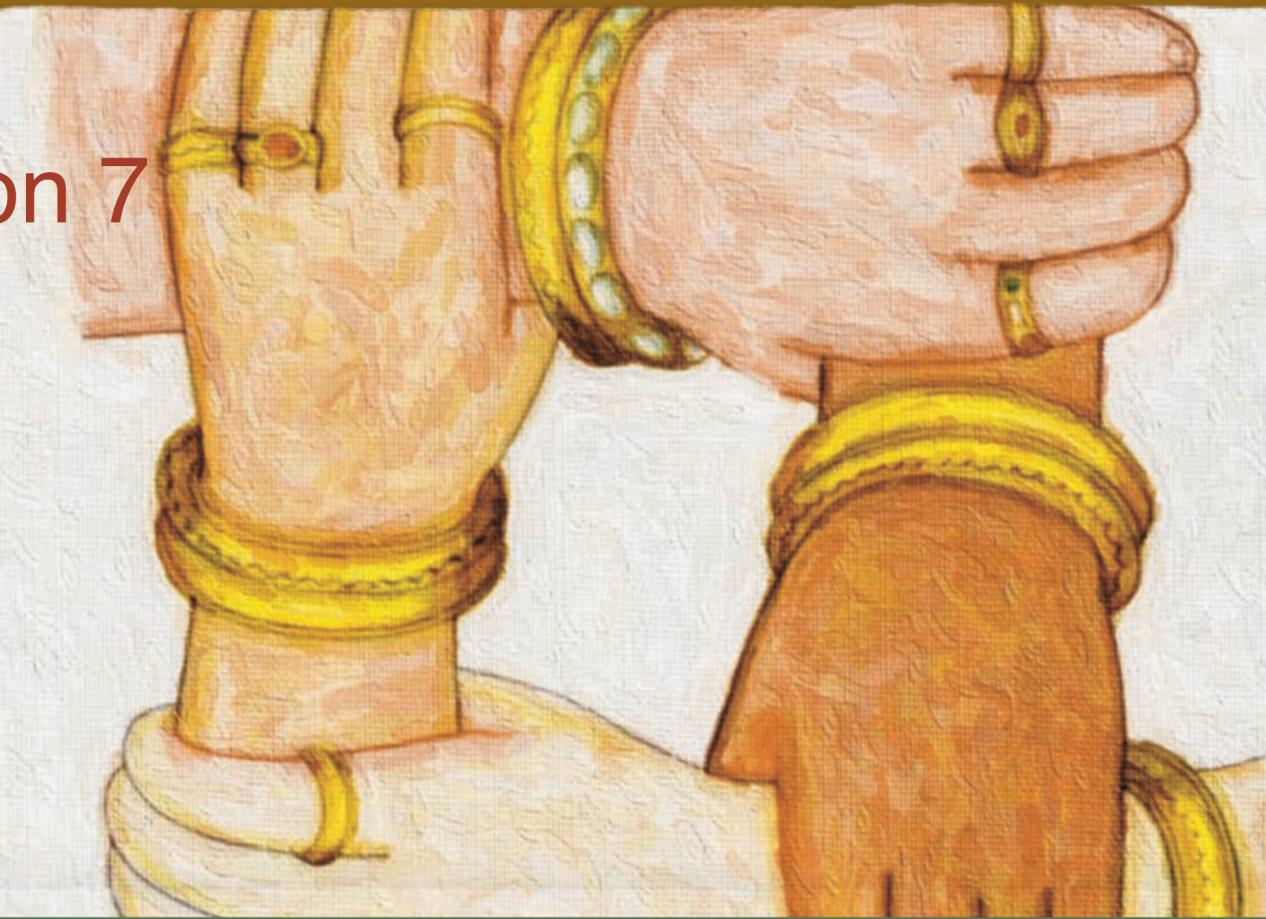


Path to Siva

A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Lesson 7



What Are the Main Hindu Denominations?

India's ancient faith ?



Hinduism's primary denominations are Saivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism.

For two centuries Western scholars have struggled to understand India's faith.

Varied beliefs and practices!

They found it so vast and varied in its beliefs, practices and ways of worship that they could not comprehend or describe it.

What they didn't realize is that India's Sanatana Dharma, or eternal faith, is a family of religions with four principal denominations.



A Supreme God by different names

For example, seeing so many Deities, scholars wrote incorrectly that Hindus have no Supreme God.

In fact, Hindus all worship a one Supreme Being, though by different names.



Who is the Supreme God?

For Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is God.

For Saivites, God is Siva. For Shaktas, Goddess Shakti is supreme.

For Smartas, who are the most liberal Hindus, the choice of Deity is left to the devotee.names.

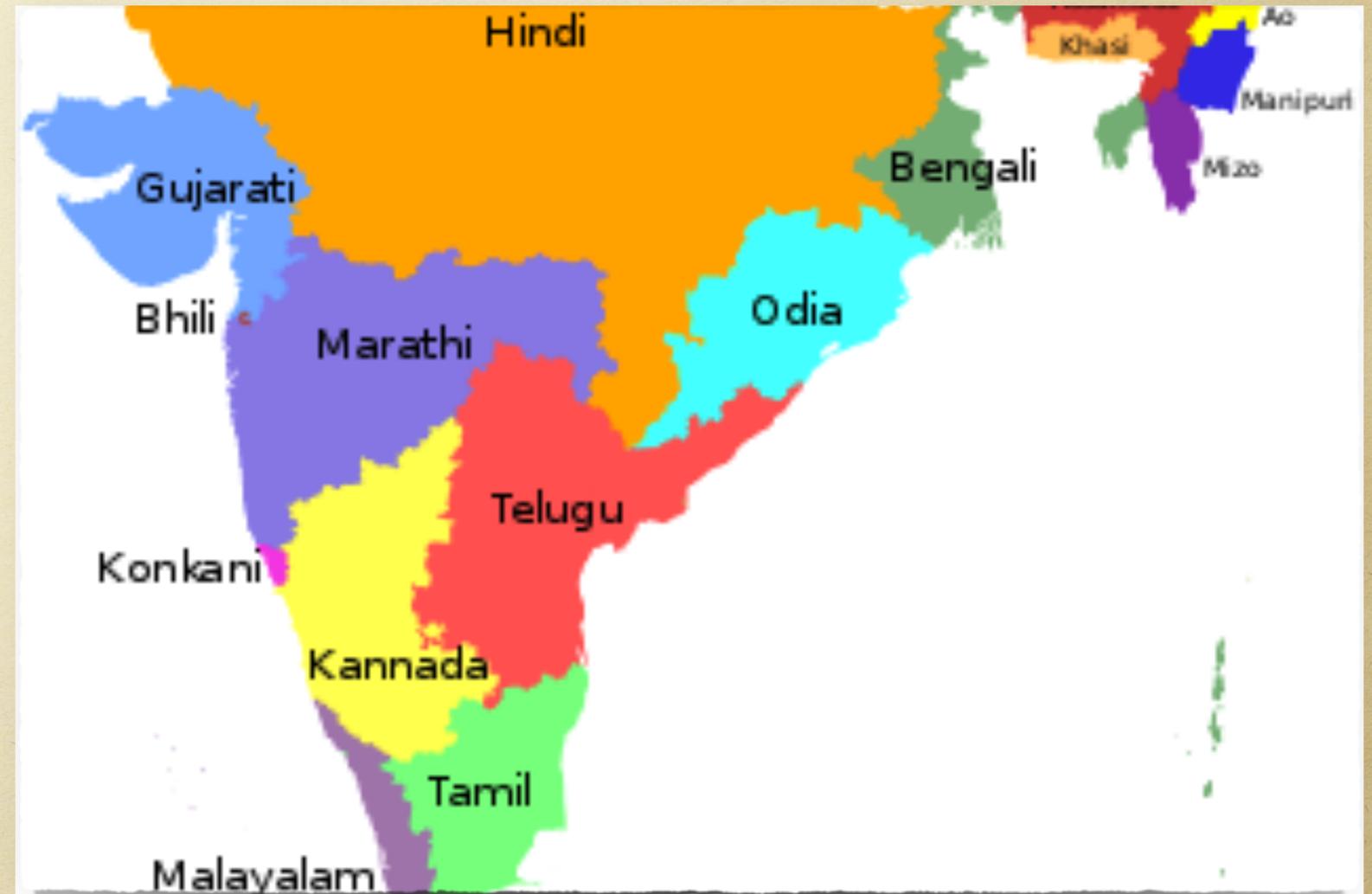


Geographical and linguistic factors

These strains arose in different geographical and linguistic regions.

Each has its own beliefs, scriptures, religious leaders and monastic traditions.

Each has its own temples, festivals and ways of worship.



Varied forms of worship

Some are more focused on devotion and temple worship.

Others stress yoga, mantra and scriptural study.

Each has hundreds of millions of followers.

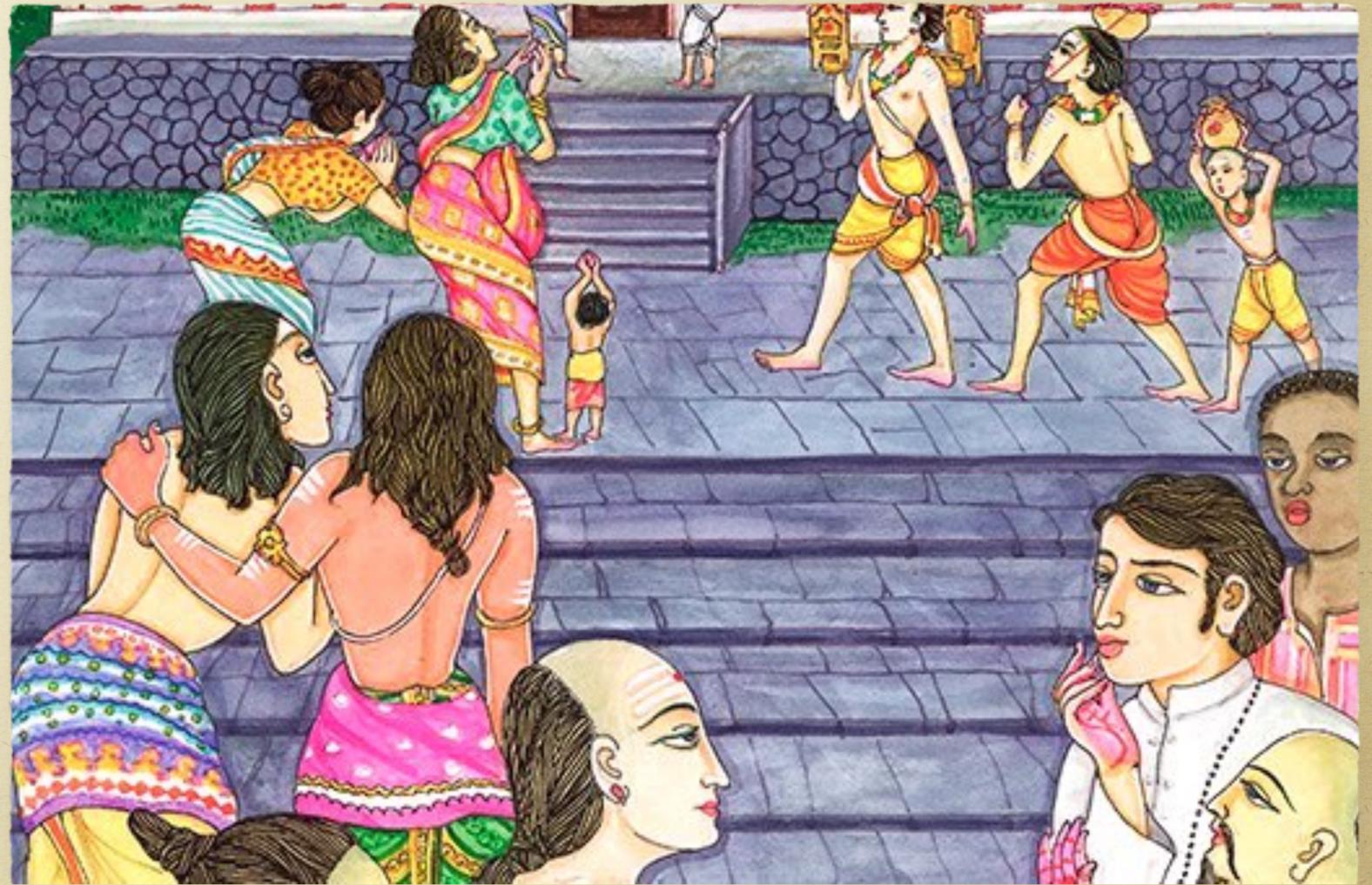


Every Hindu accept the Vedas

All four accept the authority of the *Vedas* and the basic beliefs of karma, dharma and reincarnation.

Much of their culture and tradition is the same.

Most Hindus follow the same lineage as their parents and grandparents.



Saivite respects all Hindu paths

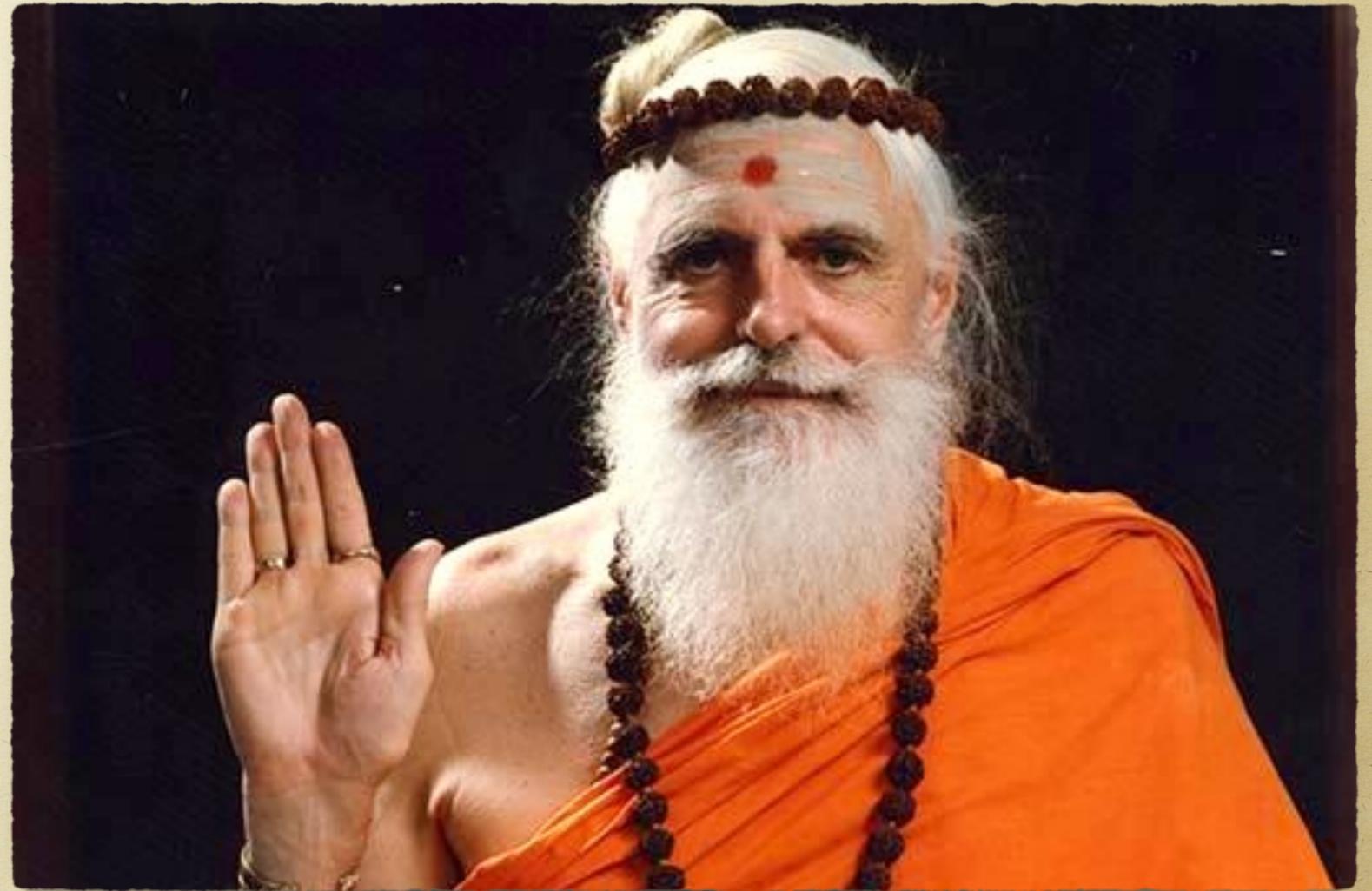
As Saivites, we respect all Hindu paths and we may occasionally visit the temples of other Hindu groups.

We join in their festivals and honor their religious leaders, but we hold firmly to our Saiva path.



Gurudeva explains...

Whatever our background, we can and we must maintain our sectarian roots and heritage, cultivate our differences and become strong within them.



QUESTIONS

Lesson 7



7.1 Understanding that Hinduism has four principal denominations helps one comprehend and describe it.

- True
- False

7.2 Hindus all worship a one Supreme Being, though by different names.

- True
- False

7.3 Enter the letter from list below of A - D for the correct Deity for the denomination.

___ For Vaishnavites
___ For Saivites
___ For Shaktas
___ For Smartas

- (A) Goddess Shakti is Supreme.
- (B) The choice of Deity is left to the devotee.
- (C) Lord Vishnu is God.
- (D) God is Siva.

7.4 These four denominations (Check the items that are true)

- A. Hold identical beliefs
- B. Have their own temples, festivals and ways of worship
- C. All stress the practice of yoga
- D. All accept the authority of the Veda
- E. Have much of the same culture

7.5 As Saivites we (Check the items that are true)

- A. Never visit the temples of other Hindu groups
- B. May occasionally visit the temples of other Hindu groups
- C. Do not join in their festivals and honor their religious leaders
- D. Do on occasion join in their festivals and honor their religious leaders
- E. Hold firmly to our Saiva path