

A woman prays in the Ganges (right). The colors of marigolds floating in the water (left) have symbolic meaning.



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

River Waters Bring Salvation

“Thus said the God of Fire:—Now I shall describe the sanctity of the river Ganges, which imparts to men enjoyment of earthly cheers in this life and salvation in the next. The countries which the Ganges meanders through should be deemed as hallowed [holy] grounds. The river Ganges is the earthly door to salvation to men who long for emancipation [freedom] from this prison house of life. . . . Hundreds, nay thousands, of impious [immoral] persons become sinless and pure, by seeing, touching, or drinking of the river Ganges.”

—*Agni Puranam*, a Hindu sacred text

Focus Question In what ways were religion and society intertwined in ancient India?

Hinduism and Buddhism

Objectives

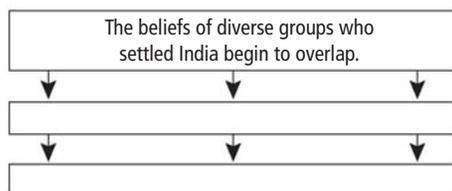
- Outline the essential beliefs of Hinduism.
- Analyze how the caste system shaped India.
- Understand the key teachings of the Buddha.
- Explore how Buddhism grew and changed as it spread beyond India.

Terms, People, and Places

atman	caste
moksha	Siddhartha Gautama
reincarnation	Four Noble Truths
karma	Eightfold Path
dharmā	nirvana
ahimsa	sect

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence Keep track of the development of Hinduism and Buddhism by filling in a flowchart like the one below with important stages, in the order they occurred.



Thousands of years ago, two major religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—emerged in ancient India. The ethical and spiritual messages of both religions profoundly shaped Indian civilization.

The Beliefs of Hinduism Develop

Unlike most major religions, Hinduism has no single founder and no single sacred text. Instead, it grew out of the overlapping beliefs of the diverse groups who settled India. The process probably began when the Aryans added the gods of the Indus civilization to their own. Later people brought other gods, beliefs, and practices. As a result, Hinduism became one of the world’s most complex religions, with countless gods and goddesses and many forms of worship existing side by side. Despite this diversity, all Hindus share certain basic beliefs.

One Force Underlies Everything “God is one, but wise people know it by many names.” This ancient proverb reflects the Hindu belief that everything is part of the unchanging, all-powerful spiritual force called brahman. Hindus worship a variety of gods who give concrete form to brahman. The most important Hindu gods are Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Shiva, the Destroyer. Each can take many forms, human or animal, to represent the various aspects of brahman with which he is associated. Some Hindus also worship various forms of the powerful goddess Shakti. She is both kind and cruel, a creator and a destroyer.

Sacred Texts Reveal Hindu Beliefs Over many hundreds of years, Hindu teachings were recorded in the sacred texts of the Vedas. The Upanishads (oo PAN ih shadz) are a section of the Vedas that address mystical questions related to Hinduism. These sacred texts use vivid images to examine complex ideas about the human soul and the connectedness of all life. In addition, literary works such as the *Bhagavad-Gita* were also revered for their representations of Hindu beliefs.

Achieving Moksha Is the Goal of Life To Hindus, every person has an essential self, or **atman** (AHT mun). Some view it as the same as brahman and others as a form of brahman. The ultimate goal of existence, Hindus believe, is achieving **moksha** (MAHK shuh), or union with brahman. To do that, individuals must free themselves from selfish desires that separate them from brahman. Most people cannot achieve moksha in one lifetime, but Hindus believe in **reincarnation**, or the rebirth of the soul in another bodily form. Reincarnation allows people to continue working toward moksha through several lifetimes.

In each existence, Hindus believe, a person can come closer to achieving moksha by obeying the law of karma. **Karma** refers to all the actions of a person's life that affect his or her fate in the next life. To Hindus, all existence is ranked. Humans are closest to brahman. Then come animals, plants, and objects like rocks or water. People who live virtuously earn good karma and are reborn at a higher level of existence. Those who do evil acquire bad karma and are reborn into suffering at a lower level of existence. In Indian art, this cycle of death and rebirth is symbolized by the image of the wheel.

To escape the wheel of fate, Hinduism stresses the importance of **dharma** (DAHR muh), the religious and moral duties of an individual. These duties vary according to class, occupation, gender, and age. Another key moral principle of Hinduism is **ahimsa** (uh HIM sah), or nonviolence. To Hindus, all people and things are aspects of brahman and therefore deserve to be respected. Many Hindus try to follow the path of ahimsa.

Key Hindu Gods



▲ Brahma, the Creator



▲ Vishnu, the Preserver



▲ Shiva, the Destroyer

Artisans covered each Hindu temple with masterful carvings, including depictions of the various forms of the god to whom a temple was dedicated. This temple at Somnathpur honors Vishnu.

Jainism Develops From Hinduism About 500 B.C., the teacher Mahavira (mah hah VEE ruh) founded Jainism (JY niz um), a religion that grew out of Hindu traditions and that is still practiced today. Mahavira rejected the idea that Brahmin priests alone could perform certain sacred rites. Jain teachings emphasize meditation, self-denial, and an extreme form of ahimsa. To avoid accidentally killing a living thing, even an insect, Jains carry brooms to sweep the ground in front of their feet.

 **Checkpoint** How do the Hindu gods relate to brahman?

The Caste System Shapes India

As you read in Section 1, the Aryans divided society into four groups. Non-Aryans held the lowest jobs. During the Vedic Age, class divisions moved more toward reflecting social and economic roles than ethnic differences between Aryans and non-Aryans. As these changes occurred, they led to a more complex system of **castes**, or social groups into which people are born and which can rarely be changed.

Complex Rules Uphold the Caste System Caste was closely linked to Hindu beliefs. To Hindus, people in different castes were different species of beings. A high-caste Brahmin, for example, was purer and therefore closer to moksha than someone from a lower caste. To ensure spiritual purity, a web of complex caste rules governed every aspect of life—for example, where people lived, what they ate, how they dressed, and how they earned a living. Rules forbade marrying outside one’s caste or eating with members of another caste. High-caste people had the strictest rules to protect them from the spiritually polluted, or impure, lower castes. Because they had jobs such as digging graves, cleaning streets, or turning animal hides into leather, some people were considered so impure that they were called “untouchables.”

For the untouchables, today called dalits, life was harsh and restricted. Other castes feared that contact with an untouchable could spread pollution. Untouchables had to live apart and to sound a wooden instrument called a clapper to warn of their approach.

Caste Affects the Social Order Despite its inequalities, caste ensured a stable social order. People believed that the law of karma determined their caste. While they could not change their status in this life, they could reach a higher state in a future life by faithfully fulfilling the duties of their present caste.

The caste system gave many people a sense of identity and interdependence. Each caste had its own occupation and its own leaders. Caste members cooperated to help one another. In addition, each caste had its own special role in Indian society as a whole. Although strictly separated, different castes depended on one another for their basic needs. A lower-caste carpenter, for example, built the home of a higher-caste scholar. The caste system also adapted to changing conditions.

Over time, many additional castes and subcastes evolved. As people migrated into the subcontinent, they formed new castes. Other castes grew out of new occupations and religions. This flexibility allowed people with diverse customs to live side by side in relative harmony. By modern times, there were thousands of major castes and subcastes.

 **Checkpoint** How did caste provide a sense of order in society?

THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Central to Buddhism is the idea that one must live a moral life. Over the centuries, as many Buddhists have strived to do this, they have taken lessons from the life and actions of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. Reminders of the Buddha's traits and actions abound in Asia and throughout the world in the form of sculpture both colossal and small, paintings, and literature. A few climactic scenes from the Buddha's life are repeated consistently in this art.

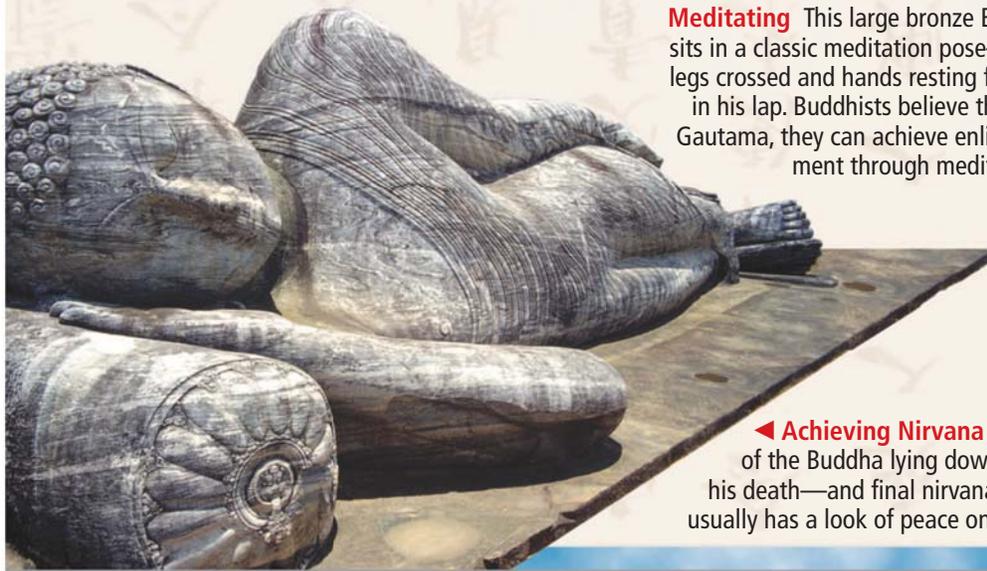


▲ **Gaining Awareness** In this illustration, Prince Gautama sees a dead man for the first time. From this and other journeys out of the palace, Gautama was inspired to abandon his life of privilege—a model many Buddhists attempt to follow.

Meditating This large bronze Buddha sits in a classic meditation pose—with legs crossed and hands resting face up in his lap. Buddhists believe that like Gautama, they can achieve enlightenment through meditation. ▶



◀ **Achieving Nirvana** Artwork of the Buddha lying down depicts his death—and final nirvana. In it he usually has a look of peace on his face.



Key Teachings of the Buddha

In the foothills of the Himalayas, a reformer appeared named **Siddhartha Gautama** (suh DAHR tuh gow TUH muh). His teachings eventually spread across Asia to become the core beliefs of one of the world's most influential religions, Buddhism.

From Boy to Buddha Gautama's early life is known mostly through various religious writings and literature. He was born a prince about 563 B.C. According to tradition, his mother dreamed that a radiant white elephant descended to her from heaven. Signs such as this led a prophet to predict that the boy would someday become a wandering holy man. To prevent that—in hopes of his son one day becoming a ruler—Gautama's father kept him in the family's palaces, surrounded by comfort and luxury. At age 16, Gautama married a beautiful woman and enjoyed a happy life.

Thinking Critically

1. **Make Generalizations** Why do you think Buddhists find it important to tell the story of the Buddha's life in art?
2. **Recognize Ideologies** Which of the basic beliefs of Buddhism are revealed in the Buddha sculptures shown here?

At age 29, Gautama's life changed. One day he took a ride beyond the palace gardens and saw an old man. On following rides, he also saw a sick person and a dead body. For the first time, Gautama became aware of human suffering. Deeply disturbed, he bade farewell to his family and left the palace, never to return. He set out to discover "the realm of life where there is neither suffering nor death."

Gautama wandered for years, seeking answers from Hindu scholars and holy men whose ideas failed to satisfy him. He fasted and meditated. At some point, he took a seat under a large tree, determined to stay there until he understood the mystery of life. Throughout the night, legend tells, evil spirits tempted Gautama to give up his meditations, but he fended them off. When he rose, he believed he understood the cause of and cure for suffering and sorrow. He was no longer Gautama; he had become the Buddha, or "Enlightened One."

Following the Four Noble Truths The Buddha spent the rest of his life teaching others what he had learned. In his first sermon after reaching enlightenment, he explained the **Four Noble Truths** that lie at the heart of Buddhism:

1. All life is full of suffering, pain, and sorrow.
2. The cause of suffering is nonvirtue, or negative deeds and mindsets such as hatred and desire.
3. The only cure for suffering is to overcome nonvirtue.
4. The way to overcome nonvirtue is to follow the Eightfold Path.

The Buddha described the **Eightfold Path** as "right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation." The first two steps involved understanding the Four Noble Truths and committing oneself to the Eightfold Path. Next, a person had to live a moral life, avoiding evil words and actions. Through meditation, a person might at last achieve enlightenment. For the Buddhist, the final goal is **nirvana**, or union with the universe and release from the cycle of rebirth.

The Buddha saw the Eightfold Path as a middle way between a life devoted to pleasure and one based on harsh self-denial. He stressed moral principles such as honesty, charity, and kindness to all living creatures.

Comparing Buddhism and Hinduism Buddhism grew from the same traditions as Hinduism. Both Hindus and Buddhists stressed non-violence and believed in karma, dharma, and a cycle of rebirth. Yet the religions differed in several ways. Instead of focusing on the priests, formal rituals, and many gods of Hinduism, the Buddha urged each person to seek enlightenment through meditation. Buddhists also rejected the caste system, offering the hope of nirvana to all regardless of birth.

 **Checkpoint** What did Gautama hope to learn when he left home?

Buddhism Spreads Beyond India

The Buddha attracted many disciples, or followers, who accompanied him as he preached across northern India. Many men and women who accepted the Buddha's teachings set up monasteries and convents for meditation and study. Some Buddhist monasteries grew into major centers of learning.

Vocabulary Builder

aspiration—(as puh RAY shun) *n.* desire or ambition to achieve something

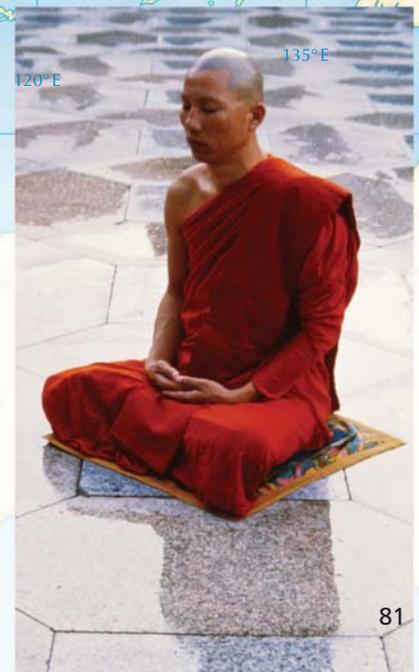
Spread of Buddhism to A.D. 500

Map Skills Missionaries and merchants spread Buddhism to many parts of Asia. It still thrives there today—though it is not practiced much in India.

1. Locate (a) India (b) China (c) Sri Lanka (d) Korea

2. Movement How did Buddhism spread to Japan?

3. Synthesize Information Looking at both maps, which arrows on the large map do you think represent the spread of Theravada Buddhism?



A Buddhist monk today, meditating.



Buddhist Stupas

Relics of the Buddha and other holy people are housed in Buddhist stupas, or large dome-shaped shrines like the Great Stupa at Sanchi, above. While stupas are quite plain, their gateways feature elaborate carvings that tell stories of the Buddha's life.

Collecting the Buddha's Teachings Legend holds that at age 80, the Buddha ate spoiled food. As he lay dying, he told his disciples, "Decay is inherent in all things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." After the Buddha's death, his followers collected his teachings into the *Tripitaka*, or "Three Baskets of Wisdom." One of the "baskets" includes sayings like this one, which echoes the Hindu emphasis on duty: "Let a man, after he has discerned his own duty, be always attentive to his duty." Other sayings give the Buddha's version of the golden rule: "Overcome anger by not growing angry. Overcome evil with good. Overcome the liar by truth."

Buddhism Spreads and Divides Missionaries and traders spread Buddhism across India to many parts of Asia. Gradually, Buddhism split into two major **sects**, or subgroups. These were Theravada (thehr uh VAH duh) Buddhism and Mahayana (mah huh YAH nuh) Buddhism.

Theravada Buddhism closely followed the Buddha's original teachings. It required a life devoted to hard spiritual work. Only the most dedicated seekers, such as monks and nuns, could hope to reach nirvana. The Theravada sect spread to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

The Mahayana sect made Buddhism easier for ordinary people to follow. Even though the Buddha had forbidden followers to worship him, Mahayana Buddhists pictured him and other holy beings as compassionate gods. People turned to these gods for help in solving daily problems as well as in achieving salvation. While the Buddha had said little about the nature of nirvana, Mahayana Buddhists described an afterlife filled with many heavens and hells. Mahayana Buddhism spread to China, Tibet, Korea, and Japan.

Buddhism Declines in India Although Buddhism took firm root across Asia, it slowly declined in India. Hinduism eventually absorbed some Buddhist ideas and made room for Buddha as another Hindu god. A few Buddhist centers survived until the 1100s, when they fell to Muslim armies that invaded India.

 **Checkpoint** How do you think the collecting of the Buddha's teachings helped the religion to spread beyond India?

SECTION 2 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0321

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence

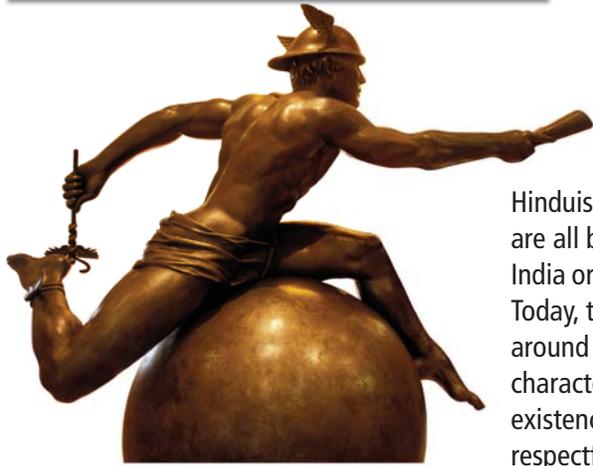
Use your completed flowchart to answer the Focus Question: In what ways were religion and society intertwined in ancient India?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Summarize** Explain the roles of karma, dharma, and reincarnation in the process of achieving moksha.
4. **Analyze Information** What aspects of the caste system relate to basic Hindu beliefs?
5. **Recognize Ideologies** According to the Buddha, how can people escape worldly suffering?
6. **Draw Conclusions** What about Mahayana teachings do you think appealed to many people?

Writing About History

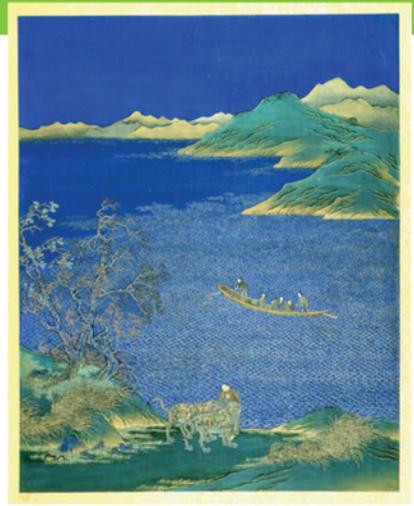
Quick Write: Gather Details On some essay tests, you may be asked to compare and contrast two topics that you have studied. Before you write a response, you may find it useful to gather details related to the two topics and create a graphic organizer to compare and contrast those details. Gather details about Hinduism and Buddhism and create a graphic organizer to compare and contrast them.



▲ The Greek god Hermes is shown here as a messenger.

What major belief systems have emerged over time?

Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism are all belief systems that originated in ancient India or China and that still attract many followers. Today, thousands of different belief systems exist around the world. Most of them share certain characteristics—for example, belief in the existence of spiritual powers such as gods and respectful worship by followers, often through prayer. Belief systems vary in whether their followers worship gods and if so, how many, as the following examples show:



▲ Many Daoists painted peaceful nature scenes like this one.

Many Gods

The earliest belief systems focused on the idea that a powerful spirit inhabited every element of nature. In later belief systems, followers often worshiped gods associated with natural forces—such as sun, rain, or fire—or forces related to life and death. Of the many Hindu gods, the three most important are a creator, a preserver, and a destroyer. Other belief systems, such as those of the Greeks and Romans, identified each god with human characteristics and behaviors. For example, the Greek god Hermes was known as a trickster and a thief.

One God

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share the belief that one god created the universe and rules over it. Jews believe that God’s law is clear—“You shall have no other gods before me.” Jesus, among whose followers Christianity developed, was a Jew. For that reason, much of the Jewish belief system was incorporated into Christianity, including its monotheism. Muslims, or followers of Islam, believe they should serve God by accepting five basic duties. The first is the daily declaration of faith that “there is no God but Allah.”

No Gods

Other major belief systems have no gods. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, for example, all arose in response to the inspiring ideas of wise, human teachers. Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, stressed moral principles that would lead people to a state of enlightenment. Confucius offered guidelines about how to live virtuously, his goal being to ensure social order and good government. Laozi, who was believed to be Daoism’s founder, taught his followers how to live in harmony with nature.



An Italian artist depicted the Christian God as a father in this painting. ▶

Thinking Critically

- Analyze Information** Do you think there is at least one element that all belief systems have in common? If so, what is it?
- Connections to Today** Do research to learn more about one of the belief systems described above. Write a summary telling how many people follow this belief system today, and in which countries.