

India Slideshow Script

Passport to Peoplehood

Jews are a multicultural people who live around the world.

Big Ideas

1. Jews move around the world and make their homes in new places.
2. The Jews of India look and act like other Indians.
3. Welcoming people who are different from ourselves is a Jewish, Indian, and universal value.

Slide 1: India

Slide 2: India (map)

India has a history dating thousands of years, including one of the world's oldest civilizations. Indians speak more than 23 main languages and hundreds of different dialects. Many religions coexist in India, including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism among others. Unlike many parts of the world, Jews have historically lived in India without any instances of anti-Semitism.

Slide 3: Indian Flag

The Indian flag has three stripes. The orange stripe is the color of saffron, a spice used in Indian cooking, and represents courage. The green represents growing plants and life. The white represents truth and peace. In the center is a blue spinning wheel, a symbol of the fact that Indians can make their own clothing, which makes them an independent nation.

Slide 4: Climate of India [K2]

India's geography and climate are as varied as its people. In the south, there are rainforests and deserts, and temperatures are as high as 113° F in the summer. In the north, the Himalayan mountains feature alpine tundra and glaciers. These include K2, the second highest mountain peak in the world.

Slide 5: Population

India is the world's second-most populous country next to China, with over 1.2 billion people.

Slide 6: Delhi

Delhi, the capital of India, is home to more than 16 million people and is one of the most populous cities in the world.

India Slideshow Script

Slide 7: Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal is one of the most recognizable sites in India. Located in Agra, it was built in memory of Mumtaz, wife of the Emperor Shah Jahan, and was completed in 1645.

Slide 8: Indian Cuisine

Spices are an important part of Indian cuisine, especially rich and complex blends of many spices. Curry is one of the most popular Indian spice blends, known and used around the world. However, there is no one style of Indian cooking. Like India itself, Indian cuisine is very diverse and incorporates influences from all over Asia.

Slide 9: The Silk Road

In ancient through medieval times, a major trade route called the Silk Road ran from China all the way to the Middle East and beyond. It didn't just carry silk. People traded many other luxury goods, including books, pottery, and musical instruments. Spices were especially important, and India was the center of the spice trade. Pepper that ended up on tables in Turkey and England came from India.

Slide 10: Jews and Trade

Jewish people have always participated in trade, and trade has always been one of the ways that Jews moved around the world. There are many stories about how Jews came to India, and they all involve trade.

Slide 11: Three groups of Jews

Generally, there are three main groups of Indian Jews: The Bene Israel, The Cochin Jews and the Bagdahdi Jews.

Slide 12: The Story of The Bene Israel Jews

Long ago, in the time of the Bible, a group of Jews left Israel for India, where they planned to trade olive oil and spices and then return home. In those days, it was a very long and difficult journey, over land and sea. As the traders neared India, a storm struck and their ship was wrecked. They hung onto the wreckage all night long, praying to God and the prophet Elijah. In the morning, local people on the coast saw them. The Indians rescued the Jews and welcomed them into their homes. The Jews felt so happy that they made India their new home. Through the generations, they never forgot the miracle that saved them and continued to thank God and Elijah the prophet. They also never forgot the welcome they had from their neighbors, and they always felt safe and welcome as Indian Jews.

India Slideshow Script

Slide 13: Bene Israel Jews Now

The Bene Israel or "Sons of Israel" are a historic community of Jews in Mumbai, India. It is estimated that India's Jewish population peaked at around 20,000 in the mid-1940s, and began to rapidly decline due to their emigration to Israel after its creation in 1948. About 5,000 Bene Israel remain in India, and they have been an important part of Indian society and culture.

Slide 14: Cochin Jews

It's possible that Cochin Jews were traders from ancient Israel who arrived in India together with merchants from King Solomon's court. They settled on the Malabar Coast in the Cochin region of India, which is why they are called Cochin Jews. The Cochin Jews formed a prosperous trading community in Kerala, and controlled a major portion of the worldwide spice trade.

Slide 15: Paradesi Jews / Synagogue

In the 15th and 16th centuries, a new group of Jews came to India. They were Sephardic Jews, fleeing persecution in Spain and Portugal. They were given the name "Paradesi", which means "Foreigner", and welcomed into the larger Cochin Jewish community. In 1568, Paradesi Jews constructed the Paradesi Synagogue in Mattancherry. The synagogue still stands today. India became independent from British occupation in 1947 and Israel established itself as a nation in 1948. Most of the Cochin Jews emigrated from India to Israel.

Slide 16: Baghdadi Jews

The Baghdadi Jews are India's newest group of Jews—they only arrived in the 18th century! Some of them came from Baghdad, but many came from around the Middle East, including Syria, Persia, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Like the Bene Israel, Baghdadi Jews first came to India as traders. They were very successful, and became prominent members of the community.

Unlike Bene Israel and Cochin Jews, they did not go in large numbers to Israel but rather headed to a variety of countries. Most went to England, but others moved to Israel, the United States, Canada, and Australia. At their height it is estimated that there were between 6,000-10,000 Baghdadi Jews in India.

Slide 17: Sassoon Family

The most prominent of the trading families were the Sassoons, who built an economic empire that dealt in everything from opium (until it was outlawed) to fabric. They connected strongly with the British ruling class and while maintaining a unique Sephardi identity with regards to

India Slideshow Script

prayer and ritual. Known for their philanthropy in the Jewish community and beyond, they built schools, bridges, and synagogues and supported many charitable causes.

Slide 18: Bollywood

Slide 19: Bollywood/Film

Today, the Indian film industry (which most people call Bollywood) is among the most important in the world. Indian Jewish screenwriters, actors, and actresses were an essential part of making Bollywood what it is today.

Slide 20: Indian Jews Today

In many ways Indian Jews today are similar, physically and culturally, to Indians of other religions, in the way they dress, eat, and look. But they also maintained many of their own customs. For example, they continue to offer special prayers to Eliyahoo Hannabi, such as [the Malida](#) and henna ceremonies before marriage.

Slide 21: Indian Jews Around The World

There are pockets of Indian Jews throughout the world. Historically Indian Jews did not train their own rabbis, relying on leaders and rabbis from other places. Today, in the United States, several Indian Jews have become rabbis. Nonetheless, there is no Indian Jewish congregation. Additionally, there are individual Indians who are now part of Jewish families or have converted to Judaism, creating a new chapter in the understanding of Indian Jews.

Slide 22: Indian Jews In Israel

The largest community of Indian Jews today resides in Israel, primarily in the south of the country in Dimona and Be'er Sheva. As with other groups of Immigrants, it was challenging for Indian Jews to be accepted in Israel. They protested, and in 1964 the Israeli Rabbinate declared that the Bene Israel are "full Jews in every respect".

Recently Indian Israelis lobbied to have the unique Malida ceremony, used for many auspicious occasions, included in the national school curriculum in connection to the celebration of Tu B'shvat. This achievement marks a milestone in the recognition of the value of the unique heritage and customs of Indian Jews.

Slide 23: The End