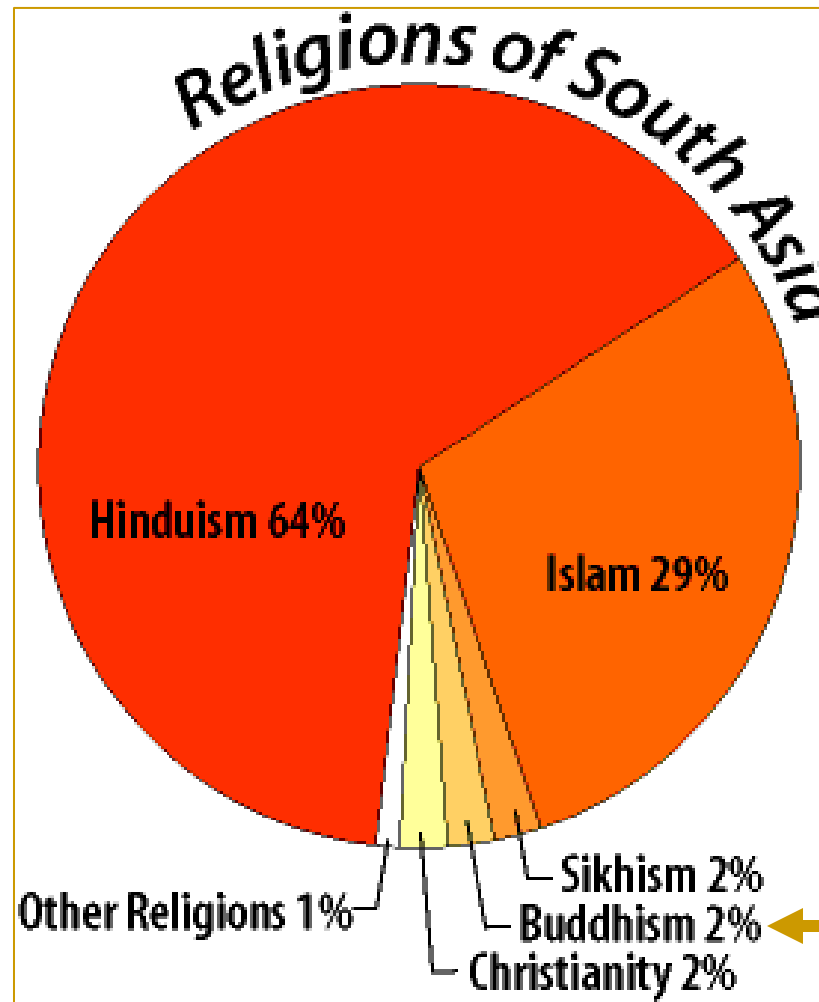
India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grand mother of tradition.

Mark Twain.

If there is one place on the face of earth where all dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India .

French scholar Romain Rolland.

Religions of South Asia



Hinduism

- ▶ Early Aryan history known as the “Rig-Vedic” Period (1700–1000 BCE)
- ▶ Rig-Vedas are the earliest religious texts of Hinduism
- ▶ Written in Sanskrit



Monotheism or Polytheism?

- ▶ Over 3000 gods and goddesses
- ▶ All considered aspects of Brahma, the overall

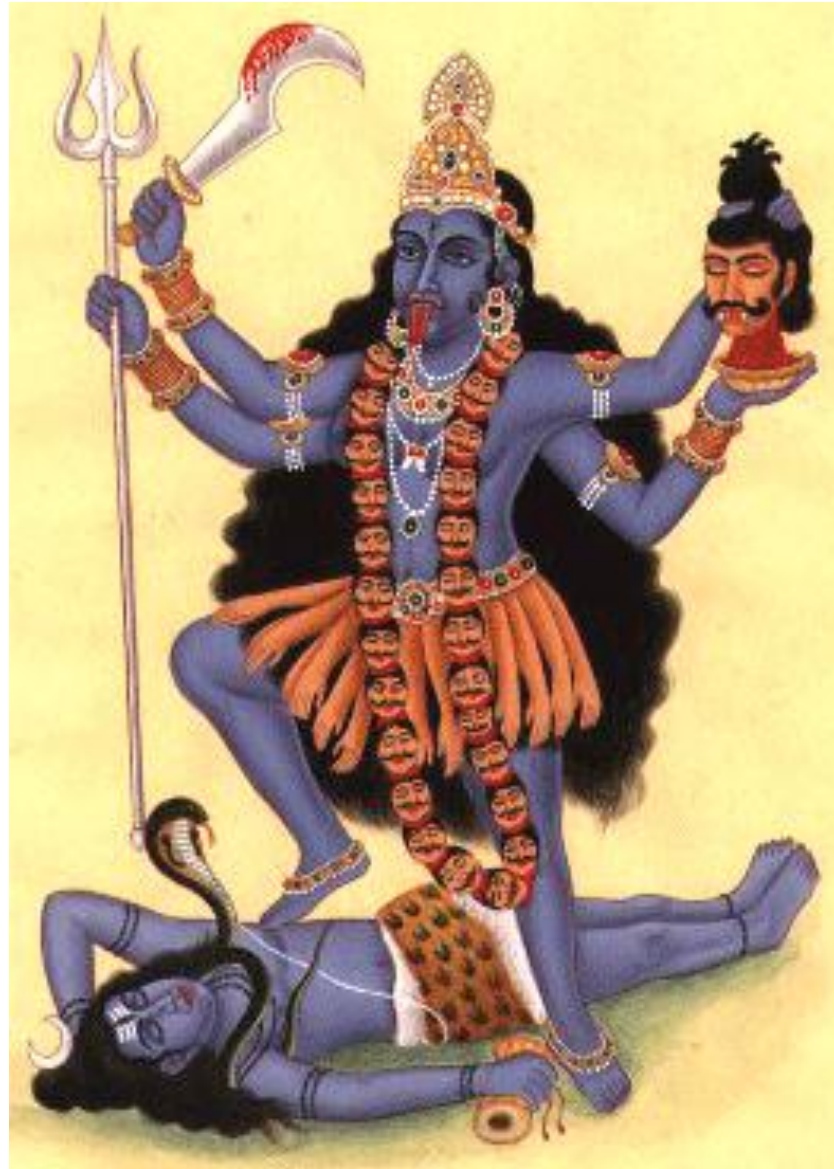
Shiva



Vishnu



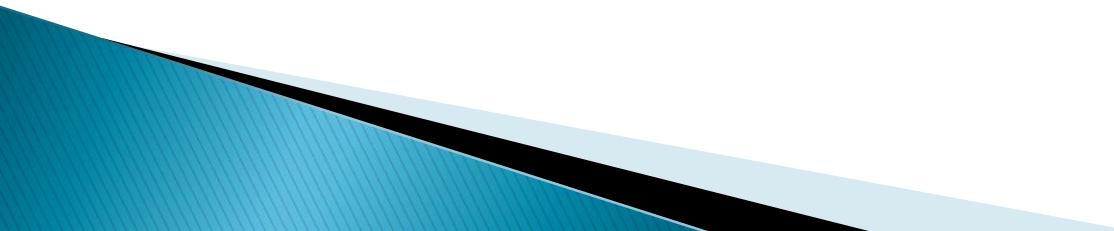
Kali



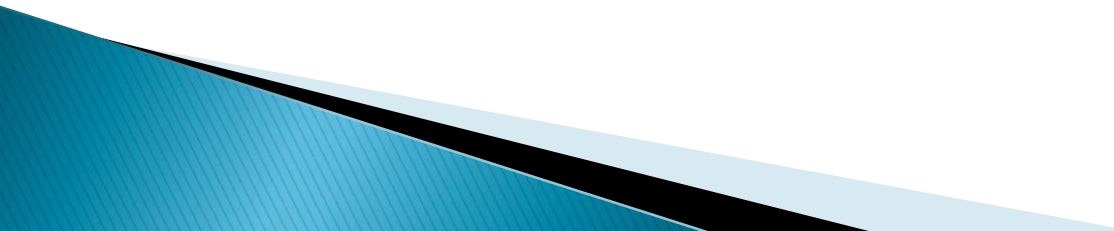
The Hindu Caste System

- ▶ Brahmin (priests)
- ▶ Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers)
- ▶ Vaisyas (merchants)
- ▶ Sudras (peasants and laborers)
- ▶ Untouchables (people without caste, Chandala)

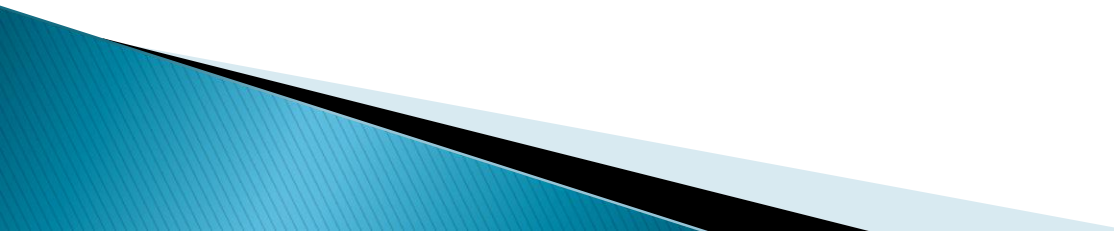


- ▶ The four varnas (castes) originated in the sacrifice of the macrocosmic, primeval man, according to the Rig Veda.
 - ▶ Brahmans: Head
 - ▶ Kshatriyas: Shoulders
 - ▶ Vaisyas: Thighs
 - ▶ Sudras: Feet
- 

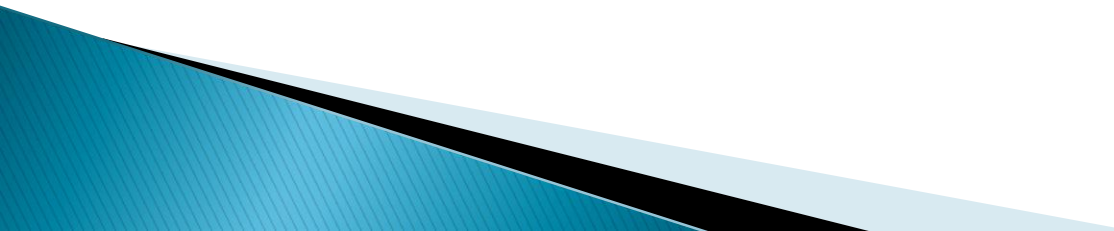
Traditional Functions of the Castes

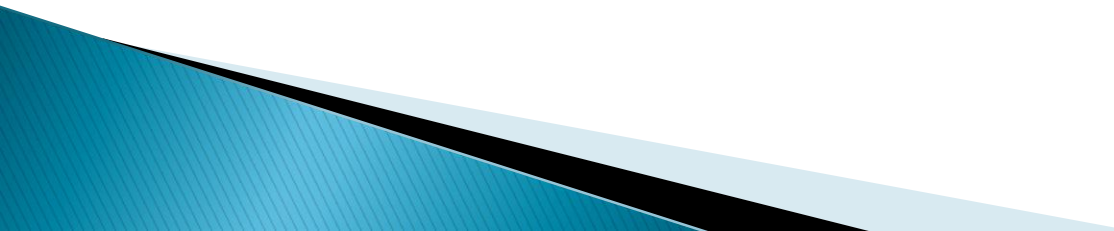
- ▶ Brahman: priests, thinkers, intellectuals
 - ▶ Kshatriyas: rule, protect, maintain order
 - ▶ Vaisyas: commerce and agriculture
 - ▶ Sudras: more menial tasks
 - ▶ Untouchables: work with polluting substances: leather, excrement, filth
- 

Castes and Hierarchy

- ▶ Hierarchical rank according to purity and pollution
 - ▶ Rituals and ceremonies in each caste serve as caste identifiers
 - ▶ Ultimate punishment: excommunication from your caste
- 

Consequences of the Caste System

- ▶ Individuals are judged by their caste, not by their abilities. Caste interaction discouraged
 - ▶ Benefits the top castes to the detriment of the lower castes
 - ▶ Some caste mobility through Sanskritization: groups within castes can gradually raise their status by emulating higher castes over several generations
- 

- ▶ The system has survived for centuries, meaning Hindu society remains stable
 - ▶ Modern India has legal equality for all and guarantees basic human rights, but cultural discrimination against lower castes and untouchables continues
- 

Hindu Religious texts

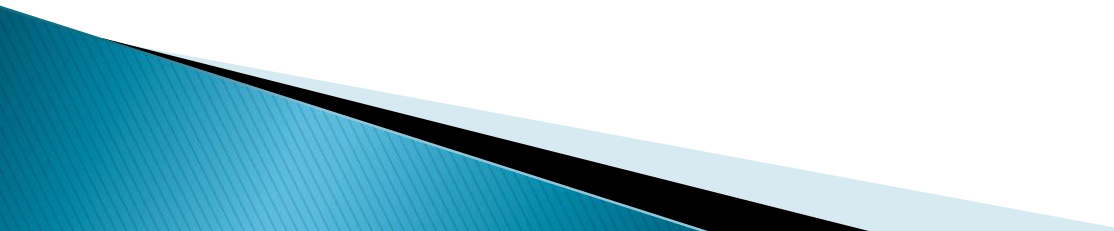
- ▶ Ramayana
- ▶ Mahabharata
- ▶ Upanishads
- ▶ Written in Sanskrit



- ▶ Dharma: Life Path
- ▶ Karma : Fate
- ▶ Reincarnation



Buddhism and Hinduism Compared

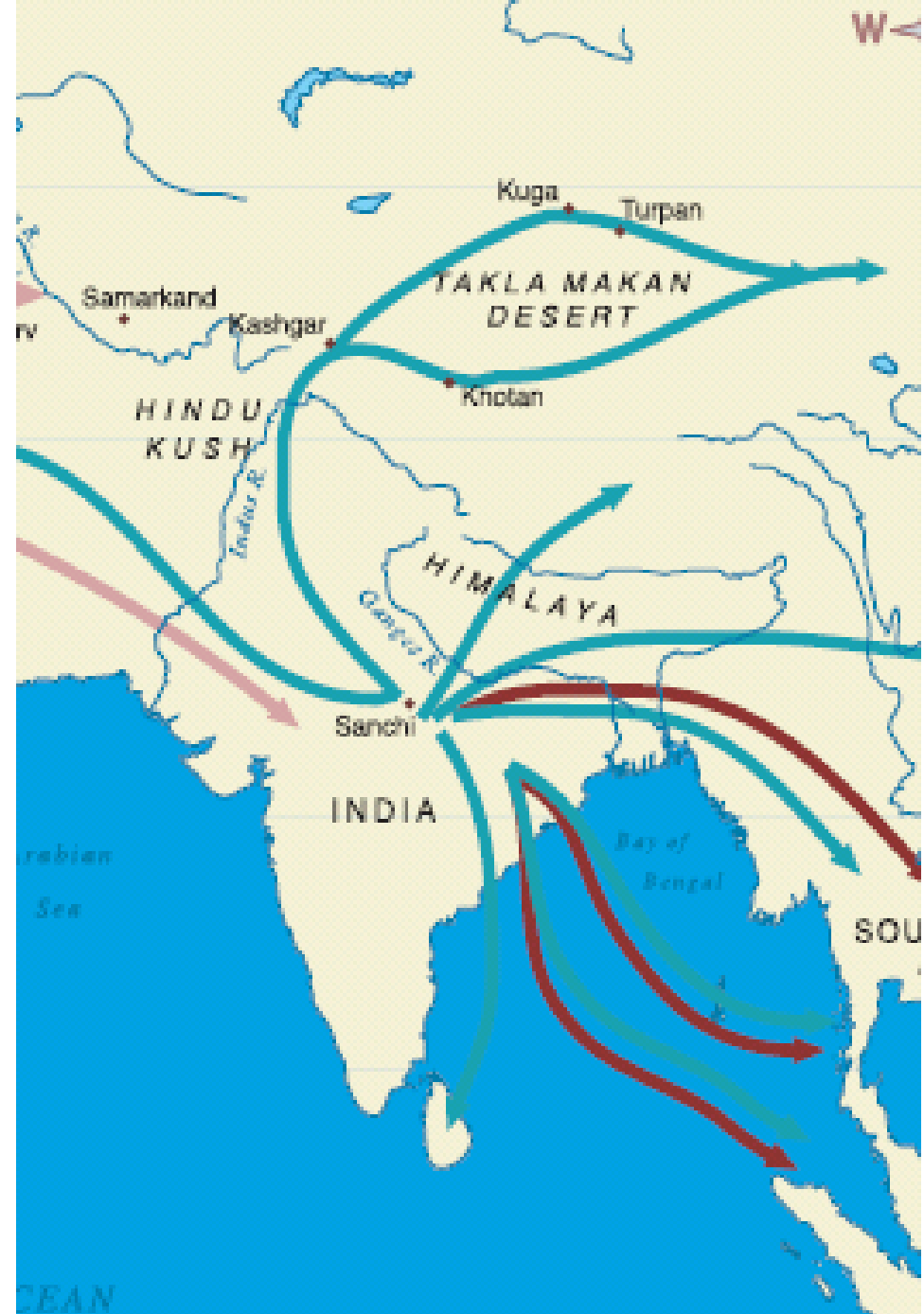
- ▶ Belief in reincarnation, the Brahma or “Universal Soul”
 - ▶ Buddhism more egalitarian, no caste system
 - ▶ Buddhism less patriarchal, women have equal chance to achieve Nirvana
- 

Two Types of Buddhism

- ▶ Theravada Buddhism: philosophy rather than religion. Buddha a man, not god, practiced primarily in Sri Lanka
- ▶ Mahayana Buddhism: salvation religion. Buddha became a god, good and devout people can become bhoddhisattvas: potential future Buddhas.



- ▶ Mahayana Buddhism spread through India to China, East Asia
- ▶ Emphasis on repetition of prayers and devotions: prayer flags, prayer wheels, printing.









Buddhism in the Subcontinent

