

**God Dreaming:  
The Origins and Early Development of Hindu Culture:**

I. The Hindu Synthesis

A. Harappan (Indus River Valley) Civilization (2500–1800 B.C.)

1. Cities: Mohenjodaro and Harappa
2. “Deciphered” script < Dravidian (Elamite?)
3. Religion: Lord Śiva and Bhakti yoga (The Way of Devotion or Meditation)
4. Types of guesses for its decline
  - a. natural—river floods? weather? earthquakes?
  - b. internal human—civicide?
  - c. external human—Aryan invaders? (Mortimer Wheeler)

B. The *Vedas* (1200–900 B.C.) Brahminism (The Way of Action or Ritual)

1. The *Rig Veda*
2. Time that the *Mahābhārata* describes
3. Four Estates (*Varna*)
  - a. *brahmin*—priests
  - b. *kshatriya*—warriors
  - c. *vaishya*—merchants (declass —outcast[e]s)
  - d. *shudra*—peasants

C. The *Upanishads* (*Vedantas*) (800–200 B.C.): Brahmanism (The Way of Knowledge)

1. What is your nature?—“Tat tvam asi” = “That you are”
2. Brahman—the Holy Power of the universe
3. Key Concepts
  - a. *samsāra*—“constantly changing,” “flowing together,” rebirth, suffering
  - b. *Ātman*—the Self; Spirit or *Brahman* within each person
  - c. *sanyasi*—one who renounces
  - d. *māyā*—magic, enchantment
  - e. *karma*—the innerconnectedness of everything to everything else

D. Hinduism (The Way of Devotion)

1. The Principle Hindu Divinities
  - a. Brahmā—the Lord of Creation
  - b. Vishnu—the Preserver and Protector of Creation
  - c. Shiva—the Destroyer of Creation, Lord of the Dance
2. “330 million gods” (some of them, anyway)
  - a. Kālī—consort of Shiva; provider and taker of life forms; bloodthirsty
  - b. shakti—personifications of dynamic, active forces of the universe (feminine)
  - c. Krishna—incarnation (*avatār*) of Vishnu; demon slayer; cowgirl lover
  - d. Sarasvatī—goddess of wisdom; patron of artists, scholars; wife of Brahmā
  - e. Satī—wife of Shiva; immolated herself
  - f. Rāma—incarnation of Shiva; hero of *Rāmāyana*; masculine virtue and power

g. Lakshmi—goddess of good fortune, wealth, prosperity; wife of Vishnu

E. Synthesis of Bhaktism, Brahminism, and Brahmanism (ca. 200 B.C.)

1. *Kama*—sense gratification, erotic love, desire
  - a. The *Kama Sutra* of Vatsyayana
2. *Artha*—practical skills of public and private life, acquisition of wealth
  - a. The *Atharva Veda*
  - b. The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya
3. *Dharma*—duty, righteousness, law, vocation
  - a. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (ca. 200 B.C.)
  - b. The *Rock and Pillar Edicts* of Ashoka
  - c. The *Laws of Manu* (ca. 4th century B.C.)
  - d. The *Ramayana* of Valmiki
4. *Moksha*—transcending the sensual world, liberation from suffering and rebirth

II. Jainism—Vardhamana Mahavira (ca. 599–ca. 527 B.C.)

III. The Buddhist Challenge

A. Buddhism

1. Hinayana (“Lesser Vehicle”) ≈ Theravada
2. Mahayana (“Greater Vehicle”)

B. Maurya Dynasty

1. Chandragupta (321–297 B.C. [or 317–293 B.C.]
2. Ashoka (269–232 B.C. [or 273–237 B.C.]
  - a. Battle of Kalinga (262 B.C. or 265 B.C.)
  - b. Rock Edict
  - c. The Way of Renunciation

IV. Brahman Counteroffensive (1st to 3rd centuries A.D.)

*Recommended Reading:*

- E. C. L. During Caspers, “Sumer, Coastal Arabia and the Indus Valley in Protoliterate and Early Dynastic Eras,” *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22 (1979), 121–135.
- P. S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, 1979
- J. Kennedy, “The Child Krishna, Christianity, and the Gujars,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, October 1907, pp. 951–991.
- Lorinser, “Traces in the Bhagavad-Gita of Christian Writings and Ideas,” *Indian Antiquary. A Journal of Oriental Research*, 2 (1873), 283–296.
- G. L. Possehl, ed. *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, 1979.
- K. H. Potter, *Guide to Indian Philosophy*, 1988.
- Romilla Thaper, “Ethics, Religion, and Social Protest in the First Millennium B.C. in North India,” *Daedalus*, 104 (1975), 119–132.

E. Relationship to Christianity and Greek Philosophical Thought