

Essentials of Hinduism

- came into being in the Indus valley more than 3000 years ago
- present especially in India (80%), Nepal (65-80%) and Sri Lanka
- belief in a universal world soul ([brahman](#))
- adoration of the divine principle in the form of many deities
- belief in the cycle of rebirths
- belief in salvation from the cycle of rebirth ([moksha](#))
- belief in the divine source of the Vedas
- hierarchical social structure (position inherited by birth and determined by deeds in former rebirths)

Hinduism : phases of development

- Indus valley culture (3000 – 1500 BC)
[Harappa culture (2300-2100 BC)]
- Vedic era (1500 – 800 BC)
[Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas (1000-800 BC)]
- older Hinduism (after 800 BC)
[Brahmanism]
- later Hinduism (after 700 AD)
[Shankara (about 700 AD), Ramanuja (11th/12th century),
Madhva (13th century)]
- modern Hinduism (19th/20th century)

Hinduism : cycle of universe

- Brahmanic period
[100 yeras in life of Brahma, folloed by 100 years of chaos]
- kalpa
[1 dayin life of Brahma]
- mahayuga
[one thousandth part of kalpa (4.32 mio earth years)]
- yuga
[one of 4 parts of a mahayuga]

Hinduism : parts of a yuga

- kritayuga
[golden age (1,728 mio years)]
- tretayuga
[less prosperous age (1,296 mio years)]
- dvaparayuga
[only half as prosperous age (826,000 years)]
- kaliyuga
[age of degeneration (432,000 years)]

Ancient Hindu scriptures

- Vedic scriptures

 - rigveda (divine hymns)

 - samaveda (songs)

 - yajurveda (sacrificial prayers)

 - atharvaveda (magic spells)

- classical epics

 - mahabharata (wars of the Pandava brothers)

 - [including the bhagavadgita, a poem on divine love (bhakti)]

 - ramayana (abduction and liberation of Sita, the wife of Rama)

Basic terms of Hinduism

- **rita** (the universal law, the eternal order of the vedas)
- **brahman** (the universal soul, the absolute)
- **atman** (the individual soul, the self)
- **samsara** (cycle of rebirths)
- **karma** (consequences of good and evil deeds)
- **avidya** (the lack of knowledge as reason for all sufferings)
- **maya** (illusion as basis of thing and matter)
- **moksha** (salvation)
- **dharma** (universal law, morals, virtue, law, doctrine, ritual Weltgesetz, Sitte, Tugend, Recht, Lehre, Ritual, caste duties)
- **ahimsa** (commandment not to kill living beings)
- **ashrama** (the four idealised stages of life)

Idea of god in Hinduism (expressions of brahman)

- **Brahma** (Lord of creation)
[little adored since task fulfilled]
- **Vishnu** (the preserver)
[with numerous incarnations (**avatara**)]
- **Shiva** (the destroyer)
- **Shakti** (the mother goddess)
[in different manifestations]
- Vedic deities
[today of subordinate importance]

Hierarchical social structure of Hinduism

- traditional classes (**varna**)

brahmana (priest)

kshatriya (monarch, warrior)

vaishya (Händler, Kaufleute, freie Bauern)

shudra (Handwerker, Künstler, Arbeiter, Diener)

dalit (Unberührbare)

Features of Hindu caste system

- division in **varna** and **jati**
- affiliation by birth
- caste endogamy
- restricted choice of employment
- limited contacts among castes
- fixed position of the individual in society
- concept of **samsara** and **karma** guarantees the continued existence of the system

Goals in Hindu life

- artha (material success)
- dharma (correct conduct according to the moral rules and duties of the individual caste)
- kama (sensual pleasures)

Hindu rituals

- **nitya** : sacrifice and worship (puja) for family deities in front of the home altar (if possible three times a day) and in The temple
- **naimittika** : yearly festivals and celebrations as well as lifecycle rituals
- **kamya** : occasional rituals on pilgrimages, holy baths, etc.

Hindu puja

- elements of puja:

 - worship in front of effigies ([murti](#))

 - ritual prayers ([mantra](#))

 - meditation over diagrams of the universe ([yantra](#))

- procedure of puja:

 - ringing a bell

 - uttering the name of the goddess

 - recitation of prayers ([mantra](#))

Map of Nepal

(Political and Administrative)

