Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great (1556-1605) holds a religious assembly in the Ibadat Khana (House of Worship) in Fatehpur Sikri; the two men dressed in black are the Jesuit missionaries Rodolfo Acquaviva and Francisco Henriques. Illustration to the Akbarnama, miniature painting by Nar Singh, ca. 1605.
Religions and their Arrival in India

India is the birthplace of 4 major world religions:

1) Hinduism – 2500 BCE
2) Jainism – 6th century BCE
3) Buddhism – 6th century BCE
4) Sikhism – 15th century CE
Religions that arrived and still remain in India

Zoroastrianism – 10th century Zoroastrians who escaped Muslim invasion of Iran

Judaism – 562 BCE

Christianity – 1st century CE; Protestant arrival 1705 CE

Islam - 7th century Arab traders in Malabar Coast; 12th century Muslim invasion of North India

Bahai - 1844
Hinduism

- Has no founder
- Exists in many forms; not formally organized
- Is the oldest living religion in the world
- Is a way of life
- Is a compilation of insights and deep reflections on life by seers, sages, and rishis
- Sacred knowledge is contained in the Vedas and the Upanishads
Hinduism

Lord Ganesh:
- Elephant headed god (based on mythology)
- Is the first god to be worshipped among the Hindus
- Remover of obstacles
- Bestowal of blessings
- Son of Shiva and Parvati
Hinduism

- Lakshmi
- Goddess of wealth, prosperity (both material and spiritual), fortune, and the embodiment of beauty.
- She is the consort of the god Vishnu.
- Also called Mahalakshmi, Shri, and Thirumagal
Hinduism

- Saraswati
- goddess of knowledge, music, arts and science.
- She is the consort of Brahma, also revered as his Shakti.
- She is also known by the names: Sharada, Veenapani, Pustaka dharini, Vidyadayini, and Vani.
Hinduism

Jagannath Temple, Rathayatra Puri, Orissa, India
Jainism

- Philosophy of non-violence and asceticism
- Began in the sixth century BC, the same time Buddhism was developing.
- The faith is named for the jinas, spiritual conquerors, who have achieved liberation.
- There are 24 spiritual leaders called tirthankaras.
- Jain ritual centers around on sacred images and mantras (chants.)
Jainism

Jain temples, Palitana, India
Buddhism

Based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha:
The Four Noble Truths:
1) suffering is an ingrained part of existence,
2) the origin of suffering is craving for sensuality, acquisition of identity, and annihilation,
3) suffering can be ended, and
4) following the Noble Eightfold Path is the means to end suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration
Archeological site at Buddhist pilgrimage site Sarnath, where the Buddha delivered his first teachings
Sikhism

- Is a monotheistic religion
- Founded during the 15th century in the Punjab region, by Guru Nanak, and continued to progress with ten successive Sikh gurus
- Punjab of India is the only region in the world with a majority Sikh population
- Sikhs are expected to embody the qualities of a "Sant-Sipahie"—a saint-soldier; one must have control over one's internal vices and be able to be constantly immersed in virtues clarified through the religious teachings.
- A Sikh must also have the courage to defend the rights of all who are wrongfully oppressed or persecuted irrespective of religion, color, caste or creed.
A Sikh man at the Harimandir Sahib, known popularly as the Golden Temple, a sacred shrine for Sikhs.
Zoroastrianism teaches that Ahura Mazda created man and gave him his body and mind. Ahura Mazda is the protector and nourisher of all. Man is responsible for his thoughts, speeches, and actions. Individual will and individual intellect are connected with the cosmic will and cosmic-intellect.

Pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds—this is the famous axiom of Zoroastrian religion. This is the constantly reiterated rule of the Zoroastrian life. Pure thoughts, pure words, pure actions can be practiced only through faith in the Ahura Mazda, the Lord of righteousness.

Zoroastrianism teaches that holiness is happiness, and that is the most precious gift of Ahura Mazda and that is the best offering to be presented to the Lord by the virtuous.

A Zoroastrian must act in harmony with the will of God. He should study the scriptures and perform his duty to God and his fellowmen. He should strictly observe the divine laws. Then only he will attain holiness and happiness.
Zoroastrianism

Parsi Navjote ceremony (rites of admission into the Zoroastrian faith)
Judaism

- The oldest of the Indian Jewish communities is in Cochin. The traditional account is that traders from Judea arrived in the city of Cochin, Kerala, in 562 BCE, and that more Jews came as exiles from Israel in the year 70 CE after the destruction of the Second Temple.

- The Bene Israel claim that their ancestors arrived 2,100 years ago after a shipwreck stranded seven Jewish families from Judea at Navagaon near Alibag, just south of Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- Bnei Menashe - an estimated 9,000 people in the northeastern Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur started practicing halachic Judaism in the 1970s, claiming to be descendants of the Tribe of Manasseh.

A map of India, showing the main areas of Jewish concentration
- There is a general scholarly consensus that Christianity was rooted in India by the 3rd century CE, including some communities who used Syriac liturgically, and it is a possibility that the religion's existence there extends to as far back as the 1st century.

- It is also well noted that Thomas the Apostle visited Muziris in Kerala in 52 AD to spread the gospel amongst Kerala's Jewish settlements.

San Thome Basilica in Chennai is built over the site where St. Thomas is believed to be originally interred.
The Basilica of Bom Jesus (Portuguese: Basílica do Bom Jesus) is located in Goa, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The basilica holds the mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier. The church is located in Old Goa, which was the capital of Goa in the early days of Portuguese rule. 'Bom Jesus' (literally, 'Good (or Holy) Jesus') is the name used for the infant Jesus. The Jesuit church is India’s first minor basilica, and is considered to be one of the best examples of baroque architecture in India.
Matters of jurisdiction involving Muslims in India related to marriage, inheritance and wakf properties are governed by the Muslim Personal Law, and the courts have ruled that Sharia or Muslim law, holds precedence for Muslims over Indian civil law in such matters.
Islam

Jama Masjid, Delhi, one of the largest mosques in the "Asia-Pacific" region
Islam

Tomb of Sufi saint Shaikh Salim Chisti in Fatehpur Sikri, Uttar Pradesh
Bahai

- Baha'u'llah (1817-1892) is the Prophet of the Baha'i Faith.
- He is regarded by Baha'is as the most recent Divine Teacher in the line of the Messengers of God that have enlightened the peoples of the earth with their divine teachings. These include Divine Teachers such as Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Christ and Muhammad.
- The central theme of Baha'u'llah's message is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come for its unification into one global society. The principal challenge facing the peoples of the earth, as perceived by Baha'u'llah, is to accept their oneness and, to assist the processes of unification of the entire human race and to thereby carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.
Bahai

Lotus Temple, Bahá'í House of Worship, in New Delhi
Sources

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