

. India is home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world, i.e. the Indus Valley Civilization. The major sites that saw the emergence of this civilization are Mohenjo-Daro, Lothal and Harappa. This civilization laid the foundation for the development of societies and a further enlarged and complex form of life. This is followed by the advent of the Aryans in the Indian sub continent. This phase is known as the Vedic phase and the one before that is known as the Pre-Vedic phase. The Vedic phase gave rise to Hinduism and this is the time the Vedas came into being

India has long been known as a very spiritual, religious heavy area of the world. In India, religion is a way of life. It is an integral part of the entire Indian tradition. For the majority of Indians, religion permeates every aspect of life, from common-place daily chores to education and politics.

Sikhism, Ayyavazhi, Buddhism and Jainism are Indian-born religious systems that are strong and influential not only in India but across the world.

Hinduism is a worldwide religious tradition that is based on the Vedas, and is the direct descendant of the Vedic religion. Hinduism evolved from a monolithic religion into a multitude of traditions over a period of 1500 years. It encompasses many religious rituals that widely vary in practice, as well as many diverse sects and philosophies. With an array of deities, all manifestations of the one Supreme monistic Brahman, are venerated. Thus, Hinduism is often misconceived to be a polytheistic religion, although the belief in a singular, Universal Soul is a fundamental tenet of the Hindu faith. Beliefs, codes and principles vary from region to region. It is the third largest religion in the world, with a following of approximately 1 billion people. Ninety-eight percent of Hindus can be found on the Indian subcontinent, chiefly in India. It is noteworthy however that the relatively small Himalayan kingdom of Nepal is the only nation in the world with Hinduism as its state religion.

Islam arrived in India as early as the 8th century CE. During the following decades, contributed greatly to the cultural enhancement of an already rich Indian culture, shaping not only the shape of Northern Indian classical music (Hindustani, a melding of Indian and Middle Eastern elements) but encouraging a grand tradition of Urdu (a melding of Hindi, Arabic and Persian languages) literature both religious and secular. Among other monuments, the Taj Mahal is a gift of the Mughals. As of 2001, there are about 130 million Muslims in India, most of whom were converted during the Mughal period and they mostly live in the north and west of the country.

Sikhism, was founded in India's northwestern Punjab region about 400 years ago. As of 2001 there were 19.3 million Sikhs in India. Many of today's Sikhs are situated in Punjab, the largest Sikh province in the world and the ancestral home of Sikhs. The most famous Sikh temple is the Golden Temple, located in Amritsar, Punjab. Many Sikhs serve in the Indian Army. The current prime minister of India, Manmohan Singh, is a Sikh. Punjab is the spiritual home of Sikhs and is the only state in India where Sikhs form a majority.

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