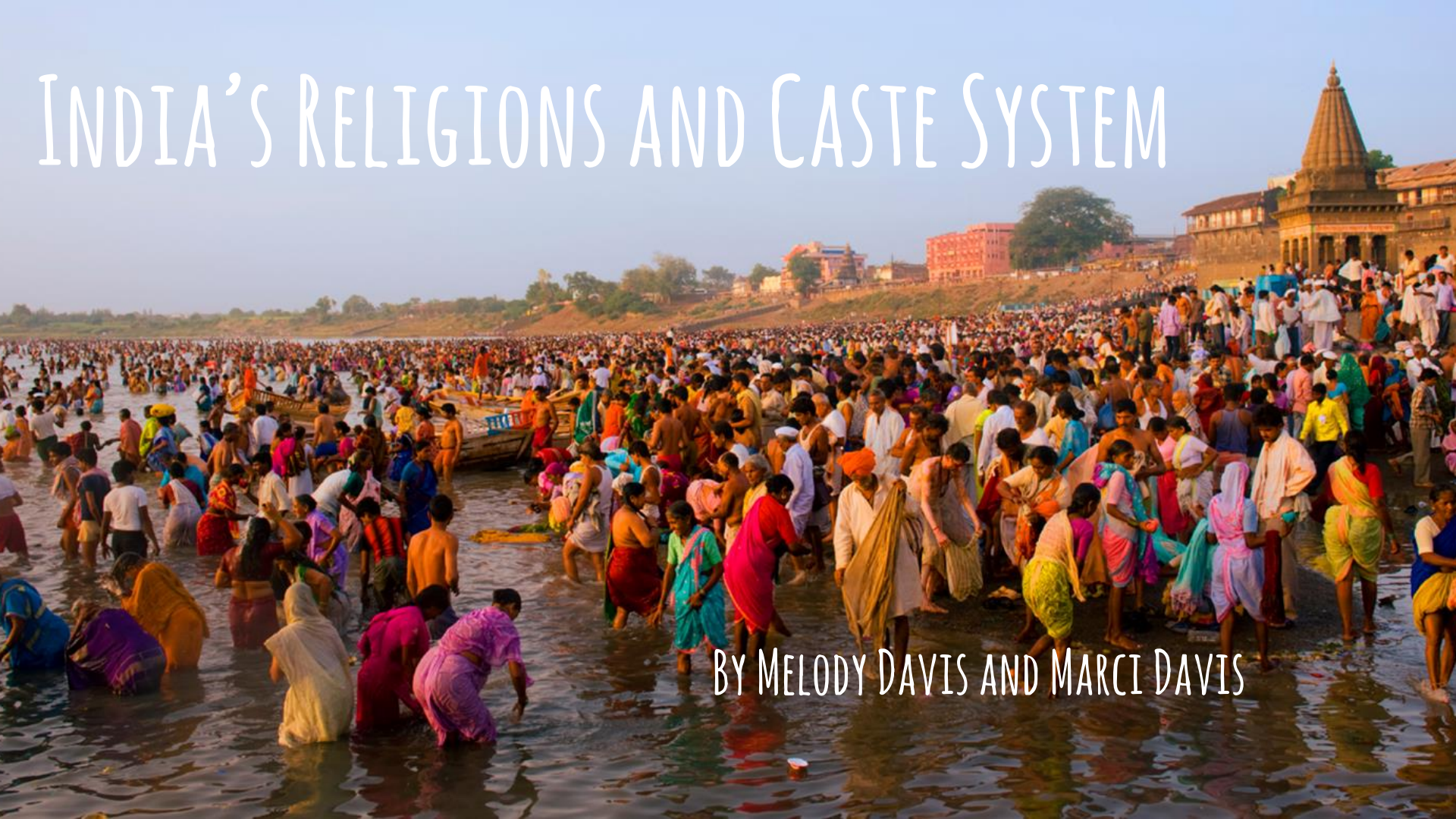


INDIA'S RELIGIONS AND CASTE SYSTEM

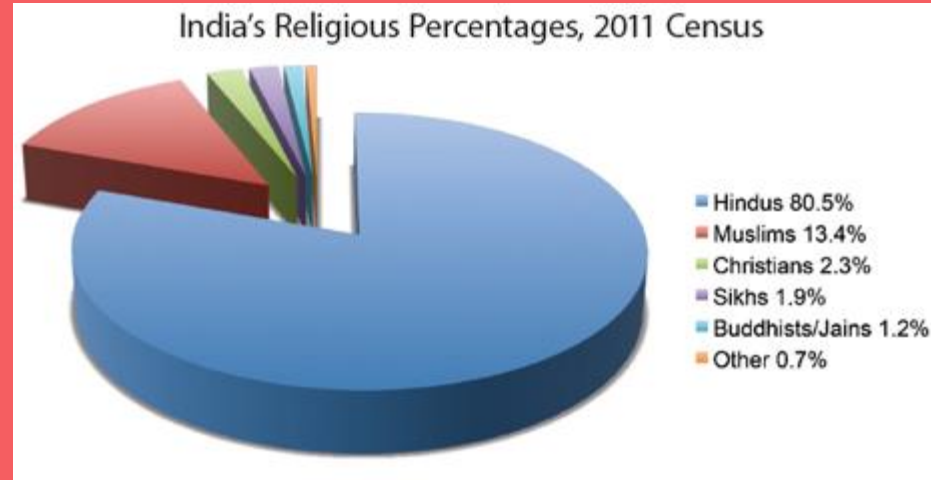


BY MELODY DAVIS AND MARCI DAVIS

Religions

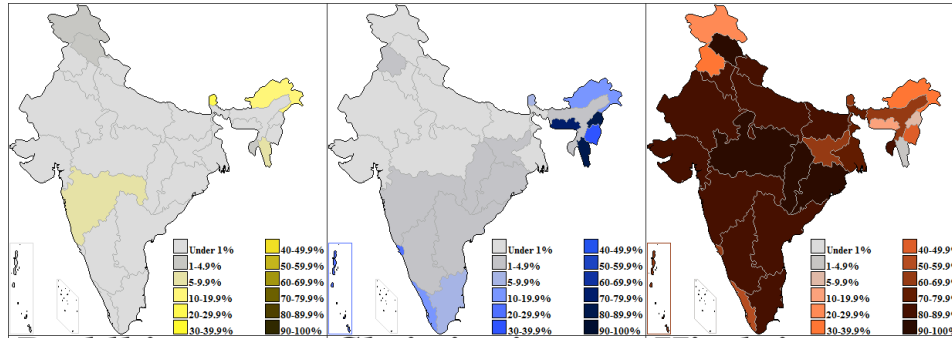
Religions in India

- ❖ Land of Diversity
- ❖ Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrian, Guru Nanak Dev, and Many More



Historical Background

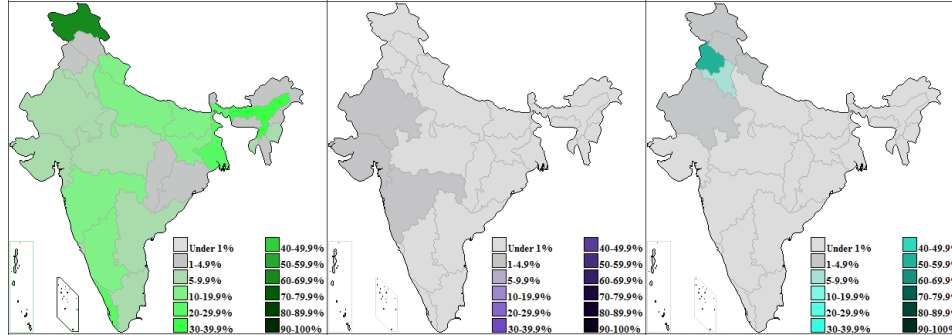
- ❖ India was the birthplace of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism
- ❖ 1500 BC, Hinduism, with the arrival of the Aryans
- ❖ 500 BC, Buddhism and Jainism, both as a way to gain rebirth through sacrifices and priests
- ❖ Sikhism emerged around the 15th century, in an effort to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Buddhism



Buddhism

Christianity

Hinduism



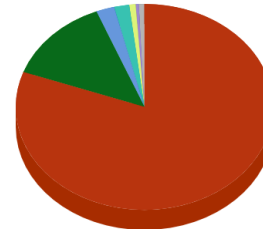
Islam

Jainism

Sikhism

***Religious Demographics
of India***

- **Hinduism (80.5%)**
- **Islam (13.4%)**
- **Christianity (2.3%)**
- **Sikhism (1.9%)**
- **Buddhism (0.8%)**
- **Jainism (0.4%)**
- **Other Religions (0.6%)**



Hinduism

- ❖ 80% of population
- ❖ World's Third Largest Religion
- ❖ Rituals and Routines
 - Light a Lamp, Prayer Room, Namaste, marks on the forehead (tilak or puttu), feet, holy ash, fasting, food offerings, pradakshina (recognizing the Lord as the point of life), and many more
- ❖ Beliefs
 - Vedas (Holy Book), Reincarnation, multiple divine beings/Gods, enlightenment to know absolute, life is sacred, tolerance
- ❖ The Aum: three parts, three meanings
 - 3 worlds: earth, atmosphere, and heaven; 3 major Gods: Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; 3 sacred scriptures: Rg, Yajur, Sama



Islam



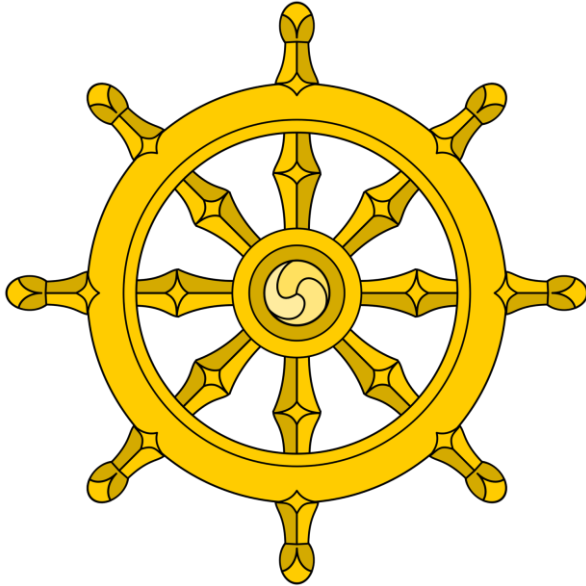
- ❖ Second most dominant, 12% of population
- ❖ Still relatively dominant in India (3rd in World)
- ❖ Famous Monuments: Taj Mahal
 - Verses from the Quran, Islamic Architecture
- ❖ Five Pillars of Faith
 - Declaration, Prayer (5 times daily), Charity (Zakat is a mandatory charity of 2.5%), Fasting (Ramadan), Pilgrimage to Mecca
- ❖ Mecca: the Holy land
 - Kaaba: considered the first worship house of God
- ❖ Sacred Text: The Quran
- ❖ Crescent and Moon Symbol
 - beginning of lunar month
 - spread of Islam to the nations

Christianity

- ❖ Third Most Dominant, 2.3%
- ❖ Concentrated in Goa, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala
- ❖ Mostly Catholics
- ❖ Sacred Text: The Bible
- ❖ Believe in the 10 Commandments
 - No other Gods, do not take the Lord's name in vain, keep the sabbath holy, honor your father and mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie, do not covet



Buddhism



The Dharma Wheel

- ❖ Represents less than 1% of the population
- ❖ Most are concentrated in Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, and the Higher Himalayas of north India
- ❖ The Four Noble Truths
 - the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering
- ❖ Beliefs
 - Karma, rebirth
 - Multiple Sacred Texts
- ❖ The Dharma Wheel
 - Represents the 8-fold path: right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration
 - 3 sections: wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline

References for Religions

<http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/>

<http://iasmania.com/art-culture/>

<http://quatr.us/india/religion/>

<https://www.himalayanacademy.com/readlearn/basics/nine-beliefs>

<http://www.pbs.org/edens/thailand/buddhism.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/muslims/beliefs.html>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+20>

The Caste System

“Caste is crumbling as India
urbanizes”

-Dipankar Gupta

Key Point:

Traditional Caste System no longer exists; however remnants still appear in hierarchical business structure, marriage, and decision making.

27%

still practice “untouchability”

- Huffington Post

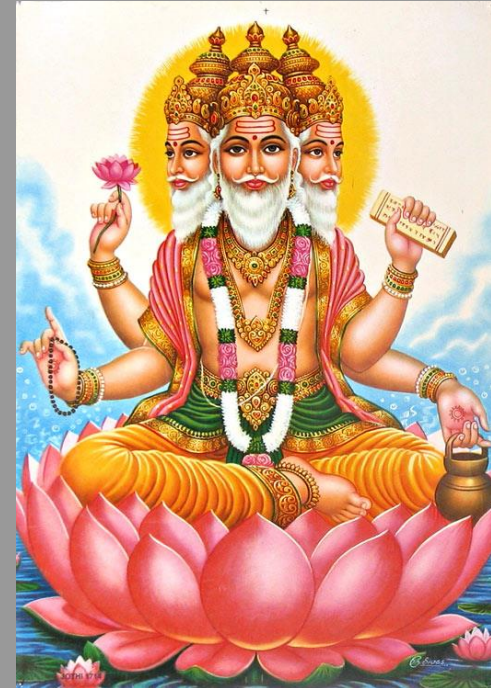
What is a Caste?

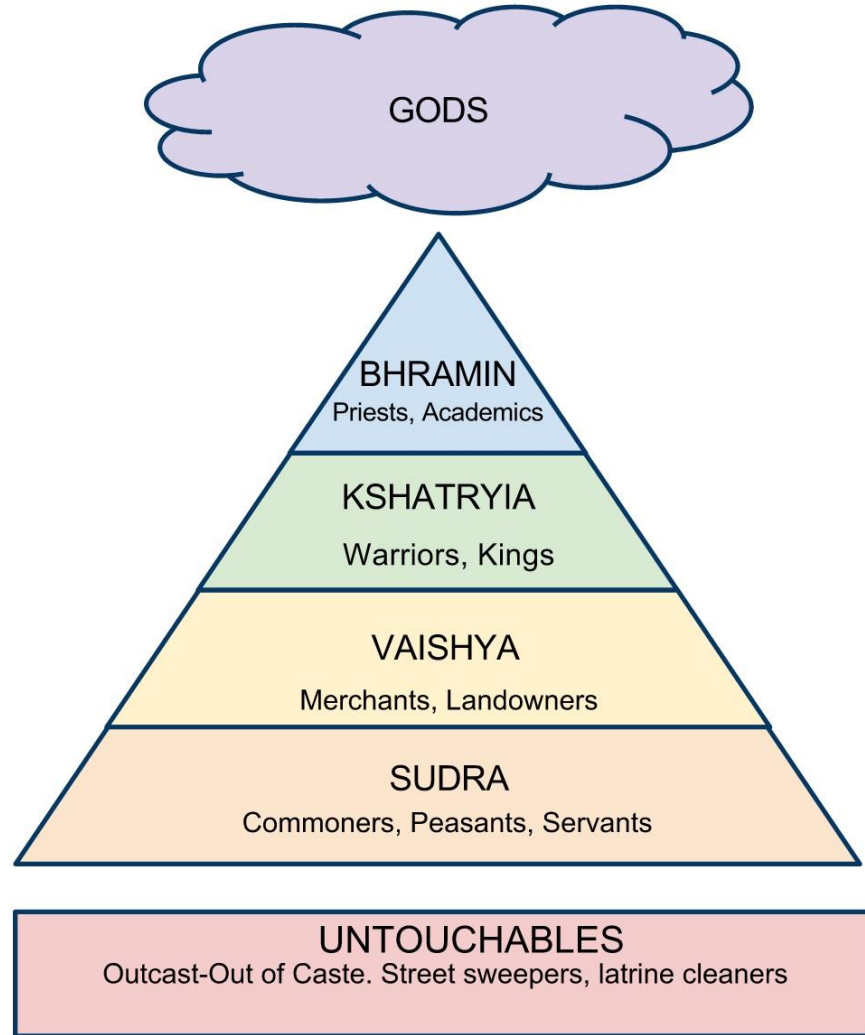
“describe(s) stratified societies based on hereditary groups”

also known as *Jati*

How did the Caste System Start?

- Associated with Hinduism
- 1,000 - 200 BCE
- Brahma — four-headed, four-handed deity, creator of the universe
- According to the Rigveda, ancient text, society was divided into 4 groups as they were cast from the body
 - Mouth - Brahmin
 - Arms - Kshatryia
 - Thighs - Vaishya
 - Feet - Sudra
 - Untouchables
- Originally based on occupation, transitioned to hereditary
- Reincarnation - born into one caste, and could move into the next during the next life if they were virtuous





The Caste System:

Brahmin

Spiritual Leaders, Teachers

Middle men between God and people

Studied Vedas, rites and rituals

Temple priests, invoke God for others

Exemplary behavior, divine knowledge,
preservation of traditions

Lord of all beings, entitled to everything



Kshatriya

Warriors, Nobility

Protect people

Bestow gifts to Brahmins

Offer sacrifices to Gods and Ancestors

Dispense Justice

No sensual pleasures

Authority only questioned when not
supporting and protecting the Brahmins

Right to fair punishment



Vaishya

Merchants, Producers

Tend cattle

Offer sacrifices

Study vedas

Trade/Lend Money

Cultivate Land

Perform and participate in certain rituals



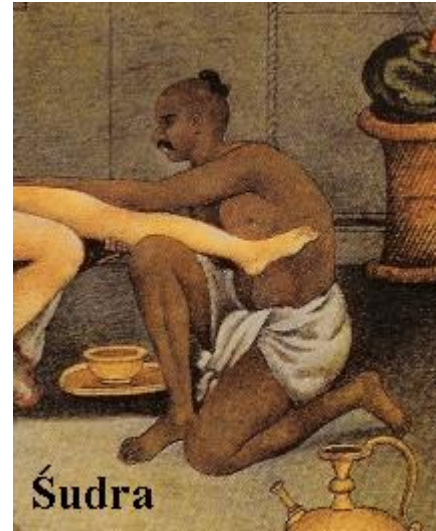
Sudra

Laborers

Serve the other class

Not allowed to observe certain rituals, study vedas or sacred chants

Only could eat food in the company of their caste



Untouchables

Street Sweepers, Latrine Cleaners

People who violated social norms

Outside of Caste System

Contact by a caste member would
contaminate the other person

bathe/wash immediately

Could not eat in the same place as caste
members

Could not be cremated



How Caste was Enforced

1. Hereditary
2. Caste Rules
3. Marriage
4. Preferential Treatment

- Sub-castes existed within the major categories
- Castes existed in Muslim faith

Key Areas of Life Dominated by Caste

1. Marriage

2. Meals

3. Religious Worship

Marriage

Traditionally

Marriages across caste lines were strictly forbidden

90-95% married within Caste Lines, arranged by parents/older brothers

Currently

Sex-selective abortions - many men are in search of wives across lines

Person intending to get married searches for his own spouse

Meals

Traditionally

Anyone could take food from a Brahmin

Brahmins would be polluted if they took certain kinds of food from a lower caste

If an untouchable drank from a public well, it was contaminated and no one else would drink from it

Religious Worship

Traditionally

Brahmin conducted all religious practices/services/festivals

Kshatrya/Vaisya full rights to worship, but Shudra were not allowed to offer sacrifices to the gods in certain places

Untouchables not allowed to go to temples

Shadow of an untouchable touched a Brahmin, he/she would be polluted, so untouchables had to lay face-down at a distance when a Brahmin passed.

Fun Fact:

Tilak/Pottu form and color vary by Caste (white, red, yellow, black).

Sources for Caste System

- [a-to-z-of –mannersand-etiquette.com/indian-etiquette.html](http://a-to-z-of-mannersand-etiquette.com/indian-etiquette.html)
- landonwhi.weebly.com
- allabouthinduism.info
- asianhistory.about.com/od/india/p/indiancastesystem.htm
- ushistory.org/civ/8b.asp
- Hindu Rituals & Routines (provided by Dr. Gaspar)
- photography.nationalgeographic.com
- Love and Money Conquer Caste - The Economist