

- **Worlds most ancient living religion**
 - Continued to India, Sri Lanka, other countries
 - 800 million hindus
 - 3rd largest religion
 - 3000-4000 B.C.
- **How to become Hindu?**
 - One has to be born as a Hindu into a caste

Implications: wider sense, a culture & way of life as opposed to religion in narrower sense

- **Origins of Hinduism**
 - No such word as “Hindu” in sacred books of Hinduism
 - Derived from word “Sindhu” meaning Indus Valley

Iranians (Persians) came to India, they called natives Hindus

Greeks, upon learning from Iranians, called them “Indos” from which the word “Indian”

Way of life, thinking, customs, rites & rituals

- **Sanskrit – ancient writing**
- **Dravidians**
 - Original inhabitants of India
 - Moherjo – Daro & Itareea(??) (underground cities) 2500 B.C.
 - Grid like patterns, brick houses, running water, sewage system

Agricultural people

Aryan religious following

Fertility cults/phallus to shiva

- **Aryans**
 - Came from Asia minor (Turkey & Greece)
 - Through Khyber Pass; conquered Indus valley
 - People at india today are product of dravidians & aryaans
- **Religion of Aryans**
 - **Dyaus Pitr or Indra**
 - God of rain, parallel to greek god Zeus

Uaruna

Keeps natural & physical order (rits) intact, parallel to the roman god Ovrenos

Rodia & Merut

Winds & storms

Rodia: father

Natures horses

Agni: fire - most worshiped, cherished & loved

Soma: drink, by which one can gain immortality (amorat)

- 3 realms of Gods:
 - celestial
 - atmospheric
 - terrestrial

(3 million gods)

- Hindu Scriptures
 - Vedas (c. 1500 B.C.)
 - Upanishads (c. 500 B.C.)
 - Epic Literature – Mahabhartta (Bhagavad ...) & Ramayana (c. 100 CE)
 - Rishis
- The Vedas
 - Means “knowledge”
 - There are four:
 - Rig-veda
 - Yajur Veda
 - Sama-veda
 - Athrva-veda
- Rig-Veda

Rig means praise. Rig-Veda contains the praise of Gods (devas)

1028 in number (hymns/chants to the Gods)

Aryans placed themselves into three upper castes and Dravidians into lowest

Based on Varna (meaning color, specifically skin color)

In Rig-Veda, Brahman says:

“I Created Brahmins from my mouth, Chaitryas from my arms, Vaishyas from my thighs, and Shudras from my feet.”

Economic class division part of religion

- Caste in Rig-Veda
 - Brahmin: Priestly class, religious authority
 - Chaitrya: Rulers & kings, defend country
 - Vaishya: tradesmen & farmers, serve people
 - Shudras: manual laborers; also include:
 - Parayas (Untouchables)
 - Chandlas (illegitimate children)
- Yajur-Veda

- Contains hymns to be recited during sacrificial ceremony
- Instructions on how to carry out rituals

IV. Sama-Veda

Contains hymns to be chanted with appropriate music

Ahimsa: respect for life

V. Athrva-Veda

Contains spells against demons, protection from sickness, snakes, etc.

Emphasizes house worship, how priest should visit home, help carry out religious ceremonies

He should also act as a medicine man.

VI. The Upanishads

“to sit under tree with Guru, Swami, or Sadhu”

Written c. 500 BCE

128 Books or Chapters

Written in Prose & poetry

By different people at different times

Emphasize meditations, fasting, silence, avoidance of sex, etc.

Written in reaction to Vedas

Reject priestly class

Don't give importance to too many Gods, rituals, and sacrifices

Hinduism had become too ritualistic

VII. Key Concepts of Hinduism

Brahman (the highest God)

Infinite, eternal, unchanging; pure consciousness

TATTVAMASI: Thou art that

NETI, NETI: It is neither this nor that

Atman

Translated as self, soul, or consciousness

Also eternal, unchanging, unborn, and undying

God is transcending

Moksha

Highest goal of life

Atman becoming one with Brahman

Release from cycle of birth and death

Reincarnation (Avatra)

Being born again and again till one achieves moksha

Maya

Illusion, referring to this empirical world of sense perception and thought

Dharma

Physical and moral order created by Brahman