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The ideological bases of Hinduism

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Census of India: Religions

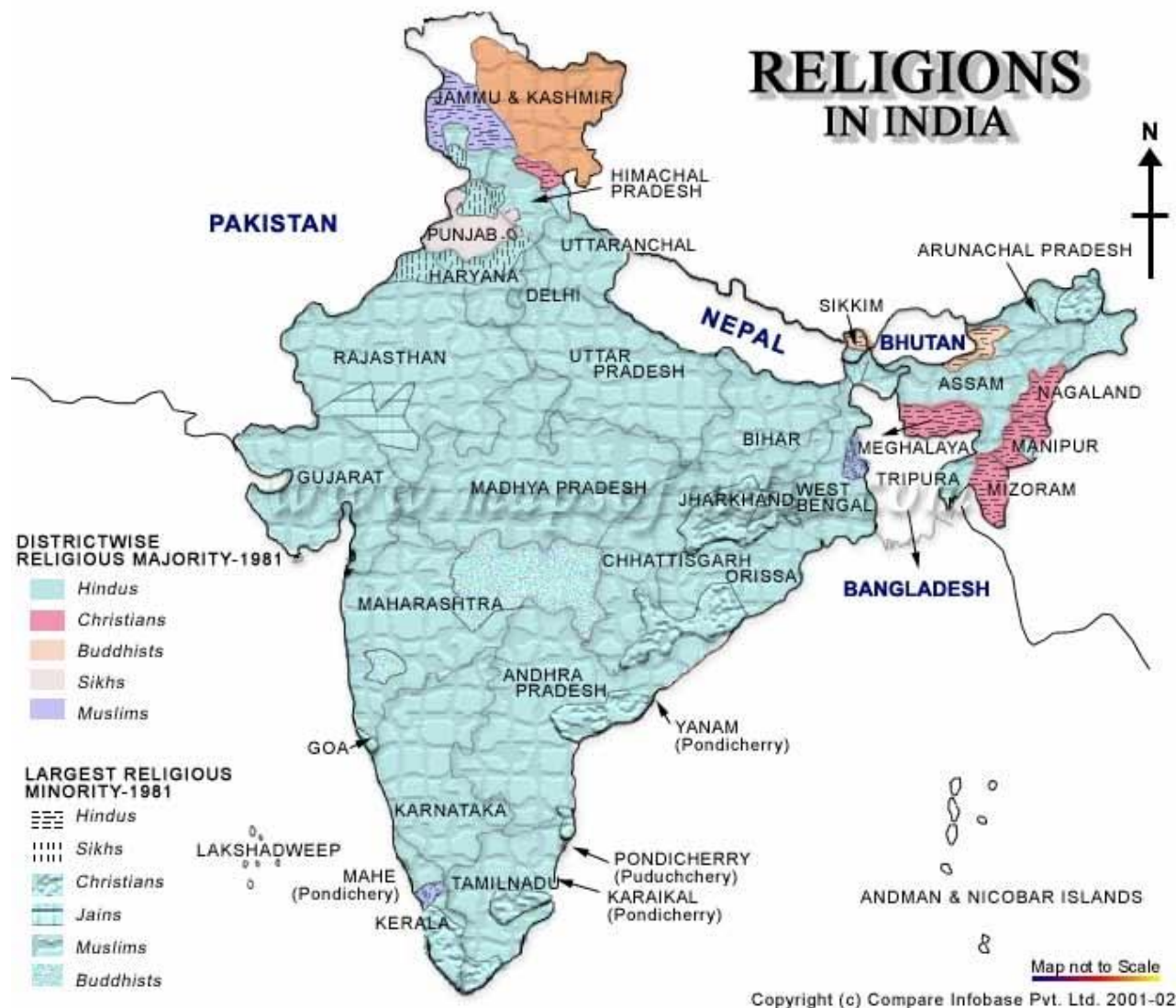
http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx

TABLE 21: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY RELIGION

Religion	Number	%
All religious communities	1,028,610,328	100.0
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Others	6,639,626	0.6
Religion not stated	727,588	0.1

Source : Religion, Census of India 2001

Religions in India



Religions in India



Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh)

Key concepts in Hinduism since the *Upaniṣads*

- *duḥkha* ‘existential suffering’
- The world is change: *jagat* ‘what moves’, *prakṛti* ‘transformation’
- A key question: is there a universal ‘true/reality’ (*satya*)?
- How to define *brahman*: *tad* ‘that’, *tad ekam* ‘the one’, *tad anantam* ‘the unlimited’, *nirguṇa* ‘lacking any quality’...
- *saṃsāra* ‘cycle of rebirth’
- *mokṣa* ‘liberation from the cycle of rebirth’
- *ātman* ‘the part of *brahman* that is in each human being’

The three ways to liberation since the *Bhagavadgītā*

- *jñānayoga* ‘yoga of knowledge’,
- *karmayoga* ‘yoga of (unselfish) action’,
- *bhaktiyoga* ‘yoga of devotion’.

The four *aśramas* (stages of life)

- *brahmacārin* ‘student’,
- *gṛhastha* ‘householder’,
- *vanaprastha* ‘hermit’,
- *saṃnyāsin* ‘ascet’

The four *purusharthas* (fundamental goals of life)

- *moksha* 'delivrance',
- *dharma* 'duty',
- *artha* 'wealth',
- *kama* 'love'

Some key concepts of Hinduism

- *Dharma* 'religious duty':

svadharma (conduct that is right for one's *jati* or station)

ashramadharma (conduct that is right for his stage of life)

kuladharmā (conduct that is right for his own family)

appadharmā (conduct that is right in moment of crisis)

Castes in India: religious basis

Puruṣasūkta (RV 10.90) [transl. by R. Griffith]:

11 When they divided Puruṣa how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

12 The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made. His thighs became the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śūdra was produced.

Castes in India: religious basis

Bhagavadgītā 41-44 (transl. by J. Mascaro):

[41] The works of Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are different, in harmony with the three powers of their born nature.

[42] The works of a Brahmin are peace; self-harmony, austerity, and purity; loving-forgiveness and righteousness; vision and wisdom and faith.

[43] These are the works of a Kṣatriya: a heroic mind, inner fire, constancy, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and noble leadership.

[44] Trade, agriculture and the rearing of cattle is the work of a Vaishya. And the work of the Shudra is service.

Castes in India: religious basis

Law Code of Manu [transl. by G. Buhler]

2.155. The seniority of Brahmanas is from (sacred) knowledge, that of Kshatriyas from valour, that of Vaisyas from wealth in grain (and other goods), but that of Sudras alone from age.

Castes in India

Upper castes (<i>dvija</i> 'twice born')	<i>brahmans</i> priests
	<i>kṣatriyas</i> 'warriors'
	<i>vaiśyas</i> 'merchants, cattle-herders and artisans'
Low caste	<i>śūdras</i> 'servants'
No caste	<i>dalits</i>

Brahmans



Temple at Bubhaneshwar

Indian constitution and castes

- 15.** (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
- (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to—
- access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or
 - the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

The importance of hierarchy

“[F]or an Indian, superior and subordinate relationships have the character of eternal verity and moral imperative – (and the) automatic reverence for superiors is a nearly universal psycho-social fact.”

(S. Kakar, *The Indian Psyche*, New Delhi 1996)

The importance of hierarchy



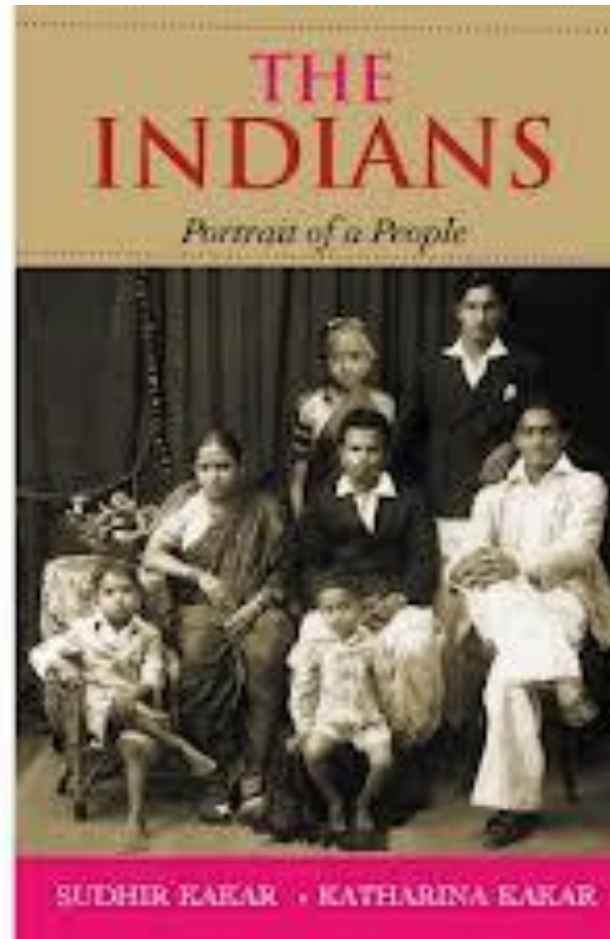
Apni aukat mat bhulo 'Don't forget your status'

Tradition vs. innovation

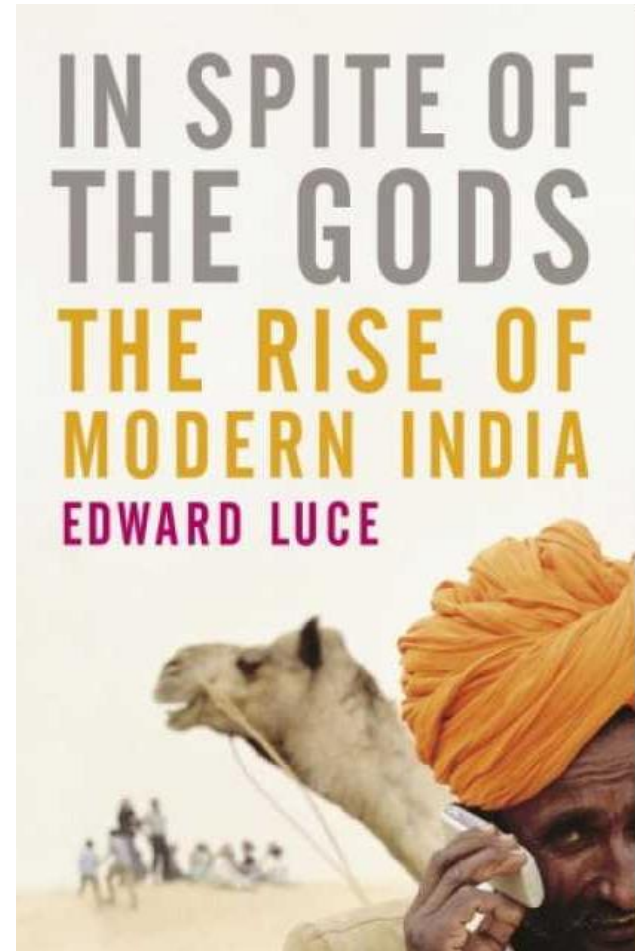
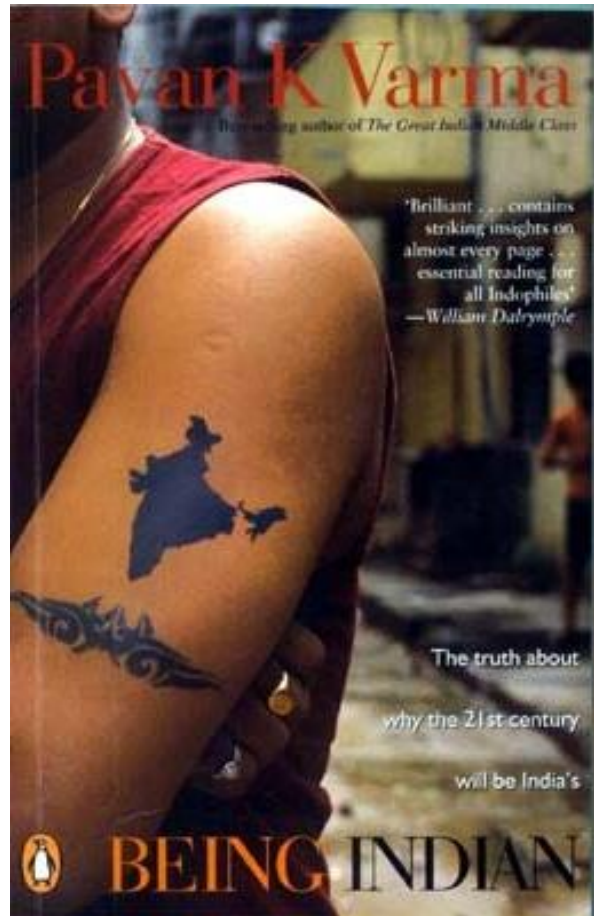
Societies change, but there are limits to change. Certain traits, which are the products of centuries of conditioning, do not change, and it is these that provide the distinct cultural label to a people. Others can be diluted or modified. Some new ones can, perhaps, be added, but they are mostly 'adds-on', scaffolding on a largely unalterable edifice. **It is this combination of (mostly) the old, and something of the new, that people carry as their cultural baggage in the journey towards the future.**

(P. K. Varma, *Being Indian*, New Delhi 2004)

Recommended readings (I)



Recommended readings (II)



Recommended readings (II)

