



Hinduism

The Basics

Background

- Around 1.1 Billion Hindus in the world (About 12.5% of global population).
- No known founder or single doctrine.
 - Traced back to Indus River Valley – The Harappa Culture
 - As far back as 4000BC-1500BC
- “India” and “Hindu” is derived from the names given to the people and traditions of the Indus River Valley.



PAKISTAN

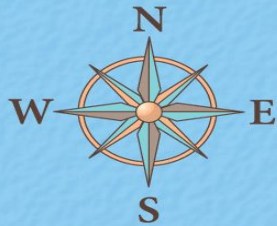
Indus River

CHINA

INDIA

*Arabian
Sea*

Bay of Bengal



Background

- Is it a religion or philosophy? Maybe both?
 - It has no set dogma and has folded in aspects of other traditions that filtered into the Indus River Valley.
- Some consider Hinduism as Polytheistic since there are tales of many gods in the literature.
- Others believe that Hinduism has a centralized god figure that can take many forms. Once we get a handle on the major themes of the religion, this will make more sense.

Basic Beliefs

- Various religions of man are different paths to the one God
Essential Concepts:
 - Dharma (individual ethics duties and obligations),
 - Samsara (reincarnation/rebirth)
 - Karma (actions leading to a cause and effect relationship; selfless action)
 - Moksha (salvation of every soul through a variety of paths)
 - Bhakti (devotion; belief in God)
 - Jnana (enlightenment, knowledge)
- Importance of Om (Aum)
- Deities are all manifestations of the ONE SUPREME monistic Brahman

Atman

- Atman describes the soul that all living things possess
- Brahman is the source of Atman – Atman comes from Brahman
- The Atman is within us all and indestructible
- After the death of the body, the Atman either achieves release (moksha) or is born into another body (reincarnation).
- The path is determined by our karma (action).

Brahman

- Brahman is the Ultimate Reality.
- Brahman is God and cause of all things.
- Brahman takes different forms.
 - Brahma (The Creator)
 - Shiva (god of destruction)
 - Vishnu (god of preservation)
- Q: Does Brahman guide you like a shepherd and her sheep?
- A: We will get to this later on.

Is this drop of water any different from its source?
If so, how? If not, why do we give it a unique name?



4 Natural Goods

- Path of Desire (PD)
 - Pleasure
 - Worldly Success
- Path of Renunciation (PR)
 - Duty
 - Liberation (Moksha)



HUMAN DESIRE

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DESIRE



To burn with
desire and keep
quiet about it
is the greatest
punishment we
can bring on
ourselves.

– *Federico Garcia
Lorca*

Desire

Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
Proverbs 13:12

Path of Desire

- **Pleasure**
 - The Good?
 - The Bad?

- **Worldly Success**
 - Wealth, Power, Fame
 - The Good?
 - The Bad?

Pleasure...good



Wealth...good.



Success...good.



The Circle of Success...good?
When does it end?



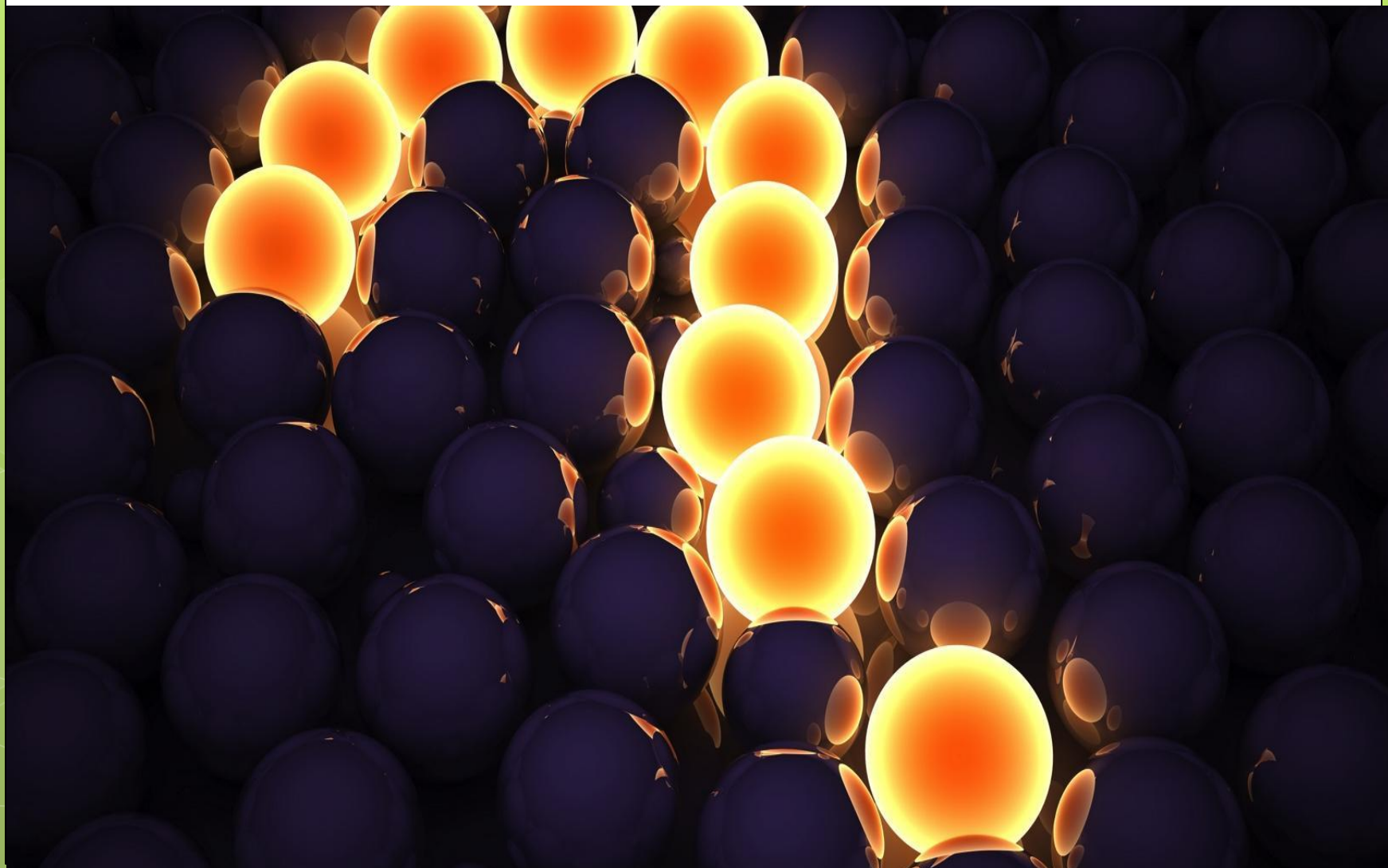
Is worldly success enough?



Path of Renunciation

- **To Renounce: To deny, to reject.**
 - We try out the natural desires (PD) and end up asking “Is this it?”
 - This is the birth of religion in our lives.
- **Duty (Dharma)**
 - We recognize what's important in life
 - Others, our communities.
 - But is that enough?
- **What else is there besides doing good for others and our community?**

Is this it?



What's the final good?

- We want being
- We want knowledge
- We want joy

And we want all of it infinitely.

So how do we get all of this
forever and ever and ever....?



We get it through Liberation
from the finite~



The Final Good of Renunciation = Liberation (Moksha)

- Hinduism says this infinite release is not just within reach, but it has always been within us.
- We are Atman and Atman is Brahman.
- So our task is to eliminate the trivial distractions and distortions to the Ultimate Reality

Atman is Brahman...



What are we limited by?

- Limited Joy
 - Cure?
- Limited Knowledge
 - Cure?
- Limited Being
 - Cure?

Recap

- (1) People desire certain things but much of it is temporal. This distracts us from what we really desire.
- (2) What we really desire is the Ultimate Reality and connection to the infinite.
- (3) This is already within us but we need to remove the obstacles in the way of our experiencing it.
- (3) So our task is to bring out the light of infinite good within us and draw from it unceasingly.
- (4) To master this is to become perfect. Perfection then allows us to obtain moksha from samsara (The wheel of reincarnation).