

1 ☐ Lecture 1

Overview of Indian Culture &
The Origins of Indian Philosophy

2 ☐ The Dravidians

- indigenous people of the Indian sub-continent
- civilization probably began *circa* 3000 BCE in lower Indus River Valley (Pakistan)
- eventually spread to about 1/3 of present-day India

3 ☐ The Aryans

- The Aryans arrived in India *circa* 1500 BCE
- Came from Europe / southern Russia
- Described themselves as tall, fair-skinned, blond-haired, and civilized

4 ☐ The Aryans: Advantages

- Civilization?
- War technology (esp. horse-drawn chariots)

5 ☐ The Aryans: Innovations

- Sanskrit
 - **aryan** = one who knows life's value

6 ☐ The *Vedas*

- **vedas** = "body of knowledge"
- Key Theme: symbiotic relationship between gods and humans

7 ☐ *Rig Veda*

- Oldest of the *Vedas* (*circa* 1500 BCE)
- Perhaps oldest text in an Indoeuropean language
- Excerpt: Hymn of Origins (10.129)
- Verse 1: What is the absolute beginning?

8 ☐ *Rig Veda*

- Verse 2: The absolute beginning is a primordial oneness called THAT ONE
 - cannot be described in language
- NB: Contradicts *creation ex nihilo*

9 ☐ *Rig Veda*

- Verse 3: There is a lack of differentiation in this primordial wholeness.

10 ☐ *Rig Veda*

11 ☐ *Rig Veda*

12 ☐ The *Upanishads*

- Written by Brahmins dissatisfied with the this-worldly focus of *Vedas*
- Recorded between 1000 BCE and 500 BCE
- Contains more insights from native Dravidians
- **upanishads** = a sitting instruction at the feet of a master

13 ☐ *Vedas* vs. *Upanishads*

- 1 • *Vedas* focus on ritual practices
 - Reflective questioning, but no definite answers
 - Claims asserted without argument
- 2 • *Upanishads* focus on inner experience
 - Attempt to explain fundamental principles of existence
 - Attempt to provide reasons for claims

14 ☐ General Characteristics

1. Emphasis on introspective analysis

15 ☐ General Characteristics

2. Emphasis on ignorance as the key to other problems.
 - We are prevented from experiencing ultimate reality (THAT ONE) due to our ignorance of what ultimate reality is

16 ☐ General Characteristics

3. Emphasis on practices for gaining knowledge.
 - Yogic practices are designed to clear the mind, support a state of serene and detached awareness

17 ☐ General Characteristics

4. Strong devotional faith tradition
 - **bhakti yoga** = intense devotion to a personal manifestation of Brahman

(Statue of Shiva in meditation at Bangalore)

18 ☐ General Characteristics

5. Sharply analytical: technical terms, arguments and rules of logic, adversarial rhetoric

19 ☐ General Characteristics

7. Tendency toward a two-layered view of reality
 - world of sensory appearances (**maya**) vs. world of true reality

20 ☐ Note about Reading

- Primary texts are scaffolding, not the building itself.
- The texts do not make sense without the requisite background knowledge.

21 ☐ Reading for Next Time

- *The Upanishads*
 - Katha Upanishad: 55-66
 - Mandukya Upanishad: 83-85

Optional: Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad: 127-132