

Eastern Faiths & Atheism

OVERVIEW:

Eastern Religions have hearths east of the Middle East. Please note: the “Eastern” view of the world is different the “Western” European/American understanding. The “West” likes to understand the world through, facts, reason, and measurements and is very literal in its understanding of life and the world. The “Eastern” mindset focuses on purpose/function and metaphor. A term like “Mother Earth” to an Eastern mind does not mean the earth is a literal human mother, but instead functions LIKE a mother: giving and sustaining life, nurturing, caring, and providing for its inhabitants. LIKE a mother, the Earth needs attention and care in return. This is critical to understanding aspects of these religions, that will seem implausible to a Western/Literal mind.

Religious Timeline:

A chronological list of important religious figures of major world religions

 Hindu Family Tree

 Abraham Tree

 Eastern Asia Religions

 Scientific/
Agnostic/
Atheist

Aryan Migration &
Hindu Vedic Period

Father Abraham,
Isaac & Ishmael

Emperor Jimmu (Shinto)
Mahavira (Jainist)

Confucius (Chinese)
Siddhartha (Buddha)

Socrates, Plato
(Greek/Western)

Lao-Tau & Taoism
(Chinese)

Muhammad (Islam)

Charles Darwin
Nietzsche (Nihilism)

The Bab (Baha'i)

2000 BCE

600-500 CE

600 CE

1800s CE

1460 BCE

30 CE

1550-1650 CE

1980s CE

Moses

Jesus (Christianity)

Protestant
Reformation
Scientific Revolution
Shinto Revival
Guru Nanak (Sikhism)
European
Enlightenment

Wahabi Islam spreads

A. Hinduism

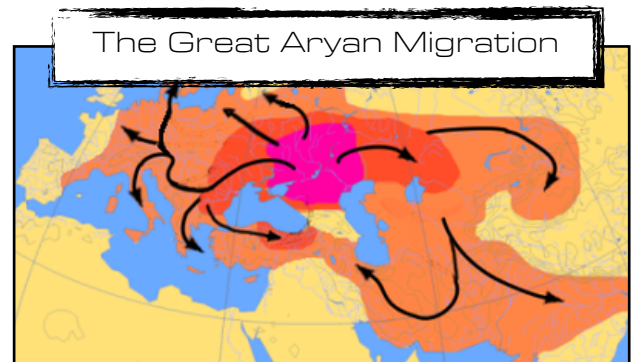
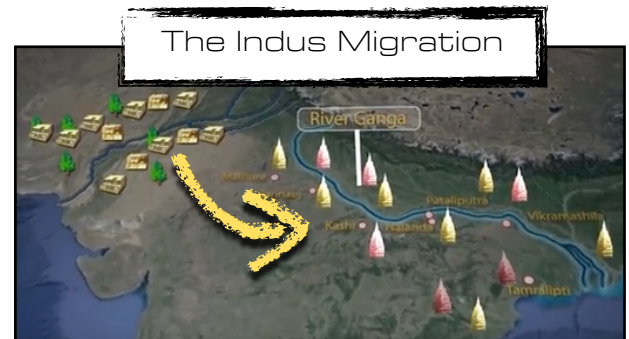
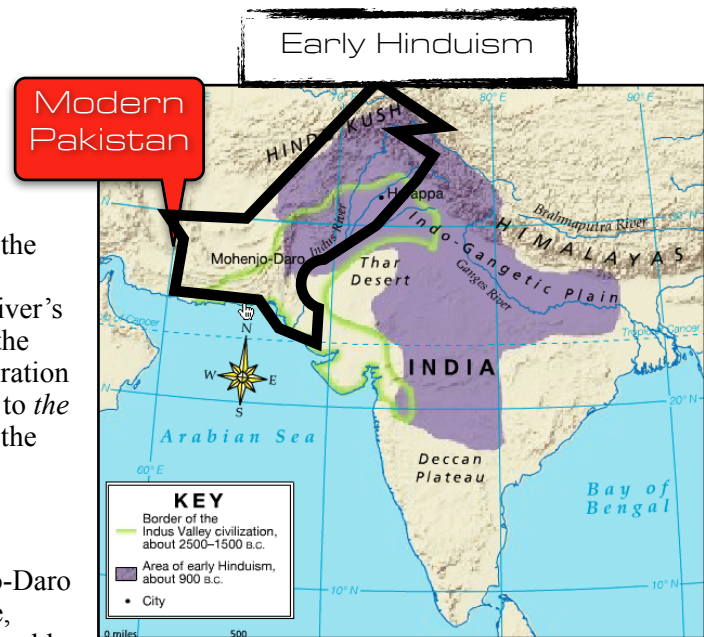
Origin and Diffusion

The story of the oldest of all modern religions, Hinduism, is begins before 2700 BCE along the Indus River Valley (now in modern day Pakistan). The subcontinent of India is relatively isolated due to its geographic barriers of the Himalayan Mountains, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean. The Indus Valley, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains, provides both resources and protection. The name Hindu stems from a mispronunciation of the river's toponym. The original pronunciation of the river was with an "S": the Sindhu River - meaning *huge amount of water*. Over time, with migration and trade along the river, the name of the river permanently shifted to *the Indus*, from whence the terms India and Indian are derived. Finally, the Muslims and Europeans added a letter H, creating the terms Hindu, Hinduism, and Hindi.

From the Indus Valley emerged the Harappa civilization, the most advanced urban center in the world at that time. Cities like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa had elaborate grid city planning, advanced architecture, sanitation infrastructure, and public services. These achievements would not be independently invented in other parts of the world until Roman times almost two thousand years later. Archeologists have found evidence in these urban centers of the images and symbols for the deities that would become the core of the Hindu faith. Animal images of cows and bulls appear around sacred buildings, along with elephants and rams. A pipal tree with a spirit ascending and a swastika were also found (rotating in either direction). Death was greeted with a cremation ceremony along the Indus River. While not all traditions from the Harappans diffused and thrived, many elements of modern Dharmic Faiths - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism - trace their roots back to this early folk-animist tradition.

While no one knows exactly what transpired next, the leading theory centers on a combination of an Indus migration and the Aryan migration. Around 2,000 BCE, the climate of the world was changing. Along the Indus River Valley, the river dried up, causing a forced migration to the Ganges River Valley and central India. As the climate changed around the world, a horse-riding people from Central Asia (Southern Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) experienced a massive migration that continues to shape the modern cultural, linguistic, and religious landscape. The language of the Aryans was Sanskrit, which became the foundation for the Indo-European language family tree. The religion had a pantheon of deities that controlled various aspects of nature. The Aryans branched into two separate groups. One group migrated through Europe, laying the foundation for the Greek, Germanic, Latin, and Viking peoples. A second group migrated east to Iran and, finally, into India. As the horse riders settled down, they amalgamated with the agricultural natives. All these societies developed similar belief structures, with a collection of mainly male deities that shared similar responsibilities and personalities. For example, each pantheon had a Chief or King deity (Zeus/Oden/Jupiter/Dyaus), a deity of fire and war (Mars/Aesir/Ares/Indra), and a deity of marriage and motherhood (Hera/Frigga/Juno/Prithvi)

Through a series of invasions, migrations, and trade the base religion of Hinduism diffused across Indian subcontinent, into Southeast Asia. As the religion and cultural system diffused, traits and complexes from traditional or folk cultures were syncretized into the Hindu faith. This created unique regionalized variations of the faith that persist to this day.



3000 BCE

1000 BCE

500 BCE

Birth of
Hinduism

Hindu Beliefs

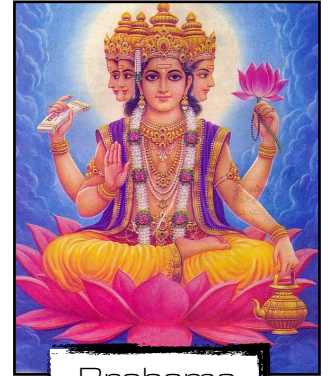
The selection of beliefs and cultural complexes stated below are general traits held by most Hindu. Because Hinduism does not have a religious hierarchy or governing body, it creates a tremendous amount of variability, that will not be reflected here.

Sanatan Dharma. Hinduism seeks to make sense of the human condition in this life and find a permanent, universal solution. Sanatan Dharma is the official name for the religion and its practices, literally translated - Eternal Religion (the term Hinduism was given by the British).

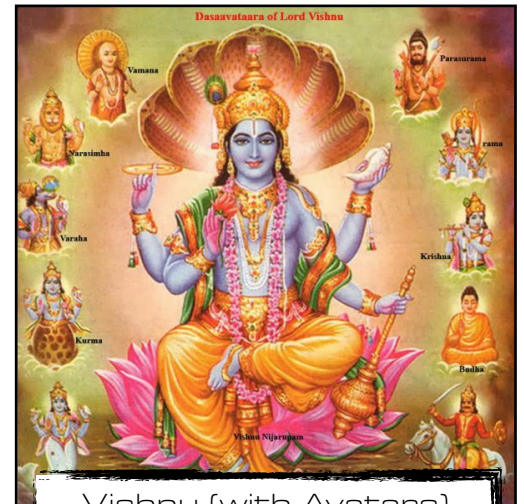
The Supreme Deity. Hinduism believes in one supreme deity, or Deus, that is omniscient, omnipresent, and all loving. The name for the supreme deity is Brahman. The other 33 deus/divas change by region, with over 330 million possible variations of names and avatars, or physical embodiments, of the divine. The most important are as follows:

- The name Brahma is used to refer to his/her role as creator of the universe as the giver of knowledge through the Vedas.
- Vishnu is used to refer to his/her role as the preserver of the universe, sustaining life. When the world becomes too evil, Vishnu takes the form of an avatar, or an iconic human or animal figure, to restore order. One example is the man/avatar Krishna, who taught about selfless actions.
- Shiva is used for the role as the destroyer (death) and renewer (rebirth).
- The Brahman can also be worshipped in a feminine role of Shakti: the great female energy. She is known as Parvati (love), Durga (invincible goddess of victory), or Saraswati (learning and art), and Lakshmi (language and good luck).

Is Hinduism polytheistic? This is a topic of great debate. Hindus believe there is one supreme deus - Brahman - who is the life source for everything. All other deus and divas are simply expressions and forms of understanding aspects of Brahman. However, most academics and test creators classify Hinduism as being polytheistic. With that said, this belief does allow Hinduism to be very flexible. As various religions have entered India, Hindus claim that they are another manifestation of Brahman. For example: to Hindus, Jesus was an avatar of Vishnu, in the same way Krishna came to earth to teach about peace and love.



Brahma

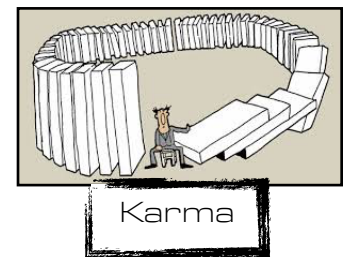


Vishnu (with Avatars)



Shiva

The Purpose of Life. It is believed the Brahman is in all things, and thus is present at all times. Brahman is a part of each person and within their divine soul. The ultimate goal of a Hindu person's life is to have a moment of "God-realization" within themselves. This can be achieved through fulfilling the dharma, or purpose, in life. The Dharma can be discovered and fulfilled through rituals, sacrifices by fire, water ceremonies, songs, meditation, and yoga. Hinduism also promotes kindness and non-violent actions.



Karma. This is the law of cause and effect, action and consequence, where all elements of the universe are intertwined. Any action a person takes causes an effect, which causes another effect... with the cycle repeating itself. The person who took the action will eventually be affected by the actions they initially took. A common karma phrase is: What goes around, comes around.

Cycles of Time and Reincarnation. Hindus also believe that time is circular, going through cycles and patterns which are present in all aspects of life: sun rise and sun set, the water cycle, birth-life-death.

Shiva: Lord of the Dance of life and death

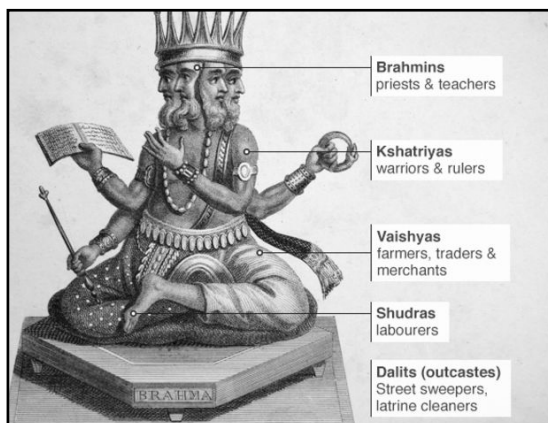


• **Reincarnation.** Hindus believe the human soul, or atman, is eternal and is rooted in Vishnu. When a person dies, the flesh decomposes but the soul moves to a new body; growing and maturing with each life and rebirth. When a person dies, their body is to be cremated, preferably along the Ganges River, and their soul re-manifests.

• **Liberation.** All souls become liberated from the cycle of reincarnation when they achieve oneness with Vishnu. There is no struggle of good versus evil, heaven or hell. Time and life are a series of endless cycles that end with Moksha, or liberation, to unite with Vishnu.

Holy Texts:

- **Vedas.** These four texts were composed in Sanskrit almost 4,000 years ago, and serve as the basis for the principles, practices, chants, and philosophies. There are the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda Atharava Veda, Sama Veda. Before they were written down in Sanskrit, they were passed down through oral tradition.
- **Upanishads.** These texts are considered essential teachings throughout the centuries. The term literally means, "Come here, let me show you something."
- **Epics.** Long stories that help bring the dry, difficult philosophies to life. Helps make the principles of the Vedas and Upanishads accessible to the common person. The most famous are the Ramayan and Mahabharata.
- **Law Books.** Hinduism distinguishes between religious principles and legal authority. The various governments throughout Indian history have had legal Manusmriti.



Varna/Caste System. Until modern times, it was believed that people's spirits are reincarnated into different levels or *castes* of societies. The castes represented a different embodiment of Brahma in society. *These castes were hereditary, making a person bound to their parent's fate.* Each caste had a job of function in society and it was their dharma, or duty to full that job. By fulfilling the Dharma, a person could reincarnate into a higher caste in the next life, moving themselves towards Moksha.

B. East Asian Religions

East Asian Traditional Religion

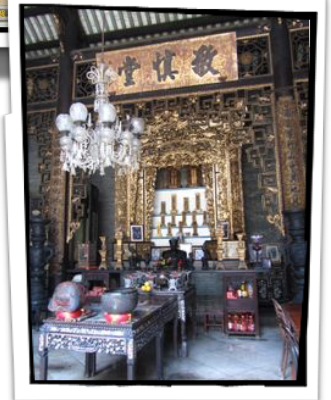
The oldest religious practices in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam were the Traditional or Folk Religions of Ancestor cult worship and animism. The *veneration of ancestors* believes that when a person dies, their spirit either stays in the grave or ascends to paradise. It was the job of the living to pray and offer sacrifices. The religion also promoted *animism*, the belief that all things in nature have a living spirit. Temples and shrines are distributed across East Asia, dating back thousands of years.

Confucianism

Around 500 BCE, a man named Confucius produced a seminal work that would shape Chinese culture and religion for the next 2000+ years. Confucius is the western name for the man known in China as Kong Zhongni. Confucius's sayings were compiled into a book titled *The Analects*, which provided the legal, ethical, and social framework for Chinese society until 1900 CE. Some key Confucian thoughts and principles are:

- Society is built on *five constant virtues*:

- ♣ Benevolence (love and compassion)
- ♣ Righteousness (self restraint and right living),
- ♣ Propriety (obedience and loyalty),
- ♣ Knowledge (gaining wisdom), and
- ♣ Fidelity (honesty). Everyone from the Emperor to the peasant must seek to live these five virtues to have a high functioning society.



- The *family* is of high importance for a stable society with personal duties to family coming before duties to the state. Parents should be obeyed and cared for in life and venerated/worshiped when they are dead (*Filial Piety*).

- Society functions best when *people obey their role* in their key relationships. The Emperor is the father to the nation and must be obeyed. Wives obey the husbands. Children obey their parents. The younger brother obeys older brothers. People should strive to do unto others as they would have done unto themselves.

- *Education* is critical. People are a constant work in progress and can always be improved. Government officials should be chosen from the best educated.

- *Harmony* was most desired: the Golden middle. Too much or too little was the cause for problems.

While intended to be a moral and political framework for an ideal society, Confucianism is viewed as an official religion in South Korea and Indonesia.

Taoism

Around 500 BCE, Lao Tzu published his book, *Tao Te Ching*, outlining the basic principles and philosophies of Taoism (also pronounced Daoism). As Confucius was promoting the rules, virtues, and social structures needed for a functioning society, Lao Tzu was formalizing the ancient oral traditions of a free-flowing animist path that was

antithetical to Confucius's rigidity. Like many eastern religions and philosophies, there are many regional variations of Taoism, but there are a few common themes:

- *The Tao is "The Way."* It is the energy flow of the universe. Everything and everyone is a part of the flow of energy. If life is a river, a person is not on the river bank watching, but instead is a part of the river, caught up in the flow. A person's purpose in life is to find *The Way*, to find *The Path* of the Tao.
- To follow the flow of the Tao, live simply. Life is about balance and flow. Too many possessions will weigh a person down and not allow them to follow the flow. The concept of *Feng Shui* is to find the right balance and flow of buildings and possessions; putting them in harmony with energy and nature. This is symbolized by the Yin-Yang, by balance and harmony. There are polarities in the universe: dark and light, women and men, earth and sky. An imbalance of either would cause destruction. This is summarized in statements like: *Less is More*.
- To follow the Tao, live spontaneously. Live in the moment, be in moment, react to the moment. Don't dwell on the past or the future. These things cannot be changed or influenced. All that a person can do is be here, in the moment, making the choices that are before them. To be focused on what is ahead or what was behind is to go against the flow of the Tao in the now. This is summarized in statements like: *Every journey begins with a single step*.
- There are three energies or the Three Treasures of Taoism: Compassion, Charity, and Humility.
- Taoism is not exclusive but INCLUSIVE. From a Taoist perspective, it is possible to be Taoist AND Hindu, Taoist AND Buddhist, Taoist AND Christian, Taoist AND Atheist.
- Taoism is tied to the following activities: Tai Chi, Meditation, and Yoga.

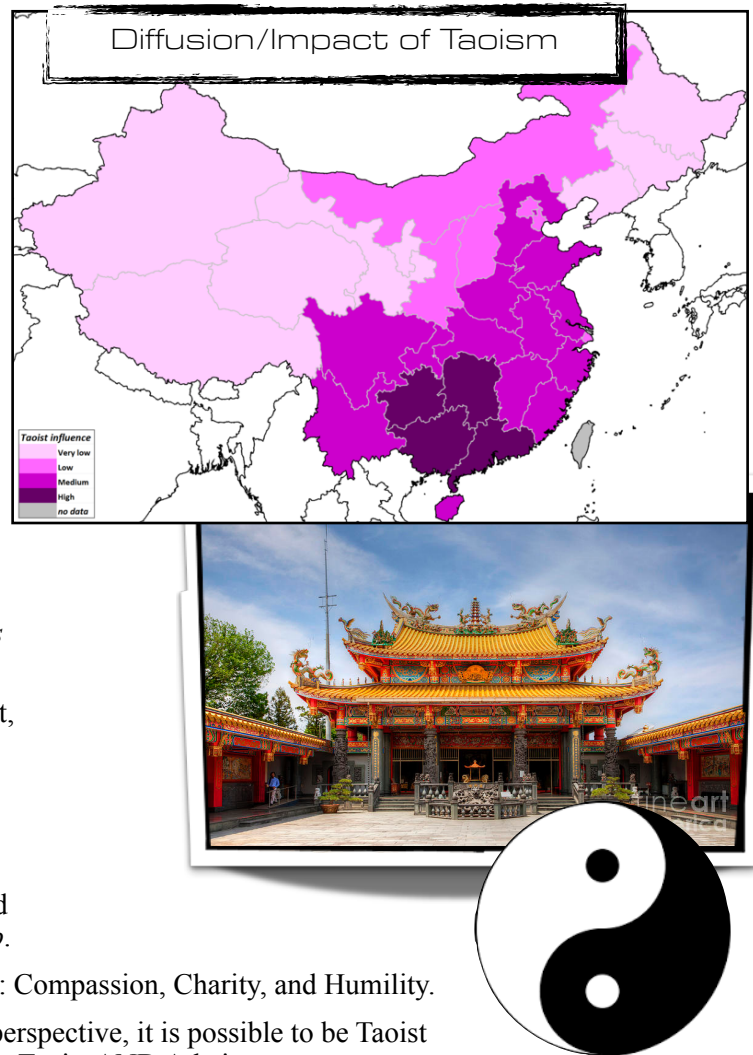
After Lao Tzu's initial book was printed, he rode through Southern China teaching and diffusing these core ideas. Taoism contagiously diffused over centuries through trade and migration to Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia .

C. Buddhism

The Beginnings of the Buddha

By 660 BCE, South and Southeast Asia were under the heavy influence of Hinduism. Indian society was the center of global trade, with one-third of the world's wealth residing in India. However, the *caste system* had created a large income inequality gap with upper castes having a high quality of life while lower castes experienced extreme poverty and a low quality of life.

Siddhartha Gautama was born as a regional prince in Lumbini, Nepal. Legend holds that his parents had a dream that Siddhartha would become a great leader: if he stayed at home, he would become a great political leader; if he travelled he would become a spiritual leader. His father wanted Siddhartha to become a great king or emperor, so he kept the boy at home. Any available pleasure provided for him, any human desire was provided for.



When Siddhartha was 29, he snuck out of the house four times. The first time, he encountered an old man. The second time, a sick man. The third time, a dead body. The fourth time, an impoverished man, begging for money, but who had a smile on his face and was happy. These were Siddhartha's first experiences with the outside world and his first contact with pain, misery, or death. He was also perplexed at how the impoverished man could find happiness in his current condition of suffering. Siddhartha concluded that life was full of misery and suffering, but people could still find their own happiness. He left all his worldly possessions and embarked on a quest to find the answer of how to achieve happiness in the midst of misery. Siddhartha's quest led to his transformation to the "Enlightened Buddha" through fasting and meditation. As the Buddha, he composed over 84,000 teachings that serve as the primary literature and teachings of his followers to this day.



Basic Beliefs

Suffering and self discovery are at the core of Buddhist teachings. Siddhartha was raised as a Hindu and therefore his teachings have strong connections to Hindu principles. Many Hindu principles stimulus-diffused into his Buddhist teachings: Dharma (a divine purpose in life), Karma (cause and effect), Circular Time, and Reincarnation. However, Siddhartha made a number of changes to these old traditions. For example: *Buddhism does not have a set of deities or supernatural figures*. Instead, it is a focus on the individual and the actions they can take to improve their own situation to achieve nirvana, or enlightened paradise. There is universal equality in Buddhism - no caste system, no good vs evil. Buddhist reincarnation believes followers can reincarnate as something not human - either as a supernatural being or as a beast or insect. At its core, Buddhism is an egalitarian quest of each follower to take action on their own destiny.

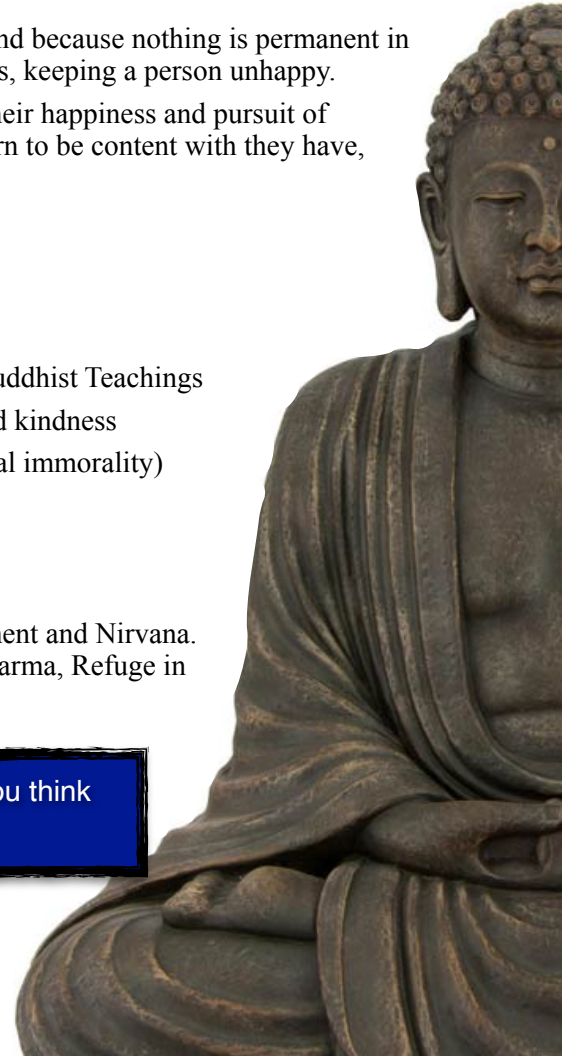
Four Noble Truths. At the core of Buddha's teachings are the Four Noble Truths:

- 1) *Dukkha*: Life is full of suffering and misery.
- 2) *Samudaya*: This suffering is created by a person's wants and desires, and because nothing is permanent in life, this causes a person to have an endless stream of wants and desires, keeping a person unhappy.
- 3) *Nirodha*: Wanting creates bad karma, keeping a person trapped from their happiness and pursuit of nirvana. A person needs to live in simplicity, eliminate their wants, learn to be content with they have, and begin to pursue enlightenment.
- 4) *Magga*. Following the eight fold path leads to enlightenment.

The Eight Fold Path.

- 1) Right Understanding: Mentally understand the 4 Noble Truths
- 2) Right Thought: Determination to control thoughts, directed towards Buddhist Teachings
- 3) Right Speech: Avoid lying, gossip and hurtful words. Promote love and kindness
- 4) Right Conduct: Avoid hurtful actions (stealing, hurting, violence, sexual immorality)
- 5) Right Livelihood: Avoid jobs that hurt animals or other people
- 6) Right Mental Attitude: Avoid negative thoughts (anger, jealousy)
- 7) Right Mindfulness: Understand mental, emotional states
- 8) Right Concentration: Control the mind to meditate towards enlightenment and Nirvana. Pray through the Three Jewels - Refuge in Buddha, Refuge in your Dharma, Refuge in the Buddhist community.

APPLICATION. How are the Asian Religions similar? Why do you think China or India did not try to colonize the world?

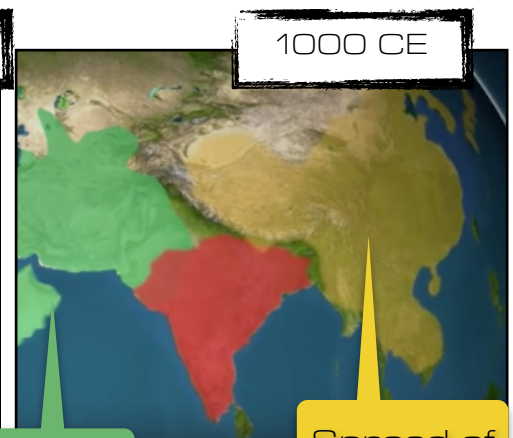
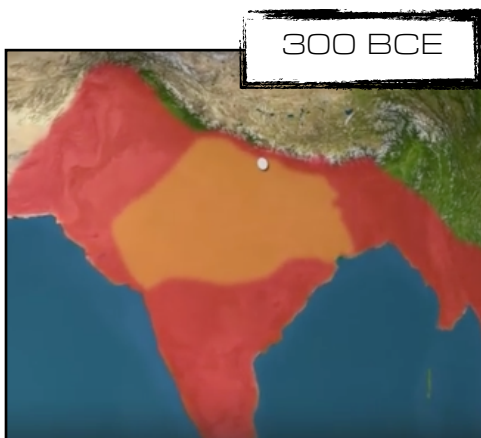


Diffusion

After Siddhartha Guatama died, Buddhist followers divided into two groups and began to spread his teachings. Unable to agree on a path forward, two divisions of Buddhism formed: Theravada and Mahayana. The Hinayana believed in holding strictly to Siddhartha's teachings and austere ways of life. This form of Buddhism spread south and east to Burma, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. Mahayana expanded upon Siddhartha's original canon, adding practices and traditions not founded by the Buddha in Nepal. Mahayana Buddhism diffused into China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia.

Missionaries for both Theravada and Mahayana utilized the Silk Road and overseas trade routes to evangelize and contagiously diffuse Buddhist teachings and practices. Monks and missionaries established temples and monasteries throughout south and east Asia, translating texts into local languages and teaching the people the 4 Noble Truths and 8 Fold Path. Buddhism's teachings were attractive to poor workers and farmers in India who were stuck in the lowest caste, known as the untouchables, because it offered equality and the chance for nirvana to all. In China and Japan, Buddhist teachings resonated and aligned well with Taoist, Confucian, and Shinto principles. Since these beliefs are inclusive instead of exclusive, people were able to add Buddhism into their society without having to give up their previous traditions, beliefs, or practices.

However, with increased interaction with other societies, Buddhism began to undergo changes in its beliefs and principles. Mahayana believed in the possibility of many Buddhas who could teach and add doctrines to the faith. Some Buddhists claim Jesus was a reincarnated Buddha, and that he visited India and Tibet after the crucifixion. One of the new teachings to be included was the requirement of silk as a part of religious ceremonies. The Buddha named Amitabha added the belief in a pure Buddhist paradise called the Land of Amitabha, where people who claim belief and faith in the leader Amitabha can be saved into paradise. Those who do not claim belief in Amitabha will go to a fiery hell.



D. Invasions and Change

Muslim Invasion

After the birth of Islam in 600 CE, there were repeated conflicts between Muslims and Hindus. Between 1000-1020 CE, there were over 20 invasion attempts from Afghanistan into Northern India. Between 1000-1100 CE an estimated 20 million Hindus died in warfare with the Muslims, destroying around 10% of the population and sending India into economic decline. In 1300 the Muslims established a Sultanate in Northern India. Between 1600-1700, the Sultanate expanded into the Mughal Empire and across India. By the 1800s, Islamic rule was beginning to wane as the Mughal empire fragmented into four kingdoms.

The Muslim invasions had a profound effect on the region. First, there was a massive loss of population followed by economic difficulties. Some sources claim as many as 400 million Hindus were killed under Muslim conquest and rule. Second, there was an impact on the language, culture, and landscape. Muslim mosques and monuments were built across the Indus and Ganges River Valleys, including the Taj Mahal. Muslim art and architecture amalgamated with Hindu architectural styles. Meanwhile, across India, hundreds of Hindu temples and sacred sites were destroyed. Attempts were made to force assimilate Hindus to Islam, and those who refused had to pay a heavy tax.

Several shifts and changes were also noted in Hindu teachings under Muslim rule. First, Muslim culture changed from the process of transculturation of Hindu practices, like early marriage for daughters and ceremonies surrounding marriage and death. Next, Islamic science and knowledge blended with Hindu knowledge and advancements. Third,

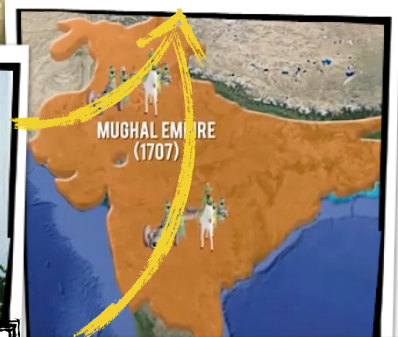
Muslim invasions unified the Hindus in the southern Hindu kingdom. Great temples, songs and festivals were created and imparted to use Hinduism as a *centripetal* (or unifying) force to try to overcome their regional diversity to unify themselves and repel the Muslims. As a result, the Hindus became less tolerant, had harsh conflicts with Buddhists in India, forcing Buddhist believers to either migrate or assimilate the sub-continent.

Meanwhile, Islamic influence also reached China during this era. Islamic missionaries first reached China in the late 600s, with a gradual diffusion of Muslims into China as traders and merchants through 1200 CE. During the Mongol rule of China, Muslims were force-migrated from the Middle East into Western China to take government posts. By 1400, Muslims were heavily integrated into Chinese culture and practices. When China rebelled against the Mongols, the army was led by a Muslim. The great navy admiral and merchant Zheng He was Muslim. Mosques were built in major Chinese cities, with a syncretism of Chinese and Muslim architecture. Muslims played key government and military roles (and were leaders in key rebellions) in China until the Communist take over in the 1940s.

Islamic Rule in India



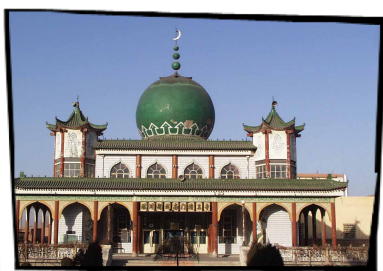
Grand Mosque in Delhi



Taj Mahal (Outside, Inside)



1800s:
Fragmented
Kingdoms



Islamic Mosques in
China



European Exploration and British Invasion

While the Hindus and Muslims were battling for political and cultural supremacy of India, a migration began that would shape the future of the sub-continent. Between 1500-1700 CE, Portuguese, French, and British merchants setup trading posts along the Indian coasts and began spreading Catholic and Baptist versions of Christianity. By politically manipulating the tense situation between the Muslims and Hindus and by utilizing military forces, the British East India Company was able to entrench itself in Indian culture via its fortified trading posts all around India.

British control of India correlated with the development of the Industrial Revolution, which increased British demand for cheap raw natural resources while also imposing a new tax system. This resulted the starvation, bankruptcy, and enslavement of millions of Indians by the British. However, because the British needed to transport Indian raw materials to factories on British soil, and then return the finished goods back to India to sell, it required the British to invest into India's transportation and agriculture infrastructures. The need for trained workers in India prompted the British to setup schools, where Indian students received a British education, learning English, scientific principles, and Christian values.



British rule created other changes within Indian Society and Hindu values:

- **Women's Rights.** India's women received greater respect as wives of British colonists, partly because the widows of British colonists could keep the land and wealth of their husbands. This started the process of creating an independent middle-to-upper class of women who had wealth and opportunity.
- **Conversions to Christianity.** Many in the lower-castes converted to Christianity in hopes to be able to move up in society, as well as to have access to church-led services like soup-kitchens. Others converted to be able to a part of the British-run government or to marry British businessmen. This showed an evolution in Indian values - showing less care for reincarnation and moksha, and more care for personal gain in this life. These conversions deeply infused Western ideals into Hindu society, preparing the Indian Christians to take advantage of British capitalist business practices.
- **Churches in India.** As with the Muslim invasion, the British infusion of Christianity changed the physical landscape across India with Anglican Churches in Northern and Southern India. Churches have also setup thousands of educational and medical facilities in India's urban centers.

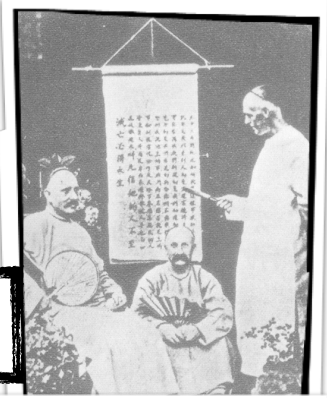


Anglican Churches in India

Meanwhile in East Asia, the European presence was also causing cultural and religious change. Europeans had used a combination of missionaries and militaries to establish colonies and trading posts throughout east and Southeast Asia. The British used drugs and war to open China to trade and commerce. The USA used industrial weapons to convince

Japan into trade deals as well. This opened the door for Christianity to more fully infiltrate East Asian societies. Christian missionaries came flooding in, helping setup churches, education centers, hospitals and orphanages. As they sought to convert and influence the local communities, they found many Taoists and Buddhists willing to accept Christianity. However, soon after the conversion, the missionaries would find their recent converts offering sacrifices to ancestors. The missionaries did not understand that Chinese religions were inclusive and allowed for the addition of multiple faiths, a sharp contrast to Christianity itself.

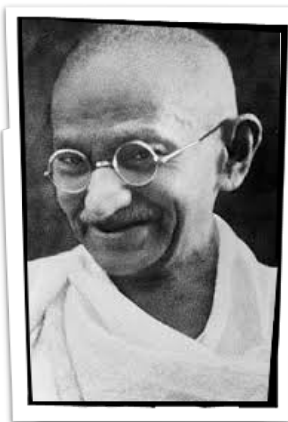
Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Many members of traditional Chinese religions found themselves unemployed and watching Protestant and Catholic Christianity infiltrate their once protected society. In 1895, in order to cleanse Chinese lands from all foreign spiritual influences, the Boxer Rebellion was led by a Chinese traditionalist who felt spiritually empowered by their ancestors to be bullet proof from Western guns. They attacked churches and punished Chinese Christian converts. The rebellion was quickly squashed, marking a key turning point for Chinese spirituality. For the next 30 years, Christianity diffused throughout China, with new churches being constructed and spirituality spread by native Chinese individuals. Similar patterns of behavior were witnessed in Japan and in the Philippines.



Missionaries Teaching

Boxer Rebellion

Cleansing China from Christianity



E. Eastern Religions in Modernity

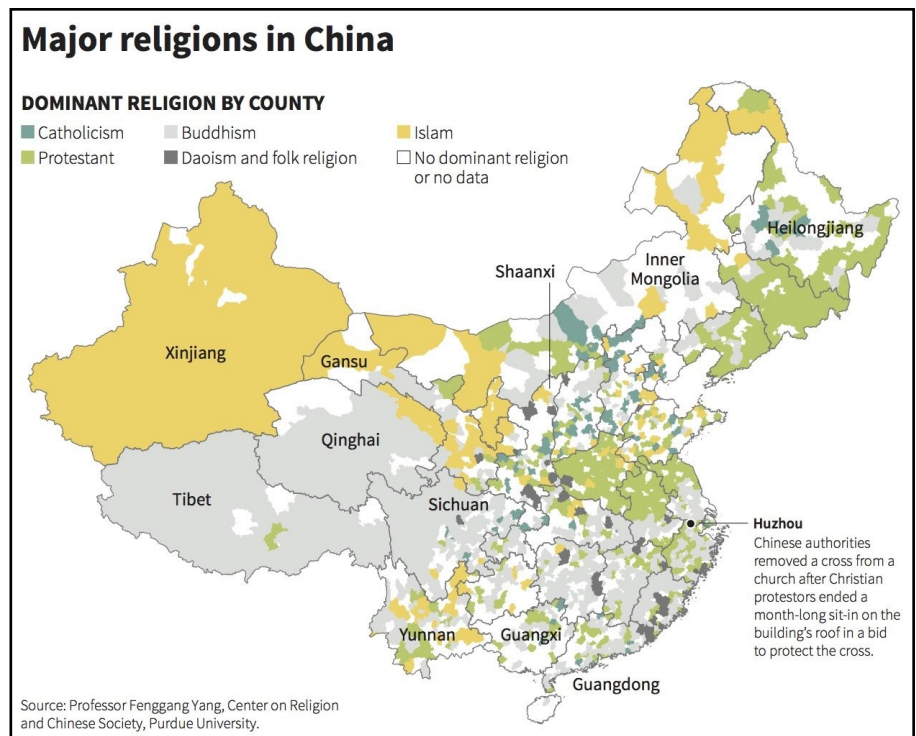
After WWI and WWII, Europe was too bankrupt to control its colonies and promote western ideals. This resulted in a few important political and religious movements:

- **Partition of India.** British rule of India was ending, thanks in part to non-violent protests led by a Jainist named Mahatma Gandhi. India had been ruled over for 700 years by the Muslims and the British, with strong populations of both Muslims, Hindus, and Christians diffused throughout the country. Before giving up control, the British superimposed new country boundaries onto Southern Asia which formally recognized the independence of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh (formerly known as West Pakistan). Muslim majorities resided in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Bhutan remains primarily Buddhist. Hindu majorities resided in India and Nepal, with India hosting a 12% Muslim enclave and 2% Christian enclave.

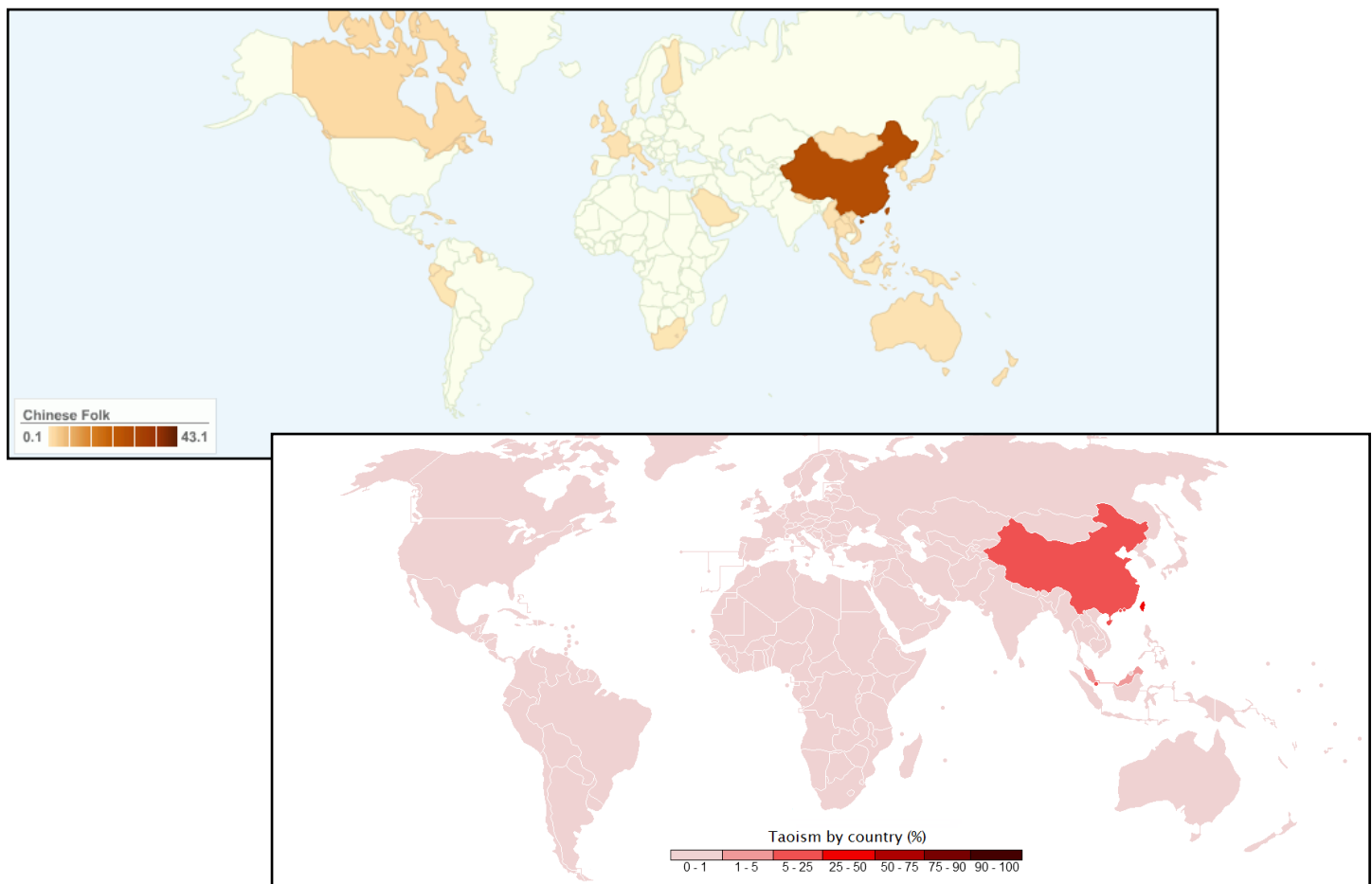


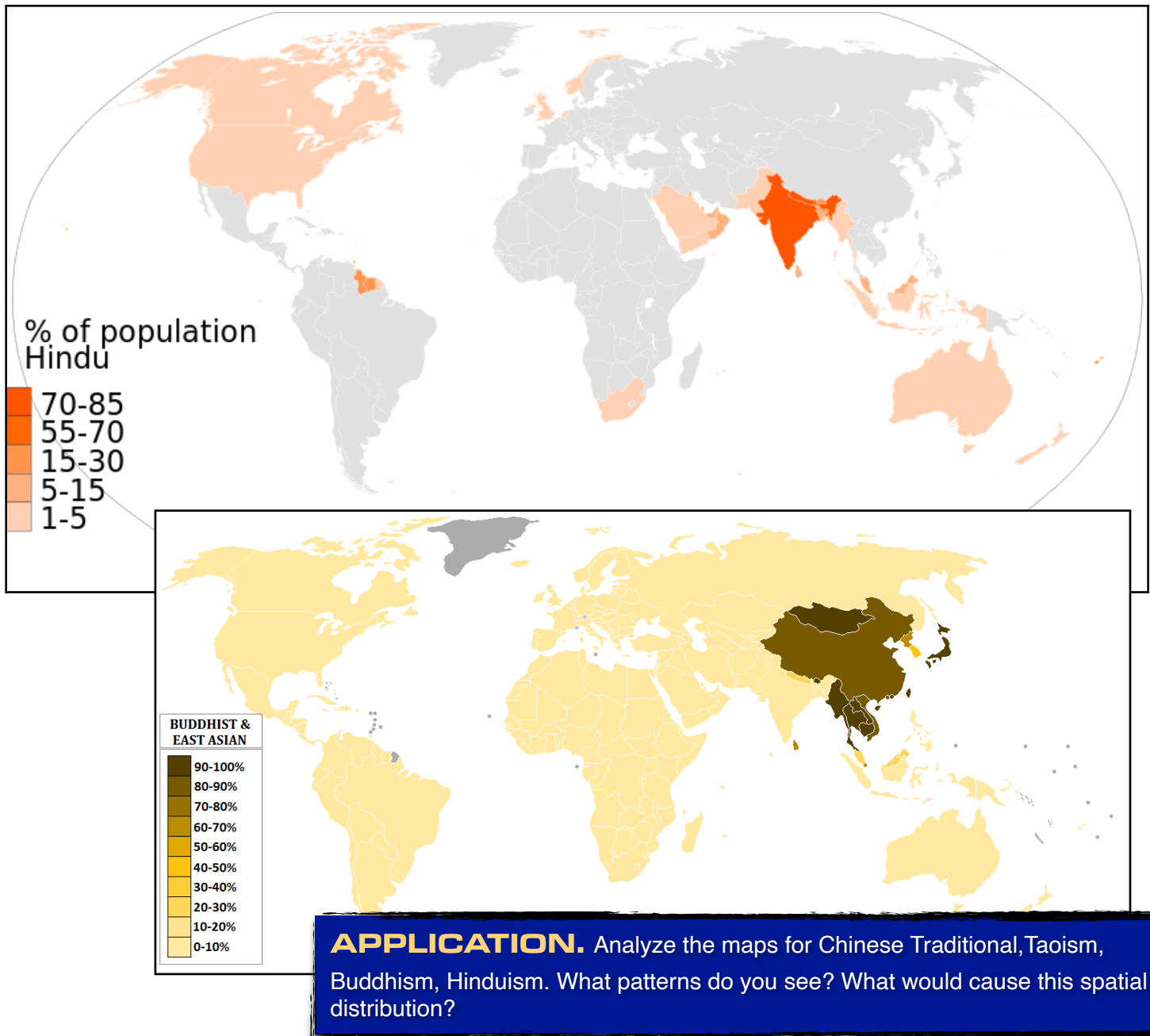
- Chinese Communism.** During WWII, the communist movement rose to power in China. As a result, Mao Zedong attempted to convert China to atheism by removing all freedom of religious practice. During the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward in the 1960s and 1970s, all religions faced persecution. Taoist shrines, Islamic Mosques, Catholic Cathedrals, and Buddhist Pagodas were torn down. Any religious book was burned. All religions became secretive. The Dali Lama, head of the Tibetan Buddhists, was forced to flee because his presence as a religious figure was considered a threat to Chinese national security.

While China has loosened its control of the economy and sought to advance society, it still places tight controls on religious practices.



- Modern Distributions.** The hearth regions of Eastern Religions have experienced tremendous development during the past 70 years. As a result, both the population size and accessible wealth have increased. This has allowed for more individuals of Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions to migrate in pursuit of economic and educational opportunities. Below are the maps of the current distributions of these faiths.





F. Other Eastern Religions - Summaries

The previous sections have focused on the most populous religions of East Asia. However, there are a couple of other religions of importance that should be mentioned:

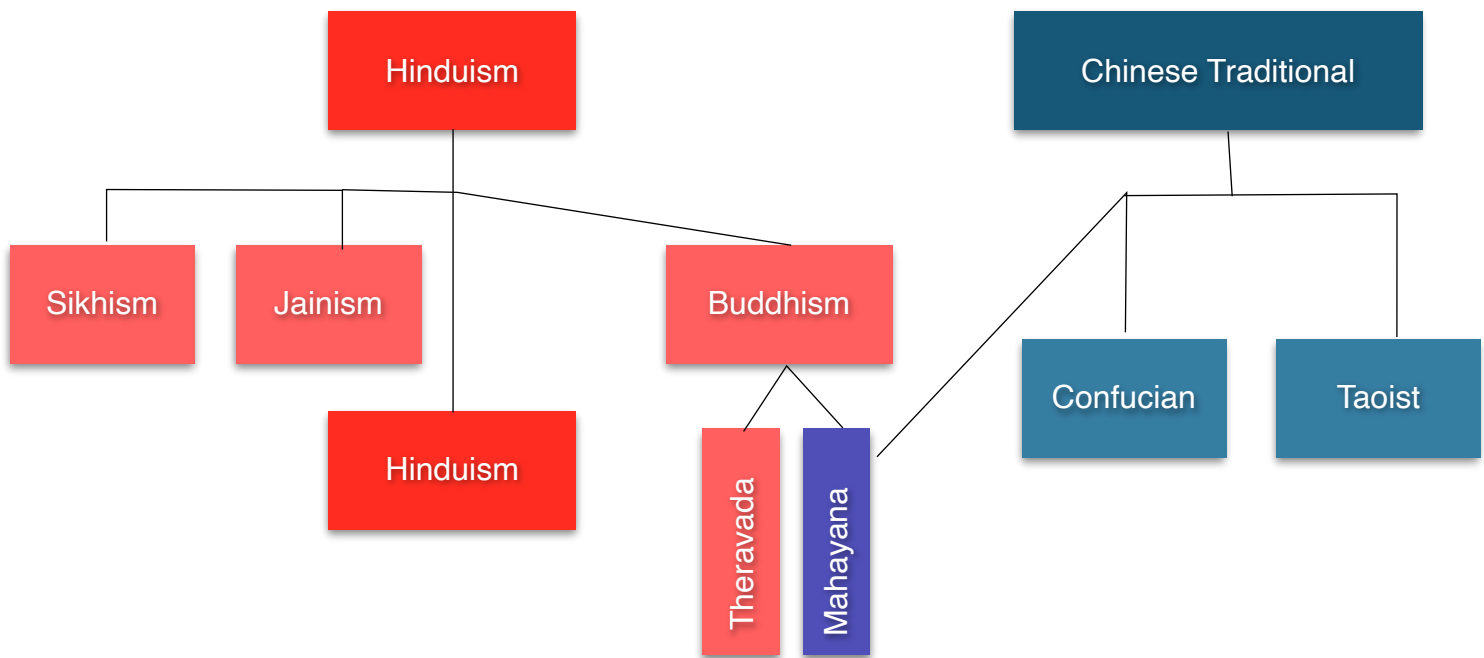
Jainism. Founded by Lord Mahavira in Patna, India (near Nepal) around 600 BCE, Jainism is a member of the Hinduism/Dharma religious family. Jainism promotes the dharma-karma-cyclical time-reincarnation view of the world. Jainism holds the belief that everything has life and should be treated well. They promote a simple, austere life defined by being vegetarian and non-violent (even to the point of not killing bugs).

Sikhism. Founded in the 1500s by Guru Nanak in the Punjab region of modern Pakistan. Sikhism is monotheistic and rather than focusing on rituals, it stresses good actions, generosity, and fair treatment of others. Sikhism shares cultural traits of both Hinduism and Islam. There are 20 million Sikhs in the world.

Shinto. Founded in Japan, Shinto worships local spiritual beings at shrines, with no major deities to worship. Members must be ethnic Japanese.

Baha'i. Founded in Iran in 1863 by The Bab, who believed himself to be the next prophet/messenger after Muhammad and Jesus Christ. Believes ALL religions are true or have truths about Allah. Promotes unity of all religions.

East Asian Faiths - Chart



G. Agnosticism and Atheism

History

The history of Atheistic and Agnostic world views begins with Christianity. Modern science began in Europe in the 1600s with the Scientific Revolution in the Catholic Countries. The scientists were Christians who believed that Yahweh created the world in six days and then was finished. Thus, if Yahweh is finished creating, there must be fixed rules that govern the universe. Through the use of the human mind (logic and reason) humans could study the universe and understand (and manipulate) its laws. In doing so, a person could understand more about Yahweh through his creation.

Early scientific results were met with mixed responses from the church. Many of the findings contradicted church teachings and traditions. Faced with this conflict, the Roman Catholic Church started an *inquisition*, imprisoning and excommunicating anyone who questioned the churches teachings, no matter the evidence. At the same time as these scientific discoveries, the Protestant Reformation was taking place. Founded in questioning authority and tradition, Protestant churches became havens where scientists could pursue their studies without fear of retribution. With this intellectual safety, the number of scientific discoveries exploded in Protestant England, the Netherlands (Dutch), Germany, and parts of France; then diffusing rapidly out to colonies in the Americas. These scientific discoveries fueled France and England's success in the Age of Exploration and helped set the stage for Industrialization.

In the late 1700s, French and English philosophers began to use the power of human reason and scientific inquiry to examine humanity and its societies. What is the best form of government? What is the best form of art and music? What is the role of family? Kings? The church?... The existence of the god(s) themselves? The process that followed created a revolutionary body of work referred to as the *European Enlightenment*. Frenchman Bernard de Fontanelle said this new century "will become more enlightened day by day, so that all previous centuries will be lost in darkness by comparison."

The intellectual results of the European Enlightenment became important building blocks of Western Culture:

- *All men are equal*
- *Every man has the right to life, liberty, and property*
- *Freedom of speech, of press, and of religion*
- *Separation of religion and politics*
- *Separation of powers, with checks and balances*
- *Government run by the people, not divine king(s).*

As scientists discovered more about nature, they began to question the role of Yahweh. If there are all these laws that govern the universe with a strong connection to cause-and-effect... What is the role of Yahweh? The first answer to come forth was the deist or *agnostic* view: a deity like Yahweh created the world and everything in it and is now sitting back watching his creation. He does not care and will not interfere with the daily affairs of humanity. Writers like David Hume went a step further to pose the question: What if there are no gods or anything supernatural at all? What if we are just here on earth, with just our logic and reason, to live and figure out life as best we can?

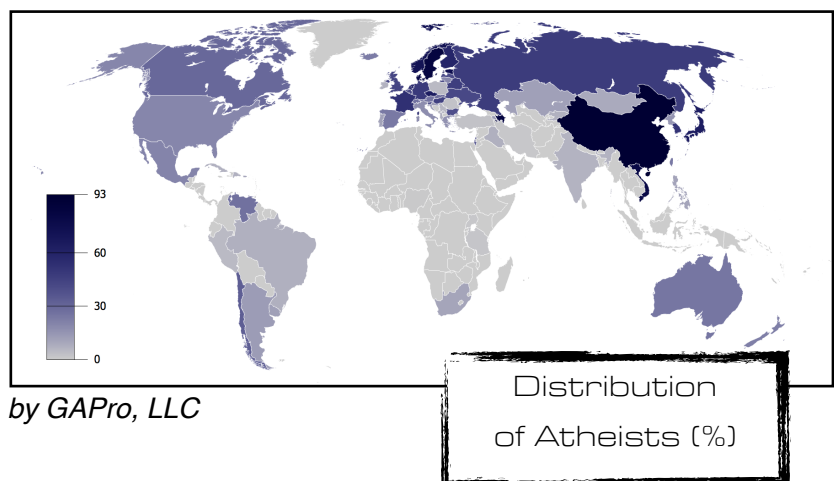
The 1800s saw a series of progressive developments within atheism. First, in 1859, Charles Darwin published the book, *On the Origin of Species*, and hypothesized that life forms change and evolve over time. This change is driven by natural selection: a process where the animals best suited to their environment survive to pass on their genetic information to their offspring. Those less suited die and do not pass on their genetic information. Darwin extrapolated this premise back to the beginning of life: that life changed or evolved over time in response to the changing environment; from simple life forms to the modern version of humanity today. This allowed atheists to explain the origins of life and the universe without a deity.

As science and technology exploded, people began to further question religion. The discovery of atoms, DNA, archeology, and deep space astronomy fueled further speculation. Historians also explored archeological sites, uncovered ruins, translated ancient documents, and shared information around the world. Many scholars viewed their findings as contradicting the "events" found in the major religious texts. From their exploration of atomic particles to astronomy to digging into the archeological past, atheists developed the following framework:

- **Natural Explanations.** Everything that takes place in life is explainable through the laws and processes of nature. Knowledge can be gained through evidence-based research. While everything that happens in life is not currently understood, progress is made every year to grow this knowledge and understanding.
- **Nothing Supernatural.** In their exploration of the natural world, atheists have not found anything they think is verifiable evidence of anything supernatural (gods, angels, spirits, forces, demons, etc). Because supernatural events and beings break the laws of nature with their miraculous actions and behaviors, atheists require extraordinary evidence to support the extraordinary claims that deities or supernatural phenomena exist. Atheists reject the evidence put forward by any and all religious systems, viewing it as insufficient, contradictory, and/or in direct conflict with well established scientific evidence-based studies.

Atheist's views found a home in Communism. Communism promotes that humans must do what is best for themselves, and when people work together for each other, we all achieve more. We must come up with a society that is best for us, with the laws and values we want. Communism promotes an atheist world view, societies based on science, human ingenuity and cooperation. The USSR and China adopted communism in the 1920s-1940s, and worked hard to suppressed all religious movements in their empires. It is important to note however, that while Communism advocates for a belief in atheism, atheism does not require or advocate for a belief in Communism.

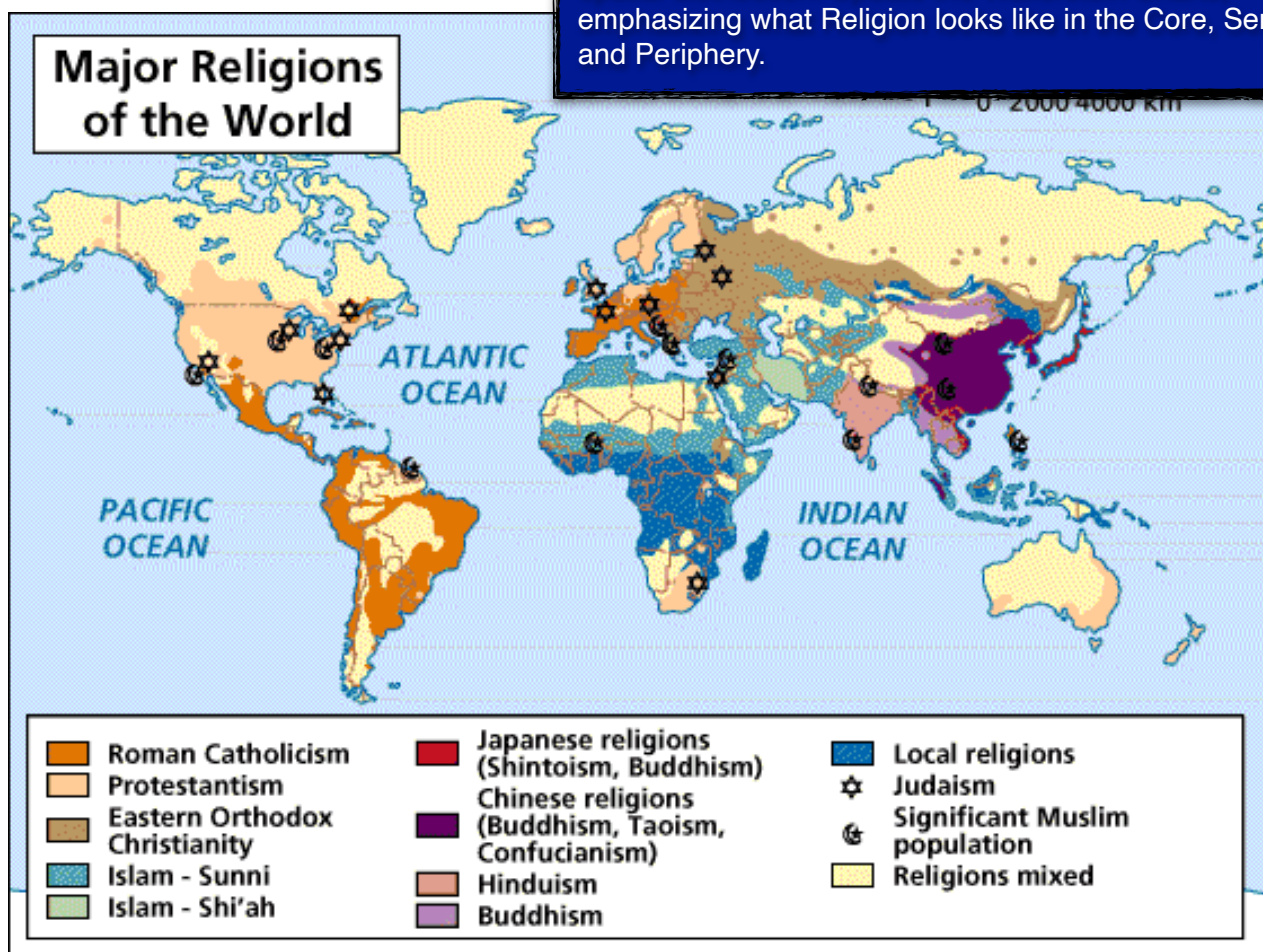
In modern times, there is a movement in the MDCs away from all religion. One of the fastest growing "religious" movements is toward the agnostic category: "Nones" - non-affiliated with any supernatural or spiritual practice in any way. It is not that they are against religion, their advanced academic upbringing has led them to feel they do not need it and do not desire to put anything religious in its place. In Western Europe, France and the Scandinavian societies have 90% of their population as "Atheists" or agnostic "Nones." In the USA, 23% of the overall population and 35% of Millennial fit the description of "Nones." With further technological advances, there is a further trend down this path. Many agnostics and atheists support a belief system know as *Humanism*, which proposes that all people can behave in a responsible way, not out of fear of punishment or because of the possibility of heaven, but because all people deserve to be treated with mutual respect, kindness, equality, and fairness.



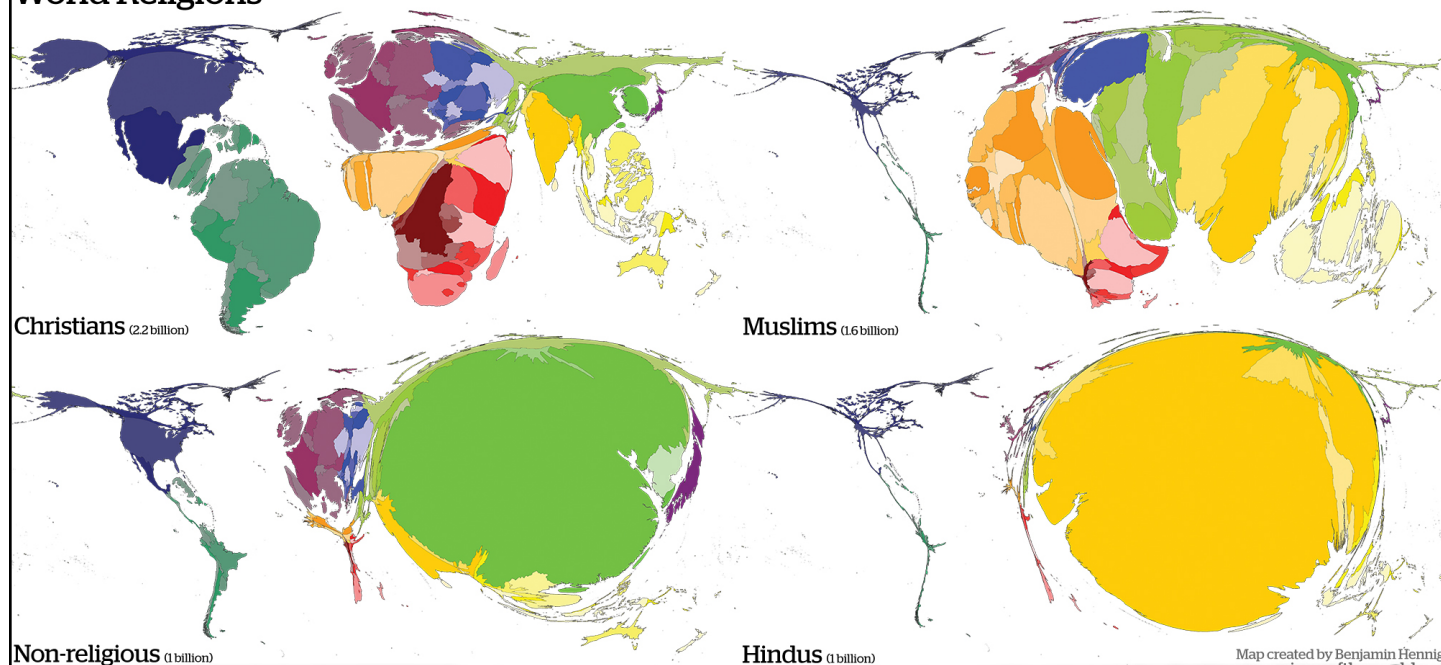
Summary: World Religion Maps

APPLICATION. Analyze the following maps.

Explain how each religion has achieved its current spatial distribution. Update the Wallerstein Charts, emphasizing what Religion looks like in the Core, Semi, and Periphery.



World Religions



APPLICATION: THE JESUS QUESTION. The figure of Jesus appears in every major world religion, being the only spiritual figure to be incorporated into each faith. What would explain this phenomena?

Cultural Snapshots: Hinduism

Icons

Sound made from deep meditation, like the vibration of the earth

Holy Cities & Buildings



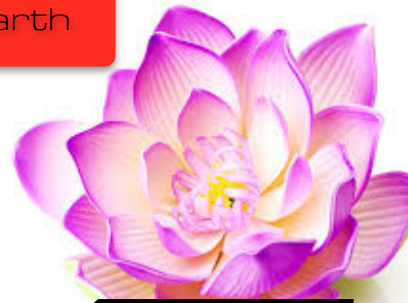
Temple - Kashi Vashwanath (India)



Aum



Swastika (Good Luck)



Lotus Flowers

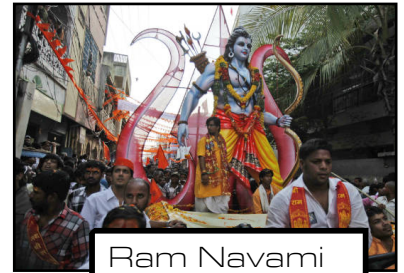
Festivals



Temple - Angkor Wat (Cambodia)



Holi



Ram Navami



Temple - Sri Ranganathaswamy (India)

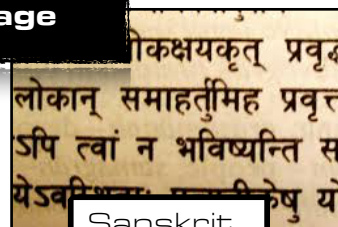


Diwali



Cremation

Language



Sanskrit

हिन्दी

Hindi

Festivals

- Diwali (Festival of Lights)
- Makar Sankranti (Zodiac Sign of Makar - Celebrates with flying Kites)
- Maha Shivaratri (Night Festival of Shiva)
- Holi (Festival of Colors)
- Ram Navami (Festival of Fruits and Flowers)

USA Landscape



Temple in California

Cultural Snapshots: Buddhism

Holy Cities & Buildings

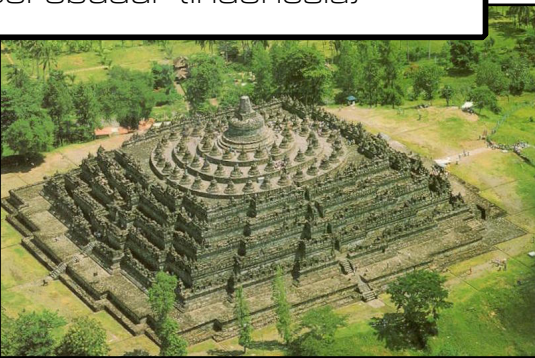
Temple in Tibet



Pagoda in China



Borobudur (Indonesia)



Boudhanath - The Stupa in Nepal



Icons



Prayer Wheel



Eternal Knot



Enlightened Buddha



Dharma Wheel



Giant Buddha Statues



USA Landscape



Temple in Houston

Languages

ཏུ་བདག་ནི་སྐུ་བས་སྤུ་མཆི།

Tibetan

अपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनी

Sanskrit

ကာကတ္တိကာဝိဇ္ဇာတိ။ ဘိဇ္ဇေကဇ္ဇိဝိဇ္ဇာ
ဘိဇ္ဇေဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာ
ဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာဘိဇ္ဇာ

Pali

Festivals

- Vesak (Buddha's Birthday)
- Magna Puja (Full Moon - Important in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia)
- Ashalha Puja (Celebrates Buddha's first teaching)
- Uposatha (Celebrates the moon cycles)
- Kathina Ceremony (New Robe)