



Hindu Concepts Beyond the Indian Subcontinent

Exploring Diverse Societies of Ancient India

World History | Grades 6-7 | Annedina Nettleton, B.Ed., M.Ed., Ed.S.

Note to teachers:

This is part 4 in a four-part series of lessons about understanding Ancient Indian Civilizations and its ancient religions and societies. There is also a single lesson plan that provides a less in-depth look at the different components if there is minimal time for teaching about this topic.

Direct Instruction:

1. Start with an engaging question using slide 2: Do you think Hindu spiritual traditions existed only in Ancient India? Where do you think Hindu Dharmas exist outside of India today? Continue with slide 3 of the Google Slideshow (Engage - 5 min):
 - Consider having students write down answers to slide 2 on sticky notes. If time allows, have students walk around the room and discuss their responses with peers.
 - Use slide 3 as a discussion point about the interaction of Hindu concepts with people from regions outside ancient India to assess students' prior knowledge.
2. Present Key Information (Explain - 20 min):
 - Go through the Hindu Concepts Beyond the Indian Subcontinent Google slideshow.
 - Slide 4 : Direct students' attention to the direct quotation.
 - **Think** – Have students individually reflect on what they notice about the direct quotation. They should gather their thoughts, and be prepared to share/discuss with peers.
 - **Pair** – Assign students to partners or small groups to share their answers and discuss perspectives.

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- **Share** – Call on a few groups to share their insights with the whole class, facilitating a discussion to clarify and expand ideas.
- 3. Slides 5, 6, and 7: Ask students to share one question they have related to these slides.
- 4. Slides 8, 9, 10, & 11: Discuss the invention of the Hindu Numeral System, Decimal Place Value, and Zero.
 - Have students write their phone numbers in Roman numerals.
 - Then have students write their phone numbers in Devanagari script.
 - Compare and contrast the differences/ease in writing the numbers using the two formats.
- 5. Slides 12 & 13: Show students where Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines are on a map. From there, discuss how the beliefs and practices are reflected in these various locations.
- 6. Slides 14, 15, 16, & 17: Discuss the different examples of Hindu influence in art, architecture, and language.
 - Slide 15: Ask students if they can read the phrase.
 - Tell them it means: elephants eat fruit.
 - Encourage them to look for other examples of Sanskrit words and phrases.
- 7. Have students complete the Dharmic Trade Route Simulation.

Reflection (5min)

- Have students answer the review questions aloud or on paper.

Assessment (15min)

- Have students complete the assessment.

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Direct Quotations to Supplement the Lesson Plan

These quotations were taken directly from the *Hindu Histories* primer produced and written by the Center for Advancing Pluralism. More resources are available at <https://pluralist.org/>. Please note that due to the language and text complexity, these quotations may not be beneficial to our students' understanding. Instead they are provided as excerpts to help you better prepare before sharing the content with students.

Slides 2 & 3: “The Hindu Dharma traditions developed over thousands of years in the Indosphere and represent the continuation and evolution of ancient spiritualities”, (Hindu Histories, Center for Advancing Pluralism).

Slides 5, 6, & 7: Ancient Hindu cultural influences extended throughout Asia, and their trade networks reached as far as Europe and Africa (Hindu Histories, Center for Advancing Pluralism).

Slide 9: This brought different worldviews into conversation with one another...they would either negotiate a way for their individual clan or tribal worldviews to continue (pluralism), or discuss and create a new worldview.... (Hindu Histories, Center for Advancing Pluralism).

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"Dharmic Trade Route Simulation" – A Kinesthetic Mapping & Roleplay Activity

Objective:

Students will physically move around the classroom to simulate how **Hindu ideas, art, and traditions traveled** beyond India via trade, alliances, and cultural exchange.

Setup:

1. **Create a large map of Asia** on the classroom floor using masking tape or butcher paper. Mark key regions:
 - India (core region)
 - Indonesia (Java/Bali)
 - Cambodia
 - Vietnam
 - Thailand
 - Sri Lanka
 - Takṣaśilā (ancient university)
 - China
 - Singapore
2. Create **role cards** for each location. Each group gets one with a quick summary (you can use simplified blurbs based on your lesson slides):
 - Traditions (e.g., Āgama Jāwā)
 - Art/temples (e.g., Angkor Wat)
 - Trade goods
 - What they borrowed or blended from Hindu societies

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Activity Flow:

Phase 1: "Cultural Exchange on the Move" (10–15 min)

- They "travel" along designated paths to their region on the map.
- All students **start in India** with one or two object cards.
- They **walk "trade routes"** (paths you mark on the floor) to a new region.
- One student from each group carries an **object card** (e.g., a symbol for meditation, Sanskrit manuscript, sculpture image, salt/spice, a mini clay statue of Ganesha, etc.).
- At each country, they:
 - **Share or trade** their object.
 - Learn how the new region adapted that belief or object.
 - As they arrive, they meet other groups and **exchange ideas**:
 - Share which Hindu tradition/art form they're carrying.
 - Receive or trade another card to show how cultures influence each other.
- At each country, they: End the simulation by returning to India or presenting what they learned.


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Assign a student to each country shown below:


INDIA – Origin Point (Start Here)

You are the cultural hub.

- Your society has developed deep spiritual traditions, art, science, and education.
- You are home to compositions like the **Vedas**, centers of learning like **Takṣaśilā**, and concepts like **karma, dharma, mokṣa**.

 You will send out:

- Sanskrit manuscript (knowledge & language)
- Statue of Vishnu or Shiva (religious art)
- Salt or spices (trade)
- Concept: Karma or Meditation

 Move to any other region and trade/share your ideas!

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CAMBODIA – Angkor Wat Region

You are home to a famous temple that blends Hindu and Buddhist art.

- Hindu deities like **Vishnu** were venerated here.
- Angkor Wat started as a **Vaiṣṇava Hindu Dharma temple**.

 Cultural Influence:

- Sanskrit inscriptions
- Art showing **stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana**
- Temple architecture inspired by Indian designs

 Accept symbols like: sculpture, temple manuscripts, Sanskrit

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INDONESIA – Java & Bali

You have a living tradition called **Āgama Jāvā** or **Kejawen**.

- Hindu ideas mixed with local Indonesian beliefs.
- You built large Hindu temples like **Prambanan**.

 Cultural Influence:

- Veneration of Shiva, Vishnu, and local deities
- Blending of ancestor worship and Hindu traditions
- Use of **puppetry (Wayang)** to retell Hindu epics


 Accept: puppets, sculpture, shrine symbols, concept of dharma

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THAILAND

Hindu and Buddhist ideas shape your monarchy, art, and ceremonies.

- The Thai version of the **Ramayana** is called **Ramakien**.
- Hindu deities are part of royal and festival traditions.

 Cultural Influence:

- Hindu priests still perform ceremonies
- Vishnu and Shiva imagery in royal processions
- Sanskrit-influenced Thai script and terms

 Accept: Ramayana scrolls, priest figure, Sanskrit writing

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VIETNAM

You absorbed Hindu spiritual ideas through ancient Champa culture.

- Hindu temples and images were built by the Cham people.
- Hindu ideas blended with local folk traditions.

 Cultural Influence:

- Veneration of Shiva Linga images
- Temples at **Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary**
- Hindu art and architecture

 Accept: lingam stone symbol, small shrine, art card

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SRI LANKA

You share deep historical ties with Hindu Dharmas and Buddhism.

- A majority of Tamils in the north practice **Śaiva Hindu Dharma, others practice Kaumāram, and regional/tribal Dharma traditions.**
- Hindu epics influenced local storytelling and festivals.

 Cultural Influence:

- Temples to Shiva and Murugan (Kaumāram)
- Celebrations of **Pongal and Deepavali**
- Use of Tamil and Sanskrit words

 Accept: statue, story scroll, Tamil writing, spices

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TAKṢAŚILĀ – Ancient University

You are a center of learning and global exchange.

- Students from Persia, Central Asia, and East Africa come to study here.
- Subjects include **astronomy, medicine, logic, and spirituality**.

 Cultural Influence:

- Promotion of pan-regional Dharma knowledge
- Role in spreading Vedic and philosophical traditions

 Accept: manuscripts, astrology chart, math tools

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China

You received Indian goods and ideas through maritime trade. Hindu traders brought spices, textiles, and spiritual ideas to your ports. Some ideas also came through overland routes like the Silk Road.

Cultural Influence:

- Trade routes connected China to Gujarat and South India.
- Indian merchants and monks brought spiritual teachings and Buddha Dharma.
- Shared knowledge in math, medicine, and astronomy helped Chinese scholars and scientists.
- Indian texts were translated into Classical Chinese, and Indian ideas were blended with local traditions in temples and monasteries.

Accept These Object Cards:

-  Spice Bag – represents trade goods brought by Indian merchants
-  Manuscript/Scroll – shared spiritual and scientific knowledge
-  Textile Swatch (optional) – symbolizing fabric and trade products

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SINGAPORE

You are an important stop along the ancient maritime trade routes between India and Southeast Asia. Hindu traders, teachers, and travelers passed through your ports on their way to places like Indonesia and Vietnam.

Cultural Influence:


- Indian merchants brought spices, cloth, and spiritual ideas through port cities.
- Early settlements in the Singapore area (Temasek) likely interacted with pan-regional Dharma traditions.
- Hindu temples like Sri Mariamman Temple still stand in Singapore today.
- Languages and rituals show South Indian influence, especially Tamil cultural connections.


Accept These Object Cards:


-  Spice Bag – symbolizes trade and the spice route
-  Temple Picture – for surviving temple architecture and ritual influence
-  Textile Swatch – represents cloth and cultural items traded through ports


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Each student needs an object card from below:


 Meditation Symbol	Hindu practice of calming the mind and finding peace (dhyāna)
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 Sanskrit Manuscript	Ancient Hindu knowledge, philosophy, and teachings
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 <p>Aum Symbol</p>	<p>Sacred sounds and symbols of the underlying Ultimate Reality in Hindu belief</p>
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 <p>Spice Sack</p>	<p>Indian trade goods like spices that spread with Hindu influence</p>
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 <p>Clay Lamp (Dīpā)</p>	<p>Object used in Hindu ceremonies, often during prayers and festivals</p>
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 <p>Ganesha Statue</p>	<p>A popular Hindu deity, remover of obstacles and bringer of good beginnings</p>
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 Puppet or Mask	Wayang puppetry used to tell Hindu epics in places like Indonesia
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 Temples	Places of veneration and spiritual and cultural practices built across Asia (e.g., Angkor Wat, Prambanan)
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Mandala or Rangoli

Design of beauty, balance, and elaborate symbolism used in spiritual and artistic traditions

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Learning Goals by Country:

Country	Main Learning Outcome
India	Hindu beliefs originated here and spread through trade and teaching
Indonesia	Hindu ideas blended with local traditions (puppetry, temples, ancestor veneration)
Vietnam	Hindu deities and teachings adopted in temples and spiritual practices
Thailand	Hindu ceremonies and deities used in royal events and cultural storytelling
Philippines	Śaiva and Buddhist Dharma traditions and Regional/Tribal traditions existed for centuries together, and post colonization their influence can still be seen in traditional spiritual practices.

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Personal Connection Reflection: Global Influence of Hindu Traditions

Prompt:

Think about how Hindu traditions and ideas traveled to different places around the world. Now, reflect on your **own family or community** and compare it to what you learned.

- **Has your family ever blended ideas or traditions from more than one culture?**
- **Do you or your family practice anything that originally came from another place?**
- **How does your family honor the past, like ancestors or old traditions?**
- **How do you think ideas or beliefs spread from one place to another?**

Task: Small Group Discussion (2–3 students)

1. **Share your answers to the questions above.**
2. **Compare how your families or communities use ideas or traditions from other cultures, just like Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines blended Hindu traditions with their own.**
3. **Use at least one term from the lesson:**
 - **Indosphere (places influenced by Indian culture)**
 - **Cultural diffusion (how ideas spread and mix)**
 - **Dharma, Karma, or Ancestor Veneration**

Writing Task: Reflection on Myths and Facts About Ancient India

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Prompt: Write two paragraphs explaining how Hindu traditions and ideas spread beyond India and how they influenced other cultures. In your first paragraph, describe at least two ways Hindu beliefs or practices (like karma, meditation, ancestor veneration, or temple architecture) interacted with peoples in other regions and countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, or the Philippines.

In your second paragraph, explain how those countries blended Hindu ideas with their own traditions. Be sure to include at least one vocabulary word from the lesson (e.g., Indosphere, cultural diffusion, karma, dharma, parivāra, etc.).

Scoring Rubric (10 Points Total)

Category	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Understanding of Content	Clearly explains how Hindu beliefs spread and names at least two regions or countries	Explains Hindu influence with limited accuracy or only one region mentioned	Information is incorrect or missing
Cultural Blending	Gives a clear example of how another culture blended Hindu beliefs with its own	Mentions blending but gives little detail or unclear explanation	No mention of cultural blending
Use of Key Vocabulary	Uses at least one vocabulary word from the lesson correctly (e.g., Indosphere, karma, dharma, cultural diffusion)	Uses a term incorrectly or without showing clear understanding	No vocabulary word used
Organization	Writing is organized into two clear paragraphs with logical flow	Some organization but paragraphs may be unclear or uneven	Writing lacks paragraph structure or is hard to follow
Grammar and Mechanics	Few or no grammar/spelling errors; writing is easy to read	Some errors that slightly distract from meaning	Many errors that make it hard to understand

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