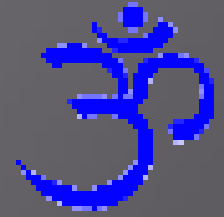
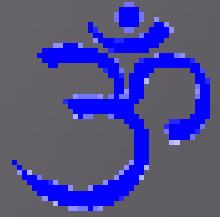


# What is Hinduism?



- ▣ One of the oldest religions of humanity
- ▣ The religion of the Indian people
- ▣ Gave birth to Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism
- ▣ Tolerance and diversity: "Truth is one, paths are many"
- ▣ Many "deities" but a single, impersonal Ultimate Reality [Brahman]
- ▣ A philosophy and a way of life – focused both on this world and beyond

# How did Hinduism begin?



- ▣ No particular founder
- ▣ Indus River Valley Civilization >5000 years ago
- ▣ *Aryans* enter 4000 – 3500 years ago
- ▣ *Vedic* Tradition 3500 – 2500 years ago:
  - rituals and many gods (polytheism)
  - sacred texts (Vedas)
  - social stratification (varnas)
  - *Upanishads* (metaphysical philosophy) added to Vedas 2800 – 2400 years ago
- ▣ Vedic Tradition develops into Hinduism



# Brahman and Monism

- ▣ **Monism** is the view in metaphysics that reality is a unified whole and that all existing things can be ascribed to or described by a single concept or system. (also referred to as pantheism)
- ▣ **Brahman** is the eternal, unchanging, infinite, immanent, and transcendent reality which is the Divine Ground of all matter, energy, time, space, being, and everything beyond in this Universe.

# Devas & Devis

- ▣ Deva: Sanskrit word for a benevolent supernatural being (deity)
- ▣ Devi: feminine form

*.Another way to say this is that Devas and Devis are manifestations of aspects of Brahman, who are emotionally and intellectually accessible by the limited human senses*

There are as many as 300 million Devas and Devis worshipped by Hindus



# Avatars

- ▣ the incarnation of a deity in human or animal form to counteract some particular evil in the world

*Rama*



*Krishna*

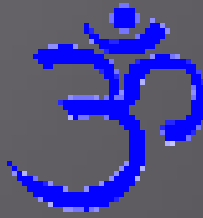


*(shown with Arjuna)*

# Assignment

- ▣ Read the article “gods on earth”
- ▣ Working with two or three other students, in your own words:
  - Describe what an Avatar is
  - List other religions that have beliefs in similar beings
  - Using a double-bubble map, show the similarities and differences between Avatars and being(s) of one other religion

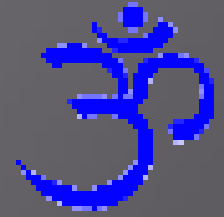
# What are the Sacred Texts?



- ▣ *Shruti* (“heard”) – oldest, divinely inspired
  - Four *Vedas* (“truth”) – myths, rituals, chants
  - *Upanishads* – metaphysical speculation
- ▣ *Smriti* (“remembered”) – developed
  - *Law of Manu*
  - *Ramayana*
  - *Mahabharata* (includes *Bhagavad-Gita*)
  - Plus others

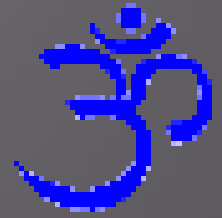


# What do Hindus believe?



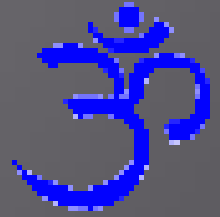
- ▣ Most people see only illusion – *Maya*
- ▣ True essence of life – *Atman*, the soul, is Brahman trapped in matter
- ▣ Station in life – *Varna*
- ▣ Our path in life – *Dharma* is dependent upon our:
- ▣ Spiritual impurity – *Karma* – due to improper actions (not following one's Dharma ) keeps us bound to this world
- ▣ Reincarnation – atman is continually born into this world lifetime after lifetime – *Samsara*
- ▣ Ultimate goal of life – to release Atman and reunite with the divine, becoming as one with Brahman– *Moksha*

# Varnas



- ♦ Brahmins
- ♦ Kshatriayas
- ♦ Vaishyas
- ♦ Shudras

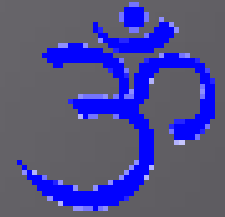
# How does Hinduism direct life in this world?



Dharma [your path] based on:

- Four “stations” of life (Varna) – priests & teachers, nobles & warriors, merchant class, servant class [Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras]
- Four stages of life – student, householder, retired, renunciant
- Four duties of life – pleasure, success, social responsibilities, religious responsibilities

# What are the spiritual practices of Hinduism?



- ▣ Yoga: to join or unite
- ▣ Marga: teaching or path of a yoga
  
- ▣ The Four Yogas – seeking union with ultimate reality:
  - *Karma-marga* – the path of action through selfless service (releases built up karma without building up new karma)
  - *Jnana-marga* – the path of knowledge (understanding the true nature of reality and the self)
  - *Raja-marga* – the path of meditation
  - *Bhakti-marga* – the path of devotion to a Deva or Devi
  
- *Guru* – a spiritual teacher (also, yogi)

Who do Hindus worship  
in Bhakti-marga?



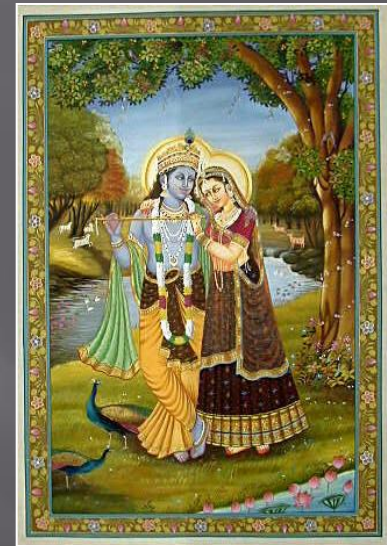
*Brahma*, the creator deva



# Who do Hindus worship?



*Vishnu*, the preserver deva



Incarnates as ten *avatars* (descends) including:  
    *Rama* (featured in the Ramayana)  
    *Krishna* (featured in the Bhagavad-gita)  
(Each shown with his consort, *Sita* and *Radha*, respectively)

# Who do Hindus worship? –

*Shiva*, deva of constructive destruction  
(the transformer)

Appears as Shiva *Nataraj*,  
lord of the dance of creation...



and with his wife, *Parvati*, and son *Ganesha*  
(the elephant headed remover of obstacles)

# What about the Devis?

*Devi* – the feminine divine

*Saraswati*, goddess of wisdom, consort of  
Brahma



# What about the Devis?

*Devi* – the feminine divine

*Lakshmi*, goddess of good fortune, consort of Vishnu

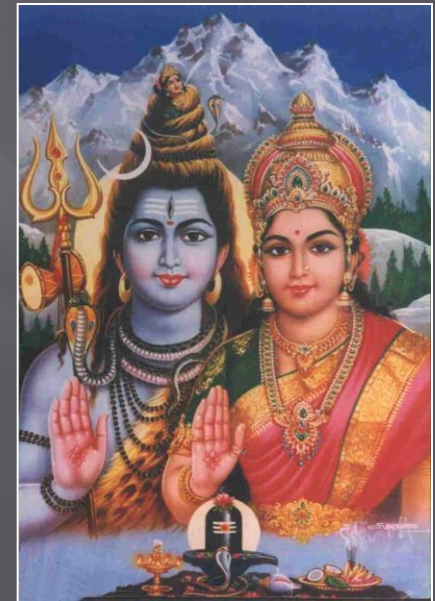




# What about the Devis?

*Devi* – the feminine divine

*Parvati*, divine mother, wife of Shiva

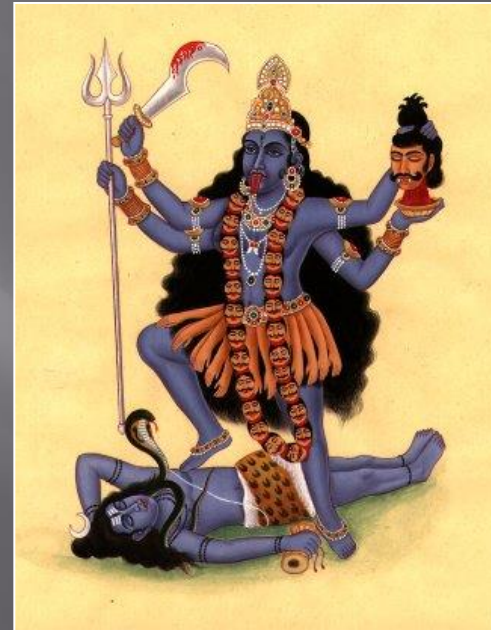




# What about the Devis?

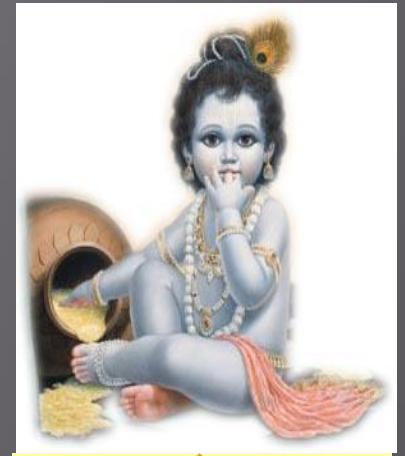
*Devi* – the feminine divine

*Durga*, protectress



*Kali*, destroyer of demons

Plus about 330 million other deities



All these deities are but  
Manifest forms (attributes  
and functions) of the  
impersonal Brahman





Aum - the essence of universal  
energy/spirit... Brahman



And we too are manifest forms of God!

“We are not human beings  
having spiritual experiences;  
We are spiritual beings  
having a human experience!”

*“That Thou art”*

Hinduism is about recognizing the all  
pervasiveness of the divine

# Explore Hinduism on the Web:

- ♦ [The Hindu Universe](http://www.hindunet.org): Lots of information on Hinduism and the Hindu community on-line and around the world. Includes chat rooms and message board forums - [www.hindunet.org](http://www.hindunet.org)
- ♦ [The Virtual Hindu Temple](http://www.rajdeepa.com/vmandir/vmandirindex.htm): Contains some interesting and useful pages including: [Discover Hindu Gods & Goddesses](#) and [FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HINDUISM](#). Also contains a gallery of deity images and a [collection of links](#) to Hindu sacred texts online and other sites related to Hinduism - [www.rajdeepa.com/vmandir/vmandirindex.htm](http://www.rajdeepa.com/vmandir/vmandirindex.htm)
- ♦ [Hinduism for Schools](http://www.btinternet.com/~vivekananda/schools1.htm) provides basic, introductory info to teach primary and secondary level students about Hinduism - [www.btinternet.com/~vivekananda/schools1.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~vivekananda/schools1.htm)