

World Religions

MS 6301

Monday

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Syllabus and Assignments

Nature of this course: to equip you to teach World Religions.

1. Thirteen lesson outlines, lecture notes, or handouts.
2. Exams
3. Research
4. Interaction with other scholars as your peers
 - a. Board 2 - news items
 - b. Board 3 - web sites survey
 - c. Board 4 - media survey
 - d. Board 5 - comparative religions - "Universal Christ"
 - e. Board 6 - bibliography for outlines
 - f. Board 7 - sharing outlines
5. Not self study - beware of deadlines

Grading

1. Grading Discussion Boards

- a. Board 2 - news items - 30 points
- b. Board 3 - web sites survey - 30 points
- c. Board 4 - media survey - 30 points
- d. Board 5 - comparative religions - “Universal Christ” - 30 points
- e. Board 6 - bibliography for outlines - 80 points

2. Grading the Research Log

- a. Board 2 - news items - 25 points
- b. Board 3 - web sites survey - 25 points
- c. Board 4 - media survey - 25 points
- d. Board 5 - comparative religions - “Universal Christ” - 25 points
- e. Board 6 - bibliography for outlines - 100 points

How to do Research

1. Use scholarly resources
2. Do not use only older resources although using them is permissible.
3. Hierarchy of sources:
 - a. General sources - e.g. encyclopedia article on Hinduism
 - b. Topical sources - e.g. world religions textbook on Hinduism
 - c. Secondary literature on the specific topic - e.g. scholarly journal article on your specific subject in Hinduism
 - d. Primary literature - e.g. the Vedas
4. Avoid provincial language and terminology
5. Avoid being preachy
6. Use an appropriate formal writing style
7. Avoid personal attacks; use logical, reasonable arguments and evidence

Why Study World Religions?

1. To learn some methods and tools for studying human belief.
2. To learn how to analyze belief systems from “outside the box.”
3. To prompt reflection upon one’s own belief system.
4. Because of the importance of religion.
5. Because of the joy of it.

The Sacred and the Profane

What is the sacred?

What is the profane?

What is religion?

Monothetic definitions

Polythetic definitions

Functional definitions

Durkheim - “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community...all those who adhere to them.”

Some Categories or Areas for Analyzing Religion

1. Sacred spaces or places
2. Sacred stories - beliefs
3. Sacred writings
4. Sacred rituals, acts, ceremonies
5. Sacred lifestyles
6. Sacred communities
7. Sacred experiences

Ways to Survey a Religion

1. Historical development

2. Worldview

3. Relation to other religions

Arnold Toynbee - "There is no one alive today who knows enough to say with confidence whether one religion has been greater than all others."

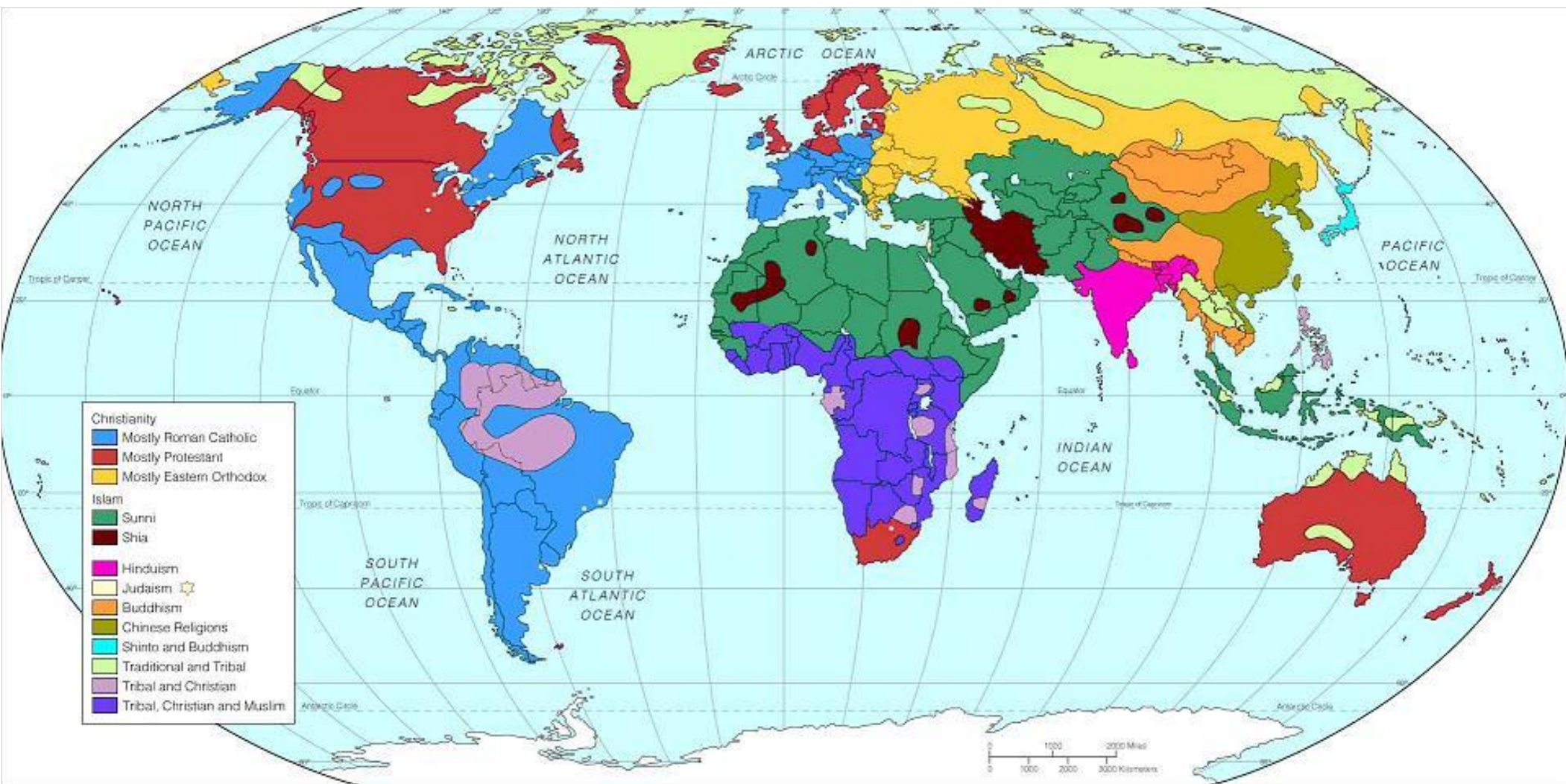
4. The instructor's approach in this course

Some ways to classify religions

Too broad, too much versus selection

Some numbers and geography

Pronunciation problems



Primitive Religions / Animism - 1

1. Definitions

"Animism is the doctrine which places the source of mental and even physical life in an energy independent of, or at least distinct from, the body....the belief in the existence of spiritual beings, some attached to bodies of which they constitute the real personality (souls), others without necessary connection with a determinate body (spirits)." Hastings's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*

2. Distribution throughout the world

"It is safe to say that, apart from revealed religion [Judaism, Christianity] some form of animistic belief has preceded all other human and historical religions." Anderson, *The World's Religions*, 10

3. Major beliefs

- a. Feelings of awe before that which is sacred.
- b. Anxiety in ritual.

Primitive Religions / Animism - 2

3. Major beliefs

c. Survival of human souls

"Not only does the savage possess an instinctive knowledge of the survival of the soul after death, but his primitive observation and reasoning would lead him to such a conclusion." Anderson, 11

d. Ancestor worship

"In much animistic belief the savage mind is torn between the love of those who have just passed on, and the fear of the potential danger they may prove to be to those who survive." Anderson, 12

e. Magic

f. Prayer

g. Divination

h. Taboo

"Never at any waking moment of day or night is the animist parted from consciousness that he is surrounded by a host of evil spirits who may ruin his crops, or inflict other misfortunes, unless he walks warily and observes the necessary taboos." Anderson, 18

Primitive Religions / Animism - 3

3. Major beliefs

i. Mana

"The African does not say that his charm is inhabited by a spirit, but that it is the container of a harnessed, pervasive energy." Anderson, 17

j. Veneration and worship of spirits

k. Naturism - worship of nature gods

"It is in the worship of the phenomena of Nature that the savage begins to pass beyond the realm of spirit worship to the personification of those major power--the sun, the moon and the stars." Anderson, 19

l. Purification rites

m. Sacrifices

"The common essence of heathenism is not a denying of God...but an ignoring of Him in the worship of natural powers and mysterious demonic powers through magic and magical sacrifices and ceremonies." in Anderson, 23

Primitive Religions

4. The effect of primitive religions on primitive people

5. Relation to the evolution of religious belief

a. "The primitive savage has always been found to possess the instinctive knowledge, not only that the human soul is immortal, but that there is a Creator, a Supreme Being, who is the maker of all things and holder of the key of life." Anderson, 22

b. "If the spirit worship which prevails among the Animists were the oldest religion of mankind, from which every other religion was developed by a long and laborious process, how could these religions, which represent the initial stage of development, derive any nourishment in that initial stage from the idea of a Supreme God, who should be the last member of a long series of acquisitions, laboriously won?...he has the idea of God; but the fact that this idea is but dimly apprehended proves that we are not dealing with a new idea, victoriously opening up new paths....The Animism of today gives us the impression of a religion that carries the marks of a fall, or a worship no longer understood, and become an empty ceremony." Warneck, *The Living Forces of the Gospel*, in Anderson, 23

c. "It would appear, therefore, that in forsaking the light he once possessed, the Animist has launched himself into a darkness of despair, from which he has no power to extricate himself." Anderson, 24



Jainism

Introductory historical and cultural / religious setting.

Vedas - Upanishads - Buddhism - Brahmanism

Kapila - Samkhya - Mahavira

Mahavira

Nataputta Vardhamana

Bihar - 599-527 B.C.

ahimsa

nirvana

Jina - the conqueror

the law of karma



Jainism

Moksha

Nirvana

“Man, you are your own friend. Why do you wish for a friend beyond yourself” - Mahavira.

Way of salvation

5 vows of ahimsa

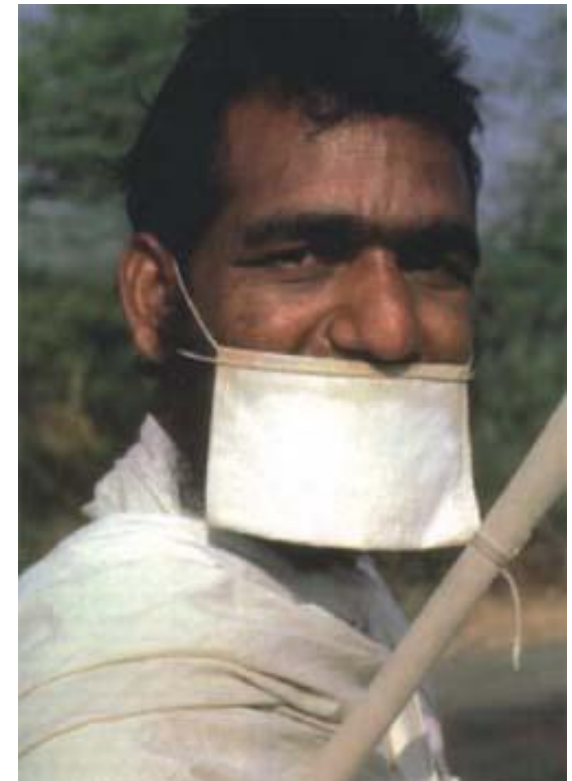
way of salvation for lay people - 12 part

Later history of Jainism

Tirthankara

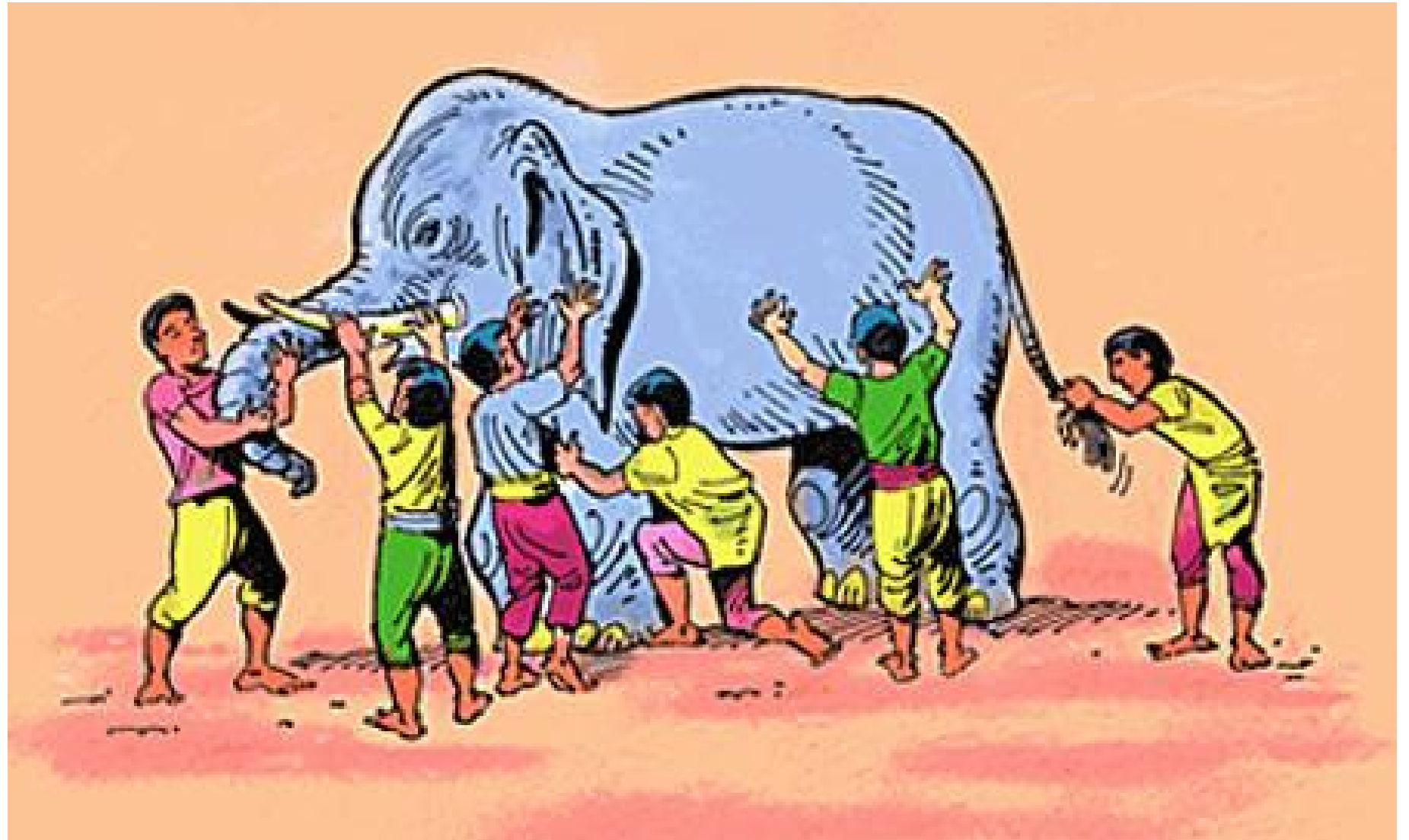
Digambaras - sky-clad

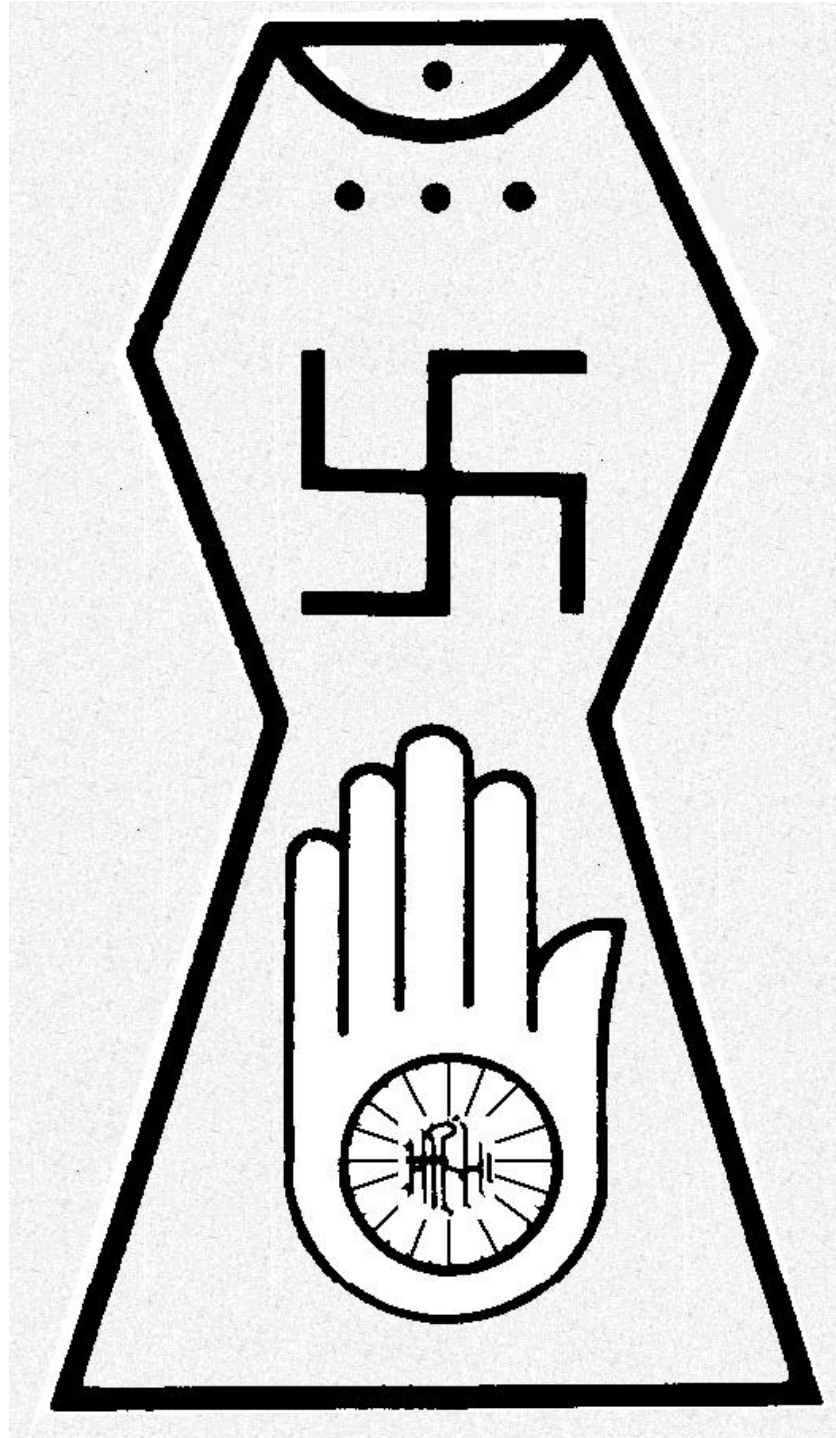
Svetambaras



BBC news photo







Hinduism

Is it a religion?

Who is a Hindu?

India's ability to synthesize.

Emphasis on the spiritual.

The term "Hindu".

The Vedic Age.

Before 1500 B.C.

Aryans

Aryans

pitar / pater / vater / father

matar / mater / mutter / mother

Hinduism

varna - color

Rig-Veda

Mahabharata

devas / deus / deity

Worship

Brahmin - presiding priest

mythology

