

# HINDUISM - Key Facts

**Approx. Number of Adherents:** 900 million

## Origins:

- \* **no historic founder**
- \* origins linked to Aryan invasion of Indus Valley civilisation approx. 1500 BCE
- \* this resulted in a socio-religious caste system
- \* emergence of the Vedas as a primary sacred text

## Subdivisions:

- \* embraces a complex spectrum of religious texts
- \* also recent movements such as Arya Samaj

Subdivided according to principal form of **Brahman**



## Transcendent Reality:

- \* **Brahman:** the one and absolute reality that embraces the entire cosmos
  - beyond all finite categories
  - is manifest and worshipped in the form of different gods and goddesses such as Vishnu, Shiva or the Mother Goddess
  - difficult to classify and is described variously as polytheistic, pantheistic, henotheistic or monotheistic

## Human Existence:

- \* **Samsara:** reincarnation
  - the **atman (soul)** of the deceased is reborn into the world according to the law of karma
  - cycle can last hundreds or thousands of lifetimes
  - hoped that all individuals will eventually be released from the cycle of rebirth and attain **moksha (final liberation)**
- \* Idea of Atman after Moksha:
  - some believe moksha involves the dissolution of the atman back into Brahman
  - for others the liberated atman retains some degree of individual existences in perfect communion with Brahman and other beings

### 3 Main Paths to Moksha:

1. Jnana Marga:  
the path of knowledge and meditation

2. Karma-Marga:  
the path of moral action

3. Bhakti-Marga:  
the path of devotion and worship of a particular deity

## Sacred Text:

**Shruti (Primary Revelation):**  
the Vedas and the Upanishads

**Smriti (Secondary Revelation):**  
Many works in this category, most prominent are:

- Two Great Epics: The Mahabharata and the Ramayana
- Poetic Puranas
- Legal Codes such as Laws of Manu

## Key Rituals:

- \* **Samskaras:** 16 traditional life cycle rituals
  - include prenatal and childhood ceremonies, initiation into adulthood, marriage and funeral rites

# COMPARISON - KEY FACTS

<b>Subdivisions:</b>	<p><b>Geographical area:</b></p> <p><b>Buddhism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theravada: Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos</li> <li>• Mahayana: China, Japan, Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam</li> <li>• Vajrayana: Tibet</li> </ul> <p><b>Historical Events:</b></p> <p><b>Christianity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of Eastern and Western Christianity</li> <li>• Sixteenth-Century Reformation: divided Western Christianity into Roman and Protestant churches (Lutheran, Anglican, Calvinist, Baptist)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Variances in belief:</b></p> <p><b>Hinduism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaishnavism: worship Vishnu and his incarnations such as Krishna and Rama</li> <li>• Shivaism: worship of Shiva</li> <li>• Shaktism: the worship of Shakti and her manifestations such as Parvati, Durga and Kali</li> </ul> <p><b>Judaism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orthodox Judaism: upholds traditional values</li> <li>• Reform Judaism: more liberal</li> <li>• Conservative Judaism: middle between Orthodox and Reform</li> </ul> <p><b>Islam</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunni: accept Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali as all valid caliphs</li> <li>• Shi'ite only accept Ali</li> </ul>
<b>Human Existence:</b>	<p><b>Reincarnation/Law of Karma</b></p> <p><b>Buddhism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reincarnation according to law of Karma</li> <li>* main focus is on personal liberation from craving which binds us to the wheel of reincarnation</li> </ul> <p><b>Hinduism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* reincarnation is referred to as 'samsara'</li> <li>* the atman or soul of the dead people is reborn into the world according to the law of Karma</li> <li>* it is hoped that all individuals will eventually be released from the cycle of rebirth and attain moksha (final liberation)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resurrection:</b></p> <p><b>Christianity, Islam, Judaism</b></p> <p>Three religions are <b>abrahamic</b> and concerned with belief of <b>resurrection</b>.</p>
<b>Mother/Daughter Religions:</b>	<p><b>Hinduism (mother) &amp; Buddhism (daughter)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* separation between the two is much more distinct than J and C</li> <li>* maintained belief in reincarnation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Judaism &amp; Christianity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* separate not as distinct</li> <li>* Christianity acknowledges Jewish beliefs as Jesus was a Jew.</li> <li>* Bible displays how early christian communities emerged from jewish communities</li> </ul>
<b>Oldest Religions:</b>	<p><b>Judaism &amp; Hinduism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Hinduism is the oldest origins linked to Aryan invasion of Indus Valley civilisation approx. 1500BCE</li> <li>* Judaism: Traces back to covenant between God and Abraham (c 1800BCE)</li> </ul>	



