

# *Common Misconceptions*

Caste System is central to Hinduism

Aryan migration brought Vedas to India ~ 1200 BCE

Simplified to polytheistic

Idol Worship

Fatalistic belief in Karma

Other worldly

Selfish

Disconnected beliefs without coherence

Focus on weird or esoteric practices

# Caste System

## Religious

**Varna:** Four temperaments; not by birth; mentioned in Hindu scriptures; no hierarchy and all equally important

## Social

**Jati:** Family lineage; by birth; thousands in number; societal grouping based on occupation; similar to guild system

**Varna** is best defined as "inherent qualities"

### THE FOUR TRADITIONAL VARNAS

**SHUDRAS**  
grow food  
make goods  
serve society

**Well  
Functioning  
Society**

**VAISHYAS**  
engage in commerce  
own land  
support society

**BRAHMINS**  
study and  
teach members  
of society

**KSHATRIYAS**  
protect and  
govern society

Over 3000 *Jatis* exist in India as societal groups based on occupation



## Caste is Social not Religious

**Caste system:** The oppressive practice of grouping jatis into four varnas is a social practice that is not based on religion; confounds varna and jati; imposes hierarchy on varnas; illegal as per Indian constitution

Many Hindu reformers have sought to abolish caste discrimination in India

Many Hindu sages were not born in Brahmin families

## Why do we have the temperament that we do?

- How we lived our past lives [qualities/attitudes]

## What should we do with the temperament that we have?

- Understand our duties as per our *varna*
- Do our duties diligently and dedicate them to God
- Cultivate nobler qualities to refine our temperament going forward

## Scriptures emphasize

- ***guna*** (aptitude) and
- ***karma*** (function),

not *jati* (birth)