# *The Religions of India*

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## They are philosophical and psychological rather than historical and ethical/social in their emphasis. Salvation is the resolution of all conflicts by elimination of the ego and ignorance; by escape or release from this world to eternal Unity with the one supreme reality. Salvation is the elimination of personality and its limitations rather than the rewarding of it.

# Hinduism:

# Basic Nature of:

## a family of religions

### Vedaism (or Brahmanism) & Tantrism

### ancient & modern

## one common bond: the Upanishads’ message:

### Brahman & Maya

### All is a manifestation of the ONE Reality

### Salvation is “moksha” (also called “mukti”)

## World-negating and World-affirming … dual roles of Hinduism

## A World-negating religion

### Meaning: this world is illusory and unreal

### Life is samsara: unending cycles of death and rebirth

### escape from this into eternal unity with Brahman is salvation = moksha

## A Practical Religion & Way of Life ... to attain order in this world as creatures in Maya, and to gain release from this world & this veil of ignorance (avidya) as we are essentially Brahman / Atman

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## Scriptures:

### Vedas

### Brahmanas

### Upanishads

### Dharma Shastras (Law Books)

### Puranas

### Epics: Ramayana & the Mahabharata

### The Baghavad Gita

### The Tantras

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## The Cosmos

### 14 layered universe in the sea of existence of an infinite number of universes

### cycles of time and space

### no plan, purpose, or intelligence controlling things

### Dharma is the law and order of the cosmos, extending to all things, including humans.

### gods are created/ they are roles to be filled

### Humanity’s place is insignificant in all this... not as in the Biblical view where humanity is at the center and history is in god’s hands for the sake of humanity’s evolution to paradise.

### Lila = the play of Brahman

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## Human Nature

### Body and jiva

### Atman (Brahman)

### Life cycles = samsara

### Reincarnation/ transmigration

### Karma ... moral energy/ causal laws which propel the jiva through its cycles.

### progress of the jiva is the goal... towards spiritual insight or super consciousness

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## The Tri-Varga: 3 goals for man as creature:

### 1. Artha ... material concerns: business and politics

### 2. Kama ... senses/ aesthetics/ pleasures

### 3. Dharma ... ethics/ morality

#### a) varna dharma

#### b) manava dharma

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## The Apvarga: Ultimate goal ... salvation ... for the human creature is release from samsara; unity with Brahman; release or escape from Maya and ignorance (avidya).

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### Four Ashramas / Four Stages in Life

#### The Path of Desires:

##### **1. Student**

##### **2. Householder**

#### The Path of Renunciation

##### **3. Forest dweller**

##### **4. Sannyasin**

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### The Four Yogas to suit different levels of spiritual adeptness (adhikara)

#### Bhakti ... devotion

#### Karma ... works/ ethics & action

#### Jnana ... wisdom / vidya

#### Raja ... meditation/ discipline