

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2011  
The Arts of South Asia & the Islamic World: Beliefs Made Visible  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*  
Lesser-Known Religions of India: Highlighting Zoroastrians, Jains, and Sikhs  
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## Introduction

Indian Constitution (Article 25) divides different religions into two groups:

Hindus: Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs  
Others: Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians

Tentative numbers

Zoroastrians: 200,000: India (Mumbai and Gujarat), Iran, Australia, England, North America  
Jains: 5 million: India (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka), and other parts of the world  
Sikhs: 25 million: India (Punjab), and the remaining are scattered globally from Australia to the U.S.

## I. The Zoroastrians

### A. Historical landmarks

Zoroaster, the founder (mid-second millennium BCE-)  
Cyrus and his empire (549 BCE)  
Response to Islam  
Parsis (From Persia) arrive in India (1000CE)  
Association with the British (1700-)  
In post-1947 India

### B. Beliefs

Sources: Avesta, Gathas, Zands (Pahlavi)  
Theology (Ahura Mazda and Ahriman)  
Inherent human goodness  
Purity based religion  
Who is a Zoroastrian?

### C. Religious life

Worshiping fire, water, winds  
Wearing sudreh and kusati  
Other rituals  
Fire temples

### D. Looking ahead

## II. The Jains

### A. Historical landmarks

Twenty-four teachers (tirthankara [bridgemaker])  
Mahavira brings their work to completion (mid-first millennium BCE-)  
Building the community  
Response to Islam (1000CE)  
In post-1947 India

## B. Beliefs

Sources: Agamas (Purva, Anga, Angabahya)  
Tirthankars and goddesses (No Creator)  
World (samsara)  
Goal of human life (moksha)  
Renunciation

## C. Religious life

Monks and laity  
Svetambrs (500 CE), Sthankvasis (1400 CE), Terapanthis (1700 CE)  
Digambrs (500 CE), Terapanthis (1500 CE)  
Non-violence is the supreme path, charity

## D. Artistic heritage

Sculpture  
Cave paintings  
Temple architecture

## III. The Sikhs

### A. Historical landmarks

Guru Nanak, the founder (1469-1539)  
Guru Gobind Singh (1661-1708) and the Khalsa  
Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) and the Khalsa Raj  
Responding to the British and modernity  
In post-1947 India

### B. Beliefs

Sources: Guru Granth, historical literature  
Monotheism (Nam, belief in one God)  
World (duniya)  
Humans (lok)

### C. Religious life

Congregational worship  
Sharing (langar)  
dan [social commitment], ishnan [personal purity]  
Welfare and justice for all (degh, tegh, fateh)

### D. Artistic heritage

Manuscripts  
Portraits  
Gurdwara architecture

## Bibliography:

Mary Boyce, *The Zoroastrians* (New York: Routledge, 1987)  
Paul Dandas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 1992)  
G.S. Mann, *Sikhism* (Prentice Hall, 2004)