

# Religions in India

Friday, September 30, 2016 11:48 PM

## Introduction

- Religion is set of beliefs held by a group of people. There are many different religions each with a different set of beliefs
- Religions define morality and ethics of the people who follow it
- Spirituality of each religion is vested in the sacred books and physical spaces where people get together to pray
- Religion is a powerful tool and it can make or break communal ties

### Indian context

- Indian subcontinent has a wide range of religions
- Several communities live together and India had seen more years of religious peace than the instances of communal tensions
- **Swami Vivekananda at World Parliament of Religions conference at Chicago in 1893**

*"I am proud to belong to a religion that has taught the world tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true"*

## Chronology of any religion

- Origin/Idea
- Consolidation of beliefs
- Making of Sacred texts, worship, rituals
- Preachers and followers
- Spread

### Chronology

Hinduism -> **Judaism** -> Jainism -> Buddhism -> Zoroastrianism -> Christianity -> Islam -> Sikhism

Both Islam and Christianity share the common messenger Abraham Moses who was the ancestor of all Jews

## Analogy

Subject	Hinduism	Judaism	Jainism	Buddhism	Zoroastrianism	Christianity	Islam	Sikhism
Literary meaning	Around Indus river	Chars of Judean ethnos	Conquer of desires	Enlightenment	Name of Prophet	Name of messiah	Submission to God	Disciple or learner
Messenger		Abraham Moses	Tirthankaras		Prophet <b>Zarathustra</b>	Messiahs, Jesus - one of them	Prophet, Mohammad	Guru
	Vedas etc.	Torah, Talmud	Agam Sutras 12 Angas	Tripitakas	Zenda Avesta, Zend	Bible	Quran	Guru Granth Sahib and Guru Panth
God		<b>Yahweh</b>			<b>Ahura Mazda</b>		Allah	
Believers	Hindus	<b>Jews</b>	Jains			Christians	Muslims	Sikhs
Sects	Vaishnavaites, Saivaites, Bhaktites etc	Orthodox, Conservative, Reform	Digambaras, Svetambaras	Mahayana, Hinayana, Vajrayana	Shehenshai ,K admi ,Fasli	Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestants	Sunni, Shia	<b>Khalsa and Sahajdhari Sikh</b>
	Temple	<b>Synagogues</b>			<b>Synagogues</b>	Church	Mosque	Gurudwaras/dharmasala
Time	Vedic period 1500 BC		599 BC	563 BC			622 AD	15th century
Hindu caste			Not condemned	Condemned				Condemned
			Rejected	Rejected Vedas				
		Day of Judgement			Day of Judgement	Day of Judgement	Day of Judgement	
		Semetic				Semetic	Semetic	

## Tantrism

- The origin of Tantrism can be dated to the Harappan Civilization
- Tantrism admitted both women and sudras into its ranks,
- Magic rituals
- They were intended to satisfy the material desires of the devotees for physical possessions
- Tantricism permeated Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Saivism and Vaishnavism

# Hinduism

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## Backdrop

- Hinduism - word drawn from Hindu which used to refer people who lived around Indus river

## Evolution

### Time:

- Genesis in Indus valley civilisation - where people worshipped natural elements of environment as Gods
- Came into limelight in pre-vedic and vedic times where Vedic literature contributed the growth of Hinduism and the Vedas are treated as sacred books and torch bearer for Hinduism - where idol worship/iconic worship started. Initially, religious offerings and sacrifices done in open places and later puja or worship of powerful image began
- Thereafter, Hinduism became a powerful religion with the availability of holy books, area of worship, rituals and priest to mediate with God
- **Emergence of Brahmanical sects - Saivaites, Vaishnavites, Shaktites during Post Mauryan times (200BC onwards)**
- Until now, Hinduism as a religion confined to elite class - top 3 castes of Varna system and dominated by Brahmins, more ritualistic
- During medieval times, **with the prominence of Bhakti movement in North India**, the religion taken to masses and the sages translated the Sanskrit holy texts to vernacular languages.
  - Faced several hardships by Islamic rulers especially Mughal rulers
- In Modern times, various religious reform movements started to reform the Hinduism religion - few within religion and few questioned religion
  - the need to reform the highly ritualistic nature of Hinduism and several problems of it such as Brahmanical domination, Sati, Child marriage, discriminative caste system
  - Few movements rejected the idol worship and rituals and few movements started to reform Hinduism for its survival and to avoid conversions
  - Brahma movement - Reform
    - Raja Rammohan Roy founder
      - ◻ Rejected idol/iconic worship
      - ◻ Abolition of Sati and Education to masses
    - Devendranath Tagore
      - ◻ Criticised British and Christian missionaries who were converting poor
      - ◻ **Urged Hinduism followers for large scale changes so that people would not convert**
  - Arya Samaj - Revive
    - Swami Dayananda Saraswati - Founder
    - Believed in Supremacy of Vedas but opposed to orthodox Hinduism
    - Welfare of mankind, education for masses
    - Iconic worship
    - Suddhi movement(purification movement) - returning to Hinduism who had earlier converted to other religion
  - Ramakrishna mission
    - Neo-Hinduism - Supreme devotion to God, God could be form less and the purpose of man is to find him
    - Ramakrishna mission - founded by Swami Vivekananda- three-fold philosophy
      - 1) Spread Vedantic spirituality
      - 2) Strive for harmonious existence of all world religions
      - 3) Consider service to mankind is service to God

### Spatial

- In South India

Vaishnavite movement	Saints called Alvars	Devotees of Vishnu	<b>Prabandhas - devotional songs</b>
Shaivite movement	Saints called Nayanars	Devotees of Shiva	63 famous Nayanars

## Principles

- Basic principles of Hinduism derived from Pre-vedic and vedic religious philosophies.
  - Below in chronological order - oldest to latest

Rig Veda	1000 hymns about various Gods Agni, Indra, Vayu, Soma
Yajur Veda	Sacrificial hymns related to the Rig Veda
Sama Veda	About music and hymns
Atharva Veda	About magic and medicine

- ✂ ◦ Each Veda is accompanied with four major text types - SBAU (mnemonic)

S	Samhitas	Mantras and benedictions(blessings)
B	Brahmanas	commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices
A	Aranyakas	text on rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and symbolic-sacrifices, mystical teachings
U	Upanishads	texts discussing meditation, <b>philosophy</b> and spiritual knowledge

- Basic principles - Ritualistic, Idol worship
- Four stages of life according to Upanishads

- a. Brahmachari - student life
  - b. Grihastha - household
  - c. Vanaprastha - a hermit - living excluded from society
  - d. Sanyasi - an ascetic - simple life
- After becoming sanyasi, he strives for Salvation/Moksha

### Chota Char dam

- Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath were known as Chota Char Dham to differentiate them from the bigger circuit of Char Dham sites
- All are in Uttarakhand state

### Char dam - Four abodes

- Four pilgrimage sites in India that are widely revered by Hindus.
- It comprises Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameswaram.



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- **The Char Dham defined by Adi Shankaracharya consists of four Vaishnavite pilgrimages**

# Sects of Hinduism

Saturday, April 28, 2018 8:36 PM

## Lingayatism or Lingayat Sect or Veerashaivism

- 12th century AD
- Basaveshwara is the founder of this sect
- Philosophy
  - Saktivisistadvait
    - a term which means the **non-duality of God** (viz, **Parasiva**) as qualified by power or sakti.
    - There is no duality between the soul and God. God and soul are in an inseparable union through the inalienable power called Sakti.
- Lingayats do not eat meat, or smoke or drink alcohol.
- Strongly **anti-Brahmanical** and opposed to worship of any image other than the lingam
- ★ Lingayatism rejects Vedic authority, caste system, the system of four stages of human life as well as temple worship.
- This has been found by Basava in 12th century
- **Basava Purana** is their sacred text Bhima Kavi in 14th century in Kannada
- In the early 21st century some Lingayats began to call for legal recognition by the Indian government as a religion distinct from Hinduism or, alternatively, as a caste within Hinduism

## Basaveshwara

- Basaveshwara Jayanti
- Basava a minister of the **Chalukya** king **Bijjala Raya of Kalyana** (1157-68 AD).
- He stood for the **upliftment of the downtrodden** and fought the evils that had crept into the Brahmanical Vedic tradition
- He heralded the establishment of '**Kalyana Rajya**' (**Welfare state**)
- He gave two important and innovative concepts called "**Sthavara**" and "**Jangama**", the meaning of which is "**Static**" and "**Dynamic**" which are the main foundation stones of the revolutionary ideology of Basavanna

# Judaism

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## Backdrop

- One of Oldest religion
- **Most persecuted religion** (specifically by Hitler in Germany)
- **Christianity and Islam borrowed a lot from Judaism**

## Evolution

- Believe in one true God - **Yahweh**
- **Abraham Moses was messenger** who followed injunctions of God. He was ancestor of all Jews
- God sent Abraham to Earth and gave him **Ten Commandments or Sefer Torahon at Mount Sinai** - These commandments directs how to live life by Israelis
- Abraham son is Issac and Grandson is Jacob(Asrael) and the **children of Asrael are called Israelis**
- **Children of Israel or Bene Israel** - 12 children of Jacob who became ancestors of **12 tribes**
- Three major sects
  - **Orthodox** - adhere to all ancient customs, practices and tradition
  - **Conservative** - middle path. Some conservative, some relaxed
  - **Reform** - changed religious ceremonies and adapted to recent times

## Principles

- **Torah** -religious book contains the first five books of Old Testament/Bible
- Talmud - Compilation of ethical and legal writings and a brief history of Jews
- **Believe in Day of Judgement**
- Place of worship
  - Synagogues- places
  - During prayer, Male has to wear **tsisith**- thread of prayer shawl
- Religious services - **Eliyahoo-ha-Nabiori**

## Spread

- First Jewish settlers came to west coast of India
- 5 major Jewish Communities in India
  - a. Malayalam speaking Cochinis
  - b. Marathi speaking **Bene Israel**
  - c. Baghdadi Jews as traders and settled around Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata
  - d. Bene Menashe or Manipuri Jews**
  - e. Bene **Ephraim** - **Telugu speaking Jews converted to Judaism** in 1980
- Antisemitism - hostility or discrimination against Jews [**Semitic religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam**]

# Jainism

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## Theory

Refer [here](#)

**santhara —a Jain religious practice of a ritualistic fast unto death.**

Supreme Court has temporarily suspended the implementation of the Rajasthan High Court order(which termed santhara as illegal) till such time that the Supreme Court itself hears the case and rules on it.

# Buddhism

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**Theory - Refer [here](#)**

# Zoroastrianism

Thursday, March 2, 2017 11:32 PM

## Backdrop

- Monotheistic religion
- Commonly called as **Parsis** in India as they are originated in Persia.
- Smallest communities in India

## Evolution

- Believed that one eternal God named **Ahura Mazda**(Goodness) vs Angra Mainyu(bad) fighting and ultimately good will win over the evil and that will be the last day
- The prophet **Zarathustra** from Persia originated Zoroastrianism- Iranian Prophet
- Major sects
  - **Shehenshai** - Calendar from last Sassanian King, Yasdegard III
  - **Kadmi** - Oldest and most accurate calendar
  - **Fasli** - Follow traditional Persian calendar

## Principles

- **Worship fire**, Also consider air, water, earth to be sacred elements
  - **Fire temples called Atash Bahram**
  - Only 8 such temples exist in India
- ✉ The basic teachings of Zoroaster are contained in the maxim “**Good thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.**”
- Sacred texts
  - **Zenda Avesta**
    - Written by Zarathustra himself
    - Written in old Avestan
    - Contains sacred songs - **gathas** and sacred chants - **Athuna Vairyo**
  - **Zend**
    - Translations of Zenda Avesta and compiled glossaries
    - 5 parts of collection
      - 1) Yasna - worship with ceremony and offerings
      - 2) Videvdad - laws against demons
      - 3) Yashts - to worship
      - 4) Khordeh Avestha - Book of daily prayers
      - 5) Gathas - 5 parts Ahunavaiti, Ushtavaiti, Spenta-Mainyu, Vohu-Khshathra, Vashista-Ishti
- Dead bodies in open space
  - Believe that dead body is a corrupting element and hence place the dead bodies in open space to be eaten by Vultures
  - Open spaces called **Dakhma - Only place in India Tower of Silence in Mumbai**
  - Vultures that eat them are called **DakhmaNashini**
  - Now people started cremating/burying dead

## Festivals

- Iranshah Udvada Utsav

## Spread

- India first seen this religion when the Zoroastrians fled to India because of Iranian invasions
- Live mostly in Mumbai, Goa, Ahmedabad
- For more than a thousand years, Zoroastrianism was a major religion in Iran.

## Current Affairs

- Jiyo Parsi
  - to reverse the declining trend of Parsi population by adopting a scientific protocol and structured interventions, stabilize their population and increase the population of Parsis in India.

# Christianity

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## Backdrop

- One of the largest religions of the world
- Founded by **Jesus Christ in Jerusalem**

## Evolution

- Christians believed that there is existence of one God who created the universe
- God sent **messiah's** (messengers) when necessary to help his creation
- Jesus was one of the messengers who wanted to help people to find God and become their savior
- After Jesus left the Earth, Christians believe that God's presence was retained in the form of **Holy Ghost**
- **Christianity became the state religion of Roman empire** and started spreading rapidly
- Three broad divisions(denominations) now- **Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestants etc.**
  - No division until 1000AD
  - In 1054, with the Great Schism(split) between the Western Church and the Eastern Church. From that point forward, there were two large branches of Christianity, which came to be known as the **Catholic Church (in the West) and the Orthodox Church (in the East which includes the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches).**
  - next major division was the Protestant Reformation which are against certain Catholic practices. **Protestants reject the authority of the Pope and many other Catholic traditions and beliefs,** emphasize the importance of reading the Bible, and hold to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.  
  
England - Anglican dominance  
Scandinavia - Lutheran dominance  
France - Catholic dominance

## Principles

- **Church**
  - Where people congregate and offer prayers
- **Baptism** - Church service by child or any individual
- **Eucharist** - bread and wine with God signifies unity with being
- Holy Trinity/**trinitarianism of Christianity**
  - Christians worship **Holy Trinity - father(God), Son(Jesus) and the Holy Ghost**

## Sacred books

- Bible - contains portions of Old Testament (Jews parts) and New Testaments (writings defined by Roman Catholic Church headed by Pope)

## Spread

- Two stages of spread in India
  - Medieval period
    - St Thomas (one of Jesus apostle (disciples)) visited India in 52 AD and worked in Kerala and Tamilnadu which led to lot of conversions in Kerala from all the classes
    - Christian missionaries of Portuguese brought permission from Akbar and preached their teachings.
  - 19th century missionary work
    - Missionaries started concentrating in bring modern education and medical assistance to those who converted to Christianity
    - They take the message of Christ to smaller tribal parts of India where they convert locals and provide them with education and medicines

# Islam

Thursday, March 2, 2017 12:07 AM

## Backdrop

- Islam literally means "submission to God"
- Those who submit to God and follow preaching of Prophet Mohammad are called Muslims

## Evolution

- Islam originated in Arabian peninsula in 5th century AD
- It is believed that **Allah**, the **God** sent line of messengers to Earth
- One of the messenger is Abraham Moses (Both Christians and Muslims share Abraham as a common ancestor)
- In 5th century, Muslims believed that an angel revealed the message of God to **Prophet Mohammad** on the mountains and Mohammad recited these injunctions to the followers
- These injunctions were compiled by his followers after his death and made Quran which is the holy book of the Muslims
- Post death of Prophet Mohammad, there were differences on who should be the successor
  - **Sunni - Believed in Sunnah and wants the successor should be close and initial followers of Prophet Mohammad like Abu Bakr**
  - **Shia - Believed that successor should be from own blood and flesh like Ali, Son-in-law**

In India and in world, Sunni Muslims are in majority. However the Shia's presence is made felt on **Muharram** where they sadly feel the gruesome death of Ali.

## Prophet Mohammad

- Born in Mecca
- After facing resentment from political leaders of Mecca for this preaching, he migrated to **Madina** and after few days, he returned to Mecca and this route from Madina to Mecca became holy route - Hajj pilgrimage- For Muslims once in lifetime to conduct this pilgrimage
- Both Mecca and Madina are in Saudi Arabia

## Principles

- Believe in **Day of Judgement**
  - All good and bad deeds will be judged on the day of judgement and accordingly will be sent to Hell/Heaven
- Zakat or Charity
  - Every Muslim should give his portion of their earnings to the needy and poor
- Prayers and worship
  - **Namaz**- Good Muslims should offer Namaz and prayer five times a day
  - Juma Namaz- Friday prayers should be in community mosque
  - Ramzan month - fasting from sunrise to sunset
- Four major schools of thought and law in Islam in India
  - Hanafi
  - Shafei
  - Maliki
  - Hambali
- **Sharia** - Islamic law based on Quran and **Sunnah** (records of teachings, deeds, sayings)
- **Ulama** – learned theologians and jurists of Muslim religion similar to Brahmins in Hinduism

## Spread

### Shia vs Sunni

- At least 85% of Muslims are Sunnis
- Sunni majority - Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, India, **Indonesia**
- Shia majority - Iran, Iraq,
  - Large Shia minority communities in Yemen, Bahrain (Sunni minority rules Shia majority), Syria (ruling by Shia 13 percent), **Lebanon**, and **Azerbaijan**
  - NOTE: Bahrain is base for US Navy Fleet which guards Strait of Hormuz
- Shia Muslims - believed that the Prophet's son-in-law, *Ali*, (own blood) was the legitimate leader of the Muslim community
- Sunni Muslims -
  - Believed in Sunnah and wants the successor should be close and initial followers of Prophet Mohammad like **Abu Bakr**
  - Who accepted the authority of the early leaders (*khalifas*) of the community, and the succeeding Khalifas



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# Sikhism

Thursday, January 5, 2017 9:42 PM

## Backdrop

- one of the youngest of the major world religions. 15th century
- Sikh literary meaning - a disciple or a learner

## Evolution

- In the later 15th century, Guru Nanak condemned the then existing social order and life of the people of Punjab and gave an organised fight to Hindu religion and provided an alternative way of socio-religious organisation
- He believed that supreme purpose of the humans existence was salvation which is attained by **numerous cycles of birth and rebirth**.
- Mughal-Sikh relations are cordial initially until the execution of Guru Arjun by Jahangir.
- After thus, Guru Hargobind gave a military dimension to the religion. He raised a military organisation and transformed the Sikh CULT to Sikh CORPS and these **saint soldiers would attain heaven**
- There were 10 Sikh gurus in physical form and the 11th Guru is the Guru Granth Sahib/Adi Granth sacred book which is the last Guru List of [Sikh gurus](#)

## Principles

- Salvation
  - Supreme purpose of human existence is salvation
  - Salvation attained from endless cycles of birth and rebirth
  - Salvation **cannot be attained by depriving of worldly possession** and cannot be obtained by idol/book worship
  - **Salvation can be achieved by Right Belief , Right Worship, Right Conduct**
- New form of worship - **langar**- Community Kitchen , **sangat** - community gatherings (share and consumer together) , **kirtan**- Community singing of praising God
- Place of worship - Gurudwaras / dharmshala
- Derive authority from Guru Granth Sahib(Adi Granth) and Guru Panth (Gurus way; now refers to whole Sikh community)
- God is **Formless (Nirankar)**,
- Direct access to God without the need of any rituals or priests.
- equality and fraternal love
- **Condemned Hindu Caste system and theocracy of Mughal rulers**
- 3 pillars of Sikhism as founded by Guru Nanak
  - Naam Japna - meditation on God through reciting, chanting, singing
  - Kirat karni - honestly earn by ones physical and mental effort
  - Vand Chakna - share and consume together

## ★ Guru Nanak

- Guru Nanak is the founder and first Guru of Sikhism
- Birth: Nankana Sahib (Near Lahore), **Settlement: Kartarpur**
  - Kartarpur corridor: connects the **Dera Baba Nanak Sahib Gurdwara** in India's state of Punjab to the Gurdwara **Darbar Sahib Kartarpur** shrine in Pakistan's Punjab province.
- **Udasis** - preaching tours [ covered most parts of India and also **Mecca, Sri Lanka, Nepal** etc.]
- Guru Angad (successor of Guru Nanak) compiled compositions of Guru Nanak in new script **Gurmukhi**

## Spread

- Initially, **khattari traders** who were attracted to Sikhism because of its practical beliefs - **need not asked ascetism**
- **Khalsa Sikhs and Sahajdhari Sikhs** (Khalsa means sovereign/free - those who fought for sovereignty)
  - Khalsa Sikhs - uniformity at physical level - 5K's Kachcha, Kesh, Kangha, Kirpan, Kara
  - Sahajdhari Sikhs - constitutes Nanak-Panthis, Bhallas, Udasis.
- **Baptized Sikhs are called Singh and the women are called Kaur**