



Six Religions in the World

We often see history dated BC and AD. This is called the Gregorian calendar.

However, it is better to use another set of letters for dating. We will use BCE and CE. BCE means 'before the common era' and CE mean the 'common era'.



Hinduism is believed to be the oldest living world religion. Some people trace its beginnings back to the remains on an ancient civilisation near the River Indus. Others trace the religion back to the Aryans who invaded the Indus valley. It is from the Indus that India and Hinduism get their names. We can find evidence of the very beginning of Hinduism dating back to 2500BCE. Today more than 80% of India is Hindu.



Judaism is another living religion which is very ancient. The Jewish faith grew up in the land of Canaan. The Jews named it the land of Israel. The story of Judaism goes back to a leader and prophet called Abraham. He probably lived about 2000BCE. Jews today still call Abraham the father of their religion. The Jewish community is now scattered around the world. However, they still look to Israel as their spiritual homeland.

Siddharta Gotama was born in 563BCE in northern India, in the foothills of the Himalayas, now in Nepal. He became known as the Buddha, the enlightened one. His followers were called Buddhists. Today **Buddhism** is wide spread in South east and East Asia.



The birth of the Christian church dates back to shortly after the death of Jesus, about 30CE. Christians get their names from the word Christ, a title given to Jesus meaning King. **Christianity** had its routes in Israel at a time when Romans governed the lands and called it Palestine. The faith quickly spread outside its place of origin, to Rome and beyond, by the end of the first century.

Muslims look back to the life of their prophet Muhammad (Muslims put PBUH after Muhammad's name meaning Peace Be Upon Him). Muhammad (PBUH) started preaching in Arabia in 610CE. The Muslim calendar begins with the year 622CE, the date when Muhammad (PBUH) left Makkah for Medina. Medina was the first city to accept his teaching. **Islam** soon spread far and wide. Muslims still regard the two cities, Makkah and Medina, as the centre of the world and Arabia, now Saudi Arabia, as the homeland of their faith.

Sikhism is the youngest of the six religions on the map. It dates from the end of the 15th century CE. This was the time when Guru Nanak started preaching in India. He was the first of the ten Gurus, the founder of the Sikh faith. The homeland of the Sikh religion is the Punjab region of India.

