

dharmaic religions

Reject Vedic Religion

- Reject Vedas
- Reject Caste System
- Reject Brahmins and their rituals
- Maintain Sramana beliefs/practices



Jainism (500 BCE-Today)

- Version of Sramana taught by **Mahavira** (497-425 BCE) religious teacher, starved himself to death
- Emphasized extreme self-denial / **ahimsa**
 - Extended fasting (not eating)
 - Some ascetics wear no clothes
 - Sweep floor and cover mouth to avoid killing bugs; Total vegetarians
- Universe is eternal, no concept of God or Brahman
- Pure liberated soul is seen as divine (after **Moksha**)

Buddhism (400 BCE-Today)

- Buddhism taught by **Siddhartha Guatama** (480-411 BCE) known as **Buddha** (Enlightened One)
- Former prince turned religious teacher
- Emphasized moderate self-denial, the “Middle Way”
- **Four Noble Truths**
 - All life is suffering
 - Suffering is caused by desire
 - Eliminate desire → End suffering
 - How? Follow the **Eightfold Path** = Dharma
- No belief in soul: nothing is real, all illusion, even you
- Goal = **Nirvana**: (Extinguished) release from rebirth, like Moksha, except you just stop existing

Classical Hinduism (300 CE-Today)

- Many sects, but all believe in **Vedas** and **Brahman**
- **Bhakti Movement**: Religious devotion (Bhakti) to individual gods now open to all people (very popular development)
- Introduced new major gods: **Trimurti** (Hindu Trinity)
 - **Brahma** (Creator) Not widely worshipped alone
 - **Vishnu** (Sustainer) Seen by Vaishnavists as main God
 - **Shiva** (Destroyer) Seen by Shaivists as main God
- Figures from Indian Epics (Mahabharata, Ramayana) important in the religion as important gods (Krishna, Rama)
 - **Bhagavad Gita**, a part of the *Mahabharata* Epic, merges diverse Hindu philosophies from many texts into a single story that the masses can understand

Mahayana Buddhism (100-200 CE-Today)

- New sect of Buddhism popular in central and east Asia
 - Mahayana means “greater vehicle”, implying that many more people could “get on board” with this more popular form of the religion
- Less philosophical and more devotional, seeing Buddha and other figures more like gods, after life more heaven-like
- Focus on bodhisattvas, enlightened individuals who delayed their Nirvana in order to help guide others on the path
- The more traditional version, called Theravada, mainly practiced in Southeast Asia

