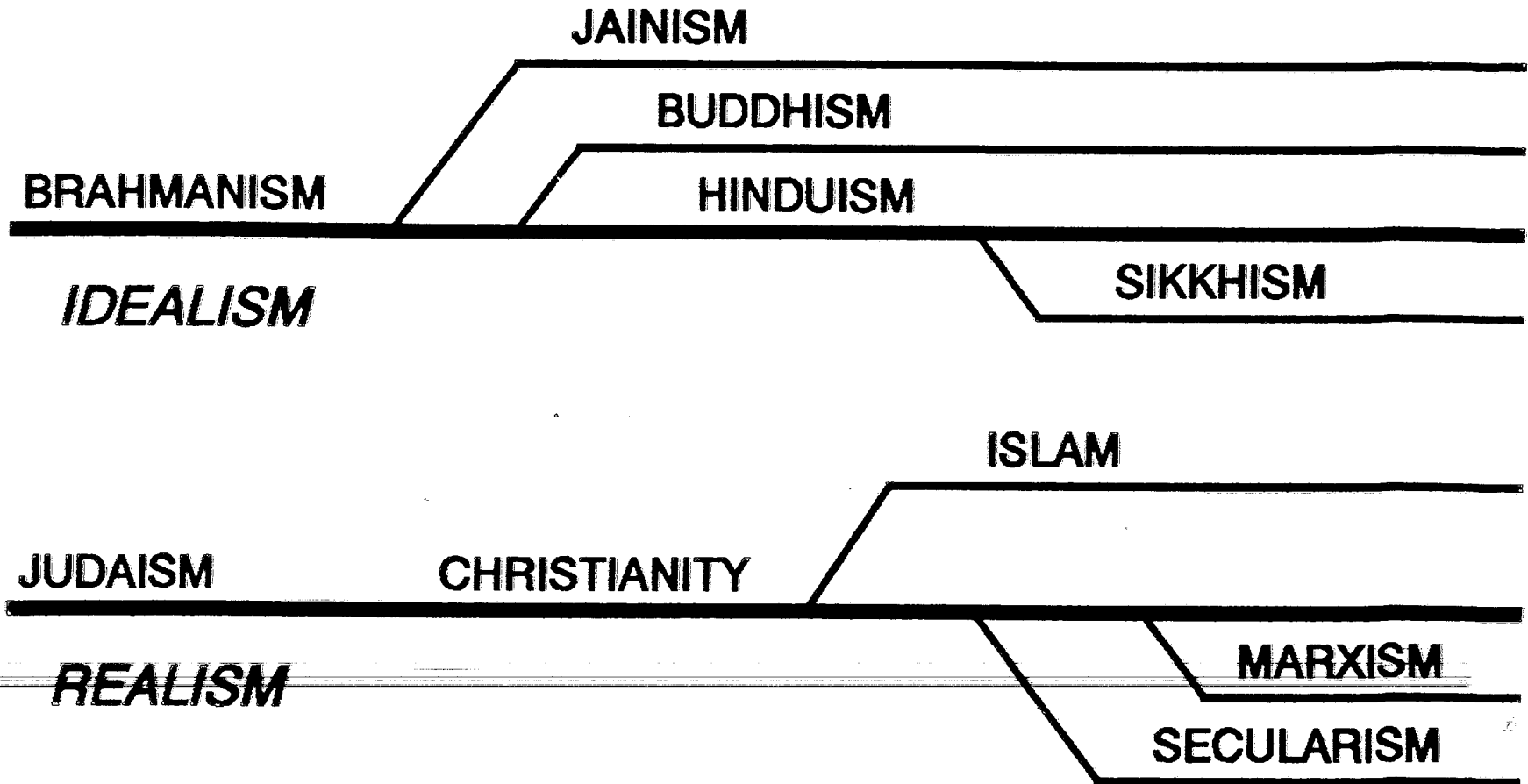


Hinduism

TWO COMPETING RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS



INDIAN HISTORY

PALEOLITHIC

NEOLITHIC

BRONZE

SMALL KINGDOMS

NORTH

SOAN

West Asia Neolithic

- wheat, cotton, cattle,
sheep, goats

BALUCH

INDUS
CIVILIZATION

- Harappa
- Mohenjo Daro

Aryan invasions
and colonization

KURU (Mahabharati)
KOSALA (Ramayana)
KASI (Varanasi)
MAGADHA ----->
VIDEHA
ANGHA

SOUTH & CENTRAL

MADRAS

CATTLE CULTURES

Southeast Asian Neolithic
- rice, chickens, pigs,
cocoanuts

VEDIC ERA (2000-500 bc)
RIG - mantras, hymns
SAMA - Brahmanas, rites
ATHARVA - Aranyakas
theology, meditations
YAJUR - Upanishads,
theology, meditations

BUDDHIST ERA

HINDU ERA

NORTH

-> **NANDA**

-> **MAURYA**

-> **SANGA**

325-175 b.c.

- Chandragupta

- Ashoka

* *Buddhist era*

GREEKS

SCYTHIANS

IRANIANS

ASIATICS

DARK AGES

SMALL KINGDOMS

GUPTAS

(320 - 550 a.d.)

- Chandra Gupta II

SOUTH CENTRAL

SATAVAHANAS

(271 b.c. - 157 a.d.)

-> **VAKATAKAS**

CHOLAS

PANDYA

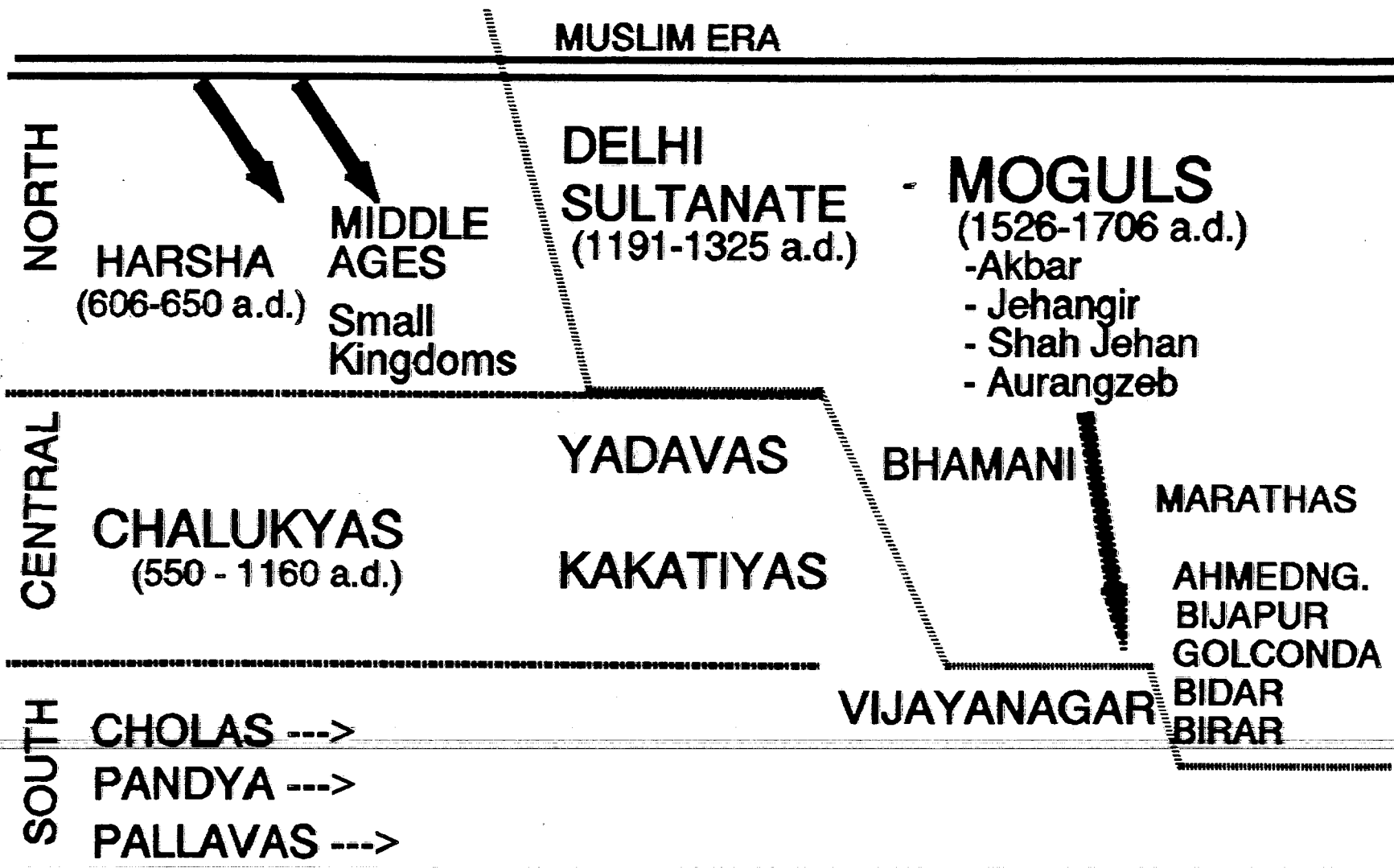
KERALA

SUTRA ERA (500 - 200 b.c.)

EPIC ERA

PURANIC ERA

(300 - 700 a.d.)



- devotional movement in S. India
- caste system fully developed

COLONIAL ERA

INDEPENDENCE

PORTUGUESE

DUTCH

FRENCH

BRITISH

**BRITISH
INDIA**

PAKISTAN

BANGLADESH

1947

REPUBLIC OF INDIA

NATIVE

STATES

- Hyderabad
- Mysore
- Bihar
- Kashmir
- Etc.

I. HISTORY OF HINDUISM

1. INTRODUCTION

A precise definition of Hinduism is hard to make because of a wide variance from region to region and caste to caste. As Basham notes, it must be seen as a whole way of life and not only a religion. Nevertheless, there is a common history and a shared set of core precepts that underly much or most of Hindu thought.

2. EARLY HISTORY

2.1 Pre-Aryan Age: Little detail is known of the religion of the Indus civilization. There was the worship of fertility, phallic symbols and mothergoddesses; of Siva-like images and bulls; and of plants and life.

2.2 Early Aryan Religion: The Aryan invaders of about 1500 B.C. worshiped nature gods such as the sun, moon and stars, and ancestors. They shared many of the deities of the middle east such as Varuna, Mitra etc. They had a three class society of rulers, priests and people (Vis).

In their conquest of the indigenous "Dravidians" they took great pains to maintain their distinctiveness and purity, and their superiority. Irvate Karve argues that these three classes became the top three varna and that the fourth, the Sudras, were the conquered Dravidians. She also argues that the Dravidians had a caste system based on clan and occupation, and that that notion of caste (as jati) spread up to bring about caste divisions in the higher varna. The Untouchables did not emerge until centuries later.

2.3 The Interaction. The confrontation between the conquered and conquerers and their religions led to the development of Vedic Brahmanism among the Aryans and of Deshya religious forms among the commoners.

3. VEDIC PERIOD (approx. 1500 - 500 B.C.)

3.1 Religious Texts; The basic texts of this period were the Vedas. These are considered 'revelation' not as theistic nor as historic. Rather it is sruti or what was 'seen' and 'heard' by the rishis and early sages. It is self-authenticating, and stands in conflict with smrti or tradition which is built upon the sruti.

The Veda is divided into two highly unequal parts: the Portion of Works, roughly comprising the pre-Upanishadic Vedic literature, and the Portion of Knowledge made up of the Upanishads. The Portion of Works sets forth 1) the injunctions to specific ritual performances for specific purposes, 2) expository passages that illuminate, praise or condemn matters pertaining to ritual performances, and 3) the mantras or Vedic verses and formulas employed at these ritual performances. The preoccupation here is with liturgy. The interpretations were later organized into the Mimamsa or Science of Works and influenced the Dharma Sastra.

in the ritual. It is through his performance of the rites that man himself is engaged in, and in fact responsible for, the macrocosmos; and through the rite the macrocosmos begins to touch directly upon man himself. Brahmanic thought had moved from thinking about the rite to thinking about the man doing the rite and his posture toward the greater universe he thus helps sustain. Humans become a miniature portrait of the universe; their eyes are the sun, their breath the wind, their food and body the earth. But what was the soul that remains when eye, breath and body have gone? What but the very basis of the universe itself. This became the central question for the next section, the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are collections of remembered contests, disputations, set pieces of speculations, anecdotes, and classification systems of early philosophical thought. They provide the Vedanta or End of the Vedas.

- 3.3 Deities and Henotheism The Vedic religion was polytheistic in that a plurality of gods are addressed: celestial deities such as Dyas, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Visny, Ratri and Adityas; atmospheric deities such as Indra, Rudra, Maruta, and Vayu; and terrestrial deities such as Privthvi, Agni, Bhahaspati, Soma, and Dindhu. Later Prajapathi emerged as the greatest. There were also demons such as the Vrata in conflict with the gods and Rakshasas in conflict with humans.

But this was polytheism with a difference, for it held the possibility of a monotheism of any which god. Van Buitenen calls it "the god of Monday is God on Monday." The seeds of monism are emerging.

- 3.4 Ritualism and Sacerdotalism The way the ancient Aryan related to his gods was by acting: the gods are invited to partake with him of a banquet. Foodstuffs of many kinds are offered to them; cakes, butter, hot milk, curds, and the juice of soma. These offerings are made by oblations into the fire which is the mouth of the gods. Thereafter the sacrificer partakes of the food. The priest joins with his patron in feasting the gods so that the gods in turn may prosper him.

This mutual prosperity is the foundation of the world. In sacrifice, gods and humans, yonder world and this world, enter into an alliance, which is expressed in the word rtam. The word can be translated 'order', but it is to be understood that this order is not something given once and for all like a natural law, but is the result of an alliance that must constantly be reaffirmed. In the older texts the god Varuna presides, assisted by Mitra. But increasingly the sacrifice itself is regarded as the seat of the order, because it is the instrument by which the basic alliance is carried out. The main altar is the 'navel of the order' and it is to that that the world is tied. Humans no longer fear the gods, they are custodians through the priests of that order.

This focus on ritual to maintain the universe led to the central role of the Brahmin or professional Priest. These are rigorously trained, and traveled from estate to estate, from little court to court, actively competing for the more lucrative sacerdotal posts. Then they engaged in interminable discussion

- 3.7 Creation and the Soul. The question of origins arises. Many answers are given. One is that Prajapathi sacrificed himself. Another is that "utterly nothing at all was here in the beginning. This was enveloped by death, by hunger (Bhadaranyaka Upanishad). In another 'the Atman was here in the beginning, in the form of a person. He caused himself to fall apart into two: thus were born husband and wife."

The search for an ultimate and irreducible principle that is both the source and vitality of the universe is increasingly complimented by the quest for a similar principle that underlies the human personality. The notion of personal immortality was given since the Veda.

The first answer was in terms of an organ: which organ can the person not do without? Eye, ear, etc all could leave. Only 'breath' had to be there and so is deemed the ultimate principle of existence. The second answer turns to consciousness: in ordinary life we are conscious of self, in sleep senses cease yet consciousness remains in some form or other for even though we have no direct experience of the world around us, conscious life goes on in the form of dreams. Even in the deepest, dreamless sleep we have a prior state of consciousness for we are later conscious of having slept. Can there be a 4th state even deeper? Out of this emerged the insistence that the final principle that animates and informs the universe is that which animates and informs the human person; it has ultimate consciousness, vitality, bliss and freedom. The result is a downgrading of the reality of life as we know it and a stress on the transcendency of the supreme being.

- 3.8 Time. The primary unit of sacrificial time became the year (see figure 2).

- 3.9 Transmigration. This concept of samsara emerged relatively late. It appears first in the Brahmanas, and then it is called 'redeath'. This has led many scholars to ascribe it to deshya origins. Along with this emerges the question of how to transcend samsara. The answer is basically one of transcending rituals for rites are part of the actions of the world. The accounts are given basically in the Upanishads (eg. Chandogya Upanishad). In one account the dead go up in the cremation fire and spend six months in the northern sphere of the sun, and then go to pitrloka (ancestral world) for six months in the south, and finally drop as raindrops becoming grain and impregnating the wife of a man that eats it.

With this came the doctrine of karma: a person creates his or her own fate. No one is to blame for the circumstances of life, not even a god. Gods therefore can be benevolent. In fact the gods need not be just for the law of karma is.

Samsara implied not a view of immortality, but rather of perpetual mortality. The later stages became essentially pessimistic.

- 3.10 Moksha or Release. Two paths have emerged by now. The first is Arya or the Path of Duty (or ethic of Task or Dharma). Task was profoundly inculcated in the Indian mind. After all, the immense

Taittiriya Upanishad. monistic and pantheistic. Right, truth (sathya), austerity (tapas) self control, and tranquility (sala) are the bases for jnana.

Katha Upanishad Jnana is not knowledge of Vedas or rites or names or knowledge of vice and virtue. It is knowledge of the true nature of the world that results in an unchanged state.

Bhadranayaka Monistic and along with Chandogya is the basis for Vedanta. Creator and creature are the same.

Mundaka. Vedic knowledge is lower (aparjnana) and wisdom is higher (parajnana). Gurus as necessary.

Prasna Deals with creation.

Mundukya Comments on the term 'Om'.

Svetasvatara. Brahma is threefold 1) nature (prakruti), 2) enjoyer (purasa) and 3) infinite soul. Extensive treatises on yoga exercises and control by which jnana is gained.

Isa Becoming and dissolution a cyclical duality.

5. THE SHRAMANAS

5.1 Heterodoxy. The period 600 b.c. to 600 a.d. is the period of conflict between the orthodox brahmins and the heterodox shramanas who called for the path of Release. The rise of the shramanas as a dominant force in Indian life is seen in the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism as the great salvation religions after the 6th century b.c. Jaini and others trace the concept of asceticism back to the Indus civilization where seals show cross-legged yogins surrounded by animals, and nude men with coiled hair sit in rigid poses.

Like the orthodox brahmins, the shramanas accepted the doctrines of karma, samsara and moksha. They made a strong case that the world was maya or illusion and that the sole reality was the Brahman of the Upanishads.

One central conflict between the brahmanas and shramanas had to do with the soul. The former followed the Upanishads and transferred all actions (karma) to the material prakrit, thus preserving the eternal and incorruptible nature of the purusha or soul. The shramanas, while assimilating several brahmanical theories regarding matter and spirit, and a large number of practices current in the schools of Yoga, remained uncompromisingly opposed to this cardinal doctrine of the Vedic Aryans. Their heresies lay in their doctrines of the atman or soul, and then of moksha and karma.

5.2 Pre-Buddhist Shramanas. There were many shramanas before Mahavira and Buddha. These included such leaders as Kassapa (antinomianism), Makkhali Gosala (fatalism), Ajita Kesakambali (materialism), Pakudha Kaccayana (atomism) and Sanjaya Belatthiputta (agnosticism). These all in some way deny the moral basis of karma and consequently of salvation.

5.3 The Jains. Mahavira (Nataputta, b. approx 467 b.c., about 16 years after Buddha's death - scholars) saw himself as the last of 24 Tirthankaras who were shramanas. He was born in Bihar in a royal family. He renounced his life at 28 to be a Jain mendicant,

realize the true nature of self and that of karma. Through self control and penances and yogic practices, they become free from passions and reach the state of omniscience. They pass away into the state of a pure spirit.

3. Ahimsa. The moral basis of right conduct is ahimsa or non-violence. All life is sacred and should not be wilfully violated. Therefore there are many dietary rules. No meat, alcohol, honey, nor many fruits and seeds that cause 'mass slaughter' of life. Ahimsa leads to right faith, right knowledge and right conduct which if followed carefully lead to liberation.

The restrictions of Jainism limited its spread to the upper and lower middle classes of the Vaishyas. Many kshatriyas followed Mahavira who was a kshatriya, but it was primarily a vaishya movement.

5.4 Buddhists. Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism, was a Kshatriya who also became a shramana. However, his bold condemnation of the revered ideal of the tapas as non-Aryan and his subsequent return to moderation marks a great departure from the ancientshramana tradition. He now chose the 'Aryan Middle Path' He not only claimed to be a Jina or Omniscient one, but also a Bramavadin or Master of the Vedas.

The Middle Path was not merely a return to a life of moderation, it was also a turning away from the interminable speculations regarding problems of the Self, problems central to all mendicants whether of shramana or brahmanical persuasion. The ascetics, he argued, proclaimed themselves free from all passions but were possessed by the passion of speculation. They were caught in their own nets. He explained:

"The religious life. . . does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; or that the world is not eternal; it does not depend on the dogma that the life is finite or that the world is infinite; it does not depend on the dogma that the soul and body are identical, or that they are non-identical; it does not depend on the dogma that the Buddha exists after death or does not exist after death. Whether this dogma obtains or that, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing.

5.5 Shramana and Brahmana conflicts. Many hundreds of young men in the prime of their youth abandoned their professions and homes to assume the yellow robes of a monk. This created a great commotion in a society dedicated to the service of parents, stability of family life, and above all the preservation of the ancient traditions of **varnashrama dharma**. The ashrama doctrine with its room for the sannyasin was an early Brahmanical response to the ascetic emphasis of deshya teachings. But now even this did not keep in the young men who renounced married life and kin to become mendicants. By advocating a life of homelessness not only for a handful of extraordinary individuals, but for most men and women

condemnation of animal sacrifices and vegetarian diets. They adopted Rama as a human Jain saint and had Jain versions of the Epics. In turn they were influenced by the doctrine of karma yoga.

After two millennia of vigorous and in many ways successful struggle against the orthodox brahmanical religion and social hierarchy, the shramana movements of Jainism and Buddhism reached a low ebb. It is within the great theistic movements of Hindu poets and mystics, from Kabir to Caitanya, that the last vestiges of an effective and articulate shramana tradition are to be sought.

6. THE HINDU PERIOD (600 a.d. - present)

Hinduism in many forms emerged after the challenges of the shramanas. It developed on the elite level in various schools of thought, and at the popular level in temples, rites, festivals and pilgrimages. It showed great regional variation and interacted with folk animism in complex ways.

6.1 Philosophical Schools of Thought. Six major philosophical schools emerged during the middle ages and reached their complete systematization during the Hindu period. They were known as astika (orthodox) because they accepted the authority of the Vedas. Those that did not were known as nastika. Each school of thought astika darsana has a short text that summarizes its tenets in their earliest canonical form. These texts consist either of prose aphorisms called sutras, or of verses called karikas. Each such work is attributed to one author, though he may have done little more than codify the opinions of his predecessors, and though several of the present texts have been interpolated by later hands. The sutras and karikas were meant to be memorized so they are as concise as possible, and often so cryptic that they are unintelligible without a commentary. Old-fashioned teachers still follow the ancient practice of making the student memorize the aphorisms first, and then explaining them to him one by one. Virtually all the texts are written in Sanskrit which meant that the philosophies address the elite educated religious leaders and not the common folk. The style is thoroughly scholastic.

Who were these philosophers who started the schools of religious philosophy? They were laymen and monks, most of them brahmins but some from the princely ranks. There is no woman among them. They came from all parts of India. There was much conversation from one school to another.

Indian philosophy relied on linguistics and psychology rather than mathematics and physics which were the basis for western sciences. India's best science was grammar. They developed elaborate theories of meaning and cognition (see figure 2).

6.1.1 History We can distinguish four successive fissions in the brahmanical tradition. In the first, the shramana movement separated from the brahmanas - the Buddhists, Jains, and Materialists from the Vedic schools. In the second, the realist atheistic schools - Nyaya-Vaisesika and Sankhya-Yoga - separated from the Vedic tradition. After this took place the sankhya world-map was combined with yogic lore to form the Yoga System which was

bondage and transmigration. Realization that the self is Brahman is the basis for moksha.

6.2 Late Schools of Thought. Several schools of thought emerged after the impact of Buddhism as counterreformation types of philosophy.

6.21 Advaita Vedanta. Founder was Shankara (788-820) A.D. Brahma Sutras. Shankara borrowed heavily from the Buddhists and was accused of being a neoBuddhist. He begins with the atman. He defines Brahman as that from which the arising, abiding and ceasing of the world proceed. The phenomenal world is neither wholly real nor wholly unreal. It is illusion (nmaya). The personal god, Isvara, is the highest and first hypostasis of the impersonal Brahman. Ultimately Shankara is a monist who accepts the doctrine of maya and nirguna Brahma. We must accept maya as real until we attain jnana. Until then polytheism is appropriate, as are personal responsibility (adhikara), and ishta devata.

6.22 Vishista Advaita Vedanta Founded by Ramanuja (1017-1137 a.d.). This resembles Shankara in some respects and starts from the Upanishads, Gita and Brahma Sutras as scripture. He rejects Sankhya dualism between spirit and matter and Shankara's extreme monism. Rather he is a qualified monist and accepts three primary kinds of being (tattva) - god (Brahman, who for Ramanuja is sarguna), souls, and inanimate matter. All three are real, but the latter are dependent on god.

The road to salvation is neither good works, nor yogic trance nor intellectual knowledge. It is faith or self-surrender to the grade of God and devotion. But salvation consists of direct realization that the soul is a mode of God. Action and ordinary knowledge are means to attain ordinary devotion; ordinary devotion is a means to the highest devotion which depends on the grace of god. He rejects the idea that to be real means to be independent. For him the world and souls are real though utterly dependent on god. Because of present ignorance idol worship is accepted.

Vishista Advaita Vedanta split into two schools, North and South. The North expressed the need of humans to express their free will, the south emphasized the irresistible grace of god.

6.23 Dvaita. Madhava (1199-1278).

For Madhava God is personal and supreme. The world is real and separate. God, souls, and world are all eternal. Lakshmi is the personification of god's creative power. Prakruti is in a state of rest until energized by Lakshmi when it becomes apparent creation to help the souls gain moksha. In heaven souls are not lost but retain individuality without discord.

6.24 Dvaitadvaita Nimbarka (1100 a.d.).

The souls and world are different because they exist apart from god; and nondifferent because they have no independent existence from god.

6.25 Suddhadvaita Vallaba (1473-1531).

Opposed Shankara and accepted pure monism. The world also is in samsara and must gain jnana.

8.21 Shaiva Siddhanta or philosophical teachings on Shiva are found in 28 agamas or books of hymns written by Shaiva saints belonging to such groups as Tirumular, Appar and Manikkarecakar who's writings are known as Tirumurai. In them Shiva is supreme. May is the cause of the universe. There are three realities; god = pati; soul = pasu; and world = pasa. By the grace of Shiva the nature of god enters the life of the worshipper.

8.22 Vira-Shaivism or Lingayats. A south Indian sect that rejected the caste system at first and wear the lingam. The atman is part of Shiva, but ignorance makes the soul think it is different. Worship leads ultimately to an identification with the deity.

8.23 Kashmiri Shaivism developed in the northern part of India.

8.3 Ganapathi Sect. the worship of Ganesh or Ganapathi, the elephant headed god.

9. SHAKTI CULTS

In addition to philosophical schools and bhakti movements, there emerged heterodox tantric movements that sought Power (shakti). These began as followers of the female counterpart of Siva, but developed their own identity. Power is worshipped, especially creative power symbolized in the sexual act. The left hand forms glorified sexuality and violated the rules of the society, hence were rejected by regular members of society.

9.1 Kali Cult. In Bengal the worship of Kali as shakti became dominant.

9.2 Tantric Cults. These are left hand and see sexual intercourse as the supreme sacred ritual.

13. THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM AND HINDU REACTIONS

Islam entered India about 1000 a.d. As its force increased, reaching a peak during the Mugul Empire (1526 - 1857 A.D.), Hinduism reacted in several ways.

13.1 Hindu orthodoxy. Orthodoxy continued, reinforced by:

1) Hindu kingdoms. Various independent Hindu kingdoms continued such as Rajput, Vijayanagar and Maratha who saw themselves as champions of Hindu dharma. They were a refuge for Hindu scholars and saints from the north.

2) Hindu local powers. Muslim rulers generally left Hindus subject to their own laws and organizations which was in the hands of quasi-independent Hindu chiefs and caste and village councils. Temples continued to be built.

3) Hindu symbols. The Hindus continued to maintain Hinduism through the local symbols and rituals.

13.2 Hindu revivalism. The bhakti movement that stressed a personal god and the equality of all people found a resurgence, particularly in the north in the form of brahmin and nonbrahmin saints. These include Vallabha Acharya (c. 1500 A.D.); Caitanya (1485-1533) in Bengal; and Mirabai (1550,- A.D.)

13.3 Adaptation. Hinduism adopted customs from th Muslims such as the seclusion of high-caste women, and etiquette.

13.4 Conversions. Conversions were difficult in rural areas where it meant often ostracism. They often took place on the margins of Muslim rule, possibly for several reasons: 1) the inducements of high jobs and court favor, 2) these were Buddhist strongholds and Buddhism did not have a strong hold on the common people, 3) these were areas of the greatest sufi (Muslim saints) missionary work.

14. ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY AND HINDU REACTIONS

Christianity arrived early in India, certainly by the 3rd century A.D. However, in its early forms it became encapsulated on the southwest coast. Modern missions introduced Christianity again after the 16th century (Catholics after 1510 and Protestants after 1706). They came along with western trade, sciences, and colonial rule that introduced modern forms of government, particularly the concept of the government as general caretaker of the people. Printing, translations, the school system, literacy in English, postal and railroad systems, and organizational methods provided new stimuli to intellectual change. The new intellectual traditions introduced were western natural sciences, social thought, Protestant Christian ideas and humanist studies such as those of the Orientalist scholars. All Hindu reactions made use of the new materials, but reacted to them in different ways.

14.1 Reform Movements. The reform movements came first.

14.11 Brahmo Samaj. Led by Rammohun Roy (1772-1833). Synthesized Islamic monotehism, Upanishadic idealism and Christian ethics. He campaigned against idolatry, polytheism and sati. He attacked the doctrine of the trinity as polytheistic. He founded the Brahmo Samaj which was open to all castes and creeds.

Debendranath Tagore (1817 - 1905) and Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884) played important roles in the movement.

14.12 M.G.Ranade (1842 - 1901), and G.K. Gokhale (1866 - 1915) were great Hindu reformers.

14.2 Revival Movements. Revival movements seeking to reform Hinduism followed.

13.21 Ramakrishbna Mission Movement. Led by Sri Ramakrishna, a brahman mystic of humble education, and popularized by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) who extolled the spiritual superiority of India at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893.

14.22 Arya Samaj. Founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), a brahman of Gujarat. He opposed idolatry, the inequality of women, untouchability and child marriage on the grounds that they lacked Vedic sanction. He taught the exclusive authority of the 4 Vedas.

14.23 Aurobindo Ghose (1872 - 1950), and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were great Hindu revivalists.

14.3 Exporting Hinduism. In this century Hinduism has begun to be a missionary religion - something it long rejected - and Indian gurus have found fertile soil in sections of western societies tired of western materialism, and seeking a mystical experience. These gurus include such persons as Maharushi Maheshvaram, founder of Transcendental Meditation; Bala Yogi; and Rajaneesh who exports tantric thought; and such movements as Hari Krishna and the Ramakrishna Mission.