

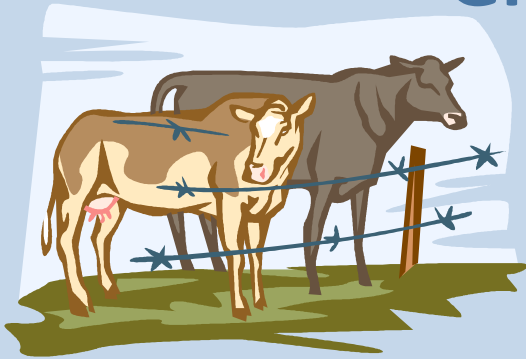
Hinduism 101 and beyond

activities/ideas for the classroom

CSEE World Religions Institute

Ghost Ranch, New Mexico

June 2010





1. What do McDonald's french fries have to do with Hinduism?
2. Who is the 7th incarnation of Vishnu and one of Hindu's most celebrated heroes? (He is often seen carrying a bow and arrows, is known to fight for peace and justice and gives strength and conviction to people when worshipped as a personal god!)

3. What is the source and significance of the following quotation:

“When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they apportion him? What do they call his mouth, his two arms and things and feet? His mouth became the Brahmin/ his arms were made the Warrior, his thighs the People and from his feet the Servants were born.”

4. What is the difference between religious purity and physical purity and how does this difference pose a potential conundrum for a devout Hindu living in Varanasi (Benares)?

5. What is the source and significance of the following quotation:

“Each one achieves success by focusing on his own action/hear how one finds success by focusing on his own action. By his own action a man finds success, worshipping the source of all creatures; activity, the presence pervading all that is. Better to do one’s own duty imperfectly than to do another man’s well/ doing action is intrinsic to his being, a man avoids guilt.”

6. What is one example of how the “colonial gaze” has shaped our understanding of Hinduism?

7. What did Thoreau and Gandhi share as a source of inspiration for their political statements and actions?

8. What is “om” and why is this sacred to Hindus?

9. What is the name of the most extreme Hindu fundamentalist party in India who is in great part responsible for the blood shed in Ayodha in recent decades?

10. Watch/listen to the opening scene to *The Lion King* and list as different illustrations of Hinduism that you can.

Answers

1. McDonald's paid American Hindu's \$10 million after failing to disclose use of beef flavoring in fries in 2002
2. Ram(a)
3. Rg Veda/origins of caste system
4. *Bhagavad-gita* (excerpt from *Mahabharata*)
Importance of dharma

Answers

5. Ganges River is one of most physically polluted bodies of water in world (chemicals, body parts, sediments), spiritually “pure”

6. Hinduism (Santana Dharma/eternal truth)

- “essentializes” Hinduism as one, unified whole

-sati- outlawed, labeled as “bride burners”

7. *Bhagavad-Gita*

Hinduism

According to Hindu scriptures, *AUM* was the first sound out of which the rest of the universe was created. The Sanskrit form of *AUM* is the seed of all mantras, expresses the complete nature of God, and symbolizes the three worlds, three states of consciousness, three Vedas, and three times (past, present, and future).



"This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Mahabharata 5:1517

9. RSS ((Rastriya Svayam Sevak)

- cultural organization that supports idea that “oneself is a servant to the nation”
- founded in 1925
- tens of thousands of branches throughout India
- includes a very disciplined training school that teaches martial arts, games, songs, prayers
- greet fellow members with “Ram, Ram”
- believe that physical prowess= spiritual accomplishments

10. samsara, reincarnation, caste system, rta, cyclical time, karma,

Overview of activity ideas:

- “wordles”
- bingo
- textbook comparisons
- engage with texts
- voice over slides/comments
- essay ideas
- social network sites
- many and one project
- festival movies
- u-tube clips (Ramayana)
- environmentalism (theory and practice)
- popular movies (Lion King)
- timeline projects
- Temple fieldtrips
- voice over power points
- calendar project-holidays/art
- jeopardy
- consumerism/Hinduism

Hand out a comprehensive vocabulary sheet for students to use as you progress through the unit.



HINDUISM: KEY TERMS
Religious Studies 2300

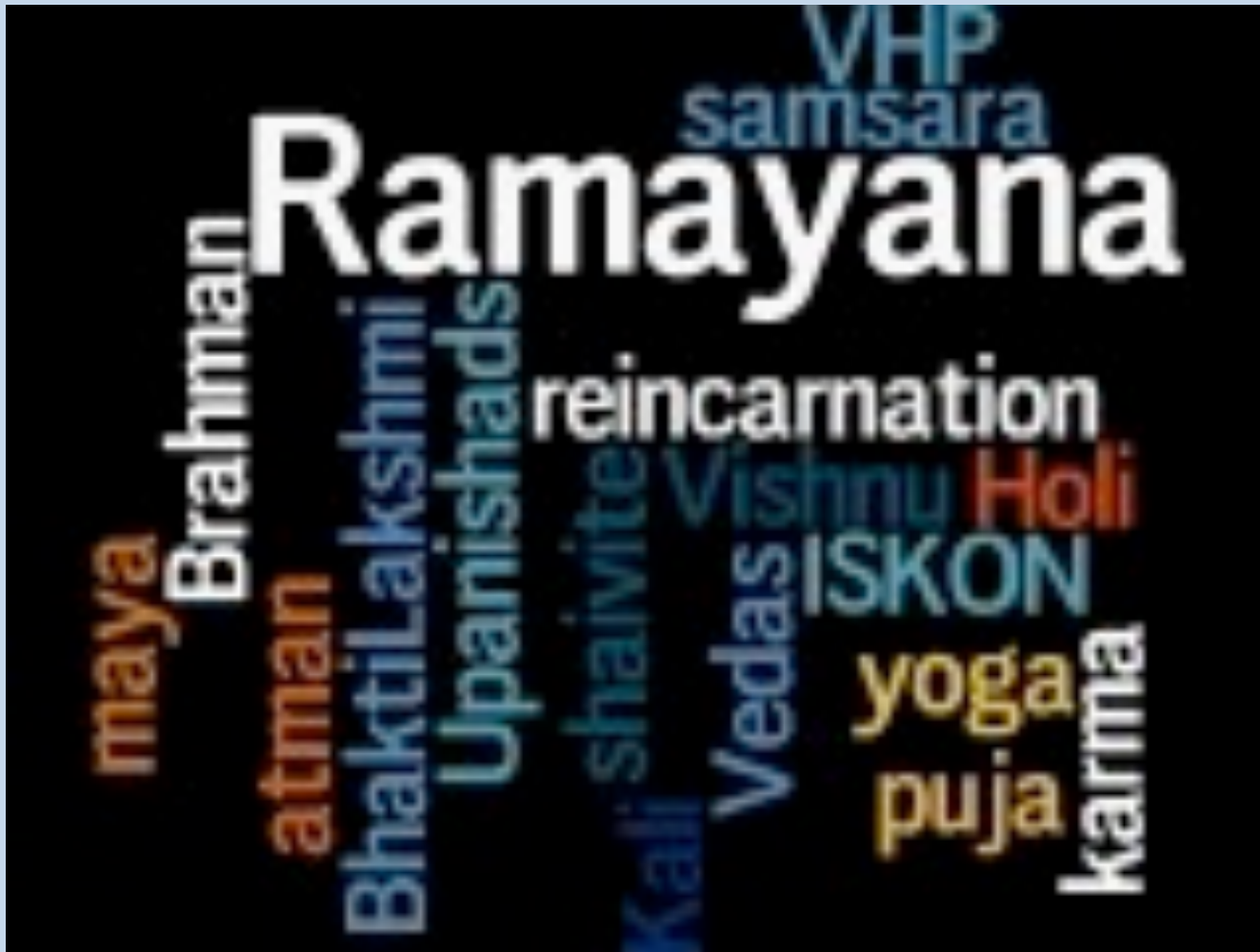


* Observe these words and write down definitions for them as we progress through this unit.

Aryans	Ramayana
Atman	Reincarnation
Avatara	Rig Veda
Banaras/Varnasi	RSS
Bhagavad-Gita	Rta
Bhakti	Sadhu
BUP	Samsara
Brabera	Sanatana Dharma
Brahman	Sanskrit
Brahmin	Shaivite
Caste	Smriti
Dharma	TM
Dharmara	Upanishads
Dalits/untouchables/barjans	Vaishnavite
Diwali	Vedas
Ganesh	VHP
Guru	Yoga
Holi	Yogananda/self-realization fellowship
ISKON	
Jnana	
Kali	
Karma	
Krishna	
Lakshmi	
Maya	
Moksa	
Murti	
Prabubada	
Prasada	
Puja	
Ramakrishna	



Wordle example #1



Have students create a “wordle”

- <http://www.wordle.net/>
- Wordle is a toy for generating “word clouds” from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. You can tweak your clouds with different fonts, layouts, and color schemes. The images you create with Wordle are yours to use however you like. You can print them out, or save them to the *Wordle* gallery to share with your friends

Activity Idea: Discuss with students the strengths/ weaknesses of the different ways to teach about Hinduism:

- emphasize chronological history?**
- stick to the classics? (literature/texts)**
- should we work to include diversity of voices even if this makes us reduce content coverage?**
- should we include stories, songs, art and dance in addition to the classic Sanskrit texts?**
- should we include practices- temples, festivals, rituals?**
- should we emphasize only the positive contributions that Hinduism makes to the world?**
- should we raise controversies and criticisms?**
- should we focus on spiritual/philosophical insights or should we pay attention to society and the politics of the religion?**
- should we approach Hinduism as a insider or outsider, practitioner-academic, practitioner as academic? What is gained and what is lost with these different approaches?**

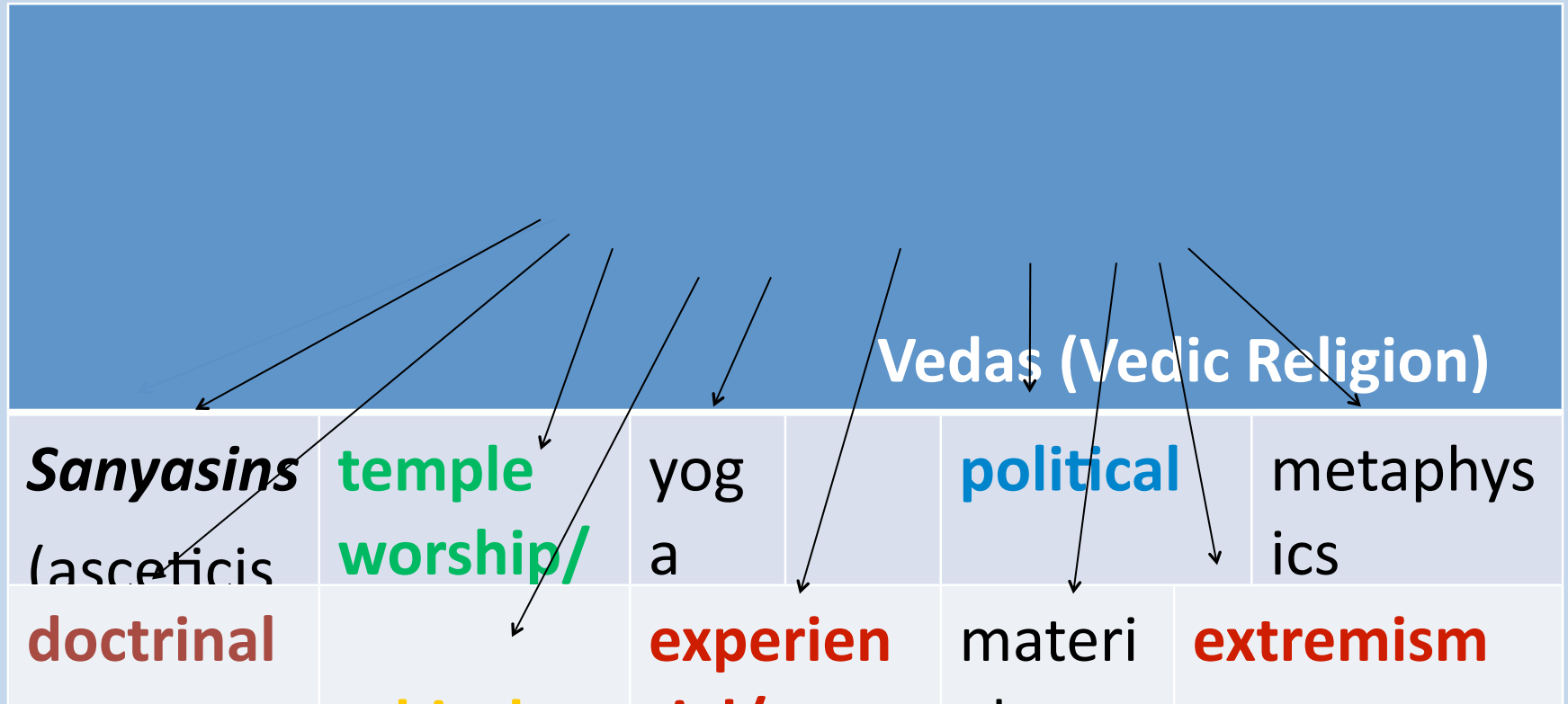
Assign an article/activity that:

- 1) Muddies the water demonstrating the complexity of Hinduism
- 2) Helps students relate to Hinduism as something in their own lives-not something that is only relevant to South Asia

Article Ideas:

- *The Mosque Next Door: Will we welcome America's new religious diversity?* By Diana Eck
- *The Lion King: Karma on the Savannah (show opening scene/read article)*
- *Camp Joins Summer Fun with Teaching Hindu Faith*
- *McDonald's fries cost \$10M: chain to pay vegetarians, Hindus for not disclosing it used beef flavor in French Fries*

Hinduism(S)



Timeline project:

- Have students identify (or provide for them) significant concepts, events, important people that are relevant to your unit about Hinduism.
- Have students create a picture timeline, inclusive of dates, and have them provide a written explanation for WHY they demarcated the “time periods” the way they did.
- Discuss the variety of timelines in class (*why did you demarcate time the way you did? What are the implications of the different ways scholars demarcate time? Would Hindus demarcate time in their tradition in the same way?*) (Note: cyclical time vs linear time issues)

Hinduism

BCE c.8000–6000	According to Indian tradition, Vedas heard by <i>rishis</i> , carried orally
c.3102	According to Indian tradition, beginning of Kali Yuga: Vishnu incarnates as Vyasa, who writes down the Vedas
c.2500–1500	Indus Valley civilization
c.2000–900	Supposed Aryan invasions of northern India
c.1500	Early Vedas first written down
c.1000–500	<i>Upanishads</i> systematized by Vyasa
c.900–700	<i>Brahmanas</i> written down
c.400 BCE–200 CE	<i>Ramayana</i> (present form)
c.400 BCE–400 CE	<i>Mahabharata</i> (present form)
by 200	Patanjali systematizes Yoga Sutras (Indian tradition, yoga practices are ancient, indigenous)
CE 100–300	Code of Manu compiled
c.300	Tantras written down (Indian tradition, Tantras are as old as the Upanishads)
500–1500	<i>Puranas</i> recorded
c.600–1800	<i>Bhakti</i> movement flourishes
711	Muslim invasions begin
c.788–820	or earlier, Shankara reorganizes Vedanta
c.800–900	<i>Bhagavata Purana</i> written down
1556–1707	Mogul Empire
1828	Brahmo Samaj revitalization
1836–1886	Life of Ramakrishna
1857–1947	British rule of India
1869–1948	Life of Mahatma Gandhi
1875	Arya Samaj reform
1947	Independence, partition of India and Pakistan
1948	Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi
1992	Demolition of Babri mosque
2002	Violence erupts again over attempts to build Ram Temple at Ayodhya

Origins of *Santana Dharma* (Hinduism): Vedic Religion

Aryans—1500 BCE

- Tribes who migrated from North, spoke Sanskrit, brought with them the Vedas
- Vedas: knowledge in books
- Four Vedas (together these collections of hymns praised a pantheon and they were considered the supreme source of knowledge)



Vedas- knowledge in books

- unity existent from eternity and w/o human origin
- om**-sacred sound, foundation of a cosmic utterance heard by ancient seers or rishis
- 7 *rishis* transmitted Vedas for benefit of the world (exact transmission important)
- all Vedas together known as *sruti* (that which is heard in a sacred way)

Listen to the Vedas being read in Sanskrit

- http://sanskritdocuments.org/links5_audio.html

Audio Recordings of Sanskrit Texts Link Description Language
Verses **Audio** First Sukta of Rig Veda (Sukta 1) S 9 **Audio** Last
Sukta of Rig Veda (Sukta 191) S 4 **Audio** Sama Veda Samhita
(Verse 594) plus Gaana text S 35 **Audio** Taittiriya Samhita
(Krishna Yajur Veda) Verse 2.2.65 Ghana-Patha S 20 **Streaming
Download** Taittiriya Samhita (Krishna Yajur Veda) Verses
1.1.1-2 S 2 **Streaming Download** Taittiriya Samhita (Krishna
Yajur Veda) Verses 1.1.14.4-5 S 2

Common elements in the Vedas:



- Hymns addressed many gods
- Included few references to the afterlife because they were concerned with the well-being on earth
- Included domestic/community life rituals
- Referenced a very strong connection between rituals and earthly order
- Included speculations about the universe

Vedic Religion:

- Vedas were manuals for rituals
- asserted there was one underlying force of the hymns but very impersonal and ambiguous
- Involved sacrifice, ritual and special priesthood
- Gods were forces of the world but had NO autonomous will
- Generous offerings were rewarded
- World was ordered by ṛta (larger cosmic order)



Teaching the creation hymn: *Nasadiya*

- 1 There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?**
- 2 There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond.**
- 3 Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning; ‘with no distinguishing sign, all this was water. The life force that was covered with emptiness, that one arose through the power of heat.**
- 4 Desire came upon that one in the beginning; that was the first seed of mind. Poets, seeking in their heart with wis-dom found the bond of existence in non-existence.**
- 5 Their cord was extended across. Was there below? Was there above? There were seed-placers; there were powers. There was impulse beneath; there was giving-forth above.**
- 6 Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen? -**
- 7 Whence this creation has arisen — perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not — the one who**

Ideas to highlight in Creation Hymn:

- riddles: don't and are not suppose to have answers
- designed to make reader become aware of inadequacy of certain knowledge
- themes: harnessing, finding open space, fear of hatred by gods
 1. non-existence is linked w/chaos/evil while existence is associated w/order, trust (purpose of vedic sacrifice is to ward off chaos)
 2. Existence is conceived as a bond that is rooted in non-existence
 3. Creation begins with desire

Questions:

- Why do you think The Creation Hymn was intentionally written as a series of unanswered questions?
- What type of conclusions does this leave you with?
- What kind of meaning do you take away from this hymn about the Hindu's understanding of creation?

Hymn of Man: excerpt from the Rg Veda

From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the melted fat was collected, and he made it into those beasts who live in the air, in the forest, and in the villages. From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the verses and chants were born, the metres were born from it, and from it, and those other animals that have two rows of teeth; cows were born from it goats and sheep were born.

*When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they apportion him? What do they call his mouth, his two arms and thighs and feet? His mouth became the **Brahmin**; his arms the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born.*

Questions for discussion

- After reading the Hymn of Man, please explain HOW this text provides an understanding about the development of Hindu culture? (HINT: explain the relationship this text might have to the Indian caste system.)
- What are the FOUR official castes and what is the particular “job” that each caste is assigned?
- Do some brief research and find out what some of the rules about membership, marriage, and restrictions about occupations are defined by the caste system.
- What direction is the caste system heading in present day India? Is it still legal? Is it still practiced? Who (consider an individual or a group) has been most concerned with this issue historically?
- In your opinion, to what extent would it be possible to abandon the caste system (which has been legally outlawed, but is still very much honored in many parts of India), yet retain the essential beliefs and values in Hinduism? Explain your argument carefully and draw upon SPECIFICS .

The Indian Caste system:

- 1) Have students explore the realities of the caste system in India today.
- 1) Simulate a role playing exercise by having students assume the identity of people from different castes while addressing certain realities that come from religion manifesting in everyday social reality.

<http://www.okbar.org/public/lre/lessonplans/caste.pdf>

India's untouchables



 NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM

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India's "Untouchables" Face Violence, Discrimination

Hillary Mayell for National Geographic News

June 2, 2003

- http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/06/0602_030602_untouchables.html

More than 160 million people in India are considered "Untouchable"—people tainted by their birth into a caste system that deems them impure, less than human.

Human rights abuses against these people, known as Dalits, are legion. A random sampling of headlines in mainstream Indian newspapers tells their story: **"Dalit boy beaten to death for plucking flowers"; "Dalit tortured by cops for three days"; "Dalit 'witch' paraded naked in Bihar"; "Dalit killed in lock-up at Kurnool"; "7 Dalits burnt alive in caste clash"; "5 Dalits lynched in Haryana"; "Dalit woman gang-raped, paraded naked"; "Police egged on mob to lynch Dalits".**

"Dalits are not allowed to drink from the same wells, attend the same temples, wear shoes in the presence of an upper caste, or drink from the same cups in tea stalls," said Smita Narula, a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch, and author of *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables."* Human Rights Watch is a worldwide activist organization based in New York.

India's Untouchables are relegated to the lowest jobs, and live in constant fear of being publicly humiliated, paraded naked, beaten, and raped with impunity by upper-caste Hindus seeking to keep them in their place. Merely walking through an upper-caste neighborhood is a life-threatening offense.

Definitions:

Caste system: way to traditionally divide society according to Vedic literature (formally outlawed by Indian legislation)

Brahmin: the priestly caste who performed the sacrifices during the Vedic times and embodied the knowledge of the Vedas

Reincarnation: process of the soul being re-born again into a new body after the existing body dies

Karma: ritual action that accrues merit or demerit based on actions and intentions that soul has committed

Dharma: one's duty, derived in part from one's caste, gender, birth order

Ahimsa: the absence of the desire to injure, non-violence

Vedic beliefs:

- priests (**Brahmins**) performed sacrifices to bring rain, protect against enemies, ensure a good harvest, etc. and to maintain cosmic order
- priests “remind” the gods of the way things should go b/c gods had no autonomous will
- individuals had to perform their dharma, in order to acquire good karma, and to help maintain **rta** (cosmic order)
- What are the ecological implications of these beliefs during the Vedic period?

Upanishad Period

- Upanishads**- teachings of highly realized spiritual masters
- 4th part of Vedic literature
- include allegorical understanding of rituals in Vedas
- new worldview in Hinduism emerges (insight more important than sacrifice)

Excerpt from Upanishads:

“That Being is the seed; all else but His expression. He is truth, He is Self. Swetaketu! You are That.”

Atman- individual human soul

Brahman- supreme, infinite, present t/o universe, in all objects of ordinary experience, constitutes true identity of every being

Chandogya- Upanishad, VI.13

A father instructed his son in the following manner:

“Put this piece of salt in the water and come to me tomorrow morning.” Svetaku did as he was told. Then his father said to him, “Do you remember that piece of salt you put in the water yesterday evening? Would you be good enough to bring it here?”

He groped for it but could not find it. It had completely dissolved.

“Would you please sip it at this end? What is it like?” the father said.

“Salt,” responded Svetaketu. “Sip it in the middle. What is it like?” “Salt.”

“Sip it at the far end. What is it like?” “Salt.”

“Throw it away and then come to me.”

Svetaku did as he was told but that did not stop the salt from remaining ever the same.

His father said to him, “My dear child, it is true that you cannot perceive Being here, but it is equally true that it is here. This is the finest essence, the whole universe has, as its Self; That is the Real: That is the Self; That *you* are, Svetaku!”

“Good sir, will you kindly instruct me further?”

“I will, my dear child,” said he.

Questions:

There are many ways in which learning takes place 😊! Consider the following quotations:

- “While we teach, we learn.” (Seneca)
- “Men must be taught as if you taught them not...” (Alexander Pope)
- “Nothing that is worth knowing can be taught” (Oscar Wilde)
- “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops”. (Henry Adams)

- Now, reflect on the fact that in Hinduism, there are a variety of ways that “true knowledge may be obtained”. Please chose ONE of the above quotations and explain how it best illustrates ONE kind of learning practice that is inherent within Hinduism.

- Be sure to explain 1) the METHOD of how one learns, 2) “where” in Hinduism this concept is derived or “taught” (Vedas, Upanishads, bhakti, classical or

Cosmology:

- All is Brahman, including “ourselves”
- Ignorance/deception causes people to see multiplicity not one
- Salvation occurs when no longer see the illusion of “I” and “though”
- Everything is a cycle- including the universe which regenerates every 4, 320,000,000 years
- Nothing which exists is ever destroyed- just changes forms

Classical Hinduism: (500 BCE-500 CE)

- Epics and the *Puranas* (helped spread Hinduism)
- Epics- smriti (that which was remembered)
 - promoted codes of laws/ethics
 - most influential literature after the Upanishads
 - Mahabharata* (18th book is *Bhagavad-Gita*) 200 BCE
 - Ramayana*
 - texts created archetypes of men, women, good devotees*

The classical pantheon:

Sati Shiva

Lakshmi/Sri Vishnu

Sarasvatti

Brahma

Parvati

Sita

Rama

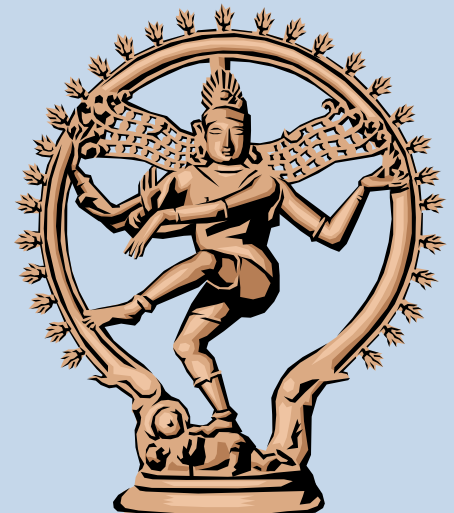
-Durga

-Kali

Radha

Krishna

Ganesha



Deity Bingo:

who is who in the hindu pantheon???

बिगो (BINGO)

krishna	rama	sita	ganesha	varuna
lakshmi	vishnu	siva	sati	parvati
		FREE ☺		

The Hero's Journey/Adventure:

- **The Call to Adventure**
- **Supernatural Aid/companions**
- **Crossing the Threshold**
- **The Initiation:** The hero must prove to be worthy of hero status, and to prove this the hero will face a series of challenges or trials while on the journey. The trials fall into two main categories.
 - Two types of hero deeds:**
 1. **The Physical Deed:** The hero performs a courageous act in battle or saves lives.
 2. **The Spiritual Deed:** The hero learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then comes back with a message.
- **The Return**

Ramanaya teaching ideas:

1. Compare Rama/Odysseus using hero cycle (Joseph Campbell)
2. Use u-tube clips to watch Ramanaya episodes
3. Discuss watching the Ramayana (puja to t.v. sets) as a way to bring in role of media in religion (article)

Ramayana and media discussion

- **Some people argue that film and television can convey complex messages that would otherwise be inaccessible to non-reading audiences. What type of messages do YOU think they are referring to?**
- **Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?**
- **What is YOUR opinion on the value of television in regard to its potential to provide a way for parents to pass down important religious traditions, an important part of one's culture, which otherwise might be lost in the rapidly changing society of India?**
- **Supporters of the televised version of the *Ramayana* argue that it infused key symbols and images into Indian society in a way that transcended older cultural and social boundaries. Assuming the success of this infusion, can you relate to how different people might have found a stronger connection to their social, political or religious identities? Please elaborate.**

- Some critics argue that the *Ramayana* itself is not what should be discussed, but rather that the act of watching television in general is a more important topic of analysis. Discuss this statement and bring in ideas such as methods of watching television. (Is it a ritual? Are there different ways to watch television? Does the medium of the t.v. take away the sacred or ceremonial aspects of the *Ramayana* that define this epic as religious?)
- b) Are there comparable t.v. events (televised versions of religious stories) in the United States?
 - If yes, provide an example and explanation. If no, explain how you would differentiate the U.S. programs from the *Ramayana*.
- c) Do you find it acceptable that Ramanand Sagar made a huge profit off his *Ramayana* series? Does it matter to you if he was just a “genius” in the fact that he produced something that people latched onto or if his purpose was to “save” an important part of their culture from being lost? Do you think turning other religious texts like the

Many and one project

- One of the most interesting aspects about Hinduism is the “one and many” conundrum. This project is aimed to help you understand why this is a difficult question to answer, to help you better articulate the nature of the debate to others and for you to gain some familiarity with some (of the many) gods/goddesses in the Hindu pantheon.

Visually depict this tension between “the one” and “the many” in some creative manner. This visual portion of your project should be approximately 8 ½ x 11 (a regular notebook sized paper) or you can use several if you want! You can draw, paint, use magazines to create a collage, use computer images, but you need to somehow visually represent this theological “puzzle”. (Pencil “chicken scratches” on a piece of lined notebook paper at the last minute is not a sufficient project. Your artistic ability does NOT matter, but your effort does.) ☺

On your visual display you must correctly label “the one” (use your notes/book if you need help here) and label the specific names of the individual gods/goddesses that you choose to represent. You should have a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 10 of these deities represented. You may find actual images of the gods/goddesses (readily available in books and on the internet) or you may use symbols to depict them. For example, Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth and good fortune) might be represented by a \$ symbol or by a 4 leaf clover (good luck charm). If you choose to symbolically represent the deities, please make sure the symbol ACCURATELY represents them. In other words, there needs to be some intentionality in how you choose to depict them.

Analysis:

Explain the nature of this theological puzzle. Who is many claims that Hinduism is monotheistic? Who is claiming otherwise? Why might some claim that Hinduism is monotheistic? Why might some argue it is polytheistic? What might be the implications of being on “one side” or the other of this debate? What do YOU think the answer to this puzzle is? Why? What evidence or justification can you provide for your opinion? What makes the relationship between “the one” and “the many” different in Hinduism than other religions? How does this theological puzzle influence worship practices/rituals, contemporary politics or the daily lives of Hindus...or does it? 😊 (Make sure you have clear “main point” to your analysis and use details to support your conclusions!)

Background on *bhakti* yoga:

YOGA:

- Literally “to yoke”. This means harnessing oneself to god, seeking union with him. Different yogic paths that accommodate the basic makeup of the individual seekers

Bhakti:

- A movement that began in South India in the 6th century. Several saints traveled from temple to temple singing in praise of Visnu or Siva.
- Love of god, surrender to the guru and to the chosen deity.
- **Vaidhi-bhakti:** A preparatory state during which all instructions from one's guru for the practice of bhakti are followed
- **Raga-bhakti:** a state in which the bhakta thinks only of God. Everything reminds one of God and is related to god
- **Para-bhakti:** the supreme love of God, wherein nothing exists save God and the consciousness of unity with God
- Archetype figure develops: poet and saint
- Families of bhakti saints developed who were aware of one another and important because united themselves in the memory of past saints
- Families drew on mythology connections and reconstructed "normal Indian societal structure" because included women, untouchables, Muslims

Common elements in bhakti

- Poet always mentioned own name as a “signature line” so composer is clear
- Poets rejected Sanskrit for the vernacular language (Tamil) and created “structure of their own”
- Personal element introduced: imagined god in many different ways
- Human relationship with god emphasized: no longer needed teacher or Brahmins to guide the way
- God as friend/parent, but respect and awe god’s power (humans no longer forcing fate like in Vedic times)
- Clear rejection of ritual
- Legitimized different paths of worship in Hinduism
- Provided literature and self expression opportunities for common man
- Puja (ritual worship) shaped by bhakti
- Less philosophical and more theological (god’s involvement with world emphasized)
- Religious in content, but universal in theme:
 - -speak of trials of life in society
 - -hollow shell of the body
 - -friendship

Karma-yoga:

- selfless action, one must do one's duty, but it should not be done either for fear of punishment or hope of reward. The right action should be done without the expectation of praise or blame.
- Service-rendered without any interest in its effects
- EX: one studies because it is correct, it is one's dharma not because you will get A's or F's

Jnana-yoga

- the path of abstract knowledge, through the means of attaining scriptural knowledge, one may achieve a transforming wisdom that destroys one's past karma. TRUE knowledge is an insight into the real nature of the universe, divine power and the human soul. Hears scripture, asks questions, clarifies doubts and eventually meditates on this knowledge, one achieves liberation.
- Ignorance is the root of all problems, seeker must develop spiritual virtues (calmness, restraint, renunciation, resignation, concentration, faith). Ultimate wisdom is spiritual insight rather than intellectual knowledge.
- EX: fire reduces firewood to ashes, so too does the fire of knowledge reduce all karma (axns to ashes).

Bhakti-yoga:

- devout love of god, general amnesty offered to those who sin, who have a karmic overload and if they devote themselves to god liberation is possible. If one surrenders to the lord, he will forgive the human being all sins
- “Letting go all dharma, take refuge in me alone/I shall deliver you from all sins, do not grieve.” ~Bhagavad-gita (18:66)

Bhakti Poetry

Kabir

Go naked if you want,
Put on animal skins.
What does it matter till you see the inward Ram?

If the union yogis seek
came from roaming about in the buff,
every deer in the forest would be saved.

If shaving you head
spelled spiritual success,
heaven would be filled with sheep.

And brother, if holding back your seed
Earned you a place in paradise,
eunuchs would be the first to arrive.

Kabir says: Listen brother,
Without the name of Ram
who has ever won the spirit's prize?

Pundit, how can you be so dumb?
You're going to drown, along with all your kin, unless you start speaking of Ram.

Vedas, Puranas—why read them?
It's like loading an ass with sandalwood!
Unless you catch on and learn how Ram's name goes, how will you reach the end of the road?

You slaughter living beings and call it religion:
hey brother, what would irreligion be?
“Great Saint”—that's how you love to greet each other: Who then would you call a murderer?

Your mind is blind. You've no knowledge of yourselves. Tell me, brother, how can you teach anyone else? Wisdom is a thing you sell for worldly gain, so there goes your human birth—in vain.

You say: “It's Narad's command.”
“It's what Vyas says to do.”
Go and ask Sukdev, the sage.”

Kabir says: you'd better go and lose yourself in Ram for without him, brother, you drown.

Questions for discussion

Bhakti can be translated as the passionate love of God. The root of the word is “to share” and is in reference to the sharing between God and Individuals. Knowing this, can you explain how *bhakti* is a reaction against the norms established by the Vedic literature and the caste system? How is it that *bhakti* was able to build bridges across religious communities and caste lines? What evidence do you see of a sarcasm?

Questions for the Bhagavad-Gita:

- In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna tells Arjuna to “renounce the fruits of every action”. Analyze this quotation and explain why some say that even the karma that one gets from performing good deeds is ultimately bad. Some people even refer to karma as “golden handcuffs”. Why? Why are both vice and virtue forms of bondage?
- What does the following statement mean: “He who knows peace has forgotten desire”? How does this relate to Arjuna’s predicament?
- After reading this excerpt, in your opinion, which path (karma, bhakti or jnana yoga) is Arjuna practicing? Be prepared to defend your choice with textual evidence!

RITUAL



Various Hindu Rituals

- *Puja/prasad* offerings
- *Darshan* with murti
- *Abishekas* (ritual baths of the deities)
- Lamp offerings
- Upanayana (sacred thread ceremony)
- Linga/yoni worship
- Pilgrimages
- Temple worship/*parikrama* (circumambulate many temples)
- 16 *samskaras* (rites) (conception, braiding pregnant women's hair, birth, name giving, 1st time leaving family house, begin solid foods, starting education, sacred thread, study of vedas, marriage, death)

Voice thread project

- <http://voicethread.com/share/546798/>
- <http://voicethread.com/#home>

Festivals calendar project

- Lohari
- Holi
- Naga Pachami
- Janmastami
- Ganesh Chaturti
- Durga Puja
- Diwali
- Mahashivaratri
- Kumbha Mela
- Jagannatha Festival

CONTEMPORARY HINDUISM: possible topics

- POLITICS
- WOMEN
- ENVIRONMENT
- HINDUISM IN AMERICA

politics

- Hindu Exclusionists: (where Hinduism meets Nationalism)

Bharat Mata- Mother India and Her Militant Matriots by Lisa McKean

- **syndicated Hinduism:** purpose is more political than religious and want to establish Hinduism as it was in pre-modern times
- **Sangh Pariwar** (whole group of political and cultural organizations affiliated with Hinduism and politics)
- **RSS** (Rastriya Svayam Sevak)
 - cultural organization that supports idea that “oneself is a servant to the nation”
 - founded in 1925
 - tens of thousands of branches throughout India
 - includes a very disciplined training school that teaches martial arts, games, songs, prayers

Hindu nationalism (continued)

VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad or World Hindu Council)

- founded in 1964
- aimed to create a community for Hindus
- plays off “Islamic threat” as reason for needing to unify Hindus
- feeds on social reform
- many ascetics participate/identify with movement
- connected to temple/mosque dispute in Ayodha
- work to bring Christian converts back to Hinduism (burn Bibles, rape nuns, destroyed Christian schools in past)

BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or India’s People’s Party)

- founded in 1984 with roots back in the 1920’s
- largest party in India

- Most politically charged hotspots related to Hinduism in India: **Ayodhya, Kashmir, Punjab**

Ayodha debate/secularism discussion

- **How does a religion influence a society? Give some examples of how a religion defines what is right or what is forbidden in a society.**
- **How do values related to religion? Think about power, prestige, income and how these values might change depending on *who* is in power.**
- **Religion and politics exist in a dialectal relationship. Explain. Think about how religion might be used to challenge authority or how people might use religion as a political tool.**
- **Is religion meant for a community or for an individual? Is it possible that religion could truly meet the needs of both? Explain.**
- **What role does religion/faith play in a secular nation? How does a secular nation address its “national identity” in light of the various religious influences?**

Hinduism in America

Background of individual, major contribution to American society and specific methods or teaching practices

- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Transcendental Meditation)
- Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (ISKON)
- Yogananda (Self Realization Fellowship)
- Ramakrishna (Vedanta Society)
- Guru Maharaj-ji
- Swami Satchidananda
- Ram Dass

Hinduism in America

- Why is “American Hinduism” bringing Hindus together in new ways? What are some examples of this “new relationship” that Hindus in America share?
- What are some of the challenges that Hindus in America must face as a community? (Provide 2-3 specific examples)
- What is ISKON and what role does it play for new Hindu immigrants in America?
- Can you comprehend WHY a group like the “Dot Busters” formed in New Jersey? What do you think are the reasons behind such strong prejudice against the Hindus? What pro-active suggestions can you make to help prevent such “hate groups” from forming in the future?

Hinduism in Environment

- Cyclical time (p. 113)
- Brahman (ultimate reality/all pervasive consciousness) (p. 113)
- karma/dharma (general background)
- Vedas/deities as natural forces (p. 114)
- Rg Veda/sacrifice cosmic man/caste system (p. 114)
- Microcosmic/macrocosmic relationship (p. 115)
- Atman/Brahman relationship (p. 115)
- Earth as goddess/spiritual purity vs physical pollution of Ganges(p. 116)
- **Sacredness of land as resistance to urban life (118)**
- *Tirkas* (sacred spots/pilgrimage) (p. 166)
- *Krishna*-pastoral images/Agarwal and (p. 117)
- Renunciation (p. 117)/
- *Ahimsa* (p. 117)
- Discussions about sacred cow (spiritual and material) significance
- Clean Ganga campaign

Hinduism and consumerism



Samsara perfume



Ganesh Beer

TWO opposing visions of India

1. the irrational other, Hinduism irrational
2. enchanting, esoteric, exotic—engages western appetite for fantasy
 - this image is seen as a spiritual reservoir, the source of deep ecology

What are the many different reasons why cows are significant (both materially and symbolically) in India?

Material significance:

- Waste as fertilizer and fuel source
- Leather
- Milk, butter, yogurt
- Provide “work” for local economy through animal husbandry

Symbolic significance:

- Lakshmi- goddess of wealth
- Mother of propensity of food systems

Hinduism and Women

- Briefly list out the different reasons why women have historically been both repressed and revered in the Hindu culture.
- What is the status of a Hindu widow? Does this help contextualize the practice of *sati*? (Explain why or why not.) Also, brainstorm another instance (any culture will do) where particular beliefs about someone/something as inauspicious have led to particular behaviors within the culture.
- Summarize the connection between women and pollution. Is cleanliness an important part of any other culture? If so, please explain and give examples. If not, why do you think it is important to the Hindu culture?

Paradoxes about women in Hinduism

Positive roles, perceptions and ideas about women

- + limitless power (goddess figures)
- + wife = auspicious and good fortune
- + important composers of hymns, participated in philosophical debates
- + sumagali = ideal woman

Negative roles, perceptions, ideas about women

- never to be independent (laws of Manu)
- slave in service, harlot in love, duties as wife

Review activities: exam essay

- Phil Jackson, coach of the L.A. Lakers (former coach of the Chicago Bulls) is known for his ability to win championships. Even though he oversees an incredibly talented group of athletes, much of the team's success is attributed to Jackson's innovative thinking and unique coaching strategies. Currently, Phil Jackson is wrestling with a major decision. He has decided to use some aspects of either Hinduism or Buddhism to train his team for the 2008 championship, but he can't quite decide which religion offers ideas or practices that would be most applicable to his players. (Please note: he is **not** trying to convert them or make them practice these traditions as an authentic practitioner would).

However, with all of your knowledge and insight, your job is to help Phil make this major decision. And, in your effort to persuade him (and you **must** help him decide one way or the other) please convince him of how the philosophies, beliefs, and practices of *either* Hinduism or Buddhism might give his players an “extra edge” in the upcoming season. In your defense of one of the religions, you’ll have to **show the faults, flaws or inadequacies of the other tradition’s ideas** make sure you convince Phil about **why** the ideas you choose to highlight will or will not work for him. In order to do this effectively, you’ll have to put forth some suggestions about what makes a “winning team” successful (what goals might be used as stepping stones as they progress through the season?) as you defend your choice, relate this criteria to the religion you choose, because Phil is only interested in one thing—and that’s WINNING!

(You need to be as realistic as possible in your argument. In other words, think about what Hinduism or Buddhism might have to offer a professional basketball player and how certain aspects of these religions really could help someone approach a tangible goal from a new perspective).