Comparison of Religions

Eastern (Indian-Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism) and Western (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) Religions

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Eastern (Indian) Religions
Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

- Common Features:
  - Philosophy of Karma
  - Continuity of Life (Reincarnation)
  - Mystical (Human Experience)
  - Self Realization (Direct contact with God/Self)
  - Individual
  - Freedom to choose God(s)/no-God
  - Human Suffering - Soul's Ignorance
Eastern (Indian) Religion
Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

Common Features (continued):

- No Judgment Day
- No Eternal Hell/Heaven
- Liberation (Moksha)- Eternal
- Scripture Has Limited/No Authority
- Worshipping - All Day
- Universe Exists in Endless Cycle
- Religious Symbols (OM, Swastika, Lotus)
- Cremation

Systems of Philosophy Developed
- Brahma System (Hinduism)
- Samana System (Jainism, Buddhism)
Brahmana System (Hinduism)

- God - Creator, Preserver, Destroyer (Cyclic)
- God is universe and universe is God (synonymous)
- At liberation, soul merges with God (soul becomes infinity)
- Scriptures have certain authority (Vedas)
  - Vedas, Upanishads, Geeta, Brahma Sutra
    - Scriptures are in Sanskrit
- Highly Ritualistic (elaborate and fancy)
- Animal sacrifice in the past
- Duties of Individuals (Caste Systems)
Philosophy of Brahmana System (Hinduism)

- Yoga
- Samkhya
- Nyaya
- Vaisesika
- Earlier Mimasa
- Later Mimasa (Vedanta)
  - Saivism, Saktism, Vaisnavism, Liberalism
Brahmana System (Hinduism)
Primary Paths:

- Path of Devotion or Surrender (Bhakti Yoga)
  - Enjoyment of Supreme Love and Bliss
- Path of Knowledge (Jnan Yoga)
  - Realization of unique and supreme self
- Path of Action (Karma Yoga)
  - Dedication of every human activity to supreme will
- Path of Self Control/Meditation (Raj Yoga)
  - Liberation through the perfection of body, thought, emotion and consciousness
Brahmana System (Hinduism)  
Caste Systems (Duties of Individuals)

- **Priests-intellectuals (Brahmins)**  
  - establish and preserve the national ideas and philosophy

- **Rulers and warriors (Kshatriyas)**  
  - to protect the state from external aggression and establish internal order

- **Merchants and artisans (Vaishyas)**  
  - for the production of national wealth

- **Sudras**  
  - to do the menial work
Brahman System (Hinduism)
Duties at various stages of Life:

- **Student life**
  - preparative period

- **Householder life**
  - worldly success: wealth, fame and power

- **Retirement life**
  - satisfaction of service to community and fellow man

- **Renunciation life**
  - renunciation of possessions and family for realization of true self
Shramana System
(Buddhism and Jainism)

- God - Not a Creator
- Humans are capable to achieve the highest spiritual state
- Human experience or self realization is the ultimate authority
- Scriptures have no authority (guide)
- Primary Path
  - Path of Knowledge (Jnan Yoga)
  - Realization of unique and supreme self through knowledge
- Self control, nonviolence, penance, and meditation
- Revolt against Hindu caste distinction, fancy rituals, and animal sacrifice
Buddhism:

- The Supreme is completely transcendent and can be described as:
  - Sunya (zero), a void, an emptiness, state of non-being
- At nirvana,
  - Being turns into a state of non-being, emptiness void, or Sunya
  - Being looses its identity and becomes nothing
  - The future vanishes, the past vanishes, and one lives at the present moment
- In Samsar (world) a being is a combination of physical and mental forces/energies
- Desire "thirst" to be and to become is the root cause of suffering and rebirth
- Life's aim is to end suffering through Nirvana, which is
  - passionless peace, perfect insight, enlightenment, perfect knowledge, immortality
Buddhism: (continued)

- Man's true nature is divine and eternal
- Preaching -
  - The greatness of self-giving love and compassion towards all creatures
  - Middle path consist of living moderately and avoiding extremes
- Scriptures -
  - Tripitaka for Theravada sect, Sutras for Mahayana sect
  - Written in Pali language (vernacular)
Jainism:

- God is a pure consciousness or perfected soul without any karma attached to it.
- The primary goal is to become a perfected (liberated) soul, known as Siddha or God.
- At liberation the soul remains finite, lives in Moksha forever, and never loses its identity.
- Every living being is eternal, individual, and capable of becoming perfect.
- The path of liberation is to follow:
  - right perception, right knowledge, and right conduct.
- One must conquer one's desire by one's own effort to attain liberation.
Jainism: (continued)

- Our intention behind our actions of body, mind, and speech bind karma particles to us in this world.
- Nonviolence followed in action, thought, and speech is the highest religion.
- Self purification, penance, austerity, and meditation are essential for liberation.

- Scriptures -
  - Agam Sutras
  - written in Ardha-magdhi language (vernacular)
  - Scriptures guide moral and spiritual life to ultimately attain liberation.
Western Religions
(Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

- Common Features
  - One Life and Eternal Judgment
  - Judgment Day
  - Eternal Hell/Heaven
  - One God
  - God's Message Revealed Through Prophet
  - Non-mystical (God chooses Prophet)
  - Congregational (Society is Essential)
Western Religion
(Judaism, Christianity, Islam)
Common Features (Continued)

- Scripture has Ultimate Authority
- Human Suffering - Disobedience of God's Will
- Worshipping - Sabbath Day
- Universe was Created By God

- Systems of Philosophy
  - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam