

Religions of 2025 America

Chester ARP Fall 2025

Hinduism



Hinduism

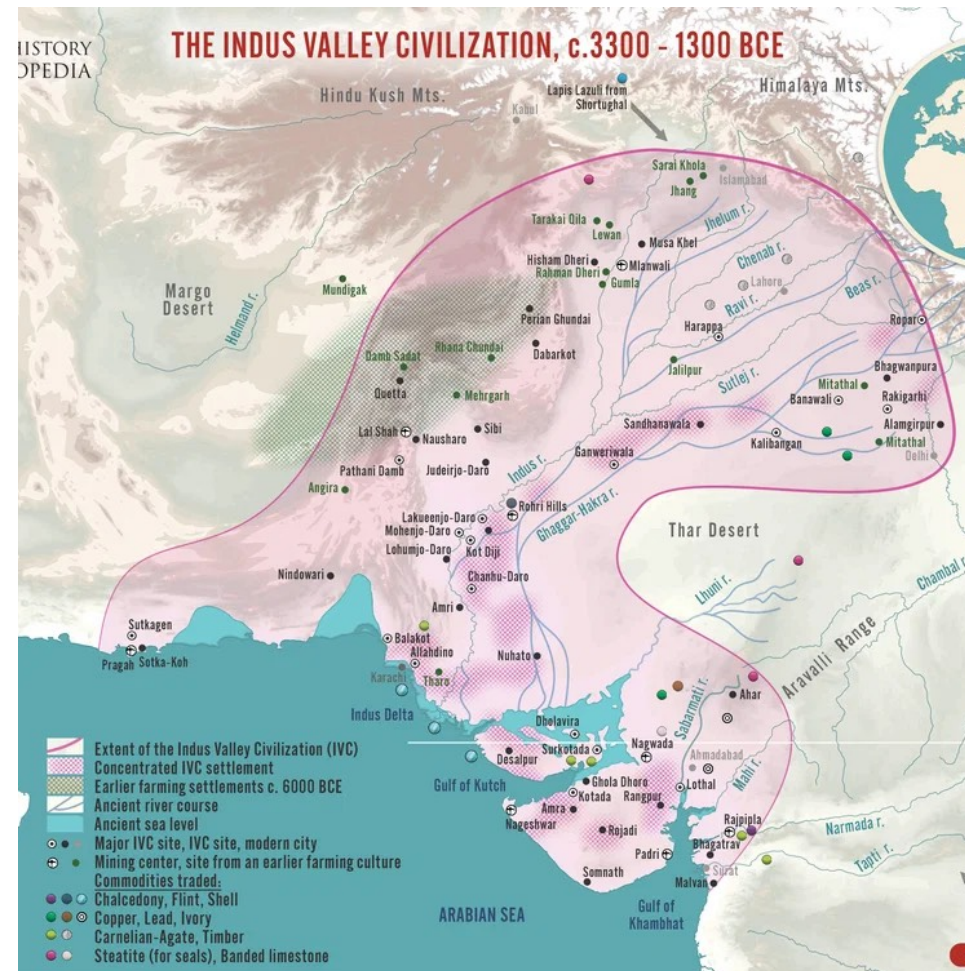
- Hinduism is the first of the world's major religions that we are going to study in this series.
- There are approximately 1.2 billion Hindus worldwide, with 95% living in India.
 - Compare that with 2.6 billion Christians and 2.25 Muslims worldwide.
 - Hinduism is the world's 3rd largest religion.

Hinduism

- Like Judaism and Buddhism, Hinduism is an ancient religion.
- It is probably the most complex religion of the ancient world, given that it has no single founder, no fixed starting date, and no single creed.
- It evolved over thousands of years from diverse cultural and spiritual roots in the Indian subcontinent.

Hinduism

- The earliest evidence of religious practices in India comes from the Indus Valley Civilization (modern-day Pakistan and northwest India) — (2500-1500 BC).
- Indo-Aryan peoples from South Asia (modern Afghanistan) migrated to the region and brought the Sanskrit language with them in approximately 1500 BC.
- They practiced a polytheistic and ritual-centered religion, focusing on nature gods representing storm, fire, and cosmic order (1500-600 BC).



Hinduism

- The largely external, ritualistic religion developed an internal component between 800 and 400 BC.
- As a result, the religion increasingly came to be defined as inner realization rather than outer ritual.
- During this time, key Hindu ideas were born.
 - Brahman — ultimate reality
 - Atman — the individual self
 - Moksha — liberation from rebirth
 - Karma — determinative cause and effect



Hinduism

- During the classical period (500 BC-500 AD), most of Hinduism's prescriptive texts were recorded.
 - Mahabharata — teaching devotion, duty, and selfless action
 - Ramayana — Prince Rama's story of virtue and divine kingship
 - Dharma Shastras — Codes of conduct
 - Puranas — popular Hindu mythology
- Gods and Goddesses gained prominence — Vishnu, Shiva, and Devi
- Temples emerged as centers of worship and community — for all people.



Hinduism

- Temple culture and the philosophical elements of Hinduism developed during the Middle Ages (500-1500 AD).
 - The Yoga school is one example.
- Influences on Hinduism:
 - Islamic (from 1200 AD)
 - Christianity (from 1800 AD)
- Cultural, societal, legal, and religious adaptations resulted from the other two major religions moving into the Indian subcontinent.



Hinduism

- The Hindu belief system centers on the ultimate concept of God, Brahman.
- Hindus believe Brahman is the ultimate, all-pervading reality that is eternal, infinite, and beyond form. Everything emanates from Brahman.
- Some important terms
 - Monism — God and soul are one.
 - Qualified Monism — God and souls are distinct but inseparable.
 - Dualism — God and souls are eternally distinct.



Hinduism

- There are four main expressions of Hinduism.
 - Vaishnavism (Vishnu-centered tradition) — worship of Vishnu, the Preserver, and his incarnations, Rama and Krishna.
 - Shaivism (Shiva-centered tradition) — worship of Shiva, the destroyer and regenerator.
 - Shaktism (Devi-centered tradition) — worship of Devi, the divine Mother.
 - Smartism (Philosophical tradition) — emphasizes knowledge and self-realization.

