



# World Christian Fellowship

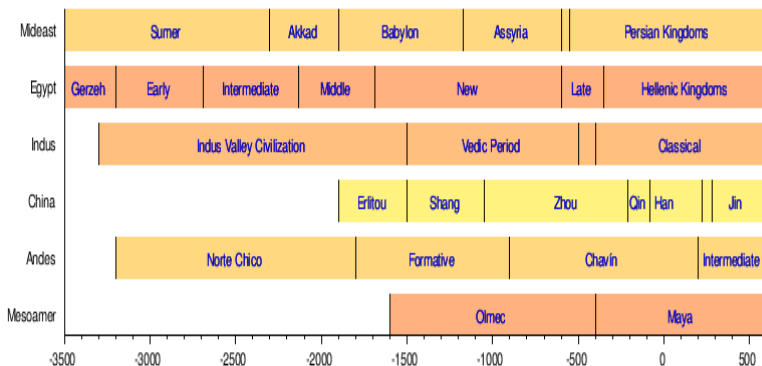
[www.wcflondon.com](http://www.wcflondon.com)  
[wcflondon@gmail.com](mailto:wcflondon@gmail.com)

## Origins of Hinduism

### Why is it important to study other religions?

One of the world's oldest religion has no beginning. Third largest religion in the World practiced by 1.1 Billion people approximately 15% of the world population. Has no human founder.

Is a mystical religion, leading the devotee to personally experience the Truth within, finally reaching the pinnacle of consciousness where man and God are one?



Has been practiced in India since at least 2500 BCE

Originated around the Indus river valley

The word Hindū is derived from Indo-Aryan/Sanskrit root Sindhu. Used by the British to describe a great variety of religious practices.

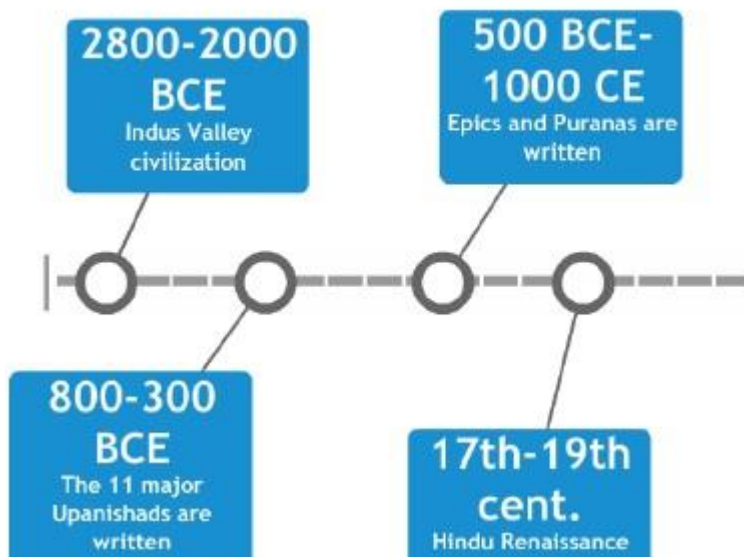
**Santana Dharma** means Eternal Truth

It was not started as a system, like Christianity or Islam.

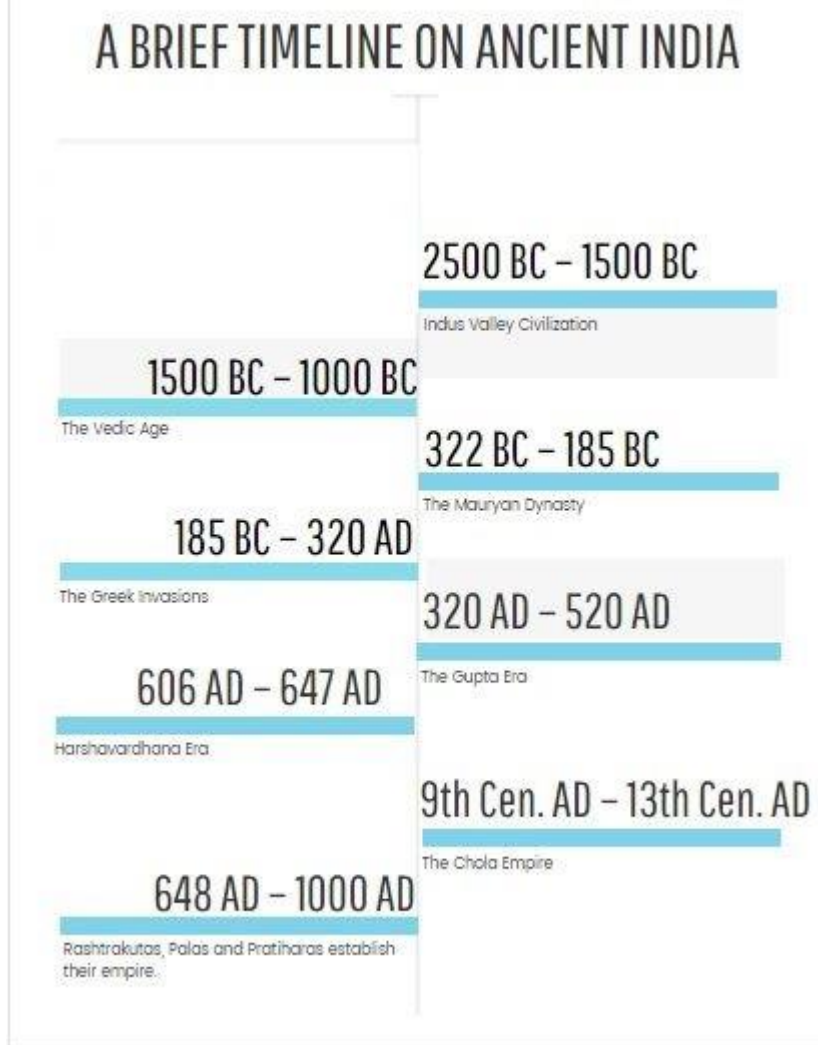
It is the product of the seers of the Vedas. It was developed from age to age by the teachings of Avatars, Rishis, Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Itihasas.

Hinduism is also known by the names Sanatana Dharma and Vaidika Dharma

- Sanatana Dharma means eternal religion, the Ancient Law
- Vaidika Dharma means the religion of the Vedas.
- The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of Hinduism.



## Stages of Hinduism



Nature worshipping with prayers, chants, and sacred formulas --  
~ time of the Aryan invasion and the blending of religions.

Priestly Hinduism with the Brahmanas and a focus on sacrifice  
~1000 – 800 BC

Philosophic Hinduism with the development of the Upanishads  
~800 – 600 BC

Legalistic Hinduism with the Code of Manu & stress upon  
obedience to a law ~250 BC

Devotional Hinduism as exemplified in the Bhavagad-Gita  
between 5 BC-1st century A.D.

Popular Hinduism with temples, shrines, sacred places,  
pilgrimages, belief in transmigration since 1st century.

(Comparison of World Religions. Heydt. 1967. (P. 18-19).)

Pre-Flood on Genesis 6-9 chapters there were civilization  
around Mesopotamia and Indus Valley.

After the Flood in **Genesis 11:1-9**

**Tower of Babel.**

**What language they were speaking?**

Traditional Jewish exegesis such as Midrash (Genesis Rabbah  
38) says that Adam spoke the Hebrew language because the  
names he gives Eve – Isha (Book of Genesis 2:23) and Chava  
(Genesis 3:20) – only make sense in Hebrew.

After this there were people moving towards the Indus Valley.

**Abraham and Keturah**

## **Genesis 25:1-6,**

After the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilisation, which ended c. 1900 BCE, groups of Indo-Aryan peoples migrated into north-western India and started to inhabit the northern Indus Valley. The Indo-Aryans were a branch of the Indo-Iranians, which—according to the most widespread hypothesis—originated in the Andronovo culture in the Bactria-Margiana area, in present northern Afghanistan.

The knowledge about the Aryans comes mostly from the Rigveda, the oldest layer of the Vedas, which was composed c. 1500–1200 BCE. They brought with them their distinctive religious traditions and practices. The Vedic beliefs and practices of the pre-classical era were closely related to the hypothesised Proto-Indo-European religion, and the Indo-Iranian religion. The Old Indic religion probably emerged among Indo-European immigrants in the contact zone between the Zeravshan River (present-day Uzbekistan) and (present-day) Iran.

The Rigveda contains accounts of conflicts between the Aryas and the Dasas and Dasyus. (Dasa is a Sanskrit language term found in ancient Hindu texts, such as the Rigveda and Arthashastra. It usually means either "enemy" or "servant".)

## **Mauryan Empire**

Before the Mauryan Empire, the Indian subcontinent was fragmented into hundreds of kingdoms that were ruled by powerful regional chiefs who engaged in warfare using their small armies.

In 327 BCE, Alexander of Macedon and his troops entered India and overran the existing kingdoms in the Punjab region. He left after only two years, but his destruction of the regional powers opened the opportunity for other groups to seize control. The first group, the kingdom of Magadha, used their military to gain control of trade routes through the Ganges valley and the sea routes to the Bay of Bengal.

Soon after Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya Empire, successfully seized control of Magadha. He gained control of northwestern India and Central Asia—what is today Afghanistan and was at that time controlled by the Greeks. Chandragupta Maurya successfully unified the Indian subcontinent under an empire.

Chandragupta ruled from 324 to 297 BCE.

Bindusara, son of Chandragupta ruled from 297 BCE until his death in 272 BCE.

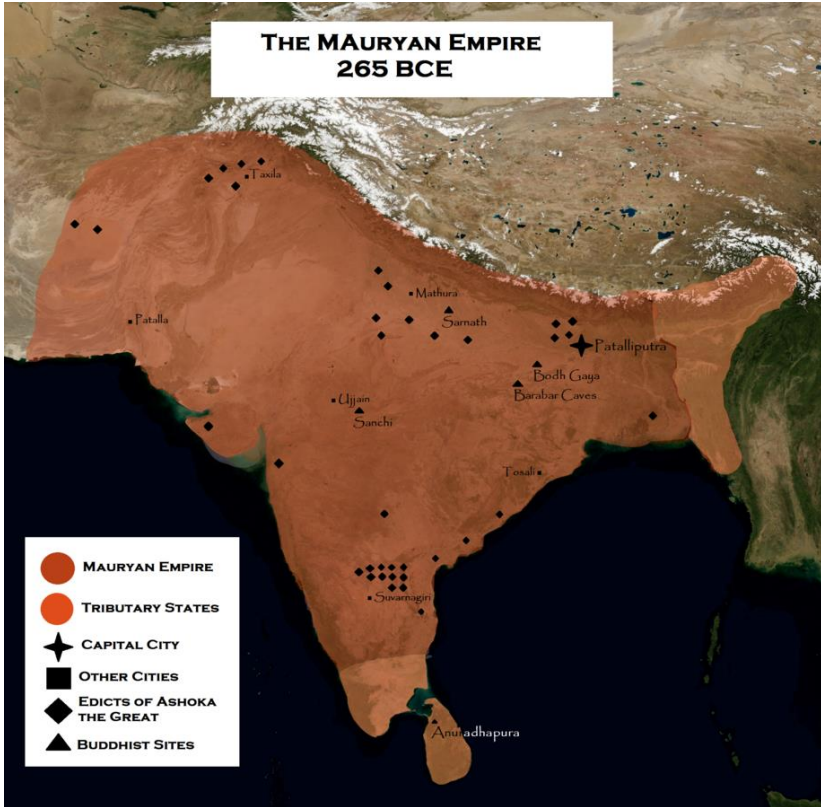
This led to a war in which Bindusara's son, Ashoka, defeated his brother and rose to the throne in 268 BCE, eventually becoming the most successful and powerful ruler of the Maurya Dynasty.

The Mauryan Army, the largest standing military force of its time, supported the expansion and defense of the empire. According to scholars, the empire wielded 600,000 infantry, or foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalries, or soldiers on horseback, and 9,000 war elephants. A vast spy network collected intelligence for both internal and external security purposes.

Although Emperor Ashoka renounced offensive warfare and expansionism after converting to Buddhism, he maintained this standing army to protect the empire from external threats and maintain stability and peace across Western and Southern Asia.

This extensive army was made possible partly through an intricate web of administration. One of Chandragupta's advisors had instituted a series of detailed procedures which Ashoka inherited.

Ashoka established a capital at the walled city of Pataliputra, which served as the centralized hub of the empire. Officials made decisions about how to collect taxes for the central treasury, which funded the military and other government jobs.



The Maurya Empire began to dissolve with Ashoka's death. Costly salaries for soldiers and government officials ended up bankrupting the central treasury. In place of an expansive empire, local rulers began to take charge of smaller regions, placing themselves strategically along trade routes.



## CHRONOLOGY OF MAURYAN DYNASTY

Approximate Dates of Mauryan Dynasty		
Emperor	Reign start	Reign end
Chandragupta Maurya	322 B.C.E.	298 B.C.E.
Bīndusara	297 B.C.E.	272 B.C.E.
Asoka The Great	273 B.C.E.	232 B.C.E.
Dasaratha	232 B.C.E.	224 B.C.E.
Samprati	224 B.C.E.	215 B.C.E.
Salisuka	215 B.C.E.	202 B.C.E.
Devavarman	202 B.C.E.	195 B.C.E.
Satadhanvan	195 B.C.E.	187 B.C.E.
Brihadratha	187 B.C.E.	185 B.C.E.

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The use of the English term "Hinduism" to describe a collection of practices and beliefs is a recent construction: it was first used by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in 1816-17.

### Background - Pantheon

The holy Hindu scriptures, the Veda, propound the idea of 33 principal deities in the earlier Hindu pantheon. Because of a mistranslation this has sometimes been interpreted as 330 million – the word for ‘types or kinds’ and the word for 10 million (crore) are the same. This naturally has led to accusations of rampant pantheism when it really means that

the One God had 33 distinct aspects, all with separate images and functions.

### **Historical Figures**

- Rishis – the ‘forest seers’ : Wrote down the Vedas
- Vyasa- mythical compiler/author of Vedas
- Shankara: ‘All plurality and differentiation are nothing but an Illusion.’

### **Background – Central Doctrines**

Central Doctrines of Hinduism:

- Everything in existence is an expression of God
- The proper aim of anyone’s life is to come close, realize, and merge with God.
- World delights are temptations that divert the person from pursuing his true purpose of coming near to God. (The elements of World Religions. Flowers. 1997.)

### **Hinduism: Central Beliefs**

- Plurality of Beliefs
- Cyclical nature of universe
- Creation and destruction
- Brahman
- Reincarnation (samsara)
- Karma
- Goal of human life: moksha

## **Who is a Hindu?**

India's Supreme Court, 1995

### **Indian Supreme court definition of Hinduism**

The Indian Supreme court has formally defined Hindu beliefs in a way that affirms universality rather than exclusiveness. According to the Court's definition, to be a Hindu means:

1. Acceptance and reverence for the Vedas as the foundation of Hindu philosophy;
2. A spirit of tolerance, and willingness to understand and appreciate others' points of view, recognizing that truth has many sides;
3. Acceptance of the belief that vast cosmic periods of creation, maintenance, and dissolution continuously recur;
4. Acceptance of belief in reincarnation;
5. Recognition that paths to truth and salvation are many;
6. Recognition that there may be numerous gods and goddesses to worship, without necessarily believing in worship through idols;
7. Unlike other religions, absence of belief in a specific set of philosophic concepts.

## **Nature of the Divine**

### **Brahman.**

- The ultimate reality behind all things
- Impersonal and beyond description; without attributes; indescribable
- Or – manifest in a personal way, as in a particular deity (such as Siva, Krishna, or Vishnu)

### **Trimurti or Triad**

- Brahma, the Creator god
- Vishnu, the Protector god
- Shiva, the Destroyer god
- Vishnu and Shiva represent opposite forces

### **Brahma, the Creator**

- Brahma is depicted as red in color with four heads, bearded faces, and four arms.
- His hands hold a kamandalu, his bow or a rosary, a sacrificial ladle, and the Vedas.
- Brahma is sometimes depicted as sitting on a lotus.
- The four Vedas are said to have originated from his head.
- The four castes are also believed to have originated from Brahma.

## Brahma and the origins of caste



Source: Alamy

BBC

- ✓ the Brahmins from his head,
- ✓ the Kshatriyas from his arms,
- ✓ the Vaishyas from his thighs, and
- ✓ the Shudras from his feet.

## Vedic gods

**Surya**, the Sun god

- Surya is linked with Agni and Vayu

**Agni**, the Fire god

- Was one of the most popular of the Vedic deities

- He acted as a mediator between gods and humans which often involved a burning a sacrifice to the gods.

### **Indra**, the Warrior leader

- He would lead the Vedic gods in battles against demons
- He was strong, brave and a great eater and drinker

### **Vayu**, the god of the air and wind

- Often linked with Indra and his chariot
- Involved in conflicts with Vishnu

### **Varuna**, the god of the sky and water

- He is all-knowing and all-seeing and king of the Vedic gods
- He had the power to punish sins
- To please him one had to lead a virtuous life

### **Vishnu, the Protector**

- Vishnu, the Preserver God, is the protector of dharma (righteousness) and the guardian of humanity
- His particular task is the conservation or preservation of the Divine Order in the world.
- Vishnu has had 10 avatars or incarnations
- He assumes these and comes down to earth in order to help humanity.

### **Avatars of Vishnu**

1. Matsya, the fish avatar
2. Kurma, the tortoise avatar
3. Varaha, the boar avatar

4. Narasimha, the half-man, half-lion avatar
5. Vamana, the dwarf avatar
6. Parashurama, “Rama with the axe” avatar
7. Rama, the Lord Rama avatar
8. Krishna, demon king Kamsa avatar
9. Buddha, ninth avatar
10. Kalki, the Final avatar

Brahmins (priests) recited the Vedas and were written down in Sanskrit much later

Aryan religion changed and borrowed ideas from other people the Aryans encountered.

**Vedas: 1700 B.C.-1100 B.C.**

The Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” are the oldest texts of Hinduism.

The Vedas are structured in four different collections containing hymns, poems, prayers, and religious instruction.

These are the most ancient religious texts which define truth for Hindus.

They got their present form between 1200-200 BCE and were introduced to India by the Aryans.

Hindus believe that the texts were received by scholars direct from God and passed on to the next generations by word of mouth.

Vedic texts are sometimes called shruti, which means hearing. For hundreds, maybe even thousands of years, the texts were passed on orally.

### **Contents of the Vedas**

The Vedas are made up of four compositions, and each Veda in turn has four parts which are arranged chronologically.

**The Samhitas** are the most ancient part of the Vedas, consisting of hymns of praise to God.

**The Brahmanas** are rituals and prayers to guide the priests in their duties.

**The Aranyakas** concern worship and meditation.

**The Upanishads** consist of the mystical and philosophical teachings of Hinduism.

### **The Samhitas**

**Rig-Veda Samhita** (c. 1200 BCE) is the oldest of the four Vedas and consists of 1028 hymns praising the ancient gods.

**Yajur-Veda Samhita** is used as a handbook by priests performing the Vedic sacrifices.

**Sama-Veda Samhita** consists of chants and tunes for singing at the sacrifices.



**Atharva-Veda Samhita** (c. 900 BCE) preserves many traditions which pre-date the Aryan influence and consists of spells, charms and magical formulae.

### **The Upanishads: 800 B.C.- 500 B.C.**

The Upanishads were so called because they were taught to those who sat down beside their teachers. (upa=near, ni=down, shad=sit).

These texts developed from the Vedic tradition, but largely reshaped Hinduism by providing believers with philosophical knowledge.

The major Upanishads were largely composed between 800-200 BCE and are partly prose, partly verse.

Later Upanishads continued to be composed right down to the 16th century. Originally, they were in oral form.

The early Upanishads are concerned with understanding the sacrificial rites.

Central to the Upanishads is the concept of brahman; the sacred power which informs reality.

Whilst the priests (brahmins) had previously been the ones who, through ritual and sacrifice, had restricted access to the divine, now the knowledge of the universe was open to those of the high and middle castes willing to learn from a teacher.

Upanishads describe how a person united with Brahman:

“A soul that becomes one with Brahman is like a lump of salt thrown into water. The lump of salt is gone, but the water tastes salty. The salt has become part of the water.”

### **Bhagavad Gita: 400 B.C – 200 B.C.**

The Bhagavad Gita, or "Song of the Lord" is part of the sixth book of the Mahabharata, the world's longest poem.

Composed between 500 BCE and 100 CE, the Mahabharata is an account of the wars of the house of Bharata.

It is one of the most popular Hindu texts and is known as a smriti text (the remembered tradition). This is considered by some to be of less importance than shruti (the heard text, such as the Vedas). It has, nevertheless, an important place within the Hindu tradition.

The Bhagavad Gita takes the form of a dialogue between prince Arjuna and Krishna, his charioteer.

Arjuna is a warrior, about to join his brothers in a war between two branches of a royal family which would involve killing many of his friends and relatives.

He wants to withdraw from the battle, but Krishna teaches him that he, Arjuna, must do his duty in accordance with his class and he argues that death does not destroy the soul.

Krishna points out that knowledge, work and devotion are all paths to salvation and that the central value in life is that of loyalty to God.

### **The Ramayana: 5 B.C.**

Composed in the same period, the Ramayana is one of India's best-known tales.

It tells the story of Prince Rama who was sent into exile in the forest with his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana.

Sita was abducted by the evil demon Ravana but ultimately rescued by Prince Rama with the help of the Monkey God, Hanuman.

The story is written in 24,000 couplets.

The symbolism of the story has been widely interpreted but basically is the story of good overcoming evil. Many people have said that it is a story about dharma or duty.

### **5 Beliefs:**

#### **1. Karma:**

The consequences of how a person lives.

If Hindus do their duty and live a good life, they will have good karma.

Having good karma will move them closer to Brahman in their next life and having bad karma will have negative effects.

## **2. Artha means “abundance” or “success.”**

It is largely this goal that keep a person from working to attain moksha when they are in the prime of their life. Chasing after moksha generally means leaving behind a person’s loved ones which does not mesh well with the goal of artha.

Artha is tied to the stage of a Hindu’s life.

- ashrama, are student,
- householder,
- forest dweller and
- renunciate.

## **3. Dharma:**

The divine law

To earn the reward of a better life in the next life, Hindus believe they must perform their duty.

Requires people to perform the duties of their caste.

A farmer has different duties than a priest.

Men have different duties than a woman.

## **4. Reincarnation:**

The idea of passing through many lives to reach Brahman.

Soul is not joined to the Brahman right after death, but a person passes through many lives first.

Soul may be reborn into a higher caste unless a person lived a bad life then maybe into a lower caste.

Influences how Hindus live their daily lives and even how they treat animals (because all life is sacred)

## **5. Moksha**

The ultimate goal of life, referred to as moksha, nirvana or samadhi, is understood in several different ways: as the realization of one's union with God; as the realization of one's eternal relationship with God; realization of the unity of all existence; perfect unselfishness and knowledge of the Self; as the attainment of perfect mental peace; and as detachment from worldly desires. Such realization liberates one from samsara, thereby ending the cycle of rebirth, sorrow and suffering. Due to belief in the indestructibility of the soul, death is deemed insignificant with respect to the cosmic self.

## **Devotional disciplines: Yoga**

Means 'to yoke.'

Spiritual seekers are generally encouraged to engage in disciplines that clear the mind and support a state of serene, detached awareness.

The practices for increasing sattvic qualities are known collectively as yoga.

There are four main yogic paths:

1. Raja yoga  
Path of physical disciplines.
2. Jhana yoga  
Path of knowledge
3. Karma yoga  
Path of action
4. Bhakti yoga  
Path of devotion

### **Yogic practices:**

The sacred sound of creation 'Om'

The OM symbol, representing the original sound of creation, is topped by the sun and the moon, harmonized opposites. To chant OM is to commune with this cosmic sound vibration.

Tolkāppiyam (தொல்காப்பியம், "ancient poem") is the most ancient Tamil grammar text and the oldest surviving work of Tamil literature. The surviving manuscripts of the Tolkappiyam consists of three books (atikaram), each with nine chapters (iyal), with a cumulative total of 1,612 sutras in the nūrpā meter.

Written between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 B.C.

Tolkappiam deals with Iyal Tamil. It is divided into three books - Eluthu (orthography), Sol (etymology) and Porul (subject matter). While other languages like Sanskrit have grammar for

the first two, the concept of Porul happens to the most original in conception, classification and elaboration.

### Tamil Language

HISTORY OF TAMIL SCRIPT			
நூற்றாண்டு	a ā i ī u ū e ē ai o ō	நூற்றாண்டு	க ங் ச் சூ ட் ண த் ந் ப் ம் ய் ர் ல் வ் ழ் ள் ற் ன்
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### SANGA KAALAM (B.C. 1700 - A.D. 100)

The period of the three Academies of Tamil (SANGAMS - MUDHAL SANGAM, IDAI SANGAM and KADAI SANGAM) covering a period of roughly 1700 years up to 250 A.D. This is considered to be the Golden Age of Tamil Literature.

There are several classics in Tamil language covering every gamut of man's life - family, children, love, State administration, war, morality, ethics etc. The language follows a threefold classification of writing called IYAL, ISAI and NAATAKAM - prose, music and drama.