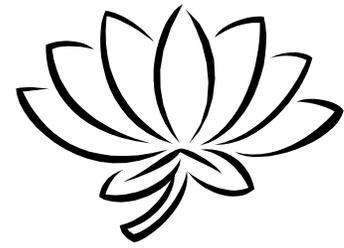


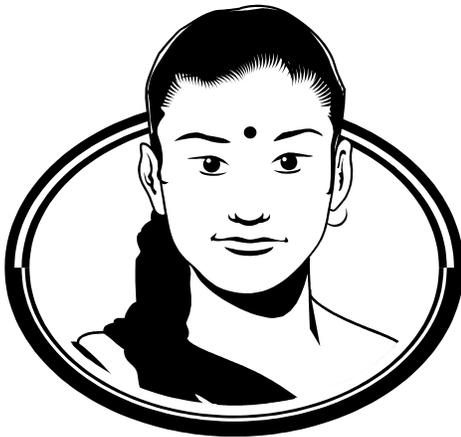
The Origins of Hinduism



In the following passages are short explanations of the historical background information on the origins or beginnings of Hinduism. The passages will answer the following questions:

- ⊗ Who are the Aryans?
 - ⊗ Where did they settle?
 - ⊗ What are the Vedas?
-

The Aryan Invasion



Historians have found proof that people already live in the Indus River Valley. Some believe that the civilization living there was being to struggle. Historians have suggested that the Indus Valley civilization might have begin to fall apart when the Aryan tribes migrated to the river valley. The Aryans migrated to that area around 3000 B.C.E. The Aryans are believed to be a group of fierce warrior-like people. This powerful group of people traveled though the dangerous Khyber Pass in the Hindu Kush Mountains and the Himalayas into the Indus Valley. They arrived with a very different belief system and way of life.

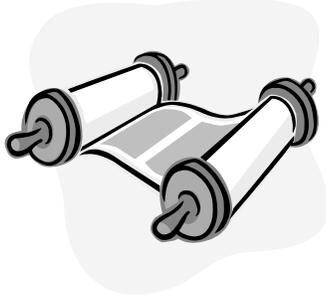
Unlike the native people of the Indus Valley, the Aryans were not agricultural people. They were warriors and created bronze weapons. Another major difference was their religious beliefs. The Aryans worshipped only male gods. The Aryans central god was a "sky father." Priests wrote poetry to the Aryans sun gods Agni and Indra to be spoken during sacrifices.

When the Aryan settled in the Indus Valley they keep their religious practices. The native people of the Indus Valley incorporated the Aryans beliefs into their religious practices. From the mixture of the people of Indus Valley and the Aryans beliefs and practices the religion of Hinduism was formed.

The Origins of Hinduism (continued)

The Vedas

When the Aryans arrived in the Indus Valley they brought the foundational book of the Hindu belief system called the Vedas. The Vedas are thought to be the world's oldest writings. The scriptures of the Vedas were created before the Aryans migrated to the Indus River Valley. After time the Vedas was broken into four books. The four books are the Rig-Vedas, the Yajur-Vedas, the Sama-Vedas, and the Atharva-Vedas. The oldest and popular book is the Rig-Vedas which is a collection of hymns that dates back to the early 5000 BCE.



Just like many other sacred writings of this time the Vedas was passed down orally. People took time to memorize the information from the Vedas. Overtime the Vedas was written into the ancient language of Sanskrit. Sanskrit was a language developed by the Aryans living in the Indus River Valley.

The Rig-Vedas tells of 33 gods. All of the gods are created from one major all powerful spirit, Brahman. After Brahman is the Hindu Trinity which is Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. Besides having gods Hinduism also has goddesses. Three of the most important goddesses are Lakshmi, Sarasvati, and Kali. The Hindu gods and goddesses that are discussed in the Rig-Vedas each have different characteristics and personalities. Many of the Hindu deities (gods or goddesses) were born into many different forms.

