

## **5. Indian Religions (OE)**

India has been home to all the major world religions. It gave birth to three major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism) and embraced two other world religions - Islam as well as Christianity. This course seeks to explore comparatively the historical experience of these complex religions in India. In this course, we will attempt to understand the development of Indian religious ideas, institutions and practices. Thus, the student will appreciate how religious thought and practice developed in the past 3,600 years.

Themes included in this comparative historical analysis include (a) the evolution and spread of these religions; (b) conception of divinity (c) their core values, institutions and religious practices; (d) religious reforms undertaken historically, with a specific focus on religious reform and secularism in modern India. Such an inquiry will allow the student to learn how Indians have thought about some of the basic questions of human existence and the answers provided in their scriptures and religious practices. Study material used in this class should include religious scriptures, philosophical texts, Bhakti and Sufi poetry, audio and video recordings of rituals and other religious observations.

**This course has the following five modules:**

Classical Hinduism – Vedas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Bhagavadgita, Puranas, Bhakti traditions, Temple Worship, Popular Hinduism  
Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism – founders, teachings, expansion, decline and modern period  
Islam and Christianity – arrival and expansion of both Islam and Christianity, Sufism, Islam and Christianity in modern India  
Key concepts of Indian religions – Dharma, Bhakti, Moksha, Samsara,

Religious in Modern India – Colonial critique of Indian Religions, Modern Indian Religious Reformers and Reform Movements (Brahmasamaj, Arya Samaj), Secularism in India

**Readings:**

- Clothey, Fred. Religion in India: A Historical Introduction (Routledge, 2007)  
Eck, Diana. Darshan: Seeing the Divine image in India (Columbia University Press 1998)  
Gupta, Bina. An Introduction to Indian Philosophy Perspectives on Reality, Knowledge and Freedom (Routledge, 2012)  
Heehs, Peter eds Indian Religions: The Spiritual traditions of South Asia  
Lopez, Donald. Buddhism in Practice. Princeton: PUP, 1995.  
Lopez, Donald. Religions of India in Practice. Princeton: PUP, 1995.  
Metcalf, Barbara D (eds) Islam in South Asia in Practice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)  
Miller, Barbara Stoler. Bhagavadgita (New York: Bantam Books, 1986)  
Mittal, Sushil. The Hindu World. Routledge, 2007.  
Mittal, Sushil. Religions of India An Introduction. Routledge, 2017.  
Narayan, R. K. The Indian Epics Retold. The Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, Gods, Demons and others (Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995)  
Smith, Houston. The World's Religions: Our great wisdom traditions (Harper Collins Publishers)

**Kannada Readings:**

Vijay Poonacha, Tambanda. *Kannada Vishvavidyanilaya Caritre Samputa*, Volumes 1-8.