



# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

**DF 404E**



**The Fundamentals  
of Different Religions  
DF 404E**

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# FOREWORD

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It is a fact that human beings from time immemorial up to the present day have always been involved with one form of religion or another. It can be said that religion has always played an important role in human life. It is for this reason that the student needs to learn about the evolution and history of different religions existing in the world today.

This course “The Fundamentals of Different Religions” presents the origin, the evolution, history, teachings, and practices of different religions. Contents of this course book are divided into three parts. The first part deals with the fundamentals of religion. The second part deals with primitive religions. And the third part deals with the different religions that are in existence today.

The Committee has garnered information for this course book from different primary and secondary sources of information, and the works of different religious scholars. It is hoped that the information presented in this course book will allow the student to gain an accurate overview of the fundamentals of different religions.

The preparation of this course book has been a team effort. It is possible that even after many rounds of editing; the material may still contain mistakes. The Committee hopes to receive comments and feedback which will allow it to further improve upon this course book.

The Committee  
September 2550 B.E.



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# COURSE SYLLABUS

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## 1. Description of the Course Material

*DF 404: The Fundamentals of Different Religions*

This course presents information about different religions beginning with the fundamentals of religion, primitive religions, and the major religions of the world today.

## 2. The Course Objectives

1. To enable the student to understand the fundamentals of religion.
2. To enable the student to understand the characteristics and beliefs of primitive religions.
3. To enable the student to understand the major religions of the world today in terms of their history, their founders, their religious texts, their doctrines, their symbols, and their current status.

## 3. Topics Covered in the Course

Chapter 1	Fundamentals of Religion
Chapter 2	Primitive Religions
Chapter 3	Brahmanism-Hinduism
Chapter 4	Jainism
Chapter 5	Buddhism
Chapter 6	Sikhism
Chapter 7	Taoism
Chapter 8	Confucianism
Chapter 9	Shintoism
Chapter 10	Zoroastrianism
Chapter 11	Judaism
Chapter 12	Christianity
Chapter 13	Islam
Chapter 14	The Bahá'í Faith

# How to Study this Course

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## 1. Preparation for Self-Learning

In order to achieve the objectives of the course, the student should follow the steps for studying each chapter as follows.

- a. Spend an hour each day on the course material and try to finish each chapter within one to two weeks.
- b. Complete the pre-test provided at the beginning of each chapter so that the student can gauge his existing knowledge of the subject matter.
- c. Complete the exercises provided for the chapter at the scheduled time. At the end of the chapter, the student should assess his/her comprehension of the material covered by completing the test.

## 2. Self-Evaluation before and after Each Chapter

The student should complete the pre-test before beginning each chapter in order to gauge his knowledge of the subject matter. The student should also complete the test at the end of each chapter. Completion of the test will allow the student to know how well he has learnt the material covered in the chapter; and whether he/she is ready to proceed to the next chapter. The test score should be at least 80%. Self-evaluation would be meaningful only if it is carried out honestly.

## 3. The Course Book

The student should first go over the layout of each chapter in terms of its topics, concepts, and objectives before proceeding with the detailed study. After having finished reading the entire chapter, the student should write down its main points and complete the exercises provided at the end of each chapter. The exercises will help the student to evaluate how well he has learnt the material covered so that he can apply what he has learnt in his daily life. Therefore, the student should not wait until the last minute to do all of the exercises because such practice is missing the point.

## 4. Completing the Assignments

The student should write down the main points of each subject and complete all of the assignments provided at the end of each chapter. The assignments are an important part of the coursework.

## **5. Long-Distance Learning via Satellite and Other Media**

The Dhamma study for the Environment Foundation broadcasts its programs via satellite 24 hours a day. Each program aims to give the general public practical information to help promote morality. There are different programs that can help the student with this course. These include Buddhist Words, the Law of Kamma, Meditation for Beginners, Luang Por's Answers, Life in the Round of Rebirth, Dhamma for the People, etc. Additional learning can be obtained through E-learning provided by DOU. For more details of these learning tools, please contact DOU's coordination center.

## **7. The Exam**

The student will be evaluated for his knowledge of this course by a multiple-choice exam and the completion of all assignments. Assignments allow the student to put what he has learnt into practice. Therefore, it is important that the student complete each assignment in a timely manner.



# Chapter 1

## The Fundamentals of Religion

### 1.1 The Meaning of Religion

- 1.1.1 Its Meaning in Sanskrit
- 1.1.2 Its Meaning in English
- 1.1.3 Its Meaning According to the 2552 B.E. Royal Institute Dictionary
- 1.1.4 Its Meaning According to Prayaanumanrachaton
- 1.1.5 Its Meaning According to Luangvijitvatakarn
- 1.1.6 Its Meaning According to Emile Durkheim
- 1.1.7 Its Meaning According to A. C. Bouquet

### 1.2 Characteristics of Religion

### 1.3 Components of Religion

### 1.4 Religion and Its Evolution

### 1.5 The Birth of Religion

### 1.6 Types of Religion

### 1.7 The Importance of Religion

### 1.8 The Value of Religion

### 1.9 The Benefits of Religion

## **Concepts**

1. Religion has been given different definitions. But it can be concluded that religion involves the teachings that the religious founder spreads and teaches to the people telling them to abstain from evil and perform good deeds for the sake of their current peace and happiness and for the sake of their eternal peace and happiness. Its adherents practice the religious teachings faithfully and devotedly. What follow are the religious rites and rituals and the religious symbols. Religious teachings include teachings at the mundane level and the supramundane level.
2. What gives birth to religion are ignorance, fear, loyalty, the need for knowledge about the reality of life, and the need for societal peace and happiness. Differences in geography, environment, and beliefs give rise to different forms of religion.
3. When a person practices his religious teachings in his daily life, he stands to gain tremendously. When people in society practice their religious teachings in their daily life, there will be peace and happiness in that society as well.

## **Objectives**

1. To enable the student to learn about the meaning, characteristics, and components of religion.
2. To enable the student to learn about the evolution of different religions, the birth of religion, and how religion benefits humanity.

# Chapter 1

## The Fundamentals of Religion

It may be said that throughout the human history, human beings have never been without religion. Today, there are 196 countries and 7 billion people in the world, the majority of which subscribe to a religious belief. Religion has played a most significant role in primitive and civilized cultures alike. Religion plays a vital role in the way people live their lives. For something this important, it is necessary that we learn as much about it as we can.

### 1.1 The Meaning of Religion

The term “religion” has been given different definitions as follows.

**1.1.1 The Meaning of Religion in Sanskrit<sup>1</sup>:** In the Sanskrit language, the word for religion is “Sasanam”. Sasanam means teachings or government and can be elaborated as follows.

- 1) Teachings: These include commandments, precepts, discipline, moral principles, and virtues. Such teachings command a person to abstain from evil but to perform wholesome deeds. For the teachings to be valid, they must possess the following components.
  1. The power of something invisible must be present:
    - a. In Islam and Christianity, it is the power of God.
    - b. In Buddhism, it is the power of the Law of Kamma.
    - c. In Brahmanism-Hinduism, it is the power of the gods.
  2. A set of moral code: For example, teaching a person to abstain from evil, perform wholesome deeds, and keep the mind bright and clear.
  3. An ultimate goal: For example, Nibbana in Buddhism, eternal life in Christianity and Islam.
  4. Rites and Rituals: For example,
    - a. Ordination Ceremony in Buddhism
    - b. Baptism in Christianity
    - c. Worship of Allah’s kindness in Islam
  5. Loyalty
- 2) Government: It means governing one’s mind, self-control, self-admonishment, being responsible for one’s every act. A person who is able to control his mind will not commit an evil act whether anyone knows about it or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Sucheep Punyanuparp, The History of Religion, 2532 B.E. page 1

**1.1.2 The Meaning of Religion in English<sup>2</sup>:** The word religion comes from the Latin word “religare” which means to bind fast, that is, to bind fast to God or the Creator. It also comes from another word “relegere” which means to act toward or to treat with care. It means behaving in such a way as to show faith<sup>3</sup> or fear toward that which has power over the person. According to westerners<sup>3</sup> and those who subscribe to theism, they take religion to mean...

1. The belief that God created the world and everything in it.
2. The belief that their religious teachings and commandments are the Word of God.
3. The belief that certain things must be taken in faith without regards to scientific proof given their God’s supernatural powers.
4. The belief that one must offer one’s deeds and everything about oneself to God as a show of loyalty.

According to easterners<sup>4</sup> especially Buddhists, they take religion to mean the Teachings of the Knower. These include the Dhamma and the Vinaya (or discipline) or the Dhamma-Vinaya. As such, religion in the easterners’ view is diametrically opposed to that in the westerners’ view in that ...

1. Kamma created the world and everything in it (Kammuna vattati loko: Living beings are dictated by their Kamma or action).
2. Their religious teachings come from the Knower or the Buddha (Sabbapapassa akaranam kusalassupasampada sacitta pariyodapanam etam buddhanasasanam: To abstain completely from all evil deeds, to perform all wholesome deeds, to keep the mind bright and clear, these are the teachings of the Lord Buddha).
3. Every teaching must be personally proven (Sanditthiko akaliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccattam veditabbo vinnuhi: It must be personally proven; it is timeless, it should be inspected, it should be assimilated, it should be personally experienced).
4. A person is his own refuge (Atta hi attano natho).

It can be seen that the easterners’ especially the Buddhists’ view of religion is completely different from that of the westerners as a result of the different characteristics of their religions. Buddhism is based on cause and effect. It deals with humanity and nature directly. Christianity is based on faith in God alone and no proof of God and His teachings is necessary.

**1.1.3 The Meaning of Religion According to the 2552 B.E. Royal Institute Dictionary<sup>5</sup>:** Religion means a set of beliefs about the birth and the passing of the world, etc., which have to do with the ultimate reality and about moral principles which have to do with merit and demerit. It also includes the performance of rites and rituals as prescribed by the teachings.

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<sup>2</sup> Reese, W.L. Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion Eastern and Western Thought, 1980 p. 488-489.

<sup>3</sup> Braden, C. The World’s Religions, 1994 p. 16-17

<sup>4</sup> Duen Kamdee. Basic Religion, 2531 B.E. pages 26-27

<sup>5</sup> The Royal Institute, The 2542 B.E. Royal Institute Dictionary, 2546 page 1100



**1.1.4 The Meaning of Religion According to Prayaanumanrachaton<sup>6</sup>** : Religion means the belief that is shown in the mannerism of its adherent indicating his veneration and fear for the supernatural power or God that let him know intellectually and feel instinctively that there must exist a Creator. It is He who dictates the lives of human beings. In other words, religion is the god-fearing worship of God who possesses supernatural powers.

**1.1.5 The Meaning of Religion According to Luangvijitvatakarn<sup>7</sup>** : Religion means something sacred. It consists of the teachings in morality and ethics, a religious founder, a group of individuals who preserve the sacredness of the religion as well as its teachings such as priests or monks, and there must ensure strict loyalty on the adherents' part.

**1.1.6 The Meaning of Religion According to Emile Durkheim<sup>8</sup>** : Religion means a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.

**1.1.7 The Meaning of Religion According to A.C. Bouquet<sup>9</sup>** : Religion means a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the Sacred, Supernatural, the Self-Existent, the Absolute or simply God.

It can be concluded from the different definitions of religion cited above that religion means the teachings that its founder propagates, teaches, and enumerates in order to encourage its believers to abstain from evil deeds and perform only wholesome deeds for the sake of their current peace and happiness as well as their eternal peace and happiness. Its believers practice the teachings respectfully and devotedly. These teachings may be about the truth that exists in nature as discovered by the religious founder or they may be the Word of God.

## 1.2 Characteristics of Religion

It can be concluded from its different definitions that religion possesses the following characteristics.

1. Religion is humanity's ultimate center of reverence.
2. Religion is humanity's refuge.
3. The religious founder does the work of propagating the religious teachings.
4. Religion teaches human beings to abstain from evil deeds and perform wholesome deeds.
5. Religious teachings contain information at both the mundane and supramundane levels.
6. Adherents must practice the religious teachings respectfully and devotedly.
7. Religion must have sacred rites and rituals, and it must have a symbol.

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<sup>6</sup> Prayaanumanrachaton, The History of the Ancient World, 2515 B.E. page 15

<sup>7</sup> Luangvijitvatakarn, Universal Religions, 2510 B.E. pages 1-2

<sup>8</sup> Durkheim, Emile, The Elementary Form of the Religious Life, 1964 p. 47

<sup>9</sup> Bouquet, A.C., Comparative Religion, 1954, p. 12

### 1.3 Components of Religion

To qualify as a religion, it should possess all of the components prescribed by scholars in religious studies as follows.

1. The Founder: The founder of a religion must be a real person; for example, Moses in Judaism, the Buddha in Buddhism, Jesus in Christianity, and Mohammad in Islam.
2. Religious Teachings: There must exist religious teachings and religious texts as in the Vedas in Brahmanism-Hinduism, the Tipitaka in Buddhism, the Qur'an in Islam.
3. Rites and Rituals: There must exist religious rites and rituals, for example, the wearing of the Yajyopaveet Rope Ceremony in Brahmanism-Hinduism, the Ordination Ceremony in Buddhism, Baptism in Judaism and Christianity, and the Hajj in Islam.
4. Sacred Objects or Sites: Buddha Images and the Four Holy Places of Buddhism, the True Cross and the Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Images of Guru Nanak and the Golden Temple in Amritsar.
5. Religious Personnel: There must exist a group of individuals who do the work of perpetuating the religious teachings and earnestly practice the teachings such as monks, priests, ministers, rabbis.
6. Places of Worship: There must exist places of worship where religious functions and religious ceremonies are performed. These include Hindu temples, Buddhist temples, Christian churches, mosques, etc.
7. Adherents: There must exist adherents of the religion and these are referred to by the name of their religion, for example, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, etc.
8. Strict Loyalty: For example, the Four Ashrams in Brahmanism-Hinduism, the Threefold Refuge in Buddhism, church attendance on Sundays in Christianity, performing one's religious duties in Islam.

A religion may be missing a component but still qualifies as a religion; for example, Brahmanism-Hinduism does not have a founder who is a real person, Islam does not have religious personnel because all Muslims are householders.

### 1.4 Religion and Its Evolution

All throughout the human history, human beings have tried to search for happiness, safety, and longevity and have done everything they can to achieve these ends. These searches have given birth to religion and its evolution. And the stages of religious evolution can be shown as follows.

#### Animism

Animism is the worldview that natural physical entities including animals, plants, and often even inanimate objects or phenomena possess a spiritual essence.<sup>10</sup> Animism encompasses the belief that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical world, and souls or spirits exist, not only in humans, but also in some other animals, plants, rock, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the

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<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, Animism

natural environment including thunder, wind, and shadows.<sup>11</sup> The early period of Animism is called in Thai as the Mana Period. Mana means soul or spirit. Animistic beliefs include Shamanism and Totemism. Shamanism is a practice that involves a practitioner (a shaman) reaching altered states of consciousness in order to encounter and interact with the spirit world and channel these transcendental energies into this world.<sup>12</sup> A shaman is a person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of benevolent and malevolent spirits, who typically enters into a trance state during a ritual, and practices divination and healing.<sup>13</sup> Totemism is a complex of varied ideas and ways of behavior based on a worldview drawn from nature.<sup>14</sup> There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects, the so-called totems.<sup>15</sup> A totem may be in the form of crocodile, turtle, cat, lion, etc.

### **Nature Worship**

Nature worship describes a variety of religious, spiritual and devotional practices that focus on worship of natural phenomenon which are attributed to the continuation of the life process.<sup>16</sup> A nature deity can be in charge of nature, the biosphere, the cosmos or the universe. Nature deities include the Sun deity, the Moon deity, the Rain deity, the Fire deity in ancient Greek and Brahmanism.<sup>17</sup> Some cultures believe that deceased parents, ancestors, kings, heroes, etc., return to protect them in their homes, in certain places.

### **Theism**

Theism, in the broadest sense, is the belief that at least one deity exists.<sup>18</sup> There are several types of Theism. These include monotheism, polytheism, etc. Monotheism is the belief that only one deity exists, and includes Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, etc. Polytheism is the belief that there is more than one deity, and includes Brahmanism-Hinduism.

### **Atheism<sup>19</sup>**

Atheism is, in a broad sense, the rejection of belief in the existence of deities. Arguments for atheism range from the philosophical to social and historical approaches. Rationales for not believing in any supernatural deity include the lack of empirical evidence, the problem of evil, the argument from inconsistent revelations, rejection of concepts which cannot be falsified, and the argument from nonbelief. Although some atheists have adopted secular philosophies, there is no one ideology

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11 Ibid

12 Ibid

13 Ibid

14 Wikipedia, Totemism

15 Wikipedia, Totemism

16 Wikipedia, Nature Worship

17 Ibid

18 Wikipedia, Theism

19 Wikipedia, Atheism

or set of behaviors to which all atheists adhere. Many atheists hold that atheism is a more parsimonious worldview than theism, and therefore the burden of proof lies not on the atheist to disprove the existence of God, but on the theist to provide a rationale for theism.

## 1.5 The Birth of Religion

There are many factors that give birth to religion depending on the environment and the time period but scholars of religious studies have postulated the following factors.

1. **Ignorance:** Ignorance here means not having a complete understanding of what causes a certain natural occurrence, for example, what causes lightning, thunder, rain, etc. Some people believe that lightning occurs because Manimekhala (a female deity) is trying to lure Ramasura (a male deity) with a crystal sphere or thunder occurs because Ramasura is throwing his hammer at the crystal sphere. Ignorance of the real causes of different natural phenomenon make people think that they have to be caused by supernatural beings who are more powerful than human beings. Therefore, they feel the need to worship them and appease them. It can be said that ignorance gave birth to primitive religious beliefs.
2. **Fear:** Fear is the result of ignorance. Not knowing why something happens causes people to be fearful; therefore, they feel the need to find ways to appease what they think of as being supernatural beings with supernatural powers. They believe these supernatural beings have the power to keep them safe and happy, etc.
3. **Loyalty:** Here loyalty means believing and feeling confident that what they worship can provide them with good things. Religions that were founded as a result of loyalty include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.
4. **The Need to Know the Truth about Reality:** This is exemplified by Buddhism.
5. **The Need for Societal Peace and Happiness:** Rules, regulations, and the law alone are not enough to keep society peaceful and harmonious. Religious teachings are needed to keep people away from evil. Religious teachings and the law must go hand-in-hand in order to ensure societal peace and harmony.

## 1.6 Types of Religion

Differences in religion arise from differences in geography, environment, and beliefs.

### 1.6.1 There Are Four Types of Religion Based on Its Characteristics

1. **Monotheism:** Monotheism is defined by the Encyclopaedia Britannica as the belief in the existence of one God or in the oneness of God. Monotheism includes Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.
2. **Polytheism:** Polytheism is the worship or belief in multiple deities usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, along with their own religions and rituals.<sup>20</sup> It includes Brahmanism-Hinduism, ancient Greek gods and goddesses, etc.

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<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia, Polytheism



- 3. Pantheism:** Pantheism is the view that everything is part of an all-encompassing, immanent God. Some schools of Brahmanism-Hinduism believe that Brahma exists everywhere.
- 4. Atheism:** Atheism is the rejection of belief in the existence of God the Creator. It includes Buddhism and Jainism.

The above four types of religion can be further grouped into two types as follows.

- Theism: It subscribes to the belief that God created the world and includes Brahmanism-Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.
- Atheism: It rejects the belief that God created the world and includes Buddhism and Jainism.

### 1.6.2 There are Two Types of Religion Based on Its Current Status

#### 1. Dead Religions:

These religions existed in the past but they no longer have adherents in the present day. There are altogether twelve religions as follows.

1.1 One religion in Africa: Ancient Egyptian religion

1.2 Two religions in America:

- (1) Ancient Peruvian religion
- (2) Ancient Mexican religion

1.3 Five religions in Asia:

- (1) Mithraism: The worship of Mithra, the Iranian god of the sun, justice, contract, and war in pre-Zoroastrian Iran.<sup>21</sup>
- (2) Manichaeism: It was a major Gnostic religion that was founded by the Iranian prophet Mani.<sup>22</sup> Manichaeism taught an elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness.<sup>23</sup>
- (3) Babylonian religion
- (4) Phoenician religion
- (5) The religion of the Hittites in Asia Minor

1.4 Four religions in Europe:

- (1) Ancient Greek religion
- (2) Ancient Roman religion
- (3) The religion of the Teutons, an ancient people
- (4) Ancient Scandinavian religion

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<sup>21</sup> Encyclopaedia Britanica, Mithraism

<sup>22</sup> Wikipedia, Manichaeism

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

## **2. Living Religions:**

There are altogether twelve religions

### **2.1 Religions in Southeast Asia**

- (1) Taoism
- (2) Confucianism
- (3) Shinto

### **2.2 Religions in South Asia**

- (1) Brahmanism-Hinduism
- (2) Jainism
- (3) Buddhism
- (4) Sikhism

### **2.3 Religions in the West**

- (1) Zoroastrianism
- (2) Judaism
- (3) Christianity
- (4) Islam
- (5) The Bahá'í Faith

## **1.6.3 There Are Two Types of Religion Based on Its Evolution**

1. Natural Religion<sup>24</sup>: Natural religion most frequently means the religion of nature, in which God, the soul, spirits, and all objects of the supernatural are considered as part of nature and not separate from it. Natural religion is found universally among all peoples, often in such forms of shamanism and animism. They are still practiced in many parts of the world. The religions of Native American societies for example are considered natural religions.
2. Organized Religion<sup>25</sup>: Also known as institutional or associative religion. It is religion as a social institution, in which belief systems and rituals are systematically arranged and formally established. Organized religion is typically characterized by an official doctrine, a hierarchical or bureaucratic leadership structure, and a codification of rules and practices. It includes Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Brahmanism-Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

## **1.6.4 There Are Three Types of Religion Based on Its Adherents**

1. **Tribal Religion:** It began as a religion of a certain primitive tribe and later developed into a state religion. It includes Jainism and Brahmanism-Hinduism in India, Zoroastrianism in Persia, Judaism in Israel, Shinto in Japan, and Confucianism in China and other Chinese speaking countries.

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<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia, Natural Religion

<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia, Organized Religion

- 2. World Religion:** It is a term which refers to a transcultural, international faith and includes Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.
- 3. Segmental Religion:** It refers to different schools of a major religion which arose from social pressure such as discrimination, inequality, etc. The group of people discriminated against attempted to find ways to preserve their own cultures and traditions by reviving their own religion and social system in a foreign land. Examples include Buddhists in Indonesia, Black Muslims in the U.S., Zoroaster in India, and Hindus in South Africa.

## **1.7 The Importance of Religion**

Every religion is very important because it teaches people to practice morality so that they can live peacefully and harmoniously together. Religion serves as humanity's refuge and provides moral principles which allow people to live a correct and secure life. Religion plays a role in every human being's life, be it civilized or primitive. Each nation, each tribe or group of people or at least each family subscribes to its own religion.

1. Religion is important because it teaches people to behave in such a way as to benefit themselves, the society, and the country.
2. Religion is the source of morality, ethics, and valuable practices, which create for its adherents unity, unique civilization, customs and traditions.
3. Religion alleviates trouble and brings happiness for its adherents physically and mentally.
4. Religion can be compared to a guiding light.
5. Religion helps create a warm and loving family, which in turn produces valuable human resources for society.
6. Religion inspires people to face life's vicissitudes courageously.
7. Religion elevates the mind and instills in its adherents the value of being human.
8. Religion creates good human relationship, removes social gap, and builds trust and unity.
9. Religion helps people to meet with higher peace and happiness and achieve the ultimate human life goal, which is the end of suffering.
10. Religion is humanity's valuable inheritance. It is humanity's last hope for survival.

## 1.8 The Value of Religion

Religion is invaluable to human mental health, which is more important than anything material. Nonetheless, its value can be enumerated as follows.

1. Religion is humanity's refuge in that it helps us not to feel too alone.
2. Religion unites groups of people and all the peoples together.
3. Religion is the source of rational knowledge, moral education, and morality.
4. Religion is the source of ethics, morality, and virtues.
5. Religion is the source of valuable customs and traditions.
6. Religion is the source of tranquility.
7. Religion is a light which shines in the dark.
8. Religion separates human beings from animals because animals have no religion.

## 1.9 The Benefits of Religion

Once people practice according to their religious teachings on a daily basis, they stand to benefit hugely. The benefits of religion can be summarized as follows.

1. Religion helps elevate the practitioner's mind beyond the minds of animals.
2. Religion promotes self-discipline.
3. Religion helps people in society to live together in peace and harmony.
4. Religion promotes valuable works of art.
5. Religion teaches people to be patient and balanced in the face of life's vicissitudes.
6. Religion helps restore harmony in society, and allows unity of action, speech, and thought in society.
7. Religion allows people to exercise autonomy anytime anywhere.
8. Religion teaches people to have a clean mind and to abstain from evil deeds.
9. Religion allows its practitioner to escape from pain and suffering and to experience ever-increasing peace and happiness until he can reach the ultimate goal of his life.
10. Religion binds people together and allows them to help each other and live together in peace and harmony.
11. Religion helps people to live life accordingly. It gives meaning and hope to one's life. It helps create societal peace and stability.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 2

## Primitive Religions

### **2.1 Characteristics of Primitive Religions**

- 2.1.1 An Impersonal Power
- 2.1.2 Animism
- 2.1.3 Magic
- 2.1.4 Divination
- 2.1.5 Taboos
- 2.1.6 Totems
- 2.1.7 Sacrifice
- 2.1.8 Rites of Passage
- 2.1.9 Ancestor Worship

### **2.2 Primitive Religious Beliefs and Practices**

- 2.2.1 Neanderthal Religious Beliefs and Practices
- 2.2.2 Cro-Magnon Religious Beliefs and Practices
- 2.2.3 New Stone Age Religious Beliefs and Practices
- 2.2.4 American Indian Religious Beliefs and Practices
- 2.2.5 Indigenous African Religious Beliefs and Practices

## **Concepts**

1. Most scholars of religious studies prefer to categorize pre-historic religious beliefs and practices as primitive religions. Some of these still exist today.
2. The religious beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples are quite similar especially in terms of core beliefs. These include the religious beliefs and practices of the Neanderthals, the Cro-Magnons, the New Stone Age people, the native Americans, and the indigenous peoples of Africa.

## **Objectives**

1. To enable the student to learn about the basic characteristics of primitive religions.
2. To enable the student to learn about different primitive religious beliefs and practices.

# Chapter 2

## Primitive Religions

The content of this chapter was taken from the book “Comparative Religion”, pages 12-41 written by Asst. Prof. Vanida Kamkiao. We thank her kindly.

### 2.1 Characteristics of Primitive Religions

Most scholars of religious studies prefer to categorize pre-historic religious beliefs and practices as primitive religions. These are the religions lacking in intellectual sophistication and are based on magic and superstition. Today, some of these religions still exist in some indigenous tribes such as the Native American Indians, indigenous Australians, and indigenous Africans. The characteristics of Primitive Religions are as follows.

#### 2.1.1 An Impersonal Power

In the island of Melanesia, such an impersonal power is called “Mana”. scholars of religious studies postulate that the belief in an impersonal power came before the belief in spirits or Anima. It is the belief derived from the power of nature. Believers demonstrate their beliefs by understanding certain laws of nature and practicing accordingly in order to benefit themselves or avoiding certain practices or taboos that might bring them harm. It appears that most practitioners avoid the taboos vehemently without wanting to know the reasons behind them. Practitioners believe that they can avoid the wrath of Mana by following the rules and avoiding the taboos.

Jack Finegan<sup>1</sup> explained that this impersonal power is called by different names in America given its many indigenous peoples. The Algonquins call it Manitou. The Iroquois call it Orenda. And the Sioux call it Wakanda.

#### 2.1.2 Animism

Primitive humans believed that natural physical entities such as rivers, mountains, the sun, the moon, thunder, wind, etc., including animals and plants possess a spiritual essence. They believed the spiritual world to have the power to bring harm or good to the people. Scholars of religious studies call such spiritual essence Anima, which is a Latin word and means the breath of life.

Practitioners of Animism carry out different rituals in order to appease the spirits so that what they want will be granted. Spirits here include different kinds of ghosts starting from tree ghosts, house ghosts, ancestral ghosts as well as forest deities, mountain deities, etc. In the old days, hunters would perform a ritual where offering was made to ask the relevant deities for permission to hunt and that the hunt should be bountiful. Woodcutters would ask the tree deities for permission to cut down only the trees that were needed with the promise that none of the cut trees would be wasted. People in the old days

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<sup>1</sup> Finegan, Jack The Archeology of World Religions, 1952, page 11

treated natural resources with respect. Practitioners of Animism tried to understand life and they worshipped nature. Certain highly evolved religions also worship nature. Examples include the role of the Ganges in the lives of Hindus, the role of the Black Stone in the lives of Muslims, the role of the Christmas tree in the lives of Christians. Buddhists also have a high regard for nature. The Vinaya forbids monks to cut down trees especially big trees. The monk who cuts down a tree is committing “Sanghadisesa”. The founder of most religions had a high regard for nature. As time passed, new generations of adherents misunderstood the high regards for nature and turned them into forms of primitive religious beliefs and practices.

### 2.1.3 Magic

The belief in magic is as old as religion itself. Magic goes hand-in-hand with raw human emotion which is devoid of rationale. Magic arises from the human wish to make things happen by using mysterious supernatural powers.

Buddhadasa Bhikku<sup>2</sup> said that magic is the way to escape suffering at one level in which the wisdom to understand the reality of life and the world was still lacking. The Thai word for magic is “Seyyasastra” where “Seyya” means asleep, which is diametrically opposed to the word “Buddha” which means awake. Therefore, magic is rooted in ignorance. Magic can be compared to the knowledge of a person who is asleep, that is, asleep in delusion (Moha) and ignorance (Avijja). Individuals involved in this art are attached to materialism. They will do everything to satisfy their wants. Magic is not the way to be emancipated from defilements (Kilesa) and craving (Tanha). Buddhism is the science that helps practitioners to remove all forms of attachment by contemplating the logic of their practices step by step until they can attain Nibbana, which is their ultimate goal. Such individuals are called “Buddha” because they are no longer asleep in defilements, craving, and ignorance. They are fully awake because they have gained the penetrating knowledge that there is nothing they want and there is nothing they want to be. A fully awakened individual is far removed from the current of the world. He has put an end to all suffering.

There are two forms of magic. Black magic harms people whereas white magic helps people.

Professor Kirati Boonjuea<sup>3</sup> divided magic into five different forms as follows.

#### 1. Representative Magic

This form of magic requires that a practitioner possess mental power or cast a magic spell on an item representing a certain person. An example includes the figure of a man and a woman in an embrace used in performing a certain ritual so that they would desire each other sexually. The victim in this case would feel irritable. His or her countenance becomes gloomy, and the rim of his or her eyes is dark. This form of magic is very difficult to reverse except by a virtuous person possessing

<sup>2</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikku, Buddhism and Magic, 2526 B.E. pages 7-10

<sup>3</sup> Boonjuea, Kirati, Prof. Basic Theology, 2541 B.E., page 18



a very high mental power. A doll may be used to represent a certain person and the doll is pricked by a pin to cause the victim great pain and even to the point of death. This form of magic is prevalent in Africa and in some tribal peoples in Thailand. This form of magic has been known since the Cro-Magnon Period. The Cro-Magnon people would draw animal figures on the cave wall and throw weapons against them. Or they would draw figures of animals being hunted and injured in order to have an easier hunt.

## **2. Part for all Magic**

This form of magic requires that a practitioner uses part of the victim's body to perform his magic rite in order to get the expected result, which may benefit the practitioner himself or harm someone else. For example, he or she may add the dirt and grunge stuck to the surface of his or her skin into the water or food for the woman or man she or he is in love with. Once the water or food is consumed, the victim will become hopelessly in love with the practitioner. Other parts of the victim's body used to perform the magic rite include hair, nail, body hair, etc. This form of magic can cause fatal harm to its victim.

## **3. Mediumship**

This form of magic requires that a practitioner allows another spirit to possess his body for a time in order to perform certain rituals.

## **4. Fetishism**

This form of magic requires that a practitioner performs a magic rite in order to invest an object with divine or demonic power and as such to be regarded with awe and worshipped. Such objects may include wood, metal, stone, bone, feather, animal hair or certain types of weapons.

## **5. Shamanism**

This form of magic requires that a practitioner undergoes the prescribed training in order to gain supernatural powers and employ them to heal illnesses as well as employing them to accomplish what he wants.

A shaman may also be a person who was born with certain supernatural powers to heal illnesses, stop a rainfall, foresee certain events, etc. Some groups of people believe that the last-born child has the power to heal cataract by performing a magic rite where rice grains are cut on a one-eyed Tanan (half a coconut shell used to measure grains, etc.). Some groups of people believe that an infant born with his feet out first has the power to use his foot to rub a person's throat in order to dislodge a bone that is stuck inside his throat.

### **2.1.4 Divination**

The ability to predict the future was but one of the abilities of the practitioner of magic in ancient times. Other abilities included healing illnesses, protecting his people from calamities. The future may be predicted in the following ways.

1. Contact with a supernatural agency to gain insight into the future.

2. Employing the practitioner's own supernatural powers to see into the future.
3. Reading signs: For example, ancient Chinese people would heat a turtle shell until it was so hot that it fell apart to give a certain pattern, and the future was then told by reading the pattern.

In ancient Greece, people used to consult the priest living in the Delphi Temple believed to be the dwelling of the god Apollo. A priestess would be the person to contact Apollo by sitting on a three-legged stool, inhaling the vapor of the temple ground, speaking in a language interpreted by a priest, and informing the people of what future events their god had revealed to her.

### **2.1.5 Taboos**

Life in the ancient worlds was filled with so many different taboos. These taboos were rules that forbade certain actions that might bring on harm. The word "taboo" was first used by the Polynesians. Generally, these taboos applied to certain special individuals such as kings, tribal heads, priests, mediums, shamans, etc.

Some of these taboos had to do with not touching anything used by a high-born person. Taboos have also existed in Thailand since ancient times. In ancient Japan, one of the taboos had to do with commoners not being allowed to look upon the emperor's countenance. Even when the emperor went hunting, passersby had to bow their heads to prevent them from looking at the emperor. Japanese emperors were believed to be descended from the Sun deity. Violators could be put to death.

In ancient Egypt, people were not allowed to enter the Pharaoh's tomb, which was sealed with a curse by the priest. And it was believed that the curse would bring destruction upon any trespasser.

The taboos concerning priests or shamans include certain forbidden vegetables or animal flesh, which may cause his supernatural powers to deteriorate. In certain tribes, a virginal priestess could not come into physical contact with a man or she would incur the wrath of the source of her supernatural powers.

There were taboos applied to the general public as well. These include:

- A person was not allowed to stand at the bow because the boat deity might be there; otherwise, the boat might capsize.
- A woman during her menstrual period could not perform important ceremonies. In some culture, she had to live away from her family for a time.
- A person possessing a charm would be told by the shaman not to eat certain vegetable such as gourd for fear that it might erode the powers of the charm.
- A person would be told not to use a knife to stoke a fire.
- A person would be told not to sit on a pail being used to measure rice grains.
- A person would be told not to pass under a woman's skirt or sarong hanging out on a clothesline or the charm he was wearing would lose its supernatural powers.

### 2.1.6 Totems

It is an object that plays an important role in a certain culture and is believed to possess supernatural powers. The belief in totems is called totemism. Some culture regards snakes as its totem; therefore, members of this culture do not harm or eat snakes. Instead they worship them and may even erect a snake totem to represent their culture. Some culture in India regards monkey or peacock as its totem.

Totemism was prevalent in North America, Australia, and Africa. Totemism is based on social customs, the objective of which is the well-being of the members of the particular culture.

Totem is derived from the word “Ototeman”, which means brotherhood in the language of the Ojibwa Tribe living near the Great Lakes of the United States. In 1791, the word “totem” was incorporated into the English language but its meaning was changed and became the belief in the guardian spirit of an individual, which appears in the form of an animal.

Totemism is frequently mixed with different beliefs such as magic spells, ancestor worship, and animism. As a result, it has made the understanding of a particular totemistic form difficult.

Some scholars of religious studies divide Totemism<sup>4</sup> into two types as follows.

1. **Individual Totemism:** Individual totemism is expressed in an intimate relationship of friendship and protection between a person and a particular animal or a natural object; the natural object can grant special power to its owner. Frequently connected with individual totemism are definite ideas about the human souls and conceptions derived from them, such as the idea of an alter ego and nagualism (from the Spanish form of the Aztec word “naualli”, which means something hidden or veiled), which means that a kind of simultaneous existence is assumed between an animal or a natural object and a person; i.e., a mutual, close bond of life and fate exists in such a way that in the case of the injury, sickness, or death of one partner, the same fate would befall the other member of the relationship. Consequently, such totems became most strongly tabooed; above all, they were connected with family or group leaders, chiefs, medicine men, shamans, and other socially significant persons. To some extent, there also exists a tendency to pass on an individual totem as hereditary or to make taboo the entire species of animal to which the individual totem belongs. Individual totemism is widely disseminated. It is found not only among tribes of hunters and harvesters but also among farmers and herdsmen. Individual totemism is especially emphasized among the Australian Aborigines and the American Indians.
2. **Group Totemism:** Social or collective totemism is the most widely disseminated form of this belief system. It typically includes one or more of several features, such as the mystic association of animal and plant species, natural phenomena, or created objects with related groups or with local groups and families; the patrilineal or matrilineal hereditary transmission of the totems; the use of totemistic emblems and symbols; taboos that may apply to certain animals or plants.

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, Totemism

Group totemism is still being practiced in Africa, North America, South America, India, etc.

### 2.1.7 Sacrifice

According to the 2542 B.E. Royal Institute Dictionary,<sup>5</sup> sacrifice means making a sacrificial offering of flowers, incense sticks, candles, etc., to a deva or a celestial being. Sacrifice is the worship of a deity or a deva for the purpose of asking for a certain favor. According to Wikipedia, sacrifice is the offering of food, objects or the lives of animals to a higher purpose, in particular divine beings, as an act of propitiation or worship. While sacrifice often implies ritual killing, the term offering can be used for bloodless sacrifices of cereal food or artifacts. For offerings of liquids as in beverages by pouring, the term libation is used.

Animal sacrifice is the ritual killing of an animal as part of a religion. It is practiced by adherents of many religions as a means of appeasing a god or gods or changing the course of nature. It also serves a social or economic function in those cultures where the edible portions of the animal are distributed for consumption among those attending the sacrifice. Animals used in sacrifice include cow, goat, chicken, pig, duck, bird, fish, etc.

Human sacrifice was practiced by many ancient cultures, people would be ritually killed in a manner that was supposed to please or appease a god or spirit. In times of war, prisoners of war were offered up as sacrifice to the god or gods of the victor. A beloved child, a young man, or a young woman was often ritually killed in order to please or appease a god.

Objects used in an offering include rice, milk, butter, water, fruit, jewelry, weapon, etc. Liquids such as water, milk, and alcohol were offered by pouring the liquid onto the ground. Food items such as rice, sweets, fruit, and meat are neatly arranged on a plate and placed at the site of the offering. Sometimes, meat or grains were burnt supposedly so that the god or gods can consume them by inhaling the smoke.

Besides sacrifice and offering, there was an interesting practice in several places in Thailand. It is called “Batphli” which means offerings. Four types of Batphli are practiced in Thailand. These include:

1. Batdeva: The offerings are generally made of the leaf sheaf of the banana tree in the shape of a three-leveled tent to be filled with the offerings made to a deva. In the tombs of some Pharaohs in Egypt, there are depictions of similar offerings on the tomb wall.
2. Batpraket: It is like Batdeva except that the tent now consists of nine levels instead of three. Batpraket is seen most often in the topknot-shaving ceremony, and the birth anniversary celebration conducted by a Brahmin.
3. Batsamlam or Batkangmoo: It is made of banana stalk and looks like a triangular tray for containing the offerings made to a Yakkha chief.

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<sup>5</sup> The Royal Institute, The 2542 B.E. Royal Institute Dictionary, 2546 B.E., page 610

4. Batseeliam: It is made of banana stalk and looks like a rectangular tray for containing the offerings made to an earth sprite.

For ghosts, a banana leaf, which may or may not be cut into a circular shape can be used to contain the offerings directly.

#### **2.1.8 Rites of Passage**

A rite of passage is a religious ritual that marks a person's transition from one status to another. It is also used for exploring and describing various other milestones in an individual's life such as the naming ceremony, baptism, confirmation, top-knot shaving, marriage, death, ordination, etc.

It may also include certain survival art such as performing a rite before a hunt, for example, the Mekong giant catfish hunt. Another rite which is performed annually is the planting ceremony. One rite often seen in the northeastern region of Thailand during the hot season is the rocket festival organized to ask for rain.

Rites are performed to reflect the belief and faith in supernatural powers. At times, the rite may serve to cleanse the mind in order to attract good luck. Such rites include the sprinkling of sacred water, performing a fire-walk, exorcism of evil spirits, etc.

#### **2.1.9 Ancestor Worship<sup>6</sup>**

Ancestor worship has to do with religious beliefs or practices that involve addressing prayers or offerings to the spirits of dead relatives. It existed among the ancient Greeks, other Mediterranean peoples, and the ancient Europeans; it also plays a major role in indigenous African religions. The dead are related to the family, clan, tribe, or village; mythical ancestors may be included. They may be friendly, or they may be displeased and require propitiation. Commemorative ceremonies are sometimes held at graves or monuments and may include prayers, offerings, sacrifices, and festivals of honor. Worship of individual ancestors is common; it may be combined with communal forms of worship, as in the case of the Roman emperor cult. In China and Japan, ancestor worship (more accurately, ancestor reverence) has declined with the decline in the size and importance of kinship groups.

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<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online

## **2.2 Primitive Religious Beliefs and Practices**

All nine primitive religions cited above have existed since the prehistoric period, and are prevalent among the tribal peoples worldwide. Here, we will present information about the religious beliefs and practices of the indigenous peoples of America and Africa, since they represent most of the primitive religions albeit their minor differences.

### **2.2.1 Neanderthal Religious Beliefs and Practices**

The Neanderthals existed between 10,000 and 25,000 years B.C. Remains left by the Neanderthals include bones and stone tools. They made advanced tools, had a language and lived in complex social groups. Archaeological findings suggest some Neanderthals built dwellings using animal bones. One ancient building was made of mammoth skulls, jaws, tusks and leg bones, and had twenty-five hearths inside. While largely carnivorous, and apex predators, new studies indicate Neanderthals had cooked vegetables in their diet. It is known that Neanderthals put food, utensils, tools, and weapons inside the grave together with the dead.

Moreover, archaeologists found a burial site containing bear bones neatly arranged together as a show of respect, but no information was available in terms of what were the Neanderthals' thoughts on life after death or what their ideas of religion were. Some archaeologists postulated that the Neanderthals hunted bears with the belief that their skulls and bones had the supernatural powers to keep them safe because they kept piles of bear skulls in their shelter.

### **2.2.2 Cro-Magnons Religious Beliefs and Practices**

The Cro-Magnons existed around 25,000 years B.C. They were robustly built and powerful. The body was generally heavy and solid with a strong musculature. The brain capacity was larger than the average for modern humans. They were primarily big-game hunters, killing mammoth, cave bears, horses and reindeer. They also placed tools and weapons inside the grave together with the dead. In some graves, there were painted bones.

The Cro-Magnons had a special talent for painting as witnessed by their cave-paintings found deep in the caves. These are paintings of animals being hunted such as bison, horses, bears, and cattle. The depictions were quite realistic. Some paintings depict animals that were being hunted or being pierced by an arrow. Most scholars of religious studies and archaeologists believed these to be the handiworks of shamans, who painted these pictures for their magic rites just before the hunt in order to make the hunt a success. These cave paintings were generally found in well-hidden places.

They also carved Venus figurines, the best known of which is called "Venus of Willendorf". It is the carving of a female figure with an ample torso, large breasts, wide hips and a protruded stomach. The head was round with no eyes, nose, mouth or ears. It was postulated that the figurines were carved to represent abundance and as such they were worshipped. These Venus figurines are the first evidence of goddess worship.

**2.2.3 New Stone Age Religious Beliefs and Practices:** People of the New Stone Age existed between 7,000 and 3,000 B.C. Like the Old Stone Age, they used stone for tools. The New Stone Age was the time when the Earth's climate was warmer than the climate in the Old Stone Age. A temperate climate meant that animals and people could stay in one place. People learned to grow their own crops and raise livestock. Farmers in the New Stone Age produced a surplus of food that they could share with other people in their community. They learned to study the rhythm of nature such as the ebb and flow of tides, the waxing and waning of the moon, the movement of stars, etc., which had an effect on agriculture. Religious development was based on the abundance provided by nature, and the belief that nature possessed supernatural powers. People began to form the concept of mythology, and assigned different gods to different natural phenomena such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the seasons, etc.

Archaeologists found large graves where men, women, animals, tools, weapons, and jewelry were buried together. It was postulated that these mass graves might have been the graves of the ruling class where the wife, servants, and favorite pets were buried along with the deceased to serve him in the afterlife.

The New Stone Age also erected stone monuments such as Stonehenge in the U.K., and Brittany in France. These huge stones were brought from faraway places and were erected as a place for performing religious rites.

#### **2.2.4 American Indian Religious Beliefs and Practices**

There are many American Indian tribes in North America, each with its own culture, style of dress, and spoken language. But they share similarities where their religious beliefs and practices are concerned.

##### **1. Animism**

In general, American Indians respect nature and believe it to have the supernatural powers to benefit or harm people. It all depends on knowing the secret to harvesting these powers. American Indians view nature as a gift from the gods which should be revered and treated properly. Before a hunt, they would pray for the souls of the animals about to be hunted, and avoid all the taboos to ensure a safe and bountiful hunt. The men who went out to hunt had to stay away from women who were menstruating. Should a drop of menstrual blood happen to fall on the hunt path or a weapon, the hunt had to be canceled. Nothing of the animals killed during the hunt was wasted. Some tribes even kept the animals' bones to ensure success for the next hunt.

In addition to hunting, they planted rice and other crops. They also made pottery. All of these activities required a religious rite and relevant taboos were applied. American Indians would take from nature only what was needed because they believed that if they exploited nature, they would come to harm as a result of natural disasters. The Papago Tribe lived in the south of Arizona. The people of this tribe would remove only the clay needed to fashion their pots as evidenced by one Papago woman's saying, "I take only what I need. It is to cook for my children."



The fox tribe has the same high regards for nature as evidenced by the following saying.

“We do not like to harm trees. Whenever we can, we always make an offering of tobacco to the trees before we cut them down. We never waste the wood, but use all that we cut down. If we do not think of their feeling, all the other trees in the forest would weep, and that would make our hearts sad, too.”

These sayings show that American Indians revered nature and believed that everything in nature possessed a soul. Therefore, human beings should treat natural resources with respect and should never be wasteful.

## **2. Taboos**

Most American Indians try to avoid evil by following the rules and taboos given them by their forefathers. One well-known taboo is to have no contact with a woman during her menstrual cycle because they believe menstrual blood to have supernatural powers. Therefore, a woman must live separate from the tribe during her menstrual cycle.

Other taboos include avoiding the place where the body of a beloved person was laid. They believe the spirit of the deceased would be around and try to persuade close relatives and friends to go and live with them. The living might be haunted by the spirit and experience nightmares. Therefore, as soon as a person dies, his body must be buried or burnt immediately to prevent the spirit of the deceased from returning and the name of the deceased must never be mentioned. These tribes regard undertakers as being unclean. They must live separate from the tribe and they are not allowed to dine with other members of the tribe.

## **3. Rites of Passage**

Most American Indians believe that rites of passage play a role in their success. Rites of passage are one way for human beings to connect with the spirit world. The most popular rite of passage is dancing. They danced before a hunt. They danced before they farmed. They danced before a battle. They danced when someone died. It is customary for American Indians to beat their drums and shake their rattles in a rhythmic fashion. Music is played to awaken the human soul and be ready to perform the task ahead.

## **4. Vision and Fasting**

Most American Indians try to empower themselves by creating a vision in order to contact different spirits. They would undergo such training starting from about nine to ten years of age. These youngsters would be left alone in the woods until they can make contact with the Spirit World. It is no easy task to create a vision and the children have to go without food for several days, sometimes water as well. They have to be naked. At times, they have to paint their face and body to show the symbol of their tribe. The vision created might be an image of an animal, a man or a woman. If the vision does not appear within two or three days, they might have to cut off a finger in order to show their earnestness. Once a



vision appears, the child can return home and become a proud member of the tribe. Vision creation is the source of important potential for American Indians because it allows them to make contact with the Spirit World and divine the future.

## **5. Religious Leader**

Almost every American Indian tribe practices Animism. They believe in the supernatural powers of nature especially the sun. Every tribe member's religious duties include chanting, dancing, and creating a vision. These are not the duties of medicine man alone.

Still, there are certain religious rites that are confined to medicine men who possess the supernatural powers to contact the Spirit World by creating a vision which allows them to heal illnesses and establish taboos. The curse of a medicine man can bring calamity or death; therefore, a medicine man is respected by the tribal members as much as if not more than the tribal chief.

In healing illnesses, the method employed usually involves extracting the spirit out of the sick person's body by singing, dancing, praying, and the use of magic spells. The rite is similar to that performed by shamans in Siberia. However, there are certain differences between a medicine man and a shaman. For example, a medicine man can contact the Spirit World by creating a vision whereas a shaman can serve as a medium for a certain spirit. Before the call to serve as a medium, a person would become so ill that only when he allows the use of his body as a medium that he would be healed. He must then serve as a medium for the rest of his life.

## **6. Death and the Hereafter**

Given the many different American Indian tribes and their different cultures, it is not surprising that there are several ways to treat the dead as well as a large number of taboos.

American Indians believe that each person has two souls but they are not eternal as souls are generally believed to be. The first soul is the breath and life itself, which comes into being and ends with the body. The second soul is free and floating here and there when a person is dreaming or sick. As soon as a person dies, the soul will return to the land of the dead, which has different characteristics depending on the beliefs of the tribe. Some believe it to be a land of happiness. Others believe it to be a place of suffering and sadness. Those who subscribe to the latter belief will help the deceased by burying food and water or by performing an animal sacrifice so that the killed animal can guide the departing soul to the land of the dead. In one American Indian tribe, which once lived in the state of Mississippi, when the chief died, his wife, his children, his close relatives and friends, along with his pets had to be sacrificed. The ancient Chinese, the Indians, and the Sumerians also subscribed to the same belief, which can be traced back to the New Stone Age.

## **7. The Great Spirit**

American Indians smoked a pipe but not for pleasure. They smoked it only during a religious rite. To them, tobacco was like incense sticks. Pipe-smoking was part of almost every rite especially when discussing war and peace. During the discussion, the pipe and tobacco would be passed from one person to another. The tobacco used in the ceremonial pipe-smoking was so strong that it caused the smoker to feel drugged.

American Indians believed the tobacco pipe to be sacred and could be employed to contact the Great Spirit. The Sioux Indians believed the tobacco pipe to be the center of the galaxy and the universe, and could be used to contact the pure spirit, which they called “Wakan Tanka”. Wakan Tanka is the Great Spirit, free and limitless. The bowl of the ceremonial pipe was made of calinite, a fine-grained easily-worked stone of a rich red color to signify earth. The part of the pipe next to the bowl was carved into the shape of a bison calf to represent all animals. The Sioux Indians deemed the bison to be extremely valuable. They used its meat for food, and its hide for clothing, and shelter. They survived because of the bison and the bison survived because of the earth. The stem of the pipe was made of wood to signify that everything grows from the earth. The feathers used to hang up the pipe were those of the spotted eagle.

All the animals of the galaxy could be connected through the use of the ceremonial pipe and the pipe-smoker could contact the Great Spirit. The pipe was the center of all the powers on earth. Pipe-smoking was a sacred rite where human beings attempted to contact supernatural powers, which they believed to be the Great Spirit, the source of everything. And it gave certain persons the ability to see visions of the future.

### **2.2.5 Indigenous African Religious Beliefs and Practices<sup>7</sup>**

Africa is a large continent and inhabited by different indigenous groups. Since Africa contains plenty of natural resources, it had been colonized by western countries. The different religious beliefs and practices in Africa can be divided into two main categories as follows.

1. New religious beliefs and practices such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Brahmanism-Hinduism
2. Indigenous religious beliefs and practices

Here, only indigenous religious beliefs and practices will be presented.

#### **1. The High God**

The indigenous peoples of Africa believe that local gods are under the High God, and it is the High God who created the Earth and everything in it. He is the one God above all the gods, but he has little contact with the Earth. It was believed that once the Earth had been created, it was allowed to be free. Its Creator watches it from a distance. This type of God can be found in the religious chronicles of the indigenous people of Yoruba.

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<sup>7</sup> Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1994, pages 24-32

They call their High God “Olorun”. According to the chronicles, Olorun told his eldest son to create the Earth but he was unsuccessful. He then told his youngest son to do it, but the youngest son was also unsuccessful. Therefore, Olorun decided to create the Earth himself. He also commanded all the deities, called “Orisha”, to help him. Once the Earth had been created, Olorun returned to heaven and allowed Orisha to look after the people of Yoruba village by village. Therefore, each village has its own deity.

## **2. Animism**

The indigenous peoples of Africa believe that nature represented by forests, streams, earth, seas, sky, mountains, etc., is filled with spirits. Some villages in Western Africa build a temple or perform rites in order to pay respect to the earth goddess or the storm god. Some indigenous peoples use water in their rites because they believe water to be a sacred medium. One of these rites includes the bathing of a newly born infant. In such a rite, they prefer the use of living water; that is, un-boiled water. They believe when water is boiled, its spirit or energy would be destroyed. To boil water is a show of disrespect. In some important rites, liquids other than water may be used. These include beer or wine. Liquids are offered by pouring them onto the ground. Liquids and foods are usually offered together to appease the spirits so that they would grant the worshippers their wishes.

## **3. Ancestor Worship**

The indigenous peoples of Africa separate ancestral spirits from the spirits in nature. They believe that the spirits of deceased ancestors will look after their descendants. Therefore, many Africans attempt to contact certain ancestral spirit to ask for advice concerning matters of war, agriculture, new-born infants, etc. Along with ancestor worship come different taboos. For example, the first harvest must be offered to the ancestral spirits to repay them for watching over them. Therefore, the living are forbidden to consume the first harvest.

Ancestor worship among the Africans is different from that in China. Chinese people worship their ancestors as a show of gratitude and to ask for special favors such as happiness and prosperity. Africans believe ancestral spirits play a key role in the survival of their tribe. They believe floods, earthquakes, and epidemics are caused by the curses of their ancestral spirits. Therefore, ancestor worship is highly important and must be carried out by everyone. They worship their ancestors with the fruits of their labor. To ensure loyalty, Africans would sacrifice the first animal born in their herd each season, and offer up its blood to their ancestors.

Ancestral spirits contact their descendants through dreams, which are an easy method and generally requires no interpretation. But sometimes a diviner is needed to interpret the dream, if the content of the dream is difficult to interpret. To be a diviner, he must be able to contact the spirit of the dead, and must be able to foretell the future. Before each battle, a diviner would be consulted.

#### **4. Sacrifice**

It is one rite that connects human beings with the spirits of nature and ancestral spirits. Some Africans take to making an offering of a small amount of water and food to the spirits daily. On such important occasions as getting ready to go to battle, and after a natural disaster, the people would sacrifice an animal such as bird, sheep, goat, dog, cattle, buffalo, etc., and offer its blood to the spirits by slitting its throat and letting the blood drain from the animal and onto the ground. Once the blood was drained out, the killed animal will be boiled or roasted. The cooked meat is divided into three portions. One portion is offered up to the spirits and ancestral spirits. The second portion is for the person performing the rite. And the third portion is for the family. Such a rite serves to show how every life is connected to each other.

Human sacrifice was hardly ever performed except when something terrible happened to a village and the diviner said that a human being had to be sacrificed. When a tribal chief died, it was necessary to perform human sacrifices so that they could go and serve the chief in the hereafter. No human bodies were eaten, since cannibalism was extremely rare.

#### **5. Rites of Passage**

There are several rites of passage throughout the life of an African. Birth is considered to be the most important event, since children are blessings sent by the Spirit World. An infertile person is believed to be cursed by the spirits. Some African tribes deemed twin birth to be undesirable, since they believe it to be a result of the mother having several lovers. Twins are often expelled from the village.

African communities such as the Ashanti wait a week to name a new-born infant because they fear the infant may not survive. Infant mortality rate is very high in Africa. Infants are often named after their forefathers.

Another important rite for some tribes has to do with bathing the infant in the moonlight or throwing the infant lightly into the air and catching it. This is performed several times to get the infant used to the moonlight. Others perform the rite when a child becomes a teenager.

African youths are assigned different community responsibilities and they are divided into groups of male and female youths. Male youths are responsible for learning religious rites. And they must undergo certain tests as proof of courage. Female youths are taught and trained in sexual matters. Many African tribes allow a man to have more than one wife, since it is a taboo to have sex with one's pregnant wife and may include the period when the newborn infant is being cared for. It is for this reason that a man will abstain from having sexual intercourse with his wife for a period of two years. A man may have several wives but each wife lives in a separate house. Several rites are performed when death occurs. The main reason is to make the spirit of the newly deceased as comfortable as possible so that it will not attempt to return and haunt its relatives. A woman is filled with dread should her husband die, for he might attempt to return and cause her to become infertile. A person is buried as soon as he is dead especially the king. He will be promptly buried along with his material wealth and slaves.

## 6. Religious Leader

Many African rites do not require a priest to perform them. These include making an offering to the spirit of the deceased, praying for things from the spirits, etc. Only special rites must be performed by a priest. A priest must know how to perform rites. He must know his religion's special code. He must learn different ceremonial dances. And he must know all about the taboos.

In Africa, a witch doctor is usually the person who performs religious rites especially when someone is ill. A witch doctor will use magic spells and herbs to heal the sick. When a family is planning to relocate, a witch doctor will be invited to perform a rite where evil spirits are cast out before the family moves into its new house.

Since some African tribes are still under monarchy rule and the king is above the law, he is also hailed as a sacred person who can make contact with ancestral spirits. Once the king and queen have been crowned, they assume the deity status and can enter the land of ancestral spirits. Many taboos arise in regards to the king. One is not allowed to look at the king's countenance. One is not allowed to touch the king's belongings. One is not allowed to have sexual relationship with the king's wives and concubines. The king is well looked after so that he will be in good health because the king's illness is the nation's illness. When a king dies, the event will be kept secret until a new king can be found.

Today, indigenous African religious beliefs and practices have come under pressure from other religions such as Christianity and Islam together with the pressure of industrialized communities. Africans are turning away from their religious beliefs and practices.

Nonetheless, some African tribes are happy to maintain the lifestyle and the religious beliefs and practices of their forefathers.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 3

## Brahmanism-Hinduism

**3.1 The History of Brahmanism-Hinduism**

**3.2 The History of Its Founder**

**3.3 Its Religious Texts**

**3.4 Its Doctrines**

**3.5 The Trimurti**

**3.6 Its Supreme God**

**3.7 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

**3.8 Its Rites and Rituals**

**3.9 Its Different Schools**

**3.10 Its Symbols**

**3.11 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Brahmanism-Hinduism happened in India around 1,000 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. It is the oldest religion in the world. It has altogether nineteen religious leaders who were also the authors of its religious texts. Adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism show the utmost reverence for the Trimurti or the three gods, which include Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.
2. The religious texts of Brahmanism-Hinduism are divided into two parts. The first part is called the Sruti (what is heard) and includes the four Vedas, namely, the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, and the Atharvaveda. The second part is called Smriti (what is remembered). The texts that were written in order to promote the study of the Vedas are called the Vedanga Texts.
3. Brahmanism-Hinduism teaches four important doctrines called the Four Ashrams, Interpersonal Relations, Paramatman, and Moksha, which is regarded as the ultimate goodness. The ultimate life-goal according to Brahmanism-Hinduism is to become one with Brahma or Paramatman.
4. Brahmanism-Hinduism's religious symbol is the "Om Symbol" in the Devanagari script. Brahmanism-Hinduism has many schools, the most important of which are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Brahmanism-Hinduism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Brahmanism-Hinduism, its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about the religious rites of Brahmanism-Hinduism, its important religious holidays, its symbols, and its current status.

## Chapter 3

### Brahmanism-Hinduism

The content of this chapter was taken from the book “Comparative Religion”, pages 48-61, 80-84 written by Asst. Prof. Vanida Kamkiao. We thank her kindly.

#### 3.1 The History of Brahmanism-Hinduism

First of all, it should be made clear that Brahmanism and Hinduism are one and the same religion. If they were to be mentioned separately, it would mean that Brahmanism is dead and Hinduism is a new religion when in fact Brahmanism is not dead and Hinduism is not a new religion but it has evolved from Brahmanism. Moreover, its religious leaders and adherents acknowledge that Brahmanism and Hinduism are the same religion. Hence, the religion is called Brahmanism-Hinduism.

Brahmanism-Hinduism has had a long evolutionary history beginning from the time when the Aryans first immigrated to India up until the present day. It was originally called “Sanatana Dharma”, which means eternal teachings. Later, it saw the birth of the Vedas, which is called “Vaidika Dharma”, which means Vedic Dharma. Later it was changed to “Araya Dharma”, which means virtuous Dharma. During the time periods that the Brahmins had religious power, it was called “Brahma Dharma”, which means the teachings of the Brahmin teachers. There was a final change in religion and it became “Hindu Dharma”, which means “Ahimsa Teachings”. Ahimsa means non-violence.

It is because Brahmanism-Hinduism has had a long evolutionary history that its religious concepts have changed dramatically over the years. In order to learn about the history and development of its religious concepts, it is necessary to go through the different stages of its development. Scholars of religious studies divide these stages into three main periods: The Vedic Period (around 1,000 – 100 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era), the Brahmanical Period (around 100 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era – 700 B.E.), and the Hindu Period. For this course book, we will present a more detailed view of Brahmanism-Hinduism’s history and development by dividing it into eleven periods as proposed by Satian Kosed and Nakaprateep as follows.<sup>1</sup>

1. The Ancient Period: Around 1,000 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era
2. The Vedic Period: Around 957 – 475 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era
3. The Brahmanical Period: Around 257 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era – the beginning of the Buddhist Era
4. The Original Hindu Period (authentic Hinduism): Around 57 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era – the beginning of the Buddhist Era
5. The Upanishads Period: Around 57 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era – the beginning of the Buddhist Era

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<sup>1</sup> Prayaanumanrachaton and Prasarnprasert, “Our Friends’ Doctrine” by Satian Kosed and Nakaprateep (pen names), 2500 B.E. pages 79-168.



6. The Sutra Period: Around 60 B.E. – 360 B.E.
7. The Avatar Period: Around 220 B.E. – 660 B.E.
8. The Decline: Around 861 B.E. – 1190 B.E.
9. The Revival: Around 1200 B.E. – 1740 B.E.
10. The Bhakti Period: Around 1740 B.E. – 2300 B.E.
11. Brahmanism-Hinduism: Around 2300 B.E. – Today

### **3.1.1 The Ancient Period**

Ancient India was the home of an indigenous people called the Dravidian people or Milakkha and other indigenous peoples, who shared similar physical characteristics in that they had short stature, dark complexion, and a snub nose. Later, the Indo-European people or the Aryans emigrated from the Volga River basin, the Ural River basin, and the Caspian Sea area to the Sindhu River basin, the Ganges River basin, and the Yamuna River basin. When more and more Aryans began to arrive, they seized the lands of the Dravidian people, established their form of government, and developed their religious beliefs by elevating their own gods above those of the Dravidian people. Dravidian people worshipped earth, water, wind, and fire and believed them to be the four living gods dwelling in heaven. They worshipped these gods with fire believing the smoke to carry their messages to them. They offer food to them by burning it.

Originally, the Aryans worshipped their ancestors and the gods of nature. The Aryans' gods of nature included:

1. Indra: The god who created everything on earth.
2. Savitri: The god of light and heat
3. Varuna: The god of coolness and moisture
4. Yama: The god of death

The Aryans believed these four gods to be sacred, and they were the protectors of the four cardinal points. Therefore, they were called “Lokapala”. The Aryans worshipped the gods by performing special rites and they worshipped their ancestors by placing food on the ground as an offering to them.

Having dominated the Dravidian people, the Aryans assimilated the gods of the Dravidian people by creating a new god, Agni, seeing that the Dravidian people worshipped fire. Still, the Aryans regarded Agni as a celestial servant of Savitri to remind the Dravidian people of their inferior status.

### 3.1.2 The Vedic Period

During this period, the Aryans created several new gods. They can be divided into three groups as follows.

The First Group: These are the gods of heaven and include Varuna, Surya, Savitri, Vishnu, Ushamitra, Aditi, Aryaman, and Ashwin.

The Second Group: These are the gods of the air and include Vata, Indra, Rudra, Parjanya, and Maruts.

The Third Group: These are the gods of the Earth and include Agni, Soma, and Yama.

They performed animal sacrifice, made an offering of Soma Juice, and sang hymns. Later, these rites became more complex, and a group of specialists was needed to perform them. These were called Brahmins, and with time, they became more and more influential. Brahmins were divided into three groups based on their religious duties as follows.

The First Group: Their duty was to worship the gods. They were called “Horatar priests”.

The Second Group: Their duty was to chant and sing hymns. They were called “Udgatar priests”.

The Third Group: Their duty was to perform religious rites. They were called “Adhavaryu priests”.

Besides these three groups of Brahmins, there was another group of Brahmins who were experts in performing religious rites and making sure that sacrifices were carried out correctly as prescribed in the Veda. Each time the people worshipped the gods, they always invited ancestral spirits to join in the worship. During this period, Brahmins competed with each other in order to gain more and more adherents and much effort was spent in devising their own special rites with increasing magical power and potency reserved for their own devotees only. This competition gave rise to the Brahmin school.

This period was called the Vedic Period because the Brahmins had arranged the different hymns into categories, thereby, giving birth to the world’s first religious text. It is called the Rigveda. The Rigveda is a collection of prayers and verses for singing the praises of the gods. It also contains hymns for the Soma juice offering rite and details about how to perform god-worshipping rites. The Brahmins believe the Rigveda to be “sruti” in that it is the celestial voice of Brahma, who created the Earth, human beings, and Brahmin ancestors.

Sometime later, the Brahmins removed all incantations from the Rigveda and compiled them into a separate text used as a handbook in hymn-singing for the Udgatar priests. The text was called the Samaveda. It was used during the Soma juice offering rite.

In addition, there was a compilation of the mantras needed by the Adhavaryu priests when performing the sacrifices prescribed by the Veda. This text is called the Yajurveda.

Therefore, the Rigveda, the Samaveda, and the Yajurveda became the Three Vedas. The Vedic Period ended with the birth of a new god called “Brahma”.

### 3.1.3 The Brahmanical Period

During this period, the entire northern part of India came under the Aryan rule. Each kingdom had its own sovereignty. Some of these kingdoms were Pancala, Ayodhana, Kurukaset, etc. The king and high-ranking officials could own land, and they had a lavish lifestyle. Middle-class people who did not own land went into business and some became quite wealthy. The indigenous people under the Aryan rule were called “Dasyu” and they belonged to the Shudra caste. They were considered too low in the social stratum to be associated with by the Aryans.

The Aryans believed in the sacredness of the gods and in sacrifices. They believed that if the rites were correctly performed, the gods would be pleased and grant them many blessings. And if they earnestly performed the religious rites, they could ultimately be transformed from an ordinary human being into a deva. During this period, the Brahmin priests were given much power because they alone knew how to perform religious rites, and the people of the Brahmin caste were the only people that could contact the gods. The power and adulation bestowed upon the Brahmin priests encouraged many Brahmins to practice chastity. They believed that if they could leave their family and material wealth behind to pursue the religious life of an ascetic, they could elevate their status to that of a king. The resulting large number of ascetics gave rise to many new doctrines.

#### A Brahmin Priest's Duties

The Brahmin Caste played an important role in society and only the Brahmins could become a Brahmin priest. Their duties included:

1. **Performing religious rites**, which were quite convoluted. These rites included the Coronation Rite or “Rajsuya”, the Release of an Upakar Horse or “Ashvamedh”, and “Purusamedh” or human sacrifice.
2. **Explaining the new god, “Brahma”, to the people.** Originally, there were these other gods such as Indra and Rudra but later the religious concepts underwent changes. Brahma became the Supreme God, since he was the Creator of the Earth and everything in it. He was present in everything. It was therefore the Brahmin priest's duty to explain “the Ultimate Truth and the Way” to the people. The Ultimate Truth and the Way could be gained by performing wholesome deeds and by practicing asceticism.

Besides Brahma, there were two more new gods: Shiva, originally the god of mountains; and Vishnu, originally the god of the seas and the oceans.

#### 3. Writing Two New Religious Texts:

**Aranyaka or lessons in the forest:** It is the basic handbook for a person who is leaving the householder's life to embark upon a life of chastity in the forest, the period of life called Vanaprastha. Such a person lives alone in a hermitage or lives with others in an ashram, clad in deer skin or in a bark garment with his hair piled high atop his head. He subsists on food growing wild in the forest, and practices asceticism in order to purify his soul. This practice is believed to help one to become one with Brahma and to have supernatural powers over deities and humans.

**Atharvaveda** is the fourth Veda. It contains magic spells used to dispel inauspiciousness and create auspiciousness. The objective of this text was to deepen people's faith in Brahmanism because toward the end of Brahmanism, it had a fierce rival in the form of Buddhism.

Division of duties gave rise to the caste system. The Brahmin priests were responsible for coming up with the teaching that Brahma created human beings and assigned them different duties for the peace and harmony of society. Members of the Kshatriya Caste arose from Brahma's arms. Members of the Brahmin Caste arose from Brahma's mouth. Members of the Vaishya Caste arose from Brahma's hip. And members of the Shudra Caste arose from Brahma's feet. People outside these four castes are treated as untouchables.

### **3.1.4 Original Hinduism (Authentic Hinduism)**

During this period, northern India was under the Aryan rule. It grew and became prosperous. There were four important kingdoms in this time period, namely, the kingdom of Avanti, the kingdom of Vansa, the kingdom of Kosala, and the kingdom of Magadha. It was the first time period that saw the birth of philosophy considered to be the core of Brahmanism. These Brahmin sages and their philosophy transformed Brahmanism into Hinduism. They were responsible for developing Hinduism to the point where it became popular. The Brahmin school in Taxila grew and became the center of education. And Taxila was where the famous teacher "Disapamokkha" lived.

According to the social value of the period, Brahma was heralded as being the only true god. He bestowed knowledge upon humans so that they could penetrate the truth. All other gods were considered a temporary appearance of Brahma. Although Brahma was held to be the Ultimate Truth, people continued to worship their various gods because the Brahman attributes were too difficult for them to understand.

In regards to thought about birth and death, it was believed that human beings had to undergo the round of rebirth under different circumstances because of their past Kamma (good and evil deeds). Brahma was the center and the origin of every soul. All living beings came from Brahma. Each soul that splits from Brahma may take possession of a deva, a human being, an animal or a plant. When the physical body dies and reborn in a different body, it is called Jati. As long as the round of rebirth continues, one encounters suffering. It is only when the soul is free from the round of rebirth that it can return to Brahma. This is called Moksha. To achieve Moksha, one must no longer perform good or evil deeds.

The people of this period believed that the Earth as created by Brahma had a finite lifespan. At the end of its lifespan, the Earth would be destroyed and a new Earth would be created. The period between the creation of the Earth and the destruction of the Earth is called "Kappa". And each Kappa is divided into four epochs or Yugas, namely, the Satya Yuga, the Treta Yuga, the Dvapara Yuga, and the Kali Yuga. The four Yugas are called the "Mahayuga". Each successive Yuga will be shorter than the one before it, and morality will also decrease respectively.

1. **The Satya Yuga:** It is the Yuga of Truth. There are no greed, anger, ignorance, dishonesty, and suffering. Whatever one wishes for is realized.
2. **The Treta Yuga:** It is the Yuga where a quarter of Truth has been lost. There are no religious rites and people practice Dharma expecting its rewards.
3. **The Dvapara Yuga:** This is the Yuga where one half of Truth has been lost. Humans begin to encounter sickness. Craving and sinfulness abound. And there is the need to cleanse away sin. This is the Yuga where the Four Vedas come into existence but human beings do not pay attention to them.
4. **The Kali Yuga:** This is the Yuga where only a quarter of Truth remains. Human beings do not pay attention to morality and become slaves to greed, anger, and ignorance.

Members of the Kshatriya Caste, Brahmin Caste, and Vaishya Caste have to send their sons to a Brahmin school. Before education can begin, the Brahmin priest must perform an initiation rite where the child is given a thread to wear called the Yajnopavita. The initiated child is now referred to as “Dvija” which means twice-born.

### 3.1.5 The Upanishads Period

It is the period where there is an active search for emancipation from the round of rebirth, and four schools of thought arise as a result.

The first school of thought: Members believe in the fruit of Jhana, which is penetrating knowledge.

The second school of thought: Members believe in the fruit of sacrifice.

The third school of thought: Members believe in the fruit of ascetic practices.

The fourth school of thought: Members believe that to achieve emancipation from the round of rebirth, one must do so through one's own effort. Emancipation cannot come about by praying or by worshipping the gods. They believe everything on earth to be Maya or an illusion, Maya prevents the mind from reaching the final and abstract destination. They believe the strict practice leading to the departure from the mundane realm involves asceticism and Jhana attainments. Such practice can be carried out individually or as a group. Three types of ascetics result from this school of thought. They include “Paribajaka”, which means one who wanders, “Bhikku”, which means one who begs, and “Sanyasi”, which means one who relinquishes.

From this first school of thought came three groups of famous thinkers. They include the Brahmins' Upanishads Philosophy, Mahavira's Jainism, and the Lord Buddha's Buddhism. The Upanishad Brahmins created the Upanishads where Paramatman and Moksha were taught. The Upanishads are also known as the “Vedanta”, which means the end of the Veda or the final text.

Although the Upanishads is part of the Veda but it differs from the Veda philosophically. The philosophy of the Veda concerns several gods and emphasizes sacrifice such as animal sacrifices. But the philosophy of the Upanishads tends toward Monism, the belief in the ultimate truth, which is Brahman. Brahman is the origin of the galaxy and everything in it. It is the

duty of human beings to study and practice until they can achieve the state of Monism or Moksha. The Upanishads may be considered to be the foundation of the Bhagavad Gita philosophy.

Brahmin ascetics have to study the Aranyaka Text. Those wishing to become Paribajaka or Sanyasi have to study the Upanishads, which is believed to be “sruti” or the Word of God. Contents of the text cannot be revealed to members of other castes. It is considered a major sin to do so.

Besides the texts that are sruti, several non-sruti texts are written during this period. These are known as “smṛti”, and their abbreviated principles are committed to memory. Toward the end of this period, the Yogi Valamiki writes an epic poem called the “Ramayana”. It consists of five parts. The main character, “Rama” was then just a hero and not yet an avatar of Vishnu. The change came later on.

### 3.1.6 The Sutra Period

It is the period where the Aryans extend their territory to the south of India, and Hindu beliefs and practices are also exported. Buddhism is its main rival because it is the time when Ashok the Great revives Buddhism. Certain important movements occur in Brahmanism-Hinduism during this period and they include:

**The First Wave :** Brahmanism-Hinduism is spread all over the south of India, and the Brahmin priests are well-respected in the south of India as well.

**The Second Wave :** The literary work “Bharata” is further elaborated to become “Mahabharata”.

**The Third Wave :** Brahmin teachers write school books for Brahmin boys traditionally associated with the study and understanding of the Vedas. These books are written in a cryptic, poetic style called “Sutra” to make them easier to memorize. The Sutras covered every branch of the art and are divided into six subjects called the “Vedanga”.

**Shiksha :** It is the study of sounds and pronunciation associated with each syllable in the Veda.

**Vyakarana :** It is the study of word and sentence structure in the Veda.

**Nirukta :** It deals with the origin and meaning of complex words and phrases in the Veda.

**Chandas :** It deals with the mastery of rhyme and meter.

**Jyotisha :** It is the study of heavenly bodies for the purpose of determining an auspicious time for the performance of rituals.

**Kalpa :** It deals with ethical, moral and procedural precepts associated with the performance of rituals as a way of life.



Of these six subjects, Kalpa is the most important because it consists of the three Sutras, namely, the Srautasutras: rules for the performance of different types of sacrifices and rituals; the Grihyasutras: domestic rites and rituals for the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas; and the Dharma Sutra: the code of conduct, duties and responsibilities for the members of each caste.

### 3.1.7 The Avatar Period

During this period, India has encountered long-termed unrests due to internal power struggles and foreign invasions. Some rulers favor Brahmanism-Hinduism. Some rulers favor Jainism. Some rulers favor Buddhism. This means that whatever religion is favored by the ruler flourishes during the time that he is in power. Toward the end of this period, India is ruled by the Kushana Dynasty, originally from Turkey in central Asia. One important Kushana king was King Kanishka. He was a supporter of Buddhism. Therefore, Hindus needed to modify their religion in order to compete with Buddhism. The competition caused the adherents of both religions to assimilate the doctrines of both religions. Meanwhile, Hinduism becomes a new entity with the addition of new gods.

Originally, Hindus regarded Rama and Krishna as heroes. Later, they were elevated as avatars of Vishnu. This practice gave birth to Vaishnavism. This branch of Hinduism is given the name “Bhagavata”, which means the worship of the Adorable One.

The Hindus who worship Shiva elevate Shiva’s status and his vehicle the cow becomes a sacred animal. The phallic symbol of creative power is considered sacred and should be worshipped. Meanwhile, there emerge six schools of Vedic philosophy and the Brahmins incorporate the philosophy of all six schools into their religion and call it “Shad-Dashan” or the six views. These six schools can be paired as follows.

- |                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| The First Pair:  | Nyaya, its founder is Gautam    |
|                  | Vaisesika, its founder is Kanad |
| The Second Pair: | Sankhya, its founder is Kapil   |
|                  | Yoga, its founder is Patanjali  |
| The Third Pair:  | Mimamsa, its founder is Jaimini |
|                  | Vedanta, its founder is VedVyas |

#### **The First Pair:**

##### **Nyaya**

This school of thought is based on the Nyaya Sutras written by Gautama, probably in the third century B.C. The most important contribution made by this school is its methodology, which is based on a system of logic. Nyaya Philosophy can be characterized as Atomistic Realism.

##### **Vaisesika**

The Vaisesika School postulates an atomic pluralism in which all objects in the physical universe are reducible to certain types of atoms. The school was founded by the sage Kanada around the second century B.C. He was also the

author of the Vaisesika Sutra, which can be characterized as non-theistic, since no reference to gods is made. Its philosophy can be characterized as pluralistic.

Vaisesika and Nyaya share similar metaphysical theories about the Law of Samsara in that they believe in the round of rebirth, which is caused by ignorance or Avijja. To be emancipated from Samsara, hence the attainment of Moksha, one must penetrate Truth. One must not be trapped in happiness but must avoid unhappiness by putting an end to Karma so that no new Karma will be incurred and the fruit of old Karma would disappear. Eventually, the pure soul or Jivatman will be emancipated from the trap of Karma and attain Moksha (emancipation).

## **The Second Pair**

### **Sankhya**

It was founded by Kapil, although he did not write any relevant text. However, the text that has been passed down and used up to the present day is called the Samkhyakarika Text which was written by Ishvarkrishna. This school espouses dualism between Prakriti and Purusha.

Prakriti is primordial materiality. It has always existed. Everything in the world today existed first in Prakriti before it appears on earth. Death is the return of all things to Prakriti.

Purusha is the eternal pure consciousness, which is comparable to Jivatman in other Indian Philosophical systems. Purusha is all pervasive.

Sankhya Philosophy believes that the world is full of suffering; hence human beings should search for the way to be emancipated from suffering and attain Moksha. Sankhya holds that Purusha, the eternal pure consciousness, due to ignorance, identifies itself with such products of Prakriti as intellect and ego. This results in endless transmigration and suffering. However, once the realization arises that Purusha is distinct from Prakriti, the Self is no longer subject to transmigration and absolute freedom or Moksha can be gained.

### **Yoga**

The Yoga philosophical system emphasizes the dynamics of the process for disentanglement, and outlines practical techniques for the gaining of emancipation (Moksha). It was founded by Patanjali, and its foundational text is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Yoga, according to Patanjali, means endeavoring to make perfect by controlling the body and the mind.

The Yoga school accepts the Sankhya psychology and metaphysics, but is more theistic than the Sankhya, as evidenced by the addition of a divine entity. And Moksha can only be gained when the individual is united with god, the special Purusha in an eternal Moksha state. There are altogether eight ways leading to the union with god. 1) Yama: the restraint of conduct; 2) Niyama: religious practices; 3) Asana: the correct sitting posture; 4) Pratyahara: restraint of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body; 6) Dharna: keeping the mind stable; 7) Dhanaya: being watchful; and 8) Samadhi: one-pointedness of mind. Samadhi is most emphasized in the Yoga Philosophy because it is held as the means to gain purity and release.



## **The Third Pair**

### **Mimamsa**

This philosophical system was founded by Jaimini, who wrote the Mimamsa Sutra. The Mimamsa philosophers accept the logical and philosophical teachings of the other schools, but feel they do not sufficiently emphasize attention on right action. They believe that only by acting in accordance with the prescriptions of the Vedas can one attain Moksha.

### **Vedanta**

Vedanta and Mimamsa are closely related because both concentrate on the Vedic teachings except that Mimamsa philosophy emphasizes the earlier segments of the Vedas called “Karma Kanda”, hence the name Purva Mimamsa. Vedanta emphasizes the last segment of knowledge in the Vedas called “Uttra Mimamsa”, which has to do with ‘Jnan Kanda’ or knowledge section. Jnan Kanda forms part of the philosophy of the Vedanta and Ramajuna.

During the Avatar Period, Hindu sages compile the rules and discipline originally called Dharma by writing them in simple verses easy for Hindus to practice. This compilation is called “Manavadharma”, which means the rules of Manu.

In addition to the Manavadharma, there is another interesting book called the “Bhagavad Gita”, an extension of the epic poem “Mahabharata”. Unlike the Veda, the Bhagavad Gita is a simple book and can be read by members of every caste. Therefore, the objective of this book is to teach Dharma principles to every Hindu such that not everyone needs to take up the religious life. Every Hindu should know his duties and perform those duties to the best of his ability without expecting anything in return. By so doing, he can know the ultimate truth. Therefore, the Bhagavad Gita is a book that teaches people to be mindful of society, and not just personal emancipation as in the Upanishads. People must perform their duties in order to ensure societal stability because people are part of society.

### **3.1.8 The Decline of Brahmanism-Hinduism**

This is the period when the Gupta kings, who are true Hindus, rule over India after having successfully usurped the last Kushana king’s throne. During this time, Brahmanism-Hinduism flourishes. The Gupta kings had ruled for about two centuries when India was invaded by the Huns through the kingdom of Punjab. The Huns ruled India for about fifty years before they were forced out in the year 1071 B.E. Afterward, India was divided twice into two empires. The first time it was divided into the western Chalukya Empire and the eastern Pallava Empire. Toward the end of the period, one ruler of a northern city in India called “Harshavardan” consolidated all the republics and states in North India but was unsuccessful in extending his territory to the south. Once again, India was divided into the northern empire (between the Himalayas and the Namda River basin) and the southern empire (the Deccan Peninsula) of the Dravidians. King Harshavardan is an adherent and supporter of Mahayana Buddhism and an opponent of Brahmanism-Hinduism.

This period sees the decline of Brahmanism-Hinduism because it is the period when Brahmanism-Hinduism splits into many different schools. And the practices of each school become very lax especially the two major schools of Shaivism, which worshipped Shiva and Vaishnavism, which worshipped Vishnu. Each tries to elevate the status of their god while looking down on the god of the other school. Efforts are made to try to solve the problem by giving Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu the same status and calling them the Trimurti, but this concept is not well-accepted by the people.

This period witnesses the decline of Brahma in particular because Shiva and Vishnu are given the highest priority. Two things happen to Brahmanism-Hinduism during its decline.

1. The birth of its religious symbol in the Devanagari script, “Om”
2. Earlier in this period, the Gupta Dynasty promoted works of literature, which included drama, poetry, fiction, fable, and an important literary work concerning Brahmanism-Hinduism called “Matysa Purana”<sup>2</sup> written in Sanskrit verses covering five subjects as follows.
  - 2.1 Sarga: the creation of the universe
  - 2.2 Pratisarga: secondary creations, creations after dissolution
  - 2.3 Vamsa: genealogy of the gods and sages
  - 2.4 Manvantara: the creation of the human race and the first human beings; the epoch of the Manu’s rule
  - 2.5 Vamsanucaritam: the histories of the patriarchs of the lunar and solar dynasties.

Both Shaivism and Vaishnavism base their religious texts on the Matysa Purana, and use them to elevate the status of their respective gods, which cause conflicts between them. Nonetheless, the most famous and popular Purana is the Vaishnavism Purana called the “Vishnu Purana”.

### 3.1.9 The Revival Period

During this period, India is once again invaded by the Turkish Muslims from Afghanistan. They enter the border at the Sindhu River Basin but a Hindu king manages to thwart the invasion. Later, he establishes the Rajputra Dynasty and this dynasty rules the western and central parts of India for close to three centuries.

It is called the revival period because Buddhism, an important rival of Brahmanism-Hinduism, is beginning to disappear from India while Brahmanism-Hinduism is being supported by different political leaders. And they have done everything they can to create stability for their religion and propagate it as much as possible especially among the indigenous peoples. At the same time, they have done everything they can to make sure that Jainism and Buddhism would never become a threat to their religion again.

The important changes and development in Brahmanism-Hinduism during this period include:

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia: Puranas

1. A large number of Hindu sages work together to improve and modify old religious texts in order to make them clearer, more logical, and more suitable to the time period. For example,

Kumaril pens the Commentary to Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa Sutra.

Sankra pens the Commentary to the Vedanta Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita. Etc.

2. Leaders of different schools of thought write prayer poems in the Tamil language, which is the original language of the indigenous people, and aggressively propagate their teachings.
3. The birth of two new branches: Shaktism and Bhaktism

- 3.1 Shaktism is the worship of the goddesses who are the wives of the different gods such as Uma Devi, Shiva's wife; Lakshmi Devi, Vishnu's wife; Surasvati, Brahma's wife. It is believed that these goddesses share their husbands' powers, and can grant people their wishes. There is a text called the "Tantra", which gives details on how to worship Shakti. The ritual consists of five steps. It begins with the drinking of alcohol (Matya), the consumption of raw meat (Mansa), the reciting of spells to arouse sexual desire (Mantra), erotic dancing (Mudra), and concludes with sexual intercourse (Maithuna).

Shakti worship is performed at midnight in a temple where Shakti is worshipped. Some groups prefer to perform the ritual in secret. Some groups prefer to perform it in public. The male ascetic in Shaktism is called "Sadhu" whereas the female participant is called "Devadasi".

Shaktism began in the northeastern part of India (Bengal, Nepal, and Assam), an area inhabited by different nationalities such as the Mons, Cambodians, Burmese, Tibetans, and Thais.

- 3.2 Bhaktism: The word "Bhakti" means the worship of the Adorable One. This branch of Brahmanism-Hinduism subscribes to the belief that god will bless those who are devoted to him. Therefore, no other rites are as important as the rite of devotion or the Bhakti Rite. This rite of loyalty can be performed for any god that one worships. It can be Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Shiva, etc. There are five different attitudes that a devotee takes according to his personal preference in expressing his devotion toward god.

Santa : placid love for god

Dasya : the attitude of a servant

Sakhya : the attitude of a friend

Vatsalya : the attitude of a child towards its mother

Madhura : the attitude of a woman towards her lover

Manikka : He was the head of Bhaktism in South India, and its adherents worshipped Shiva. Nimbarka was the head of Bhaktism in North India, and its adherents worshipped Krishna and his wife, Radha.

4. Construction of large and elaborate temples in major cities. The procession carrying the statue of a god or goddess becomes popular in this period.

Moreover, toward the end of this period, there begins a new social value, which is the burning of a Hindu widow along with the body of her deceased husband. A woman who honors this tradition is called a “Sati” or a brave woman. If a woman refuses to follow this tradition, her relatives will entreat her to comply. If not, she will be considered a bad woman and she must practice chastity for the rest of her life.

### **3.1.10 The Bhakti Period**

It is the period that Genghis Khan’s descendant, Timur, invades Delhi and takes many prisoners of war back to his land. In 1206 B.E., India was once again invaded, this time by the Muslim Mongols. In this invasion, Hindu temples and all the images of the gods and goddesses were completely destroyed. Some were converted to mosques. Indians were forced to convert to Islam or be heavily taxed. They were forbidden to pay homage to their sacred images, for fear that their religion would be revived. However, the severe treatment could only cause Hinduism to temporarily decline because Hinduism had been deeply rooted in the Hindus. During the reign of Akbar the Great, an important king of the Moghul Dynasty, Indians were allowed religious freedom.

Nonetheless, during the time that India was ruled by the Moghul Dynasty, Islam had spread to the south of India, and some Indians converted to Islam. This gave rise to a new religion called “Sikhism”, which is based on a combination of Hindu and Islam religious principles. Sikhism had quite a large following.

Around 1500 B.E., different European countries came to India to trade. These included Portugal, Holland, France, and England. These European merchants brought Christianity with them and began to propagate it. Eventually, India lost its independence to England during the reign of King Aurangzeb, the last king of the Moghul Dynasty, which had ruled India for about 100 years.

During this period, the Bhakti branch of Brahmanism-Hinduism, which began during Brahmanism-Hinduism’s revival, flourishes in North India. Bhakti has three branches depending on which god is considered to be the most powerful by its adherents.

The first branch: Its adherents worship Rama. Ramanon is responsible for reviving Bhaktism. Tullidas is responsible for spreading it. And Bhaktamala is the author of the book “Bhaktamala”, which is a compilation of the history and works of the leaders of Bhaktism.

The second branch: Its adherents worship Krishna. Its leader is Vallabha.

The third branch: Its adherents worship Rama but do not recognize him as being an avatar of Vishnu. They worship Rama’s image and practice the caste system. Its leader is Kbir, and he was formerly a Muslim. His teachings are a combination of Hinduism and Islam. His followers are mostly of the Shudra Caste, and they were formerly adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism or Islam.

Bhaktism propagates its religion by using the language spoken locally. They call their religious teachers “Guru”. Its religious rites include chanting, meditation practice, casting magic spells, and partaking of the ceremonial rice. Each branch has its own priests and laity. Although its adherents worship different gods but they share the same belief that whichever god they worship is the most powerful. They believe that their god is kind and compassionate to whomever is devoted to him. They believe that the human soul comes from god; hence, it is eternal. Whoever is devoted to god can hope to achieve emancipation or Moksha regardless of whichever caste he belongs to.

### 3.1.11 The Current Status of Brahmanism-Hinduism<sup>3</sup>

Although other religions have been propagated in India, Brahmanism-Hinduism remains the major religion in India with the most number of adherents (more than 80%). Next to Brahmanism-Hinduism are Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism respectively. Only a small percentage of Indians are adherents of Jainism, Buddhism, and Parzi.

Adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism believe that to be qualified as a true Hindu, one must...

1. Be a descendant of the Brahmin Caste, the Kshatriya Caste, the Vaishya Caste, or the Shudra Caste. People outside the caste system are not Hindus even though they may be adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism and practice accordingly.
2. Follow strictly the two following rules:
  - 2.1 One must adhere to the customs and traditions of one’s social caste.
  - 2.2 One must adhere to the customs and traditions of every caste, which include
    - 2.2.1 Marriage, food, livelihood, and shelter
    - 2.2.2 Domestic rites called Samsakaras
    - 2.2.3 Sraddha
    - 2.2.4 The worship of gods

Today, young and well-educated Indians are not as interested in practicing according to Brahmanism-Hinduism. It remains for the Brahmin ascetics to adhere strictly to the rites and rituals of Brahmanism-Hinduism.

Those who worship Rama or Krishna as an avatar of Vishnu or Shiva along with other gods continue to adhere to its rites and rituals. Adherents who live far away will make an effort to go and worship at the temple of their special god whenever they can.

For the indigenous people who belong to the lower caste and the less educated, they tend to worship lesser gods such as Kali, an avatar of the goddess Uma, Hanuman, Ganesha, Nandi the sacred cow, Phya Naga, monkey, turtle, elephant, tree, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Mon Tongchut, Today’s Important Religions, 2530 B.E. page 24

### 3.2 Brahmanism-Hinduism: The History of Its Founder

Brahmanism-Hinduism is a very old religion but it does not have a founder like other religions because the great Yogis of ancient times heard the celestial teachings (sruti) with their own ears. The teachings were then passed down by oral tradition (smṛti) from one generation to another. This fact is borne out by the writing in Buddhism's Suttantapitaka, Dighanikaya, Silakhandhavagga under the Tevijja Sutra,<sup>4</sup> where the Lord Buddha says that they are ten Yogis who are the first teachers of the Veda. Their names are Atthaka, Vamka, Vamdeva, Vessamitra, Yamataggi, Angirasa, Bharadvaja, Vasettha, Kassapa, and Bhagu. Later, there were religious leaders or religious text writers<sup>5</sup> who helped spread the teachings. The following is a list of important leaders and teachers of Brahmanism-Hinduism.

1. Vyasa: He is responsible for compiling the Veda, Itihasa, and Purana. Incidentally, the name of the writer of the epic poem "Mahabharata" is also Vyasa. Therefore, it can be concluded that Vyasa is an important Yogi who plays the biggest part in writing or compiling Hindu texts.
2. Valmiki: He wrote the epic poem "Ramayana". It is postulated that he was born near the end of the fourth or early third century B.C.E.
3. Gautama: He was the founder of the "Nyaya" school of thought, and was born about 550 years B.C.E.
4. Knada: He is the founder of the "Vaisesika" school of thought, and was born in the third century B.C.E.
5. Kapila: He is the founder of the "Sankhya" school of thought, and was born in the sixth century B.C.E.
6. Patanjali: He is the founder of the "Yoga" school of thought, and was born in the third or fourth century B.C.E.
7. Jaimini: He is the founder of the "Mimamsa" or "Purva Mimamsa" school of thought, and was born between the sixth and the second century B.C.E.
8. Manu: He is the author of the text "Dharma Sutra", and was born in the fifth century B.C.E.
9. Badrayana: He is the founder of the "Vedanta" or "Uttara Mimamsa" school of thought.
10. Caravaka: He is the founder of the "Lokayana" (materialism) branch, history unknown.
11. Shankracariya: He is the author of the Commentary to the Vedanta, and was born between 788 and 820 A.D. He is the founder of the "Adaivata" or monism, which is the worship of one god.
12. Nathamuni: He is the first leader of the Vaisnava branch, and was born between 824 and 924 A.D.

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<sup>4</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Dighanikaya, Silakhandhavagga, 2539 B.E.

page 233

<sup>5</sup> Prateep Savayo, The World's Eleven Religions, 2545 B.E. pages 99-100



13. Ramanujacariya: He is an important person of the Vaisnava branch and the originator of the Vishishtadvaita Philosophy, an offshoot of the Vedanta branch. He was born between 1027 and 1137 A.D.
14. Madhvacariya: He is a leader of the Vaisnava branch and the originator of the Dvaita Philosophy or dualism. He was born between 1199 and 1277 A.D.
15. Lakulisha: He is a teacher of Shaivism in South India, and the founder of the Pashupata branch, history unknown.
16. Vasugupta: He is the founder of Shaivism in North India, which is also called "Kashirashaiva". He was born in the ninth century.
17. Ramamohan Roy: He is the founder of the Brahmsamaj Society, and was born between 1774 and 1833 A.D.
18. Swami Dayananda Sarasvati: He is the founder of the Aryasamaj Society, and was born during 1824 and 1883 A.D.
19. Ramakrishna: He is a leader of religious knowledge and practices. He is responsible for organizing the Rama-Krishna Mission, although he is not the founder. Swami Vivekananda Sarasvati, however, regarded him as being the founder of the mission. He lived between 1836 and 1886 B.E.

### 3.3 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Religious Texts

Important texts in Brahmanism-Hinduism<sup>6</sup> can be divided into two parts: *sruti* and *smriti*.

**3.3.1 Sruti:** It includes the Four Vedas, which are the words believed to be heard from god directly. They have no authors but they were discovered by the great Yogis. They are eternal and they are the breaths of god. They are true. And they depict the spiritual experiences of the Yogis in ancient times. The Four Vedas are as follows.

1. **The Rigveda:** It is the oldest text and contains a collection of prayers and verses used in singing the praises of the gods and their wives. There are altogether 1,017 hymns. These are sung to praise the power of nature, the battle between light and darkness, the battle between heat and cold. The power of nature is elevated to the status of god. Some important gods of nature include Agni, Indra, Surya, Varuna, Ushas, Aswin, Prithvi, Tattva, Maruts, Rudra, Yama, etc. Each hymn is accompanied by a Yogi's name to indicate the Yogi who revealed the particular hymn.
2. **The Yajurveda:** It is a compilation of mantras needed to perform the sacrifices of the Veda by the Adhvaryu priests. Most of the mantras were taken from the Rigveda but they were arranged accordingly. They need to be studied especially, and many offshoots have come out of the Yajurveda.
3. **The Samaveda:** It is a compilation of 1,549 hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses taken from the Rigveda. Seventy-Eight hymns were later added to the original ones. These hymns are sung at the rite in which the juice of the Soma plant is offered in libation to various deities.

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<sup>6</sup> Four Authors, A Simple History of Ancient India, 1971, pages 90-95

4. **The Atharveda:** It was written toward the end of Brahmanism, and contains magic spells used in removing inauspiciousness and creating auspiciousness, and bringing calamities to one's enemies.

Originally, there was only the Rigveda. Later, it was split into three texts called the Three Vedas. Hundreds of years went by before the Brahmins wrote the fourth Veda called the Atharveda. Still, they are referred to as the Three Vedas.

In addition, each Veda is divided into four categories as follows.

1. **Samhitas:** They are a collection of mantras or hymns used in singing the praises of the gods during a religious rite. Most of these mantras or hymns are concerned with nature and deities. Samhitas form the first part of each of the four Vedas. They form the Karma-Kanda segment of the Vedas and deal with ceremonial rites and rituals.
2. **Brahmanas:** They provide details on the proper performance of rituals. They form the Karma-Kanda segment of the Vedas and deal with ceremonial rites and rituals.
3. **Aranyaka:** It is a handbook used by a Brahmin who intends to take up the religious life (Vanaprastha) or a Paribrajaka who is in search of peace and the absence of a householder's concerns. Aranyaka forms the Gyan-Kanda segment of the Vedas and focuses on philosophy and spiritualism.
4. **Upanishads**<sup>7</sup>: They are a collection of philosophical texts which form the theoretical basis for the Hindu religion. They are also known as "Vedanta", which means the end of the Veda. They are found mostly in the concluding part of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas and have been passed down by oral tradition. The Upanishads are considered by Hindus to contain revealed truth or Sruti concerning the nature of the ultimate reality and the description of the character and form of human salvation or Moksha as follows.
  - 1) **Paramatman:** Paramatman is the absolute Atman or Supreme Soul called Brahman from which everything comes and to which everything will eventually return. Paramatman is identical with Brahman.
  - 2) **Atman:** Or Jivatman is an individual's true self. It is the essence of an individual. In order to attain emancipation from the round of rebirth, Atman must return to Brahman or Paramatman.
  - 3) **Karma:** To return to the eternal state of Brahman, one must endeavor to perform good deeds and different rites or Yoga. In other words, one must perform Yoga Karma, good deeds, Bhakti Yoga (devotion to the gods), and Jnana Yoga according to what is prescribed in the Vedas.

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia, Upanishads



**3.3.2 Smriti:** It means that which is remembered. It refers to a specific body of religious scripture generally seen as secondary in authority to Sruti. Smriti literature was composed after the Vedas in order to promote and aid the correct and effective learning of the Vedas.

Such literature is called the Vedangas, which means the limbs of the Vedas. It serves to preserve and protect the Vedic tradition and include:

1. **Siksha:** It deals with the study of the pronunciation of words and syllables through the correct intonation, conjunction and disjunction of syllables, recognized primarily as vowels and consonants. The objective is to chant the Vedic hymns perfectly, producing the desired sound vibrations and maintaining the purity and efficacies of the rites being performed.
2. **Chhanda:** It deals with the analysis of the types of meter used in the construction of various Vedic hymns. This text is compilation of Yaska's works.
3. **Vyakarna:** It deals with Sanskrit grammar providing useful insight into the usage of words and sentences leading to the mastery of the language. The most authoritative work on the subject is considered to be the Ashtadhyayi of Panini, who lived around 240 years B.C.
4. **Nirukta:** It deals with the etymological interpretations or explanations of obscure words especially those found in the Vedas.
5. **Jyotisha:** It deals with the astronomical and astrological aspects of fixing auspicious date and time to perform various Vedic rites and rituals. The auspicious time is usually determined based on the position of the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.
6. **Kalpa:** It deals with the practical, ceremonial, sacrificial, and ritual aspects of the Vedas. The method and the manner in which the sacrificial ceremonies and daily household rituals must be performed are established in three categories of sutras as follows.
  1. Srautasutras: They prescribe rules for the performance of different types of sacrifices and rituals, etc.
  2. Grihyasutras: They prescribe domestic rites and rituals such as marriage, house-warming, etc.
  3. Dharmasutras: They deal with the code of conduct, the duties and responsibilities of various castes within the framework of the Four Ashramas, namely, Brahmachara, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa. The Dhammasutras were written between 600 and 200 years B.C.
7. **Dhammashastra:** It deals with the norms in domestic, social, and religious life in India under the influence of the Brahmins. The persons credited with this work are Manu, Yajnavalkya, and Prashra. These names are immortal in the world of law.
8. **Nitishastra:** It deals with individual and social action, ethics, and conduct.

9. **Itihasa:** It deals with the heroic deeds of heroes in the ancient past. It includes the two epic poems, namely, Ramayana and Mahabharata. They depict the duties of relationships portraying ideal characters according to the Dhammashastra.

10. **Puranas and Upapuranas:** These are ancient Hindu texts eulogizing various deities through divine stories. The Puranas aim to teach Brahmanism-Hinduism through fairy tales, fables, and legends. There are altogether eighteen Puranas as follows<sup>8</sup>:

1. Vishnu Purana
2. Naradiya Purana
3. Bhagavat Purana
4. Garuda Purana
5. Padma Purana
6. Brahma Purana
7. Varaha Purana
8. Brahmanda Purana
9. Brahma-Vaivarta Purana
10. Markandeya Purana
11. Bhavishya Purana
12. Vamana Purana
13. Matsya Purana
14. Kurma Purana
15. Linga Purana
16. Shiva Purana
17. Skanda Purana
18. Agni Purana

There are altogether eighteen Upapuranas as follows<sup>9</sup>:

1. Sanat-kumara
2. Narasimha
3. Brihan-naradiya
4. Siva-rahasya
5. Durvasa
6. Kapila
7. Vamana

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<sup>8</sup> About.com, Hinduism

<sup>9</sup> New Models of Culture (online), 18 Upapuranas

8. Bhargava
9. Varuna
10. Kalika
11. Samba
12. Nandi
13. Surya
14. Parasara
15. Vasishtha
16. Devi-Bhagavata
17. Ganesa
18. Hamsa

**11. Upavedas:** These texts deal with different vocations as follows.

1. Ayurveda: The science of health and longevity
2. Gandharvaveda: The science of music and dance
3. Dhanurveda: The science of archery and war
4. Sthapatyaveda: The science of architecture

In addition, there are texts of agama-based religions, each with its own important religious texts dealing with deity worship and religious practices. There are three main agama-based religions: the Vaishnava-Agamas worship Vishnu as the Ultimate Reality. The Shaiva Agamas revere Lord Shiva as the Ultimate Reality. The Shakta-Agamas venerate Shakti as the Ultimate Reality. Despite the differences in these three religious branches, the religious text of each branch is based on the Veda.

### 3.4 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Doctrines

Brahmanism-Hinduism teaches four important doctrines as follows.

1. The Four Ashramas
2. Interpersonal Relations
3. Paramatman
4. Moksha

**3.4.1 The Four Ashramas:** They refer to the four stages of a Hindu's life; each stage takes up 25 years based on the lifespan of 100 years.

The First Ashrama – Brahmacharya: This is the time of formal education. It begins at the age of eight and ends at the age of twenty-five. The student of the first Ashrama is called a Brahmachari and the following are his duties.

- 1) He must learn the teachings relevant to his caste.
- 2) He must listen to his teacher and practices what he teaches.

- 3) He must practice celibacy.
- 4) He must not have anything to do with members of the opposite sex.
- 5) After graduation, he must undertake a rite which involves having his head shaved (Keshanatasamskara), and giving a gift to his teacher as repayment (Gurudaksina).

The graduate is now a true Brahmin and as such he has the following five special privileges.

- 1) He can study the Vedas.
- 2) He can teach the Vedas.
- 3) He can perform a Yagnam Rite (having to do with donations).
- 4) He can receive alms from a believer.
- 5) He can give alms to the poor (members of the lower castes).

The Second Ashrama – Grihastha: It begins at the age of twenty-five and ends at the age of fifty. The person at this stage must perform the following duties.

- 1) He must help his parents with their work.
- 2) He must marry.
- 3) He must earn a living.

The Third Ashrama – Vanaprastha: It begins at the age of fifty and ends at the age of seventy-five. The person at this stage must perform the following duties.

- 1) He must transfer his material wealth to his children.
- 2) He must practice altruism.
- 3) He must practice asceticism.
- 4) He must pass on his knowledge by being a teacher.

The Fourth Ashrama – Sannyasa: It begins at the age of seventy-five. Whoever wishes to attain emancipation or Moksha must ordain as a Sannyasi for life and practice accordingly for the purpose of attaining emancipation from the round of rebirth.

### 3.4.2 Interpersonal Relations

Brahmanism-Hinduism's teachings on interpersonal relations are very much similar to the Lord Buddha's Teachings on "The Six Directions", which detail the duties and responsibilities that a person has toward the persons in his life.

1. **Pitardharma:** It deals with a father's duties and responsibilities toward his child from birth until the time he comes of age.
  - The father must treat his child with loving-kindness and compassion from birth until the child is five years old.

- Once the child comes of age, father and child will be more like friends and the child should be given the opportunity to lead at times. The father now becomes more like an advisor. He should also find an appropriate spouse for his child.

2. **Matardharma:** It deals with a mother's duties and responsibilities toward her child. The mother must perform the same duties as the father but she must exercise special care and attention to make sure that her child will have a bright future. She must be her child's first teacher; therefore, she must take care to help her child form good habits.
3. **Acarayadharma:** It deals with a teacher's duties and responsibilities toward his student. The teacher must pass on his knowledge to his student in a correct and fair manner. He must be like a father and mother to his student. And he must work together with the student's parents to help the student form good habits.

Mother, father, and teachers must be a good role model for the child. They must teach by way of examples and not by words alone.

4. **Putradharma and Sisayadharma:** They deal with a person's duties and responsibilities toward his parents and teachers. It is written in the Brahmanism-Hinduism rules that...

"Whoever respects his parents and teachers are said to be practicing the Dharma. But whoever insults these people will not meet with success however hard he tries. Therefore, whoever wishes for success and happiness or growth in this life must sincerely respect his parents and teachers, listen to their advice, and practice what they teach."

"Whoever is devoted to his parents is already a winner in this world. Therefore, one must be devoted to one's parents, for such a person will conquer heaven. And whoever is devoted to his teachers will conquer the Brahma world.

5. **Bharatardharma:** It deals with the duties and responsibilities that a sibling has toward other siblings. Younger siblings must regard their older siblings like a parent. It is written that one must hold one's teachers the way one holds the image of Paramatman, one's father the way one holds the image of Prajabadi, one's mother the way one holds the image of Dharani, and one's older sibling the way one holds the image of a guru. One must not look down upon one's parents, teachers, and older siblings, whatever one's status may be. If one is a Brahmin, one must take special care in one's practice. Likewise, older siblings must care for their younger siblings the way a mother cares for her child, and teach them the way parents teach their children.

6. **Patidharma:** It deals with the duties and responsibilities that a husband has toward his wife. A man must choose his bride accordingly in that she must be suitable to his family and his social environment. The bride he chooses must meet the approval of his elders. Once the approval has been given he can take the woman as his wife. He must support his wife all throughout her life. He must be devoted to her. He must never be a womanizer. He must regard other women as his sister, child, or mother.
7. **Patnidharma:** It deals with the duties and responsibilities that a wife has toward her husband. She must be devoted to her husband. She must hold all other men as her father, brother, child or nephew. She must never have an extramarital affair. She must be subservient to her husband. Wife plays an important role in the family. It is said that birth-giving, wholesomeness, excellent service, a man's heaven, all these things are in the hands of a woman.

A woman must take care to keep herself chaste, pure, youthful, and beautiful, and gives herself only to her husband. According to the Manava Law, a woman who has an extramarital affair will be vilified in this world and in the hereafter. She will be reborn as a wolf or a fox. Moreover, she will suffer from repugnant diseases now and in the hereafter.

Once married, a couple must stay together for life to preserve the name of the family, and for the good of the children and grandchildren's future, for this is the objective of marriage in this religion. Therefore, there must not be a divorce.

8. **Svami-Sevakadharma:** It deals with the duties and responsibilities that an employer (Svami) has toward his employee (Sevaka), and an employee toward his employer.

An employer must support his employee and his employee's family. When paying his employee, he must bear in mind if the pay is enough for his employee to live on. He must put himself in his employee's shoes. He must care about his employee's well-being. It is written in the Manava Law that an employer must observe his employee's financial burden and make sure that his employee can live well enough on the pay that he gives him.

Likewise, an employee must perform his duties faithfully and has his employer's interest at heart. He must do all he can for his employer's gain and must never directly or indirectly cause his employer to lose money or profit. It is written in the Hindu text that "An employee must never do anything to cause his employer physical and mental shame."

9. **Rajdharm:** It deals with the duties and responsibilities that a king has toward his subjects or the duties and responsibilities that a subject has toward his king. The king must regard his subjects as his children. He must pay close attention to his subjects' well-being. Brahmanism-Hinduism teaches that a king's most important duty is to look after his subjects, protect them, and make them feel secure. In the same token, the king's subjects are required to

behave appropriately. The king is the holder of the law and whoever violates the law will be punished by the king. When Rajdharma is practiced by the king and his subjects, the nation will prosper, the people will be happy, and the king will enjoy a long life.

The people must pay the king the highest respect because he is not an ordinary person. A king can be compared to the following eight deities.

- 1) Indra
- 2) Yama
- 3) Vayu
- 4) Surya
- 5) Agni
- 6) Varuna
- 7) Chandra
- 8) Kuvera

It is written in the Hindu text that “The Great Brahmadhata appoints a king by invoking the powers of the above eight deities in order to keep and protect his subjects. Therefore, these eight deities reside in the king’s person at all times. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says, “I am the king of humanity.” It is for this reason that Brahmanism-Hinduism regards a king as highly as Narayana. Whoever respects the king is an adherent of this religion. In India, people used to be loyal and respectful to the kings of their respective kingdoms.

### **3.4.3 Paramatman**

Paramatman is the Absolute Atman or Supreme Soul. Paramatman is the Primordial Self who is spiritually identical with the Absolute, identical with Brahman. The attributes of Paramatman include:

- 1) It is not created.
- 2) It dwells in everything and takes the form of Atman. It is invisible to the physical eyes.
- 3) It is the center of every soul.
- 4) Everything in the world comes from Brahma.
- 5) It is Truth. It is reality. (The Earth and everything in it is Maya, an illusion that exists only temporarily.)
- 6) It is the giver of Jnana, thought and peace.
- 7) It is eternal.

All the souls of living beings (Atman) come from Paratman. Atman dwells in multitudes of living beings such as human beings, devas, animals, and plants. The conditions are good or poor depending on the fruit of each being's past Karma. All conditions are deemed as suffering and for as long as the soul is not emancipated, it will continue to suffer inside the round of rebirth.

#### 3.4.4 Moksha

Moksha is the ultimate good as taught in Brahmanism-Hinduism, "Whoever realizes his true identity as being part of Brahma will be emancipated from the round of rebirth." Moksha consists of two main teachings as follows.

1. Returning Atman to Paratman by practicing all the Dharma which allows one's soul to be united with the Primordial Self and attain Moksha, which is the emancipation from Samsara.
2. There are three ways to attain Moksha: Karmamagga (Karmayoga), Jyanamagga (Jyanayoga), and Bhaktimagga (Bhaktiyoga).

### 3.5 The Trimurti

The end of the Veda Period and the beginning of the Epic Poems Period were between the sixth century B.C.E. and the fourth century B.C.E. During this time period, the Brahmins play a major role in society. They belong to a special class with special privileges and powers. During the Veda Period, the religion is called Brahmanism. Toward the end of the Veda Period, Brahmanism underwent transformation and gave birth to different schools of thought. Later still, Brahmanism became Hinduism.

Great changes took place during the Epic Poems Period, and the three important deities or the Trimurti of this period are Brahma, Shiva, and Narayana.<sup>10</sup> Details of each deity and his duties are as follows.

**3.5.1 Brahma:** He is the Creator of human beings and everything on earth including devas. Initially, Brahma was formless. The Brahmins realize soon enough that a formless Brahma is a flawed concept. Therefore, they give him four faces, which give him a 360° vision. Brahma is both abstract and concrete. His abstract aspect is represented by the galaxy, the soul of nature such as earth, water, wind, fire, space, sky, etc. These things are Brahma's body. He dwells in all things. He is the ultimate truth. He is indescribable. He is immeasurable. He is the basis of all knowledge. He is not coarse. He is not refined. He is not short. He is not long. He is devoid of smell, light, sound, location, etc. Concretely speaking, Brahma is a great deity. He is the Creator. Brahma's wife is called Sarasvati. She is the goddess of speech and education and the supporter of every branch of arts.

**3.5.2 Shiva:** He is the god of destruction and the god of dance. He is called by different names such as Ishvara, Rudra, Nataraj, etc. Shiva is the highest god in Shaivism. He dwells in Mount Kailash. His mount is the bull "Nandi". The phallic symbol is used to represent his creative power.

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<sup>10</sup>

Danai Chaiyayota, The History of Ancient Southern Asia, 2527 B.E. page 19



Shiva is depicted as the omniscient Yogi having four hands. He wears animal skin and sits on a tiger skin. He carries a trident, an arrow, and a staff made of human skulls. He wears a rosary of skulls and is garlanded with a snake. His throat is black. He has a third eye in the middle of his forehead. If and when he opens his third eye, the Earth will be instantly destroyed by fire. Above the third eye is the crescent moon.

Shiva's wife is called Umadevi. She takes on different forms such as Parvatidevi, daughter of the Himalayas, Durgadevi, the goddess of war, and Kalidevi, the black goddess.

Umadevi can take on three different forms. The first form: as a beautiful woman with four arms, the faithful and devoted wife of Shiva; the second form: as Durgadevi with ten arms, each carrying a bow, an arrow, a chakra (discus-like weapon), a snake, a shield, a sword, a lance, an axe, a ball, a bell; she is depicted sitting astride a tiger, getting ready to kill Demon Durgam in the form of a bull, which causes suffering in the human world; the third form: as Kalidevi with a black body and four arms, two of them carrying a sword and a human head, her tongue sticking out, being garlanded with human skulls, wearing a belt of human arms. In this form, she favors animal sacrifices.

**3.5.3 Vishnu or Narayana:** He is the protector of the Earth. Hindus believe that Rama and Krishna are the avatars of Narayana. It is believed that Narayana has the power to support the world. And in times of great hardship, Narayana will descend on earth in the form of an avatar to help alleviate human suffering and end hardship.

He is depicted reclining on the coiled-up thousand-hooded Shesha Naga floating in the Kshira Ocean. His vehicle is the Garuda. He has so far descended on earth in nine different avatars. He has altogether ten avatars. He can take on any one of these avatars depending on the situation at hand. The last avatar will appear at the end of the Kali Yuga. The ten avatars include:

- 1. Matsyavatar:** He takes the form of a fish that kills Hayagriva, the Yakkha who causes humans to commit evil deeds and saves human beings from a great flood that submerges the entire earth.
- 2. Kurmavatar:** He takes the form of a turtle that supports Mount Mandara and helps the Devas churn the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality.
- 3. Varahavatar:** He takes the form of a boar that rescues the Earth by resting it on its tusks, and kills Hiranyaksha, the Yakkha who has caused the Earth to be submerged under water.
- 4. Narasimhavatar:** He takes the form of the half-lion, half-human who conquers the Yakkha Hiranyaksha, who has received a boon from Brahma, which makes him undefeatable. He is the entity that causes havoc worldwide.
- 5. Vamanavatar:** He takes the form of a dwarf that grows into a giant to save the three worlds from the power of the Yakkha, Bali, and the Yakkha is forced to live in the bowels of the earth.

6. **Parshuramavatar:** He takes the form of “Rama of the battle axe”, the son of a Brahmin called Yamadagni who is a descendant of Bhargu to prevent the Kshatriyas from having power over the Brahmins.
7. **Ramavatar:** He takes the form of Rama in the epic poem “Ramayana” to conquer the Yakkha king, Ravana.
8. **Krishnavatar:** He takes the form of Krishna, the driver of Arjuna’s chariot to quell evil people in the epic poem “Mahabharata”.
9. **Buddhavatar:** He takes the form of Buddha to teach the Dharma principles that help human beings to escape suffering. This is a clever way to assimilate Buddhism.
10. **Kalkayavatar:** He takes the form of Kalki, a man on a white horse carrying a sword of light like a comet to quell evil people and re-establish morality on earth.

Narayana’s wife is called Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty who blesses the kind-hearted with luck and prosperity. When Narayana takes the form of Vamana, Parshurama, and Rama, his wife also takes the form of Padma (Kamla), Dharni, and Sita respectively.

The Trimurti is the personification of the three deities under the three following conditions.

1. Upada: The birth of the Earth
2. Thiti: The maintenance of the Earth
3. Bhaga: The destruction of the Earth when it is devoid of goodness, a period when human and animal souls can rest.

Hindus believe that the Earth comes into existence, exists for a time, and ultimately comes to an end. In worshipping these three gods, it is the worship that leads to the understanding of the above three states in that the Earth comes into existence, exists for a time, and ultimately comes to an end.

### 3.6 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Highest God

Brahmanism-Hinduism has had a very long developmental history, and their belief about God the Creator has changed with the times. Initially, it subscribed to the gods of nature of the indigenous people. With the birth of the Veda, the concept of God has changed with the times. First, it was Brahma who reigned supreme. Eventually it changed to Shiva and at times to Vishnu. Later on when Brahmanism was transformed into Hinduism, God took the form of Paramatman, the formless God who manifested himself as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Today, the ultimate goal of Brahmanism-Hinduism is the achievement of Moksha or emancipation from defilements and suffering. And once Atman emerges as one with Paramatman, the round of rebirth will be no more.

### 3.7 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal<sup>11</sup>

Brahmanism-Hinduism believes Brahma to be the highest god, who created the Earth and everything in it. It is Brahma who determines each living being's destiny. But a person can change the course of his life if he can entreat Brahma to favor him by making offerings to him, praying to him, and being faithful to him. Whoever is favored by Brahma will be reborn in the States of Happiness. And if he is Brahma's most favorite person, he will be able to enjoy eternal life with Brahma. Anyone who displeases Brahma will be reborn in the States of Unhappiness where horrific suffering awaits. Hindus believe that the soul does not die with the body. Therefore, death comes when the soul leaves the body once the body becomes old and decrepit and can no longer house it. The soul then goes in search of a new body. The process is called rebirth. It is like taking off worn-out clothes in order to put on new ones. The soul does not go through birth and death, only the body does. Rebirth continues until Moksha can be achieved. Hindus believe Moksha to be their ultimate life-goal. When a person achieves Moksha, his soul goes to live for eternity with Brahma. There are four practices leading to Moksha as follows.

- 1. Karmamagga (Karmayoga):** It has to do with diligently performing one's work with a peaceful mind and without expecting anything in return. Practitioners are called "Karmayogin".
- 2. Jyanamagga (Jyanayoga):** It has to do with the practices which allow one to penetrate the reality that the only thing that is real is Paramatman. Atman (the individual soul) must become one with Paramatman or the Supreme Soul. Jyana can be achieved by following the four paths as follows.
  - 1) Seeing the difference between what is real and what is not real in a process called Viveka.
  - 2) Giving up all worldly pleasures in a process called Vairagaya.
  - 3) Cultivating the four virtues: Restraining the body and the five senses, preventing the body and the five senses, which one has control of, from falling prey to different emotions; restraining emotions, exercising perseverance; keeping the mind still and steadfast; and exercising devotion (Slampat).
  - 4) Aspiring Moksha, a process called Mumuksutva. Practitioners are called Jyanayogin.
- 3. Bhaktimagga (Bhaktiyoga):** It has to do with the practices that show love and devotion for the god that one worships. Practitioners are called Bhaktiyogin.

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<sup>11</sup> Fern Dokbua, Comparative Religions, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2549 B.E., page 38

- 4. Rajmagga (Rajyoga):** It has to do with keeping the mind under control in a process called Yogakiriya. Practitioners are called Rajyogin.

### 3.8 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Rites and Rituals

Rites and rituals play an important role in Brahmanism-Hinduism. Members of every caste have their own as well as shared customs and traditions. The customs and traditions shared by members of every caste<sup>12</sup> can be divided into four categories as follows.

#### 3.8.1 Customs and Traditions Pertaining to the Caste System:

These must be strictly observed.

- 1. Marriage:** Only members of the same caste can marry each other. Even then, there are still limitations in regards to family and lineage. Transgressors will be vilified or ostracized from members of one's family and one's caste.
- 2. Food:** Certain foods can be eaten and others cannot. Members of different castes cannot have their meal together. Members of a higher caste will not eat the food cooked by members of an inferior caste. Public facilities such as pools must be divided into zones for members of different castes, and each zone must be 96 paces, 40 paces, 15 paces or 12 paces away from each other, etc.
- 3. Livelihood:** Members of the Brahmin caste earn a living as priests or teachers or performers of rites and rituals. Members of the Kshatriya caste are rulers and governors, who make it possible for the people to live in peace and harmony. Members of the Vaishya caste are merchants and farmers. Members of the Shudra caste are laborers.
- 4. Housing:** Originally, Hindus are not allowed to live abroad or travel by sea but these practices are no longer being observed.

The above four practices used to be strictly observed by Hindus but not so much today especially among the well-educated.

#### 3.8.2 Domestic Rites and Rituals or Samsakaras:

There are twelve Samsakaras given by the Manava Law for members of the Kshatriya caste, Brahmin caste, and Vaishya caste. These are to be performed chronologically as follows.

1. Garbhadhana is the conception ritual for having healthy children. This rite is performed the day after marriage.
2. Punswana is the fertilization ceremony performed on the third month of pregnancy asking for life and safety for the fetus assumed to be a male.
3. Seemantonnayana is the cutting of the pregnant woman's hair when she is four, six or eight months pregnant.

<sup>12</sup> Vanida Kamkiao, Comparative Religions, 2543 B.E., pages 68-72

4. Jatkarma is the birth ceremony.
5. Namkarana is the naming of the baby, which takes place twelve or fifteen days after birth.
6. Niskramana is the act of taking the four-month-old child outside the house early in the morning for its first sunbathing.
7. Annaprashana is the elaborate ceremony conducted when the child is fed cereal for the first time at the age of five or six months.
8. Chudakarma is the ceremonious tonsuring of the head when the child is three years old.
9. Keshantakarma is the ceremonious cutting of hair at the age of sixteen for a Brahmin, twenty-two for a Kshatriya, and twenty-four for a Vaishya.
10. Upanayana is the ceremonious investiture of the sacred thread where Brahmin boys are adorned with a sacred thread called the Yajyopavita. Having worn the sacred thread, the Brahmin boy is considered to be “Dvija” or twice born; first from his mother’s womb, second from wearing the sacred thread. Please note that only the boys of the Brahmin caste can be twice born.
11. Samavartana is the homecoming ceremony performed when a young man has completed his study and is getting ready to return home.
12. Vivaha is the lavish nuptial ceremony.

Of these twelve ceremonies, only the Upanayana Ceremony is denied a female person. She is not allowed to recite the Veda, since the Veda is a sacred text reserved for males and the male members of certain castes only. Today, most Brahmins perform only four ceremonies, namely, Namakarana, Annaprashana, Upanayana, and Vivaha. The rest are no longer performed except for the very religious.

### 3.8.3 Shraddha:

It is the dedication of merit to one’s departed parents or ancestors on the first day to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the tenth waning moon. The ceremony involves the following steps.

1. The use of Pinda rice or cooked rice as an offering. This ceremony is carried out by the son of the deceased because Hindus believe that their son can rescue them from the Hell Realm called “Putta”. The ceremony begins on the day before the cremation and continues for ten or eleven consecutive days. The eleventh day is the gathering of all the relatives, which include three generations above the parents and three generations below the parents in a ceremony called “Sapinda”. Sapinda means attending the Pinda Ceremony together.
2. The dedication of merit to one’s departed parents or ancestors must be performed monthly for at least a year.

### **3.8.4 Deva Worship:**

Hindus have many deities that they worship. Members of the high castes used to worship Shiva and Vishnu. Once the concept of Avatar was established, more Hindus were worshipping Krishna and Rama as well. Members of the low castes were prevented from worshipping the gods of the high caste members. Therefore, they created their own deities such as Kali, Monkey Deity, Snake Deity, Turtle Deity, Tree Deity, Elephant Deity, etc.

Worship takes different forms depending on the caste but members of the high castes worship their deities in the following ways.

1. They chant, bathe, and make an offering to their gods daily. The more religious ones do it routinely whereas the well-educated ones rarely do it.
2. They perform special celebrations and observe the Precepts on special occasions such as Lakshmipuja, the day to worship the goddess Lakshmi; Sarasvatipuja, the day to worship the goddess Sarasvati; Durgapuja, the day to worship the goddess, Durga, etc. The celebrations may be different depending on the religious branch and locality.
3. They attend the different Hindu temples to worship the deities of their choice.

### **3.8.5 Important Religious Holidays**

#### **The Fifth Month**

It is considered to be the New Year according to Brahmanism-Hinduism astrological calendar. New Year's Day falls on the first day of the fifth waxing moon. The time period from the first day to the ninth day of the fifth waxing moon is called "Navrati". It is the time dedicated to the worship of all nine forms of Shakti, one form each night. At the end of the festival, people will attend the fire-worshipping ceremony and nine girls from the age of two to ten are invited along to worship each form of Shakti. These nine girls will be given gifts by the masses that attend the ceremony.

#### **The Sixth Month**

The third day and the fourteenth day of the sixth waxing moon are the days to worship Vishnu while the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon is believed to be the day of Sonkranta, the first full-moon of the year. It is a very important day and Hindus worship fire and perform the family's traditional rites and rituals on that day.

#### **The Seventh Month**

The eleventh day of the seventh waxing moon is the day to worship Vishnu and go without food and water for a day.

The fifteenth day of the seventh waxing moon is the Rains-Entry Day where Sannyasi ascetics remain in one place for four months because it is the rainy season, which makes travels inconvenient. Moreover, they do not want to commit misdeeds by accidentally stepping on insects on the ground, which appear in great numbers during this season.

### **The Eighth Month**

The second day of the eighth waxing moon is the day of the procession with the statue of Vishnu especially in the Assam State. The fifteenth day is the day to pay homage to teachers.

### **The Ninth Month**

The fifth day of the ninth waxing moon is the day to worship Phya Naga with milk. It is believed that whichever bowl of milk the snake drinks from, the owner of that bowl of milk will be safe from snakebite for one year. This day is called Nagapancami.

The fourth day of the ninth waning moon is the day to worship Ganesh and fast until the ceremony is over. Worshippers can eat at the first appearance of the moon.

The sixth day of the ninth waning moon is the day to worship Surya. The eighth day of the ninth waning moon is the day to worship Krishna and fast until midnight.

### **The Tenth Month**

The third day of the tenth waxing moon is an important day in regards to Uma and Shiva. Hindus believe that a woman who practices austerity on this day will have a good husband and they will live happily together because it is the day Uma practiced austerity and entreated Shiva to marry her. Shiva agreed to marry Uma and gave his blessings to all the women who practice austerity on this day.

The fifteenth day of the tenth waxing moon is the day for ancestor worship and inviting Sannyasi ascetics to dine at one's house.

### **The Eleventh Month**

The period between the first day and the ninth day of the eleventh waxing moon is called Navratri when each of the nine forms of Uma is worshipped each day for nine consecutive days the way it happens in the fifth month. On the tenth day, Uma is worshipped. Members of the Kshatriya caste must pay special attention to the worship of Uma because it is believed that whoever worships Uma on this day will be victorious all year long.

On the night of the fifteenth day of the eleventh waxing moon, Brahmins and adherents of Hinduism will worship Vishnu with white-colored offerings.

The thirteenth day of the eleventh waning moon is the day to worship Lakshmi, Ganesh, Kuvera, Sarasvati, and Indra. After the ceremony, worshippers must go out to buy new clothes and new things for good luck.

The night of the fourteenth day of the eleventh waning moon is the time to worship Yama by lighting candles and lanterns so that the worshippers will not be reborn in hell. Should anyone commit a grave misdeed, at least the path will be lit.

Today is believed to be Hanuman's birthday. He is an avatar of Shiva.



The Fifteenth day of the eleventh waning moon is the day to worship all five deities and the day to worship Lakshmi.

### **The Twelfth Month**

The first day of the twelfth waxing moon is the day to offer fifty-six dishes to all the deities.

The second day of the twelfth waxing moon is the day that a male sibling must go and dine at a female sibling's home. He must bring along a gift for the female sibling, and the female sibling will anoint his forehead for good luck.

The twelfth day of the twelfth waxing moon is the day to worship Vamana, an avatar of Vishnu.

The fifteenth day of the twelfth waxing moon is the day to worship Vishnu.

### **The Second Month**

The fifteenth day of the second waxing moon is the day to worship Vishnu by lighting candles at the Vishnu temple.

The sixth day of the twelfth waxing moon until the sixth day of the twelfth waning moon is the period of Triyampvaya or the planting ceremony where Ishvara and Narayana are worshipped.

### **The Third Month**

The fifth day of the third waxing moon is the day to worship Sarasvati for the increase of one's intelligence. It is also the day to worship Kama and Vishnu and the day to wash away sins in the river.

The fifteenth day of the third waxing moon is the day to worship the deity of one's choice.

The fourteenth day of the third waning moon is called Shivaratri Day. Brahmins worship him by fasting and staying awake for twenty-four hours.

### **The Fourth Month**

The fifteenth day of the fourth waxing moon is the day to burn all things filthy.

The first day of the fourth waning moon is the day of the Holi festival where Hindus spray paints on each other for the removal of diseases. It is an ancient Hindu festival where members of every caste enjoy themselves. The Holi festival is especially enjoyed by members of the Shudra caste.

The fifteenth day of the fourth waning moon is the last day of the year in Brahmanism-Hinduism.



### 3.9 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Different Schools

There are many different schools in Brahmanism-Hinduism but the three major ones are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism.

#### 3.9.1 Vaishnavism:

Adherents of Vaishnavism believe that Narayana has descended on earth twenty-four times and taken the forms of twenty-four avatars to help human beings in times of great suffering. They worship Rama, Krishna, Hanuman, and Buddha as the five avatars of Narayana. Vaishnavism does not emphasize rites and rituals. They call their religion Hinduism. They worship different deities by worshipping their images in the style of religious pluralism.

Adherents anoint their foreheads with a three-point mark as a sign of Vishnu worship. Vaishnavism flourishes in North India and on the western shore of Bombay. The worship takes the form of devotion (Bhatism) rather than meditative attainments (Jyana).

Its important texts include the Sanhita Text (a compilation of hymns for singing the praises of god during sacrifices), the Ramayana Text, and the Bhagavad Gita.

The Bhagavad Gita has two main points as follows.

1. The worship of Krishna as the great Brahmin. He is the one every Yogi aspires to achieve union with in their meditative effort. The general public can achieve union with Krishna through worship and prayers.
2. The Karmayoga Principles teach adherents wishing to be householders to endeavor to end craving and struggles, the sources of Karma, so that they can achieve liberation.

The important teachers who cause Vaishnavism to grow and prosper in the south of India include:

- 1) Nathamuni: the first leader of Vaishnavism
- 2) Alvar: the twelve teachers who wrote the Veda in the Tamil language
- 3) Ramanuj: a follower of the Alvar teachers

Vaishnavism eventually split into two branches. The one in the north is called “Vadgalai”, and the one in the south is called “Tenagalai”.

#### 3.9.2 Shaivism:

Adherents of Shaivism worship Shiva and they anoint their foreheads with three horizontal lines with white or grey charcoal ashes. Their ultimate life-goal is Moksha or the achievement of emancipation and union with Shiva. Adherents practice self-mortification, which the Lord Buddha subscribed to for a time before attaining Self-Enlightenment.

Shiva is the god of destruction and the god of reproduction as represented by the phallic symbol. Stone phallic symbols are erected in temples and adherents worship them. It is said that from such symbol appeared Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu. These three deities are believed to come from the highest deity, which is Brahma or Paramatman.

Shaivism is divided into different branches such as Danhin (which splits into ten other schools) and Dashman. Adherents of Shaivism are all ascetics.

Its important religious texts include:

- 1) The Atma Text (magic spells and incantations, the discourse between Shiva and Uma)
- 2) The Tolkapapilam Text (in the Tamil language)
- 3) The Mahabharata Text and the Shevatashvata Upanishad (in the Sanskrit language)

Shaivism was later split into two major schools as follows.

- 1) The North School, Kasmishiva: Its leader is Vasugupta. Adherents of this school believe Shiva to be the highest god and inherent in everything on earth.
- 2) The South School, Singayat: Its leader is Lakulita. Adherents of this school believe their leader to be an avatar of Shiva; hence, he is the object of their worship.

### **3.9.3 Shaktism:**

Adherents of Shaktism worship the wives of the three gods, namely, Sarasvati, the wife of Brahma; Uma, the wife of Shiva; and Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. The word “Shakti” means power or energy. It means the energy which brings about wish fulfillment for the devotee. They believe in dualism, for example, hot vs. cold; light vs. darkness; happiness vs. unhappiness. Therefore, if gods exist then there must also exist goddesses. All of a god’s capability is made possible through his wife’s support. Moreover, it is much more difficult for a god to grant one’s wishes because males are in general much tougher than females. It is better to get around god by going directly to his wife in order for one’s wishes to be granted. Thus was the reason Shaktism came into existence. Adherents do not need to worship all three goddesses but they can choose to worship one particular goddess depending on their faith. For example, adherents of Shaivism worship Uma as their Shakti. Adherents of Vaishnavism worship Lakshmi as their Shakti. In general, most Hindus worship Uma more than any other goddesses because she is the wife of Shiva, the god most feared by the people. Uma is given different names to match those of Shiva, for example, Mahadevi vs. Mahadeva; Yogini vs. Mahayogi; Jaganmatri (mother of the world) vs. Ishavara; Durga or Bhraivi vs. Bhraiva (the fearsome one); Kali (the destroyer) vs. Mahakala, etc.

The religious rites and rituals of Shaktism are stranger than those of other schools, for example, decapitating a goat to worship Kali or the rite of five acts: consuming alcohol, consuming meat and fish, reciting magic spells to arouse sexual appetite, erotic dancing, and sexual intercourse. These rites are performed due to the belief that Kali favors animal sacrifices and sexual intercourse. They believe these rites to please Kali and also as a means of becoming tired of sexual pleasure through overindulgence. Worshipers of other goddesses also adopt these rites. Devotees who practice these deviant and abominable rites are called “Vamacari” but those who practice what is originally taught in the Veda are called “Daksinacari”.

### 3.10 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Religious Symbol

The important religious symbol acknowledged by all Hindus is the Devanagari letter representing the sound “Om”. Om is considered to be the most sacred word in Brahmanism-Hinduism because it represents the three gods. “A” represents Vishnu or Narayana. “U” represents Shiva or Ishvara. “M” represents Brahma. Therefore, A+U+M = Om. The “Om” symbol is sometimes called “Svasti” or “Svastika”

The symbol “Om” below represents the three energies of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.



### 3.11 Brahmanism-Hinduism: Its Current Status

Ever since India came under Islam imperial rule in the thirteenth century, Brahmanism-Hinduism underwent a period of decline until it all but disappeared. The main cause was the inordinate greed and power of the Brahmin caste. In 1857, India came under British rule and remained so for 200 years. During this period, Brahmanism-Hinduism did not seem to play the same important role in the people’s lives as it once did. The situation was eventually reversed with the reform and improvement of the religion whereby the teachings of the Veda were adapted and seamlessly applied in the people’s daily lives. Meanwhile, there was a continuous political movement to liberate India from British rule. The process of religious reform includes the following steps.

#### 3.11.1 The Founding of Brahmo Samaj

This society was founded in 2371 B.E. at Lahore by Pandit Nobin Chandra Roy. The Brahmo Samaj Society is founded on the following principles.

1. Members believe in monotheism in that there is only one god, Brahma. He is a real entity. They do not believe in Avatars.
2. Members believe that Atman does not die.
3. Members believe that Moksha can be achieved by regretting one’s mistakes and performing good deeds.
4. Members denounce the concepts of Samsara, child marriage, and the caste system.
5. Members encourage widowed women to remarry. They pass laws forbidding men to have more than one wife and the performance of the Sati Ceremony (where wife must jump into the burning pyre to die alongside her husband).

In 2408 B.E., this society was split into two branches, namely, Adibrahmo Samaj and Sadharanabrahmo Samaj. Rabindranath Tagore was the leader of Adibrahmo Samaj. This society preserves the original principles of Brahmo Samaj. Keshub Chandra Sen was the leader of Sadharanabrahmo Samaj who attempted to incorporate Christian theology within the framework of Hindu

thought. The religious symbol of this society is represented by the Trishula, the cross, and the crescent, the symbols of Brahmanism-Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. At times, Keshub Chandra Sen identified himself with Jesus Christ but near the time of his death he kept calling God's name until the end came.

### **3.11.2 The Founding of Araya Samaj**

It was founded in Bombay in 2418 B.E. by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Its main principle is to base its practices on the Veda. Members earnestly study the Veda and uphold religion as the national ideal. Their god takes the form of monism. They worship Brahma. They denounce the caste system. They do not believe in Avatars. They denounce child marriage. And they allow widowed women to remarry.

### **3.11.3 The Krishna Mission**

It was founded by Swami Ramakrishna and his pupil Swami Vivekananda in 2440 B.E. Members acknowledge the teachings of every religion in India believing them to be without conflicts and eternal. They emphasize the achievement of Upanishads or Vedanta and the interpretation of the Veda. Its main objective is to create in India harmony, social equality, economics, public service, and the union with god.

### **3.11.4 Sarvodaya**

This movement is under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Members uphold non-violence both individually and socially. This movement not only reforms Brahmanism-Hinduism but also successfully restores independence for the country. It allows Hindus to enter the Indian government and rule the country. However, the differences in ideal, lifestyle, and religious beliefs inherent in Brahmanism-Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, etc., eventually cause widespread and constant conflicts and confrontations in India. Examples include the Papri Mosque conflict between Islam and Brahmanism-Hinduism, the Golden Temple Amritsar conflict between Sikhism and Brahmanism-Hinduism. Etc.

In terms of propagating Brahmanism-Hinduism abroad, the Vedic Society, the Gita Ashram, the Hare Krishna Society, etc., have organized religious activities for their members worldwide. Today, there are about 790 million adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism. More than 80% of Indian people are adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism. There are also Hindus in other countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## Jainism

### **4.1 Jainism: The History of Jainism**

### **4.2 The History of Its Founder**

4.2.1 The Founder's Family Background and Childhood

4.2.2 His Marriage

4.2.3 Taking up the Religious Life

4.2.4 Taking the Vow of Silence for Twelve Years

4.2.5 Teaching the Doctrines

4.2.6 The Last Part of His Life

### **4.3 Its Religious Texts**

### **4.4 Its Doctrines**

4.4.1 Its Basic Principles

4.4.2 Its Philosophy

4.4.3 Moksha

### **4.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **4.6 Its Rites and Rituals**

### **4.7 Its Different Schools**

### **4.8 Its Religious Symbol**

### **4.9 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Jainism was founded during the fifth century B.C.E. in India close to the time when the Lord Buddha attained Self-Enlightenment. The founder of Jainism was Mahavira. Agamas are canonical texts of Jainism based on the teachings of Mahavira. His teachings are about the practices of Jain priests and Jain householders as well as Jataka stories.
2. Jainism teaches three basic principles, namely, taking the five vows, Jain Philosophy, and Moksha. An important Jain festival is called Paryushana, which is the time to commemorate Mahavira, its founder. Jains' ultimate life-goal is eternal peace and happiness called Moksha (liberation). To achieve Moksha, one must follow the practices called "Tiratana" or the Three Gems. Jains believe that each life on earth must undergo many rebirths as long as it is still defiled and obstructed by Karma.
3. The Jain community is divided into two major sects: Digambara and Svetambara. Jains use the image of the naked Mahavira as their religious symbol. Today, they use as their religious symbol a rectangle with the short side up; in it are the images of a wheel, the Ahimsa (non-violence) symbol on a palm, the swastika, three dots to represent Samsara, and one dot inside a half circle at the very top to represent Tiratana or the Three Gems.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Jainism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Jainism, the history of its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about the important rites and rituals of Jainism, its religious sects, its religious symbol, and its current status.

# Chapter 4

## Jainism

### 4.1 Jainism: The History of Jainism

Jainism was founded during the fifth century B.C.E. Jains believe their religion to be the oldest in the world. They believe the earth age to consist of two cycles: the growth cycle and the decline cycle. The growth cycle is called “Utasaripini”. It began with a decay state which is gradually developed into a prosperous state. For example, human beings began with a short lifespan which gradually lengthens until it becomes so long as to equal countless number of years. The same thing applies to human size and human virtue. The cycle of decline is called “Avasarapini”. It is the opposite of Utasaripini. Currently, we are in the decline cycle and everything is going through a decline. During each decline cycle, there would happen twenty-four propagators. In this particular decline cycle, the first propagator that happened was Rasabha, who lived to be 8,400,000 years old. Next came Ajita, Sambhava, Abhinanda, Sumati, Padmaprabha, Subhasava, Chandaraprabha, Busapadanta, Sitala, Sherayanasa, Vasupujava, Vimla, Ananta, Dharma, Santi, Gundhu, Cara, Malti, Munisavarata, Nami, Nemi, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> propagator, Parshava, who died in the year 776 B.C. The 24<sup>th</sup> and last propagator of this cycle is Vardharmana Mahavira.

Jainism flourished during the times of Vardharmana Mahavira. He had a large number of disciples and followers. The history of Jainism since his passing is as follows.

510 B.C.	Divisiveness within Jainism occurred just fourteen years after Mahavira’s passing.
400 B.C.	The first enshrining of Mahavira’s image in the Jain church
300 B.C.	Two sacred texts were written after the meeting in the city of Patna.
244 B.C.	Asoka the Great of Buddhism gave Jainism the use of five caves “for as long as the sun and the moon still exist”.
232 B.C.	Samprali, Asoka the Great’s grandson and heir built several Jain churches and temples.
100 A.D.	Translation of Jain literatures into Tamil, the language of South India
200 A.D.	Translation of Jain literatures into the native language of the kingdom of Gujrat located in the west of India
514 A.D.	Completion of the Jain religious texts at the meeting held in the city of Vallabhi in India
550 A.D.	Jainism was spread to the city of South Maratha in the south of India.
640 A.D.	Chinese Buddhist monk “Faxian” traveled by foot from China to India. He saw a large number of Jains and Jain churches in the north and south of India. In North India, there were many naked ascetics as well as many ascetics clad in white.
650 A.D.	A Hindu king called “Kuna” commanded the killing of 8,000 Jains in the city of Arcot in South India.



- 815 – 880 A.D. During the reign of King Amoghavarsa, Jainism flourished in North India under the leadership of Jinasena and Gunabhadra.
- 1125 – 1159 A.D. The most famous Jain sage and writer “Hemachandra” successfully converted the Hindu king “Kumarpala” of the kingdom of Gujrat to Jainism. He had thirty-two Jain temples built and made his city the stronghold of Jainism.
- 1174 – 1176 A.D. The next Hindu king of Gujrat, Ajyadeva ordered the brutal killing of Jains. Jain leaders were tortured to death. Jain temples were destroyed.
- 1297 – 1298 A.D. Alah Uddin of Islam conquered Gujrat and ordered the mass killing of Jains.
- 1542 – 1605 A.D. The great Muslim imperial of the Moghul Dynasty, King Akbar, favored the Jains by canceling personal income tax in his kingdom. He recognized Jain sacred places and followed the Jain teachings on showing compassion for all living beings by forbidding animal killing in India for six months.

The word “Jain” is derived from the word “Jina”, which means to conquer. But it is not the kind of external victory over one’s enemy. Rather, it means the internal victory over one’s defilements. Jainism regards defilements as the worst enemy, for they wreak havoc in one’s own and other people’s lives. War, killing, and violence are caused by defilements. The round of rebirth is also caused by defilements. Therefore, it is crucially important that defilements are completely extinguished. The more defilements one can overcome, the better off one will be. But it is best if one can completely overcome one’s defilements, for then one will be a perfect human being. Therefore, it is every Jain’s duty to overcome his defilements. Jains believe that all of their propagators have completely overcome their defilements. Therefore, they are called Jina, which means the conqueror of defilements, the Tirthankara who builds the pier to take people to the shore of Moksha or Jain Nirvana where there is no more rebirth.

Jainism is an Ahimsa religion because it upholds non-violence. Every living being cherishes its life. Every living being loves happiness and hates unhappiness. Therefore, there should never be violence or killing. Jainism is the religion of asceticism because Jains believe defilements dwell inside the body, and they have to be removed at all cost. When one allows one’s body to become fat or happy, one’s defilements will only increase. Therefore, all forms of self-mortification are needed in order to burn off defilements.

## **4.2 Jainism: The History of Its Founder**

### **4.2.1 The Founder’s Family Background and Childhood**

Mahavira, the founder of Jainism was formerly called Vardharmana, which means a civilized person. He was born in the city of Vesali of the kingdom of Vajji (Bihar Province today) located in North India about ten or twelve years before the birth of the Lord Buddha or more than 2,600 years ago. He was the son of King Siddhartha (Sherayama) and Queen Trishla, one of the Licchavi rulers. Queen Trishla was the sister of King Vetaka of the kingdom of Vedaha. Prince Vardharmana was the youngest son. He had an older brother and an older sister.



On the day of his birth, there was a huge celebration attended by the residents of the city. There were different fun-filled activities and the streets were decorated with multi-color cloths, flags, and lanterns. Inside the Hindu temples, sacrifices were performed and priests recited mantras in front of the statues of Brahma, Vishnu, and other deities. The king of Vesali gave alms to the poor and destitute, and all of the prisoners were released from prison. The celebration of Prince Vardharmana's birth was just as grand as a war victory celebration. Moreover, groups of ascetics, Yogis, and Brahmin teachers from the Ganges River basin and the Himalayas traveled to the palace to admire the newborn prince and give him blessings. By the physical features of the baby prince, they foretold that the prince would have a great future depending on the path he chose when he grew up.

1. If he remains a householder, he would become a Universal Monarch.
2. If he takes up the religious life, he would become a world-famous religious leader.

As the prince was growing up, he studied all the branches of the art befitting his station in life such as the Bedanga Shastra, the Three Vedas, archery, the training of wild horses, elephant riding. One day, while the prince was visiting the royal park and playing with his friends, a male elephant in rut escaped from the elephant enclosure and ran into the royal park. It was moving its trunk threateningly from side to side. The prince and his friends were busily playing and paid it no mind. They could only hear the sound of branches being crushed underfoot and the sound was getting closer. Eventually, they could see that the elephant was coming after them. The children ran helter-skelter and screamed for help except for the prince. He stood still and as soon as the elephant was close enough, he caught the elephant's trunk the way he had been taught to do and climbed up to its neck before riding it back to the elephant enclosure. Upon returning to the palace, he said nothing to his parents about the incident. But the mahout went to report the incident to the king and queen. In time, the people also heard about it. They admired his bravery and called him "Mahavira", which means a brave man. Ever since then the prince was called "Prince Mahavira".

When the prince was twelve years old, he took part in the Yajnopavita Ceremony (the wearing of sacred thread), and vowed to believe in Brahmanism-Hinduism. He studied the Vedas with the Brahmin teachers for several years. He was a good and accomplished student. But he hated the Brahmin teachers for their arrogance. They deemed themselves superior to kings, and some Brahmin teachers were much too reserved.

#### **4.2.2 His Marriage**

He finished his religious studies at the age of nineteen. The hatred he once harbored against the Brahmins was no longer there. He fell in love with Princess Yasodhara and married her that year. He was happily married until he was twenty-eight years old. The prince and princess had a daughter named Anoja.

### 4.2.3 Taking Up the Religious Life

When Mahavira was twenty-eight years old, he had to meet with tragic events. His parents died within a short time of each other, not from accident or from assassination but from decreasing their food intake little by little until they eventually starved to death. In those days, people in India believed in death by self-mortification, and how it was one way to earn merit. Mahavira's older brother succeeded the throne and was called King Mogada. Mahavira was bereaved by his parents' death and wanted to take up the religious life in their honor. He wanted to take the vow of silence for twelve years and practice asceticism, but his brother forbade it. King Mogada had already lost both of his parents; he could not bear to lose his brother too.

### 4.2.4 Taking the Vow of Silence for Twelve Years<sup>1</sup>

When Mahavira was thirty years old, he finally decided to leave the city of Vesali. As soon as he reached the city limit, he put on the garb of an ascetic and made a vow, "From this second onward for a period of twelve years, I will not utter a single word". He trekked to different places like the thousands of ascetics in India in those days. When he passed a village or a city, he would extend a vessel to beg for food from kind-hearted people. When in the forest, he would subsist on whatever fruit he could find. Most of the time he would spend time alone in the mountain to contemplate the teachings of Brahmanism-Hinduism and search for new doctrines. In all this time, he did not utter a word. The more he thought and contemplated, the more new doctrines came to him and the more flaws he saw in the teachings of Brahmanism-Hinduism. He also thought about correcting and changing his vow.

Throughout the period of twelve years, Mahavira observed his vow very strictly in spite of the great difficulties he had to encounter at times as shown in the following incident.

At one point during his trek, he arrived at a field where a shepherd was tending his sheep. The shepherd said to him, "Tend the sheep for me, I will go into the village for some food and will give you some of it."

Mahavira nodded in acknowledgement and the shepherd left for the village.

Soon afterward, a wolf came and left with a lamb hanging from its mouth. When the shepherd returned and found one of his lambs missing, he asked Mahavira about it. But he said nothing. The shepherd thought him a thief and became very angry. He beat Mahavira's head with his club.

Mahavira refused to break his vow of silence and although he was stronger than the shepherd, he did not fight back. The reason was that he also took another vow which had to do with not defending himself against attackers.

The shepherd beat Mahavira until he was bloody. Suddenly, the shepherd stopped and stared at Mahavira in fear. His voice shook when he said, "You are the first person I've met who refuses to fight back or run away. Are you a Yogi?"

Mahavira did not answer and left. The shepherd ran after him begging for forgiveness. Mahavira nodded to signify that he had forgiven the shepherd and continued with his trek.

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair, Stevenson The Heart of Jainism, 1970 pages 36-37

The shepherd watched Mahavira until he was out of sight and said to himself, “This ascetic taught me a lesson in that silence is more powerful than words.”

Mahavira thought to himself that the incident taught him that humility is better than arrogance. Peace is more powerful than anger.

#### **4.2.5 Teaching the Doctrines**

After twelve years of silence, Mahavira felt confident that he had found all the answers to life’s problems and so he began teaching his doctrines. He went everywhere but he never returned to Vesali. The people who came to listen to his teachings all said that he was a great speaker and he spoke Truth. In time, he had a large number of disciples and followers.

Mahavira founded a new religion called Jainism, which means the religion of a victor. It was a new kind of victory because Jains do not want to conquer other people. They want only to conquer themselves. Their leader teaches them that liberation resides within them.

Like the Lord Buddha, Mahavira began by accepting the Law of Karma as expounded by Brahmanism-Hinduism. Both denounced the caste system, liberation through prayers, and the Veda’s ultimate truth.

There is one thing that both religious leaders do differently. The Lord Buddha practices Majjhimapatipada or the Middle Way whereas Mahavira practices self-mortification.

Although some of Mahavira’s teachings are not new and are the teachings of Brahmanism-Hinduism or past religious leaders, many of his teachings are new and more concise. Being a gifted orator, many people believed his teachings and became his disciples. Finally, Mahavira succeeded in founding Jainism and organizing his disciples into groups of Bhikkus and Bhikkunis. His disciples believed him to be a Jina or a victor in that he had achieved Moksha and been liberated from bondage, defilements, etc. He was loving, kind, and compassionate toward all living beings including plants and grass. Moreover, they accepted Mahavira as being the last and most important propagator of Jainism. They believed that there were twenty-three other propagators prior to Mahavira. These included Rasabha, Ajita, Sambhava, Abhinanda, Sumati, Padmaprabha, Subhasava, Chandraprabha, Busapadanta, Sitala, Sherayanasa, Vasupujava, Vimla. Ananta, Dharma, Santi, Gundhu, Cara, Malti, Munisavarata, Nami, Nemi, and Parshava.

#### **4.2.6 The Last Part of His life**

Mahavira went to different cities and towns teaching his doctrines for thirty or so years. At the age of seventy-two, he went to the city of Pava or Pavaburi (a small town in Patna today) and fell gravely ill. He knew that his final days on earth were approaching.<sup>2</sup> He called a meeting of his disciples and taught them for the last time.

One disciple asked, “Of all your teachings, which is the most important?”

Mahavira answered, “Of all my teachings, the first part of the Patinna-5 is the most important.

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<sup>2</sup> Satien Pantarungsee, Comparative Religions, 2516 B.E. page 104

Do not kill a living being. Do not harm a living being through word, thought, and action.

Do not kill animals for food. Do not hunt animals or fish. Do not kill even the smallest of animals. Do not kill the mosquito that bites us or a bee that stings us. Do not make war. Do not fight back against an aggressor. Do not walk over worms found by the wayside because worms have a soul.”

This first Patinna is known by his disciples as Ahimsa teaching, and it has to do with not hurting anything that has a soul.

Mahavira passed away the next morning. His body was cremated in the city of Pava. Today, Pava of Patna in the state of Bihar is a Jain Holy Place where Jains go to worship.

### 4.3 Jainism: Its Religious Texts

Agamas are canonical texts of Jainism based on Mahavira’s teachings.<sup>3</sup> These comprise forty-five works: eleven Angas, one Iddhivada, eleven Upanga Agamas, four Mulasutras, six Chedasutras, two Culikasutras, and ten Prakirnaka Sutras. Evidence suggests that the Agamas were written down in the Prakarata language about 200 years after Mahavira’s passing. The Commentary and other Jain literature were written in Sanskrit. Today, Agamas are translated into different native languages as well as other languages.

### 4.4 Jainism: Its Doctrines

Jainism teaches three basic principles as follows.

#### 4.4.1 Basic Moral Principles: These include the five minor vows (Anuvata-5).

1. Ahimsa: It means non-violence. It means causing no harm to living beings. Non-violence is the most distinctive aspect of Jaina religious practice.
2. Satya: It means “truth”. It means to speak only the truth. It means not telling a lie.
3. Asteya: It means not taking anything that has not been willingly offered. It includes not cheating on taxes, not using counterfeit money or being involved with producing counterfeit money, not using an inaccurate scale.
4. Brahmacharya: It means, at the very least, not committing sexual misconduct.
5. Aparigraha: It means non-possessiveness or non-greed. It means not owning too many things.

Householders are encouraged to observe these five minor vows within their current limitations while monks and nuns are obligated to practice them very strictly.

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<sup>3</sup> Sucheep Punyanuparp, History of Religion, 2513 B.E., pages 71-72

The vow of Ahimsa applies to the following five categories of living beings.

- 1) The first category has to do with living beings possessing the five sense-faculties: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch. These include celestial beings or devas, hell beings, human beings, and such animals as monkeys, cows, buffalos, elephants, horses, parrots, and snakes. These living beings are considered by Jains to possess Buddhipanna.
- 2) The second category has to do with living beings possessing the four sense-faculties: eyes, nose, tongue, and touch. These include almost all of the large insects such as flies, wasps, and butterflies.
- 3) The third category has to do with living beings possessing the three sense-faculties: nose, tongue, and touch. These include small insects such as ants, fleas, and other small animals.
- 4) The fourth category has to do with living beings possessing the two sense-faculties: tongue and touch. These include worms, leeches, crustaceans such as snails, crabs, shrimps, and certain kinds of small animals.
- 5) The fifth category has to do with living beings possessing the one sense-faculty of touch. These include plants and everything that arises from earth, water, and wind.

Jains cannot kill or eat living beings except for plants. In other words, every Jain is a vegetarian.

#### **4.4.2 Jain Philosophy is divided into two categories as follows.**

- 1) Jyana: There are five parts of Jyana as follows.
  1. Matijyana is knowledge gained through the sense of touch.
  2. Sharutijyana is knowledge gained through listening.
  3. Avadhijayyana is knowledge gained through history.
  4. Manaprayayajyana is knowledge gained through reading other people's minds.
  5. Kevalajyana is the perfect Jyana gained before attaining Nirvana.

Jains believe that Mahavira achieved the first three parts of Jyana at birth. He achieved the fourth part of Jyana later on. And he achieved the fifth part of Jyana after having practiced asceticism for twelve years.

- 2) Jiva and Ajiva

Jainism practices pluralism and considers reality to comprise two eternal parts as follows.

1. Jiva: It means soul or living being or Atman.
2. Ajiva: It means soulless or non-living things.

Ajiva or matter comprises five basic components. These include movement (Dharma), stillness (Adharma), space, substance, and time. These components are eternal (have no beginning), and all except for soul (Jiva) are non-living things. And all except for substance have no entity. They cannot move or become still on their own. They have to

be made to move or come to a standstill. These five components of Ajiva or matter are eternal.

In other words, everything can be divided into nine components as follows.

1. Jiva or Atman
2. Ajiva or matter
3. Punya or merit
4. Papa or demerit
5. Karma or action
6. Bandha or attachment
7. Samsara or the round of rebirth
8. Nirjara or the destruction of Karma
9. Moksha or liberation

**4.4.3 Moksha** means liberation or freedom of the soul. Jainism believes once the soul is liberated, it becomes part of the universe called “Siddhishila”. Jainism believes Siddhishila to be the land of eternal bliss.

Jainism teaches that Moksha can be attained through “**Tiratana**”<sup>4</sup> or three kinds of gems as follows.

1. Samyagadarshana: Right View

Right View here means the firm belief that all of Jainism’s Tirthankaras or propagators were once an ordinary person, but through their uncommon endeavor they were able to achieve liberation. They are conquerors. They spent their pure lives teaching the religious principles to the people to help them escape suffering and achieve prosperity.

2. Samyagajyana: Right Knowledge

Right knowledge here means the religious doctrines of Jainism which include:

- a. Knowledge about the world means knowing that this world, hell, heaven and other worlds are self-existent. They are eternal and they are not under anyone’s control.
- b. Everything that appears in the world comprises six components, namely, Atma, Dharma, Adharma, Yugakala, Vatthudhatu, and Anupramanu. The coming together of Anupramanu gives rise to earth, water, wind, fire, and the human body as well as everything on earth.
- c. The world is divided into three parts: lower, middle, and upper; and there are many hell realms and many celestial realms. All of these belong to the two groups of Jina: Jiva and Ajiva.

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<sup>4</sup> Danai Chaiyayota, Different Religions, 2539 B.E., pages 285-286

### 3. Samyagacarita: Right Conduct

Right conduct includes the two categories of Dharma principles.

#### 1) **Dharma for Householders:** It includes the five minor vows as follows.

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. <b>Ahimsa</b>      | Non-violence; no killing   |
| 2. <b>Satya</b>       | No lying   |
| 3. <b>Asteya</b>      | No stealing  |
| 4. <b>Brahmacarya</b> | No sexual misconduct, not using the service of prostitutes, and no alcohol consumption |
| 5. <b>Aparigraha:</b> | Non-greed; not accruing wealth by dishonest means                                      |

#### 2) **Dharma for Ascetics:** It includes the five major vows. These are like the five minor vows for householders except that every vow must be earnestly practiced especially Brahmacarya. Ascetics must earnestly practice chastity. In regards to Ahimsa, Jain monks must watch their every step and every posture and even during mealtime so as not to harm other living beings. It is for this reason that Jain monks must wear something over their nose and mouth in order to prevent insects and microbes from entering them. They carry a broom and a water-straining cloth with them at all times. The broom is used to sweep the path when they are walking or chase the insects away when they are sitting down. They remain in one place during the rainy season to avoid harming insects. Besides animals, Jain monks must also take care not to harm plants (plant seeds) and plant shoots.

A Jain monk either wears one piece of cloth or nothing at all. They either shave their heads or pluck their head hair. They must beg for alms. They do not stay in one place more than one night except during the rainy season. They must fast. In some cases, a Jain monk may choose to fast to death.

Besides the vows cited above, right conduct also means the four practices of loving-kindness and compassion as follows.

1. One must exercise compassion without expecting anything in return.
2. One feels pleased with another person's success.
3. One is sympathetic when another person is having problems in life and one tries to help him out.
4. One shows compassion even when one is transgressed against. Mahavira teaches that monks should not be angry even when they are beaten. They must not be vindictive. Patience is the ultimate goodness. Monks should contemplate the Dharma.



## 4.5 Jainism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

Jainism believes that Samsara or the round of rebirth is the cause of physical and mental suffering, and defilements give rise to Samsara. At death, the soul is reborn because the soul is eternal. Whether rebirth takes place in the States of Happiness or the States of Unhappiness depends on the Karma accumulated during one's existence on earth. Jainism believes that the Hell Realm consists of seven sites, and the Celestial Realm consists of sixteen realms. Since the round of rebirth is the source of all kinds of suffering, it is considered to be a horrible thing. One must endeavor to put an end to the round of rebirth, hence suffering, by attaining Moksha. Therefore, Moksha or liberation is Jainism's ultimate goal. And Jains adhere strictly to the teachings of Jainism in order to attain Moksha. Moksha is the end of suffering and the end of rebirth. To attain Moksha, Jains must cultivate the following virtues.

1. **Samyagadarshana** or Right View but here it means believing in the teachings of every Jaina propagator.
2. **Samyagajyana** or Right Knowledge: It means knowing and seeing according to the propagators' teachings.
3. **Samyagacarita** or Right Conduct: It means practicing the propagators' teachings in an earnest manner.

## 4.6 Jainism: Its Rites and Rituals

One important Jain festival<sup>5</sup> is called Paryushana. It is the time to commemorate Mahavira. During the festival, Jains practice peace and forgiveness, give alms to the poor, and organize a procession of Mahavira's Image. Paryushana generally takes place at the end of August or at the beginning of September and lasts for a period of eight days.

During the festival, Jain monks who normally live in the forest will come into town to attend the festival for the entire eight days. Jain householders will read Mahavira's teachings throughout the eight days and celebrate the occasion joyously.

**Details of Paryushana are as follows.**

1. During the first part or the first three days of the festival, householders will attend a two-hour sermon given by a Jain monk every morning.
2. During the second part or the fourth day of the festival, Jain householders must read the Kalpa Sutra which contains the history of Jainism and the life and times of Mahavira.
3. During the third part or the fifth day of the festival, there is an elaborate ceremony because it is considered to be Mahavira's birthday. On this day, a sale of fourteen dream objects must be carried out. These include an elephant, a cow, a lion, the luck goddess, a wreath, the moon, the sun, a flag, a water pot, a lotus pond, an ocean, a palace, a pile of diamonds, and a lightless fire.

Replicas of these fourteen dream objects are often made with silver and placed inside the temple or on a pier along the Ganges. Every temple must house replicas of these objects. Some temples also have a cradle to represent Mahavira's cradle.

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<sup>5</sup> Phraprommuni (Pim Dhammatharo), World Religions, 2505 B.E., pages 342-346



On the day of the procession, these objects will be carried in the procession along with a huge image of Mahavira and Jaina religious texts. The procession usually ends at the bank of the Ganges or some other destinations.

4. During the fourth part or the sixth to the seventh day of the festival, the time is spent reading the Kalpa Sutra alone.
5. During the fifth part or the eighth day of the festival, every religious text will be read. At each reading, a Jain monk is on hand to explain the text to the laity.

In reading the religious texts during the festival, each reading must last three hours both in the morning and in the afternoon.

#### **4.7 Jainism: Its Different Schools**

After the passing of Mahavira, his disciples were split into different groups, each practicing according to what they thought to be the way to attain Moksha. Nonetheless, each group still practices Ahimsa.

There are two main sects in Jainism.<sup>6</sup>

**1. Digambara:** The members of this sect wear no clothes. They are naked ascetics who earnestly practice self-mortification. They do not want anything to hamper their practice. The only things they carry with their persons are a broom and a water-straining cloth to make sure that no living beings come to harm. There are three practices that they must strictly adhere to. These include:

1. No food or water goes down their throat when they are practicing self-mortification.
2. They own absolutely nothing and travel naked everywhere.
3. They do not allow women to emulate them.

**2. Svetambara:** The members of this sect wear a piece of white cloth in order to cover up their body, for they still cannot bring themselves to wearing nothing at all. Most of them live in North India, where the weather is very much colder than the south where the members of the Digambara Sect live.

One can tell which Jain temple belongs to which sect by observing the statue of the propagator or Tirthankara. If the statue of the Tirthankara is naked with eyes downcast, it is a Digambara temple. If the statue of the Tirthankara wears a white cloth with eyes looking straight ahead, it is a Svetambara temple.

#### **The Practices of a Digambara monk are as follows.**

1. He must strictly adhere to the five major vows of Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha.
2. He must practice self-restraint in terms of his movement, his speech, his food consumption, his lifting and placing of things, his throwing of things.
3. He must restrain his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body.

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<sup>6</sup> Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Comparative Religion*, 1983, pages 87-88

4. He must perform the following six activities. He must seek solitude. He must chant. He must respect those who are superior to him. He must confess his transgression. He must endeavor to remove Papa or demerit. And he must practice meditation.
5. He must shave his head.
6. He must wear no clothes.
7. He must not bathe.
8. He must sleep on a flat surface.
9. He must not brush his teeth.
10. He must eat his food standing up.
11. He can eat only once a day.

**The Practices of a Svetambara monk are as follows.**

1. He must adhere to the five major vows.
2. He must not consume food at night.
3. He must restrain his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body.
4. He must keep his mind clean.
5. He must uphold cleanliness.
6. He must keep all of his belongings clean.
7. He must practice forgiveness.
8. He must not form any attachment.
9. He must be kind-hearted.
10. He must practice kind speech.
11. He must protect every life.
12. He must exercise patience.

**Vattapada-7**

Both Jaina sects subscribe to the same practices, since they adhere to the same Sutra. Minor differences exist such as to go with or without clothes, etc. There are seven practices that a Jain monk must adhere to all of his life. These include:

1. He must not wear any clothes.
2. He must be celibate.
3. He must live on dry food. He does not consume cooked rice or fresh snack.
4. He must go to worship at the Udena Cetiya, which is located in the east.
5. He must go to worship at the Gotamaka Cetiya, which is located in the south.
6. He must go to worship at the Sattamba Cetiya, which is located in the north.
7. He must go to worship at the Bahuputatika Cetiya, which is located in the west.

Traveling to the four Cetiys is considered a great pilgrimage and every Jain must undertake such pilgrimages all throughout his life however great the distance may be because it is the way to achieve liberation.

#### 4.8 Jainism: Its Religious Symbol

Jainism had for its symbol the image of Mahavira in the same way that the Buddha Statue is for Buddhism except that Mahavira is naked. Later, different graphics were added to the image of Mahavira housed inside a circle.

Today, the symbol is represented by a cylinder containing the following four components.

1. The wheel representing Ahimsa is housed inside a palm.
2. The Swastika, which represents Samsara.
3. Three dots, which represent the three gems – Right View, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct.
4. One dot housed inside a half-circle at the very top of the cylinder, which represents

the liberated soul dwelling in the highest part of the universe.



Jains believe that the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. It is independent and self-sufficient. It does not require any superior power to govern it. Space is formless and expandable. It houses everything in the universe. And the universe looks like a person standing with his legs apart and his hands on his hips. The body is trim. The waist is flat. At the center of the universe is the place where souls dwell. It is the place where all living beings are. Above the center of the universe is the upper world, which is divided into two parts: sixteen realms of heaven and fourteen celestial territories. At the uppermost of the universe is the location of “Siddhisila”. It is a curved place where dwell all the liberated souls or Kaival.

## 4.9 Jainism: Its Current Status<sup>7</sup>

Jainism is a religious minority in India, with 4.2 million adherents, and there are small but notable immigrant communities in Belgium, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and the United States. Jains have the highest degree of literacy of any religious community in India (94.1 percent), and their manuscript libraries are the oldest in the country.<sup>8</sup> Although Jainism is an old religion, the number of its adherents is relatively small. There are two reasons for this.

1. Jaina practices are extremely strict. They are so extreme that few people can adhere to them.
2. Within Jainism, there is very little interest in propagating the religion. They are happy to keep what adherents they already have. Moreover, they are surrounded by Brahmanism-Hinduism, which has many more times the number of adherents. The result is that Jainism is being gradually assimilated. Jainism denounces the caste system, and yet most Jain monks today belong to the Brahmin caste. They are paid a higher respect than the monks of other castes.

Today, there is a process to propagate Jainism. It is called the Minor Vows Process led by Tulsi. Its headquarters are located in Calcutta. This initiative is an attempt to encourage people to practice the Minor Vows by incorporating the relevant teachings of Brahmanism-Hinduism and Buddhism.

Although Jains live under many rules, most of them are better educated and more successful financially than their neighbors. It is also widely acknowledged that Jains are honest and virtuous. Jains attend the temple regularly and there are more than 40,000 Jain temples in India. There is a magnificent statue of the Tirthankara at each temple. Many temples are filled with beautiful arts such as the Jain Temple on Mount Abu. It is lauded as one of the seven wonders in India.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, 1994, p. 131

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia: Jainism

# Chapter 5

## Buddhism

### **5.1 The History of Buddhism**

- 5.1.1 The Social Conditions in India before the Lord Buddha's Time
- 5.1.2 India before the Lord Buddha's Time
- 5.1.3 The History of the Lord Buddha's Forebears

### **5.2 Buddhism: The History of Its Founder**

- 5.2.1 The Lord Buddha's Family and Childhood
- 5.2.2 His Marriage
- 5.2.3 Taking up the Religious Life
- 5.2.4 His Yogi Teachers
- 5.2.5 Practicing Self-Mortification
- 5.2.6 Attaining Self-Enlightenment
- 5.2.7 Teaching the Dhamma
- 5.2.8 His First Dhamma Lecture and His First Disciples
- 5.2.9 Propagating Buddhism

### **5.3 Buddhism: Its Religious Texts**

- 5.3.1 The Vinayapitaka
- 5.3.2 The Suttantapitaka
- 5.3.3 The Abhidhammapitaka

### **5.4 Buddhism: Its Doctrines**

- 5.4.1 The Triple Gem
- 5.4.2 Right View
- 5.4.3 The Three Characteristics
- 5.4.4 The Four Noble Truths
- 5.4.5 The Noble Eightfold Path
- 5.4.6 Nibbana

## **5.5 Buddhism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

## **5.6 Buddhism: Its Rites and Rituals**

5.6.1 Ceremonies Performed by the Sangha

5.6.2 Merit-Making Ceremonies on Auspicious Occasions

5.6.3 Merit-Making Ceremonies on Inauspicious Occasions

5.6.4 Worship Ceremony on Important Buddhist Holidays

## **5.7 Buddhism: Its Different Schools**

5.7.1 Theravada School

5.7.2 Acariyavada School

## **5.8 Buddhism: Its Religious Symbols**

5.8.1 The Dhamma Wheel

5.8.2 The Buddha Image

5.8.3 The Buddha's Footprint

5.8.4 The Bodhi Leaf or the Bodhi Tree

## **5.9 Buddhism: Its Current Status**

## **Concepts**

1. Buddhism appeared in India forty-five years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era, around 600 years after Brahmanism-Hinduism, 543 years before Christianity, and 1,124 years before Islam. Its founder is the Lord Buddha.
2. Its doctrines include the Triple Gem, Right View, the Three Characteristics, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Nibbana. The ultimate life-goal according to Buddhism is Nibbana, the realm of true and everlasting peace. To attain Nibbana, one must practice according to the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhists believe in the round of rebirth, which is caused by defilements.
3. Buddhism has two important schools, namely, Theravada School and Acariyavada or Mahayana School. Its religious symbols include the Dhamma Wheel, the Buddha Image, The Buddha's Footprint, and the Bodhi Leaf or the Bodhi Tree.
4. Today, Buddhism is flourishing in Asia and it is said to be the light of Asia especially Thailand. Thailand is considered to be the center of Buddhism because more than 90% of the Thai people are Buddhists. Buddhism has been propagated to different countries and the number of Buddhists in the world is on the rise.

## **Objectives**

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Buddhism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Buddhism, the history of its founder, its important religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Buddhism's rites and rituals, its religious holidays, its different schools, its religious symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 5

## Buddhism

### 5.1 The History of Buddhism

Buddhism appeared in ancient India, which is now divided into several countries, namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. The founder of Buddhism is the Buddha. He was born in the northernmost part of India along the foothill of the Himalayas. Today, it is part of Nepal.

The indigenous people of India are the Dravidians. The people that immigrated into India at a later date were the Aryans or Ariyakas. These people had once been nomads. They were good at warfare. They were a civilized race. After they defeated the Dravidians, they took over the control of the fertile Sindhu River basin. They extended their territory to the east toward the Ganges. The defeated indigenous people either submitted to their rule or moved to the south. India during the Lord Buddha's time<sup>1</sup> was divided into two territories as follows.

- (1) The Inner Territory (center), which was fertile and the home of the Ariyakas. This territory was called "Madhyamaprades" or Majjhima Country. It lied in the north.
- (2) The Outer Territory (border), which was the home of the Dravidians. This territory was called "Paccanta Country". It lied in the south.

Majjhima Country in the ancient times was a civilized region. It was the center of government. It was the center of well-educated people and the location of sixteen major kingdoms. These include Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vamsa, Kuru, Pancala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara, and Kamboja. In addition, there were smaller kingdoms such as Sakka, Koliya, Bhagga, Videha, Anguttrapa, etc.

The major kingdoms had at times enjoyed a friendly relation with one another but at other times had constantly waged war against each other. The most powerful kingdoms during the Lord Buddha's time were Magadha and Kosala.

The Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born into the House of Sakya, the son of the king who ruled over the minor kingdom of Sakka. Its capital city was Kapilavastu. Sakka was at the time a vassal state of the kingdom of Kosala.

#### 5.1.1 The Social Conditions of India before the Lord Buddha's Time

1. **Government:** Most kingdoms were ruled by a king. Some kingdoms were ruled by a group of royalties. Whatever form of government was used, there generally was a group of councilors and a place of meeting where someone with the highest authority made the final decision. The form of government used in the kingdom of Sakka in those days was majority rule.

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<sup>1</sup> Danai Chaiyayota, The History of South Asia in Ancient Times, 2527 B.E., pages 44-45



**2. Economy:** Agriculture formed the backbone of the economy. Some kingdoms were known for their handicraft industry. And there was trading between certain major kingdoms such as Ujjeni and Kosambi. For the kingdom of Sakka, the most important contribution to its economy was agriculture (rice farming).

**3. Society, Customs and Traditions:**

- 1) There were four main castes, namely, Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya, and Shudra. Members of the three upper castes were the fair-complected Ariyakas. Members of the Shudra caste were the dark-complected indigenous people. Members of different castes worked in their respective fields. There was inequality in terms of rights and freedom. There was prejudice and contemptuous treatment toward members of the lower castes. There was no social interaction between members of the higher caste and members of the lower caste. Women were inferior in status to men.
- 2) Brahmin priests were given the highest respect. Brahmin teachings and Hindu philosophy had a huge impact on the beliefs, the consciousness, and the lifestyle of the Indian people.
- 3) Ascetics were admired and respected. Their status could be elevated to the height of that of an imperial ruler.
- 4) There were a large number of people belonging to the high caste and a large number of people belonging to the low caste, and there were few people in between.
- 5) The religious thought about death and rebirth differed among groups of people giving rise to different schools of thought.

Of the people who subscribed to the belief about death and rebirth, one group believed that one would be reborn as the same kind of living being while another group believed that one could be reborn as something else.

Of the people who believed that death was the end, one group believed that the end was complete while another group believed that the end was partial.

In terms of life after death, one group believed that there was memory after death while another group believed that there was no memory left after death.

In terms of happiness and unhappiness, one group believed that happiness and unhappiness happened naturally while another group believed that they were caused by Karma (internal factor) or by destiny (external factor).

- 6) Many different schools of thought appeared in North India during this period, sixty-two according to an old Buddhist Scripture<sup>2</sup> (363 according to the Jaina texts). The important ones include:

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<sup>2</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Dighanikaya, Silakhandhavagga, No. 9, Samannaphala Sutta, 2539 B.E., page 95

1. Puranakassapa: He teaches that Punna (merit) and Papa (demerit) do not exist. Whatever one does, be it good or bad, has no consequences.
2. Makkhaligosala: He teaches that happiness, unhappiness, good, or evil happens naturally without causation.
3. Pakudhakaccayana: He teaches that only seven elements in this world are real: earth, water, wind, fire, happiness, unhappiness, and life. Good Karma, evil Karma, Punna, Papa, hell and heaven are just thought and do not exist in reality. This school of thought believes that killing is not an evil act. When someone is struck by a sword, the sword merely cuts through the space existing among the seven elements, which are eternal. They cannot be destroyed or divided. Therefore, no harm has been done.
4. Ajitakesakambala: He teaches that only the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire are real. Everything else is just an illusion and results from the coming together of the four elements. When a thing breaks down into the four elements, that thing simply exists no more. Alms-giving and sacrificial offering are useless. This school of thought believes that happiness and unhappiness are coincidental and have nothing to do with good and evil deeds. It believes that hell and heaven do not exist. There are no such things as liberation and rebirth.
5. Niganthanataputra: He teaches that liberation from the round of rebirth can be gained by not harming all living beings, not lying, not possessing anything including clothing, not stealing, and by practicing celibacy.
6. Sanjayavelatthaputra: He teaches that a person's thought is not to be believed, since it can be wrong. Members of this school of thought deny other people's reasoning by saying, "That is not so. This is not so. It isn't that that is not so. It isn't this that is not so." Members are taught not to agree that someone is right or wrong.

**Note:**

The teachings of Puranakassapa are called "Akiriyaditthi".

The teachings of Makkhaligosala are called "Ahetukaditthi".

The teachings of Pakudhakaccayana are called "Natthikaditthi".

The teachings of Ajitakesakambala are called "Natthiucchedaditthi".

The teachings of Sanjayavelatthaputra are called "Amaravikkhepikaditthi".

### 5.1.2 India before the Lord Buddha's Time<sup>3</sup>

Buddhism appeared in India around 600 years after Brahmanism, 543 years before Christianity, and 1,124 years before Islam in the midst of the Ariyaka or Aryan people. India is located to the northwest of Thailand. Its northernmost part meets the Himalayas and Tibet. Its western and eastern parts meet the Indian Ocean. The Vindhya Range dominates its central part.

Toward the end of Brahmanism and close to the Lord Buddha's time, Brahmanism was at its height. India was divided into two territories. The northern territory was called "Majjhima Country". The Ganges was its important river. The southern territory was located in the southern part of the Indian Peninsula was called "Daksina Country". The Godavari was its important river.

There are sixteen major kingdoms in Majjhima Country. These included:

1. **Gandhara:** Located in the upper part of the Sindhu River basin, its capital city was called "Taxila". It was famed for its school where the different branches of the arts were taught by a group of teachers called "Disapamokkha". Its fame spread all the way to Greece and Egypt. Gandhara is now Afghanistan.
2. **Kuru:** Located in the upper part of the Yamuna River basin, its capital city was called "Indapattha" or "Indraprastha". It was ruled by the five Prandaba kings. It was mentioned in several places in the Buddhist religious texts, for example, as the place where the Lord Buddha taught the Mahasatipatthana Sutta. The area is postulated to be Punjabi State and the city of Delhi, which is New Delhi, the current capital of India.
3. **Pancala:** Located in the upper part of the Ganges River basin, its capital city was called "Hasdinapura" or "Hasdin" where the Gaorabachandavong kings lived. Later, two more cities were built: Kampila and Kanyakubz. It is the city of Kanosh today.
4. **Kosala:** Located between the Himalayas and the central part of the Ganges, its former capital city was called "Ayadhya". Later, a new city called Savatthi was built. Today it is called Sahetamaheta. Kosala was so powerful that it could dominate nearby kingdoms such as Sakka.
5. **Malla:** Located east of Kosala, its former capital city was called "Kusavadi". Later, it was divided into two parts: Kusinara and Pava. Today, it is called Patraona.
6. **Vajji:** Located next to Malla, its capital city was called "Vesali" or "Paisali", where the Licchavi kings lived. Today, it is called Yezara, the birth place of Mahavira.
7. **Anga:** Located in the lowest part of the Ganges River basin, its capital city was called "Campa". It had at one time been very prosperous but during the Lord Buddha's time, it was a vassal state of the kingdom of Magadha.

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<sup>3</sup> Tripathi, Rama Shamkar, History of Ancient India, 1967, pages 86-89

8. **Kamboja:** Located south of the kingdom of Gandharasdar, its capital city was called “Dvaraka”. The city was built along the shoreline in the kingdom of Valabhi or Guradharasdar. Today, it is called Gudharath located to the north of Bombay.
9. **Maccha:** Located between the Sindhu River and the upper Yamuna River, its capital city was called “Sagala”. Its ruler was King Milinda.
10. **Surasena:** Located between the Sindhu River and the lower Yamuna River, its capital city was called “Mathura”. Later, the capital was moved to Dvaratha.
11. **Vamsa:** Located below the Yamuna River to the west of Kasi, its capital city was called “Kosambi”. It was a very prosperous city because it was the center of trade. Vamsa was ruled by King Udena. Today, the city is called Kozam.
12. **Kasi:** Located at the place where the Ganges and the Yamuna met, its capital city was called Varanasi. Today, it is called Benares. It was a famous city mentioned often in the epic poem “Mahabharata” and in the Buddhist Scriptures.
13. **Magadha:** Located in the south of the Ganges River Basin, with the Campa River as its eastern border, the Sona River as its western border, and the Vindhya Range as its southern border. It was a huge territory in those days. Its capital city was called Rajagrh, and is still called by the same name today.
14. **Malava:** Located to the west of Vamsa and north of the Vindhya Range. Its name was later changed to “Avanti” and its capital city was called “Ujjeni”. Today, it is called Ujjain.
15. **Ceti:** Located in the Ganges River basin next to Vamsa on the southeastern side of Malava, its capital city was called “Sotativadi”.
16. **Assaka:** Located on the Godavari River basin, its capital city was called “Potali”.

### 5.1.3 The History of the Lord Buddha’s Forebears

#### The History of the House of Sakya

King Okakakaraj ruled over a certain city. He had five wives, namely, Queen Hattha, Queen Citta, Queen Jantu, Queen Jalini, and Queen Visakha.

Queen Hattha was the chief queen. She had four sons, namely, Prince Okakakamukha, Prince Karandi, Prince Hatthinikesi, Prince Nipura; and five daughters, namely, Princess Piya, Princess Supiya, Princess Ananda, Princess Vijita, and Princess Vijitasena.

There was no record of the children born by other queens. After Queen Hattha died, King Okakakaraj had a new and beautiful wife whom he appointed as the chief queen. She gave birth to a very adorable child called Jantu. He was a favorite of the king. On one occasion, the king made the mistake of telling the new chief queen to ask for any favor from him and it would be granted. So she asked that her son be the next king. King Okakakaraj had to honor his word and he told the princes and princesses born of Queen Hattha to move to a new city.

The princes and princesses moved out of the city accompanied by a huge number of the four armed forces in order to build a new city. They arrived at the Sakka Forest near the Himalayas and met a Yogi by the name of “Kapila” who had built an ashram and practiced asceticism in the forest. The Yogi Kapila asked the princes and princesses for the reason why they were there. When told the reason, he advised them to build a city there because it was an auspicious location. After the city was built, the princes and princesses called it “Kapilavastu” in honor of the Yogi Kapila.

Having built the city, the royal siblings appointed Princess Piya, their oldest sister in the position akin to their mother. The rest paired off and married each other in order to preserve their lineage. When King Okakakaraj heard of their actions, he was very pleased and exclaimed, “Sakya vata bho kumara paramasakya vata bho kumara”, which means the princes are capable, they are highly capable.” It was for the reason that the city was built in the Sakka Forest that the royal house was called the House of Sakya.

### **The History of the House of Koliya**

Later, Princess Piya became infected with leprosy and felt extremely embarrassed about her condition. Her siblings feared that other people might become infected as well and they felt that she had to be confined somewhere out of town. Therefore, a pond-like structure was built underground and furnished for her comfort, and a large amount of food and other necessities were stored inside. Once in a while a royal servant would bring her more supplies.

At the same time, the king of Varanasi called “Ram” also became infected with leprosy. He did not want his subjects to feel repulsed by the fact that their king was a leper. Therefore, he allowed his eldest son to ascend the throne and he went to live inside the large hollow of a Kola Tree in the forest. He lived on fruit the way an ascetic would. Fortunately, some of the fruit he ate had healing properties and his leprosy was cured. It might have been the fruits from the Kola Tree.

Early one morning, a tiger was out hunting and caught the scent of Princess Piya inside the underground structure, and went after her. When Princess Piya saw the tiger, she cried so loudly that the tiger ran away. Her cry reached King Ram’s ears, and he followed the sound until he found Princess Piya. He told her to eat the fruits from the Kola Tree, and soon she too was cured of leprosy. King Ram and Princess Piya fell in love and decided to live together in the hollow of the Kola Tree.

Sometime later, a man from Varanasi went into the forest and chanced upon King Ram. He returned to give the news to King Ram’s son and how he had been cured of leprosy. The son went with the four armed forces into the forest to invite the father to resume the throne, but the father refused to do it. The son then ordered the Kola Tree cut down and had a city built for his father. He called the new city “Koliya”. King Ram was the first king of the House of Koliya. Later, he changed the city’s name to “Devadaha”. Ever since then, the prince and princess of Kapilavastu and Devadaha had married each other.

### **The Relationship between the House of Sakya and the House of Koliya**

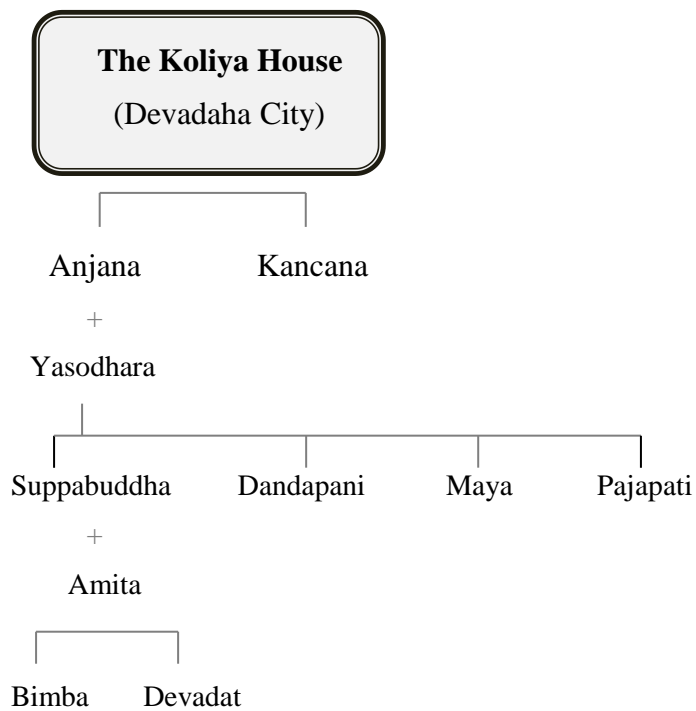
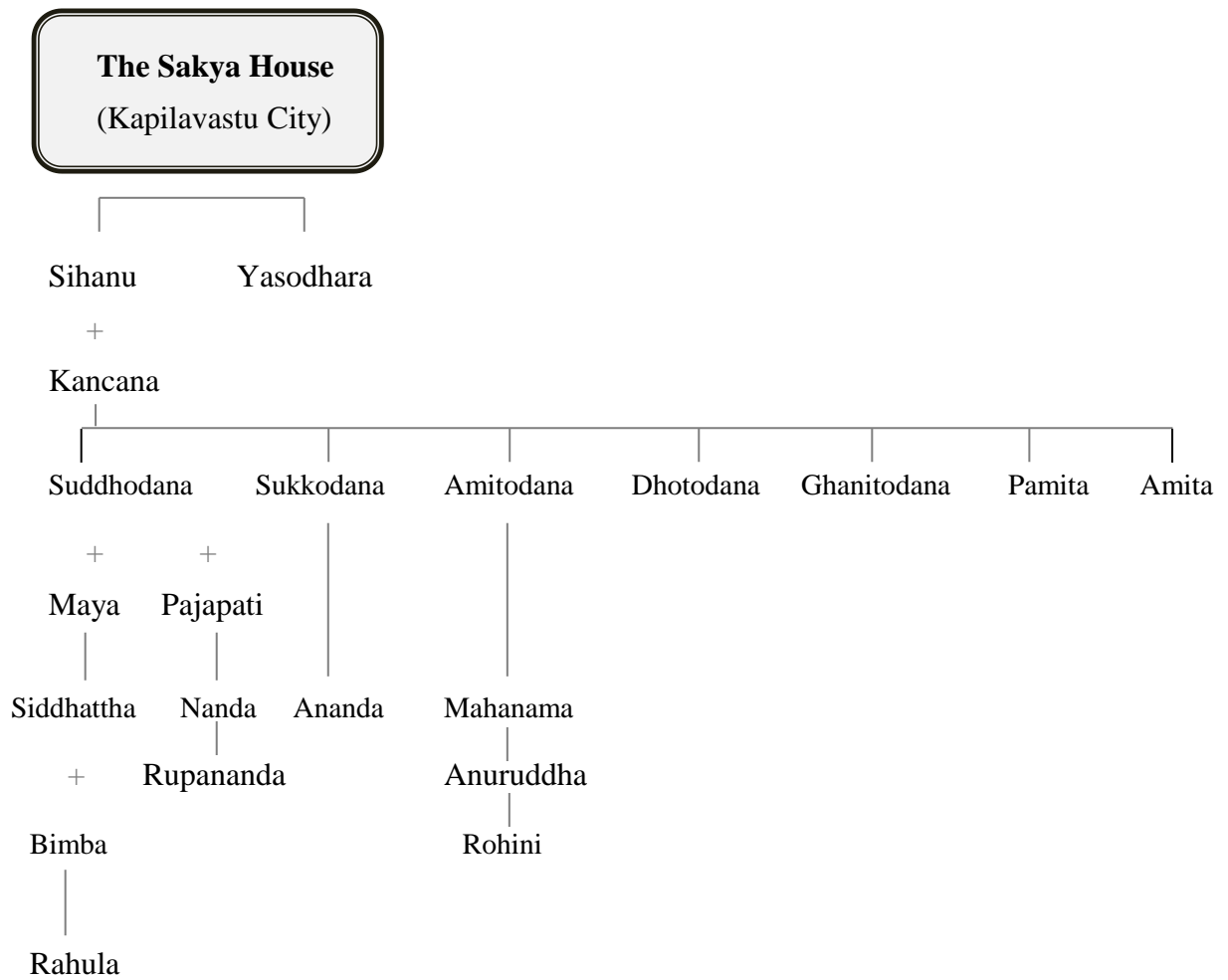
The kings of the House of Sakya had ruled over Kapilavastu until the time of King Jayasena. He had a son called “Sihahanu” and a daughter called “Yasodhara”.

The kings of the House of Koliya had ruled over Devadaha until the time of King Anjana and his younger sister, Princess Kancana. King Sihahanu married Princess Kancana. They had five sons, namely, Suddhodana, Sukkodhana, Amitodana, Dhotodana, and Ghanitodana, and two daughters, namely, Pamita and Amita.

King Anjana married Princess Yasodhara. They had two sons, namely, Suppabuddha, Dandapani, and two daughters, namely, Maya or Sirimahamaya and Pajapati or Gotami.

King Suddhodana married Queen Maya and they had one son, Siddhattha. After Queen Maya died, King Suddhodana married Queen Pajapati. They had one son called “Nanda” and one daughter called “Rupananda”.

## The Lord Buddha's Family Tree



## 5.2 Buddhism: The History of Its Founder<sup>4</sup>

### 5.2.1 The Lord Buddha's Lineage and Childhood

The Lord Buddha was born Prince Siddhattha Gotama in the royal park of Lumbini. (Today, the place is called Rumminderi located in Peshawar, Nepal). Lumbini was located between Kapilavastu and Devadaha. Prince Siddhattha was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> waxing moon (the month of Visakha) in the year of the dog 80 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. He was the son of King Suddhodana of the House of Sakya who ruled Kapilavastu, the capital city of Sakka and Queen Sirimahamaya, the daughter of the House of Koliya, who ruled Devadaha.

At the time, there was a Yogi by the name of "Asita" or "Kaladevila". He had been well-respected by the Sakya royal household. Having heard about the infant prince's birth, the Yogi wanted to have a look at him. Having seen the little prince's physical attributes, he knew right away that the little prince would attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Lord Buddha in the future. He got out of his seat to kneel down and bow with his palms pressed together in a Namaskar to the infant prince before laughing out loudly. He felt extremely fortunate to have seen the infant prince and his special physical attributes. But when he realized how he would die before he could follow the Lord Buddha to Nibbana, he cried very hard. The royal family was puzzled by the Yogi's reaction. The Yogi told the royal family that the infant prince would become a personage of greatness in the future. Everyone who heard the Yogi including King Suddhodana bowed with their palms pressed together in a Namaskar to the infant prince.

When the infant prince was five days old, King Suddhodana wanted to have the prince's future foretold and give him a name. He invited 108 Brahmins learnt in the art to dine at the palace. Out of these, he picked the eight topmost Brahmins to foretell the prince's future. Seven Brahmins said that it could turn out two ways in that...

1. If the prince remains a householder, he will become a Universal Monarch.
2. If the prince takes up the religious life, he will attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Buddha.

But the young Brahmin "Kondanna" said that the prince would definitely take up the religious life and become self-enlightened as the Buddha. All eight Brahmins decided on the name "Siddhattha" for the infant prince, which means the fulfillment of every wish.

Queen Sirimahamaya died when the infant prince was seven days old, and King Suddhodana put Prince Siddhattha under the care of his aunt and stepmother, Queen Pajapati. Later, after she had given birth to a son, Prince Nanda, and a daughter, Princess Rupananda, she continued to provide excellent care for Prince Siddhattha.

One day, it was the day of the planting ceremony. King Suddhodana, his ministers, his retinue of attendants, Brahmins, and wealthy men went to attend the planting ceremony at the royal rice paddies. They brought the young prince along and prepared a place for him under the Java plum tree. He was

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<sup>4</sup> Vajirayanvarorod, Somdetphramahasamanajao, Krompraya, The Lord Buddha's History, 2526 B.E., pages 6-44



surrounded by numerous nursemaids. While the king, the ministers, and senior officials plowed the field to yield 108 tracks, the nursemaids were there to watch. Having been left on his own, the prince sat up to practice meditation until he attained the First Jhana. It was then in the afternoon, the shadow of all the trees in the area had moved with the sun except for the Java plum tree, whose shadow remained in the same position as at midday. When the nursemaids returned and witnessed the miraculous event, they went outside to fetch King Suddhodana who bowed to his son for the second time.

When Prince Siddhattha was seven years old, the king had three lotus ponds dug for Prince Siddhattha and his playmates' swimming pleasure. There were white water lilies in one pond, pink lotuses in another pond, and white lotuses in the third pond.

When Prince Siddhattha was eight years old, King Suddhodana had him learn the arts under Vishvamitra, the teacher of the royal household. Prince Siddhattha learnt all the eighteen branches of the arts so quickly that the teacher had nothing left to teach him. His intelligence was far more superior to that of the rest of the children in the royal household.

### **5.2.2 Prince Siddhattha's Marriage**

When Prince Siddhattha was sixteen years old, King Suddhodana had three castles built for him in the same area, one for each season. There was a path which connected all three castles together. After the construction of the castles was completed, the king did not allow the prince to move in until he married. King Suddhodana went to ask for Princess Yasodharabimba, the daughter of King Suppabuddha of Devadaha to be Prince Siddhattha's wife. After they were married, the couple lived happily together in the three castles until Prince Siddhattha was twenty-nine years old. So far in his life, the prince had never seen anyone born, anyone age, anyone get sick, and anyone die. He was surrounded by young and healthy people because his father did not wish him to take up the religious life but wanted him to become a Universal Monarch.

One day, Prince Siddhattha wished to visit the royal park. He ordered his page "Channa" to prepare a carriage drawn by four horses. While enjoying himself at the park, he saw a celestial messenger (a celestial being in the human guise) in the form of an old man having white hair and a bent back, and using a walking stick. The prince was surprised at what he saw and asked Channa, "Why is this man different from other men?" When he learnt that everyone had to age, he felt so sad that he returned to the palace right away.

The next day, Prince Siddhattha visited the royal park once again. This time he saw a sick person and the next time he saw a dead person. When he learnt that everyone had to get sick and everyone had to die, he became doubly sad. The fourth time he went to visit the park, he saw a monk wearing the saffron robe. His composure inspired a deep respect in anyone who saw him. Channa told the prince that the monk knew tranquility. This time, the prince felt happy and could enjoy himself at the park all day long.

On that very day, Princess Bimba gave birth to a male infant. King Suddhodana told a page to give Prince Siddhattha the news. As the prince was contemplating the religious life, upon hearing the news of his son's birth, he exclaimed, "A Rahu is born. A fetter has arisen." As a result, the infant prince was given the name "Rahula".

### 5.2.3 Taking up the Religious Life

After Prince Siddhattha realized how everyone had to age, get sick, and die, he knew that birth, aging, sickness, and death are the causes of suffering. He thought that all phenomena have their opposites: hot vs. cold; light vs. darkness; unhappiness vs. happiness. And to find happiness, one must be free from birth, aging, sickness, and death. He knew that he could not find the means to end suffering if he remained a householder.

Late one night when Prince Siddhattha was twenty-nine years old, he decided to take up the religious life by leaving behind his beloved wife and son, his material wealth, and his worldly position. He left the palace on the royal steed “Kanthaka” together with his page “Channa”. At the bank of the Anoma River (the border between the kingdoms of Sakka and Malla), he cut off his topknot with his dagger. He removed his royal apparel and put on the garb of a monk and vowed to take up the religious life in order to search for the means to end suffering. Prince Siddhattha stayed at a mango grove called “Anupiyaambavana” in Savatthi for seven days before trekking to the city of Rajagarh in the kingdom of Magadha.

On the part of the Brahmin Kondanna, as soon as he heard the news that Prince Siddhattha had taken up the religious life, he invited the sons of the other seven Brahmins who were present during the naming of the prince to take up the religious life together with him. But only four out of the Brahmins’ seven sons believed in Kondanna’s prediction and they did as Kondanna suggested. Now this team of five ascetics comprised Kondanna, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama, and Assaji. They were called the “Pancavaggiya”. They began to look for Prince Siddhattha. When King Bimbisara, the ruler of the kingdom of Magadha, heard about Prince Siddhattha, he went to see the prince immediately. Upon finding out that the prince was a Sakya prince who became a monk in order to search for the way to end suffering, King Bimbisara invited the prince to remain in his kingdom and promised that he would give half of his kingdom to the prince. Prince Siddhattha politely declined the king’s generous offer.

### 5.2.4 Prince Siddhattha’s Yogi Teachers

Prince Siddhattha went to the school of the Yogi Alara Kalamagotra located at the foothill of the Bandava Mountain and became the Yogi’s student. Here, he was able to attain seven levels of the Jhanas, namely, the Four Form Jhanas and the Three Non-Form Jhanas. He then went on to study with the Yogi Udaka Ramaputra and was able to attain the Fourth Non-Form Jhana, which was the upper limit of the Yogi’s meditative attainments. Prince Siddhattha knew that such meditative attainments were not the means to end suffering. Therefore, he left the Yogi Udaka’s school and continued on to the sub-district of Uruvelasenaniham. He saw that the area was flat, peaceful, and lovely with plenty of lush trees. It was also located on the bank of a river where clear, clean water was flowing. It had a nice pier. It was not too far to go for alms. He decided to remain in the area for a time.

The five ascetics “Pancavaggiya” had been searching for Prince Siddhattha and finally found him in Uruvelasenaniham. They saw how the prince was practicing different methods of self-mortification and believed that he would

definitely attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Buddha. They stayed with him and attend to him.

### 5.2.5 Practicing Self-Mortification

It was at Uruvelasenanimam that Prince Siddhattha began practicing self-mortification, which was popular at the time because it was believed to be the means to achieve liberation. The prince practiced self-mortification very earnestly. He began by pressing his teeth together. He pushed the roof of his mouth with his tongue so hard that sweat poured from his armpits. Next, he restricted his breathing. When the air passage through his nostrils and his mouth was restricted, he could hear a loud hum in his ears. Eventually, he restricted his food intake until his body dried up, his complexion turned sallow, and his bones were jutting out all over his body. The situation was so bad that when he touched his body, his body hair fell out. He became so weak that he could hardly walk. Having practiced self-mortification to the extreme, he was still nowhere near attaining Self-Enlightenment.

Finally, he realized that he had reached the ultimate in terms of self-mortification; there was nothing more he could do. Yet, liberation still eluded him. It then occurred to him that meditation practice could be the way to achieve liberation. It also occurred to him that his search for the means to end suffering could be compared to a three-stringed harp. If the string is strung too tightly, it can break when one strums it. If the string is strung too loosely, it will be out of tune. If the string is strung at just the right tautness, it can make beautiful music. Likewise, a loosely strung string can be compared to a person who is immersed in sensual pleasures; it cannot lead to the end of suffering. A string tightly strung is like self-mortification, it cannot lead to the end of suffering either. He has practiced self-mortification to the point where he almost loses his life and yet he can gain nothing from it. Therefore, he should practice the middle way, the way that is not too tight or too loose. The middle way called “Majjhimapatipada” may just lead him out of suffering.

Prince Siddhattha realizes how the body and the mind are connected together. Self-mortification makes the mind restless and anxious. When the mind is restless, how can any insight be gained? When the body is weak, how can there be willpower? A sound mind rests inside a healthy body. Prince Siddhattha decided to resume eating so that he would have the strength to practice meditation.

When the Pancavaggiya ascetics saw how the prince had stopped practicing self-mortification and resumed food consumption, they thought that the prince had become lax and would now never attain Self-Enlightenment. They saw no use in remaining with him any longer and decided to go the Deer Park (called Saranath today) near the city of Varanasi.

It was good that Prince Siddhattha had been attended to by the Pancavaggiya ascetics during his practice of self-mortification. They could later serve as his witnesses that self-mortification was not the way to attain Self-Enlightenment. Once he decided to practice meditation, it was due to his accumulated merit that the Pancavaggiya ascetics should depart and leave him alone, for meditation practice requires peace and quiet, and having people around could jeopardize his meditation practice.

On the morning of the fourteenth day of the sixth waxing moon, Prince Siddhattha received the special rice pudding contained in a gold platter from

the woman Sujada. She made the special offering in repayment for having a male child as wished for at the tree earlier thinking the prince to be the tree nymph. Having fashioned the rice pudding into forty-five lumps, the prince ate them all. He then took the gold platter to the riverbank and made a wish that should he be able to attain Self-Enlightenment, let the gold platter float against the current. If not, let it float along the current. As it happened, the gold platter floated against the current for forty meters before sinking into the whirlpool. Having seen the miraculous event, the prince felt confident that he would definitely attain Self-Enlightenment and become the Buddha, and he was overjoyed.

### **5.2.6 Attaining Self-Enlightenment**

It had been six full years from the time Prince Siddhattha took up the religious life to the day he ate the special rice pudding. After his meal, he went to sit under the Sal tree and thought about the location, the time, and the things he had to do prior to sitting down for his meditation practice. When everything had been made ready, he went toward the Bodhi Tree. At the time, a grass mower called Sotthiya was passing by carrying eight bundles of grass. He saw the prince and felt moved to offer them to him. The prince took the eight bundles of grass and continued to walk toward the Bodhi Tree. Having arrived at the Bodhi Tree, he noticed that it was flat and smooth under the tree on its eastern side. He made a seat for himself with the eight bundles of grass. He was happy with the seat and thought of it as a precious throne. He sat facing east in a half-lotus position, his back toward the Bodhi Tree. He then made an earnest vow, “For as long as I cannot attain Self-Enlightenment, I will not rise from this seat even if my flesh and blood should dry up leaving only skin, tendons, and bones.” Having made the vow, he began practicing meditation.

At that moment, there was a conflict between the low part of nature called “defilements” and the high part of nature called virtues. But the prince’s heart was steadfast. He could recall all of the Perfections that he had pursued to the fullest extent all throughout his previous countless lifetimes. Consequently, he could completely overpower defilements. His mind became so quiet and still that he attained the First Jhana and continued all the way to the Fourth Jhana. The defilements inherent in his mind were completely extinguished as he attained the different Nanas during the night.

During the First Watch (18:00 – 22:00 hours): He attains the “Pubbenivasanussatinana” in that he can recall clearly his previous existences. He knows about birth and the reality of life.

During the Second Watch (22:00 – 02:00 hours): He attains the “Cutupapatanana” in that he penetrates the reason why living beings live and die differently.

During the Third Watch (02:00 – 06:00 hours): He attains the “Asavakkhayanana” in that he has penetrated the Higher Knowledge that allows his defilements to be completely extinguished. He attains the penetrating knowledge that our body is made up of aggregates which come together as a result of ignorance (Avijja), want, endless craving, attachment (Upadana), and our action (Kamma). These factors are linked to each other like a chain reaction called the Law of Causation. In other words, Prince Siddhattha has attained the Four Noble Truths, namely, Dukkha (Suffering), Samudaya (the Cause of Suffering), Nirodha (the Cessation of Suffering), and Magga (the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering). Having attained such

Higher Knowledge, his mind becomes completely pure. At dawn, Prince Siddhattha attains Self-Enlightenment and becomes the Lord Buddha or Sammasabuddha.

### **5.2.7 Teaching the Dhamma**

Having attained Self-Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha spent forty-nine days (seven weeks) immersed in the bliss of emancipation. He returned to the Banyan tree and thought that His self-enlightened knowledge is much too profound for ordinary people to know, understand, and practice. Initially, he thought that he might not teach anyone at all. But due to His incomparable compassion, He knew that he had to teach and make known His enlightened knowledge to all living beings.

He considered the fact that living beings possess different levels of intelligence and intellect. They are like the lotus buds. Some just emerge from the rhizome beneath the water and is still covered with mud. Some are just beneath the waterline. Some are at the water surface. And some are above the water, and will bloom as soon as the sun shines upon them. Living beings can be compared to the lotus buds. Some are highly intelligent and need just one Dhamma lecture to attain Enlightenment. They are like the lotus buds above the water waiting to open up when the sun shines upon them. Some are intelligent and may need a few Dhamma lectures before they can attain Enlightenment. They are like the lotus buds at the water surface, which take a few days to open up. Some may not be able to attain Enlightenment just yet, but they can be taught to conduct themselves righteously. They are like the lotus buds under the water, which may bloom sometime in the future. But some cannot be taught at all because they are slaves to their own defilements and they harbor Wrong View. They are like the lotus buds that just emerge from the rhizome. They are in danger of becoming food for fish and turtles. Having thus considered, the Lord Buddha decided to teach His enlightened knowledge. He thought about His former Yogi teachers, Alara and Udaka. Unfortunately, both were already dead. Next, He considered the Pancavaggi ascetics, who had gone to live in the Deer Park.

### **5.2.8 The Lord Buddha's First Dhamma Lecture and First Disciples**

The Lord Buddha went to the Deer Park in Varanasi. On the way there, He passed by an ascetic called Upaka in a sub-district located between the Gaya River and the Bodhi Tree. Upaka was amazed to see the Lord Buddha's glorious and radiant countenance. He asked the Lord Buddha, "What glorious complexion you have! What is your name? Which school are you from and who is your master?" The Lord Buddha answered, "I penetrate Truth as a result of my Self-Enlightenment. I do not come from any school. Therefore, I have no master." But Upaka could not understand what the Lord Buddha was saying. The Lord Buddha arrived at the Deer Park on the fourteenth day of the eighth waxing moon and He was able to convince the Pancavaggiya ascetics to believe in His Self-Enlightenment. On the fifteenth day of the eighth waxing moon, The Lord Buddha gave His first Dhamma Lecture called the "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta" to the Pancavaggiya ascetics. As they listened to the Dhamma lecture, the oldest one of the Pancavaggiya ascetics, Kondanna, saw the Dhamma (attained the Dhammakaya-Eye) in that he could see Truth as taught by the Lord Buddha. Kondanna is therefore the first person in this Buddha Eon who could penetrate what the Lord Buddha was teaching.



It was the first step that would lead him to attain Arahatship later on. The Lord Buddha was very pleased that the profundity of His self-enlightened knowledge was not beyond the grasp of ordinary people. Kondanna was His proof and it caused Him to exclaim twice, “Annasi vata bho kondanna”. It means Kondanna knows it now. As a result of this exclamation, Kondanna was later called Annakondanna. Annakondanna wanted to become a Bhikku (Buddhist monk). The Lord Buddha ordained him, and he became the first Buddhist monk in this Buddha Eon and the Lord Gotama Buddha’s first disciple.

Meanwhile, the Lord Buddha continued to give more Dhamma lectures. The next persons to attain the Dhammakaya-Eye were Vappa and Bhaddiya. The last Pancavaggiya ascetics to attain the Dhammakaya-Eye were Mahanama and Assaji. The Lord Buddha ordained all four of them. Later, the Lord Buddha gave the Pancavaggiya monks another Dhamma lecture called the “Anattalakkhana Sutta”. This time, all five Buddhist monks attained Arahatship at the same time. There happened then six Arahats altogether including the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha and His five disciples spent their first Rains-Retreat in the Deer Park.

While at the Deer Park, the Lord Buddha gave Dhamma lectures to Yasa and his four friends who lived in Varanasi, namely Vimala, Subahu, Punnaaji, and Gvampati as well as his fifty friends who lived outside Varanasi. All of them attained Arahatship. Therefore, there happened altogether during the first Rains-Retreat sixty-one Arahats.

## **5.2.9 Propagating Buddhism**

With sixty disciples, all of whom Arahats, the Lord Buddha thought it time to propagate Buddhism once the Rains-Retreat came to an end. He had a meeting with them and said,

“Behold, monks, I have been emancipated from all fetters both the celestial kind and the human kind. And so have all of you. Let us now trek to the countryside for the benefit and happiness of the masses. Let each monk take a different road. Let your Dhamma lectures be lovely at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. Proclaim the Holy Life which is complete and perfect. There exist individuals that possess a light level of defilements. They will lose the benefit they deserve if they do not hear the Dhamma. There exist individuals who can attain Enlightenment. I myself will go to teach the Dhamma in Uruvelasenaniham.”

The Lord Buddha not only sent out sixty disciples to propagate Buddhism in sixty different places, but He Himself also went out to propagate Buddhism.

The sixty Arahats did as the Lord Buddha commanded and went to propagate Buddhism in different provinces, different districts and sub-districts. It was the reason a large number of men converted to Buddhism and some wanted to enter the monkhood. Since the Lord Buddha’s disciple could not ordain anyone, he had to bring the ordinand to the Lord Buddha. Travels in those days were difficult; therefore, the Lord Buddha gave His disciples permission to ordain the men. The ordinand had to first shave his head and beard before putting on the saffron robe. Afterward, he knelt down to pay homage to the monk, and said, “I take the Lord Buddha as my refuge. I take the Dhamma as my refuge. I take the Sangha as my refuge.” He said this thrice. This type of

ordination is called “Tisaranagamanupasampada”, which means ordaining by vowing to take the Triple Gem as one’s refuge.

In the first Vassa<sup>5</sup> (year), the Lord Buddha had sixty disciples who were also Arahats. They went everywhere to propagate Buddhism until there were a large number of Bhikkus (monks), Bhikkunis (female monks), Upasakas (male lay devotees), and Upasikas (female lay devotees). These made up the Four Buddhist Communities. The propagation of Buddhism had continued in earnest in different villages and different kingdoms for forty-four years altogether.

In the second Vassa, the Lord Buddha went to the sub-district of Uruvela. On the way there, He gained a group of thirty disciples called the Bhaddavaggiya. In Uruvela, He gave a Dhamma lecture called the “Adittapariyaya Sutta” to the three fire-worshipping brothers: Uruvelakassapa, Nadikassapa, Gayagassapa and their 1,000 followers at Gayasisa. He then went to Rajagarh where King Bimbisara offered the Veluvana Park to the Lord Buddha and His disciples. There, He appointed His two Chief Disciples, Venerable Sariputra and Venerable Mahamoggallana. Two months later, He went to Kapilavastu and stayed at Nigrodharam. It was while the Lord Buddha was staying in Nigrodharam that Nanda, Rahula, Ananda, Devadatta, and other relatives entered the monkhood. The millionaire Anatha asked the Lord Buddha to visit the city of Savatthi in the kingdom of Kosala. Anatha offered the Jetavana Temple to the Lord Buddha and His disciples. The Lord Buddha spent His second Rains-Retreat at Anatha’s Jetavana Temple.

In the third Vassa, the great female lay devotee, Visakha, offered the Pubbaram Temple located in Savatthi to the Lord Buddha and His disciples. This was where the Lord Buddha spent His third Rains-Retreat.

In the fourth Vassa, the Lord Buddha spent the Rains-Retreat at the Veluvana Temple in the city of Rajagarh of the kingdom of Magadha.

In the fifth Vassa, the Lord Buddha enabled His father to attain Arahatsip. He also settled the conflict between the Sakka relatives and the Koliya relatives over the use of the Rohini River. He allowed Queen Pajapatigotami and her ladies to enter the monkhood.

In the sixth Vassa, the Lord Buddha performed the Yamaka Miracle in the city of Savatthi and spent the Rains-Retreat on Mount Mankalu.

In the seventh Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat in Savatthi. During the Rains-Retreat, he went to the celestial realm of Tavatimsa to teach the Abhidhamma (the Higher Doctrine) to His birth mother.

In the eighth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma in the kingdom of Bhagga and spent the Rains-Retreat at the Bhesakalavana Park.

In the ninth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma in the kingdom of Kosambi.

In the tenth Vassa, a dispute arose. It became so serious that it caused divisiveness among the monks in Kosambi. They refused to listen to the Lord

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<sup>5</sup> Pitoon Maliwan and Sawai Malatong, 45 Years of Buddha-Activities, 2531 B.E., pages 21-23

Buddha's advice, so the Lord Buddha went to spend the Rains-Retreat in the Lileyayaka Forest. There, He was attended to by an elephant.

In the eleventh Vassa, the Lord Buddha went to Savatthi. The dispute between the two groups of monks in Kosambi had been resolved. The Lord Buddha spent the Rains-Retreat at a Brahmin village called Ekanala.

In the twelfth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat in Veranjara where there was a famine.

In the thirteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat on Mount Calika.

In the fourteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat in Savatthi. Rahula, previously a novice, entered the monkhood.

In the fifteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha went to Kapilavastu. King Suppabuddha was swallowed up by the ground for having obstructed the Lord Buddha's alms-round.

In the sixteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat in Alavi.

In the seventeenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha went to Savatthi, returned to Alavi, and spent the Rains-Retreat in Rajagarh.

In the eighteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha went to Alavi and spent the Rains-Retreat on Mount Calika.

In the nineteenth Vassa, the Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma and spent the Rains-Retreat on Mount Calika.

In the twentieth Vassa, Ongulimala entered the monkhood. Venerable Ananda was appointed the Lord Buddha's personal assistant. The Lord Buddha spent the Rains-Retreat in Rajagarh and began decreeing the Vinaya (Disciplinary rules).

From the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 44<sup>th</sup> Vassa, the Lord Buddha spent His time between the Jetavana Temple and the Pubbaram Temple in Savatthi using the Jetavana Temple as the center for propagating Buddhism to nearby kingdoms.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Vassa was the Lord Buddha's last Vassa. It was written in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta that Devadatta Bhikku tried to kill the Lord Buddha at Vulture's Peak near Rajagarh causing the Lord Buddha to sustain a contusion in the foot. The injury was cared for by the physician Jivaka. The Brahmin "Vassakara" came to see the Lord Buddha. Afterward, He went to Ambalatthika, Nalanda, and Pataligama respectively. He crossed the Ganges at Tomadittha and continued on to Kotigama, Nadigama, and Vesali. He stayed in the park belonging to Mrs. Ganika Ambapali, and spent the Rains-Retreat at the Veluvana Temple. The Lord Buddha fell ill and attained complete Nibbana three months later in the city of Kusinara in the kingdom of Malla on the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon (the month of Visakha) at the age of 80.

One day before attaining complete Nibbana, the Lord Buddha went to teach the Dhamma to Mr. Cunda. Mr. Cunda offered a special dish called Sukaramadava to the Lord Buddha for breakfast. On the way to Kusinara on that full-moon day of the sixth lunar month, the Lord Buddha had bloody diarrhea until He crossed the Hiranvadi River into the city of Kusinara. His condition was very grave and He told Venerable Ananda to prepare a bed for



Him between the two Sal trees. The Lord Buddha laid down on His right side with His head toward the east and attained complete Nibbana after giving His final advice.<sup>6</sup>

“Behold monks, all conditioned things undergo decay and come to an end. Let all of you exercise heedfulness in all things.”

Seven days after the Lord Buddha’s attainment of complete Nibbana, His body was cremated at the Makutabandhana Cetiya located about two kilometers east of Kusinara. The Holy Relics were divided among the rulers of nine different kingdoms.

### 5.3 Buddhism: Its Religious Texts

Buddhism’s religious texts are called the Tipitaka, a Pali word which means three baskets; that is, the baskets used to contain all of the Lord Buddha’s Sayings, which are divided into three main categories. Initially, the Lord Buddha’s Teachings were memorized and passed down using the oral tradition. Later, a Sangiti (general convocation of the monks in order to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the Scriptures) had been held at different times. Later still, the Scriptures were written down in Pali, Chinese, Tibetan, and Thai.

**The Tipitaka<sup>7</sup> comprises:**

**5.3.1 The Vinayapitaka:** It deals with the disciplinary rules (Vinaya) or the monks’ moral conduct. It contains the details and history of each disciplinary rule as well as detailed procedures concerning the administration of the monastic community. The Vinayapitaka consists of 21,000 articles, which are divided into three categories or five texts. The Vinayapitaka in the Thai version contains eight volumes.

**a. Vibhanga or Suttavibhanga:** It deals with the disciplinary rules described in the Patimokkha. The Vibhanga is divided into two texts as follows.

**1. Adikammika or Parajika:** It deals with the disciplinary rules for major offences from Parajika to Aniyata (Major Offences). This text is printed in one volume.

**2. Pacitatiya:** It deals with minor offences from Nisasaggiyapacittiya to Sekhiya and includes Bhikkunivibhanga (Minor Offences). This text is printed in two volumes. The Pacitatiya can also be divided into two categories as follows.

(1) Mahavibhanga or Bhikkuvibhanga: It deals with the disciplinary rules in the Patimokkha for monks. This is printed in two volumes.

(2) Bhikkunivibhanga: It deals with the disciplinary rules in the Patimokkha for female monks. This is printed in one volume.

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<sup>6</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Dighanikaya, Mahavagga, No. 10, Mahaparinibbana Sutta, 2539 B.E. page 238

<sup>7</sup> Sucheep Punyanuparp, The Tipitaka for the People, 2539 B.E., pages 20-24

- b. **Khandhaka:** It deals with the disciplinary rules outside of the Patimokkha. These disciplinary rules are grouped into twenty-two Khandhakas and divided into two Vaggas as follows.
  - 1. **Mahavagga:** It deals with the first part of the disciplinary rules outside of the Patimokkha and comprises ten Khandhakas. The Mahavagga is printed in two volumes.
  - 2. **Julavagga:** It deals with the last part of the disciplinary rules outside of the Patimokkha and comprises twelve Khandhakas. The Julavagga is printed in two volumes.
- c. **Parivara:** It is a handbook containing questions and answers about the disciplinary rules, and is printed in one volume.

**5.3.2 The Suttantapitaka:** It deals with the Suttas, which are the teachings of the Lord Buddha and His disciples. It contains a large number of stories including the details of the conversations the Lord Buddha had with non-believing ascetics and other people. It contains details about geography, incidents, individuals, and time, which are helpful to the study of the Indian people's lifestyle in those days. Some details are in the form of incantations, and some are in verses. There are altogether 21,000 articles, which can be divided into five sections. These are printed in twenty-five volumes as follows.

- 1. **Dighanikaya:** It comprises thirty-four lengthy Suttas. These Suttas are divided into three groups and printed in three volumes.
- 2. **Majjhimanikaya:** It comprises 153 medium-length Suttas. They are divided into three Pannasakas and printed in three volumes.
- 3. **Sanyuttanikaya:** It comprises 7,792 Suttas, which are divided into fifty-six Sanyuttas. These Sanyuttas are divided into five groups and printed in five volumes.
- 4. **Anguttaranikaya:** It comprises 9,557 Suttas, which are divided into eleven Nipatas and printed in five volumes.
- 5. **Khuddakanikaya:** It contains a collection of different Suttas, Dhamma topics, explanations and miscellaneous accounts, which cannot be placed with the above four sections. The Khuddakanikaya consists of fifteen texts and printed in nine volumes. The first volume comprises the Khuddakapatha, Dhammapada, Udana, Itivuttaka, and Suttanipata. The second volume comprises the Vimanavatthu, Petavatthu, Theragatha, and Therigatha. The third and fourth volumes comprise the Jataka stories. The fifth and sixth volumes comprise the Nidadesa (one volume of the Mahanidadesa and one volume of the Culanidadesa). The seventh volume comprises the Patisambhidamagga. The eighth volume comprises the Apadana. And the ninth volume comprises the Buddhavonsa (2/3 volume) and Cariyapitaka (1/3 volume).

**5.3.3 The Abhidhammapitaka:** It deals with the Abhidhamma or the Higher Doctrine. It has nothing to do with incidents, individuals, geography, and time. It consists of 42,000 articles, which are divided into seven texts and printed in twelve volumes as follows.

- 1. **Dhammasamgani or Samgani:** It comprises a collection of Dhamma topics, which are explained by types (one volume).

2. **Vibhanga:** It comprises a collection of Dhamma topics, which are analyzed and described in detail (one volume).
3. **Dhatugatha:** It comprises a collection of Dhamma topics, which are grouped into Khanda, Ayatana, and Dhatu (one-half volume).
4. **Puggalapanyati:** It comprises a collection of definitions of different types of individuals according to their virtue (one-half volume).
5. **Kathavatthu:** It comprises an analysis of the different conflicts arisen among the different schools during the third Sangiti (one volume).
6. **Yamaka:** It comprises a collection of the paired questions used in analyzing each Dhamma topic (two volumes).
7. **Patthana (or Mahapakarana):** It comprises the detailed description of the twenty-four conditions (six volumes).

The three Pitakas can be combined to give two Pabacanas where the Suttantapitaka and the Abhidhammapitaka are categorized as the Dhamma and the Vinayapitaka is categorized as the Vinaya.

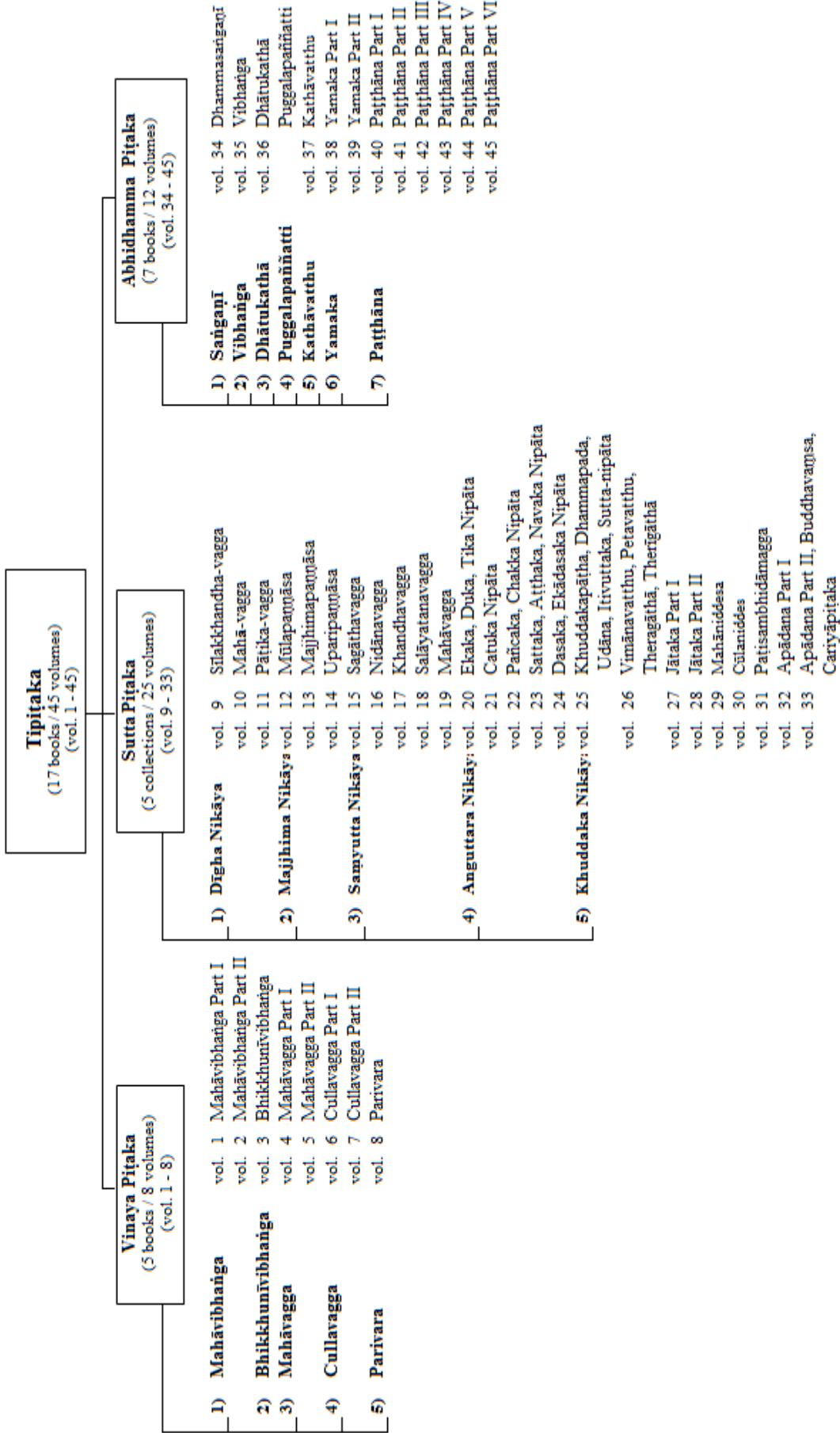
The Tipitaka was written in the Pali language and has been printed using the alphabets and vowels of different languages such as Thai, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Laotian, Mon, Khmer, and Roman. It has also been translated into different languages such as English, French, and German. The Thai Tipitaka contains forty-five volumes to represent the number of years that the Lord Buddha had spent teaching the Dhamma.

After Buddhism was split into Theravada School and Mahayana School, the Pali Tipitaka became the Theravada School Scripture and the Sanskrit Tipitaka became the Mahayana School Scripture. The Sanskrit Tipitaka was translated into Chinese and Tibetan and many parts of the Sanskrit Tipitaka have been lost. Therefore, members of the Mahayana School, the Japanese included, have used the Chinese Tipitaka instead. In the past, the Japanese had employed the Chinese characters in their language until the Japanese characters were invented.

Besides the Tipitaka, there are other Buddhist texts written to explain the teachings contained in the Tipitaka. They are listed here in the order of decreasing importance as follows.

- a. **The Commentary:** These texts were written in later times by knowledgeable teachers of the Dhamma. The Commentary's importance is second to the Tipitaka.
- b. **The Sub-commentary:** They were written by knowledgeable teachers of the Commentary in order to further explain the contents of the Commentary. Its importance is third to the Tipitaka.
- c. **The Sub-subcommentary:** They were written by knowledgeable teachers of the Sub-commentary in order to further explain the contents of the Sub-Commentary and to add other miscellaneous comments. Its importance is fourth to the Tipitaka.

## Chart of Tipiṭaka



## 5.4 Buddhism: Its Doctrine

The Lord Buddha's Teachings are divided into 84,000 articles but all the articles are equally important. The reason is that any one of these 84,000 articles when practiced earnestly can lead the practitioner to be emancipated from defilements and attain Nibbana. For this course, certain fundamental teachings will be introduced. These include the Triple Gem, Right View (Sammaditthi), the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path, and Nibbana.

### 5.4.1 The Triple Gem<sup>8</sup>

The Triple Gem means the three precious gems. The Triple Gem represents the three precious entities which are highly venerated by Buddhists. They include the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

#### The Triple Gem as the Symbol of Buddhism

##### 1. The Lord Buddha<sup>9</sup>

The first precious gem represents the Lord Buddha. Here, two attributes of the Lord Buddha will be presented.

- 1) The Lord Buddha as a historical person called Siddhattha: He was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Sirimahamaya of the Sakya House in the city of Kapilavastu. He was born in Lumbini Park on the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon in India. When he was sixteen years old, he married Princess Yasodhara and they had one son together. His name was Rahula.

He took up the religious life when he was twenty-nine years old. He had practiced self-mortification for six years prior to practicing the Middle Way and attained Self-Enlightenment on the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon in Buddhagaya. As the Lord Buddha, He had spent forty-five years teaching the Dhamma. He attained Complete Nibbana when He was eighty years old on the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon in the city of Kusinara in India.

- 2) The Lord Buddha as the most advanced human being and the role model for every human being who possesses the following nine attributes.
  - (1) He is holy.
  - (2) He is fully self-enlightened.
  - (3) He is perfect in knowledge and conduct.
  - (4) He is a well-farer.
  - (5) He is the knower of the worlds.
  - (6) He is the incomparable leader of men who can be taught.
  - (7) He is the teacher of celestial beings and human beings.

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<sup>8</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Khuddakanikaya, Khuddakapatha, Vol. 25 The Triple Gem, 2539 B.E., page 1

<sup>9</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Majjhimanikaya, Mulapannasaka, Vol. 12 The Buddha-Virtues, 2539 B.E., page 67

(8) He is awakened.

(9) He is blessed.

The above virtues can be grouped into three main attributes as follows.

- 1) **The Buddha-Insight:** It means that the Lord Buddha is fully self-enlightened.
- 2) **The Buddha-Compassion:** It means that the Lord Buddha happens for the peace and happiness of all living beings.
- 3) **The Buddha-Purity:** It means that the Lord Buddha is pure in body, word, and mind.

## 2. The Dhamma<sup>10</sup>

The Dhamma means the Lord Buddha's Teachings, Truth that can be personally experienced.

A personage who is self-enlightened and subsequently teaches the Dhamma and founds Buddhism is called the Lord Buddha. A personage who is self-enlightened but does not teach the Dhamma or found a religion is called a Paccekabuddha. A personage who penetrates the Dhamma taught by the Lord Buddha is called an Anubuddha or a disciple.

The Dhamma possesses six characteristics as follows.

1. It is the teachings of the Lord Buddha.
2. It can be personally experienced.
3. It is timeless.
4. It can be personally proven.
5. It should be practiced.
6. It is for a wise person to know.

The Dhamma enables its practitioners to attain Ariyahood, which is divided into four levels: Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami, and Arahant. The core of the Dhamma is emancipation and the taste of the Dhamma is the end of suffering.

The Dhamma or the Lord Buddha's Teachings are contained in the Tipitaka. The Tipitaka consists of three main categories. The Vinayapitaka deals with regulations, discipline and morality. The Suttantapitaka deals with the Dhamma principles taught by the Lord Buddha to individuals and concerns events, time, and places. The Abhidhammapitaka deals with pure Dhamma and does not concern individuals or places.

The practice of the Dhamma can be divided into three parts: Pariyatidhamma or the study of the Scriptures; Patipattidhamma or practicing what has been learnt; and Pativedhadhamma or the fruit of practice, namely, the Path of Ariyahood, the Fruit of Ariyahood, the Fruit of Sotapanna, etc. The highest fruit of Dhamma practice is Arahantship.

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<sup>10</sup>

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Majjhimanikaya, Mulapannasaka, Vol. 12  
The Dhamma-Virtues, 2539 B.E., page 67

### 3. The Sangha<sup>11</sup>

The Sangha (Buddhist Monks) practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Vinaya as taught and decreed by the Lord Buddha. They are the Lord Buddha's disciples and they bear witness to the Lord Buddha's Self-Enlightenment. The Sangha practice the Dhamma and teach the Dhamma to other people. They deserve our reverence.

The Sangha possess the following nine attributes.

1. They practice righteousness according to the Dhamma-Discipline. They continue to develop themselves. They are harmless. They endeavor to scrub their minds clean. And they endeavor to scrub themselves clean of unfitting behavior.
2. Their practice is true to the teachings. They are true to themselves, to other people, and to the work of Buddhism.
3. They practice the Dhamma in that they endeavor to keep their body, word, and mind tranquil and to the extent that they can be emancipated from suffering.
4. They conduct themselves appropriately in that their personal conduct is fitting to their monkhood, their status, and to the extent that they can extinguish all defilements.
5. They are worthy of the laity's reverence because they practice righteousness, their practice is true, they practice the Dhamma, and they conduct themselves appropriately.
6. They are worthy of hospitality because whoever welcomes them will feel happy and joyful as a result of the merit earned. And the fruit of merit is happiness here and now and in future existences.
7. They are worthy of alms because whoever offers them alms can earn a large amount of merit.
8. They are worthy of veneration. They should be greeted reverentially by pressing the palms together in a Namaskar.
9. They are the world's incomparable merit-field. Their virtues make them an abundant field of merit. They are the world's virtuous friends. They are the source of all forms of goodness, wholesomeness, and happiness.

The Sangha practice according to the Lord Buddha's Teachings and they teach the Dhamma to the laity.

#### 5.4.2 Right View (Sammaditthi)<sup>12</sup>

Sammaditthi means the teachings that enable one to have the correct understanding about the reality of life and the world, the teachings about what

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<sup>11</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Majjhimanikaya, Mulapannasaka, Vol. 12 The Sangha-Virtues, 2539 B.E., page 67

<sup>12</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Majjhimanikaya, Vol. 13, Mahacattarisaka Sutta, 2539 B.E., page 342



unwholesomeness must be abstained from, what wholesomeness must be performed, what leads to the complete removal of defilements. And whoever and however many people put the teachings to the test, they will always receive the same result.

Sammaditthi-10 or the ten parts of Right View that every human being must know are as follows.

1. Dana practice bears fruit (Dana means sharing what one has with others).
2. Yunna practice bears fruit (Yunna means the giving of aid).
3. Sacrificial offering bears fruit (Sacrificial offering here means venerating the persons who are worthy of veneration).
4. Good and evil deeds have their respective consequences (good deeds beget good consequences and evil deeds beget evil consequences).
5. This world exists (it means that this world benefits us because it is a suitable place for accumulating merit and Perfections).
6. The hereafter exists (it means death is not the end and life in the hereafter depends on the deeds performed here on earth).
7. Mother exists (it means that one owes one's mother a debt of gratitude, and one must do one's best to repay one's mother).
8. Father exists (it means that one owes one's father a debt of gratitude, and one must do one's best to repay one's father).
9. The Spontaneous Rising birth mode exists (it means that there exist living beings that are born fully grown. These include living beings in the States of Unhappiness, namely, hell beings, Petas, Asurakayas; and living beings in the States of Happiness, namely, celestial beings, Brahma beings, Non-Form Brahma beings).
10. There exists a sublime Brahmin who practices righteousness to the point of gaining penetrating knowledge about this world and the hereafter with his penetrating insight and teaches the knowledge to others (it means the Lord Buddha, an Arahant who has the ability to gain penetrating knowledge about this world and the hereafter through His own endeavor exists).

It can be said that whoever understands these ten parts of Right View has the knowledge to live life correctly.

#### **5.4.3 The Three Characteristics (Tilakkhana)<sup>13</sup>**

Tilakkhana can also be called Samannalakkhana, which means the Three Characteristics. It means the law of nature. The law of nature is a condition that exists in nature (Dhammadhatu). It is a fixed principle (Dhammathiti). It is common. It has no creator. It exists and it just is (Dhammaniyama). In regards to the law of nature, the Lord Buddha says that whether or not all the Lord Buddhas happen on earth, the law of nature exists and will always do. The Buddha merely penetrates the law of nature and reveals it to others so that they too may know and understand.

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Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Sanyuttanikaya, Salayatanavagga, Vol. 18, Tilakkhana, 2539 B.E., page 1



Tilakkhana or Samannalakkhana means the three characteristics that are shared by everything.

- 1) **Aniccata:** The State of Impermanence: It means changeability, not steady, not certain. When a thing comes into existence, it deteriorates and changes.
- 2) **Dukkhata:** The State of Suffering: It means unsustainability; not everlasting, changing as a result of birth, deterioration, and death.
- 3) **Anattata:** The Absence of Selfhood: It means uncontrollability, in conflict with the self, cannot be owned, emptiness, a convention, not belonging to the self.

Aniccata which is manifested externally includes gray hair, lost teeth, wrinkles, etc. Dukkhata is manifested internally in that it causes the changes to occur. Dukkhata happens because things have no real substance and are imperfect. They are flawed; therefore, they cannot remain the same and they must change.

Anattata has two meanings as follows.

- 1) Anattata which means not of the self. The corporeality (Rupa) of a person, which is made up of feeling (Vedana), perception (Sanna), compounded things (Sankhara), and consciousness (Vinnana), is not the person's self.
- 2) Anattata which means the absence of true selfhood.

Everything possesses the Three Characteristics in that everything is impermanent, it must change, deteriorate, and come to an end. Nothing is everlasting. Everything in the galaxy falls under the law of the Three Characteristics be it the earth, the country, or our body.

#### 5.4.4 The Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca-4)<sup>14</sup>

Ariyasacca means the sublime truth or the truth penetrated by Ariya individuals. Whoever penetrates Ariyasacca with his Nana (supernormal insight) is instantly a sublime individual or an Ariya individual. Ariyasacca is the heart of Buddhism. It is the highest truth discovered by the Lord Buddha in the process of His Self-Enlightenment. Some details of the Four Noble Truths are as follows.

1. **Dukkha or Dukkharīyasacca:** It means physical and mental unsustainability. The Lord Buddha penetrates Truth, which includes Dukkha or suffering as a result of corporeal unsustainability or corporeal suffering and the state of mental unsustainability or mental suffering. Dukkha here can be divided into two categories as follows.
  - 1) **Sabhavadukkha:** It is Dukkha experienced by all compounded things (Sankhara) as a result of birth, aging, and death.
  - 2) **Pakinnakadukkha:** It is miscellaneous or passing Dukkha, which includes grief, deep yearning, illness, mental discomfort,

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<sup>14</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Sanyuttanikaya, Mahavaravagga, Vol. 19, Ariyasacca-4, 2539 B.E., page 528

vindictiveness, being parted from a loved one, encountering something one dislikes, and disappointment.

The student may notice from the above two categories of Dukkha how constant change marks the process of life physically and mentally. Physical changes include birth, aging, sickness, and death. Mental changes include grief, deep yearning, illness, etc. Physical and mental changes cause all forms of suffering. It can also be said that the misguided mental state is Dukkha because it does not understand the truth about reality; therefore, it forms attachment to the body and different thoughts.

Buddhism teaches us to look at life and the world for what they are in reality. If we do not acknowledge the truth as it appears, the problems we face will not be solved correctly or they may be impossible to solve altogether.

Buddhism teaches that we must learn about and understand Dukkha so that we can find ways to address it. The Lord Buddha tells us that human beings are sick. If we believe that we are not, our condition will only worsen to the point of death as a result of our recklessness. But if we believe that we are so sick that we cannot be cured of our sickness, we would become hopeless.

2. **Samudaya or Dukkhasamudaya:** It means the cause of suffering. The Lord Buddha penetrates the cause of suffering and knows it to result from the three kinds of craving as follows.

- 1) **Kamatanha:** It is sensual craving and enjoyment. It is taking pleasure in sense-desire or what is desirable.

The word “Kama” in Buddhism has two meanings.

1. Kilesakama: It means the defilement which gives rise to sensuality.
2. Vatthukama: It means the object or emotion which gives rise to sensuality. Vatthukama includes corporeality, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

- 2) **Bhavatanha:** It means wanting to be what one desires, for example, wanting to be a movie star, wanting to be a house representative, wanting to be a Prime Minister, etc.

- 3) **Vibhavatanha:** It means not wanting to be what one abhors, for example, not wanting to repeat the same class, not wanting to get old, not wanting to have gray hair, etc.

3. **Nirodha or Dukkhanirodha:** It means the cessation of suffering. The Lord Buddha teaches that to end suffering, one must extinguish the cause of suffering. Once the cause of suffering is extinguished, suffering will be no more. The cessation of suffering here refers to the extinguishment of the three kinds of craving as mentioned above.

It is difficult to extinguish craving directly because craving has tremendous power. Craving is mental behavior. It has been so entrenched in the mind that people believe craving to be the mind’s nature, and that the two cannot be separated from each other. Moreover, people are wont to give up craving thinking craving is part of them. They do not want to extinguish it. Craving is like a roaring fire; it is difficult to be instantly

extinguished. Therefore, craving must be extinguished gradually and in a stepwise fashion by employing the Noble Eightfold Path.

4. **Magga or Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipada:** It means the path leading to the cessation of suffering or the cessation of craving. It includes the Noble Eightfold Path.

#### 5.4.5 The Noble Eightfold Path<sup>15</sup>

##### 1. **Sammaditthi or Right View:**

- 1) It is the clear understanding about suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.
- 2) It has to do with having the clear understanding about what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.
- 3) It is the clear understanding about the Law of Causation or the process of the arising of suffering and the cessation of suffering and how they relate to each other.

##### 2. **Sammasankappa or Right Thought:**

- 1) Right Thought is free-flowing. It is unconcerned about satisfying one's craving which arises from corporeality, taste, smell, sound, and touch. It also means selfless thought instead of selfish thought (Nekhammavitaka).
- 2) Right Thought is free from vindictiveness but full of loving-kindness and compassion (Abyapadavitaka).
- 3) Right Thought is about not exploiting others, not harming or destroying others (Avihinsavitaka).

##### 3. **Sammavaca or Right Speech:**

- 1) No lying (Musavada veramani)
- 2) No divisive speech (Pisunavaca veramani)
- 3) No offensive speech (Pharusavada veramani)
- 4) No nonsensical speech (Samphappalapa veramani)

##### 4. **Sammakammanta or Right Action:**

- 1) No killing (Panatipata veramani)
- 2) No stealing (Adinnadana veramani)
- 3) No sexual misconduct (Kamesumicchacara veramani)

##### 5. **Sammaajiva or Right Livelihood:**

It means earning an honest living. It means not earning wrong livelihood or earning a living by using a deceptive scheme, by being obsequious, by

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<sup>15</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Dighanikaya, Mahavagga, Vol. 10, The Noble Eightfold Path, 2539 B.E., page 348

coercion, or by giving bribes. It also includes the following five forbidden trades.

- 1) Trading human beings
- 2) Trading weapons
- 3) Trading animal flesh
- 4) Trading alcohol and other addictive substances
- 5) Trading poisons

#### **6. Sammavayama or Right Effort:**

It means the following four mental efforts.

- 1) The effort to prevent unwholesomeness from occurring (Sanvarapadhana)
- 2) The effort to stop unwholesomeness which has already occurred (Pahanapadhana)
- 3) The effort to start wholesomeness which has not yet occurred. (Bhavanapadhana)
- 4) The effort to maintain one's wholesomeness and keep it from deteriorating (Anurakkhanapadhana)

#### **7. Sammasati or Right Mindfulness:**

It means the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana-4).

- 1) Contemplating the body: It includes, for example, being mindful of one's incoming and outgoing breath (Kayanupassanasatipatthana).
- 2) Contemplating the feeling: It means being mindful of happiness, unhappiness, non-happiness, non-unhappiness (Vedanupassanasatipatthana).
- 3) Contemplating the mind: It means being mindful of one's thought. One knows if one's mind is being lustful or not lustful, angry or not angry, etc. (Cittanupassanasatipatthana)
- 4) Contemplating the Dhamma in order to develop wisdom (Panna): It means being mindful of Truth by contemplating the Five Aggregates (Khanda-5), etc. (Dhammanupassanasatipatthana)

#### **8. Sammasamadhi or Right Concentration:**

It means that the mind has achieved one-pointedness and no longer wanders haphazardly.

There are three levels of Samadhi starting from low to high as follows.

1. Momentary Samadhi or Khanikasamadhi occurs to people when performing their daily tasks.
2. Near-steady Samadhi or Upacarasamadhi is a more developed Samadhi than momentary Samadhi.
3. Steady Samadhi or Appanasamadhi is the highest level of Samadhi characterized by the different levels of Jhana attainments.

Sammasamadhi refers to Appanasamadhi and consists of four levels as follows.

1. The First Jhana (Pathamajhana): It consists of five components, namely, Vitaka: being mindful of one's incoming and outgoing breath; Vicara: contemplating one's incoming and outgoing breath; Piti: feeling content and happy (Sukha) physically and mentally as a result of solitude; and Ekaggata: steady-state mindfulness.
2. The Second Jhana (Dutiyaajhana): It consists of three components, namely, Piti, Sukha, and Ekaggata.
3. The Third Jhana (Tatiyaajhana): It consists of two components, namely, Sukha and Ekaggata.
4. The Fourth Jhana (Catutthajhana): It consists of two components, namely Ekaggata and Upekkha (equanimity).

#### **5.4.6 Nibbana**

Human life is plagued by all kinds of physical and mental suffering and no one can avoid it. It is for this reason that Buddhism teaches us to work toward putting an end to suffering and attaining Nibbana.

##### **1. The Meaning of Nibbana**

The word “Nibbana” means cessation, specifically the cessation of defilements and suffering. It also means the absence of craving (Tanha); the absence of defilements (Kilesa). It is the state devoid of defilements, hence, suffering. It is Samucchedapahana, which means the absolute extinguishment of defilements and every form of suffering. Buddhism calls the person who has attained Nibbana an Arahant.

In practice, an Arahant is a personage who has practiced according to Sila (morality), Samadhi (concentration), and Panna (wisdom) or the Noble Eightfold Path until he can attain the ultimate aim in Buddhism, namely, the Path and Fruit of Nibbana. The type of Kilesa called Sanyojana, which remains after one has practiced the three lower levels of Magga until one can attain the Fruit of Sotapanna, the Fruit of Sakadagami, and the Fruit of Anagami, will be completely extinguished once the Fruit of Arahantship can be attained. According to the teachings of Buddhism, a person who has attained Arahantship and Nibbana is called an Arahant.

##### **2. Two Categories of Nibbana**

As stated above, an Arahant is a person who has attained Nibbana, which is the ultimate goal according to the teachings of Buddhism. However, a living Arahant or an Arahant who is still living in the flesh, attains what is called “Saupadisesanibbana”. An Arahant has already extinguished defilements and every form of suffering from his mind; even so, he still experiences physical suffering such as physical pain and illness because his physical body arises from the fruit of defilements. Therefore, he still experiences physical suffering the way ordinary people do.

The difference between an Arahant and an ordinary person or an Ariya individual who has attained a certain stage of Enlightenment is that when a person possessed of defilements experiences physical suffering, he also experiences mental suffering but for an Arahant, his physical suffering cannot exert any effect on his mental condition. Once an Arahant's body dies, he will attain Anupadisesanibbana or Complete Nibbana. Upon

attaining Complete Nibbana, an Arahant has completely extinguished physical and mental suffering. He has put an end to rebirth.

The Lord Buddha's teaching on "Saupadisesanibbana and Anupadisesanibbana" can be found in the Khuddakanikaya Itivuttaka.<sup>16</sup>

The Lord Buddha's teaching on the subject shows clearly the difference between Saupadisesanibbana and Anupadisesanibbana. When a person can extinguish defilements, namely, lust, anger, and ignorance, he has attained Saupadisesanibbana, and such a person is called an Arahant in Buddhism. While he is still living, he experiences pleasure and displeasure, happiness and unhappiness because the five sense-faculties (Indriya-5), namely, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are still working properly. But since he has already extinguished defilements, pleasure and displeasure, happiness and unhappiness cannot affect his mind. Once the body passes away and he attains Anupadisesanibbana, Vedana or feeling is also extinguished.

### 3. The Reality of Nibbana

According to the teachings of Buddhism, the ultimate state called Nibbana which a person wishing to put an end to suffering is working toward, is real. And it is attainable by anyone who has completely extinguished all defilements as witnessed by the Lord Buddha's Sayings as appeared in the Khuddakanikaya, Itivuttaka,<sup>17</sup> and Udana<sup>18</sup>.

The Lord Buddha's teaching on the subject shows clearly that Nibbana is real but it is nothing like our earth. It can be said that whatever exists or appears on earth does not at all exist in Nibbana. The sun and the moon do not exist there. It is not this world or the world of the hereafter. Generally, when we think of something we know to exist, we think of it as moving to or from a certain direction. But the condition which is Nibbana is not coming from or going to, and it is not staying still in one place. It is not death (Cutī). It is not birth (Upatti). It is the condition which has no location; hence, its location cannot be described. It is also the state devoid of every emotion. It is the state which the Lord Buddha calls the end of suffering.

Nibbana is the state which is devoid of birth and activity. It is unconditioned state (Asankhata). The Lord Buddha confirms that such a state exists. If it did not, it would be impossible to work toward the emancipation from the state where there are birth, activity, and conditioning. It is precisely because the unconditioned state exists that one can practice until one can be emancipated from the round of rebirth, the conditioned state.

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<sup>16</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Khuddakanikaya, Itivuttaka, Vol. 25, 2539 B.E., page 222

<sup>17</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Khuddakanikaya, Itivuttaka, Vol. 25, 2539 B.E., pages 126, 221

<sup>18</sup> Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, The Suttantapitaka, Khuddakanikaya, Udana, Vol. 25, 2539 B.E., page 50, 158

## 5.5 Buddhism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

It is the belief of Buddhism that as long as a human being cannot be emancipated from defilements, his soul will continue to undergo the round of rebirth. A human being can be reborn as an animal. An animal can be reborn as a human being, etc., depending on the soul's overall Kamma. Rebirth can also take place in the States of Unhappiness which include the Hell Realm, the Peta Realm, the Asurakaya Realm, and the Animal Realm as well as in the States of Happiness which include the Human Realm, the Celestial Realm, and the Brahma Realm. Rebirth in these different realms is caused by each living being's defilements which in turn are the causes of Kamma and the fruit of Kamma. The fruit of Kamma gives rise to defilements, so on and so forth in an endless cycle until defilements can be extinguished and Nibbana can be attained. Once Nibbana is attained, the round of rebirth comes to an end. Therefore, Nibbana is Buddhism's ultimate goal. In Nibbana, there is no birth, aging, sickness, and death. There is no round of rebirth. There is no physical and mental suffering. Nibbana belongs to the supramundane (Lokutara) state. It is beyond convention (Sammati). It is beyond the world current. It is beyond description. It exists. Most importantly, it is not annihilation.

## 5.6 Buddhism: Its Rites and Rituals

Buddhist ceremonies are part of Buddhism. They are activities which connect practitioners with Truth or the Lord Buddha's Teachings. Buddhist ceremonies not only connect Buddhists with the Dhamma, they also express the meaning of Buddhism.

There are four different major categories of Buddhist ceremonies.

**5.6.1 Ceremonies Relevant to the Vinaya (Disciplinary Rules) and the Monastic Community (the Sangha):** These ceremonies are performed exclusively by the Sangha (four or more Buddhist monks). Such ceremonies are called "Sanghakamma". Householders can attend but not take part in Sanghakamma, which include the Ordination Ceremony, the Rains-Entry Ceremony, the Rains-Exit Ceremony, etc.

**5.6.2 Merit-making Ceremonies on Auspicious Occasions:** These ceremonies are participated by the Sangha and the householders for their blessings. There is the preparation of holy water inside an alms-bowl. Such ceremonies include marriage ceremony, house-warming ceremony, birthday anniversary ceremony, alms-offering ceremony, the forest-robe offering ceremony, the New Year's Day food-offering ceremony.

**5.6.3 Merit-making Ceremonies on Inauspicious Occasions:** These ceremonies are participated by the Sangha and the householders in order to dedicate the merit earned to departed relatives or to remove evil and misfortune.

- 1) Merit-making ceremonies when a person dies: These include the chanting of Abhidhamma, cremation, merit-making seven days, 50 days, and 100 days after the death of a person, etc.
- 2) Merit-making ceremonies to remove evil and misfortune: People in ancient times believed that certain incidents bring evil and misfortune such as a vulture perching on the top of the house, a rainbow crossing the house, etc.



**5.6.4 Worship Ceremonies on Important Buddhist Holidays:** These ceremonies are performed together by Buddhists such as Magha Puja Ceremony, Visakha Puja Ceremony, Asalha Puja Ceremony.

The first three categories of ceremonies (5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.3) are performed by Buddhists in Thailand. Buddhists in other parts of the world practice differently depending on local customs and traditions.

The fourth category of ceremonies includes ceremonies which must be performed together by members of the Four Buddhist Communities (Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas) worldwide at the same time and on the same day. They are universal ceremonies for Buddhists, the details of which are as follows.

**1. Magha Puja Ceremony:** This ceremony is performed on the fifteenth day of the third waxing moon and consists of the following activities.

- 1) Buddhist temples, government offices, and houses are decorated with the Wheel of Dhamma flags.
- 2) Buddhists make merit at the temple by offering food to the Sangha.
- 3) Buddhists listen to a Dhamma lecture.
- 4) Buddhists circumambulate a sacred Buddhist structure three times. Circumambulation can be performed all day long from morning to evening by groups of Buddhists such as government officials, soldiers, policemen, students, and the general public. Most of the time circumambulation takes place in the evening.

During circumambulation, people carry articles of worship such as flowers, lit incense sticks and candles as homage paid to the Buddha-Virtues, the Dhamma-Virtues, and the Sangha-Virtues.

#### The History of Magha Puja Day

Nine months after the Lord Buddha's Self-Enlightenment and while the Lord Buddha was staying at the Veluvana Temple in the city of Rajagarh, there was an important meeting of all of the Lord Buddha's disciples. This meeting is called "Caturangasannipata", which means the Great Assembly of Disciples marked by the union of four factors.

- 1) It was the Buddhist Holy Day, the fifteenth day of the third waxing moon.
- 2) 1,250 disciples came to meet without prior arrangement.
- 3) All of these disciples were Arahats.
- 4) All of them were ordained by the Lord Buddha.

This meeting was the first important meeting. And the Lord Buddha deemed it a good opportunity to proclaim the Fundamentals of Buddhism as well as the policy for propagating Buddhism. He gave a Dhamma lecture called the "Ovadapatimokkha", which means the Fundamental Teaching.

The teaching contained in the Ovadapatimokkha is considered to be the heart of Buddhism. It is expressed in three Pali verses. The English translation of these verses is as follows.

“Patience is self-restraint; it is a great exertion. All of the Lord Buddhas say that Nibbana is supreme Truth. A person who harms other people is not a Pabbajita (an ascetic, a monk). A person who exploits other people is not a Samana (a recluse, a Buddhist monk).

Commit no evil deeds, perform good deeds to the full extent, cleanse the mind and keep it bright and clear. This is what every Lord Buddha teaches.

Do not offend anyone verbally, do not harm anyone, exercise restraint according to the monastic code of conduct, exercise moderation in terms of food consumption, lie down and sit in a quiet place, practice meditation. This is what every Lord Buddha teaches.”

2. **Visakha Puja Ceremony:** This ceremony is performed on the fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon. The ceremony and activities of the day are like those held on Magha Puja Day.

The History of Visakha Puja Day

The fifteenth day of the sixth waxing moon is the day of the Lord Buddha’s birth, attainment of Self-Enlightenment, and attainment of Complete Nibbana. Buddhists worldwide regard this day as an important Buddhist holiday.

3. **Asalha Puja Ceremony:** This ceremony is performed on the fifteenth day of the eighth waxing moon. The ceremony and activities of the day are like those held on Magha Puja Day.

The History of Asalha Puja Day

It was the day that the Lord Buddha gave the first Dhamma lecture called the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta to the Pancavaggiya ascetics. At the end of the lecture, the head of the Pancavaggiya ascetics, Kondanna, attained the Fruit of Sotapanna. He was the first person to be ordained as a Buddhist monk by the Lord Buddha. It was the day the first Ariya disciple happened in the world. This incident brought to completion the Triple Gem, namely, the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Buddhists worldwide regard this day as another important Buddhist holiday.

## 5.7 Buddhism and Its Different Schools

Buddhism has two important schools. The split came as a result of differences in opinion in regards to the monastic code of conduct (the Vinaya) after the second Sangiti.

- 5.7.1 **Theravada School:** The monks of this school practiced according to the monastic code of conduct (the Vinaya) as decreed by the Lord Buddha, and preserved during the first Sangiti which was presided over by Venerable Mahakassapa Thera. This group of monks was also called the “Sathavira monks”. In later times, they were called “Hinayana” by the Mahayana School. Hinayana means a poor vehicle, a small vehicle, a narrow vehicle, to mean that it cannot carry a large number of living beings out of suffering due to its strict code of conduct, which makes it difficult for its practitioners to attain the ultimate goal. During the first meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Sri Lanka in 2493 B.E., it was unanimously agreed that the word “Hinayana” would no longer be used and the word “Theravada” would be used in its place. The reason is that the term Hinayana arose as a result of past

rivalry. Theravada Buddhism is found in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.

**5.7.2 Acariyavada School:** The monks of this school included the Vajji monks who practiced according to the changes their teachers had made to the original monastic code of conduct. This group of monks was also called the “Mahasanghita” monks. In later times, they referred to themselves as “Mahayana”, which means a great vehicle, to mean that it can carry a large number of living beings out of suffering due to its accommodating code of conduct. Mahayana Buddhism is found in Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea, Vietnam, Sikkhim, and Bhutan.

Theravada School and Mahayana School share similar principles, although there are many more schools and many additional Suttas and religious texts in Mahayana Buddhism. The following table shows some differences between these two schools of Buddhism.

Theravada	Mahayana (Acariyavada)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It holds the Four Noble Truths to be important.</li> <li>2. It holds the quality of Buddhists to be important.</li> <li>3. It has just one Buddha, which is the Lord Gotama Buddha or Sakyamuni Buddha</li> <li>4. It teaches emancipation from defilements and the round of rebirth for the self before helping one's fellow beings.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It holds Parami (Perfections) to be important</li> <li>2. It emphasizes quantity initially given that quality can be improved at later times. Therefore, it is necessary to modify the monastic code of conduct to make it easier to comply with. It adds deities and music to its ceremonies to attract the general public. It exaggerates the Lord Buddha's Sayings to the point where they become mere philosophy and logic.</li> <li>3. It has many Buddhas. The original Buddha is Adibuddha (blue body). Many Buddhas were born from Adibuddha's Jhana practice such as Vairojana Buddha, Akkhobhaya Buddha, Rattanasamabhava Buddha, Bhaisajjaguru, Oghasiddhi, and Amitabha. This last one appears in the human body (Manusi Buddha) as Sakyamuni Buddha.</li> <li>4. It teaches Bodhisattvahood or Buddhahumi to fully help one's fellow beings. There are many Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara, Manjusi, Vajrapani, Kasiti, Gappa, Samantabhadara, Ariyamaitreya, Etc.</li> </ol>

<p>5. It teaches Parami-10: Dana, Sila, Nekkhamma, Panna, Viriya, Khanti, Sacca, Adisthana, Metta, Upekkha for the attainment of Buddhahood.</p> <p>6. It upholds the Tipitaka which resulted from the first Sangiti. No new Dhamma-Vinaya is added.</p> <p>7. It preserves the original Dhamma-Vinaya.</p> <p>8. It teaches that an Arahant, once attaining Complete Nibbana will not be reborn.</p> <p>9. It acknowledges only Dhammakaya and certain parts of Niranakaya.</p>	<p>5. It teaches Parami-6: Dana, Sila, Vinaya, Khanti, Jhana, Panna for the attainment of Bodhisattvahood.</p> <p>6. It upholds the old Dhamma-Vinaya and adds new Suttas such as Sukhavatiputta Sutta, Lankavatara Sutta, Saddhamma-Pundarika Sutta, Paramita Philosophy Sutta, etc.</p> <p>7. It modifies the Dhamma-Vinaya according to changing environment.</p> <p>8. It teaches that an Arahant once attaining Complete Nibbana can be reborn and become a Buddha.</p> <p>9. It teaches that the Lord Buddha has three bodies: 1. Dhammakaya or the Dhamma; 2. Sambhogakaya or an Avatar of Buddha such as Lord Kassapa Buddha, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, Lord Kakusantha Buddha. These are Avatars of the original Buddha; and 3. Niranakaya, which is the human body that must age, get sick, and attain Complete Nibbana. It is the body created by the Buddha to teach people about the reality of life. It has the same concept as Brahmanism's Paramatman.</p>
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## 5.8 Buddhism: Its Religious Symbol

Buddhism has many symbols but the well-known ones are as follows.

- 5.8.1 Dhammacakka:** It means the Wheel of the Doctrine and is used to represent the Eightfold Noble Path, the four Noble Truths, gained through the Lord Buddha's Self Enlightenment. The Wheel of the Doctrine has eight spokes. It has been nationally accepted as a symbol of Buddhism. The six-colored flag of Buddhism used in Sri Lanka currently has been accepted nationally as a symbol of Buddhism. However, Thai Buddhists prefer the Dhammacakka flag with a yellow background.



- 5.8.2 The Buddha Image:** Buddha Images are crafted to depict the Lord Buddha in different postures. They are like monuments to remind people of the Buddha-Wisdom, the Buddha-Purity, and the Buddha-Compassion.
- 5.8.3 The Lord Buddha's Footprint:** In the times when no Buddha Images were available yet, Buddhists liked to craft the Lord Buddha's Footprint to represent the Lord Buddha and His exemplary conduct.
- 5.8.4 The Bodhi Leaf or the Bodhi Tree:** It is the tree where the Lord Buddha practiced meditation until He attained Self-Enlightenment and became the Lord Buddha.

## 5.9 Buddhism: Its Current Status

Today, Buddhism flourishes in Asia, and Buddhism is said to be the light of Asia. Thailand is named the center of Buddhism because Buddhism is the predominant religion in this country. More than 90% of its population are Buddhists, and Buddhism is the state religion. Every king of Thailand has been a supporter of Buddhism in legal term and in factual term. Thailand has been chosen to be the permanent headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. Each year, quite a number of men from different countries come to Thailand to enter the monkhood. There are now many foreign monks and novices in Thailand especially at the Wat Pah Nanachat in Ubon Ratchathani Province. Some of these foreign monks return to propagate Buddhism in their home country. They are instrumental in helping to spread Buddhism to non-Buddhist countries in Asia, Europe, the United States, and Australia.

In 2538 B.E. (1995), there were ninety-seven Thai temples abroad. There were fifty-one temples in the United States, eleven temples in Singapore, eight temples in Australia, seven temples in India, six temples in the United Kingdom, four temples in Malaysia, two temples each in Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands, one temple each in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Switzerland. Buddhism can spread to non-Buddhist countries because Buddhism is the religion of wisdom and loving-kindness. The teachings in Buddhism are about Truth as it appears in nature. They are more in line with science because they deal with cause and effect. Buddhism teaches people to use their intellect to consider different things which include the way to live their lives, what to choose to believe instead of just being told what to believe. Moreover, Buddhism is the religion of non-violence and forgiveness. For these reasons, non-Buddhist countries have no reason to fear Buddhism.

Buddhism enters a non-Buddhist country by founding a Buddhist society, publishing a Buddhist journal, founding a monastery, and ultimately building a temple to be the center for learning about and practicing the Dhamma as well as propagating Buddhism. There are more than 1,000 Buddhist organizations all over the world today.

In addition, former Buddhist countries like China have been allowed by their government to return to their former faith. This is one of the reasons the number of Buddhists worldwide is on the rise and is now at more than 390 million (Encyclopedia Britannica 1992:269). Moreover, the World Fellowship of Buddhists has organized many global meetings in order to keep Buddhists worldwide informed of the state of Buddhism in different countries. It is on hand to help solve problems when they arise. It works toward the unity of Buddhism by harmonizing the Buddhists of different schools so that Buddhism can be more effectively and widely propagated in the future. Buddhism is recognized as being one of the fastest growing religions in the world today.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 6

## Sikhism

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### **6.2 The History of Its Founder**

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### **6.10 Its Current Status**



## Concepts

1. Sikhism was founded in India in 1469 (2012 B.E.). It combines together certain prominent aspects of Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam. The leaders of Sikhism are called Gurus and there are altogether ten Gurus. The first Guru is called Guru Nanak. The Scriptures take the place of the Gurus after the passing of the tenth Guru.
2. Sikhism teaches three important doctrines: 1) the Trinity; 2) the Five Virtues; and 3) the Twenty-One Practices and Prohibitions as well as the means to achieve spiritual union with God.
3. The ultimate aim of Sikhism is true and eternal happiness derived from spiritual union with God or to receive God's grace. To achieve this aim, believers must repeatedly recite the name of God. Sikhs believe that human birth occurs because of Karma, but salvation is attained through God's grace.
4. There are two important schools in Sikhism: Nanakpanthi or Sahajdhari and Khalsa or Singh. As of December 2012 (2555 B.E.), there are approximately thirty million adherents<sup>1</sup> living in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc. but most of them live in India.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain a good overview of Sikhism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Sikhism, its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed, and its ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Sikh ceremonies and customs, its religious holidays, its different schools, its religious symbol, and its current status.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, Sikhism

# Chapter 6

## Sikhism

### 6.1 The History of Sikhism

Sikhism is a new religion founded in India in 1469 (2012 B.E.), which was the year Guru Nanak was born. The word “Sikh” is a Panjabi word. It corresponds with the Pali word “Sikkha” and the Sanskrit word “Sisya”, which means follower or student. Therefore, the Sikhs are followers of every Sikh Guru. Sikhism was founded at the time when Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam were having such severe conflicts that they were killing each other. Noble-minded Nanak could not come to terms with the situation and did his very best to find ways to bring peace back to the country. His effort resulted in the founding of Sikhism. It is the religion that seeks to harmonize different religions in India especially Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam.

Besides having its own teachings, Sikhism also incorporates certain prominent teachings of other religions especially Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam while at the same time removing the undesirable parts such as the caste system, narrow-mindedness, corrupted deities, etc. Sikhism teaches that all people are brothers and sisters, since they all come from the same God. It teaches that God has different names such as Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Akala, Purukha, Eka, Nirabhao, etc. He is the God of all humanity, not just the God of the Hindus, the Muslims, etc. God is everywhere and He is in everyone’s heart.

Although God dwells in everything, not everything is God. It is like the scent of a flower where the flower is not the scent. Or it is like a reflection in the mirror where the mirror is not the reflection. The God of every religion is the same God. No religion should claim God as its own. God belongs to every religion and all humanity. The different names used to call God or the different abodes of God are merely differences in time and place. Guru Gobind Singh said that Mosque, palace, and Vihara are places for people to practice righteousness but they differ in time and place.

There are Sikh hymns (Japji) about incorporating the God of Brahmanism-Hinduism into Sikhism. For example, in the teaching of the Guru, one hears the voice of God; in the teaching of the Guru, one obtains wisdom; in the teaching of the Guru, one learns that God is everywhere. Guru is Shiva. Guru is Vishnu and Brahma. Guru is Paravati, Lakshmi, and Sarasvati. This teaching shows the Hindus how the three great deities of Brahmanism-Hinduism and their wives also exist in Sikhism.

In summary, the aim of Sikhism is to harmonize different religions in India especially Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam. It aims to create unity in terms of God, religion, and humanity for the sake of bringing true peace to this world. A brief history of Sikhism is as follows.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Noss, David, A History of the World’s Religions, 1994, pages 83-85

### **Guru Nanak**

1469 - 1539 (2012 – 2082 B.E.): He was the first Sikh Guru to spread Sikhism to every region of India as well as abroad such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Saudi-Arabia, etc. for the purpose of creating harmony between Hindus and Muslims. He teaches people to be a good householder, and a good adherent of their religion. He also lay down Sikh practices such as Sangat, which is the meeting of Sikhs in the evening; and Pangat, which is the sharing of meal where everyone comes together and helps clean the dining hall, do the dishes, etc. He also founded the city of Kartarpur in Panjabi.

### **Guru Angad**

1504 – 1552 (2047 – 2095 B.E.): The second Sikh Guru improved upon and promoted the religious use of orthography and font. He also set up charity kitchen to feed the poor and reinforced the practices of Sangat and Pangat initiated by Guru Nanak.

### **Guru Amar Das**

1479 – 1574 (2022 – 2117 B.E.): The third Sikh Guru built Sikh temples (Gurdwaras) in Sikh villages. He transformed society by objecting to the covering of faces by women and the practice of Sati (where wife jumps into the burning pyre to die along with her husband). He taught that women could also achieve emancipation from rebirth.

### **Guru Ram Das**

1534 – 1581 (2077 – 2124 B.E.): The fourth Sikh Guru built the Sikh center in the city of Ramdaspora and the large pond called the Amritsar, which means the immortal pond. He also had a plan to have a temple built in the middle of the pond.

### **Guru Arjan Dev**

1563 - 1606 (2106 – 2149 B.E.): The fifth Sikh Guru had a temple built in the middle of the immortal pond as planned by the previous Guru and named it the Har Palace. Sometime later, King Ranjita Singh 1780 – 1799 (2323 – 2342 B.E.) of Panjabi State as well as other Sikhs donated enough gold to be fashioned into gold sheets to be used to cover the Har Palace. The temple was subsequently called the Golden Temple. It is a beautiful temple and considered to be one of the world's masterpieces. It has four doorways to symbolize the openness of the Sikhs to all peoples and religions. This Guru also compiled together the teachings of the first to the fourth Gurus with his own as well as the teachings of the sages in other religions such as Ramnanda and Kabir into a religious text called the Adi Granth. He also established the rule for every Sikh to tithe one-tenth of his income for charity purposes. This Guru was eventually executed by King Jhangir. Before his execution, he proclaimed the separation of Sikhism from Brahmanism-Hinduism and Islam. He proclaimed that he was neither a Muslim nor a Hindu. He forbade the Sikhs to fast the way Hindus and Muslims did. He refused to worship with the Hindus. He would not go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He would not pray before any object of worship in Islam and he would not say Muslim prayers.

### **Guru Hargobind**

1595 – 1645 (2138 – 2188 B.E.): The sixth Sikh Guru was the son of Guru Arjan Dev. This Guru carried a sword and formed a 2,200-men cavalry to defend themselves against the attacks of the Mughal forces. Albeit just 2,200 men, they managed to defend themselves against every attack by King Jahajhan's forces. Faced with persecution, Guru Hargobind was the first Guru to take up sword to defend his country and his religion. He used the kettle and the sword as the symbols of secular power and religious power. These symbols are still in use by Sikhs today.

### **Guru Har Rai**

1630 – 1661 (2173 – 2204 B.E.): The seventh Guru strengthened the cavalry, built hospitals, and extended the charity kitchen. This Guru was loving and kind and enjoyed helping the poor. His conduct inspired Bhagatabhagavan, a Hindu priest, to convert to Sikhism.

### **Guru Har Krishan**

1656 – 1664 (2199 – 2207 B.E.): The eighth Guru was appointed when he was just five years and six months old. It shows that age is not a reflection of ability especially mental capacity. For example, one Brahmin challenged him to a debate. Guru Har Krishan told the Brahmin to bring anyone, and he would let that person hold the debate for him. The Brahmin brought a person belonging to the Shudra caste named Chajju whom everyone knew to be the most stupid person. Guru Har Krishan touched Chajju with his staff and said to him, "Chajju, be now a sage of the Bhagavadgita interpretation and answer this Brahmin's question. Amazingly, Chajju became a clever sage who could hold a debate with the Brahmin.

### **Guru Teg Bahadar**

1621 – 1675 (2164 – 2218 B.E.): The ninth Guru propagated Sikhism to every part of India following in the footsteps of Guru Nanak. He successfully stopped the war between the government force from Delhi and the force of King Ramraya of Tai Ahom. He was eventually executed by King Aurangzeb.

**Guru Gobind Singh** 1666 – 1708 (2209 -2251 B.E.): The tenth Guru was the son of the ninth Guru. He became the leader of Sikhism when he was just nine years old. He was well-educated and was fluent in several languages such as English, Sanskrit, Persian, etc. He was a poet, a warrior, and a good administrator. He fortified the city of Anandapura and prevented it from invasion. He called on the Sikhs to be courageous. He also laid down certain rules and regulations to be practiced by the Sikhs. For example, he prohibited hair- and beard-cutting for life to make the Sikhs stand out from other people so that they could come together in strength to fight against enemy forces and help each other. He taught that power and virtue go hand-in-hand. Virtue without power is ineffective in that there will be no protection. Power without virtue is beastly. He wrote an additional religious text by compiling some of the previous Gurus' teachings together with his own. It is called the Dasam Granth. He was the last Guru because he did not appoint anyone to take his place before he died. He wanted the religious text the Granth Sahib to be the Guru. Sikhism after the tenth Guru went through periods of growth and decline depending on who was in power. But mostly it grew until it now has more adherents than Jainism and Zoroaster combined.

## **6.2 Sikhism: The History of Its Founder<sup>3</sup>**

### **6.2.1 His Birth and Childhood**

The founder of Sikhism is Guru Nanak. He was born on April 15, 1469 (2012 B.E.) in the small village of Talvandi. Today, it is called Nankana Sahib. It is located southwest of Lahore on the bank of the Ravi River in Pakistan. He was born in a Brahmin family. His father's name was Kalyan Chand Das Bedi, shortened to Mehta Kalu, and his mother's name was Mata Tripta. His father was an accountant for crop revenue in the village of Talwandi, employed by a Muslim landlord of that area, Rai Bular Bhatti.<sup>4</sup> His mother was a very religious person.

When Nanak was seven years old, he was educated by a Muslim teacher. It was said that he had always been intelligent and intellectual. He also loved to read. He was already asking his teacher intelligent questions about God. He studied the Vedas and became a scholar of the Vedas. Two years later, he studied Persian in order to learn about Zoroastrianism and Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism. Nanak's intelligence and intellect allowed him to successfully hold religious debates with religious teachers since childhood. Sikhs believe their Guru Nanak to have the ability to teach people since he was nine years old.

Nanak was gentle and magnanimous. Although he was not wealthy, he enjoyed sharing what he had with others until he became widely known for his generosity. He loved to learn about religion. He did not like soldiering or trading or the high position offered him by the government. He was determined to found a new religious faith in order to solve the disharmony plaguing society at the time. He tried to research the different teachings, compare them, and improve upon them so that they were in line with what was needed in society. His efforts were supported by his family and friends.

### **6.2.2 His Marriage**

When Nanak was fourteen years old, he married a girl from the same village. Her name was Sulakkhani. They had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand. After ten years of marriage, Nanak found marriage life wanting because he and his wife liked different things. Nanak preferred peace and quiet but his wife preferred fun and entertainment. Nanak was happy composing hymns of praise to God. He was loving, kind, gentle, and generous. Finally, when he was thirty-six years old, he decided to leave his wife and sons to seek for spiritual peace in the forest.

### **6.2.3 His Spiritual Encounters**

Soon after Nanak left his family to practice meditation in the forest, one day after a bath, as he sat practicing meditation, he had a spiritual encounter. During the spiritual encounter, he was drinking immortal (Amrit) water given to him by God. It is written in the Granth Sahib that God gave Nanak a cup of immortal water. Nanak took it in gratitude and God said to Nanak, "I will be

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<sup>3</sup> Sikh Missionary, Sikh Religion, 1990, pages 7-10

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, Guru Nanak

with you. I will give you peace and happiness. And I will also give everyone who believes me through you happiness. Leave this place. Go forth and think of me. Teach people the way you are doing now. Go and keep the earth clean. Think of me by reciting my name constantly. Be loving and kind. Be clean. Continue to practice meditation. In the future, you will be people's Guru." Having had the spiritual encounter, Nanak felt confident and extremely happy. He immersed himself in the experience for three more days in the forest before leaving the forest to return to his village.

#### **6.2.4 His Ministry**

Upon returning home, Nanak gave alms to the needy and helped the sick by giving them medicine and healing them. Afterward, he put on the garb of an ascetic and went places to teach people. In his days, the government was in a chaotic state. There was no justice. People with less power were intimidated and taken advantage of by people who had more power. There was no justice in the court of law. Rulers were ruthless. There was no honesty among the people. There were epidemics. Peace and happiness were practically non-existent. Nanak became a teacher and a physician. He taught people to exercise justice, to practice morality, and to be devoted to the one God.

Nanak showed himself to be both a Muslim and a Hindu. When he dressed to go out and teach people, he would wear a red garb the color of a ripe Areca nut. Red is the color of freedom according to Brahmanism-Hinduism. He wore a rosary of bones around his neck and anointed his forehead like a Hindu using saffron. At the same time, he wore a Muslim hat. His dress code was one way of inspiring adherents of both religions to be more tolerant of each other. This is what Nanak teaches, "Sikhism is the religion of all people. God is harmless. God has no enemy. He is not a destroyer. He is the Creator. I do not have God just for the Muslims. I have just one God. He is the God of everyone in the entire world. He is not partial to caste, color or creed. He has no hatred. He has no curses. He is not like other gods."

"My God is eternal. He exists even now. He has no birth. He is self-existent. I can achieve union with God with the help of Gurus (meaning Nanak as the first Guru)."

"My God is not appointed. He dwells alone. He is not controlled by anything. He is devoid of death. He has no origin. He has no family and lineage. He is incomprehensible. He is devoid of form and attributes. I come to God and I meet God inside what is made up of all forms."

Guru Nanak wanted Muslims and Hindus who were antagonizing each other about race and creed to live in harmony with each other. As a Hindu, Guru Nanak wanted Muslims to believe in his teaching. He had an important Muslim follower named Mardana, who used to be a musician. Mardana employed music as a principal tool for teaching Sikhism. Guru Nanak and Mardana traveled together to different towns in North India, which was the center of Brahmanism-Hinduism all the way to today's Cashmere. They went to teach people in different towns for twelve years and gained a large number of followers. They returned to Guru Nanak's hometown to teach for a time before leaving for South India and all the way to Madras State, the center of Jainism. They also went to Sri Lanka to teach their doctrines. The most important place that Guru Nanak went to teach the doctrine of "harmony,



equality, faith, and love” was Saudi Arabia. He went all the way to Mecca, the center of Islam, to teach his doctrines.

Guru Nanak is the first Indian religious leader who trekked to Mecca. He left Mecca and continued to travel and teach in Medina and all the way to Baghdad in Iraq. There, his audience was all Muslims. During his teaching, someone shouted, “Who are you? What religion do you subscribe to?” to which Guru Nanak replied, “I am the Guru. I’ve traveled here in order to bring good things to the people. I reject all religions. I worship the one God right here, in heaven, and everywhere.”

During his travels, Guru Nanak had met with harm. He suffered physical injury, and he was punished by those who were in power. Despite these obstacles, he never gave up. He endured and persisted in his endeavor for thirty-five long years. He had converted a large number of Muslims and Hindus, turning them into peace-loving, tolerant people. He had successfully fulfilled his motto, “harmony, equality, faith, and love.”

### **6.2.5 The Last Part of His life**

Although Guru Nanak dressed like an ascetic, he in fact did not live like one (Sikhism has no monastic personnel) because he had lived at home with his wife and children. When he was seventy-one years old, he knew that his time on earth would come to an end soon. The Granth Sahib described his life at this point that Guru Nanak knew that his end was near. Therefore, he passed his work onto his chief disciple “Lahina” or in some sources “Bailahna”. Actually, Guru Nanak wanted his sons to take over his lifework but they were faithful adherents of Brahmanism-Hinduism and could not bring themselves to believe as their father did. This fact pained Guru Nanak especially near the end of his life.

The Granth Sahib described the end of Guru Nanak’s life in miraculous terms as follows. Guru Nanak felt exhausted and went to rest under a tree in Gatepura Tamon, Panjabi State. At the time, lush plants were flowering profusely and miraculously as if to greet and worship him. A large number of his Muslim and Hindu followers were on hand to attend to him. When it became apparent that their Guru would not live much longer, the Guru’s Muslim followers said that after their Guru’s death, he should be buried. The Guru’s Hindu followers said that the Guru should be cremated according to Hindu customs. The two groups began to quarrel. Guru Nanak heard the quarrel and told his followers to stop quarrelling. He told the Hindu followers to place flowers on his right and the Muslim followers on his left. After he died, whichever flowers bloomed first, let that party handle his body. He then asked his followers to chant while he covered himself up completely getting ready to face God. In the morning, when they removed the cover, the body was gone. The flowers on both sides bloomed at the same time to the amazement of the followers. Both groups of followers performed the memorial ceremony without their Guru’s body. They erected a monument in that place and at the bank of the Ravi River, the birthplace of another Guru.

After Guru Nanak’s death, Bhailahna or Lahina became the second Guru. He was called Guru Angad. The third Guru was called Guru Amar Das. The fourth Guru was Guru Ram Das. The fifth Guru was Guru Arjan Dev. The sixth Guru was Guru Hargobind. The seventh Guru was Guru Har Rai. The eighth Guru was Guru Har Krishan. The ninth Guru was Guru Teg Bahader.



The tenth and last Guru was Guru Gobind Singh. After the last Guru, the Granth Sahib has served as the Guru up to the present day.

The Gurus and the years they served as Gurus are as follows.

- |                       |                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Guru Nanak         | 1503 – 1538 (2046 – 2081 B.E.) |
| 2. Guru Angad         | 1538 – 1552 (2081 – 2095 B.E.) |
| 3. Guru Amar Das      | 1552 – 1574 (2095 – 2117 B.E.) |
| 4. Guru Ram Das       | 1574 – 1581 (2117 – 2124 B.E.) |
| 5. Guru Arjan Dev     | 1581 – 1606 (2124 – 2149 B.E.) |
| 6. Guru Hargobind     | 1606 – 1638 (2149 – 2181 B.E.) |
| 7. Guru Har Rai       | 1638 – 1664 (2181 – 2207 B.E.) |
| 8. Guru Har Krishan   | 1664 – 1675 (2207 – 2218 B.E.) |
| 9. Guru Teg Bahader   | 1675 – 1686 (2218 – 2229 B.E.) |
| 10. Guru Gobind Singh | 1675 – 1707 (2229 – 2250 B.E.) |

### 6.3 Sikhism: Its Religious Texts

The Granth Sahib is an important Sikh religious Scripture. The word “Granth” corresponds to the Pali word “Gantha”. The word “Sahib” means “Lord”. Therefore, Granth Sahib means the Lord Scripture or the Lord Book. It is divided into two parts.

#### 1. The Adi Granth Sahib:

It means the first scripture. This text was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru in 1604 (2147 B.E.). It was a compilation of the teachings of the first four Gurus together with his own teachings. It also contains the teachings of the Hindu sage Ramnanda and the teachings of the Muslim sage Kabir.

#### 2. The Dasam Granth: It means the tenth scripture. This text was compiled by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru. It was a compilation of the teachings of some of the previous Gurus together with his own teachings.

The bulk of the scripture is classified into rags, with each rag subdivided according to length and author. There are 31 rags and 29,480 saloks within the Granth Sahib. It is written in six different languages: Panjabi, Multani, Hindi, Marathi, Prakriti, and Persian. The reason for these six languages is that each author would use whichever language he was fluent in. For this reason, it is difficult for anyone to read the entire scripture. The Granth Sahib is now kept inside the Golden Temple located in the middle of the Amritsar Pond in Panjabi State, which is an important historical building as well as the center of Sikhism. Sikhs regard this scripture to be as sacred as God, and they keep watch over it. It is wrapped inside an expensive cloth, enshrined on an altar under a white umbrella and inside a curtain embroidered with diamond chips. In the evening, Sikh officials move the scripture to a gold bench inside a special room. In the morning, it is moved inside the curtain once again. No one else is allowed to touch it. Dust is not allowed to settle on it.

## 6.4 Sikhism: Its Doctrines

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. It teaches a universal God called “Ik Onkar”. Ik Onkar has none of the characteristics of Hindu deities. Ik Onkar has no love or hatred like the Islam or Christian God. “Ik Onkar” is omnipotent and infinite. Ik Onkar has power over everything. Ik Onkar is constant, beyond time and space, without form, without gender.

According to Guru Nanak, the world has no Hindus, no Muslims, etc. It means that God belongs to everyone. There is no caste system. And there is no race except the human race.

Sikhism teaches the following important doctrines.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.4.1 Trinity

In Sikhism the concept of Trinity includes:

- 1) God
- 2) Sri or Sikh teaching
- 3) Akaal or the timelessness of God

### 6.4.2 The Five Virtues

It was Guru Gobinda Singh who set up the five K's which baptized Sikhs are bound to wear at all times:

- 1) Kes: Sikhs are not allowed to cut their hair or shave their beard and mustache.
- 2) Kangha: Sikhs must wear a small wooden comb in their hair.
- 3) Kara: Sikhs must wear an iron bracelet.
- 4) Kirpan: Sikhs must wear a sword/dagger.
- 5) Kacchera: Sikhs must wear a special undergarment.

Baptized Sikhs must also abstain from...

- 1) Cigarettes and alcohol;
- 2) Eating meat killed in a ritualistic manner;
- 3) Hair cutting, beard and mustache shaving;
- 4) Participating in Muslim rites.

The Five Virtues were practiced as a result of wars. Sikhs wear an iron bracelet or carry a dagger to show that they belong to the same side or to have a weapon ready for self-protection and to remind them to be as tough as steel.

### 6.4.3 Twenty-One Practices and Prohibitions

Guru Gobinda Singh started the Sikh baptism. The baptized person is sprinkled with sacred water before drinking the sacred water in which a sword is immersed to signify that the drinker of the sacred water is a brave person. This water is called “Amrit Water”. Its drinker is considered to be pure (Khalsa) and ready to fight for his country and religion.

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<sup>5</sup> Sikh Missionary, Sikh Religion, 1990 pages 252-253

Once the Amrit Water has been drunk, the person must practice according to the Twenty-one practices and prohibitions.

**a. The Practices**

1. A Sikh is to regard every Guru as his father.
2. A Sikh is to regard the city of Pataliputra (Patna today), the birthplace of Gobinda Singh and the city of Anandapura (where Gobinda Singh went to get ready to fight King Aurangzeb) as sacred cities.
3. A Sikh must not practice the caste system.
4. A Sikh must be willing to give up his life in battle.
5. A Sikh must worship: 1. Sacca (God), Sri (Sikh teaching), Akaal (the timelessness of God); 2. The Adi Granth and the Dasvenpad Sahib; and 3. Purity.
6. A Sikh must adhere to the 5K's: Kes, Kangha, Kara, Kirpan, and Kocchera. Sikhs who live abroad must wear a two-inch knife inside their hair.
7. A Sikh must use Singh as his last name (Singh means being as brave as a lion).
8. A Sikh must regularly train in the ways of horseback-riding, sword-fighting, and wrestling.
9. A Sikh must remind himself that he was born to help alleviate other people's suffering.
10. A Sikh must worship God and practice hospitality.

**b. Prohibitions**

11. Sikhs are not allowed to quarrel with each other.
12. Sikhs are not allowed to lie.
13. Sikhs are not allowed to commit misdeeds caused by sexual desire, greed, anger, and ignorance.
14. Sikhs are not allowed to keep the company of those who are enemies of the faith.
15. Sikhs are not allowed to keep the company of those who do not promote the sovereignty of nation.
16. Sikhs are not allowed to wear anything red.
17. Sikhs are not allowed to remove their turban except when taking a bath.
18. Sikhs are not allowed to gamble.
19. Sikhs are not allowed to cut their hair, shave their mustache, their beard or their head.
20. Sikhs are not allowed to be involved with those who are enemies of their faith.
21. Sikhs are not allowed to dress elegantly or nonsensically.

There are other fundamental Sikh teachings as follows.

1. **Unity:** It means the absence of conflicts. People who compete and fight with each other stand to lose on both sides. Losers lose benefits and honor. Winners win benefits but lose in other ways. A good community must stand united.
2. **Equality:** It means the source of energy. Any community devoid of division in terms of gender and caste can work together for the good of the community. Conversely, the caste system causes division and everyone stands to lose.
3. **Faith:** Faith in the Supreme Timeless One causes a person to be courageous, patient, and diligent, attributes which bring about success.
4. **Love:** It means the energy that makes everyone live together happily. Anger and hatred destroy the community. They cause suffering and harm to the people of that society.

These four fundamental principles help a person to achieve liberation. At the same time, one must avoid evil which is the cause of harm and sin. These five evils include:

1. **Craving:** Craving is inherent in human nature and it is difficult to be free from it except for a highly virtuous person. Therefore, Sikhism allows a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife but sexual misconduct is forbidden.
2. **Anger:** It is the source of conflicts. Therefore, a person must exercise patience and know to forgive.
3. **Greed:** Material wealth gained by honest means is allowed but not when it is in excess. Satisfaction and contentment help to control greed.
4. **Ignorance:** Not knowing the truth and blind faith cause wrong decisions and suffering. Ignorance is a result of attachment.
5. **Ahankara:** It is the worst defilement because it causes envy and jealousy, arrogance, self-promotion and division. A good Sikh must be humble, gentle, forgiving, loving, and kind.

Sikhs believe each person's practices have an effect on life in the hereafter. Practicing according to the Sikh teaching will bear fruit in a stepwise fashion from the first step to the highest step. Such practices are called "Khanda".

1. **Dhammakhanda:** It is the fulfillment of one's duty, which includes performing good deeds, being impartial. It is the realm of action.
2. **Nanakhanda:** It is the use of knowledge to achieve greatness. It is the realm of wisdom.
3. **Saramakhanda or Hansakhanda:** It is the realm of ecstasy. In this realm of existence, there is only entertainment, wish fulfillment, and beauty.
4. **Karmakhanda:** It is the realm of spiritual power. In this realm of existence, there is power. A person who can achieve this level of Khanda will be fearless and eternal. He will be like a celestial being.
5. **Satayakhanda:** It is the realm of truth. It is the last realm of existence. A person who can achieve this level of Khanda becomes one with God.

#### **6.4.4 Spiritual Union with God**

The spiritual union with God can be attained by constantly meditating on the name of God and by obeying the teachings of the Gurus of that religion.

#### **6.4.5 The Supreme Timeless One**

Sikhs believe that there is only one God, the ultimate truth which has no origin because God is the origin of everything. God is the final destination to whom everything must return. God is eternal. God is beyond time and space. God is formless. God is beyond human understanding. God has enormous powers. God's greatness and perfection is limitless. God is in every person regardless of his social class, gender, age or race. We can know God through all the things He has created. But these creations cannot be regarded as God, since God is formless and limitless. God can be known through the practice which leads to the union with God or salvation. The practice involves keeping one's mind clean and pure by meditating on God's name constantly so that God will be in one's mind at all times; thereby, one's impure mind will be made clean and pure. It can be compared to a glass of dirty water where the dirty water must be poured out first before clean and pure water can be added to the glass. Sikhs call God "Kartapurukha", which means the creator of the world and everything. Sikhs also refer to God by the following names.

Ek Ongkaar: It means the one God who is the Supreme Timeless One, beyond description and human understanding.

Sat Nam: It means God is Truth. God exists and is the origin of everything.

Nir Bhau: It means God is fearless because God owns the world.

Nirvair: It means God has no enemy and no hatred.

Akaal Murat: It means God is beyond time and space. God is eternal.

Ajooni: It means God has no origin.

Sai Bhang: It means God is self-existent.

Gur Prasad: It means the compassion that God has for Guru Nanak and showed it by allowing the Guru to know God so that Sikhs can know God.

### **6.5 Sikhism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal<sup>6</sup>**

Sikhs believe that there is only one God. God is the God of all humanity. God is not confined to one particular religion. God has many names such as Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Ek Ongkaar, Sat Nam, Karta, etc. God is the source of goodness. God is loving, kind and compassionate. God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. God created the world and everything. To create the world, God first created fog and gas. These two things circulated for ten million million years before the ground, the stars, water, air, and other things appeared. Later, 8,400,000 kinds of living beings appeared and human beings are above all other beings because they can practice the teaching until their minds become clean and pure so that they can attain salvation through spiritual union with God. They can attain salvation by meditating on the name of God at all times.

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<sup>6</sup> Satien Pantarangi, Comparative Religion, 2516 B.E. pages 194-195

## **6.6 Sikhism: Its Monastic Life**

Sikhism does not subscribe to monasticism, although they do have temples. Guru Amar Das wanted a Sikh temple built in every village that had Sikh villagers. He also wanted to propagate Sikhism in twenty-two districts in India; each district was under the responsibility of a devout Sikh in that district.

Teachers of Sikhism wear no uniform. Liberated saints do not practice chastity in the Sikh temple. Anyone can perform religious ceremonies. Scholars of the scripture are allowed to read it. Singers of hymns are not monks. Religious personnel are volunteers. Women have the same rights as men in performing religious work and can participate in every religious ceremony such as baptism, marriage, memorial service, etc. Scripture reading is the duty of every Sikh.

## **6.7 Sikhism: Its Rites and Rituals**

The practices and traditions a Sikh must adhere to include the following.

### **6.7.1 Pahul**

Pahul is the ceremony of initiation into Sikhism. Every initiated Sikh is bound to wear the 5K's.

- 1) Kes: Uncut hair
- 2) Kangha: Small wooden comb
- 3) Kara: Iron bracelet.
- 4) Kirpan: sword/dagger.
- 5) Kacchera: special undergarment.

Every baptized Sikh takes the last name “Singh” because he has been through the process of Khalsa of “Vaheguru”. And he is now God’s property.

### **6.7.2 The Sikh Baptism**

Every Sikh must attend the Sikh Baptism where he receives the Amrit Water. The Sikh Baptism was begun during the times of Guru Govind Singh where five Panj Pyares (beloved of God) are present. These are virtuous individuals who are learnt in the Sikh teachings. During the ceremony, they are seated in a row facing the Guru. Today, they sit facing the Granth Sahib. They are seated with the right knee on the floor and the left knee perpendicular to the floor. Before them is a stone altar, on which a large bowl of water with drops of sugar added to it is placed. Inside the bowl there is a double-edged sword. Both the bowl and the sword are made of good quality steel (originally they were made of inexpensive and easily available metals used by the general public in India in those days). The water in the bowl is stirred with the sword while five verses of the scripture are read, one verse by each of the five Panj Pyares in the following order.

1. Yapyi Sahib
2. Yap Sahip
3. Svaye
4. Chopaii
5. Ananta Sahib

After the chanting, all five Panj Pyares bring the water for the baptized persons to drink. These persons sit behind the five Pan Pyares facing the Granth Sahib. After drinking the Amrit Water, in some places, the person being baptized must proclaim, “Khalsa is God. Victory belongs to God.” (Khalsa here means the Sikhs, both words are used interchangeably.)

### **6.7.3 Kirtan**

This ceremony is performed to worship God. Sikhs generally chant with the accompaniment of music. Such music is considered to be celestial music. Its purpose is to help the chanter’s mind to be with the divine quicker and better. The musical instrument is like a square box and may be referred to as the music box.

Sikhs chant in the morning before dawn and in the evening at dusk. It is their duty to chant every day.

### **6.7.4 Wearing the Turban or Dastar**

Sikhs dress differently from other groups of people in India because they wear a turban. A turban has been worn by Sikhs ever since Guru Nanak founded Sikhism.

In the birthplace of Sikhism, a turban is the symbol of saints and sages. It is part of the dress code of Asian people in ancient times. Turban in the Panjabi language is Dastar. It is a cloth 4.5 meters long and around 1.25 meters wide. The material preferred is sheer cotton but some Sikhs may prefer a thicker material. Some may prefer the cloth to be as long as 7 meters. There is a smaller turban called Dastara, which is 1.5 to 2 meters in length and is used as an inner turban inside the outer one. The turban can be any color but most Sikhs in Thailand prefer white or bright blue.

To the Sikhs, the turban is not simply part of the traditional dress code but it symbolizes the continuity of their religion. When the head of a family dies, a turban will be placed on the head of his eldest son to signify that he is continuing the tradition in his father’s place.

A person first wears the turban when he is a grown man. The turban is removed only as a punishment. Therefore, whoever removes another person’s turban will be barred from all religious ceremonies until an apology is made and the punishment is exacted according to the scripture. Sikhs will fight for the right to wear their turbans in different countries. The first time this happened was in the United Kingdom. Therefore, wearing a turban is the lifestyle and the heart and soul of the Sikhs. It is a reflection of their commitment to their faith.



### 6.7.5 Free Kitchen

This tradition is part of the religious practices. Sikhs call this practice “Pangat” or “Langar”. It means charity kitchen or free kitchen because it is open to the public regardless of their caste, gender, and race. Everyone is warmly welcome. This tradition was started by Guru Nanak and has been practiced by Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das up to the present time.

Dining in the free kitchen promotes brotherhood, which is an important principle in Sikhism. Partakers must sit on the seat arranged in rows at the same level. There is no master. There is no servant. There are no differences in race and creed. Sikhs come together to help cook and serve the meal. Sikhs donate food or money to the free kitchen to make sure that there is always enough food to feed the public.

## 6.8 Sikhism: Its Different Schools

There are two important schools in Sikhism.

1. **Nanakpanthi or Sahajdhari School:** Members of this school adhere to the teaching of Guru Nanak. They live simply. They can cut their hair and shave their mustache and beard.
2. **Khalsa or Singh School:** Members of this school adhere to the teaching of Guru Govind Singh. They do not cut their hair, shave their mustache or their beard all their lives.

## 6.9 Sikhism: Its Religious Symbols

One important religious symbol is the kettle and the sword representing service and power.

The second religious symbol is the 5K's.

The third religious symbol is called “Khanda” whereas Khanda is a special type of double-edged sword. Khanda is the symbol used most frequently today. It is printed on books to signify Sikhism. The Khanda constitutes three symbols in one: two crossed swords below the Khanda and a circle as depicted below.



## 6.10 Sikhism: Its Current Status

Sikhism is a relatively young religion, and yet its adherents outnumber those of Zoroastrianism and Jainism combined. There are now (as of December 2012) about 30 million Sikhs worldwide. Approximately 70% live in Panjabi. There are large Sikh communities in Canada, East Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

Sikhism teaches its adherents to conduct themselves similarly wherever they live. Sikhs are known to be hard-working, thrifty, honest, brave, patient, and a good warrior. Sikhs make up only 2% of the Indian population but they have made a name for India. Sikhs are India's leading farmers because they know to apply leading technology to their farming. Their personal conduct and character make them successful in whatever profession they take up.

Sikhs are top-rate warriors. In defending India against China, Pakistan or other countries, it is the Sikh soldiers that have made it possible. They are outstanding athletes. Most of the Indian athletes who win different medals in international competitions are Sikhs. Sikhs are bankers and successful traders in and outside of India.

Today, the center of Sikhism is in the city of Amritsar in Panjabi State of India. The center is represented by the Golden Temple. Sikhism is growing gradually but the Nanakpanthi School is being assimilated by Brahmanism-Hinduism.

Sikhs and Hindus had lived together in peace for a long time but in recent times political problems in India caused certain groups of Sikhs to want to separate from India to establish an independent state of their own called "Khalistan". However, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the soldiers to the temple in order to kill the Sikh militants causing many innocent Sikhs visiting the temple to be killed as well. Later, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards. These incidents have given rise to Hindu-Sikh conflicts in Panjabi ever since.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 7

## Taoism

### **7.1 The History of Taoism**

### **7.2 The History of Its Founder**

7.2.1 His birth and childhood

7.2.2 His Middle Years

7.2.3 The Last Part of His Life

### **7.3 Its Religious Texts**

### **7.4 Its Doctrines**

7.4.1 The Three Treasures

7.4.2 Harmony with Nature

7.4.3 Characteristics of a Good Person and the Happiest Life

7.4.4 The Three Great Purities

7.4.5 The Philosophy of Life

### **7.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **7.6 Its Place of Worship**

### **7.7 Its Rites and Rituals**

7.7.1 Taoist Vegetarian Festival

7.7.2 Quelling Evil Spirits and Ghosts

7.7.3 Chasing Away Evil Spirits

7.7.4 Taoist Funeral Rite

7.7.5 Ancestor Worship

### **7.8 Its Different Schools**

### **7.9 Its Religious Symbols**

### **7.10 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Taoism was founded in China approximately sixty-one years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. Initially it was not a religion but a philosophy. It had no rites or rituals and it was nothing more than just thoughts and teachings. It was not until sometime later that it was developed into a religion and had all the components of a religion. Taoism is an atheistic religion and its founder is Lao Tzu.
2. The Taoist text is called the Tao Te Ching. Its teachings include the three treasures of compassion, moderation, and humility; living in harmony with nature; characteristics of a good person and the happiest life; the three great purities; and the philosophy of life.
3. Important Taoist rites include the Taoist Vegetarian Festival and ancestor worship. The ultimate destination of a Taoist is true and eternal happiness called the Tao. To become one with the Tao, one must live in harmony with nature, and exercise self-restraint. To live in harmony with nature keeps the mind calm. Taoists believe that one is born on earth just once and the hereafter is the spirit world which lasts forever.
4. There are several schools in Taoism but the two most important ones are the Zhengyi School and the Quanzhen School. Its religious symbols include the image of Lao Tzu riding a water buffalo and the Yin-Yang Symbol.
5. Currently, there are approximately 183 million Taoists in different countries where there are large Chinese communities such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, etc., but most adherents of Taoism live in China.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Taoism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Taoism, the history of its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about important Taoist rites and rituals, its different schools, its religious symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 7

## Taoism

### 7.1 The History of Taoism

Taoism is an odd religion in that originally it was not a religion at all. Moreover, its supposed founder knew nothing about it becoming a religion. When he was living, Lao Tzu never proclaimed himself a religious leader and he did not found Taoism. What changed a philosophy into a religion is Lao Tzu's goodness and philosophical prowess. He was credited with being the founder of Taoism centuries after his death. A story has been told that by the time of Lao Tzu's death, he already had a large number of followers. Chief among these was a man called Zhang Dao Ling. He was responsible for spreading Lao Tzu's teachings until Taoism received more and more recognition. For example,

In the year 156 (699 B.E.), Emperor Hwan performed the first Lao Tzu worship.

In 650 – 684 (1193 – 1227 B.E.), Lao Tzu was elevated to the same status as a Chinese Emperor and the knowledge of Lao Tzu's teachings was tested in imperial exams.

Taoism became a religion because during the reign of the Hun Dynasty (approximately 206 B.C.E - 220 A.D. or 337 B.E. – 763 B.E.), an ascetic called Tia Tao Leng who claimed to have achieved the ability to communicate with deities, established Taoism as a religion at Mount Hor Meng Sua in Szechuan Province by claiming Lao Tzu to be the religious leader. He based the religious text on the book written by Lao Tzu called the "Tao Te Ching". Tia Tao Leng wrote several additional Taoist texts. Each of them dealt with supernatural powers, magic spells and the prescribed rituals needed to make the magic spells work. For example, there are medicinal concoctions for longevity and immortality, magic spells for flying like a celestial being, etc.

As a result, Taoism can be divided into two categories: Philosophical Taoism called Daojia; and Religious Taoism taught by Tia Tao Leng and his successors, which is a form of mysticism. Zhang Tao Ling or Zhang Ling, who was appointed as the first Supreme Patriarch of Taoism in 34 A.D. (577 B.E.), had a sacred sword believed to be able to kill evil spirits 1,000 miles away. This form of Taoism is called Daojiao. For the purpose of this book only Philosophical Taoism will be presented.

Taoism underwent periods of growth and decline depending on the political environment. During the times when Chinese emperors were adherents of Taoism, it flourished; at other times, it declined. Its worst decline happened during the Communist era in China. The history of Taoism prior to the Communist era is as follows.

In 212 B.C.E. (331 B.E.), Emperor Shi Huang Ti commanded Confucius texts to be burnt because he was an adherent of Taoism. He also sent a ship to one magic island to obtain a plant believed to be the fountain of youth.

In 156 A.D. (699 B.E.), Emperor Hwan performed the first Lao Tzu Worship.

In 574 – 581 (1117 B.E. – 1124 B.E.), Emperor Wu changed the ranking of religions as follows: first, Confucianism; second, Taoism, and third, Buddhism. Later, he developed a dislike for Taoism and Buddhism and cancelled their ranking altogether. During the reign of Emperor Tsing, Taoism and Buddhism were added to the list once again.

In 650 – 684 (1193 B.E. – 1227 B.E.), Lao Tzu was elevated to the same status as a Chinese emperor, and the knowledge of Lao Tzu's teachings was tested in imperial exams.

In 713 – 742 (1256 B.E. – 1285 B.E.), Emperor Kai Yuen distributed copies of the Tao Te Ching text all over China and he also consumed the medicinal concoctions prepared by the Taoist monks. He gave credence to the magical powers of Taoism.

In 825 – 827 (1368 B.E. – 1370 B.E.), Emperor Pao Li expelled all Taoist monks to the two southernmost provinces because they were guilty of being conniving.

In 805 – 847 (1348 B.E. – 1390 B.E.), Emperor Wu Tsung closed down all of the Taoist and Buddhist temples. Later, he became an adherent of Taoism and consumed the medicinal concoctions prepared by the Taoist monks because he wanted to be immortal and able to fly like a celestial being.

In 1661 – 1721 (2204 B.E. – 2264 B.E.), Emperor Kang Hsi ordered the punishment of the illegal Taoist doctors and their patients. He forbade Taoists to meet and march in protest. Every Taoist school came under great pressure under his reign.

In 1900 (2443 B.E.), The Boxer Rebellion was initiated by members of one Taoist school. These men believed their bodies to be impenetrable to the bullets of foreigners based on the Taoist teaching that a soldier had no need to fear any weapon.

Taoism used to flourish in China. It has its own religious texts. It has its own monks called “Tao Sur” or “Tao Yin”. It has its own temples. Around the year 423 (966 B.E.), the Chinese emperor appointed a Taoist Supreme Patriarch along with its line of succession. The Taoist Supreme Patriarch is called “Tien Jeuh” or Celestial Master. Around the year 1016 (1559 B.E.), Zhang Tien Jeuh was given a large tract of land in the city of Kiang Si, and the White Deer Cave on the Dragon-Tiger Mountain believed to be the place where Zhang Tao Ling found the fountain of youth and died when he was 123 years old. This place is considered sacred for Taoists.

## **7.2 The History of Its Founder**

Lao Tzu was honored as being the founder of Taoism because he was the writer of the Tao Te Ching text and he also taught other people to follow his teachings in order to help solve societal problems.

### **7.2.1 Lao Tzu's Birth and Childhood**

Lao Tzu was born in 604 B.C.E. or 61 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era (he was nineteen years younger than the Lord Buddha). He lived between 604 – 520 B.C.E. He was born in the Lee family of poor rice farmers during the reign of the Jew Dynasty (1122 – 255 B.C.E.) in a small village called “Ju Yen” in the city of Honan in central China. It was said that he was born under the mulberry tree. When he was born his head was covered with white hair. Therefore, he was given the name Lao Tzu, which means an old child. Here the word old means old with knowledge because Lao Tzu was just a child in body but his level of intelligence was that of a wise adult or a sage. His extraordinary intelligence foretold a great and bright future for him.

In another source, it was written that besides being born with a head covered with white hair, he performed a miraculous act by pointing his left hand at the sky and his right hand at the ground and proclaimed, “The sky above, the ground below, Tao is the only thing worth worshipping.”

In another source, it was written that Lao Tzu was in his mother's womb for sixty-two years. By the time he was born, he was an old man with white hair. This may not be possible in reality. It could be an analogy used to describe Lao Tzu's second birth after having spent time alone to carry out his search for knowledge. Having found the knowledge, he went out at sixty-two to teach it to other people.

Lao Tzu had been highly intelligent and a deep-thinker since childhood. He received his education from nature and from everything and everyone around him.

### **7.2.2 His Middle Years**

When Lao Tzu<sup>1</sup> grew up, he was given a job by the government as the head librarian of the public library in the city of Lok Iang, the capital city of the Jew Dynasty. He was also the imperial scribe. In his work as a senior official, he had the opportunities to learn many different things and witness many events. He conducted himself according to the Tao. He was a virtuous person. At one point, the country was experiencing serious problems as a result of corruption and public servants taking advantage of each other. Government leaders could not solve the problems. Lao Tzu became so tired of having to work and live among unethical people that he became discouraged. Eventually, he decided to solve his own problem by leaving his work to live in solitude. He left Honan and traveled west (to India or Tibet). It was said that Lao Tzu was a bald man with a long beard and was often seen going places riding on his water buffalo.

### **7.2.3 The Last Part of His Life**

Lao Tzu had ridden his water buffalo to teach the people in different places. One day, he met Confucius, another important Chinese sage. They had a conversation by way of questions and answers. Lao Tzu advised Confucius to be careful and not be too ambitious. An example of their conversation is as follows.

Confucius said, "I wish to pay homage to all the sages of the past." Lao Tzu said, "The people whom you wish to pay homage are all dead, only their remains are left. So, you should abandon you wish."

Confucius said to Lao Tzu, "I have studied a great deal but I still do not know what Tao is." Lao Tzu said, "If Tao can come inside a person, who would not want it? Why don't you try to bring Tao inside you?"

When Confucius returned home, his followers asked, "How was it?" Confucius said, "I know how a bird flies. I know how a fish swims. I know how an animal runs. And I know how to catch it. A trap is needed for some animals. A lure is needed for other animals. An arrow is needed for some animals. But now there is a kind of animal. It is the dragon. I cannot say how it climbs up to the sky. I cannot say how it climbs past the clouds or into the heavens. Today, I met Lao Tzu and I realize that Lao Tzu is a dragon. And it is difficult to understand him."

To Confucius, Lao Tzu is like a terrible dragon beyond understanding. He dreams and searches for reality. He prefers natural living. In his view, good deeds and evil deeds are paid back in kind by nature. He sees the world as a trap. He is tired of the world. He said let the world be and it will be happy and

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<sup>1</sup> Gare, Joseph, What Great Religion Believe, 2533 B.E. pages 110-111



well. To Confucius, Lao Tzu is like a person who dreams of other worlds, flying amidst the clouds of his own dream. To Lao Tzu, Confucius is a busybody. These two most influential men of China had drastically different methods in solving societal problems. Confucius was a man of the world and he belonged to the world. Lao Tzu was a man of the religious world and wanted to leave the world. They might differ in methodology and conduct but they had the same goal, which was peace for humanity especially the people in China.

Lao Tzu lived a very simple life, preferring solitude, peace, humility, virtue, and helping others out of a loving and kind heart. It was written in the Tao Te Ching that ...

“Every person wants to be happy. I prefer solitude. I enjoy being alone. You can find fault with me if you like but I do not want the kind of happiness enjoyed by other people. I am stupid and cowardly. I am different from all the happy people. I left those people in search of the Tao (the way of nature).”

“People call me a sage. But I am not what they say I am. I do however possess three treasures, which I cause to happen inside me always. Other people should also take good care of their three treasures, which are loving-kindness, frugality, and humility.”

“My words are easy to understand, easy to follow but no one can know and follow them because people do not know nature. And they do not know me.”

Lao Tzu is said to cherish the three virtues of loving-kindness, frugality, and humility. These are the virtues that characterize Lao Tzu.

Lao Tzu had a long lifespan. He lived for more than 160 years. Some sources say more than 200 years. It is believed that Lao Tzu’s attainment of the Tao gave him longevity. It is believed that whoever attains the Tao will be long-lived or immortal. If he dies, his body will not decompose. Lao Tzu rode his water buffalo out of China and headed west. At the border, the border guard recognized him. The guard asked Lao Tzu to explain to him his life philosophy so that he could write it down for future generations. Lao Tzu permitted the guard to write down some of his teachings. They were mostly about the world, nature and life. The book is called the “Tao Tek Keng” and comprises approximately 5,500 words. It became one of the important texts in Taoism.

From that point on, Lao Tzu was never heard of or seen by anyone again.

Since Lao Tzu spent the last part of his life in solitude, searching for the truth, finding harmony with nature, Taoists of future generations practiced asceticism in the mountain and in the forest leaving the chaotic world behind them. They practiced natural living or Tao Sur.

The Chinese people regard Lao Tzu as a great sage and have built memorial objects and a memorial building in his honor in the village of Ju Yen, Lao Tzu’s birthplace. Lao Tzu’s teachings gained popularity with time. One Chinese emperor who ruled China between 650 – 688 A.D. (1193 - 1231 B.E.), made a proclamation honoring Lao Tzu as the first Chinese emperor.

## 7.3 Taoism: Its Religious Texts

The Taoist text is called the Tao Te Ching. “Tao” means way “Te” means merit, goodness or virtue; Ching means formula or high literature. Together they mean Taoist scripture and virtue. According to its history, the book was written by Lao Tzu after he resigned from his post as the head librarian. The book had been given to the border guard at the border between China and Tibet. It was written in Chinese, and contains 81 topics and 5,500 words. Later, it was translated into different languages such as Latin, English and French. The Tao Te Ching is the most translated book and second only to the Bible.

The Tao Te Ching teaches that there is a type of energy which causes everything to move and controls things to be as nature intends. It teaches people to be virtuous and content, and not to be ambitious, boastful, competitive, power-hungry, etc. Taoism is about virtue and ethics.

## 7.4 Taoism: Its Doctrines

### 7.4.1 The Three Treasures<sup>2</sup>

Lao Tzu encouraged every human being to cultivate the three treasures for the good of himself and society. Lao Tzu said, “People call me a sage but I am not what people say I am. But I do have within me the three treasures, which people should cherish.

1. Loving-kindness
2. Frugality
3. Humility

When a person is loving and kind, he has nothing to fear.

When a person is frugal, he can become wealthy.

When a person is humble, his intelligence can fully mature.

When a person forsakes loving-kindness, he can hold on to courage alone.

When a person forsakes restraint, he can hold on to power alone.

When a person refuses to be a follower but rushes ahead of others, he will die.

### 7.4.2 Harmony with Nature

Lao Tzu teaches people to live in harmony with nature as best they can. Law is not needed to force someone to perform good deeds or evil deeds but nature rewards and punishes everyone accordingly. Fight unrighteousness with righteousness. Fight dishonesty with honesty. Fight evil with goodness.

“When someone is good to one, one should be good to him.

When someone is not good to one, one should still be good to him.

Therefore, everyone should be a good person.

When someone deals with one honestly, one should deal honestly with him.

When someone deals with one dishonestly, one should still deal honestly with him.

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<sup>2</sup> Koon Tojan, The Way of Tao, 2537 B.E. page 168

Therefore, everyone should be an honest person.”

He teaches people to overcome aggressiveness with gentleness.

“When a person is first born, he is soft and weak.

But when he dies, he is hard and stiff.

When an animal or a plant is still living, it is soft and pliable.

But when it dies, it is fragile and dry.

Therefore, hardness and stiffness is the stuff of death.

Softness and courteousness is the stuff of life.

Therefore, a tough and aggressive army loses the battle.

When a tree is hard, it is felled.”

“What is large and strong stays below.

What is courteous and gentle stays above.”

### 7.4.3 Characteristics of a Good Person and the Happiest Life<sup>3</sup>

Lao Tzu teaches that “The best person is like water. Water benefits everything and it does not compete with anything at all. Water at the lowest level is near Tao...” (Everything grows because of water but it does not struggle to move higher. It is happy to stay in a low place where everything else tries to avoid. This is the nature of Tao.)

Allowing life to proceed simply without competition, letting it evolve naturally, not struggling for position and power, and helping others without expecting anything in return is the happiest life according to Lao Tzu.

### 7.4.4 The Three Great Purities

The three great purities taught by Lao Tzu and should be regarded as the Doctrines of Taoism include:

1. **The Original Root (Jing):** It means heaven or Wu Xing-Tien Chun or Tien Pao Chun, the kingdom of purity where the great deity or the Jade Emperor dwells. The great deity’s body is made of jade. He radiates light as bright as that of the sun to let the people see the reality of the world.
2. **Energy (Qi):** It means the energy of intelligence and ability or Wu Qi-Tien Chun or Ling Pao Chun. The great deity divides time into day, night, and season. He is the master of yinyangism or pairs of opposite (yang vs. yin; darkness vs. light; the sun vs. the moon; male vs. female, etc.).
3. **Spirit (Shen):** Or Fan Jing-Tien Chun or Shen Pao Chun. The great deity is the master of all spirits. Lao Tzu is the avatar of the great deity who came to teach human beings. Shen can be compared to Paramatman or Brahma in Brahmanism-Hinduism.

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<sup>3</sup> Potjana Jantarasanti, The Way of Tao, 2523 B.E., page 168

### 7.4.5 The Philosophy of Life

For life to be good, one must practice the following four principles.

1. Juh Jai: Know one's self.
2. Juh Zeng: Conquer one's self.
3. Juh Jok: Self-contentment.
4. Ji I-Tao: Uphold the Tao Ideal

## 7.5 Taoism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

Taoists believe that Tao is sacredness of nature. Tao is the energy of every form of goodness. Therefore, everyone must identify with the Tao and whoever is able to do it will become an immortal person. Such a person may be called by several names such as Satya, Yogi, deity, supernatural. There are two types of immortal persons: the forest type and the domestic type. A forest immortal person includes the Yogi who leaves the community to live in the mountain or the forest in search of solitude with the Tao as his goal. It is written in the Zhuangzi about this type of Yogis as follows.

At the distant Mount Ko Sia Sua, there lives a heavenly human being. His complexion is as white as snow. He has the gentle deportment of a young lady. He subsists on wind and dewdrops. He uses clouds or a dragon as his means of transportation as he travels the four oceans. By the power of his meditative attainments, he can turn wherever he passes by into a land of milk and honey. Nothing can harm him, not even the great floods. Fire hot enough to melt stone or iron cannot harm him. Deadly cold weather cannot kill him. Nothing can perturb him or harm him. The Yogi's ashram is located near a human community and he still sees people but he is not dominated by secular emotions because he has identified with the Tao. He is beyond desirable and undesirable emotions. A Satya individual does not dream when he sleeps. He is not worried or anxious when he is awake. He lives simply. He takes no pleasure in birth or death. He sees birth and death as being natural.

Tao Jiao Taoism<sup>4</sup> is about magic and mysticism. Zhang Tao Ling was a Taoist leader in the second century and he had a temple in the mountain of Ho Ming Zhan in Szechuan Province. It is said that Zhang Tao Ling met up with the immortal Lao Tzu there. And Lao Tzu told him that there are many evil spirits all around that bring diseases and death as well as calamities. Therefore, human beings should know how to overcome these evil spirits so that they can be long-lived and healthy. And if they are good at magic spells, they can use these evil spirits to work for them by using them as soldiers in a battlefield. It is also said that Lao Tzu gave Zhang Tao Ling two magic swords.

Both Taoist schools have the same goal which is to identify with the Tao. The Daojia School aims at identifying with the Tao in order to know reality, the result of which is spiritual peace and happiness. The Daojiao School aims at identifying with the Tao in order to use it to perform different tasks such as using charm spells, fortune-telling, healing, physical invulnerability, flying in the air, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> Liu Da, *The Tao and Chinese Culture*, 1981, page 71

## 7.6 Taoism: Its Place of Worship

A Taoist temple or shrine has strict rules when it comes to interior design and placement of different objects. In Taiwan where there are a large number of Daojiao Taoists, there are differences in the practice between North Taiwan and South Taiwan resulting from their belief in deities and black magic and the need to bless the worshippers.

However, the Taoist shrine usually contains paintings of deities and important Tao masters. The direction in which these paintings are placed depends on local beliefs. Important paintings of Tao masters include:

1. The painting of Zhang Tao Ling riding a tiger: It comes from the belief that Zhang Tao Ling rode the tiger to heaven and returned with the celestial powers bestowed upon him by deities.
2. The painting of Lao Tzu in a yellow garb: He is the master who revealed important teachings to Zhang Tao Ling.
3. The painting of Wern Jian, one of the four Tao warriors who protect the shrine in the east.
4. The painting of Ju Yi in a red garb: Red is the symbol of the sun and the heart. Sunlight dispels darkness and evil. The heart opens the way for one to identify with the Tao. Ju Yi's painting is usually placed near Tao Ling's painting. In Ju Yi's hand is the yellow scroll believed to be the command to open heaven.
5. The painting of an emperor in the garb of a warrior: It is usually called Emperor of the North. His painting is usually placed opposite that of Zhang Tao Ling.

In addition, there is an altar where offerings are placed in different prescribed directions depending on which direction a deity dwells. The more elaborate a ceremony, the larger the altar, and in some cases it can extend outside the shrine.

There are two types of Taoist priests who perform the Taoist ceremonies depending on which Taoist school they belong to. Most Quanzhen priests practice celibacy and adhere to a very strict practice. They practice contentment and meditation quite similar to the Buddhist monks. They do not perform many ceremonies. However, Zhengyi priests can marry and they perform rites to remove evil and bless those who are having problems. They wear a special garb to perform ceremonies and it is usually quite elaborate and magnificent.

There are three types of ceremonial garb altogether and these include Tao Pao, Chiang-I, and Hai Ching.

**Tao Pao** is worn often and practically for every ceremony. It is a red dress with the Yin-Yang symbol embroidered on it. The Tao Pao belonging to the head priest is orange to distinguish him from other priests. The entire dress is elaborately embroidered.

**Chiang-I** is worn during official and important ceremonies. The head priest wears this ceremonial dress to signify that he represents the heavens. It is made of red silk embroidered with details of heaven and the universe. If the head priest dons this ceremonial dress, the assisting priest must wear the Tao Pao dress. If the head priest dons the Tao Pao dress, the assisting priest must wear the Hai Ching dress.

**Hai Ching** can be red or orange in South Taiwan. It is worn during basic ceremonies such as chanting and other less formal ceremonies.

## 7.7 Taoism: Its Rites and Rituals

**7.7.1 The Vegetarian Festival:** Latter days Taoism deviates from what is taught in the Tao Te Ching. For example, Taoists now believe in black magic. They adopt the practice of Sila-5 as taught in Buddhism. They practice vegetarianism. There is now an annual vegetarian festival. Some Taoists may vow to practice vegetarianism for life. Devout Taoists abstain from meat consumption on the first and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Chinese lunar month. But most people practice vegetarianism during the annual Vegetarian Festival, which begins on the first day of the ninth lunar month for a period of ten days. Practitioners generally cleanse their stomach three days before the festival and may continue to practice vegetarianism for an additional one to three days at the end of the festival.

**7.7.2 Quelling Evil Spirits and Ghosts:** Taoists believe that evil spirits and ghosts can be chased away and guarded against if they know how to do it. For example, singing or whistling when walking in the woods can keep forest ghosts away because they do not like the sound of music. They can be repelled by music the way mosquitoes can be repelled by smoke. To prevent a ghost from following one inside the house, one is to stop at the front door of the house and turn oneself around two or three times before entering one's house. They believe such an act makes the ghost dizzy and causes it to run into a wall or a fence. Or one can have an image of the woods painted on the front door of the house to fool evil spirits and ghosts into believing the house is a forest so that they would not harm anyone. Etc.

### 7.7.3 Chasing Away Evil Spirits

Taoists believe there are numerous evil spirits and ghosts which haunt and harm people. For example, they may appear to people in a hideous form or they may make strange sounds, etc. Their trickery can cause the victim to fall ill. Therefore, evil spirits and ghosts must be chased away. The ritual where evil spirits and ghosts are to be chased away is performed by Taoist priests who don a hat with seven stars on it as well as an inscribed cloth. At the beginning of the ritual, each of the five priests holds a different color flag: green, red, yellow, white, and black; and go to stand at the four cardinal points. Images of Taoist deities are hung up. Joss sticks are lit, mantra water is prepared, and musical instruments are played. One priest holds the sword and water. Another priest holds a flag with seven stars on it. Another priest holds a whip to chase away evil spirits and ghosts. All the priests then chant together in order to entreat different deities to help them remove all the evil spirits and ghosts from the place.

### 7.7.4 Taoist Funeral Rite

Chinese people have a high respect for their ancestors. When a relative dies, the family must perform a funeral rite to help the spirit of the deceased to go to a good place, live happily and not be bothered by evil spirits and ghosts. Details of the funeral rite depend on the financial standing of the deceased and the person who hosts the rite. When a high-born person dies and the person who hosts the funeral rite is wealthy, the rite may comprise forty-nine priests and last for forty-nine days. If a middle-class person dies, the rite may comprise just one priest and last from one to three days depending on the

financial situation of the person who hosts it. Taoist priests play musical instruments and recite magic spells to help the deceased avoid punishment in the spirit world. During the funeral rite, a Taoist priest would use fresh red ink to write down the day of birth and the day of death as well as the name of the deceased on two sheets of yellow paper. The two sheets of paper are stamped with the temple logo and serve as a death certificate. One sheet is placed inside the coffin and the other sheet is burnt in order to help the deceased reach the deities directly without being detained by local spirits. When the coffin is being carried to the cemetery or the cremation site, Taoist priests would lead the procession and ring a bell constantly, play music, and recite the mantra all at the same time.

#### **7.7.5 Ancestor Worship**

Chinese people not just Taoists adhere to ancestor worship. Taoists believe that there are spirits in everything. They believe that if they practice ancestor worship, their ancestors' spirits would watch over them and bless them with a good and happy life. Ancestor worship takes place once a year. Worshippers go to their ancestors' graves to clean them and decorate them. They light joss sticks and make an offering of alcohol and food as well as burnt silver and gold paper to the deceased.

### **7.8 Taoism: Its Different Schools**

There are several Taoist schools but the two most important ones are the Zhengyi School and the Quanzhen School. The Zhengyi School flourished in South China along the southern part of the Yangtze River. It emphasizes the magical powers of the Celestial Masters. It is also called by another name, Tien Juh. It is believed that Zhang Tao Ling is the first Celestial Master. He possesses the magic sword which can kill evil spirits as far away as 1,000 miles. This Taoist school believes in charms, omen, magic, and magic spells. They have numerous magic spells such as the magic spell for rain, the magic spell for preventing the rain from falling, the magic spell for guarding against ghosts, etc. They also practice mediumship. Priests of this school can marry and live as a householder.

The Quanzhen School flourished in North China along the northern part of the Yangtze River. Members of this school adhere to the original Taoist teachings. They practice natural living. They are peace-loving. They live simply. Many of them leave the householder life to live at the temple, practice vegetarianism and occasional fasting. Priests of this school are not allowed to marry or drink alcohol. This school has the tendency to combine the teachings of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism into one.



## 7.9 Taoism: Its Religious Symbols

The Taoist religious symbol is the image of Lao Tzu riding on a water buffalo. The reason for this is that Lao Tzu traveled everywhere riding on a water buffalo. During his travel to the border between China and Tibet he was last seen riding on a water buffalo. Another Taoist symbol is the image of the Yin and Yang, a circle divided into two equal parts to signify natural dualities such as darkness vs. light; day vs. night; female vs. male, etc.



## 7.10 Taoism: Its Current Status

Taoism used to flourish in China<sup>5</sup> but suffered badly during the Communist era beginning in 1949 (2492 B.E.). The Communist Party regarded every religion as an addiction; hence, every religion was looked upon in a bad light. For example, Confucianism was looked upon as representing the ruling class. Taoism was looked upon as representing blind faith in magic and charms. Buddhism was looked upon as being foreign; the validity of its teachings was doubted. Christianity was looked upon as being foreign and representing Colonialism. Islam was looked upon as being foreign and entirely unsuitable for the government of China. Therefore, every religion had to be destroyed so that they could not obstruct the development of the country. The worst situation faced by religion in China was during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 (2509 B.E.). Religious beliefs were held to be old-fashioned and useless. Temples and churches were destroyed. Religion became so unpopular and dangerous that adherents did not dare profess their religious faith. Many Taoists immigrated to Taiwan including Chang Ir Pu, who had been appointed the Celestial Master and the Taoist Supreme Patriarch. He was respected and feared as the ruler of evil spirits, ghosts, and other strange beings.

Today, there are Taoists, Taoist priests and priestesses, Taoist shrines, and charity kitchen serving vegetarian food in Chinese communities but they do not practice according to the teachings contained in the Tao Te Ching. They subscribe instead to mediumship and deity worship. Taoist priests chant and give blessings, sprinkle mantra water, sell charms, perform rites where ghosts are chased away, concoct love potions, etc. In some places, they practice Sila-5 or the Five Precepts as taught in Buddhism and recite the Sutras of Mahayana Buddhism or a mixture of Taoism and Buddhism. They do not study the Tao Te Ching but practice according to Taoist customs.

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<sup>5</sup> Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, 1994, pages 210-212

The situation for religion has been improving in China. After the death of Mao Zedong, the leader of the Communist Party, and since 1977 (2520 B.E.), the Chinese government has had more contact with the outside world. There has been an increase in free market economies. Oppression of religion has decreased, and people have more freedom in choosing a religion. Those who believe in Taoism dare show themselves as adherents of Taoism. It is a fact that beliefs cannot be destroyed by might but must be replaced by a different set of beliefs. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica 1992:269, there are approximate 183 million Taoists living in different countries where there are large Chinese communities such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, etc., but most Taoists live in China.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 8

## Confucianism

### **8.1 The History of Confucianism**

### **8.2 The History of Its Founder**

8.2.1 His Birth and Childhood

8.2.2 His Marriage

8.2.3 His Middle Years

8.2.4 The Last Part of His Life

### **8.3 Its Religious Texts**

8.3.1 The Five Classics

8.3.2 The Four Studies

### **8.4 Its Doctrines**

### **8.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **8.6 Its Place of Worship**

### **8.7 Its Rites and Rituals**

### **8.8 Its Different Schools**

### **8.9 Its Symbols**

### **8.10 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Confucianism was founded in China approximately eight years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. This religion is called by its founder's name, Confucius. During the times of Confucius, his teaching was not considered a religious teaching. It was not until after his death that his followers and devotees so admired his teaching that the government proclaimed Confucianism to be a religion.
2. Confucian texts are divided into two categories. Confucius' writing is called "Keng" or "King". It comprises the Five Classics. And the writing of Confucius' followers are called "Xue". It comprises the Four Studies.
3. The core teaching of Confucianism is humanism. Confucius deemed economic life, social life, religious life, and political life to be one and the same thing, hence, cannot be separated from one another. The center of social, economic, political and religious ideal is the cultivation of virtue and the maintenance of ethics.
4. There are three important Confucian rites: The worship of Confucius; the worship of the sky, earth, sun and moon; and the worship of heaven and ancestral spirits. Confucianism holds true and eternal happiness or heaven as its ultimate life-goal. To enter heaven, one must cultivate virtue and maintain one's personal ethics. Confucians believe that life on earth happens just once. After one dies, one goes to live forever in the spirit world or heaven.
5. Some of its religious symbols include the sculpture and image of Confucius, the Yin-Yang image, a name plate with Confucius' name inscribed on it, the painting depicting two Chinese men in ancient Chinese dress paying respect to each other.
6. There are approximately 300 million Confucians today. Confucius is lauded as China's number one sage.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to learn about Confucianism.
2. To enable the student to learn about its history, the history of its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, and its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Confucian rites and rituals, its symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 8

## Confucianism

### 8.1 The History of Confucianism

Confucianism was founded eight years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era based on Confucius' year of birth. In fact, when Confucius was still living, he never proclaimed himself to be a religious leader. The only proclamation he ever made was that he was a student forever in search of knowledge. Neither did he claim his teaching to be a religious teaching. Confucianism became a religion in the same way that Taoism became a religion. Confucius died in the year 479 B.C.E. (64 B.E.). After his death, his followers helped spread his teaching until the time of, Meng Zi, Confucius' principal follower who spread Confucius' teaching far and wide until the time of the Han Dynasty when Confucius was regarded as a deity and Confucianism was proclaimed the state religion of China.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Confucius' status had been increasingly elevated as follows.

In 195 B.C.E. (348 B.E.), the Chinese Emperor went to Confucius' gravesite to make him a sacrificial offering.

In 1 A.D. (544 B.E.), Confucius was given a noble title equivalent to an English duke.

In 89 A.D. (632 B.E.), Confucius was given a noble title equivalent to an English earl.

In 267 A.D. (810 B.E.), it was decreed that a sacrificial offering was to be made to Confucius four times a year.

In 492 A.D. (1035 B.E.), Confucius was heralded the top sage of China.

In 700 A.D. (1243 B.E.), a sculpture of Confucius was placed inside the royal academy beside the sculptures of Chinese emperors.

In 1068 – 1076 (1611 – 1619 B.E.), Confucius was elevated to the status of Chinese emperor.

In 1906 (2449 B.E.), Confucius was given the same status as the deity of sky and earth, the highest deity according to Chinese beliefs.

Confucianism has more to do with philosophy than religion because it deals with ethics and humanism. It has to do with what a person can do in order to achieve personal happiness and prosperity, social happiness, national happiness, and global happiness. Confucianism does not teach high virtue or the mystery of the soul and the hereafter. It does not deal with metaphysics but it is still called a religion because: 1) it has a religious leader or founder; 2) it has religious texts; 3) it has its religious personnel or priests; 4) it has its shrines where its priests live; 5) it has its religious sites, rites and rituals. Since Confucianism deals with human beings in the current existence only, it is also called the religion of humanism.

Confucianism places great importance on human beings, since it is human beings who create growth or decline as well as other happenings on earth. Human beings are at the center of everything that goes on in this world. Therefore, human beings must cultivate virtue and maintain ethics so that they can bring good things to themselves and the world. The question is how can a person become good and decent? Confucius said that

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<sup>1</sup> Home, Robert E., *The World's Living Religions*, 1957, pages 117-118

the answer lies in virtue, traditions and customs, knowledge and technology given to us by our ancestors.

Confucius devoted his time studying different technologies accumulated throughout the Chinese ancient past. He had worked hard to revive ancient knowledge and such ancient traditions and customs as sky and earth worship, sun worship, moon worship, ancestor worship, etc., in order to build good and decent people. Confucianism is about virtue and ancient technologies with a new interpretation. It teaches the principle of putting oneself in another person's shoes when dealing with each other. How to conduct oneself in life according to Confucianism can be summarized into just one Chinese word, "Shu", which means not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.

Confucianism used to flourish in China alongside Taoism and Buddhism. But because Confucianism does not deal with metaphysics, when the Chinese want to learn about the hereafter, they have to turn to Taoism or Buddhism. Confucianism plays an important role for Chinese Buddhists as well. Therefore, Chinese people have a tendency to subscribe to all three religions simultaneously, namely, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. They mix and match the teachings of these religions together until it is difficult to separate which teaching belongs to which religion. There is a Chinese saying, "Sum Kow", which means the teachings of all three religions. It had been this way until China came under Communist rule when every religion especially Confucianism was very much threatened because it was deemed as a religion that taught people to keep with traditions, customs, and social distinction. Confucian teaching crashes violently with communist principles. Adherents of Confucianism had to keep their faith secret for their own safety. Many had to immigrate to Taiwan. Today, Taiwan has become the center of Confucianism.

## **8.2 Confucianism: The History of Its Founder**

Confucius is held as the founder of Confucianism. The word "Confucius" is a Latin word and corresponds with the Chinese term "Kung Fu Tzu" which means Master Kung.

### **8.2.1 His Birth and Childhood**

Confucius was born in 551 B.C.E or eight years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era in the Kung family, a poor soldier family living in Lu Province. Today it is in Shan Tung County, Chu Fu Province in northern China. His father was a soldier by the name of Ju Liang Ho or Chok Liang Yid. He possessed exceptional physical strength. His mother's name was Jin Jai. According to history, Confucius was born when his father was seventy years old and his mother gave birth to him in a cave in a certain mountain.

It was said that Ju Liang Ho was married but had a daughter and a son by a mistress. Both were physically handicapped. Chinese custom requires that only the son born of a person's wife can worship the soul of his father for the soul's happiness. Therefore, not having a proper son to carry out ancestor worship posed a real problem for Ju Lian Ho, and he decided to remarry when he was seventy years old. He married a seventeen-year old girl and they had a son together. When Confucius was three years old, his father died. His mother became a widow at the age twenty and had to work hard to raise Confucius until he was old enough to help earn a living. Confucius had to work hard to support his mother and himself.

Confucius loved to study but he had to wait until he was fifteen years old before he could go to school. He had studied for three years until he was eighteen when he got a job working for the imperial granary of Lu State as the imperial pets' minder. Since Confucius was clever, hard-working, and loyal and got on well with his bosses, they treated him well. Even the governor of Lu State was fond of him and his career advanced quickly.

### **8.2.2 His Marriage**

When Confucius was nineteen years old, he married a girl from a good family. On his wedding day, the governor of Lu State honored him by sending him two fishes as his wedding gift. Confucius thought the gift auspicious and decided that he would name his firstborn "Po Yu", which means beautiful fish. Soon after marriage, he had a son and named him "Po Yu". Unfortunately, soon after his marriage, his mother-in-law became problematic and his married life turned difficult because Confucius had a penchant for religion. He preferred to study and contemplate. His son was nothing like him and there was hardly any mention of his wife and son in his biography.

### **8.2.3 His Middle Years**

Ever since Confucius entered the imperial service at eighteen, his career progressed quickly. He was appointed by the governor of Lu State to be the manager of the imperial granary. He was responsible for exacting tax on grains for the Lu State's imperial granary. He was well-versed in traditions and customs; and he knew how to perform all of the rites and rituals. Eventually, he became the master of ceremony and the teacher of the people around him. Importantly, he saw during the course of his work the public servants' ineptitude and injustice. This prompted him to try to think of a way to solve the problems facing the country at the time.

At the same time that Confucius wanted to change and improve the public servants' conduct and teach the people to be good citizens, there was a political unrest and the governor of Lu State had to flee for his life. Confucius went with the governor and they were followed by a group of loyal public servants who wanted to work closely with Confucius.

Life became very difficult and Confucius had to go from place to place and he finally went to work for the governor of Ji State. This governor was interested in governmental affairs and wanted the people to live happily. Confucius did have ideas about how the government should work.

"A good government begins with good government personnel. High-ranking officials must perform their respective duties. A father must perform his duty. Children must perform their duty."

"People are the most important asset of the state. The state (or heaven) must always see things the way the masses do. The state (or heaven) must listen to things the way the masses do. The governor or the state must first win the hearts of the people before the state can be won. If not, the state can disappear."

"The best things that any government should gain are not high taxes which cause problems for the people but the people's good conduct and trust in the government."



Confucius' ethical and sociopolitical teaching did not gain much popularity initially but it did not stop Confucius from trying to teach it all the time. He continued to teach until he had around 3,000 pupils, most of whom came from poor families. He taught these things because he wanted to sustain the state and solve social problems. He taught the five aspects of relationship telling people how to treat each other accordingly. He established a school to teach ethics. Therefore, Confucius was the first person in those days to formally teach ethics, culture, and philosophy, and the number of his students continued to increase.

Examples of some of Confucius' teaching include: "If you do not know birth, how can you know death? If you do not want other people to harm you, then you must not harm other people." Confucius' effort had never waned and the number of his students continued to increase until his fame spread far and wide. Eventually, the imperial government recognized his effort and assigned him to monitor the justice system of all the different towns in the kingdom. This assignment gave Confucius a great opportunity to learn about people and their different situations as well as the state of local politics. He was like a mobile university. Any place where justice prevailed met with his support. Any place lacking in justice received his help in solving its problems. He had worked and taught in this manner for a period of ten years before returning to Lu State where he was asked to serve the government once again. Confucius declined the offer because he wanted to devote his time to teaching. Toward the end of his life, he spent time compiling all of his teachings into a textbook and made improvement on some of his earlier writings.

#### **8.2.4 The Last Part of His Life**

By the time Confucius was sixty-nine years old, his teachings had been compiled into several textbooks. These included philosophy, poetry, science, archery, history, and music. These were all the subjects that Confucius had taught. He did not encourage extravagance. His favorite pupils were those who were good at studying and archery.

Confucius left this world when he was seventy-three years old. In 479 B.C.E soon before his death, Confucius said, "The most dreadful persons are high-ranking officials who betray his country and disobedient children." Just before his last breaths, he said, "Mountains will eventually disappear. Strong pillars will break. A sage's life will wilt the way flowers do. No one listens to me in this kingdom. My time has now come."

After Confucius' death, his followers compiled all of his teachings and books and used them as textbooks for teaching political science and religion. Eventually, these books became sacred and priceless religious texts. Confucius' followers also spread his teachings in earnest until Confucius was named the religious leader and his teachings became a religion.

## 8.3 Confucianism: Its Religious Texts

Confucius' teachings<sup>2</sup> can be divided into two categories. His writings are called Keng or King which comprises the Five Classics; and a collection of Confucius' words and teachings written up by his disciples called Xue which comprises four books. Keng or King has the same meaning as the word Sutra.

### 8.3.1 The Five Classics

1. **I Ching or the Book of Changes:** It is generally held to be the earliest of the classics. It shows a metaphysical vision which combines divinatory art with numerological technique and ethical insight according to ancient Chinese beliefs. Philosophy of change sees the cosmos as interaction between the two energies, Yin and Yang. It contains Confucius' commentary on ancient books and the writings of Emperor Wen Wang, the first emperor of the Chou and Chou Kung Dynasties. This book was written during the last part of Confucius' life.
2. **Shu Ching or the Book of History:** It is a compilation of events and political science in ancient times from the Tang Dynasty to the reign of Emperor Mu Kung of the Jin Dynasty. It embodies the political vision and addresses the imperial way in terms of the ethical foundation for humane government.
3. **Shih Ching or the Book of Songs:** It is the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry and songs, comprising 305 works and divided into four parts as follows.
  1. Folk music
  2. Lesser court hymns, comprising an emperor's daily activities
  3. Major court hymns, comprising an emperor's important activities
  4. Eulogies of Zhou, comprising dynastic hymns praising the emperor
4. **Liji or the Book of Rites:** It describes the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites as follows.
  1. Social relation rites, confirmation of son and heir rite, marriage rite, mourning rites, and sacrificial offering rites
  2. Social and national institutions
5. **Chun-Chew or Spring and Autumn Annals:** It is the official chronicle of the State of Lu covering the period from 722 B.C.E to 481 B.C.E. It emphasizes life under ethical rule and the governing of the earth by heavenly ethics. It is an excellent source of political science ethics and can be divided into two parts.
  1. Part 1 contains the annual events of the State of Lu in 722 – 481 B.C.E.
  2. Part 2 contains ancient commentaries compiled around 400 B.C.E by Zuo, a close disciple of Confucius in the Commentary of Zuo.

These Five Classics began as ordinary books but were later elevated to the status of high literature and religious doctrines.

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<sup>2</sup> Satien Potinanta, Sages of the East, 2514 B.E. pages 85-88

### 8.3.2 The Four Books (Xue)

The word “Xue” means book or textbook. The Four Books were compiled by Confucius’ disciples and include:

1. **Ta Sui:** It means great learning or the learning that makes one a gentleman. It consists of a short main text expressing many themes of Chinese philosophy and political thinking, for example, the government of state depends on the well-ordered family.
2. **Jung Yung:** It means doctrine of the mean. It focuses on the way to gain perfect virtue in terms of self-knowledge, balance, and propriety. It mentions the importance of sincerity, for example, a person who is sincere to oneself and others is a true human being.
3. **Lune Yu or Analects:** It is a compilation of speeches by Confucius and his disciples as well as the discussions they had, for example, when walking in three, I often have my teacher with me. I can choose a person’s good attributes and imitate them. And I can choose a person’s poor attributes and use them to correct myself.
4. **Meng Zi or Mencius’ book:** Mencius was a disciple of Confucius. This book is a collection of conversations of the scholar Mencius with the kings of his time such as compassion is the beginning of human virtue. Shame is the beginning of justice. Gentleness is the beginning of good manners. A good conscience is the beginning of wisdom.

## 8.4 Confucianism: Its Doctrines

Confucian doctrines are different from those of Brahmanism-Hinduism because the latter emphasizes life in the hereafter whereas Confucianism emphasizes the virtue of Chinese ancestors. It emphasizes the reality of the current environment and the cultivation of ancestral virtue. It deals with the form of government which allows the people to live in peace and happiness. It teaches persons with political power to be ethical and to treat the people under their rule with loving-kindness. It teaches junior persons to be respectful and loyal to the persons senior to them. It teaches husband and wife to be faithful to each other. Confucius believed that when a human being is born, he is as pure as water at the water source. Things that contaminate life are everywhere and it is easy for a human being to commit misdeeds since it is easier to commit misdeeds than to perform good deeds. Therefore, persons in power ought to be a good role model for those under their rule and the people under their rule ought to be loyal to their ruler for the country to be peaceful.

Confucius’ teachings<sup>3</sup> are about conducting one’s self according to rule and order, ethics, and good manners. They teach the same golden rule as Christianity but long before Christianity, which is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Since Confucius taught people to respect their ancestors, his teaching has given rise to many Chinese traditions and customs. In the history of China, no one has had as deep an influence on the life of the Chinese people as Confucius. Confucianism has long become part of Chinese society and Chinese thought.

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<sup>3</sup> Parulski, George A. A Path to Oriental Wisdom, 1981, pages 30-31

There are four bases of Confucian Doctrines.

1. **Ren:** Humaneness
2. **Yi:** Righteousness or justice
3. **Li:** Propriety or etiquette
4. **Zhi:** Knowledge

Confucius' teachings are based on the following five principles.

1. **Faith:** Confucius teaches people to believe that when they have respect for each other no crime can happen; and there will be happiness in society. A person should learn the truth about human nature and endeavor to attain human goodness and perfection.
2. **Education:** People need to be educated in order to understand each other. A well-educated person can live happily in society. He is a good role model for others as well.
3. **Altruism:** People must be loving and kind to each other. They must understand and respect each other.
4. **Relationship:** Each person must form good habits and have a good attitude in order to be a good citizen. Relationship among family members is crucially important. Children must respect their parents. Wife must respect husband. Siblings must be loving, kind, and respectful to each other. Family relationship is crucial to the success of the government. Family is where a person learns that a junior person must have respect for a person more senior to him. A senior person must protect a junior person and treat him fairly. Confucius' disciples added two more principles: Children must be obedient to their parents; and a person must be loyal to his emperor.
5. **Traditions and customs:** They motivate a person to conduct himself properly. Therefore, it is important that a person learns about the traditions and customs that have been passed down from his ancestors. Being learnt in literature and history helps a person to know about his cultural heritage. Confucius said,

“For a government to rule successfully, it must pay attention to history and past events in order to learn from them.”

Confucius said that music soothes the mind and makes it gentle. While traditions and customs anchor a person physically, music anchors a person mentally. Different kinds of music, local or foreign are an expression of the mind and reflect the uniqueness of each country's traditions and customs.

Confucius' teachings set a standard for social harmony so that society can continue in an orderly manner. His teachings focus on ethics and they suit the practical mentality of the Chinese people who prefer applying thoughts and beliefs in their daily lives in order to see how they work. Confucius' teachings have a creative effect on Chinese civilization, beliefs, thoughts, certain branches of the philosophical system, literature and literary works.

Ethics has always played a part in the lives of Chinese people and Confucius' teachings have played a great role in the lives and thoughts of the Chinese people. Confucius' teaching is an ethical-sociopolitical teaching, and comprises different branches of philosophy.

## **1. Political Philosophy**

The government is the center of the governing body. According to Confucius, government has two important roles.

- 1.1 Government does things that benefit the people.
- 1.2 Government creates the rule of law. Government works when society has good traditions and customs. On the government's part, it must:
  - 1) Provide enough food for the people
  - 2) Have adequate military power
  - 3) Have the people's confidence

## **2. Governing Philosophy**

If the ruler is respectful and exercises self-restraint, his subjects will also be respectful and exercise self-restraint. If the ruler values justice and knows his duty, his subjects will be reluctant to violate the rule of law. If the ruler values gentleness, empathy, and trust, his subjects will do the same.

When the ruler is just, his subjects will perform their duties without having to be asked. But if the ruler is unjust, no amount of asking will make his subjects obey him.

A good government is a government which allows its people to live happily, and is trusted by the people who live far away. If the ruler exercises self-restraint, his subjects will happily comply with his rules.

If a government must sacrifice something during the course of government, the first thing must be military power, and the next thing must be food. The government cannot afford to lose the people's confidence.

A person in power needs only a wooden fence and no one dares trespass his property. A ruler must be earnest, steadfast, and know how to command the people's respect.

## **3. Educational Philosophy**

To study without thinking is a waste. To think without studying is dangerous.

A knowledgeable person equipped with suitable physical and verbal conduct looks becoming. It is like a drawing that is colored with gold. If his physical and verbal conduct does not match his knowledge, it is like a drawing devoid of color.

A sage may possess much knowledge, and has no need to ask questions about what he already knows. But whatever he does not know, however trivial it may be, he must ask questions so that he will know. In the presence of your teacher, when you know something, you should say that you do. But if you do not know something, you should say that you do not know it. Do not try to outdo your teacher, and the path of your learning will be made easy.

If one studies but does not contemplate the knowledge gained, it is like not having studied at all. But if one contemplates without studying, his thought goes around in a circle. Endeavor to study and you will gain wisdom. You will be able to accomplish much. A truly learnt person is not likely to commit

evil deeds. One who is not a truly learnt person is likely to commit misdeeds out of his own stupidity.

If one loves to study books on traditions and customs and puts his effort into it, surely he will learn things. Whatever one has learnt, one should review it often so that one can pass it on.

A person having physical strength but no wisdom can dare others to fight him but it will be like hitting a tiger with his bare hands or going across a river in a boat with no sails.

When a person is newly born, his thought is still crude but it will improve later with education. It is like a freshly cut lumber or stone, it is still rough but when polished it becomes smooth.

#### **4. Economic Philosophy**

When a person is poor he should be thrifty and works hard to earn money according to his mental capacity. He should not be a sycophant. When a person is wealthy, he should be kind to everyone and help those in need. A poor person should still try to be happy. He should not feel discouraged or weak. When one earns a small amount of money, one should also consume a small amount of food. When one earns a large amount of money, one can eat whatever one wants and one should also study ancient traditions and customs.

#### **5. Personal Conduct Philosophy**

A high-ranking official should practice honesty. He praises those who deserve to be praised, and he admonishes those who deserve to be admonished. He should not pronounce an evil person good and a good person evil for the sake of gain. If he can conduct himself in this manner, he will be well-respected.

When he wants to say something, he should say only what is true so that people can respect and trust him. If he agrees to someone's request, he must honor his word. He should act honestly. Friends must not deceive each other, and then the friendship will last.

### **8.5 Confucianism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

The creed and ultimate goal of Confucianism are not clearly stated. Confucianism teaches people to believe what their ancestors believed, for example, to believe in ghosts and devas. One should endeavor to perform good deeds so that one can live in heaven after one dies. Etc. Confucius emphasized human beings and the human world. He wanted the people, society, country, and the world to be at peace. He did not want the people to be divided by class, groups, or nations. He wanted the world to have just one country and the people just one race. He wanted everyone to be like brothers and sisters, to have goodwill toward each other and to help each other. Confucius' ultimate goal is to see everyone on earth live together in peace and harmony.

Confucianism has a great influence on the Chinese people. Confucius' literary works are considered to be high literature, and they are being studied in different institutions. Imperial examination used to be held to test the candidates' knowledge of Confucius' literary works. Many unique Chinese cultures owe their existence to the influence of Confucius' teachings. Some examples include:



1. The importance of family: The Chinese people regard the family as the foundation of society, and they endeavor to build a large and stable family comprising several generations: grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren living together. Family relationship is very important to the Chinese people as can be seen by the way every family member is related. For example, there are different names for maternal aunts and paternal aunts.
2. The importance of age: The Chinese people have different names to address people of different ages in the community similar to the Thai people. Chinese men wear a beard after having children and grandchildren to signify their elderly status.
3. The importance of ancestors: The Chinese people place a great deal of importance on their ancestors. They care for their ancestors' graves and make an offering to them.
4. The importance of teachers: The Chinese people have a high regard for their teachers but not so with soldiers. The Chinese people are more interested in knowledge than in military power.
5. The importance of harmony: The Chinese people dislike going to court for any reason and would rather settle things out of court.

## 8.6 Confucianism: Its Place of Worship

The shrine is originally the place to worship out of gratitude the deities of the sky, earth, wind, rain, rivers, and mountains. Later, Confucian beliefs were integrated into Taoism and black magic beliefs.

The result is Animism. Deities are added to the shrine and they are given power to bless or punish people. Therefore, they have to be worshipped often. The only pure Confucian temple seen today is the Wen Miao Temple in Taipei, Taiwan.

The temple was built in accordance with Chinese architecture. Its buildings are elaborately decorated and there is a high fence all around the temple. The entrance is located in the southern direction and comprises three doors. The roof of the temple is so extensive as to cover these three doors. On the door panels were painted colorful images of guardian deities, which protect evil spirits from entering the temple. Inside the great hall are located Confucius' name plaque and the name plaques of his four distinguished disciples: Ngan, Oang, Jeung Juh, and Juh Suh, who was both a distinguished disciple and beloved grandson as well as Mencius who was not a direct disciple but played an important role in spreading Confucianism.

Confucius' name plaque is located in the middle of the hall facing the entrance so that when people first come inside the hall, they feel as though he is still living and have the opportunity to pay homage to him. On the eastern and western walls there are the name plaques of eleven disciples and that of Chu Hsi who played an important role in Neo-Confucianism. The temple looks more like a memorial than a temple. Later, when Taoism and Buddhism became popular with the Chinese people, Confucian shrines were changed and religious paintings replaced the name plaques believed to be the dwelling of the deceased's spirit.



## 8.7 Confucianism: Its Rites and Rituals

Confucius advocated ancestral traditions and customs, which include sky and earth worship and ancestor worship. These practices have existed for millennia. Later when Confucianism assumed the status of state religion, three different rites and rituals were performed as follows.

1. Confucius Worship
2. Earth Worship, Sky Worship, Sun Worship, and Moon Worship
3. Tien Worship and Ancestor Worship

1. **Confucius Worship:** It began in 195 B.C.E (348 B.E.), the Chinese emperor made an offering of meat to Confucius at his grave. He issued an imperial command for such worship to be held regularly. He also had Confucian shrines built in every important town where an offering was made to Confucius regularly. He also designated Confucius' birthday to be on August 27 and declared it a public holiday. Later, the date was changed to September 28.
2. **Earth Worship, Sky Worship, Sun Worship and Moon Worship:** A state ceremony was held four times annually.
  - 2.1 Sky Worship: This ceremony generally took place on December 22 and was presided over by the emperor. During the ceremony, there were a musical display, a lantern procession, offerings such as food, cloth, silk, alcohol, etc. Afterward, all the offerings would be burnt. The Sky Worship altar was located in the southern direction of Peking and made of white marble sitting on a three-tiered balcony.
  - 2.2 Earth Worship: It is the worship of nature and deities of nature. This annual ceremony was presided over by a high-ranking official and took place on June 21 or 22. The altar was located in the northern direction of Peking on a square structure with water around it.
  - 2.3 Sun Worship: It was an annual ceremony and took place on March 21, which is the spring solstice. The altar was located in the eastern direction of Peking.
  - 2.4 Moon Worship: It was an annual ceremony and took place on September 22 or 23, which is the fall solstice.
3. **Tien Worship and Ancestor Worship:** The Chinese people believed the deity "Tien" to reside in heaven, and they worship him as the head of deities. They believe Tien to be the protector of the world. He is the spirit of the moon, the sun, rain, fire, thunder, lightning, mountains, and rivers. The Chinese people also worship the spirits of their ancestors, emperors, and heroes. The emperor's spirit is regarded as pure. Ancestor worship had been practiced in China for millennia. During the ceremony, they would sing and play the flute. These worships were advocated by Confucius because they are an expression of ethics.

## 8.8 Confucianism: Its Different Schools

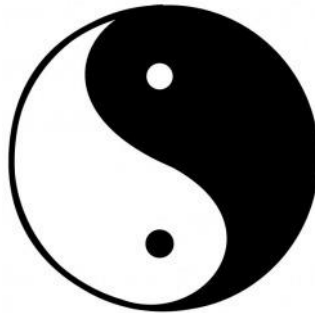
Some scholars of religious studies say that Confucianism has no different schools. Still, several books mention the presence of Neo-Confucianism during the Sung Dynasty (960 – 1279 or 1503 – 1822 B.E.), which incorporated Yin-Yangism and the making of sacrificial offerings.

Yin-Yangism is the system of dualism: darkness vs. light; evil vs. good. Yin represents darkness and evil whereas Yang represents light and goodness.

Although Neo-Confucianism practices differently from Confucianism but it does not quite qualify as a different school.

## 8.9 Confucianism: Its Religious Symbols

1. Some direct symbols include the sculpture or painting of Confucius seen in the shrines.
2. Other symbols include the Yin-Yang symbol.
3. If the above symbols are not available, Confucius' name plaque can be used as a symbol for worship the way ancestors' name plaques are worshiped.
4. Another symbol is the image of two ancient Chinese men bowing to each other with folded hands.



## 8.10 Confucianism: Its Current Status

Confucianism used to flourish in China. It now has approximately 300 million adherents. The Chinese people regard Confucius as their number one sage. Confucius had been respected in China until it came under Communist rule in 1949 (2492 B.E.), when every religion was destroyed because it was regarded as an addiction. During the Cultural Revolution in 1966 (2509 B.E.), religion suffered severe blows especially Confucianism because it was regarded as the religion that upheld feudalism and ancient traditions and customs. Some adherents of Confucianism had to immigrate to Taiwan.

Taiwan welcomed and admired Confucianism. In 1952 (2495 B.E.), the government changed the national teacher's day from August 27 to September 28, Confucius' birthday and declared it a public holiday. It also paid the perpetrators of Confucianism a salary. Taiwan has become the center of Confucianism. The situation of Confucianism in mainland China is gradually improving ever since the death of Mao Zedong in 1977 (2520 B.E.) and the Chinese government has had more contact with the outside world. The oppression of religion has also eased.

Adherents of each religion now have more freedom to perform their religious ceremonies when the Chinese government had to change its stance given the fall of the Soviet Union. Priests and monks can now return to the temple and perform religious ceremonies. In 1979 (2522 B.E.), Nanking University became the center for religious studies in China.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 9

## Shinto

- 9.1 The History of Shinto**
- 9.2 The History of Its Founder**
- 9.3 Its Religious Texts**
- 9.4 Its Doctrines**
- 9.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**
- 9.6 Its Shrines and Its Priests**
- 9.7 Its Rites and Rituals**
  - 9.7.1 Its Religious Rites
  - 9.7.2 Nature Worship
  - 9.7.3 The Worship of Important Individuals
  - 9.7.4 The Birth Rite
  - 9.7.5 Its Festivals
  - 9.7.6 The Ohoharashi Ceremony
- 9.8 Its Different Schools**
  - 9.8.1 Kokka Shinto
  - 9.8.2 Kiaoha Shinto
- 9.9 Its Religious Symbols**
- 9.10 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Shinto had its birth in Japan 117 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. The word Shinto came from the Chinese words “Shen Tao”, which means the way of the gods. After Buddhism and Confucianism entered Japan, the Japanese called the worship of deities Shinto in order to distinguish it from Buddhism and Confucianism. Shinto has no founder.
2. Shinto has two important religious texts: the Koshiki text and the Nihongi or Nihonshoki text. Shinto emphasizes spiritual improvement and such basic virtues as being obedient to the teaching of the deities, performing one’s duty honestly and to the best of one’s ability, performing deity worship and ancestor worship.
3. Shinto’s ultimate goal is to obtain eternal bliss after death by becoming a deity. To gain this status, one must be loyal to the deities and worship the spirits of one’s ancestors. Shintoists believe that life on earth happens just once. After one dies, one spends eternity in the spirit world.
4. There are two different Shinto schools: Kokka Shinto and Kiao-ha Shinto.
5. Shinto has two symbols: The Torii and the mirror. But the symbol used since ancient times and passed down through the emperors is called Yatai no Kagami and comprises three things: mirror, sword, and gem.
6. Today, there are 3,162,800 Shintoists but most of them live in Japan, in the island of Hawaii in the United States as well as Brazil, since these two countries have a large Japanese population.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Shinto.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Shinto, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Shinto rites and rituals, its shrines, its priests, its different schools, its symbols, and its current status.

## Chapter 9

### Shinto

#### 9.1 The History of Shinto

Shinto had its birth 117 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era based on the time of the first Japanese emperor, Jimmu Tenno. Shinto is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese words Shen Tao. Shen or Shin means deity. Tao means way. Therefore, Shinto means the way of the deities. It can also mean deity worship, the deity's teaching, or the deities' religion. In Japanese, this religion is called Kaminomichi but this name is not as well-known as Shinto. Initially, not too many people outside of Japan knew about Shinto. But when Buddhism and Confucianism entered Japan, the Japanese had to give their religion a name in order to distinguish it from other religions. Shinto has no founder but it came about as a result of such long-held traditions and customs as deity worship, ancestor worship, etc. As a result, Shinto does not have set doctrines or formalized religious texts because Shinto beliefs differ with different time periods and localities.

Shinto is a polytheistic religion where different deities or gods are worshipped. There are different categories of deities: genuine deities and deities that came from dead human beings such as emperors, war heroes. There are also deities of nature such as the deities of mountains, which came from the spirits of all the people who once lived in the mountains. The deities of the sea came from the spirits of all the people who once lived near the seashore. Etc. There are deities that came from animals which were respected by human beings. These deities live in nature such as mountains, forests, the sky, the sea, the ground, etc. For these reasons, there are a large number of shrines in Japan and Japan has been referred to as the land of shrines. Animal shrines include the shrine of the fox, the shrine of the tiger, etc. These objects of worship are collectively called Kamisama. The word "Kami" has a broad meaning. It means deity. It can also mean things that are pure, strong, powerful, and intimidating. Therefore, mountains, rivers, seas, fields, forests, animals, etc., can be considered to be Kami. Japan is also known as the land of deities. The deity that is worshipped above all other deities is called Amaterasu-omi-kami or the sun which is a female deity. Her husband is called Tsukiyomi or the moon deity. Japanese deities have the same attributes as human beings in that they look like human beings, they feel love, they can be greedy, they can be angry, they can be ignorant, etc. The history of Shinto can be divided into five periods as follows.<sup>1</sup>

The first period lasted 1,200 years. It began 117 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era and ended in 552 A.D. (1095 B.E.) It was the period of pure Shinto because it was not influenced by other religions. This period began with the reign of the first Japanese emperor, Jimmu Tenno and lasted until Buddhism entered Japan. During this period, Shinto was the only religion in Japan; therefore, it had a profound effect on the people of Japan.

The second period lasted 250 years from 552 to 800 A.D. (1095 to 1343 B.E.) It was the period that Buddhism and Confucianism entered Japan. Buddhism had a huge influence in the first 150 years of this period. There are fifty mentions of Buddhism in the Nihongi text. In 645 (1188 B.E.), Emperor Kotoku admired Buddhism but despised the way of the gods. In 671 (1214 B.E.), Crown Prince Shotokutaichi entered the

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, Robert E., *The World's Living Religions*, 1957, pages 170-173

monkhood. Etc. During this period, Shinto still had the most influence on the people of Japan.

The third period lasted 900 years from 800 – 1700 A.D. (1343 to 2243 B.E.) It was the period that other religions were assimilated into Shinto. Some scholars of religious studies even say that Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism can be grouped together as one religion. Shinto was becoming less and less important and from 1465 – 1687 (2008 to 2230 B.E.), the Ohonihe Ceremony or the Shinto Coronation Ceremony was no longer performed even though it was once held as the most important ceremony.

The fourth period lasted 168 years from 1700 – 1868 (2243 to 2411 B.E.) It was the period of the great Shinto revival. Campaigns were made to stress the importance of Shinto, the importance of Japanese emperors as the descendants of the Sun, the importance of the Japanese people as descendants of deities, and the importance of Japan as the land created by deities. The campaigns were so successful that the people of Japan came to believe that Shinto, Japanese emperors, Japan, and its people were superior. The result was instant and intense nationalism.

The fifth period began in 1868 (2411 B.E.) up to the present time. Shinto continued to be promoted by Emperor Meiji (2411 – 2455 B.E.). He opened the door of Japan to other countries. He ordered the further purification of Shinto by separating it completely from Buddhism and Confucianism. Only Shinto rites and rituals were performed in Shinto shrines. Other religions were allowed to perform their own rites and rituals in a separate place. In 1882 (2425 B.E.), he divided Shinto into two categories: the State Shinto and the People's Shinto. He also promoted nationalism as exemplified in the speech he gave to the military forces. "Let everyone love his country, love courage, be loyal to the imperial throne, be willing to give up his life, and obey his superiors. Let this be a command from heaven." From that time onward, Japanese soldiers were greatly honored. No harm was allowed to come to them. They became like mechanical dolls following every command of their superiors. During the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 – 1905 (2447 – 2448 B.E.), Japan could defeat Russia, a country tens of times larger.

## 9.2 Shinto: The History of Its Founder

It is well-known that Shinto has no founder, since it is derived from ancient traditions and customs as well as deity worship. However, Shinto can be divided into two major categories as follows.

### 1. State Shinto or Shrine Shinto

2. **Sectarian Shinto:** State Shinto may not have a founder but the different schools of Sectarian Shinto most definitely do. For example, the Konko School was founded by Konko. It is interesting that a new religion in Japan should involve a person who claims to have seen God and speak for God after the manner of the prophets. Here, only two such persons will be mentioned. The first person is a woman who is the founder of Tenrikyo. This religion has about two million adherents. The second person is a man. His name is Konko Daishin. He is the founder of Konkoyo and his religion has 600,000 adherents. Both these religions are very different from Shinto but the Japanese Education Department grouped them as Sectarian Shinto. There are other self-proclaimed prophets but here only two will be mentioned.



## Stories of Japanese Prophets

1. **Miki Nakayama** was a rice farmer's daughter living in Yamato Province. She was born on June 2, 1798 (2341 B.E.). When she was forty-one years old, God her father came down and held her as being his living or walking church. She had taught in the name of God and gradually gained more and more adherents until she died when she was ninety years old. Today, Tenrikyo is considered an important religion in Japan. The word Tenrikyo means the Tenri Religion but Tenri here is the name of God, which begins with "Tenri" and comes from "Tenri-o-no-mikodo". The God of this religion is the Creator, the origin of all things in the same way as the God of other religions.
2. **Konko Daishin** is the founder of the Konkoyo or the Konko Religion. He was born in 1814 (2357 B.E.) and died at the age of sixty-nine. When Konko was forty-six years old, he heard the voice of God the Creator and the call to help save humanity as shown in God's words as follows.

"God's children on earth know nothing of God's love. They conduct themselves wrongly in that they do not obey God's wishes. Therefore, they suffer much hardship and are blind to God's blessings. Now, God is sending Konko Daishin to His children so that they will know the truth that God regards their happiness and prosperity as importantly as His own."

## 9.3 Shinto: Its Religious Texts

Shinto has two important texts.

1. The Kojiki text
2. The Nihongi or Nihon Shoki text.

Other religious texts include:

1. The Koko-shui text
2. The Munyo-shiu text
3. The Fudoki text
4. The Taiho-ryo text
5. The Yengi-shiki text

### 1. The Kojiki Text

It is based on traditions and customs, stories, myths, and history relevant to the imperial court. Shinto's theism developed from the interpretation of mythological entities described in the Kojiki text. It is said that Shinto religious texts are a combination of mythology and history, traditions, customs, prohibition, black magic, and deity worship.

### 2. The Nihongi or Nihon Shoki Text

The Nihon Shoki text is considered to be a classic in that it is high literature. It comprises thirty volumes. The first fifteen volumes deal with mythology and different stories. The latter fifteen volumes deal with history. It is believed that they are the most accurate source of history.

The following religious texts are second to the first two texts in terms of importance.

### **3. The Kogo Shui Text**

This text was written by Imbe Hironari to explain the meaning of the words used in ancient rites and rituals. It is an expression of the author's opinion about the shrines in Ise and Asuta and his family status, which is related to the Nakatomi family as well as the status of the Katomi family.

### **4. The Munyo-shiu Text**

This text contains a collection of the oldest Japanese poems. It contains 4,500 poems written by individuals in different positions from an emperor to a farmer. These poems are very important because they express in a direct manner intense as well as ordinary feelings. They allow people to learn about the beliefs, traditions, customs, and religious thoughts of people in ancient times.

### **5. The Fudoki Text**

This text contains geographical information of the region in the form of reports which government officials wrote for the emperor so that he would know the original geographical names, the level of abundance in each geographical area. It also contains ancient local tales and stories.

### **6. The Taiho-ryo Text**

This text assumes the same level of importance as ancient Japanese law. It gives information about which government office was most important in carrying out Shinto rites and rituals.

### **7. The Yengi-shiki Text**

This text contains minute details about the imperial law and the administration of the government. It comprises fifty volumes and contains such information as imperial ceremonies, court manners, appropriate conduct, administration of local government, etc. The first ten volumes are the most important, since they have to do with Shinto rules and regulations. They are helpful to the study of Shinto. It is said that once the laws contained in this text were formally instituted, it signified the official birth of Shinto.

## **9.4 Shinto: Its Doctrines**

Shinto teaches the people of Japan to respect their ancestors, to show their gratitude to departed loved ones, to show respect for older people, to be loyal to their emperor and their teachers. The emperor is like a celestial father to his subjects and can make demands of them as parents of their children. The human soul is immortal. Death is like a change of clothes. When a person one respects has been insulted, one is to seek revenge. One should not live under the same sky as the culprit. If revenge is not possible, one is to commit Hara-kiri. Courage and no fear of death are necessary during wartime. Every Japanese person must be responsible for the Emperor and the country's loss and gain.

Some of the Shinto teachings are shown as follows.

1. Begin with worshipping the beauty of flowers, end with committing suicide.
2. Being honest, respectful, and loyal to one's elders is a virtue higher than all other virtues.
3. Being loyal to the emperor and one's boss makes one's life honorable.

4. The goodness that we desire comes from perpetuating our lineage with loyalty, loving-kindness, compassion, and harmony.
5. Children and young men must be respectful to their elders. Young women must be deferential to old people. And women must respect men.
6. One must love one's parents and be a good child to them. Be loving and kind. Be compassionate. There must be harmony among members of the family. Be honest with your friends. Be decent. Be thrifty. Love other people as much as one loves one's self.
7. Women should respect men. Men should be loyal to the state. Children must respect their parents.
8. Truthfulness is the basic and ultimate virtue. Without truthfulness, no other virtues can exist.
9. Whoever abuses you verbally and commits a misdeed against you, you should not respond in kind. There is only one thing you must do: Perform your work honestly in honor of your work.
10. A Japanese sword has just one sharp edge and is useful in two ways: one, it can be used to cut down one's self when one is guilty; two, it can be used to beat an enemy.

### **The Practice which Leads to the Highest Good**

In Shinto, the practice which leads to the highest good has to do with four mental endeavors.

1. Think cheerful thoughts (Akaki Gokoro).
2. Think pure and clean thoughts (Giyoki Gokoro).
3. Think right thoughts (Tagashiki Gokoro).
4. Think impartial thoughts (Naoki Gokoro).

These four mental endeavors lead one to become a deity befitting the lineage of heaven. These mental endeavors can be abbreviated to just one word Seimei-Shin

## **9.5 Shinto: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

The people of Japan believe that the two highest gods Amaterasu Omi Kami and Tsukiyomi came from the first two god and goddess Izanagi and Izanami. Everything comes from these first two deities according to Shinto's creation myth as follows.<sup>2</sup>

The god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami were called by all the myriad gods to create the Japanese Islands. So they descended to earth which had been covered with water. They stood on the celestial bridge which connected earth to heaven. Izanagi used the celestial spear to stir the water, and when the spear was removed water dripped from its end, and the Onoko Island was created. They lived on this island, and created a palace with a large pole inside it. Later, when they wished to bear offspring, Izanagi said to the goddess Izanami, "Let's walk around the pole in different directions, and when we meet on the other side, we will live together and have children." Izanagi walked to the right while Izanami walked to the left. When they finally met on the other side, the goddess Izanami said to Izanagi, "Oh, Izanagi, you are a sublime man and oh so

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<sup>2</sup> Fern Dokboor, Translation of Joseph Gare's What Great Religions Believe, 2533 B.E. pages 135-136

endearing!” Izanagi answered, “Oh, Izanami, you are a sublime woman and oh so endearing!” They lived together and soon appeared another island and they called it Futana. Afterwards there appeared other islands and they named them respectively. Once all of the islands had been created, they created gods and goddesses as well as human beings as written in the Koshiki text, chapter 296. There appeared gods and goddesses in the high, medium, and low levels of heaven. There were earth deities. There were vegetation deities. There were mountain and forest deities. There were river deities. Etc. These deities appeared after the appearance of the earth. Once the creation work was done, this first pair of deities created three more deities: the sun goddess, the moon god (Tsukiyomi), and the storm god (Susunovo). The sun goddess was a favorite of Izanagi because she never gave him cause for trouble and he named her Amaterasu Omi Kami. Later, she married the moon god. The sun goddess sent her grandchild Jimmu Tenno to be the first emperor of Japan. The storm god was a bad son. It is written in the Nohongi text that he is the god of evil. In other words, all evil come from Susunovo.

Shinto’s teaching on deities and nationalism exerted such an influence on the people of Japan that they possess special characteristics: a deep respect for their ancestors, nationalism, and cleanliness.<sup>3</sup>

**A Deep Respect for Their Ancestors - Ancestor Worship:** Japanese people believe that when a person dies, his spirit lives on because spirit is eternal and it dwells in the spirit world forever. As spirits, they watch over their relatives on earth and bless those who perform ancestor worship with happiness and success. Ancestor worship makes the ancestral spirits happy. Without ancestor worship, they suffer. Therefore, it is the duty of the living to perform ancestor worship.

**Nationalism:** Japanese people believe that their country was built for them by the first two deities. Moreover, they believe that the goddess Amaterasu Omi Kami sent her grandson Jimmu Tenno to be the first emperor of Japan. She said to Jimmu Tenno, “I think this land is certainly suitable for spreading the work of heaven so that its powers can be manifested all over the universe. This land will be for certain the center of the earth.” Japanese people worship their emperors because they are the descendants of the sun goddess. It is for this reason that there has been just one imperial dynasty in Japan. An emperor’s birthday is the most important day of the country because it is the day to worship the sun goddess. The people of Japan are very proud of their country believing it to have been created for them by deities. They are also proud of the fact that their emperors are the direct descendants of the sun goddess. They believe themselves special because they belong to the celestial race. For these reasons, Japanese people are very nationalistic and will do all they can to create prosperity for their country. They will also do everything to preserve their nationality. Their nationalism gave rise to the Bushido Cult or the way of the warriors, which has to do with the code of ethic for samurais.

Chinese people also believe their emperors to be the sons of heaven. The difference is that Chinese people believe every emperor wherever they come from to be the son of heaven. However, the Chinese people do not come from heaven. Therefore, the emperor and the commoners have different ancestors because the emperor is the son of heaven while the people are the sons of the earth. Japanese people believe that only the emperors descending from Jimmu Tenno are the sons of heaven and the Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> Dok Boor Kao, Different Religions, 2507 B.E. pages 110-116

people also descend from heaven. Therefore, the emperor and the people belong to the same race and share the same ancestors. The emperor and the people belong to the same family and the emperor is the head of the family. For these reasons, Japanese people love and guard their emperor jealously. They are willing to give up certain things but never their emperor.

**Nature-Loving:** Shinto promotes the love of nature so much so that the people of Japan have cultivated a great love for nature. They hold nature sacred and they see themselves as part of nature. They feel that every living thing in nature corresponds to the life-force coursing through their veins. Japanese people are very much in love with nature. They even hold a festival during the fall where they listen to insect calls. The emperor and the people pay special attention to insect calls during the Sakura season. People are out admiring the beauty of the Sakura flowers in parks and fields. Whatever the season, Japanese people spend a lot of time gazing at flowers and branches swaying in the breeze. They can sit and watch the full-moon for hours. It is the fact that Japanese people love nature that they adore beauty. If they build a shrine, they will pick the most beautiful location for it and the most attractive style. They decorate their homes and their gardens. Whatever they invent, they endeavor to perfect it. They try to infuse their invention with life and nature. Of all the things that are beautiful, the sun outdoes them all. Japanese people adore the sun and will wake up early to greet it and bow to it every morning. They adore the sunrise only and not the sunset because they regard the sunset to be the sad part of the day.

Japanese people regard Shinto as all things natural and nothing supernatural. Therefore, life and religion cannot be separated from each other. They are one and the same thing.

**Cleanliness:** Shinto places a great importance on cleanliness. It is written in the Shinto text that even the goddess Izanagi bathes frequently. Japanese people adore cleanliness. They clean the inside and the outside of their body as homage paid to the gods. A dirty person is a sinful person. In the old days, a ceremony was held twice a year to clean the body. It is called Ohoharaji. Everyone who attended the ceremony would use paper to scrub their body clean. The dirty paper would then be burnt or thrown into the river or the sea. After the ceremony was over, the emperor proclaimed in the name of Amaterasu Omi Kami that everyone was clean. When a Japanese person enters a shrine, he would first wash his hands and his mouth. It is akin to floating sins away in the Ganges. Cleanliness is the symbol of a clean mind.

Shinto's ultimate goal is to go and live in heaven forever. The way to attain this goal is to worship the deities and to be faithful to them.

## 9.6 Shinto Shrines and Shinto Priests

A Shinto shrine is believed to be the dwelling of Kami and a place for praying. Therefore, it is sacred. Most of them are built in the countryside, on a mountain, near a waterfall, or on isolated islands because these natural places are Kami's abodes.

In ancient times before the construction of shrines, the people of Japan believed that Kami lived in places far away from human beings. They would come and visit human beings on special occasions only such as during a ceremony. A ceremony was performed inside a temporary shelter, a small square with a large sacred tree in the middle. Kami was invited to dwell in the tree. These temporary shelters later became permanent shelters and the permanent dwelling of Kami. This is the origin of the Shinto shrine.

Shinto shrines are built in a simple and natural style without ornate decoration. They are built with wood and paper. The entrance or Tori-i is a large door built with wood or stone.

Inside the shrine there is the Kami symbol which is a mirror, clothes, or a sword, and an altar for placing a food-offering of rice, vegetable, fish, duck, chicken, and a good quality Saki. Blood is never offered because it is deemed impure. Flowers are not used as an offering but Sakaki leaves are used instead.

An offering can be made by an individual or by a community but it is made routinely by a Shinto priest. During the ceremony, attendees must be composed and quiet.

There are Shinto priests and priestesses. A Shinto priestess must practice chastity. In some schools, Shinto priests are allowed to marry. Only men can do work for the shrine. A Shinto priest's duty is to take care of the shrine and perform different ceremonies.

One important role played by a Shinto priestess is the role of a princess whose duty is to take care of the sun goddess at Ise. To perform this duty, the priestess must be a high-born lady. This is different from the dancers who are commoners and whose duty is to dance and play music for the Kami at the shrine. Dancing and music-playing take place in a separate building.

Today, a Shinto priest wears a white robe with broad sleeves and a high hat on formal religious occasions. Dancers wear a white top and a red brocade is worn over the trunk.

Shintoists pay homage to Kami by clapping their hands the first time to ask Kami for help and the second time to bid farewell.

Shintoists believe in charms, spirits, and black magic. It is the reason for images and symbols. In a Shintoist's house there is an altar for worshipping spirits. At the entrance of a village stands a carved stone Kami to protect the village and the villagers.

## **9.7 Shinto: Its Rites and Rituals**

### **9.7.1 Religious Worship:**

Japanese people worship deities or Kami by putting on clean clothes before visiting a shrine. They bow in front of the shrine; there are almost 200,000 in all. The entrance or Tori-i of the shrine represents the shrine's property, which is the country of Japan itself. At the entrance, one bows, closes one's eyes, and claps once to summon the spirit to acknowledge one's respect. Or one may stand still for a moment before leaving the shrine. Or one may do other things depending on the advice given by a priest or the caretaker of the shrine. Items of worship are provided for free by the shrine's priest and comprise the same things: four small cups of Saki, sixteen lumps of cooked rice, sixteen lumps of salt, fresh fish, fruit, seaweed, and a few oranges.

**9.7.2 Nature Worship:** Japanese people believe that Japan and its natural environment are the creation of deities and deserve to be worshipped. These include the ocean, rivers, streams, earth, vegetation, wild animals, and the sacred celestial possessions of the emperor which include the mirror, the sword, and the gem. Japanese people have a great love for nature. They guard their forests, mountains, and vegetation as much as they do their own lives.



### 9.7.3 The Worship of Important Individuals:

1. **Hero Worship:** When it comes to nationalism, no other countries can equal Japan. Therefore, whoever gives up his life in the battlefield for the country assumes the deity status and deserves to be worshipped. The Yasukuni Shrine is the place where all the spirits of war heroes go to live. Each year, a state ceremony is held to worship the spirits of these brave soldiers.
2. **Imperial Worship:** Japanese people believe that their emperor or Mikado or Tenno descends from a long line of emperors who are the direct descendants of the sun goddess. The emperor is the head of the family of Japanese people. Therefore, the emperor is valued by the Japanese people more than life itself.
3. **Ancestor Worship:** It is said that the Japanese form of ancestor worship appears to be nobler and more sacred than the Chinese form of ancestor worship. It may be true since the Japanese believe their emperors to be the direct descendants of the sun goddess. All Japanese emperors come from the same imperial family. The Japanese people and their imperial rulers share the same ancestry. Therefore, ancestor worship for the Japanese is the worship of the family's ancestors as well as the ancestors of the entire nation.

**9.7.4 The Birth Rite:** When a newborn is seven days old, it is brought to the altar to be given a name. When the infant is thirty-one or thirty-two days old, the infant is taken to different shrines. It is the Japanese custom that a birth rite is performed when a child is born. If a priest is not available, then the head of the family will perform the rite.

**9.7.5 Festivals:** During a festival, there is a procession which is accompanied by music and dancing. The priest chants in front of the altar at the shrine to bless the people with happiness and a good harvest, to bless the soldiers with victory, to bless the government with good governance, and to bless the emperor with longevity.

**9.7.6 The Ohoharasi Ceremony or the Great Purification:** According to the sage Aston, the emperor is appointed by the god Amaterasu Omi Kami to perform the ceremony. The ceremony is performed by sprinkling pure water and making an offering in order to wash away impurity. All the high-ranking officials and the emperor's subjects must purify themselves in order to wash away impurity.

## 9.8 Shinto: Its Different Schools

There are two different Shinto schools.

**9.8.1 Kokka Shinto or State Shinto:** It is supported by the Ministry of Interior and it sets rules for the priests who perform only the state ceremonies. They are forbidden to perform other ceremonies such as advertising, marriage, and funeral. The Kokka Shinto's ideal has to do with national prosperity, imperial safety, and the happiness of the people.

The Kokka Shinto faith and ceremonies are written in the imperial decree announced in the fifteenth year of the Meiji Era as follows.



1. **Imperial Worship:** Shinto fosters national stability and the belief that the nation of Japan is a country of people descended from the same celestial ancestry.

The emperor is an avatar of the sun goddess. He is the link between the sun goddess and the Japanese people. He is the ruler of the kingdom and the head of the religious kingdom. He represents the presence of celestial power. He is a deity in a human body. Etc. The imperial command is the command of heaven.

2. **The Worship Performed by the Imperial Family:** The worship is performed by the emperor and his family. Inside the palace, there are four shrines, one at each cardinal point.

- 2.1 One shrine is dedicated to the sun goddess. It is the place for holding the Planting Ceremony as reproduced from the Ise Shrine in the city of Nara, the center of Japanese emperors. It is believed that the sun goddess presides over the ceremony on that day.

- 2.2 One shrine is dedicated to the spirits of previous emperors. It is a place to worship the spirits of deceased emperors.

- 2.3 And 2.4 These two shrines are the places for holding other state ceremonies as commanded by the emperor.

3. **The Worship Performed by the Family:** Shinto is promoted as the vehicle which unites the Japanese people.

A Japanese family (albeit being Buddhists) will install a Shinto altar on which are placed the Tori-i (the spirit door), a mirror, a white sheet of paper, a rope, food, fruit, and sometimes Saki.

The Japanese are very religious. They get up early, bathe, and worship at the altar by clapping their hands twice, bowing twice before leaving for work.

At seven days old, an infant is taken to the altar and the birth rite is performed. At thirty-one or thirty-two days old, it is brought to a shrine in the countryside or in the mountain. The Japanese believe that birth and death require a priest to perform the respective ceremonies. If a priest is not available, the head of the family will perform the ceremonies in his place.

Today, Kokka Shinto or State Shinto has a new teaching which deals with the broadening of nationalism to include the continent and onward to the entire world.

- 9.8.2 **Kyoha Shinto or Sectarian Shinto:** The Education Ministry supports and controls it. Kyoha Shinto has nothing to do with state ceremonies based on Emperor Meiji's imperial decree.

It is written in the decree that now that other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, etc., have entered Japan, it is time that Shinto receives formal support so that it can stand apart and not be connected with other religions. For the sake of orderliness among the citizens according to state policy, Shinto must be regarded as the structure of our nation and other religions are but certain components of this structure.

Kyoha Shinto means the religious process based on Japan's state religion but separated into different schools. Most of them originated in the eighteenth century and there are altogether thirteen schools which can be grouped into five categories as follows.

1. **Pure Shinto:** It comprises three schools, namely, Shinto Hongkyoku, Tokyo Shinrikyo, and Taizakyo.
2. **A Combination of Shinto and Confucianism:** It comprises two schools, namely, Zuzeha and Tozekyo.
3. **Mountain Deity Worship:** It comprises three schools, namely, Yiktokyo, Fuzokyo, and Mitakekyo.
4. **Sin Cleansing:** It comprises two schools, namely, Shinzukyo and Mizogi.
5. **Faith Healing:** It comprises three schools, namely, Furoshikyo, Congokyo, and Tenrikyo.

## 9.9 Shinto: Its Religious Symbols

1. **The Tori-i:** It is a gate comprising two pillars with two planks of wood laid across them. Every shrine has one except for the small ones. It is the entrance of the Shinto shrine.
2. **The Mirror:** It contains floral prints.

The Tori-i and the mirror can represent Shinto in certain cases. But the symbol that has been passed down since ancient times along with the imperial family is the symbol of virtue called Zanshuno-Zingi. It comprises three treasures, namely,

- 1) The mirror (Yata No Gangami)
- 2) The sword (Gusanagi No Zirugi)
- 3) The curved jewel (Yasakani No Maga Tama)

The Mirror is the symbol of wisdom. According to the Shinto teaching, the sun goddess Amaterasu Omi Kami sent her grandson Ninigino Mikodo to rule over Japan. Therefore, the mirror may be the symbol of the sun goddess. Today, it is kept inside the Ize Shrine.

The Sword is the symbol of courage and it is kept inside the Asuta Shrine.

The Curved Jewel is the symbol of altruism and it is kept inside the imperial palace.

These three treasures represent the three virtues of wisdom, courage and altruism. These are important Shinto virtues.

## 9.10 Shinto: Its Current Status

State Shinto no longer exists. Ever since Japan lost the war in WWII, the government no longer forces the people to worship Kami in general and the emperor in particular. Kami worship and emperor worship are now a personal concern. Today, Shinto can be divided into five different types as follows.

1. **Imperial Shinto:** It deals with imperial ceremonies.
2. **Shrine Shinto:** It deals with ceremonies for the general public.
3. **Sectarian Shinto:** It has thirteen important schools.

4. **Neo-Sectarian Shinto:** It is Sectarian Shinto which has been formally recognized as a religion since 1945 (2488 B.E.) after the abolishment of Imperial Shinto.
5. **Popular Shinto:** It deals with black magic and folk customs and rites.

Today, Shinto assumes a much less important role and exerts less influence on the people of Japan. A large number of Japanese have converted to Buddhism. It may be said that Buddhism especially Zen Buddhism now exerts a greater influence on the Japanese people than Shinto. But the majority of Japanese Buddhists continue to subscribe to Shinto beliefs because Shinto symbolizes national unity. Buddhism is important in terms of life in the hereafter and the cultivation of virtue. Good and decent people are good for the family and the country. It may be said that Japanese people believe in Shinto for the sake of life in the here and now and in Buddhism for the sake of life in the hereafter.

The decline of Shinto has been brought about by two important factors.

1. Japan lost the war in WWII and State Shinto was abolished. Newer generations know less and less about Shinto because it is not taught in school or other educational institutions.
2. Japanese people wanted to become modernized and Japan is now one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. Having become an industrialized nation, the people are becoming less and less interested in religion and nationalism. More and more Japanese people today have no religion and they adopt different lifestyles. Some Japanese people are beginning to realize that if things continue as they are, Japan will meet with ruin. They are now trying to revive Shinto but with little success because the new generation Japanese have other things on their minds.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica 1994:269, there were then 3,162,800 Shintoists in Japan. But there are also Shintoists in Hawaii, USA, and Brazil where there is a large Japanese population.

## ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 10

## Zoroastrianism

### **10.1 The History of Zoroastrianism**

### **10.2 The History of Its Founder**

10.2.1 His Birth and Childhood

10.2.2 His Middle Years and His Spiritual Encounters

10.2.3 His Ministry

10.2.4 His Success

10.2.5 The Last Part of His Life

### **10.3 Its Religious Texts**

### **10.4 Its Doctrines**

10.4.1 The Six Virtues Leading to the Union with the Divine

10.4.2 Evil and Good

10.4.3 The Three Duties of a Human Being

10.4.4 The Four Principles of Forming Good Habits

10.4.5 Zoroastrian Priesthood

10.4.6 Fire Worship

10.4.7 The Supreme Deity

### **10.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **10.6 Its Rites and Rituals**

10.6.1 Initiation

10.6.2 Fire Worship

10.6.3 Evening Worship

10.6.4 Funeral Rites

### **10.7 Its Different Schools**

### **10.8 Its Religious Symbols**

### **10.9 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Zoroastrianism arose in the eastern region of the ancient Persian Empire 117 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. It had been the religion of the Iranian people before they converted to Islam. Zoroastrianism is the origin of dualism and has influenced such later religions as Judaism and Christianity. Its founder's name is Zoroaster.
2. The Avesta is the name of the Zoroaster text. It is divided into five categories. These include the Yasna which deals with rites and rituals; the Visperad which deals with prayers; the Vendidad which deals with recitations for expelling evil spirits; the Yashts which contains verses for the worship of twenty-one angels and Zoroastrian heroes; and the Khordeh Avesta which is the communal household prayer book.
3. Zoroaster teaching includes 1) The six virtues leading to the union with the divine; 2) Good and evil; 3) The three duties of a human being; 4) The four principles of forming good habits; 5) Zoroastrian priesthood; and 6) Fire worship. Zoroastrianism's ultimate goal is true and eternal bliss in heaven. To attain their ultimate goal, Zoroastrians must practice morality which can be summarized as good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; and they must worship God with love and devotion. This religion teaches that life on earth occurs just once and the hereafter is spent for eternity in either heaven or hell.
4. Zoroastrianism has two different schools: Shahenshahis and Qadmis. Zoroastrianism uses the image of a lamp to mean light and warmth as its religious symbol.
5. According to a survey in 2004 by the Zoroastrian Associations of North America, the number of Zoroastrians worldwide is estimated at between 124,000 and 190,000 most of whom live in Bombay, India and Iran.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Zoroastrianism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Zoroastrianism, the history of its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Zoroastrian rites and rituals, its religious symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 10

## Zoroastrianism

### 10.1 The History of Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism<sup>1</sup> arose in Iran 117 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces: Ahura Mazda (Illuminating Wisdom) and Angra Mainyu (Destructive Spirit). Zoroastrians believe that there is one universal, transcendent, supreme God, Ahura Mazda or Ormuzd or Spenta Mainyu. Ahura Mazda is the god of truth and order; the instrument or “Bounteous Principle” of the act of creation. Ahura Mazda created beauty, fertility, happiness, wish fulfillment, etc. Angra Mainyu or Ahriman is the god of evil and creates ugliness, scarcity, unhappiness, disappointment, etc. These two gods are constantly battling each other. Ahura Mazda said, “I, Ahura Mazda, cannot rest because it is my wish to protect my creation. Likewise, Ahriman cannot rest because it is his wish to destroy my creation.” It is for this reason that there exists duality on earth: good vs. evil; high vs. low; black vs. white; darkness vs. light, etc. All good things come from Ahura Mazda whereas all evil things come from Ahriman.

Zoroastrianism is also called the Parsi religion because this religion arose in Persia and the Persians believed in Mazdaism because the supreme God of this religion is called Ahura Mazda. It is also a fire-worshipping religion, since adherents of this religion are fire-keepers in that they keep it from going out. It does not mean that Zoroastrians believe fire to be sacred but that it is a symbol of light, cleanliness, knowledge, goodness, etc. That is, wherever there is fire, darkness disappears. Wherever fire is burning, dirtiness disappears. Wherever there is knowledge, stupidity disappears. Wherever there is goodness, evil disappears.

Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the Persian Empire during the reign of Cyrus the Great (558 – 530 B.C.E.). Zoroastrianism flourished in Persia for more than 1,000 years, and for three centuries it was spread to other countries such as Greece. The religion was admired by such well-known Greek historians as Herodotus and Plutarch and such well-known Greek philosophers as Plato and Aristotle. In fact, the word Zoroaster and the Greek word for wisdom are interchangeable. Zoroaster’s philosophy and Plato’s philosophy are said to be quite similar. There are two main reasons for the disappearance of Zoroastrianism from Iran.

1. Iran was invaded by Alexander the Great of Greece in 330 B.C.E. (213 B.E.) He commanded the Zoroaster texts to be burnt and Zoroastrians were forced to convert to the Greek religion.
2. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Islam waged war against non-Muslim countries in the name of Allah. It seized control of Iran and ordered the rest of the Zoroastrian texts to be destroyed. All Zoroastrians were forced to convert to Islam on pain of death. Devout Zoroastrians fled to Bombay in India. Zoroastrianism had all but disappeared for several centuries, and it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that it reappeared.

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<sup>1</sup> Hopfe, Lewis, M. Religions of the World, 1994, pages 256-259

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a British individual received one of the Zoroaster texts called the Saint Avesta text. Since he could not read it, he just hanged it on the wall of the Bodleian Library in Oxford University as a show piece. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Anquertil Euperron, a student of the Eastern Language Institute in Paris saw the book and was determined to solve the mystery of the Avesta text. He traveled to Bombay to study under a Persian teacher for ten years. Upon his return to Paris, he was commissioned by the French public library to translate the Saint Avesta text thereby unlocking the mystery of Zoroastrianism for the entire world.

## **10.2 Zoroastrianism: The History of Its Founder**

Zoroastrianism was founded by the religious philosopher Zoroaster or Zarathustra. He was born in the seventh century B.C.E. According to history, he lived between 660 and 583 B.C.E.

### **10.2.1 His Birth and His Childhood**

Zoroaster was born into a priestly family of the Spitamids in Persia or today's Iran in the seventh century B.C.E. His father's name was Pourusaspa, a Persian nobleman, and his mother's name was Dughdova. His life was filled with miraculous events. Zoroaster's disciples believed that it had been foretold for more than 3,000 years that a great and miraculous man would eventually appear on earth to save Persia. They believed that the Supreme God, Ahura Mazda, sent this person to be conceived in the form of light in a young girl's womb. Zoroaster's mother was at the time just fifteen years old. Some texts say that Zoroaster could perform supernatural feats as soon as he was born. For example, he could laugh as soon as he was born.

Many wondrous and miraculous events occurred during Zoroaster's childhood. For example, he had an extraordinary brain in that it was very powerful. Whoever touched his head would feel as though he was near a high-tension line. He could easily hold a debate with sages and was intelligent beyond his years. When he was fifteen years old, he felt inclined toward a life of peace. He was loving, kind, and compassionate toward the poor and all creatures. When he was twenty years old, he wanted to spend time alone in the forest but his parents forbade it. They tried to keep him home by finding a beautiful girl for him to marry but he refused to do it. He said that it was against customary practice to marry a person one did not love.

### **10.2.2 His Middle Years and His Spiritual Encounter**

When Zoroaster was thirty years old, he decided to live among poor farmers in different places. He saw how they were oppressed by landowners and he saw how much the farm animals suffered. He wanted desperately to help these people and animals. While he was thinking of a way to help them, he had a vision. He felt as if he had been summoned by Ahura Mazda to come before Him. He asked him questions about different problems until He was satisfied. He then appointed Zoroaster as his representative to go and help alleviate people's misery. This is God's command, "I created this man to be my representative. He is the only man that pays attention to my advice." God also said to Zoroaster, "You are the first man to venerate me. Others look upon me with hatred."



### **10.2.3 His Ministry**

The vision gave Zoroaster the confidence that he should teach the people. It is said that Zoroaster vowed to God that<sup>2</sup> he would spread the teaching worldwide, that he would transform evil into good. Ever since then Zoroaster devoted his life to God and adhered to the principle of “good thoughts, good words, and good deeds”. He vilified dirtiness, dinginess, drunkenness, knavery, and deceit. Zoroaster warned that whoever does not follow this teaching will experience trouble and hardship near the end of his life.

### **10.2.4 His Success**

“Where there is a will, there is a way.” With persistence, Zoroaster finally had the opportunity to meet and teach King Vistaspa, the king’s brothers and sons as well as the courtiers. These people used to worship nature and the power of nature as practiced by the Aryans of old but Zoroaster successfully converted them to Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster was forty-two years old at the time. The success at court allowed him to spread the teaching to the fullest extent until he was fifty-seven years old. In the meantime, he had been helped by his three wives, all of whom from a noble family. But he received the most help from the wife who was the minister’s daughter. From these three wives, Zoroaster had three sons and three daughters. One daughter married the Chief Minister and she was instrumental in helping her father spread Zoroastrianism. All three of his sons served as commanders in the Persian army. They too were important in helping their father spread Zoroastrianism.

From the time he was fifty-seven years old, Zoroastrianism became a bloody and political tool to extend the Persian king’s influence and territory. It turned out that a king who supported Zoroastrianism had to wage a great war at least once with the Turanians. To wage war with the Turanians and nearby countries that did not subscribe to Zoroastrianism and to win the war, 100,000 soldiers were required.

### **10.2.5 The Last Part of His life**

As an elderly person, Zoroaster became the master of strategy for the propagation of Zoroastrianism. He used it to further the cause of the country. Zoroaster was a noble-minded person and was well-respected by the people. He died at the age of seventy-seven. When Islam began to spread across the globe, Persia fell under Islam and its people began to convert to Islam. Adherents of Zoroastrianism or Parsis had to flee to India mostly to the city of Bombay. They laid down their weapons, changed the way they dressed, and abstained from killing cattle because they had to abide by Hindu rules. The Parsis were able to live among the Hindus for so long that they eventually forgot their language and their religious beliefs. They did not preserve any religious text and even if they did, they had no real understanding of it.

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<sup>2</sup> Muller, Max F., Sacred Books of the East, 1969, p. 156

### 10.3 Zoroastrianism: Its Religious Texts

The Zoroaster text is called the Avesta, which means knowledge and corresponds with the word “Veda” in the Veda of Brahmanism. The language used is Avesta (similar to Sanskrit). It was a collection of the teaching passed down through oral tradition. The Avesta text can be divided into five major categories as follows.

1. **The Yasna:** It deals with the different rites which include sacrificial rites. These rites show that deities are more important than human beings and sacrificial offering must come before all else. The Yasna is written in the form of hymns as in the Vedas. It contains five chapters and consists of prayers and hymns in honor of the Supreme God, Ahura Mazda, the Angels, Fire, Water, and Earth.
2. **The Visperad:** It is a collection of supplements to the Yasna and contains twenty chapters.
3. **The Vendidad:** It is an enumeration of various manifestations of evil spirits and ways to confound them. It is an ecclesiastical code, not a liturgical manual, and there is a degree of moral relativism apparent in the codes of conduct. It contains teachings about creation, history, hell, and heaven.
4. **The Yashts:** They are a collection of twenty-one hymns, each dedicated to a particular divinity or divine concept. They vary greatly in style, quality and extent. They are used as the priest’s handbook during ceremonies.
5. **The Khordeh Avesta (Little Avesta):** It is the prayer book for general lay use.

### 10.4 Zoroastrianism: Its Doctrines

#### 10.4.1 The Six Virtues Leading to the Union with the Divine<sup>3</sup>

Whoever practices according to the way of the wise God is considered to be a true Zoroastrian. These practices are as follows.

1. Truthfulness in body, speech, and mind
2. Having a clean and pure mind
3. Generosity
4. Being loving, kind, and compassionate toward useful animals
5. Doing worthwhile work
6. Educating the poor

#### 10.4.2 Evil and Good

Evil is a friend of evil people but an enemy of good people. Evil includes physical, verbal and mental dishonesty, anger, violence, vindictiveness, stubbornness, arrogance, gambling, sexual lust, greed, shamelessness, jealousy, etc. Zoroastrians must keep away from evil because an evil deed begets an evil consequence. Good or goodness is a friend of good people but an enemy of evil people. Good or goodness includes alms-giving, loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, endearing speech, a thirst for knowledge, truthful words, etc. Zoroastrians must practice only what is good.

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<sup>3</sup> Muller, Max F., Sacred Books of the East, 1969, p. 138

### **10.4.3 The Three Duties of a Human Being**

A human being must perform the following three duties.

1. Turn an enemy into a friend.
2. Turn an evil person into a good person.
3. Turn a stupid person into an intelligent person.

### **10.4.4 The Four Principles of Forming Good Habits**

1. Support those who are deserving of support.
2. Practice impartiality.
3. Be a friend to everyone.
4. Remove dishonesty from the self.

### **10.4.5 Zoroastrian Priesthood**

There are practices and disciplinary rules for a Zoroastrian priest as follows.

#### **The Five Practices**

1. Practice chastity.
2. Practice impartiality toward human beings and animals in body, speech, and mind.
3. Be a knowledgeable and trustworthy person. (Able to teach others)
4. Be wise in the way of rites and rituals.
5. Be patient in the face of evil.

#### **The Ten Disciplinary Rules**

1. One must have a good reputation in order to honor one's teachers.
2. One must not have a poor reputation in order to honor one's teachers.
3. One must not physically or verbally abuse one's teachers.
4. One must accept what is taught by one's teachers and pass it down accordingly (without deviating from it).
5. One must set up rules for rewarding those who do good deeds and punishing those who do evil deeds in an impartial manner.
6. One must practice hospitality.
7. One must forbid others to commit evil deeds.
8. One must confess one's misdeeds.
9. One must know how Zoroastrianism is faring and must support it.
10. One must be loyal to the ruler of the country and the head of Zoroastrianism.

#### **10.4.6 Fire Worship**

The Supreme God, Ahura Mazda, is pure and brighter than any light. He provides warmth for all mankind. Therefore, fire is the symbol of divinity. Fire burns away dirtiness and dinginess leaving only what is pure. Wherever Ahura Mazda is, the place will be filled with purity. Zoroastrians are called fire worshippers and Zoroastrianism is the religion of fire worshippers. For Zoroastrians, there must be a place for fire worshipping and the fire must not be allowed to go out.

#### **10.4.7 The Supreme Deity**

Ahura Mazda is believed to be the Supreme God. Hopfe explained that the word “Ahura” is a Persian word which means god, and the word “Mazda” means wisdom. Therefore, Ahura Mazda means the god of wisdom. According to the Zoroaster text, more than twenty names are used to call Ahura Mazda. These names include the giver of blessings, the giver of flocks of animals, the omnipotent one, perfect sacredness, the creator, the omniscient one, the undefeated god, etc.

Ahura Mazda is believed to be the creator of all things. He is good and pure and everlasting. The earth and everything in it are created by Him. But no one could create Him. He is self-existent, eternal, and beyond time. No one can know or understand Him directly except when he reveals himself through the six deities, namely,

- Asha: The god of justice and the knowledge of God’s rules
- Vohu-Mana: The god of love
- Kshatra: The god of help
- Armaiti: The goddess of kindness
- Haurvatat: The goddess of fertility
- Ameretat: The goddess of eternity

There are other gods such as Sraosha, the god who protects and rewards human beings that are obedient to the teaching of Ashi Vanguhe. Mithra is the god admired by soldiers.

These gods and goddesses are responsible for banishing evil and protecting human beings. Zoroastrians must routinely pray to these deities and ask for their blessings. There are more than forty deities in Zoroastrianism but only a few are important. Zoroastrianism may be easily mistaken to be polytheism given its many deities but these deities are the servants of Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda can be the god of goodness and light and as such he is called Spenta Mainyu or the god of evil and darkness called Ahriman. Both came from the same source.

## 10.5 Zoroastrianism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

Zoroastrianism teaches that there are two gods: Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. Ahura Mazda is the god of goodness. He is the creator of the earth and everything good in it. In the Bunhadis text, the Avesta Commentary, it tells about the creation of the earth by Ahura Mazda. On the first day, he creates the sky. On the second day, he creates water. On the third day, he creates the land. On the fourth day, he creates plant life. On the fifth day, he creates animals. On the sixth day, he creates human beings. The first man he created was Meshia, and the first woman he created was Meshiana. He also created light between the sky and the ground. He created the sun, the moon, and all the stars. In some texts, it is written that the first man Ahura Mazda created was Mashya and the first woman was Mashyana. They had fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls.

Ahura Mazda in addition to being the creator of all things is also the god of goodness, life, beauty, light, cleanliness, good health, intelligence, etc. Ahriman is the god of evil. He is the creator of everything evil. He is the god of death, ugliness, darkness, filth, weakness, sickness, stupidity, etc. These two gods are constantly battling each other. In battling Ahriman, Ahura Mazda is assisted by his assistants in the forms of deities. He created three gods and three goddesses to be his assistants. The three gods include Vohumana, the god of purity; Ashvahista or Asha, the god of justice; and Kshatra, the god of power. The three goddesses include Spendarmad, the god of love; Haurvatat, the god of fertility; and Ameretat, the god of eternity. These six deities are referred to as Amesh-Spenta or Heptat. They may also be the personification of the six virtues which include purity, justice, power, love, health, and eternity.

Zoroastrianism teaches that however powerful Ahriman may be; in the end he will be destroyed by Ahura Mazda. How quickly will Ahura Mazda be able to destroy Ahriman depends on humanity. He wants humanity's help in addition to the help of the six deities. To help speed Ahura Mazda's victory, everyone must banish Ahriman by practicing good thoughts, good speech, and good deeds. Human beings must try to remove evil from their minds. Conversely, whoever practices evil thoughts, evil speech, and evil deeds becomes Ahriman's victim because evil is Ahriman's kin whereas good or goodness is Ahura Mazda's kin. Ahura Mazda's army and Ahriman's army are constantly battling each other and their battlefield is the human mind. Every morning the demon of laziness whispers to a person telling him it is not yet time to arise and to continue sleeping. Whoever can resist the temptation by getting right up will be the first to enter heaven.

In terms of the hereafter, Zoroastrianism teaches that the soul is eternal and does not die with the body. After a person dies, his soul will linger with his body for three days and three nights. On the morning of the fourth day, the soul will go to a place of judgment and be judged by Mithra, the god of justice. From there, the soul will go to the Chinvat Bridge. Whoever accumulated many good deeds during his life on earth, his soul will be able to walk easily on the bridge as it expands. Along the way, there will be a goddess to help guide his way. The soul asks for the goddess' identity and she will answer, "I am your ego. I represent your physical, verbal, and mental purity." The goddess then leads the soul to heaven, the land of light, happiness, beauty, and perfume to live with Ahura Mazda forever. Whoever accumulated many evil deeds, his soul will have difficulty walking on the bridge. He will encounter many obstacles. The bridge will become narrower and narrower until it becomes as sharp as a sword. Then a hideous witch will appear. The soul will ask for the witch's identity and the witch will answer, "I am your ego. I represent your filth, your physical, verbal, and mental impurity." And the witch will lead the soul to hell, a land of darkness and

suffering to be with Ahriman. The time spent in hell does not last forever. As soon as he feels contrite and no longer dares to commit evil deeds, Ahura Mazda will bring him to heaven to be with Ahura Mazda forever. To attain the ultimate goal, one must practice physical, verbal, and mental purity and worship Ahura Mazda with devotion. Zoroastrians believe that life on earth occurs just once. However, in other places it is written that every 100 years, three wondrous men called Aushedar, Aushedar Mah, and Soshyant would take turn coming to earth to save humanity. They are avatars of Zoroaster and will be born of virgins the way Zoroaster was. These statements touch upon reincarnation.

## **10.6 Zoroastrianism: Its Rites and Rituals**

### **10.6.1 Initiation**

Every Parsi must attend the rite of admission into the Zoroastrian faith when he is seven years old (in India) and ten years old (in Iran). After the ceremony, he will receive a sacred shirt and a dagger.

Purification is performed in three ways as follows.

1. Padyab: Cleansing
2. Nahan: Bathing
3. Barsenum: A complicated ceremony to be performed in a special place

Purification is accompanied by the chanting of the Patet which is to vow that one will not sin again and the confession of sin is performed in the presence of a senior priest (Dastur) or a regular priest if the senior priest is not available.

### **10.6.2 Fire Worship**

Fire is the symbol of divinity. Ahura Mazda provides light and warmth for mankind. Wherever there is fire, filth is destroyed leaving cleanliness, purity, brightness, and warmth. Fire represents the presence of Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians worship fire by making sure that it does not go out. In their place of worship, a fire is kept burning at all times.

### **10.6.3 Evening Worship**

Every day at dusk, Zoroastrians in India especially in Bombay, which is the center of this religion, will be dressed in white and covered with a breast cloth with its ends hanging down. They come together in an orderly manner at a beach in order to perform the evening worship. They start by bending down and carefully dunk both hands in the seawater. They then touch their forehead slowly with their wet hands. Next, they touch their forehead once again with both ends of the breast cloth before removing the breast cloth and tie it around their waist as they turn toward the setting sun and chant softly,

“Humata hakhata havesata” (All of us praise those that practice honest deeds, honest words, and honest thoughts.) Afterward, they bow their heads three times in each of the four cardinal points and dunk their hands in the seawater, and touch their foreheads once again.

#### 10.6.4 Funerals

When a Zoroastrian dies, the body is not cremated or buried or thrown into the river because fire represents the presence of Ahura Mazda while earth and water are considered sacred. If the body is burnt, fire will be contaminated. If the body is buried, the earth will be contaminated. If the body is thrown into the river, the water will be contaminated. Therefore, the body is taken to the tower of death or the tower of silence built specifically for this purpose and left for such animals as birds, crows, vultures, insects, dogs, etc.

### 10.7 Zoroastrianism: Its Different Schools

There are two Zoroastrian schools.

1. **Shahenshahis:** This school adheres to the text which describes all the things that was told to the prophet Zoroaster by Ahura Mazda. This religious text called the Menog-i Khrad was compiled at the beginning of the third century and translated into the ancient Persian language, Pahlavi.
2. **Qadmis:** This school adheres to the text which describes the different rites and rituals called the Dadestan-i-Denig compiled in the same era as the Menog-i Khrad.

### 10.8 Zoroastrianism: Its Religious Symbols

The lamp is used to symbolize light and warmth, the characteristics of Ahura Mazda, who is purity itself and brighter than any light. He provides warmth for all mankind. Fire is the source of light. It destroys filth leaving only purity behind. Wherever Ahura Mazda is, it is the place of purity.



### 10.9 Zoroastrianism: Its Current Status

Zoroastrianism<sup>4</sup> arose and flourished in Iran for over 1,000 years. It disappeared from Iran because it was overcome by a foreign faith. Zoroastrians were forced to convert to the new religion on pain of death. Devout Zoroastrians had to flee to Bombay in India and elsewhere. Today, Bombay is the center of Zoroastrianism. It is estimated that there are approximately 180,000 Zoroastrians in the world today and 30,000 of them are living in Iran. These Iranians are derogatorily referred to as the Gabars (infidel) by the Muslims but they call themselves the Zardushtians or Bahdinans.

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<sup>4</sup> Darid, Noss A History of the World's Religions, 1994, p. 403



Most Iranian Zoroastrians live in the cities of Yazd, Kerman, and Tehran. There are 150,000 Zoroastrians or Parsis in Bombay. Although they are small in number, Zoroastrians are well-educated and wealthy. They control the Indian economy. They are the owners of the best hotels, the largest department stores, the largest wool companies, the largest jute mills, the largest steel mills and air services. They are known for their integrity. Zoroastrians do not appear to be interested in propagating their religion but they are happy to preserve it for their own posterity even though it may face the threat of being assimilated into other religions. Iranian Zoroastrians have faced discrimination and persecution especially after the banishment of the Shah of Iran and during the rule of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Every religion except for Islam was persecuted and destroyed.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 11

## Judaism

### **11.1 The History of Judaism**

### **11.2 The History of Its Prophet**

11.2.1 His Birth and Childhood

11.2.2 His Stepson and His Middle Years

11.2.3 The Last Part of His Life and the Ten Commandments

### **11.3 Its Religious Texts**

### **11.4 Its Doctrines**

11.4.1 The Ten Commandments

11.4.2 The Creation

11.4.3 The Human Soul

11.4.4 Monotheism

### **11.5 The Role of the Prophets**

### **11.6 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **11.7 Its Synagogues and Rabbis**

### **11.8 Its Rites and Rituals**

### **11.9 Its Four Major Movements**

### **11.10 Its Religious Symbols**

### **11.11 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Judaism arose in Palestine 957 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. It is monotheism in that it worships Jehovah or God and believes Him to be the Creator of all things. God helped them to be liberated from slavery in Egypt. Its prophet is Moses.
2. Its foundational text is called the Tanakh, which comprises three parts: 1. The Torah; 2. The Prophets; and 3. The Literature. There are also supplemental oral tradition represented by later texts such as the Mishnah and the Talmud.
3. Its doctrines include 1) The Ten Commandments; 2) The Creation; and 3) The human soul. Its ultimate goal is the union with God in heaven. To attain the ultimate goal, one must be obedient and devoted to God alone and practice the commandments given by God to Moses especially the Ten Commandments. Jewish people believe that life on earth occurs just once and the hereafter is spent in heaven all throughout eternity.
4. There are four major movements in Judaism: 1) Orthodox; 2) Conservative; 3) Reform; and 4) Reconstructionist. Its original religious symbol was the Hanukkah but today it is the Star of David.
5. In 2012, the world Jewish population was estimated at about 14 million. About 42% of all Jews reside in Israel and about 42% reside in the United States and Canada with most of the remainder living in Europe, and other minority groups spread throughout the world in South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Judaism.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Judaism, the history of its prophet, its religious texts, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about its rites and rituals, its synagogues, its rabbis, its movements, and its current status.

# Chapter 11

## Judaism

### 11.1 The History of Judaism

Judaism is the oldest surviving monotheistic religion. It was founded between 957 and 657 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era based on the times of Moses, the prophet of this religion. But the Jewish people believe Judaism to have existed since the times of Abraham or 1,500 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. It means that Judaism was founded 4,000 years ago. Judaism is the religion, philosophy, and way of life of the Jewish people. The word Judaism is derived from the Hebrew word Judah. The word Jew is derived from the word Judea, a Persian word.

The Jewish people were nomads and they were shunned wherever they went. The word Hebrew was the name used by the Canaanites to call the Jewish people. It means nomads. They went from place to place with their animals in search of pasture. They did not have a land of their own and yet their population was growing. These problems caused the chief of the Jewish people to try to find a way for his people to obtain land so that enough food could be grown to feed them all.

When Abram or Abraham was the chief of the Jewish people, he said to his people that God visited him and said that He is the only God and He is the God of the Israelites. He has chosen the Israelites to be His own people. He commanded Abraham to leave his land, family, and household in Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldeas) in return for a new land, family and inheritance in Canaan, the Promised Land. God said to him,

“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time Abraham was seventy-five years old. He led the Hebrew people to the Promised Land. When they arrived in Canaan, God appeared to Abraham and said, “To your offspring, I will give this land.”<sup>2</sup> They stayed in Canaan for a time until there was a prolonged drought. Abraham had to lead his people down to Egypt along with his wife Sarai, later called Sarah. Since Sarah was a very beautiful woman, Abraham feared for his life if the Egyptians should find out that she was his wife. So he told his wife to say that she was his sister. When Pharaoh saw her, he was pleased to make her his wife. For her sake, Pharaoh gave Abraham many things and treated him well. Later, he found out that she was Abraham’s wife. He told Abraham to take his wife and his people out of Egypt. They returned to Canaan once again. Abraham did not have a child with Sarah so Sarah let her handmaiden Hagar become Abraham’s wife. Later, Hagar gave birth to a son called Ismael. Eventually, Sarah also gave birth to a son called Isaac.

Abraham is said to be the first Jewish forefather and the first Jew to convert from polytheism to monotheism. He encouraged his people to share his belief of monotheism. Abraham was completely devoted to his God. For example, at one point

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

God wanted to put Abraham's faith to the test by commanding him to kill his son Isaac as a sacrificial offering. When Abraham was about to kill his son, God said to him that He merely wanted to put his faith to the test and did not really want Isaac to be killed. God then blessed Abraham and the Jewish nation. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to him again and said, "The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."<sup>3</sup> God also said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for all the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."<sup>4</sup>

At ninety-nine, Abraham underwent circumcision along with his son Ishmael. Note that circumcision is earnestly practiced among Muslim males as well. This is because Islam and Christianity had evolved from Judaism. Circumcision does not play a key role in Christian beliefs, however. After Abraham died, his son Isaac became the chief of the Jewish people. He married Rebekah and they had two sons: Esau and Jacob. Rebekah was very partial to the younger son Jacob and wanted him to take Isaac's place after he died. Esau became extremely jealous of Jacob and was always trying to harm him. Jacob was urged by his parents to go to a distant land called Haran to live with his uncle, Laban, Rebekah's elder brother. Later, Jacob married both of Laban's daughters. The elder daughter was called Leah and the younger daughter was called Rachel. Later still, Jacob married the two handmaidens of Leah and Rachel. Altogether, Jacob fathered twelve children and they became the heads of the twelve Israelite tribes. Rachel was the wife most favored by Jacob. She gave him two sons: Joseph and Ben Oni or Benjamin. Jacob had lived in Haran for many years before deciding to return to his homeland to reconcile with his brother Esau. One night during his travel, a man came to wrestle with him all night and the man turned out to be God. God blessed Jacob and gave him a new name "Israel", which means the one who wrestles with God or the one who is devoted to God. It is for this reason that the Jewish people are also known as children of Israel. Of all his sons, Jacob loved Joseph the best and wanted him to inherit his position and material wealth. Joseph's siblings became jealous and sold him to the Midianite merchants who in turn sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

This was how Joseph came to be a slave in Egypt and suffered much hardship. Still, he prospered at everything he did and eventually rose to become the second most influential man in Egypt after Pharaoh. This was how it happened. One night, Pharaoh had a dream.<sup>5</sup> In the dream, he was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted – thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 17

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 41

heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up. In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. Someone told Pharaoh about Joseph and how he could interpret dreams.

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph interpreted his dreams for him. Joseph told Pharaoh that both dreams had the same meaning and their meaning was revealed to him by God. The seven sleek and fat cows and the seven healthy heads of grains represented seven years of great abundance whereas the seven ugly and gaunt cows and the seven thin heads of grain meant seven years of famine. There would be plenty of rain for the fields for seven consecutive years. After that, the rain would not fall for seven consecutive years. Famine would be so severe that the people would completely forget about the seven years of great abundance. The reason for the two dreams was that God would make it happen soon. So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the whole land of Egypt and gave him a new name, Zaphenath-Paneah, and gave him Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife.

Joseph traveled all over Egypt. During the seven years of abundance, the harvest was plentiful. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance and stored it inside different cities. He stored up such huge quantities of grain that he stopped keeping records of it because it was beyond measure. When the seven years of famine began, there was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole of Egypt there was food. All the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, and Pharaoh was very pleased with Joseph. The news of Joseph's success and prosperity reached the Jewish people, and a large number of them immigrated to Egypt. They were able to live happily in Egypt. But once Joseph died, they began to encounter hardship. The new Pharaoh was unhappy to see how the Jewish population was growing so rapidly and feared that it would soon pose a threat to Egypt. He forced the Jewish people to become slaves and made them do hard labor work such as building the pyramids, etc. As a result, many died and the number of Jewish people began to decrease. To decrease the Jewish population even further, Pharaoh ordered the killing of every Jewish male infant. He gave this order to all his people: "Every Jewish boy that is born must be thrown into the Nile, but let every Jewish girl live."<sup>6</sup> Jewish girls were allowed to live so that they could eventually marry Egyptians and in time the Jewish population would be no more.

Technically, Judaism arose during the time of Moses in that Moses was the founder of Judaism. Judaism flourished during the time period that the Jewish people had their own land in Canaan. They had lived happily for about 700 years before they were made slaves again.

After King Solomon, the greatest Hebrew king, died in the year 931 B.C.E., the Hebrew kingdom was divided into two: the north kingdom of Israel and the south kingdom of Judah. Two hundred years after King Solomon's death or in the year 731 B.C.E., the north kingdom of Israel was dominated by Assyria and the people of Israel became their slaves. They were sent to work in different places until the Jewish population all but disappeared. It is believed that of the twelve Israelite tribes, ten were destroyed. Judah remained independent for 135 more years before being dominated by Babylonia in the year 586 B.C.E. The Babylonians treated the Jewish people cruelly. They burnt and destroyed their country as well as the synagogue in Jerusalem which had been built by King Solomon. Babylonia ruled the Jewish people for forty years when it was dominated by Persia in year 546 B.C.E. The Jewish people

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 1:22

automatically came under the rule of Persia. However, the Persians did not treat them as cruelly as the Babylonians had done and allowed them to return to their own land. The Jewish people were able to restore their country and build a new synagogue in Jerusalem. The respite was brief because the Jewish people were overcome by the Greeks because the Persians lost the war to the Greeks in the year 333. They later became prisoners of the Syrians and the Romans respectively.

During the periods that the Jewish people were under the rule of the Greeks and the Romans especially the Romans, they suffered terribly. A large number of Jewish people were killed. Jerusalem and the synagogue were destroyed for the second time and the Jewish people were scattered across different lands. Even so, they always thought of themselves as God's chosen people and they were determined to acquire their own land. They believed that God would send someone to help them again. These beliefs kept the Jewish people going strong. And whenever the suffering became too much, a prophet would appear to help them.<sup>7</sup> For example, between the fifth and eighth century, there appeared altogether sixteen prophets. These can be divided into two groups, the major prophets and the minor prophets. There are four major prophets, namely, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. There were twelve minor prophets, namely, Amos, Micah, Hosea, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Jonah, Zechariah, and Malachi.

These prophets helped alleviate the suffering of the Jewish people by giving them hope that the Messiah would be coming soon, the kingdom of God was coming soon, etc. Jewish people might have been scattered all over the world, but each Jewish person had faith in the Zion Movement in that they believed that one day God would grant them a land of their own once again. They believed themselves to be God's people and God's chosen race. They were excited to come upon a book written by the Viennese writer and journalist, Dr. Theodor Herzl, called "The Jewish State". In the first page of the book, he wrote, "If you are truly determined, this is no longer a dream." A year after the book was published; Dr. Herzl organized an international meeting in Switzerland to launch the Zionist Movement. Jewish representatives from all over the world attended the meeting. Dr. Herzl made a prediction at the meeting that fifty years hence, the country of Israel would happen. And things did happen just as he had predicted.

On November 29, 1947 (2490 B.E.), the United Nations held a vote (33 for, 13 against, 10 not voting) for Palestine to be divided into two states: the Jewish State and the Arab State. Therefore, on May 14, 1948 (2491 B.E.), the Jewish people proclaimed Israel a sovereign state. David Ben-Gurion served as its first Prime Minister. It had taken the Jewish people more than 2,000 years before they could have their own country. But the Jewish people and their sovereign state continue to face many problems from nearby countries especially the Palestinians.

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. Its adherents worship just one God which is Jehovah. All the events contained in the original covenant or the Torah, which is its foundational text, often involved God. There are many stories in Christianity and Islam that involve God. The Qur'an is filled with stories about God. This is the case because both Christianity and Islam have evolved from Judaism. The Jewish people not only worship Jehovah but they also live their lives by the Torah. Therefore, Judaism is not only a religion but it is also a way of life.



## 11.2 Judaism: The History of Its Founder

The Jewish people are known for their intelligence, persistence, thriftiness, and love for their clansmen. When they lived in Egypt, they caused it to prosper. The Pyramids in Egypt, an amazing architectural feat, happened as a result of the Jewish people's power of intelligence and physical strength. They lived in Egypt as slaves and their rapid population growth caused Pharaoh to fear that one day, Egypt would be dominated by the Jewish people. He decided to manage the Jewish population growth by confining them to a certain area, and they were not allowed to live among the Egyptians. But the confinement seemed to have backfired because it only caused the Jewish population to explode. Pharaoh finally chose a heinous method to solve the problem by having every Jewish male infant killed.

### 11.2.1 His Birth and Childhood<sup>8</sup>

The killing of every Jewish male infant happened between 1,200 and 1,500 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. Moses was born to Jewish slaves during the time of Pharaoh's heinous policy. Moses' mother saw that he was a fine infant and hid him for three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she prepared a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the infant in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to fetch it. She opened it and saw the infant. She wanted to adopt the infant and named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water." She knew Moses to be a Jewish infant, however. She had a Jewish woman raise Moses in secret. When Moses grew older, the Jewish woman took him to Pharaoh's daughter. Moses was a compassionate person and he felt pity for the Jewish slaves. Eventually, he learnt that he was a Jew and not an Egyptian.

### 11.2.2 His Middle Years

One day, Moses as a grown man went out to watch the Jewish people while they were working. He saw an Egyptian beating a Jew to death. Upon looking around and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand. He then fled to Midian, became a priest, and changed his name to Hobab or Jethro. Later, he married the daughter of a priest of Midian.

Moses returned to Egypt secretly in order to help the Jewish people. He discovered upon his arrival in Egypt that the old Pharaoh had died and the new Pharaoh did not want him executed. He forgave Moses but degraded Moses to the slave status just like the rest of the Jewish people. From that moment on, Moses became the head of the Jewish slaves in Egypt. He helped to make bricks and did construction work for the Egyptians. Meanwhile, he founded the Mason Society and used it to be the center where all the Jews could meet. One expert of chronicles said that Moses should be named the world's first founder of the Labor Organization.

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<sup>8</sup> Exodus 2

Moses once asked Pharaoh to stop forcing the Jewish people to be slaves. He also asked him for permission to lead his own people out of Egypt but Pharaoh denied his request. Sometime later, an epidemic broke out all over Egypt and the problem was beyond Pharaoh to solve. Having understood that the epidemic occurred because God was angry with him for not allowing the Jewish people to leave, Pharaoh finally allowed Moses and his people to leave Egypt.

### **11.2.3 The Last Part of His Life and the Ten Commandments**

Before Moses led his people out of Egypt, he told everyone to worship only God and let God be the center of their unity. Every male had to undergo circumcision to allow ease of cleaning during the journey. (Later, the Muslims adopted this practice as their own.) By the time Moses led his people out of Egypt, he was already eighty years old. He promised his people that God had inspired him to lead them, the Israelites, to a land of abundance called the Promised Land.

After the departure of the Jewish people, Pharaoh became fearful that they might return to attack Egypt or worse inciting other kingdoms to join them in attacking Egypt. Pharaoh sent out troops to hunt and kill the Jewish people. The troops came upon them as they were preparing to cross the Red Sea. As soon as the Jewish people had gone across the Red Sea, the Egyptian troops, their horses and chariots were drowned according to the Book of Exodus,

All Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground." And the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." And the Lord swept them into the sea.

In traveling from place to place as God commanded, the whole Jewish community encountered all sorts of hardship such as the lack of water and food. The hardship became so severe that by the time they reached Mount Sinai, the Jewish people began to doubt Moses and their faith in God was shaken. Some wanted to return to Egypt. Quarrels broke out causing divisiveness among them.

Moses feared that the end of the Jewish community was near, so he went up to spend time alone on Mount Sinai. After forty days, he returned to the community with the Ten Commandments inscribed in two stone tablets. He told the Jewish people that they have to encounter severe hardships because they have committed evil deeds. But now God has given them through him the rules for them to live by. Whoever believes and follows these commandments will be protected by God. Whoever does not believe and does not follow these commandments will be punished.

Moses was a clever man and an able leader. He was a capable prophet who could lay down rules and teach his followers to solve short-term as well as long-term problems as encountered in real life situations. It so happened that while the Jewish community was traveling from place to place, its members had committed all sorts of sinful deeds.

- They had no real faith in anything.
- They had drastically different opinions about things.
- They committed sinful deeds. They were immoral. They committed adultery. They stole. They lied. They were ungrateful to their parents. Etc.

Moses knew that to create unity and harmony in the community, he needed the Ten Commandments as rules for members of the community to live by.

- He made it known that the Ten Commandments were given to them by God for the Jewish people to live by. They served as the covenant between God and His people.
- The Jews were to marry their own kind.
- The use of the Holy Tent for performing religious ceremonies. These ceremonies were led by Moses and by Joshua after Moses' death. The Holy Tent later became the faith center of the Jews, the synagogue.
- There was the Box of Covenant of Yahweh inside which were the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The box was to go everywhere with the Jewish people to remind them of God's protection and the need for the Jewish community's unity and harmony.

It can be said that Moses was clever, persistent, bold, and courageous in standing up for his people and against their enemies. His innate character made him a great prophet and a leader. He knew that religious faith is necessary to a person's spirituality, and faith can unite people. Besides teaching the Jewish people to worship Jehovah, the one God, he also set up rules and regulations for members of the Jewish community to live by. And God played a role in everything in their lives. He was their supreme ruler and He ruled them through His representative, Moses.

Moses continued to lead his people as they traveled from place to place until they reached the fertile Jordan River basin. There, the Jewish people fought with the Canaanites, the original owners of the land. After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader. Eventually, the Jews could seize control of the land and no longer had to travel from place to place. They earned their living through agriculture and raising farm animals. The different tribes of Israel came together and they were united as one people and one nation. Their first ruler was called Saul. He ruled the Jewish people around 1,000 years before the beginning of the Buddhist Era. During the reign of King David, the kingdom of Judah was founded. During the reign of King Solomon, son of David, a magnificent synagogue was built in the city of Jerusalem to be the ceremonial center of the Jewish people. The Jewish nation was the most prosperous under King Solomon.

After King Solomon's reign, the nation was divided in two, namely, Judah and Israel. The two nations were constantly warring with each other. In the eighth Century B.C.E., Israel came under the rule of Assyria and became one of the Assyrian cities. In the year 586 B.C.E., Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem, came under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Later, Cyrus the Great of Persia seized control of Babylonia and ruled over Judah. He freed the Jews, and some of them returned to Palestine, which was then a colony of Persia. Losing independence and freedom did not cause the Jewish people to lose their identity. Wherever they went, they were determined to preserve and protect their ways of life. Their God did not reside only in Jerusalem but He was with them wherever they were.

During the time that the Greek and Roman Empires were prosperous and powerful, Palestine was under their rule at different times. The Jewish people under the rule of the Roman Empire during the first century put up a resistance, and Roman troops were dispatched to quell it. A large number of the Jewish people were cut down. The remaining Jewish people fled and went to different parts of Europe and Asia.

What the Jewish people contribute to the world civilization is monotheism and moral principles. Ancient Jewish literature was all about religion and the most important piece of literature is the Bible. The Bible is the most widely read book and it has been translated into more languages than any other piece of literature.

### 11.3 Judaism: Its Religious Texts

It is well known that the Bible comprises two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the story of creation and the teachings of different prophets. The New Testament is about the teachings of Jesus, the story of Christianity.

The Old Testament is the story of Judaism. It was written in the Hebrew language and was later translated into Greek, Latin, and English. It was not until the year 538 B.C.E. when Cyrus the Great of Persia allowed the Jewish people to return to Palestine that they had the opportunity to build synagogues and began compiling Hebrew literature, which had been scattered in different places, into the Old Testament. This work was not completed until the year 100.

The Old Testament is a great piece of literature because it serves as the foundations of both Judaism and Christianity. It tells us about the history of the Jewish people, how their lives have been intertwined with their religious faith, and how the moral principles given to them by God have become their way of life.

The Tanakh is the canon of the Jewish bible. It is divided into three parts as follows.

1. **The Torah:** It comprises the first five books believed to be the work of Moses and includes,
  1. The Book of Genesis
  2. The Book of Exodus
  3. The Book of Leviticus
  4. The Book of Numbers
  5. The Book of Deuteronomy

These five books or Pentateuch contain different accounts starting from the story of creation all the way to Moses' history, the Ten Commandments, as well as all the rules applied to the worship of God, the Jewish way of life, and peace and harmony of the Jewish community. These five books form the foundation of the Talmud. They show how Judaism is the religious of rules given by God to the Jewish people. Believing in and practicing these rules is the same thing as being obedient to God.

2. **The Prophets:** It contains the stories of all the prophets and their teachings. It also gives a historic account of how the Jewish people entered the land of Canaan all the way to how they came under the rule of different kingdoms. It comprises three books, namely, the Book of Joshua, the Book of Isaiah, and the Book of Jeremiah.
3. **Writings:** It contains historic accounts, poems, proverbs, hymns, and philosophy. It was originally written in the Hebrew language but was later changed to Aramaic.

The Talmud comprises two books, namely, the Mishnah and the Gemara. It was written in Aramaic with certain parts in the Hebrew language.

1. **The Mishnah:** It deals with prayers and blessings, tithing, agricultural laws, the laws of the Sabbath and the Festivals, marriage, divorce, some forms of oaths, civil and criminal law, sacrificial rites, the Temple, the dietary laws, and the laws of purity and impurity.
2. **The Gemara:** It is the component of the Talmud comprising rabbinical analysis of and commentary on the Mishnah.

## 11.4 Judaism: Its Doctrines

The teachings of Judaism can be divided into different parts as follows.

### 11.4.1 The Ten Commandments

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not be covetous.

These Ten Commandments<sup>9</sup> are very important to the life of every Jewish person.

The First Commandment promotes religious and national unity.

The Second Commandment strengthens loyalty to God.

The Third Commandment emphasizes God's holiness.

The Fourth Commandment allows the Jewish people one day of rest a week.

The Fifth Commandment promotes family ties in that parents are an important foundation of the Jewish community, second only to religion.

The Sixth Commandment promotes loving-kindness and compassion.

The Seventh Commandment sanctifies the institution of marriage and emphasizes the importance of family as the smallest social unit.

The Eighth Commandment promotes honesty and diligence in that one should work for what one needs and wants.

The Ninth Commandment emphasizes the importance of verbal honesty and social harmony in that to be a witness in court, one must swear to tell the truth before God.

The Tenth Commandment promotes the removal of greed in that one must not lust after other people's possessions which include their wives.

Besides the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament also contains other religious rules as follows.<sup>10</sup>

1. One must not grieve the death of a loved one by making cuts in one's flesh.
2. One must not consume certain animals' flesh such as camel, rabbit, and mouse deer because they are herbivores without split hooves. Therefore, they are considered impure.
3. One must not consume pork because a pig, albeit having split hooves, is not an herbivore. Therefore, it is considered impure.
4. One must not consume aquatic animals which have no fins and scales. They are considered impure.
5. The flesh of the following animals must never be consumed: eagle, vulture, black-tailed hawk, long-tailed hawk, house crow, ostrich, seagull, Asian barred owlet, owl, fish-owl, bat, purple swamp hen, spot-billed pelican, snakebird, stork, woodpecker, and every kind of winged insects.
6. One must not consume the flesh of an animal which dies of natural causes.
7. One must not boil a goat kid in the milk of its dam.
8. One must not earn a living by being a fortune-teller, a seer, a medium, a sorcerer, a witch, or a black magician.

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<sup>9</sup> Jumnong Tongprasert, *International Religions*, 2520 B.E., pages 87-88

<sup>10</sup> The Old Testament

### 11.4.2 The Story of Creation<sup>11</sup>

Judaism teaches that Jehovah is the one and only God. No other god is above Him. According to Exodus 1, creation proceeds as follows.

On the First Day, God created light. Then he separated light from darkness, and he named the light “Day” and the darkness “Night”.

On the Second Day, God created a dome to divide the water and to keep it in separate places. He named the dome, “Sky”.

On the Third Day, God created land and sea and all kinds of plants.

On the Fourth Day, God created the sun to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night; He also created the stars.

On the Fifth Day, God created birds and all kinds of creatures that live in the water.

On the Sixth Day, God created all kinds of animal life. He then created human beings in His likeness, and put them in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.

On the Seventh Day, God rested from all his work because it was the day of Sabbath.

### 11.4.3 The Human Soul

The Jewish people believe in the immortality of the human soul. They believe that God has granted living beings happiness and unhappiness. They believe that a person’s acts will be judged on the day the world ends. Those who perform good deeds will be brought to heaven. On the contrary, those who perform evil deeds will be cast down to hell. They believe that when a person dies, his soul will hang about his body for three days before being told where to go. According to Judaism, there are seven heavenly realms and seven hell realms.

According to ancient Jewish history, there were three important Jewish factions that emerged under Hasmonean rule: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.<sup>12</sup>

1. **The Pharisees:** They are the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism. They believe in an Oral Law that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah. They maintained that an afterlife existed and that God punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous in the world to come. They also believed in a messiah who would herald an era of world peace.
2. **The Sadducees:** They were elitists who wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Hellenism into their lives. They rejected the idea of the Oral Law and insisted on a literal interpretation of the Written Law. They did not believe in an afterlife, since it is not mentioned in the Torah. The main focus of Sadducee life was rituals associated with the Temple.

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<sup>11</sup> Genesis 1 & 2

<sup>12</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, Ancient Jewish History: Pharisees, Sadducees, & Essenes



3. **The Essenes:** They emerged out of disgust with the other two factions whom they believed to have corrupted the city and the Temple. They moved out of Jerusalem and lived a monastic life in the desert, adopting strict dietary laws and a commitment to celibacy.

Judaism teaches the following doctrines.

1. The body is the shell which houses the soul.
2. The rich keep God in their pockets; the poor keep God in their hearts.
3. Do not avenge yourself or be vindictive but to love your neighbor as yourself.
4. Do not be angry with your siblings, not even in thought.
5. Do not cause widows and orphans to suffer.
6. Do not annoy or abuse your visitor.

#### 11.4.4 The God of Israel<sup>13,14</sup>

The God of Israel has a proper name, written YHWH (modern Yehovah) in the Hebrew Bible. The name YHWH is a combination of the future, present, and past tense of the Hebrew verb “howa” meaning “to be” and translated literally means “The Self-Existent One”. A further explanation of the name was given to Moses when YHWH stated, “I will be that I will be”, the name relates to God as God truly is, God’s revealed essence, which transcends the universe. It also represents God’s compassion towards the world. In Jewish tradition, another name for God is Elohim, relating to the interaction between God and the universe, God as manifest in the physical world, it designates the justice of God, and means “the One who is the totality of powers, forces and causes in the universe”.

Initially, the Jewish people did not build a temple for God but they used the Tent of Meeting to perform their religious ceremonies. They also carried with them the Ark of the Covenant wherever they went. The ark contained the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, understood to be inscribed by Moses after he threw the original one at the Jewish people when he came down from the mountain and saw how they had turned their backs on God.

The use of the Tent of Meeting continued until a temple was built by King Solomon (961 – 922 B.C.E.). Its architectural style was like that of the Canaanite temple. There was a place where the Ark of Covenant was kept and rooms for the priests. It had a large square for performing animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifices had been performed to please God since the time of Abraham.

Hopfe was of the opinion that at the beginning of Judaism, no animal sacrifices were made but there were only human sacrifices. Abraham was once ready to sacrifice his own son for God. More details on this subject can be found in the Book of Genesis.

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<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia, the God of Israel

<sup>14</sup> Hopfe, Lewis, M. Religions of the World, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1983, page 329

## 11.5 The Role of the Prophets

According to Kirati Boonjuea, the term prophet means a person who propagates his own teachings or the teachings of another person. It does not necessarily mean the representative of God. In Judaism, the Prophets played an important role in instilling in the people the belief in one God. They also did the work of propagating Judaism. But they did not perform sacrifices. They played a key role in motivating the Jewish people to believe in God and in the coming of the Messiah to remove their suffering. These prophets had made certain predictions, which gave the Jewish people the hope of having their own great nation, the greatest nation on earth, in a land where they can enjoy abundance and freedom, for they are God's chosen people.

The teaching of each prophet encouraged every Jewish person to persevere and persist in making their dream come true. With the same shared goal, the Jewish people have bonded tightly with each other and they share a great love for their race. In the course of their history, they had often come under the rule of a more powerful nation. When they became discouraged, a prophet would appear to inspire them to continue to persevere. Whenever their faith in God was weakening, a prophet would appear to inspire them to continue to believe in God. Toward this end, miracles were created by some prophets.

The following are the names of the prophets known for their teachings and their predictions as appeared in the Old Testament.

1. **Isaiah:** He taught the Jewish people that YHWH or Yehovah is not only the God of the Israel but the God of every human being.
2. **Jeremiah:** He encouraged the Jewish people in Israel and Judah to return to God; otherwise, God would punish them.
3. **Ezekiel:** He prophesied that the Jewish people in Jerusalem would worship other gods instead of God, and death would be punishment for their disobedience. However, anyone who repented would be forgiven. He also prophesied the fall of Israel but Israel and Judah would later be united.
4. **Daniel:** He is known for his gift in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. He prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would become a great king, greater than all other kings. He also prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would eventually be split and given to Media and Persia.
5. **Hoseah:** He prophesied that after the Jewish people turned their backs on God, they would return to Him again. He told the people how it was wrong to worship other gods.
6. **Joel:** He prophesied that Judah would be restored and Jerusalem would be inhabited by people of different races.
7. **Amos:** He prophesied that Judah would be destroyed with fire by God and the people of Israel would be punished for their greed, selfishness, obscene conduct (father and son sharing the same woman), contempt for the poor, and consumption of alcohol in the place of worship. They had turned their backs on God; therefore, God punished them by inflicting them with locusts, fire, and plumb line.
8. **Obadiah:** He prophesied against Edom.
9. **Jonah:** He prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed.
10. **Micah:** He found faults with the leaders of Israel.
11. **Nahum:** He reminded the Jewish people not to incur the wrath of God.

12. **Habakkuk:** He prophesied that evildoers would be punished whereas good-doers who were loyal to God would be saved.
13. **Zephaniah:** He prophesied that God would destroy Ethiopia, Assyria, Nineveh, and turned Sodom and Gomorrah into a salt mine. God would protect Israel and unite the Jewish people. He would give them fame and they would receive worldwide praise.
14. **Haggai:** He told the Jewish people that he had received a message from God telling the people to build Him a temple.
15. **Zechariah:** He prophesied that Jerusalem would be restored and God would free His people from bondage.
16. **Malachi:** He prophesied that the end of the world was near.

## 11.6 Judaism: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

### The Story of Creation<sup>15</sup>

It is written in the Old Testament about the story of creation that on the first day, God created day and night. He created the sky on the second day. He created land on the third day. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars on the fourth day. He created birds, fish, and other animals on the fifth day. He created human beings both male and female to have dominion over all the animals and plants on the sixth day. His work was finished on the seventh day, the day designated as pure and sacred.

God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now God planted a garden called the Garden of Eden and put the man in it to work it and take care of it. He called the man, “Adam”, which means a clump of dirt. Next, God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man and the woman was called “Eve”, which means the mother of all the living. And He brought Eve to Adam to be his wife. Adam and Eve lived happily in the Garden of Eden. It was the serpent that told Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree. She did and gave part of it to Adam. Therefore, God cursed the serpent so that it had to crawl rather than walk around. And He put enmity between the serpent and the woman and between their offspring. God cursed the woman such that she would suffer severe pains in childbirth and to be ruled by the man. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden to fend for themselves. God caused their offspring to inherit their sin of disobedience.

### The Flood<sup>16</sup>

God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. He wanted to wipe from the face of the earth the human race along with the animals but Noah found favor in the eyes of God. So God told Noah to make himself an ark of cypress wood and coat it with pitch inside and out. He, his wife, their sons and daughters-in-law were to enter the ark. They were to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female. For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, every living thing that moved on land perished. After the earth was completely dry,

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<sup>15</sup> The Book of Genesis

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

God made a covenant with Noah in that He would not destroy the earth by flood again. So He set his rainbow in the clouds to be the sign of covenant between Him and the earth. The Jewish people believe Noah to be Abraham's ancestor.

### **The Afterlife and Life's Ultimate Goal<sup>17</sup>**

The Jewish people believe that the human soul lives on after death to await God's judgment. However, no details about the afterlife, heaven or hell are mentioned in the Torah. Such stories appeared after the Jewish people had had contact with the people of other religious faiths. They believe that for good-doers, on the day of the judgment, God will grant them eternal life. They will live for eternity with God and other celestial beings in heaven (Shekhinah). As celestial beings, they do not have to eat or drink. They do not reproduce. They do not have to work. There will be no jealousy, hatred or competition. Every celestial being wears a crown and immerses itself in celestial happiness. For evil-doers, they will suffer for eternity in hell (Gehinnon). In some scriptures, it is written that a messiah will eventually happen to save the evil-doers from hell.

## **11.7 Its Synagogues and Rabbis**

Originally, Jewish ancestors did not build a temple but they held their religious ceremonies in a tent designated as the "Tent of Meeting". Inside the tent was the Ark of Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. Wherever the Jewish people went, they would take the ark with them to remind them of God and His commandments. Wherever they went, they would erect a tent separate from other tents to house the ark. This tent was also the place where religious ceremonies were held, and hymns were sung. The Jewish people built their first temple during the reign of King Solomon. Its architectural style was similar to that of the Canaanites.

After the temple was destroyed, the Jewish people built a synagogue, a place of worship in their own unique style. Each group of Jewish people was self-governed by a rabbi. According to Hopfe<sup>18</sup>, rabbi means "my master". It is the rabbi's duty to interpret God's rules, for the Torah was not written by a human but it contains the Word of God. Therefore, it is necessary for someone who is devout and intelligent to take the time to study the Torah in detail so that he can correctly pass the knowledge on to others.

Therefore, a rabbi is an expert in Judaism and its teachings. They do not, however, perform religious ceremonies because such duty belongs to the tribe of Levites. Its members served certain religious duties such as safeguarding the Ark of Covenant, taking care of the table, the altar, the Jewish candelabra (Menorah), items of worship, food for the altar, and lamp oil. They also carried the Ark of Covenant from place to place. Jewish priests must come from the tribe of Levites whereas rabbis can come from any tribe but they must be an expert in the Torah and have the ability to interpret it.

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<sup>17</sup> Tiwari Nath Kedar, *Comparative Religion*, 1983, pages 122-123

<sup>18</sup> Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1983, page 334.

## 11.8 Judaism: Rites and Rituals

### 1. Sabbath

Judaism teaches that God created the world and everything in it in six days. His work was finished in the seventh day. Therefore, the seventh day is the day of rest and the day of worship. The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. The Jewish people perform the Sabbath in their homes by lighting the Menorah and singing hymns. Afterward, they had a sumptuous meal, and ended the evening by giving each other blessings by pouring wine on a piece of bread. They spent Saturday worshipping at the synagogue, listening to a sermon, and reading the Torah. Some groups of conservative Jews had to observe prohibitions. They were not allowed to turn on lights. They were not allowed to drive a vehicle. They were not allowed to smoke. They were not allowed to spend money. They were to keep their minds quiet.

### 2. Passover

It begins on the fifteenth day according to the Jewish calendar in the month of Nisan (between May and June). The festival lasts for eight days. It commemorates the time when the Jewish people were free from the enslavement of Pharaoh and their travels from place to place to find the Promised Land. During the first two days of the festival, each family organizes a feast of unleavened bread, roast mutton, spinach, etc.

### 3. Shavuot

This festival takes place fifty days after the Passover on the sixth day of the Jewish month of Sivan (sometime between May and June). It commemorates the anniversary of the day God gave the Torah to the entire nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai. The Jewish people celebrate the festival by decorating the synagogue and their homes with flowers and plants to express the abundance given to them by God.

### 4. Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. It is the first of the High Holy Days which usually occurs in the early autumn of the Northern Hemisphere. Rosh Hashanah is a two-day celebration, which begins on the first day of Tishrei. Rosh Hashanah customs include sounding the shofar (a hollowed-out ram's horn) and eating symbolic foods such as apples dipped in honey to evoke a "sweet new year".

### 5. Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is also known as the Day of Atonement. It is the holiest day of the year for the Jewish people. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jewish people traditionally observe this holy day with an approximate 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services.

### 6. Sukkot

Sukkot is a biblical Jewish holiday celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month of Tishrei (varies from late September to late October). It is one of the three biblically mandated festivals on which the Jewish people were commanded to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. Sukkot follows the solemn holiday of Yom Kippur.

## **7. Purim**

Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people in the ancient Persian Empire. It is celebrated annually according to the Jewish calendar on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Adar. Purim is the holiday of feasting and gladness, and the Jewish people spend it exchanging gifts of food and drink as well as making donations to the poor.

## **8. Circumcision**

A Jewish male child must be circumcised at eight days old by a circumciser (called Mohel). Under Jewish law, a mohel must draw blood from the circumcision wound.

## **9. Bar Mitzvah**

When Jewish boys are thirteen years old, they become accountable for their actions and become a bar mitzvah. After this age, they bear their own responsibility for Jewish ritual law, tradition, and ethics, and are able to participate in all areas of Jewish community life. They may be counted towards a prayer quorum and may lead prayer and other religious services in the family and the community.

## **10. Kiddushin**

Kiddushin (betrothal) refers to the first stage of the Jewish wedding process. The common custom is to betroth by means of a money transaction, using the traditional wedding band to effect the kiddushin. The ring serves as a constant and highly visible reminder of the couple's wedding commitment. In order for the betrothal to take effect, the transition must be witnessed by two kosher witnesses.

## **11. Death and Mourning**

When a Jewish person dies, his body is cleaned and dressed in white. The funeral is to take place as soon as possible. Mourning continues for seven days after death, and the mourners are to keep quiet inside their home except for the Sabbath when they go to pray at the synagogue. In some places, the mourning period lasts for eleven months. A headstone with the inscribed name of the dead person is placed at the person's grave. At the anniversary date, relatives will gather in the cemetery to pray for the dead person.

## **12. Daily Prayers**

There are three daily Jewish prayers: morning, afternoon, and evening. The prayers can be said anywhere.

# **11.9 Judaism: Its Four Major Movements**

- 1. Orthodox Judaism:** It is a relatively small movement, making up about ten per cent of those Jews who affiliate. Orthodox Jews accept the idea that the first five books of the Torah are binding on all Jews because they believe that God gave the Torah to Moses. They also believe that Israel is their Promised Land.



## **2. Reform Judaism**

Reform Jews do not accept the binding nature of Jewish law, focusing instead on the moral autonomy of individuals to decide which laws are religiously meaningful for them. In general, Reform Judaism is a liberal religious movement whose adherents often support liberal social causes. The Reform movement is often thought, sometimes by its own members, to be the most lenient when it comes to religious practices.

## **3. Conservative Judaism**

Conservative Judaism accepts the notion that Jewish law is binding upon Jews in that Conservative Jews have an obligation to obey all the teachings of Judaism. They believe that Jewish law, by its very nature, is capable of evolution as humans learn more about interpreting the Torah. Therefore, Conservative Jews have changed some of the earlier interpretations.

## **4. Reconstructionist Judaism**

Reconstructionism has made intellectual contributions to Jewish life that transcend its small numbers. Reconstructionists believe in a naturalistic approach to religion and conceive of Judaism not just as a religion but as an evolving religious civilization. They do not accept the binding nature of Jewish law and reject the notion of Jews as a chosen people. In general, Reconstructionism tends to the most liberal of the Jewish movements in many areas.

## **11.10 Judaism: Its Religious Symbols**

Originally, Judaism used the Menorah as its religious symbol but today it uses the Star of David. The Star of David is also depicted in the flag of Israel. Jewish people consider the Temple of Jerusalem built by King Solomon in the year 900 B.C.E. as a sacred place. Today, only its wall called the Wailing Wall remains. Jewish people from all over the world came to pray at the Wailing Wall by kissing it and putting their heads against it as they cry and remember the greatness of the Jewish community in times past. The Wailing Wall is the symbol of Jewish unity.

## **11.11 Judaism: Its Current Status**

Jews are an ethno religious group and include those born Jewish and converts to Judaism. In 2012, the world Jewish population was estimated at about 14 million. About 40% of all Jews reside in Israel and about 42% reside in the United States and Canada, with most of the remainder living in Europe, and other minority groups spread throughout the world in South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.



# Chapter 12

## Christianity

- 12.1 The History of Christianity**
- 12.2 The History of Its Founder**
- 12.3 The Propagation of Christianity**
- 12.4 The Birth and Development of Different Denominations**
  - 12.4.1 The Catholic Church
  - 12.4.2 The Eastern Orthodox Church
  - 12.4.3 Protestantism
- 12.5 Its Religious Texts**
- 12.6 Its Doctrines**
  - 12.6.1 The Concept of the Trinity
  - 12.6.2 The Concept of Love
  - 12.6.3 The Kingdom of God
  - 12.6.4 The Concept of the Almighty God
  - 12.6.5 The Sermon on the Mount
- 12.7 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**
- 12.8 Its Rites and Rituals**
- 12.9 Its Religious Symbol**
- 12.10 Its Current Status**

## **Concepts**

1. Christianity has its birth in Palestine in 543 B.E. The founder of Christianity is Jesus.
2. Christianity's important religious text is the Bible. Christian teachings are based on the relationship between God and humanity and social ethics. There are five major doctrines taught in Christianity: the concept of the Trinity, the concept of love, the Kingdom of God, the concept of the almighty God, and the Sermon on the Mount (the first sermon).
3. Christianity's ultimate goal is to spend eternity in the Kingdom of God. To attain this goal, the adherent must practice according to the Ten Commandments. Most importantly, he must love God with all his heart and to love his neighbor as himself. Christians believe that life on earth occurs just once and the afterlife takes place in either heaven or hell.
4. There are three important denominations in Christianity: the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Protestantism. Its religious symbol is the cross.
5. Christianity is the world's largest religion. Most of its adherents live in Europe, the Americas, and Australasia.

## **Objectives**

1. To enable the student to gain an overview about Christianity.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Christianity, the history of its founder, its religious text, its doctrines, its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about its propagation, the birth and evolution of its important denominations, its rites and rituals, its religious symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 12

## Christianity

### 12.1 The History of Christianity

Christianity is one of the three world religions. The word “Christ” comes from the Roman word “Christus”, which in turn is derived from the Greek word “Christos” that means “Messiah” in the Hebrew language.

Most Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and fully human, and the savior of humanity whose coming was prophesied in the Old Testament. Consequently, Christians refer to Jesus as “Christ” or the Messiah.

Christianity has its birth in Palestine in 543 B.E. based on the year Jesus was born. Christianity is an Abrahamic religion that began as a Jewish sect in the mid first century. Therefore, Judaism and Christianity worship the same God and share the same belief in the Old Testament. Jesus never set himself up as the founder of Christianity but said that he believed in Judaism. He went around teaching the Jewish people for the purpose of making the teachings of Judaism more complete. Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” The word Christianity appeared only after Jesus’ death.

While Jesus was still living, he was vilified by the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they sought to destroy him any way they could. Eventually, Jesus was put to death on the cross. It is written in the New Testament that Jesus Christ miraculously returned to life on the Sunday following the Friday on which Jesus was crucified. The Resurrection of Jesus is the central tenet of Christian faith and theology.

The foundations of Christian theology are expressed in ecumenical creeds. These professions of faith state that Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead in order to grant eternal life to those who believe in him and trust in him for the remission of their sins. The creeds further maintain that Jesus bodily ascended into heaven, where he reigns with God the Father. Most Christian denominations teach that Jesus will return to judge everybody, living and dead, and to grant eternal life to his followers.

Christianity’s earliest development took place under the leadership of the Twelve Apostles, particularly Saint Peter and Paul the Apostle, followed by the early bishops, whom Christians consider to be the successors of the Apostles.

According to the scriptures, Christians were from the beginning subject to persecution by Jewish religious authorities, who disagreed with the apostles’ teachings. Larger-scale persecutions followed at the hands of the authorities of the Roman Empire. State persecution of Christians ceased in the fourth century, when Constantine I issued an edict of toleration in 313 (856 B.E.). On February 27, 380 (923 B.E.), Emperor Theodosius I enacted a law establishing Christianity as the state church of the Roman Empire. From at least the fourth century, Christianity has played a prominent role in the shaping of Western civilization.

When Constantine the Great ruled Rome, Christianity became the predominant religion of the Roman Empire. In 313, (856 B.E.), Constantine issued the Edict of Milan legalizing Christian worship. He supported the Church financially, had an extraordinary number of basilicas built, granted privileges to the clergy, promoted Christians to high-ranking offices, returned property confiscated during the great persecution, and endowed the church with land and other kinds of wealth. In 325 (868 B.E.), he summoned the First Council of Nicaea, effectively the first Ecumenical Council.

Between 325 and 1054 (868 and 1597 B.E.), Christianity became the state religion of Italy and every European country. Later, it spread to the countries in North America, South America, and Australia. Between 1054 and 1517 (1597 and 2060 B.E.), the Pope reigned supreme and had the power to install or remove monarchs for the reason that he was God's representative on earth.

From 1517 (2060 B.E.), Christianity began to suffer at the hands of Martin Luther, a German monk, Catholic priest, professor of theology and seminal figure of a reform movement in sixteenth century Christianity. He was born in Eisleben, Saxony in Germany on November 10, 1483 (2026 B.E.). He entered a closed Augustinian friary in Erfurt on July 17, 1505 (2048 B.E.). In 1511 (2054 B.E.), he had an audience with the Pope in Vatican City and witnessed the lavish lives of priests in high-ranking offices. In 1516, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar and papal commissioner for indulgences, was sent to Germany by the Roman Catholic Church to sell indulgences to raise money to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Less than a year later, Luther wrote to his bishop where he asked among many other things, "Why does the Pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?" Luther objected to a saying attributed to Johann Tetzel that "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." Luther insisted that since forgiveness was God's alone to grant, those who claimed that indulgences absolved buyers from all punishments and granted them salvation were in error. Christians, he said, must not slacken in following Christ on account of such false assurances. Finally, after many clashes with the Church, Luther was excommunicated by Pope Leo X on January 3, 1521 (2064 B.E.). And by 1526 (2069 B.E.), Luther found himself increasingly occupied in organizing a new church. Martin Luther is considered one of the three major founders of Protestantism.

## **12.2 Christianity: The History of Its Founder**

### **12.2.1 Jesus' Birthplace**

Jesus is the founder of Christianity. He was born in Bethlehem of Jewish parents. His mother's name was Mary, and his father's name was Joseph. Joseph was a carpenter who made a living in the town of Nazareth, Galilee. According to the Bible, Mary was a virgin betrothed to Joseph. Christians believe Jesus was born through Immaculate Conception, and his lineage can be traced back to the House of David. According to the Bible, God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary as his wife. He told Joseph that Mary would give birth to a boy and they were to name him "Jesus". Joseph did as commanded by God.

### 12.2.2 The Birth of Jesus

When Mary was heavy with child, Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, which was 100 miles away. Their travel was made difficult by the mountainous terrain. A decree of the Roman emperor Augustus required that Joseph return to his hometown of Bethlehem to be taxed. While he was there with Mary, she gave birth to Jesus; but because there was no place for them in the inn, she had to use the manger for Jesus' crib.

### 12.2.3 His Education

When Jesus was little, Joseph took him and Mary to live in Egypt. It is not known how long they had lived in Egypt before they moved back to Nazareth. Jesus attended school in Galilee, a multi-cultural town where different languages such as Egyptian, Assyrian, Arabic, and Greek were spoken. He received as good an education as any poor child did in those days. There was evidence that Jesus knew several languages especially Greek.

Jesus was very interested in religion especially Judaism. He was well-versed in the Old Testament. At the time, another person who was also learnt in the Old Testament was John the Baptist. He was the son of a Jewish priest. He had gone to spend time in solitude in a cave until he was thirty years old before leaving it to set himself up as a religious teacher. John's ministry included the concept of baptism, similar to the practice of Brahmanism, where a person could wash away his sins by bathing in a river. In this case, it was the Jordan River. Jesus was also baptized by John at the Jordan River.

### 12.2.4 The Temptation of Christ

After the baptism, the New Testament describes the Temptation of Christ, in which Jesus resisted temptations from the devil while fasting for forty days and nights in the Judean Desert. Jesus' baptism and temptation serve as preparation for his public ministry which began when he was about thirty years old.

### 12.2.5 The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of sayings and teachings of Jesus, which emphasizes his moral teaching found in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup> It is the first of the Five Discourses of Matthew and takes place relatively early in the Ministry of Jesus after he has been baptized by John the Baptist and started preaching in Galilee.<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount<sup>3</sup>

- 1) **The Eight Beatitudes:** Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, Sermon on the Mount

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Gospel of Matthew, 5-7

be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

- 2) **On Murder:** Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. If while you are offering your gift at the altar, you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court.”
- 3) **On Adultery:** Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”
- 4) **On Oaths:** Jesus said, “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”
- 5) **On Eye for Eye:** Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”
- 6) **On Love for Enemies:** Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others: Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- 7) **On Giving to the Needy:** Jesus said, “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”
- 8) **On Forgiveness:** Jesus said, “If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”
- 9) **On Treasures in Heaven:** Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”
- 10) **On Judging Others:** Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.
- 11) **On Ask, Seek, Knock; the Narrow and Wide Gates:** Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

#### 12.2.6 Jesus’ Ministry

Jesus taught for only three or four years. Galilee, lying in the northern region of Israel, served as the major ministry center for Jesus. The headquarters of this ministry was Capernaum. He taught and performed many miracles in all the communities nearby. Jesus often used parables when teaching the multitudes who came to listen to Him wherever He went. Some of His miracles included: raising Lazarus and others from the dead; feeding over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish; walking on water and calming the storm in the Sea of Galilee; casting out demons; healing a paralyzed man, restoring a man’s hearing, and healing many others.

Jesus’ purpose in life was to do the will of His heavenly Father. Wherever He went, He brought goodness. He never hurt or injured anyone, although He did get angry at others who did wrong. He called self-righteous temple-



going people vipers and once turned over tables in the temple where money-changers were taking advantage of the people. Jesus was friend with the outcast of society – sinners. He reached out to the publicans, thieves, prostitutes. He never scorned anyone. He had made enemies of conservative Jews because His teachings were different from those of Moses especially His Sermon on the Mount.

#### **12.2.7 Contradictory Teachings**

Moses taught that husband and wife could be divorced from each other but Jesus taught that they could not. The reason given by Jesus was that God created Adam and Eve so that they could spend their entire lives together. God created Eve from one of Adam's ribs. Therefore, husband and wife are considered the same person, hence, cannot be separated from each other.

Moses laid down the law that every Jewish person must strictly observe the Sabbath, but Jesus did not do so. He healed the sick even on the Sabbath. The reason given by Jesus was that if someone's lamb falls into a well on the Sabbath, will he let his lamb drown?

#### **12.2.8 Jesus' View on Rich People**

Jesus said, "And again I say to you that it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup>

The Lesson of the Widow's mite is presented in the Gospels, in which Jesus is teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem. In the story, a widow donates two small coins, while wealthy people donate much more. Jesus explains to his disciples that the small sacrifices of the poor mean more to God than the extravagant, but proportionately lesser, donations of the rich. The reason was that the sum of money donated by the widow was all that she had to her name, while the wealthy people gave only a small portion of their wealth.

According to Matthew 23, Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example, for they don't practice what they teach. He also said, "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You won't go in yourselves, and you don't let others enter either.

#### **12.2.9 Enmity Appeared**

Jesus had no fear of those who were in power but acted unrighteously. He boldly taught what He believed to be righteous. In time, His enemies began to show themselves. It is written in Matthew 22: Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Jesus in His words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians (one of a party among the Jews). "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

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<sup>4</sup> Gospel of Matthew 19

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Jesus then said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

#### **12.2.10 The Twelve Apostles**

The Twelve Apostles are the twelve primary disciples of Jesus Christ, and they were his closest followers and the primary teachers of the gospel message of Jesus. Their names are shown as follows.

1. Simon, who is called Peter
2. Andrew, Peter’s brother
3. James, the son of Zebedee
4. John, James’ brother
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew, the tax collector
9. James, the son of Alphaeus
10. Thaddaeus
11. Simon the Zealot
12. Judas Iscariot

The first four apostles were fishermen. Peter and Andrew were brothers. When Jesus met them, they were casting a fishing net. Jesus called them to become fishers of men, and they immediately left their fishing net to follow Jesus. Together, they came upon James and John who were mending their fishing net. They saw Peter and Andrew with Jesus and they wanted to follow Jesus too. Of the Twelve Apostles, John (the brother of James) was the writer of the Gospel of John and Matthew was the writer of the Gospel of Matthew. Both gospels contain detailed information about Jesus and His ministry.

The last apostle, Judas Iscariot, is remembered for one thing: his betrayal of Jesus Christ. His motive appeared to be greed, but some scholars speculate political desires lurked beneath his treachery. He was in charge of the group’s money bag and sometimes stole from it. He was disloyal. He took a bribe from the chief priests and elders and betrayed Jesus by identifying Him with a kiss to the Roman soldiers. He felt remorse after his betrayal of Jesus and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. Judas ended his life in suicide.

### **12.2.11 The Approach of Danger**

Jesus had made many enemies during His ministry. His former religious teacher, John the Baptist, was murdered for his blasphemous teaching. Jesus knew that one day he too would come to harm. Of all his close disciples, He could trust not even one.

### **12.2.12 The Jewish Leaders Planned to Kill Jesus**

According to Matthew 26 (12.2.12 – 12.2.17), Jesus told his followers that on the day of Passover, he would be handed over to his enemies to be killed on the cross. Meanwhile, the leading priests and the Jewish elders were having a meeting at the palace where the high priest lived. They were trying to find a way to arrest and kill Jesus.

### **12.2.13 A Woman Did Something Special**

Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper when a woman came to him and poured expensive perfume from an alabaster jar on Jesus' head while he was eating. Jesus' disciples reproached the woman for having wasted the expensive perfume when it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus told his disciples that the woman was preparing him for burial after his death.

### **12.2.14 Jesus Was Betrayed**

Then one of the twelve Apostles named Judas Iscariot went to talk to the leading priests. He told them that he would hand Jesus over to them for a price and the priests gave him thirty silver coins. Having taken the money, Judas waited for the best time to hand Jesus over to them.

### **12.2.15 The Passover Meal**

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, Jesus' disciples came to him and asked where they should have the Passover meal so that they could go and prepare everything for him. Jesus told them to go to a certain man he knew in the city and tell him that he and his disciples would have the Passover meal at his house. In the evening Jesus was at the table with the twelve Apostles. They were all eating when Jesus said to them that one of his twelve Apostles would hand him over to his enemies.

Then Jesus took some bread and broke off some pieces, gave them to his followers and said, "Take this bread and eat it. It is my body." Then he took a cup of wine and said, "Each one of you drink some of it. This wine is my blood, which will be poured out to forgive the sins of many and begin the new agreement from God to his people."

### **12.2.16 Jesus Was Arrested**

After the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives and to a place called Gethsemane. He told his disciples to wait there and stay awake with him while he went a little way away to pray. Then he went back to his followers only to find them asleep. He did this three times but they still fell asleep. Finally, he told them to stand up and prepare to leave. At that moment, Judas went there with a large crowd, all carrying

swords and clubs. They had been sent from the leading priests and the elders. Judas told them that the one he kisses will be Jesus. Having thus identified Jesus, the men grabbed and arrested Jesus. Then Jesus said to the crowd, “Why do you come for me with swords and clubs as if I were a criminal? Every day I sit and teach in the Temple area but you did not arrest me there. But all these things happen to fulfill what had been written by the prophets.” Then all of Jesus’ disciples left him and ran away.

#### **12.2.17 Jesus before the Jewish Leaders**

The men who arrested Jesus led him to the house of the high priest. The teachers of the law and the elders were gathered there. The leading priests and the high council tried to find something against Jesus so that they could justify their action. Many people came and told lies about him. But the council could find no real reason to have him executed. Finally, two people came and said, “This man said, ‘I can destroy the Temple of God and build it again in three days.’” Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Don’t you have anything to say about these charges against you? Are they telling the truth?” But Jesus said nothing. Again the high priest said to Jesus, “You are now under oath. I command you by the power of the living God to tell us the truth. Tell us, are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” Jesus answered, “Yes, that is so. But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right side of God. And you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.” The council pronounced the death sentence upon Jesus as a result of Jesus’ answer.

Then some people there spit in Jesus’ face, and they hit him with their fists. Others slapped him. They said, “Show us that you are a prophet, Messiah! Tell us who hit you!”

#### **12.2.18 Jesus before Pilate**

According to Matthew 27 (12.2.18 – 12.2.10), Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor, and Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. Now it was the governor’s custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” the governor asked. “Barabbas,” they answered. “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?” Pilate asked. They all answered, “Crucify him!”

#### **12.2.19 The Crucifixion**

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” All the people answered, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!” Then Pilate released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed over to be crucified. Pilate’s soldiers led him away to be crucified at a place called Golgotha. Two robbers were crucified alongside him, one on his right and

one on his left. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And when Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen sheet, and placed it in his own new tomb that had been cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the tomb entrance and left.

### 12.3 The Propagation of Christianity

According to Matthew 28, Jesus rose from the dead three days after he died on the cross. Jesus appeared to his eleven Apostles and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of age.”

Christianity owes its initial dissemination to two men of vastly different backgrounds and personalities: Peter and Paul.

1. **Saint Peter:** According to John 21, in a later appearance after Jesus’ resurrection, he assigned Peter the role of tending to his sheep, that is, leading Jesus’ followers. Peter was a man of action but during Jesus’ ministry his words and actions were often the wrong ones. But after Jesus’ resurrection, the Apostle Peter became a very different man. He was still a man of action but now his actions were the right ones. According to the book of Acts, Peter no longer thought of himself, but his only purpose was to proclaim the Gospel to the world. One important action was to preach the greatest sermon ever where 3,000 people became believers. Peter’s courage inspired other Christians to go out and boldly speak the word of God. Sometime later King Herod began persecuting Christians, and Peter was captured and executed by Nero.
2. **Saint Paul:** According to the book of Acts, he was formerly Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee in Jerusalem who swore to wipe out the new Christian church, called The Way. He had letters from the high priest, authorizing him to arrest any followers of Jesus in the city of Damascus. On the Damascus Road, Saul saw a vision of the risen Christ, was converted and baptized into the Christian church. He was Jesus’ chosen instrument to deliver the gospel to the Gentles, their kings, and the people of Israel. After his baptism, he changed his name from Saul to Paul. He became the most determined of the apostles, suffering brutal physical pain, persecution, and finally martyrdom.

St. Paul is generally considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age. In the mid-30s to the mid-50s, he founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe. Paul used his status as both a Jew and a Roman citizen to his advantage in his ministry to both Jewish and Roman people.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (306 – 337 or 849 – 880 B.E.), Christianity became the predominant religion in the Roman Empire. Constantine’s conversion was a turning point for Early Christianity. In 313 (856 B.E.), Constantine issued the Edict of Milan legalizing Christian worship.

He became a great patron of the Church. On February 27, 380 (923 B.E.), Emperor Theodosius I enacted a law establishing Christianity as the state church of the Roman Empire. From at least the fourth century, Christianity has played a prominent role in the shaping of Western civilization. Christianity has since been propagated all over Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. It entered Thailand during the Ayutthaya period through the Portuguese, Spanish, and French missionaries who came with the merchants. However, the propagation of Christianity in Thailand has not been as successful as in other countries.

## **12.4 The Birth and Development of Different Denominations<sup>5</sup>**

For the first thousand years of Christian history, there were no denominations within the Christian church. Various offshoot groups existed, but they were considered “heresies” and not part of the Christian church. From the beginnings of Christianity through the Middle Ages, there was only one church, the Catholic (“universal”) Church.

The first divisiveness within Christendom came in 1054 with the “Great Schism” between the Western Church and the Eastern Church. From that point onward, there were two large branches of Christianity, which came to be known as the Catholic Church (in the West) and the Eastern Orthodox Church (in the East). The center of the Catholic Church was in Rome whereas the center of the Eastern Orthodox Church was in Constantinople. The Catholic Church uses Latin while the Eastern Orthodox Church uses Greek.

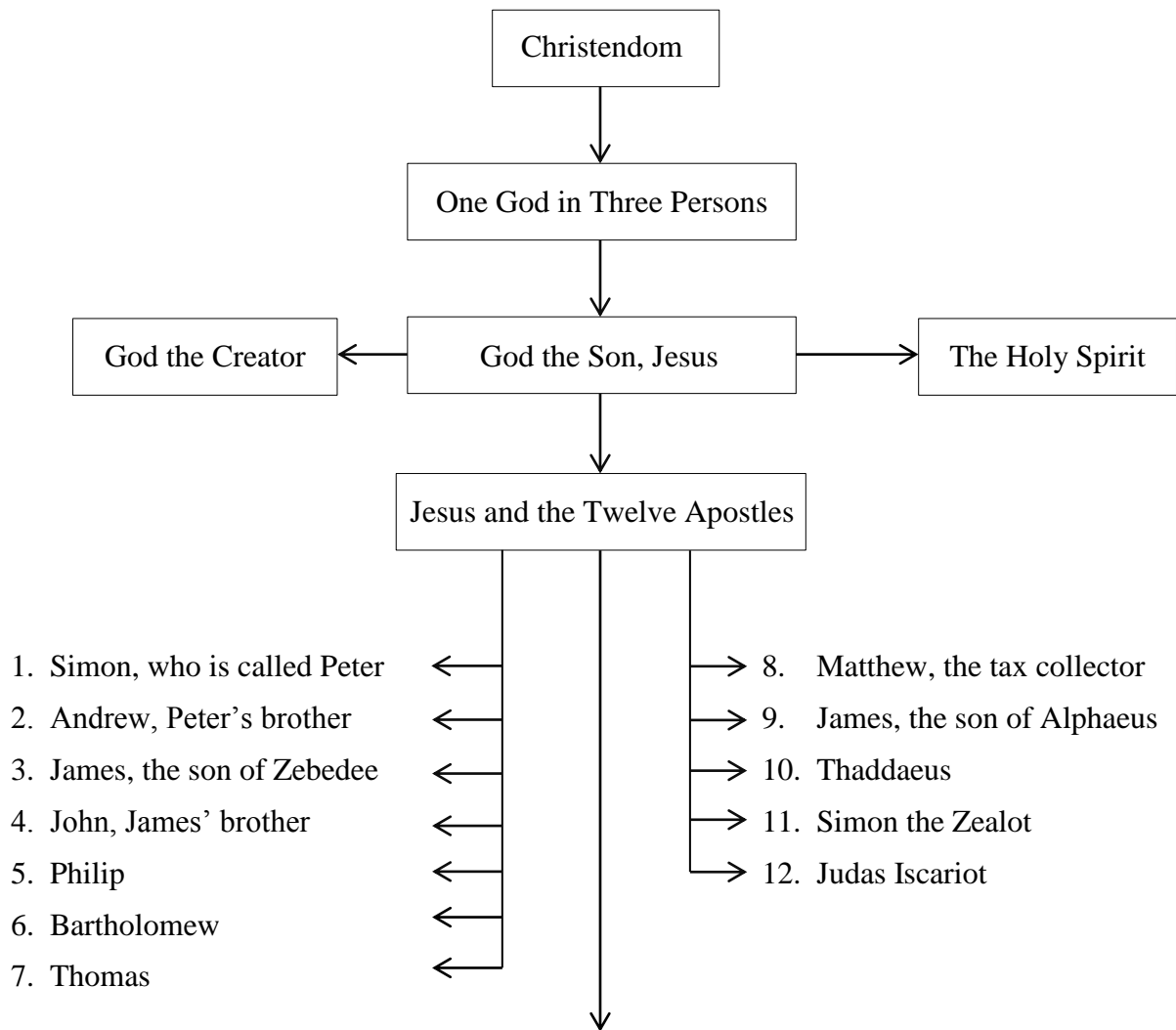
The next major divisiveness occurred in the sixteenth century with the Protestant Reformation. It was sparked when Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 (2060 B.E.) but “Protestantism” as a movement officially began in 1529 (2072 B.E.). It was the year that marked the publication of the Protestation, directed at the imperial government. The authors, German princes who wanted the freedom to choose their own faith, protested that “in matters which concern God’s honor and salvation and the eternal life of our souls, everyone must stand and give account before God for himself.”

Nonetheless, every Christian denomination worships Jesus and God.

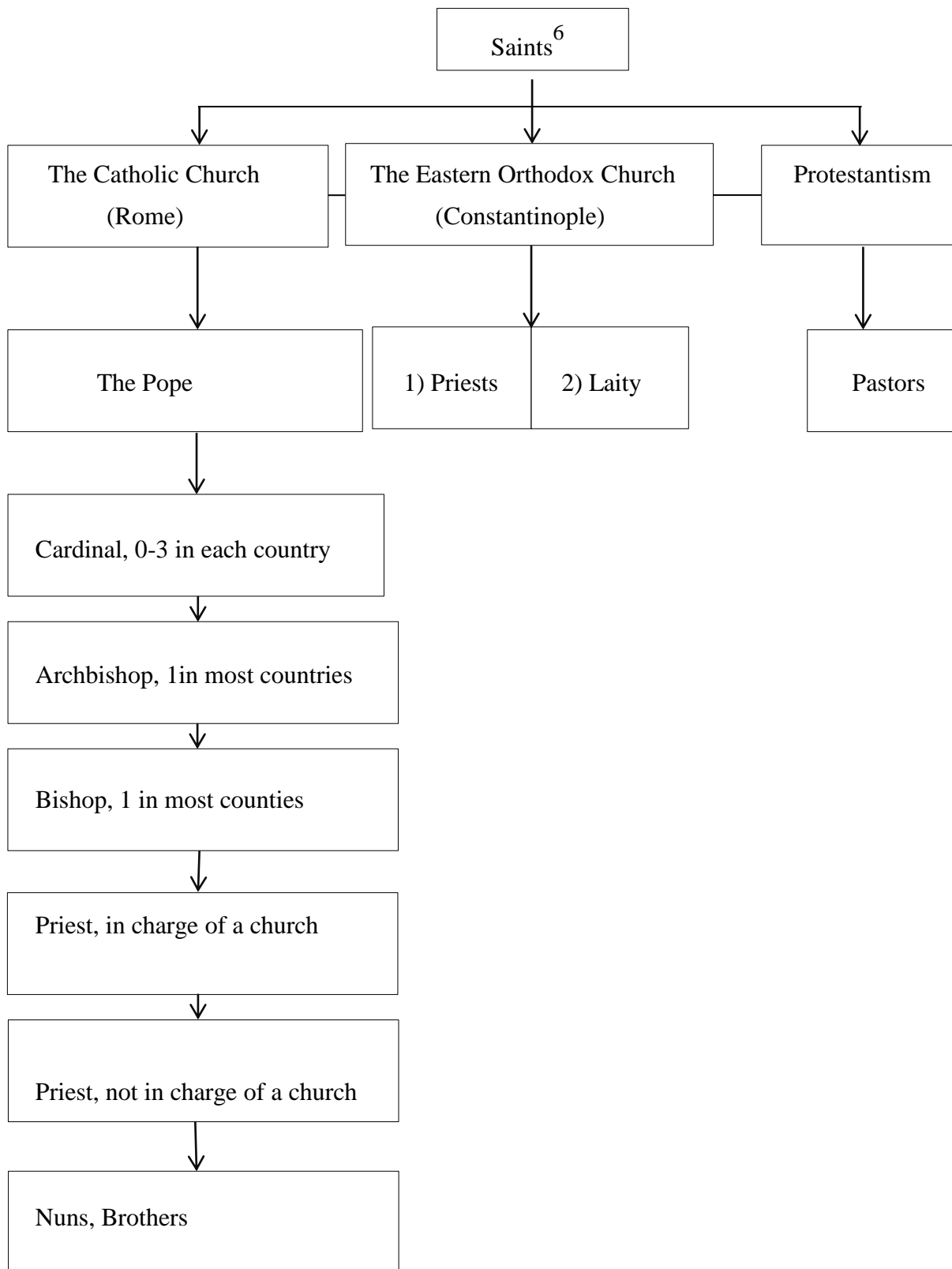
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<sup>5</sup> Religion Facts: A Brief History of Christian Denominations (on line)

## The Flow Chart of Christendom








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<sup>6</sup> Canonization is the act by which the Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Church declares a deceased person to be a saint.

#### 12.4.1 The Roman Catholic Church

The word catholic is derived from the Greek word which means “universal”. It teaches that it is the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ. It also teaches that its bishops are the successors of Christ’s apostles and that the Pope is the sole successor to Saint Peter who has apostolic primacy.

The Roman Catholic Church and its more than 1.16 billion members are governed by the Pope whose operation center is in Vatican City State. Vatican City State is a landlocked sovereign city-state whose territory consists of a walled enclave within the city of Rome, Italy. It has its own unique political structure. Legislative authority is vested in the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, a body of cardinals appointed by the Pope for five-year periods.

The hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is shown as follows.

1. **The Pope:** The Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church
2. **Cardinal:** The position of cardinal is a rank of honor bestowed by popes on certain ecclesiastics, such as leaders within the Roman Curia, bishops serving in major cities and distinguished theologians. For advice and assistance in governing, the pope may turn to the College of Cardinals. Following the death or resignation of a pope, members of the College of Cardinals, who are under age eighty, meet in Rome to elect a successor. Cardinals are all bishops but not all bishops are cardinals.
3. **Bishop and Archbishop:** A bishop is a priest who is responsible for a diocese. A bishop is the head of the priests in his diocese. An archbishop is the diocesan bishop of a large diocese which is usually in a city area.
4. **Priest:** A priest is a deacon who chooses to take the vows of celibacy after one year to become ordained a priest or a brother in service. Dioceses are divided into individual communities called parishes, each staffed by one or more priests.
5. **Deacon:** A deacon is a layperson who receives the Sacrament of Ordination after having undergone six years of training. A priest may be assisted by deacons.
6. **The laity:** People baptized as Catholics are counted as members of the Catholic Church.

#### 12.4.2 The Eastern Orthodox Church

The Eastern Orthodox Church is the second largest Christian church in the world, with an estimated 225 – 300 million adherents, primarily in Eastern Europe, throughout the Middle East and across Russia. The Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church split in an event known as the East-West Schism, traditionally dated to the year 1054, although it was more of a gradual process than a sudden break. The Eastern Orthodox Church differs from the Roman Catholic Church in two important ways.

1. The Eastern Orthodox Church regards Jesus Christ as the head of the Church; therefore, it does not recognize the authority of the papacy.
2. In terms of organization, each bishop has a territory (see) over which he governs. His main duty is to make sure the traditions and practices of the Church are preserved. Bishops are equal in authority and cannot interfere in the jurisdiction of another bishop. In the Eastern Orthodox Church priests are divided into two distinct groups, married clergymen and monastic clergymen.

### 12.4.3 Protestantism

The Protestant movement has its origins in Germany and is popularly considered to have begun in 1517 (2060 B.E.) when Martin Luther, a German Augustinian friar published the Ninety-Five Theses criticizing medieval doctrines and practices, especially with regard to salvation, justification, and ecclesiology. At the time, Rome was using the sale of indulgences as a means to raise money for a massive church project, the construction of St. Peter's Basilica.

The three fundamental principles of traditional Protestantism includes the belief in the Bible as the supreme source of authority for the church, justification by faith alone, and universal priesthood of believers. There are altogether over 33,000 Protestant denominations.

In addition to the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Protestantism, there are other denominations such as

- 1) **Anglicanism:** In the first half of the seventeenth century the Church of England and associated episcopal churches in Ireland and in England's American colonies were presented by some Anglican divines as comprising a distinct Christian tradition, with theologies, structures and forms of worship representing a different kind of middle way between Reformed Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. There is no single Anglican Church with universal juridical authority, since each national or regional church has full autonomy. The Churches of the Anglican Communion are in full communion with the See of Canterbury and thus the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his person, is a unique focus of Anglican unity.
- 2) **Society of Jesus:** The Society of Jesus is a Christian male religious congregation of the Catholic Church. The members are called Jesuits. It is founded by Saint Ignatius Loyola, Saint Francis Xavier, and others in 1534 (2077 B.E.), to do missionary work. The order was zealous in opposing the Reformation. Despite periodic persecution it has retained an important influence in Catholic thought and education. The society is engaged in evangelization and apostolic ministry in 112 nations on six continents.
- 3) **Quakers:** Quakers are members of a family of religious movements collectively known as the Religious Society of Friends. The first Quakers, known as the Valiant Sixty, lived in mid seventeenth century England. The movement arose from the Legatine-Arians and other dissenting Protestant groups, breaking away from the established Church of England. They based their message on the religious belief that "Christ has come to teach his people Himself," stressing the importance of a

direct relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and a direct religious belief in the universal priesthood of all believers. Quakers focused their private life on developing behavior and speech reflecting emotional purity and the light of God.

Some of the Quakers doctrines include:

1. Quakers believe that there is something of God in everybody and that each human being is of unique worth.
2. Quakers believe in the revelation from the Holy Spirit.
3. Quakers believe Jesus Christ to be the head of the Church.
4. Quakers seek religious truth by way of inner experience, and place great reliance on conscience as the basis of morality.
5. Quakers believe in the freedom to preach.
6. Quakers believe in gender equality.
7. Quakers emphasize direct experience of God rather than ritual and ceremony. They believe that priests and rituals are an unnecessary obstruction between the believer and God.
8. Quakers refuse to participate in war.
9. Quakers refuse to swear oaths.
10. Quakers integrate religion and everyday life. They believe God can be found in the middle of everyday life and human relationships, as much as during a meeting for worship.

#### **12.4.4 Deism**

A modern definition has been created and provided by the World Union of Deists (WUD) that provides a modern understanding of deism: Deism is the recognition of a universal creative force greater than that demonstrated by mankind, supported by personal observation of laws and designs in nature and the universe, perpetuated and validated by the innate ability of human reason coupled with the rejection of claims made by individuals and organized religions of having received special divine revelation. Currently, there are two main forms of deism: classical deism and modern deism.

The concepts of Deism include:

- 1) God exists and created the universe;
- 2) God gave humans the ability to reason;
- 3) God does not intervene with the functioning of the natural world in any way, allowing it to run according to the laws of nature;
- 4) Human beings can only know God via reason and the observation of nature, but not by revelation or supernatural manifestations especially miracles;
- 5) God is not ascribed any specific qualities beyond non-intervention;
- 6) Deism is related to naturalism because it credits the formation of life and the universe to a higher power, using only natural processes;

- 7) Deism may also include a spiritual element, involving experiences of God and nature.

Deism rejects religions based on books that claim to contain the revealed word of God. It rejects religious dogma and demagoguery. It is skeptic of reports of miracles, prophecies and religious mysteries.

#### **12.4.5 Mormonism**

Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr., in the 1820s in western New York during a period of religious excitement known as the Second Great Awakening. The faith drew its first converts while Smith was dictating the text of the Book of Mormon from Golden Plates he said he found buried after having been directed to their location by an angel. Smith dictated the book of 584 pages over a period of about three months saying that he translated it from an ancient language by the gift and power of God. Smith was seen by his followers as a modern-day prophet. During the 1820s Smith reported having several angelic visitations, and by 1830 he said that he had been told that God would use him to re-establish the true Christian Church and that the Book of Mormon would be the means of establishing correct doctrine for the restored church. After Smith's death, most Mormons followed Brigham Young west, calling themselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The thirteen fundamental beliefs of Mormons or the thirteen articles of faith are as follows <sup>7</sup> :

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
8. We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God.

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<sup>7</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Articles of Faith (online)

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.
13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul – We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

Smith and his followers avoided confrontation with New York residents by moving to Kirtland, Ohio. However, they were expelled from Jackson County in 1833 (2376 B.E.) and forced to flee Kirtland in early 1838 (2381 B.E.). The displaced Mormons fled to Illinois and settled in the city of Nauvoo, where they were able to live with a degree of peace and prosperity for a few years.

#### 12.4.6 Christian Science<sup>8</sup>

It is a set of beliefs and practices belonging to the metaphysical family of new religious movements. It was developed in the United States by Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910 or 2364 – 2453 B.E.) after she experienced what she said was a miraculous recovery from a fall. She subsequently wrote *Science and Health* (1875 or 2418 B.E.), which argued that sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer alone. The book became Christian Science's central text along with the Bible.

At the core of its theology is the idea that God's creation is entirely good, that the material world, including evil, sickness and death, are illusions, and that humankind, as an idea of God or Mind, is perfect; the limitations and flaws of what Eddy called "mortal man" are simply humankind's mistaken view of itself. Eddy saw God not as a person, but as "Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love." She distinguished between Jesus the man and the concept of Christ; Christ was a quality rather than an identity, a synonym for Truth, while Jesus was the first person fully to manifest Divine Mind; Eddy called him a Christian Scientist and a "Way-shower" between humanity and God. His death she regarded as an illusion like any other; a person who seems to die simply adjusts to a level of consciousness inaccessible to the living. The Holy Spirit is "Divine Science" or Christian Science, and heaven and hell are states of mind.

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<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, Christian Science

According to [www.christianpost.com](http://www.christianpost.com), the number of Christian Science churches in the U.S. has been gradually decreasing over the last few decades, dropping from 1,829 U.S. churches in 1971 to only 911 in 2009. Another source says that there are approximately 1,100 Churches of Christian Scientist in the U.S. and about 1,700 worldwide.

#### **12.4.7 Unitarianism<sup>9</sup>**

Unitarianism is a theological movement, named for its understanding of God as one person, in direct contrast to Trinitarianism, which defines God as three persons coexisting consubstantially as one being. Unitarians maintain that Jesus is in some sense the “son” of God, but not the one God. Unitarianism is also known for the rejection of several conventional Christian doctrines besides the Trinity, including the soteriological doctrines of original sin and predestination, and, in more recent history, biblical inerrancy.

Unitarians have liberal views of God, Jesus, the world and the purpose of life as revealed through reason, scholarship, science, philosophy, scripture and other prophets and religions. They believe that reason and belief are complementary and that religion and science can co-exist and guide them in their understanding of nature and God.

Notable Unitarians include Bela Bartok the 20<sup>th</sup>-century composer, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker in theology and ministry, Charles Darwin, Isaac Newton, Joseph Priestley, John Archibald Wheeler and Linus Pauling in science, etc.

#### **12.4.8 Jehovah’s Witnesses<sup>10</sup>**

Jehovah’s Witnesses’ beliefs are based on their interpretations of the Bible and they prefer to use their own translation, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. They believe that the destruction of the present world system at Armageddon is imminent, and that the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth is the only solution for all problems faced by humanity.

The group emerged from the Bible Student movement founded in the late 1870s by Charles Taze Russell with the formation of Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society with significant organizational and doctrinal changes under the leadership of Joseph Franklin Rutherford. The name Jehovah’s witnesses, based on Isaiah 43:10-12, was adopted in 1931 (2474 B.E.) to distinguish themselves from other Bible Student groups and symbolize a break with the legacy of Russell’s traditions.

In 1870 (2413 B.E.), Charles Taze Russell and others formed an independent group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to study the Bible. During the course of his ministry, Russell disputed many beliefs of mainstream Christianity including immortality of the soul, hellfire, predestination, the fleshly return of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the burning up of the world. In 1876 (2419 B.E.), Russell met Nelson H. Barbour; later that year they jointly produced the book *Three Worlds*, which combined restitutionist views with end time

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<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia, Unitarianism

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, Jehovah’s Witnesses



prophecy. The book taught that God's dealings with humanity were divided dispensationally, each ending with a "harvest", that Christ had returned as an invisible spirit being in 1874 (2417 B.E.) inaugurating the "harvest of the Gospel age", and that 1914 (2457 B.E.) would mark the end of a 2520-year period called "the Gentile Times", at which time world society would be replaced by the full establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Beginning in 1878 (2421 B.E.) they jointly edited a religious journal, Herald of the Morning. In June 1879 (2422 B.E.), the two men split over doctrinal differences, and in July, Russell began publishing the magazine Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence, stating that its purpose was to demonstrate the world was in "the last days", and that a new age of earthly and human restitution under the reign of Christ was imminent.

According to the 2014 (2557 B.E.) Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, as of August 2013, the organization reports worldwide membership of over 7.9 million adherents involved in evangelism, convention attendance of over 14 million, and annual Memorial (to commemorate Christ's death as a propitiatory sacrifice) attendance of over 19.2 million.

#### **12.4.9 Seventh Day Adventist Church<sup>11</sup>**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant Christian denomination distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the original seventh day of the Judeo-Christian week, as the Sabbath, and by its emphasis on the imminent second coming (advent) of Jesus Christ. The denomination grew out of the Millerite movement in the United States during the middle part of the nineteenth century and was formally established in 1863 (2406 B.E.). Among its founders was Ellen G. White, whose extensive writings are still held in high regard by the church today.

#### **12.4.10 Assumption<sup>12</sup>**

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven, informally known as The Assumption, according to the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy, and part of Anglicanism, was the bodily taking up of the Virgin Mary into heaven at the end of her earthly life.

Although the Assumption was only relatively recently defined as infallible dogma by the Catholic Church, and in spite of a statement by Saint Epiphanius of Salamis in AD 377 that no one knew whether Mary had died or not, apocryphal accounts of the assumption of Mary into heaven have circulated since at least the fourth century.

In the churches that observe it, the Assumption is a major feast day, commonly celebrated on August 15. In many countries the feast is also marked as a Holy Day of Obligation.

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<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia, Seventh Day Adventist Church

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia, Assumption of Mary

#### 12.4.11 Gabriel<sup>13</sup>

Gabriel is an angel who typically serves as a messenger sent from God to certain people. In the Bible, Gabriel is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, he appeared to the prophet Daniel, delivering explanations of Daniel's visions (Daniel 8:15-26, 9:21-27). In the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, and to the virgin Mary foretelling the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, respectively (Luke 1:11-38). In the Book of Daniel, he is referred to as "the man Gabriel", while the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel is referred to as "an angel of the Lord" (Luke 1:11).

#### 12.4.12 Baptists<sup>14</sup>

Baptists are individuals who comprise a group of denominations and churches that subscribe to a doctrine that baptism should be performed only for professing believers (believer's baptism, as opposed to infant baptism), and that it must be done by complete immersion (as opposed to affusion or sprinkling). Other tenets of Baptist churches include soul competency (liberty), salvation through faith alone, scripture alone as the rule of faith and practice, and the autonomy of the local congregation. Baptists recognize two ministerial offices, pastors and deacons. Baptist churches are widely considered to be Protestant churches, though some Baptists disavow this identity.

Diverse from their beginning, those identifying as Baptists today differ widely from one another in what they believe, how they worship, their attitudes toward other Christians, and their understanding of what is important in Christian discipleship.

The number of Baptists can add up to a total of close to 100 million adherents in the world through 211 denominations.

#### 12.4.13 Calvinism<sup>15</sup>

Calvinism (also called the Reformed tradition or the Reformed faith) is a major branch of Protestantism that follows the theological tradition and forms of Christian practice of John Calvin and other Reformation-era theologians. Calvinists broke with the Roman Catholic Church but differed with Lutherans on the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, theories of worship, and the use of God's law for believers, among other things.

#### 12.4.14 Presbyterianism<sup>16</sup>

Presbyterianism is a branch of Reformed Protestantism which traces its origins to the British Isles. Presbyterian churches derive their name from the

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<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia, Gabriel

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia, Baptists

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia, Calvinism

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia, Presbyterianism

Presbyterian form of church government, which is government by representative assemblies of elders.

Presbyterian beliefs are rooted in the thought of the French reformer John Calvin. In addition to the common Reformation themes of justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the importance of the Bible, Presbyterianism also reflects Calvin's distinctive emphasis on the sovereignty of God and a representational form of church government.<sup>17</sup>

#### **12.4.15 Methodism<sup>18</sup>**

The Methodist movement is a group of historically-related denominations of Protestant Christianity which derive their inspiration from the life and teachings of John Wesley. Methodists are convinced that building loving relationships with others through social service is a means of working towards the inclusiveness of God's love. Most Methodists teach that Christ died for all of humanity, not just for a limited group, and thus everyone is entitled to God's grace.

#### **12.4.16 Franciscan<sup>19</sup>**

Franciscans are people and groups (religious orders) who adhere to the teachings and spiritual disciplines of Saint Francis of Assisi. The most prominent group is the Order of Friars Minor, commonly called simply the "Franciscans". They seek to follow most directly the manner of life that Saint Francis led. This Order is a mendicant religious order of men tracing their origin to Francis of Assisi. It comprises three separate groups; each considered a religious order in its own right. These are the Observants, most commonly called "Franciscan friars", the Capuchins, and the Conventual Franciscans. They all live according to a body of regulations known as "The Rule of Saint Francis".

Saint Francis of Assisi<sup>20</sup> (1181 – 1226 or 1724 – 1769 B.E.) was an Italian Catholic friar and preacher. He founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of Saint Clare, and the Third Order of Saint Francis for men and women not able to live the lives of itinerant preachers followed by the early members of the Order of Friars Minor. Though he was never ordained to the Catholic priesthood, Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

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<sup>17</sup> Religion Facts, Presbyterian and Reformed Beliefs (online)

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia, Methodism

<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia, Franciscan

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia, Francis of Assisi

## 12.5 The Bible

The term “bible” is derived from the word “biblia” which means “the books”. The Bible is a canonical collection of texts considered sacred in Judaism and Christianity. The term Bible is shared between Judaism and Christianity, although the contents of each of their collections of canonical texts are not the same.

The Bible comprises two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament

### a. The Old Testament

The Old Testament is the Christian term for the Hebrew Bible, a collection of religious writings by ancient Israelites that form the first section of the Christian Bible, to which were added a second collection of writings referred to as the New Testament. The Old Testament was compiled and edited by various men over a period of centuries, with many scholars concluding that the Hebrew canon was solidified by about the third century B.C. It comprises three parts: The Pentateuch, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim.

**Part 1: The Pentateuch**, it is also known as the Five Books of Moses. In Judaism, it is called the “Torah”, and is the first part of the Tanakh. It comprises Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

- **The Book of Genesis**<sup>21</sup>: It is the basic narrative expressing the central theme: God creates the world along with the first man and woman and appoints man as his regent, but man proves disobedient and God destroys his world through the Flood. The new post-Flood world is equally corrupt, but God does not destroy it, instead calling one man, Abraham, to be the seed of its salvation.

- **The Book of Exodus**<sup>22</sup>: The book tells how the Israelites leave slavery in Egypt through the strength of Yahweh, the God who has chosen Israel as his people. Led by their prophet Moses they journey through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where Yahweh promises them the land of Canaan (the “Promised Land”) in return for their faithfulness. Israel enters into a covenant with Yahweh who gives them their laws and instructions for the Tabernacle, the means by which he will dwell with them and lead them to the land, and give them peace.

- **The Book of Leviticus**<sup>23</sup>: This book refers to the Levites, the tribe from whom the priests were drawn. In addition to instructions for those priests, it also addresses the role and duties of the laity.

- **The Book of Numbers**<sup>24</sup>: Numbers is the culmination of the story of Israel’s exodus from oppression in Egypt and their journey to take possession of the land God promised their fathers. As such it draws to a conclusion the themes introduced in Genesis and played out in Exodus and Leviticus: God has promised the Israelites that they shall become a

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<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Genesis

<sup>22</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Exodus

<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Leviticus

<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Numbers

great nation, that they will have a special relationship with Yahweh their God, and that they shall take possession of the land of Canaan.

- **The Book of Deuteronomy**<sup>25</sup>: The book consists of three sermons delivered to the Israelites by Moses on the plains of Moab, shortly before they enter the Promised Land.

**Part 2: Nevi'im (Prophets)** is the second main division of the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. It contains two sub-groups, the Former Prophets, (the narrative books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) and the Latter Prophets, the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets.

**Part 3: Ketuvim (Writings)** is the third and final section of the Tanakh, after Pentateuch and Nevi'im. In English translations of the Hebrew Bible, this section is usually entitled "Writings" or "Hagiographa". Ketuvim comprises eleven books which include Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, etc.

## b. The New Testament<sup>26</sup>

It is the second major part of the Christian biblical canon, the first part being the Old Testament. Although Christians hold different views from Jews about the Old Testament, Christians regard both the Old and New Testaments together as sacred scripture. The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books: four narratives of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, called "gospels", a narrative of the Apostles' ministries in the early church, called the "Acts of the Apostles", twenty-one letters, often called "epistles" in the biblical context, written by various authors, and consisting of Christian doctrine, counsel, instruction, and conflict resolution; and the Book of Revelation, which is a book of prophecy, containing some instructions to seven local congregations of Asia Minor, but mostly containing prophetic symbolism, about the end times.

## The Four Gospels<sup>27</sup>

A gospel is an account describing the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The most widely known examples are the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Christianity places a high value on the four canonical gospels, which it considers to be a revelation from God and central to its belief system. Christianity traditionally teaches that the four canonical gospels are an accurate and authoritative representation of the life of Jesus, but more liberal churches and many scholars believe that not everything contained in the gospels is historically reliable.

The four gospels present different narratives, reflecting different intents on the parts of their authors. All four gospels portray Jesus as leading a group of disciples, performing miracles, preaching in Jerusalem, being crucified, and rising from the dead.

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<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Deuteronomy

<sup>26</sup> Wikipedia, New Testament

<sup>27</sup> Wikipedia, Gospel

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke represent Jesus as an exorcist and healer who preached in parables about the coming Kingdom of God. He preached first in Galilee and later in Jerusalem, where he cleansed the temple. He states that he offers no sign of proof (Mark) or only the sign of Jonah (Matthew and Luke). In Mark, apparently written with a Roman audience in mind, Jesus is a heroic man of action, given to powerful emotions, including agony. In Matthew, apparently written for a Jewish audience, Jesus is repeatedly called out as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. In Luke, apparently written for gentiles, Jesus is especially concerned with the poor. Luke emphasizes the importance of prayer and the action of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life and in the Christian community. Jesus appears as a stoic supernatural being, unmoved even by his own crucifixion. Like Matthew, Luke insists that salvation offered by Christ is for all, and not only for the Jews.

The Gospel of John represents Jesus as an incarnation of the eternal Word, who spoke no parables, talked extensively about himself, and did not explicitly refer to a Second Coming. Jesus preaches in Jerusalem, launching his ministry with the cleansing of the temple. He performs several miracles as signs, most of them not found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Gospel of John ends: (21:25) "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."

## **The Acts of the Apostles<sup>28</sup>**

The Acts of the Apostles, often referred to simply as Acts, is the fifth book of the New Testament; Acts outlines the history of the Apostolic Age.

Acts tells the story of the Early Christian Church, with particular emphasis on the ministry of the apostles Simon Peter and Paul of Tarsus, who are the central figures of the middle and later chapters of the book. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, discuss Jesus' Resurrection, his Ascension, the Day of Pentecost, and the start of the apostles' ministry. The later chapters discuss Paul's conversion, his ministry, and finally his arrest, imprisonment, and trip to Rome. A major theme of the book is the expansion of the Holy Spirit's work from the Jews, centering in Jerusalem, to the Gentles throughout the Roman Empire.

## **Epistles<sup>29</sup>**

The letters in the New Testament from Apostles to Christians are usually referred to as epistles. Those traditionally attributed to Paul are known as Pauline Epistles and the others as Catholic Epistles.

The Pauline Epistles include:

1. Epistle to the Romans
2. First Epistle to the Corinthians
3. Second Epistle to the Corinthians
4. Epistle to the Galatians

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<sup>28</sup> Wikipedia, Acts of the Apostles

<sup>29</sup> Wikipedia, Epistle

5. Epistle to the Ephesians
6. Epistle to the Philippians
7. Epistle to the Colossians
8. First Epistle to the Thessalonians
9. Second Epistle to the Thessalonians
10. First Epistle to Timothy
11. Second Epistle to Timothy
12. Epistle to Titus
13. Epistle to Philemon

The Catholic Epistles include:

1. Letter to the Jews
2. Letter of James
3. First Epistle of Peter
4. Second Epistle of Peter
5. First Epistle of John
6. Second Epistle of John
7. Third Epistle of John
8. Epistle of Jude

The Pauline Epistles<sup>30</sup> or the Letters of Paul are the thirteen New Testament books which have the name Paul as the first word, claiming authorship by Paul the Apostle. Among these letters are some of the earliest extant Christian documents. They provide an insight into the beliefs and controversies of early Christianity and, as part of the canon of the New Testament, they have also been, and continue to be, foundational to Christian theology and Christian ethics.

Letter of James or the Epistle of James<sup>31</sup>, usually referred to simply as James, is a letter (epistle) in the New Testament. The epistle may not be a true piece of correspondence between specific parties, but rather an example of wisdom literature formulated as a letter for circulation. The work is considered New Testament wisdom literature because, like Proverbs and Sirach, it consists largely of moral exhortations and precepts of a traditional and eclectic nature.

**The Epistles of John**<sup>32</sup> are the three books in the New Testament thought to have been written between 85 and 100. The author of these letters is traditionally believed to be John the Evangelist, also known simply as “the Elder”.

**The Epistle of Jude**<sup>34</sup>, often shortened to Jude, is the penultimate book of the New Testament and is attributed to Jude, the brother of James the Just. In the

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<sup>30</sup> Wikipedia, Pauline Epistles

<sup>31</sup> Wikipedia, Epistle of James

<sup>32</sup> Wikipedia, Epistles of John



Epistle, Jude quotes directly from the book of Enoch. He cites Enoch's prophecy that the Lord would come with many thousands of his saints to render judgment on the whole world.

**The Epistles of Peter**<sup>35</sup>: The First Epistle of Peter, usually referred to simply as First Peter and often written 1 Peter, is a book of the New Testament. The author presents himself as Saint Peter the apostle, and the epistle is addressed to various churches in Asia Minor suffering religious persecution. The Second Epistle of Peter or 2 Peter was composed by the Apostle Peter, an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry. It criticizes "false teachers" who distort the authentic, apostolic tradition, and predicts judgment for them. 2 Peter explains that God has delayed the Second Coming of Christ so that more people will have the chance to reject evil and find salvation. It calls on Christians to wait patiently for the Second Coming of Christ and to study scripture.

### **The Book of Revelation**<sup>36</sup>

The Book of Revelation, often known simply as Revelation or the Apocalypse, is the final book of the New Testament and occupies a central place in Christian eschatology (the study of "end things"). Written in Koine Greek, its title is derived from the first word of the text, *apokalypsis*, meaning "unveiling" or "revelation". The author of the work identifies himself as "John" and says that he was on Patmos, an island in the Aegean, when he was instructed by a heavenly figure to write down the contents of a vision. The book begins with an epistolary address to the reader followed by an apocalyptic description of a complex series of events derived from prophetic visions which the author claims to have seen. These include the appearance of a number of figures and images which have become important in Christian eschatology, such as the Whore of Babylon and the Beast, and culminate in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

## **12.6 Christianity: Its Doctrines**

Basic Christian Doctrine is the study of the revealed word of God. It is Christian Theology regarding the nature of truth, God, Jesus, salvation, damnation, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, resurrection, and more.<sup>37</sup> Five concepts will be presented here. These include the Trinity, Love (Agape), the Kingdom of God, the nature of God, and the Sermon on the Mount.

### **12.6.1 The Holy Trinity**<sup>38</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity defines God as three consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit; "one God in three persons". According to this central mystery of most Christian faiths, there is only one God in three persons. It is the Father who generates, the Son who is

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<sup>34</sup> Wikipedia, Epistle of Jude

<sup>35</sup> Wikipedia, First Epistle of Peter; Second Epistle of Peter

<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia, Book of Revelation

<sup>37</sup> Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, Christian Doctrine & Theology (online)

<sup>38</sup> Wikipedia, Trinity

begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds. All things are from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

- **God the Father**<sup>39</sup>: In Christianity, God is the eternal being who created and preserves the world. Christians believe God to be both transcendent (wholly independent of, and removed from, the material universe) and immanent (involved in the world). Jesus refers to God in Matthew 7 as follows.

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ....”

### **God the Son**<sup>40</sup>

God the Son is the second person of the Trinity in Christian theology. The doctrine of the Trinity identifies Jesus as God the Son, united in essence but distinct in person with regard to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. In these teachings, God the Son pre-existed before incarnation, is co-eternal with God the Father (and the Holy Spirit), both before Creation and after the End. Son of God for some draws attention to his humanity, whereas God the Son refers more generally to his divinity, including his pre-incarnate existence. In John 3:16, it says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him...” In John 1, it says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth..... No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”

### **God the Holy Spirit**<sup>41</sup>

For the large majority of Christians, the Holy Spirit is the third divine person of the Holy Trinity. The New Testament details a close relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus during his earthly life and ministry. The Gospels of Luke and Matthew and the Nicene Creed state that Jesus was “conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary”. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as a dove during his Baptism, and in his Farewell Discourse after the Last Supper Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples after his departure. In Luke 1, the birth of Jesus was foretold, “...God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you..... Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

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<sup>39</sup> Wikipedia, God in Christianity

<sup>40</sup> Wikipedia, God the Son

<sup>41</sup> Wikipedia, the Holy Spirit (Christianity)

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God....."

In John 14:26, Jesus says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

### **12.6.2 The Concept of Love (Agape)<sup>42</sup>**

Agape is the Koine Greek word often translated as "unconditional love". It became particularly appropriated in Christian theology as the love of God or Christ for humankind. In the New Testament, it refers to the covenant love of God for humans, as well as the human reciprocal love for God; the term necessarily extends to the love of one's fellow man.

The Christian usage of the term agape comes almost directly from the canonical Gospel's accounts of the teachings of Jesus. When asked what was the great commandment, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Matthew 5:47-46)

For Christians, the love for God can be expressed by placing their faith in:

1. The one and only God
2. God's love for everyone
3. Jesus Christ, the Son of God
4. Jesus Christ, the Savior
5. The Kingdom of God

The concepts of love and the Kingdom of God are related to each other in that human beings can enter the Kingdom of God through the virtue of love and the Kingdom of God is the kingdom of love.

### **12.6.3 The Kingdom of God**

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<sup>42</sup> Wikipedia, Agape

Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven and the treasures in heaven are shown clearly in Matthew 19 and Matthew 6 as follows. The Kingdom of God represents a key element of the teachings of Jesus.

Matthew 19: Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

"Which ones?" he inquired.

Jesus replied, "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself."

"All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

Matthew 6: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

#### 12.6.4 The One and Only God<sup>43</sup>

Early Christian views of God (before the gospels were written) are reflected in Apostle Paul's statement in 1Corinthians (8:5-6), written ca. AD 53-54, i.e., about twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus: For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

Apart from asserting that there is but one God, Paul's statement includes a number of other significant elements: he distinguishes Christian belief from the Jewish background of the time by referring to Jesus and the Father almost in the same breath, and by conferring on Jesus the title of divine honor "Lord", as well as calling him Christ.

In the Book of Acts (17:24-27) during a sermon given by Paul, he further characterizes the early Christian understanding: The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of Heaven and earth; and reflects on the relationship between God and Christians: that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us for in Him we live.

The theology of the attributes and nature of God are listed below.<sup>44</sup>

- 1) Aseity (self-existence and self-sufficiency)
- 2) Goodness (kindness, love, grace, mercy and longsuffering)
- 3) Graciousness
- 4) Holiness
- 5) Immanence (being in the world)
- 6) Immutability (God cannot change)
- 7) Impassibility
- 8) Impeccability
- 9) Incorporeality
- 10) Incomprehensibility
- 11) Infinity
- 12) Jealousy
- 13) Love
- 14) Mission
- 15) Omnipotence
- 16) Omnipresence
- 17) Omniscience
- 18) Oneness
- 19) Providence

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<sup>43</sup> Wikipedia, God in Christianity

<sup>44</sup> Wikipedia, Attributes of God in Christianity

- 20) Righteousness
- 21) Simplicity
- 22) Sovereignty
- 23) Transcendence (outside space and time, eternal)
- 24) Trinity
- 25) Veracity
- 26) Wrath

#### 12.6.5 The Sermon on the Mount<sup>45</sup>

The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of sayings and teachings of Jesus, which emphasizes his moral teaching found in the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 5, 6, and 7). The Sermon is the longest piece of teaching from Jesus in the New Testament, and has been one of the most widely quoted elements of the Canonical Gospels. It includes some of the best known teachings of Jesus, such as the Beatitudes, and the widely recited Lord's Prayer. To most believers in Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount contains the central tenets of Christian discipleship. Details of the Sermon are as follows.

##### 1. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12):

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
 For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 Blessed are those who mourn,  
 For they will be comforted.  
 Blessed are the meek,  
 For they will inherit the earth.  
 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
 For they will be filled.  
 Blessed are the merciful,  
 For they will be shown mercy.  
 Blessed are the pure in heart,  
 For they will see God.  
 Blessed are the peacemakers,  
 For they will be called children of God.  
 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
 For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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<sup>45</sup> Wikipedia, Sermon on the Mount

**2. Salt of the Earth** (Matthew 5:13)

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

**3. Light of the World** (Matthew 5:14-16)

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

**4. The Fulfillment of the Law** (Matthew 5:17-20)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

**5. Murder** (Matthew 5:21-26)

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca’, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

**6. Adultery** (Matthew 5:27-30)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”



**7. Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)**

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

**8. Oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)**

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

**9. Eye for Eye (Matthew 5:38-42)**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

**10. Love for Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

**11. Giving to the Needy (Matthew 6:1-4)**

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

**12. Treasures in Heaven** (Matthew 6:19-24)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

**13. Judging Others** (Matthew 7:1-6)

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

**14. Ask, Seek, Knock** (Matthew 7:7-12)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

## 12.7 Christianity: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal

In the Old Testament, God or Yahweh was kind and merciful only to the people of Israel who had faith in Him and were obedient to Him but He was ruthless to those who were disobedient as shown in the laws given to Moses in Exodus 21:22-25, “If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”

In the New Testament, God is merciful to everyone, believers and non-believers alike. He forgives even those who curse Him. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus told His disciples that He is the way to the Father, “The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.....(John 14:10-11). You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.....(John 14:28-31).

Jesus comforted His disciples when He knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father saying, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have to you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. (John 14:1-4) ”

He also promised the Holy Spirit saying, “All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:25-27).”

Jesus also foretold the destruction of the Temple and signs of the end times in Matthew 24: As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the

abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.

So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other....

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father....”

## 12.8 Christianity: Its Rites and Rituals<sup>46</sup>

Roman Catholic teaching holds that there are seven sacraments which Christ instituted and entrusted to the Church. These include baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance or reconciliation, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony.

1. **Baptism:** The Catholic Church sees baptism as the first and basic sacrament of Christian initiation. In the Western or Latin Church, baptism is usually conferred today by pouring water three times on the recipient's head, while reciting the baptismal formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). In the Eastern Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite immersion or submersion is used, and the formula is: "The servant of God, (name), is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Though sprinkling is not normally used, its validity is accepted, provided that the water flows over the skin, otherwise it is not a washing.
2. **Confirmation:** It is the second sacrament of Christian initiation. The rite confirms and strengthens baptismal grace. Confirmation is conferred by the anointing with Sacred Chrism (oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop), which is done by the laying on of the hand of the minister who pronounces the sacramental words proper to the rite. These words refer to a gift of the Holy Spirit that marks the recipient as with a seal.

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<sup>46</sup> Wikipedia, Sacraments of the Catholic Church

3. **The Eucharist:** It is the sacrament by which Catholics partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and participate in His one sacrifice. The first of these two aspects of the sacrament is also called Holy Communion. The bread and wine used in the Eucharistic rite are, in Catholic faith, transformed in its inner reality, though not in appearance, into the Body and Blood of Christ, a change that is called transubstantiation. The minister who is able to confect the sacrament of the Eucharist in the person of Christ is a validly ordained priest alone.
4. **Penance or Reconciliation:** It is the sacrament of spiritual healing of a baptized person from the distancing from God resulting from sins committed. The sacrament involves four elements: 1) Contrition; 2) Confession to a priest who has the faculty to hear confessions; 3) Absolution by the priest; and, 4) Satisfaction or penance.
5. **Anointing of the Sick:** In this sacrament a priest anoints the sick with oil blessed specifically for that purpose. The anointing of the sick can be administered to any member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason, begins to be in danger by reason of illness or old age. A new illness or a worsening of health enables a person to receive the sacrament a further time.
6. **Holy Orders:** It is the sacrament by which a man is made a bishop, a priest, or a deacon, and thus dedicated to be an image of Christ. A bishop is the minister of this sacrament. Ordination as a bishop confers the fullness of the sacrament, making the bishop a member of the body of successors of the Apostles, and giving him the mission to teach, sanctify, and govern, along with the care of all the Churches. Ordination as a priest configures the priest to Christ the Head of the Church and the one essential High Priest, and conferring on him the power, as the bishops' assistant, to celebrate the sacraments and other liturgical acts, especially the Eucharist. Ordination as a deacon configures the deacon to Christ the Servant of All, placing him at the service of the bishop, especially in the Church's exercising of Christian charity towards the poor and preaching of the word of God.
7. **Matrimony or Marriage:** It is another sacrament that consecrates for a particular mission in building up the Church, and that provides grace for accomplishing that mission. This sacrament, seen as a sign of the love uniting Christ and the Church, establishes between the spouses a permanent and exclusive bond, sealed by God.

However, most Protestant denominations identify two sacraments instituted by Christ; the Eucharist (Holy Communion) and Baptism. Although the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church identify all seven sacraments, they differ in other beliefs as follows.

1. The Roman Catholic Church holds the Pope to be holy because he represents Christ or God on earth. Therefore, he can interpret the Bible in such a way as to impart infallible teachings. Moreover, he can forgive sins. But the Eastern Orthodox Church holds the Pope to be an ordinary person, therefore, fallible. It holds the Bible to be true and perfect, therefore, more important than the Pope.

2. The Roman Catholic Church believes Jesus to be both human and divine. He pre-existed before being incarnated as Jesus. After His resurrection, He returned to God as God the Son. The Eastern Orthodox Church believes Jesus to be both human and divine in the same person.
3. The Roman Catholic Church believes in the assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven while the Eastern Orthodox Church believes that it was her soul that ascended to heaven.
4. Both Churches support intercessory prayer to saints but free-standing statues of saints are almost non-existent in the Eastern Orthodox Church. This is partly due to the rejection of the previous pagan Greek age (Greek gods) of idol worship.
5. The Roman Catholic Church holds that after physical death the soul of the person destined for heaven undergoes purification in an intermediary state called Purgatory so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Eastern Orthodox Church holds that after physical death, the soul awaits the Judgment Day.

All Christian denominations believe 1) that Jesus Christ is the head of the Christian Church; 2) that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; 3) in Jesus' resurrection; 4) in the Judgment Day; 5) in Baptism; and 6) in Holy Communion.

Initially, Christians attended church on Saturday or the day of the Sabbath. It was not until the times of Saint Paul that it was changed to Sunday.<sup>47</sup> The Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Churches celebrate Christmas or the Nativity of Jesus on December 25. The Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates it in January. Nonetheless, four weeks before Christmas, many Western Christian churches observed a season called Advent as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. Epiphany, which traditionally falls on January 6, is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. Easter or Resurrection Sunday is a festival and holiday celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred three days after his crucifixion by Romans at Calvary. It is the culmination of the Passion of Christ, preceded by Lent, a forty-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance. Pentecost is a prominent feast in the calendar of ancient Israel celebrating the giving of the Law on Sinai. Later, in the Christian liturgical year, it became a feast commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ as described in the Acts of the Apostles 2:1-31. However, the puritans (a Protestant denomination founded by a group of English Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth century) deny all such celebrations.

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<sup>47</sup> Hopfe, Lewis M., *Religions of the World*, 1994, p.347



## 12.9 Christianity: It Religious Symbols<sup>48</sup>

The Christian Cross, seen as a representation of the instrument of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, is the best-known religious symbol of Christianity. It is related to the crucifix (a cross that includes a usually three-dimensional representation of Jesus' body) and to the more general family of cross symbols.

## 12.10 Christianity: Its Current Status<sup>49</sup>

About 33% of the world's population – in excess of 2 billion people – regard themselves as Christian. About 50% of persons who identify themselves as Christians are Roman Catholics. About 75% of American adults and a similar number of Canadians identify themselves as Christians. This number has recently been dropping almost one percentage point per year. Worldwide, Christianity is now widely fragmented into tens of thousands of faith groups, large and small due to diversity of belief. There is perhaps no other aspect to Christian belief that contains as much diversity as the expectation of one's life after death. Many Christians' prime focus is on the afterlife for themselves, family, and others. Life on Earth is merely considered a type of anteroom to Heaven:

- Many conservative Protestant Christians believe that people are born and remain sinful. They will end up after death being eternally tortured in Hell unless they were saved during their life on earth. Salvation is a free gift of God. It is attained by repenting of sin and trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- Roman Catholics also believe that salvation comes from God. But they believe that it is channeled through church sacraments to sinful but repentant persons. Most people, at death, enter Purgatory, which is a type of temporary Hell and considered to be both a place and a state of existence. A very few go directly to Heaven; others go permanently to Hell for eternal punishment without any hope of relief. Their destination depends on the good and evil deeds that they have performed during life, and their exact status with regard to the sacraments at the time of their death.
- Liberal Christians generally interpret hell symbolically, not as an actual place. They reject the concepts of a loving God having created a Hell – a place of eternal torment for the vast majority of humans.
- Some progressive Christians do not believe in an afterlife. They believe that the only part of us that survives our death are the influences that we have had on others.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

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<sup>48</sup> Wikipedia, Christian cross

<sup>49</sup> Zebedeo.org, Current status of Christianity



# Chapter 13

## Islam

- 13.1 The History of Islam**
- 13.2 The History of Its Prophet**
- 13.3 Its Caliphs**
- 13.4 The Spread of Islam**
- 13.5 Its Religious Texts**
- 13.6 Its Doctrines**
- 13.7 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**
- 13.8 Its Place of Worship**
- 13.9 Its Rites and Rituals**
- 13.10 Its Religious Holidays**
- 13.11 Its Denominations**
- 13.12 Its Religious Symbols**
- 13.13 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a book considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God and by the teachings and normative example of Muhammad (570 – June 8, 632 or 1113 B.E. – June 8, 1175 B.E.), considered by them to be the last prophet of God. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim.
2. The Qur'an is the primary text of Islam, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad beginning in the year 610 (1153 B.E.). It was canonicalized between 644 and 656 (1187 B.E. and 1199 B.E.). The Hadith, second only to the Qur'an in importance and authority, are collections of Islamic traditions and laws (Sunna). This includes traditional sayings of Muhammad and later Islamic sages. By the ninth century over 600,000 Hadith had been recorded; these were later edited down to about 25,000.
3. Muslims' ultimate goal is to go and live with Allah in the afterlife. This is made possible by practicing according to Muhammad's teachings especially the immaculate practice of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims believe that life on earth occurs just once and the hereafter is spent either in heaven or in hell.
4. Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75-90%) or Shia (10-20%). The star and crescent is the symbol used to represent Islam.
5. With about 1.6 billion followers or 23% of earth's population, Islam is the second-largest religion and the fastest-growing religion in the world. About 13% of Muslims live in Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country, 25% in South Asia, 20% in the Middle East, and 15% in Sub-saharan Africa. Sizable minorities are also found in Europe, China, Russia, and the Americas.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of Islam.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of Islam, the history of its prophet, Muhammad, his successors, the spread of Islam, important Islamic texts, Islamic doctrines, creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about Islamic place of worship, its rites and rituals, its religious holidays, its denominations, its religious symbols, and its current status.

# Chapter 13

## Islam

### 13.1 The History of Islam<sup>1</sup>

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a book considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God and by the teachings and normative example of Muhammad (570 – June 8, 632 or 1113 B.E. – June 8, 1175 B.E.), considered by them to be the last prophet of God. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim.

Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable and the purpose of existence is to worship God. Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed before many times throughout the world, including notably through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, whom they consider prophets. They maintain that the previous messages and revelations have been partially misinterpreted or altered over time, but consider the Arabic Qur'an to be both the unaltered and the final revelation of God.

Islam is a verbal noun originating from the triliteral root “s-l-m” which forms a large class of words mostly relating to concepts of wholeness, safeness and peace. In a religious context it means “voluntary submission to God”. Muslim, the word for an adherent of Islam, is the active participle of the same verb of which Islam is the infinitive. Believers demonstrate submission to God by serving God, following his commands, and rejecting polytheism. The word Islam sometimes has distinct connotations in its various occurrences in the Qur'an. In some verses, there is stress on the quality of Islam as an internal conviction: “Whosoever God desires to guide, He opens his heart to Islam.” Other verses connect Islam and din (usually translated as “religion”): “Today, I have perfected your religion (din) for you; I have completed My blessing upon you; I have approved Islam for your religion.”

Initially, Muhammad preached to the people in Mecca imploring them to abandon polytheism and to worship one God. Although some converted to Islam, Muhammad and his followers were persecuted by the leading Meccan authorities. By the time of his death, most of the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam, and he had united Arabia into a single polity. With Muhammad's death in 632 (1175 B.E.), Abu Bakr, a companion and close friend of Muhammad, was made the first caliph, leader of the Muslim community. Under Abu Bakr the Muslims expanded into Syria after putting down a rebellion by Arab tribes in an episode known as the Ridda wars, or “Wars of Apostasy”. The Qur'an was compiled into a single volume at this time. Eventually, the Muslims seized Damascus in 635 (1178 B.E.), Persia in 636 (1179 B.E.), Jerusalem in 638 (1181 B.E.), Egypt in 640 (1183 B.E.). They seized the entire North Africa by the seventh century and Spain in 711 (1254 B.E.). These victories allowed Islam to spread far and wide and within 100 years, Islam became the state religion of many countries including Saudi Arabia. From the Middle East, Islam spread to many countries in Africa and on to Asia in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, China, Malaysia and Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, Islam

## 13.2 The History of the Prophet, Muhammad<sup>2</sup>

### 13.2.1 His Birth

Muhammad was born in 570 (1113 B.E.) in the city of Mecca. His father, Abdullah, died almost six months before Muhammad was born. At the age of six, Muhammad lost his biological mother Amina to illness and he became orphaned. For the next two years, he was under the guardianship of his paternal grandfather Abd al-Muttalib, of the Banu Hashim clan, but when Muhammad was eight, his grandfather also died. He then came under the care of his uncle Abu Talib, the new leader of Banu Hashim. While still in his teens, Muhammad accompanied his uncle on trading journeys to Syria gaining experience in commercial trade, the only career open to Mohammad as an orphan. He became a merchant and was involved in trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Due to his upright character he acquired the nickname “al-Amin”, meaning “faithful, trustworthy” and “al-Sadiq” meaning “truthful” and was sought out as an impartial arbitrator.

### 13.2.2 His Marriage<sup>3</sup>

At age twenty-five, Muhammad wed his wealthy employer, the forty-year-old merchant Khadija. This marriage, his first, would be both happy and monogamous; Muhammad would rely on the wealthy Khadija in many ways, until her death twenty-five years later.

### 13.2.3 The First Revelation<sup>4</sup>

When Muhammad was nearly forty, he used to spend many hours alone in prayer and speculating over the aspects of creation. He was concerned with the social unrest, injustice, widespread discrimination (particularly against women), fighting among tribes and abuse of tribal authorities prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. The moral degeneration of his fellowmen, and his own quest for a true religion further lent fuel to this, with the result that he now began to withdraw periodically to a cave named Mount Hira, three miles north of Mecca, for contemplation and reflection. Islamic tradition holds that Muhammad during this period began to have dreams replete with spiritual significance which were fulfilled according to their true import; and this was the commencement of his divine revelation. This created inclination in him to engage himself in solitary worshipping.

During one such occasion while he was in contemplation, the archangel Gabriel appeared before him in the year 610 (1153 B.E.) and said, ‘Recite’, upon which he replied, ‘I am unable to recite’. Thereupon the angel caught hold of him and embraced him heavily. This happened twice after which the angel commanded Muhammad to recite the following verses:

Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of the Lord and Cherisher, Who created-

Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, Muhammad

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia, Muhammad’s wives

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, Muhammad’s First Revelation

Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, -  
Who taught (the use of) the pen, -  
Taught man that which he knew not.  
Qur'an, sura 96 (Al-Alaq), ayat 1-5

#### 13.2.4 His Followers<sup>5</sup>

Muhammad's wife Khadija was the first to believe he was a prophet. She was followed by Muhammad's ten-year-old cousin Ali Abi Talib, close friend Abu Bakr, and adopted son Zaid. Around 613 (1156 B.E.), Muhammad began to preach to the public (Qur'an 26:214). Most Meccans ignored him and mocked him, though a few became his followers. There were three main groups of early converts to Islam: younger brothers and sons of great merchants; people who had fallen out of the first rank in their tribe or failed to attain it; and the weak, mostly unprotected foreigners.

#### 13.2.5 The Islamic Greeting

Muhammad told his followers to greet each other with the phrase, Asalam Alaikum which means "peace be upon you". He wanted Islam to be the religion of peace where fellow Muslims try to establish peace and friendly relations by greeting and meeting one another.

#### 13.2.6 Hijra

A delegation consisting of the representatives of the twelve important clans of Medina (a place 320 kilometers north of Mecca) wanted Muhammad to serve as chief arbitrator for the entire community; due to his status as a neutral outsider. There was fighting in Medina: primarily the dispute involved its Arab and Jewish inhabitants, and was estimated to have lasted for around a hundred years before 620 (1163 B.E.). The recurring slaughters and disagreements over the resulting claims, especially after the Battle of Bu-ath in which all clans were involved, made it obvious to them that the tribal concept of blood-feud and an eye for an eye were no longer workable unless there was one man with authority to adjudicate in disputed cases. The delegation from Medina pledged themselves and their fellow-citizens to accept Muhammad into their community and physically protect him as one of themselves. Muhammad instructed his followers to immigrate to Medina, until nearly all his followers left Mecca. Being alarmed at the departure, the Meccans plotted to assassinate Muhammad. With the help of Ali, Muhammad fooled the Meccans watching him, and secretly slipped away from the town with Abu Bakr. By 622 (1165 B.E.), Muhammad immigrated to Medina, a large agricultural oasis. Those who migrated from Mecca along with Muhammad became known as muhajirun (emigrants). The migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 (1165 B.E.) is called the Hijra. It is celebrated annually on the first day of the Muslim year.

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<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia, Muhammad

### **13.2.7 The First Islamic State**

Among the first things Muhammad did to ease the longstanding grievances among the tribes of Medina was to draft a document known as the Constitution of Medina, establishing a kind of alliance or federation among the eight Medinan tribes and Muslim immigrants from Mecca; this specified rights and duties of all citizens, and the relationship of the different communities in Medina (including the Muslim community to other communities, specifically the Jews and other “Peoples of the Book”). The community defined in the Constitution of Medina, Ummah, had a religious outlook, also shaped by practical considerations and substantially preserved the legal forms of the old Arab tribes. It effectively established the first Islamic state.

### **13.2.8 Conflict with Mecca**

Within a few years, two battles were fought against the Meccan forces: first, the Battle of Badr in 624 (1167 B.E.), which was a Muslim victory, and then a year later, when the Meccans returned to Medina, the Battle of Uhud, which ended inconclusively. The Meccans marched back to Mecca declaring victory when they thought that the wounded Muhammad was dead.

### **13.2.9 Beginning of Armed Conflict**

In March 624 (1167 B.E.), Muhammad led some three hundred warriors in a raid on a Meccan merchant caravan. The Muslims set an ambush for the caravan at Badr. The Battle of Badr commenced. Though outnumbered more than three to one, the Muslims won the battle, killing at least forty-five Meccans with fourteen Muslims dead. They also succeeded in killing many Meccan leaders. Seventy prisoners had been acquired, many of whom were ransomed in return for wealth or freed. Muhammad ascribed the victory as assisted from an invisible host of angels.

### **13.2.10 Conquest of Mecca**

In 630 (1173 B.E.), Muhammad marched on Mecca with an enormous force, said to number more than 10,000 men. With minimal casualties, Muhammad seized control of Mecca. He declared an amnesty for past offences, except for ten men and women who were “guilty of murder or other offences or had sparked off the war and disrupted the peace.” Some of these were later pardoned. Most Meccans converted to Islam and Muhammad proceeded to destroy all the statues of Arabian gods in and around Kaaba. By 629 (1172 B.E.), Muhammad was victorious in the nearly bloodless Conquest of Mecca, and by the time of his death in 632 (1175 B.E.), (at the age of 62) he had united the tribes of Arabia into a single religious polity.

### **13.2.11 Mecca**

As the birthplace of Muhammad and a site of Muhammad’s first revelation of the Qur’an, Mecca is regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam and a pilgrimage to it known as the Hajj is obligatory for all able Muslims. Mecca is home to the Kaaba, by majority description Islam’s holiest site, as well as being the direction of Muslim prayer.

### 13.3 Muhammad's Successors

With Muhammad's death in 632 (1175 B.E.), disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as a leader of the Muslim community. Abu Bakr, a companion and close friend of Muhammad, was made the first caliph. Under Abu Bakr the Muslims expanded into Syria after putting down a rebellion by Arab tribes in an episode known as the Ridda wars, or "Wars of Apostasy".

His death in 634 (1177 B.E.) resulted in the succession of Umar ibn al-Khattab as the caliph, followed by Uthman ibn al-Affan, Ali ibn Abi Talib and Hasan ibn Ali. The first caliphs are known as "Rightly Guided Caliphs". Under them, the territory under Muslim rule expanded deeply into the Persian and Byzantine territories.

When Umar was assassinated by Persians in 644 (1187 B.E.), the election of Uthman as successor was met with increasing opposition. The standard copies of the Qur'an were also distributed throughout the Islamic State. In 656 (1199 B.E.), Uthman was also killed, and Ali assumed the position of caliph. After the first civil war (the "First Fitna"), Ali was assassinated by Kharijites in 661 (1204 B.E.). Following a peace treaty, Mu'awiyah came to power and began the Umayyad dynasty. These disputes over religious and political leadership would give rise to schism in the Muslim community.

### 13.4 The Spread of Islam<sup>6</sup>

#### 13.4.1 Muslim Conquests

The spread of Islam began when, around 613 (1156 B.E.), the Islamic prophet Muhammad began to share the revelation which God (Allah) had started to give to him three years previously. During the rest of his life, the Muslim Ummah (community) was established in Arabia. Muslim conquests in the years following Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates (a caliphate is an Islamic state led by a supreme religious and political leader known as a caliph), occupying a vast geographical area and conversion to Islam was boosted by missionary activities particularly those of Sufis, who easily intermingled with local populace to propagate the religious teachings. These early conquests, coupled with Muslim economics and trading and the later expansion of the Ottoman Empire, resulted in Islam's spread outwards from Mecca towards both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the creation of the Muslim world. Trading played an important role in the spread of Islam in several parts of the world, notably Southeast Asia.

Islam teaches the concept of an offensive war to spread the faith; it is known as a Holy War for the sake of God or Jihad. Muhammad as well as all the Caliphs who succeeded him called for holy wars. Muhammad said, "I have been ordered by God to fight with people till they bear testimony to the fact that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is his messenger, and that they establish prayer and pay Zakat (money). If they do it, their blood and their property are safe from me." (see Bukhari Vol. I, p.13).

"Invitation first (that is, call them first to embrace Islam). If they refuse, then war."

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<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia, Spread of Islam



To Abu Sufyan, a Meccan inhabitant, Muhammad said, “Woe to you! Accept Islam and testify that Muhammad is the apostle of God before your neck is cut off by the sword.”

To the tribe of the children of Haritha, Muhammad said, “Had you rejected Islam, I would have beheaded you and cast your heads under your feet.”

“Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to Paradise, which can be opened only for the Holy Warriors!”

#### **13.4.2 The Invasion of Europe<sup>7</sup>**

The Muslims slowly and methodically invaded Europe. They conquered the old Visigoth Kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula. Afterward, they pushed into the Frankish Kingdoms of modern France. The Islamic invasion represented a direct threat to Western Civilization and Christendom. In 732 (1275 B.E.), Charles Martel defeated the Islamic invaders. The victory blunted the Islamic advance and essentially saved the west.

#### **13.4.3 Spread of Islam into South and Southeast Asia (600 – 1450 or 1143 B.E. – 1993 B.E.)**

Beginning in the early eighth century, waves of Muslim groups begin entering India and establishing a foothold in the area of the Sind, present-day Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. By the seventh and eighth centuries, Muslim merchants were making their way from India into Southeast Asia. By the end of the thirteenth century, Islam had been established in North Sumatra; by the fourteenth century in northeast Malaya, Brunei, the southern Philippines and among some courtiers of East Java; and the fifteenth century in Malacca and other areas of the Malay Peninsula. By the end of the sixteenth century, Islam, through conversion, had surpassed Hinduism and Buddhism as the dominant religion of the peoples of Java and Sumatra.

### **13.5 Islam: Its Religious Texts**

#### **13.5.1 The Qur'an<sup>8</sup>**

The term “al-qur'an” means “the recitation”. The Qur'an is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be a revelation from God (Allah). It is widely regarded by Muslims as the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language. Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the only book that has been protected by God from distortion or corruption. Qur'anic chapters are called “suras” and verses are called “ayahs”.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an was verbally revealed from God to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Jibril), gradually over a period of approximately twenty-three years, beginning on December 22, 610 (1153 B.E.), when Muhammad was forty, and concluding in 632 (1175 B.E.), the year of his death. Shortly after Muhammad's death, the Qur'an was collected

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<sup>7</sup> [www.examiner.com/When the Muslims Nearly Conquered Europe](http://www.examiner.com/When the Muslims Nearly Conquered Europe)

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, Quran

by his companions using written Qur'anic materials and everything that had been memorized of the Qur'an.

Muslims regard the Qur'an as the most important miracle of Muhammad, the proof of his prophethood and the culmination of a series of divine messages that started with the messages revealed to Adam and ended with Muhammad. The Qur'an assumes familiarity with major narratives recounted in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. It summarizes some, dwells at length on others and, in some cases, presents alternative accounts and interpretations of events. The Qur'an describes itself as a book of guidance. It sometimes offers detailed accounts of specific historical events, and it often emphasizes the moral significance of an event over its narrative sequence. The Qur'an is used along with the hadith to interpret sharia law. During prayers, the Qur'an is recited only in Arabic.

Someone who has memorized the entire Qur'an is called a hafiz. Some Muslims read Qur'anic ayahs with elocution, which is often called tajwid. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims typically complete the recitation of the whole Qur'an during tarawih prayers.

The Qur'anic content is concerned with the basic beliefs of Islam which include the existence of God and the resurrection. Narratives of the early prophets, ethical and legal subjects, historical events of the prophet's time, charity and prayer also appear in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic verses contain general exhortations regarding right and wrong and the historical events are related to outline general moral lessons. Verses pertaining to natural phenomena have been interpreted by Muslims as an indication of the authenticity of the Qur'anic message.

Translation of the Qur'an has always been a problematic and difficult issue. Many argue that the Qur'anic text cannot be reproduced in another language or form. Furthermore, an Arabic word may have a range of meanings depending on the context, making an accurate translation even more difficult. Nonetheless, the Qur'an has been translated into most African, Asian and European languages.

### 13.5.2 The Hadith<sup>9</sup>

In Islamic terminology, the term hadith refers to reports of statements or actions of Muhammad, or of his tacit approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence. The hadith literature does not qualify as primary source material as it was compiled from oral reports that were present in society around the time of their compilation, well after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Bukhari's collection which is considered by many traditional religious scholars as the most 'reliable' was compiled two centuries after the death of the Prophet. Hadiths reports claim to originate from important characters of the earliest years of Islam such as the companions of Muhammad or Shia Imams/Religious leaders. These hadith narrations have formed the controversial basis of the Shariah models of "Islamic law", despite the contradictions they contain with regards to the Qur'an itself, such as regarding the punishment for Zina in the hadith (stoning to death) contradicts the Qur'an, rates of Zakat, definition of Ribba, etc. The

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<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia, Hadith

Hadith has also had a profound influence on molding the commentaries (tafsir) on the Qur'an. The earliest commentary of the Qur'an by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari is mostly sourced from the hadith, in-line with Tabari's Athari creed which considered rational inquiry in matters of religion to be forbidden. As the application of deductive reasoning in deriving laws directly from the Qur'an was sidelined, the arbitrary authority of the hadith was used to replace the Qur'an in forming the basis of 'Shariah' Law. Much of early Islamic history available today is also based on the hadith.

Each hadith is composed of two parts, a chain of authorities reporting the hadith (isnad), and the text itself (matn). Hadiths are regarded by traditional Islamic schools of jurisprudence as important tools for understanding the Qur'an and in matters of jurisprudence. Hadith were evaluated and gathered into large collections during the eighth and ninth centuries. These works are referred to in matters of Islamic law and history to this day.

The largest denominations of Islam, Sunni, Shi'a, and Ibadi, rely upon different sets of hadith collections.

Clerics and jurists of all denominations classify individual hadith as sahih (authentic), hasan (good) and da'if (weak). However, different traditions within each denomination, and different scholars within each tradition, may differ as to which hadith should be included in which category.

## 13.6 Islam: Its Doctrines

Islamic beliefs and practices comprise three main parts: Iman, Ibadah, and Ihsan.

1. **Iman:** It means a believer's faith in the metaphysical aspects of Islam. Its most simple definition is the belief in the six pillars of faith, known as arkan al-iman.
2. **Ibadah:** It means the obedience, submission, and devotion to Allah (God) along with the ultimate love for Him. Muslims believe that ibadah is the reason for the existence of all humanity. That is, Muslims believe that all people exist only to submit to Allah.
3. **Ihsan:** It means "perfection" or "excellence". It means taking one's faith or iman and showing it in both deed and action, a sense of social responsibility borne from religious convictions. According to Muhammad, "Ihsan is to worship God as though you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then indeed He sees you." (Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim)

### 13.6.1 Iman

In Islam, there are six pillars of faith: Belief in Allah, belief in His angels, belief in His books to mankind, belief in His Prophets and Messengers, belief in the Day of Judgment, and belief in Destiny.

#### 1) Belief in God<sup>10</sup>

Tawhid in Arabic means "doctrine of Oneness" (of God). It is the concept of monotheism in Islam. It is the religion's most fundamental concept and holds that God (Allah) is One (Wahid) and Unique (ahad). The Qur'an asserts the existence of a single and absolute truth that

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia: Tawhid

transcends the world; a unique, independent and indivisible being, who is independent of the entire creation. God, according to Islam, is a universal God, rather than a local, tribal, or parochial one. God is an absolute, who integrates all affirmative values and brooks no evil.

Tawhid constitutes the foremost article of the Muslim profession. The first part of the Shahada is the declaration of belief in the oneness of God. To attribute divinity to a created entity, known as shirk, is the only unpardonable sin mentioned in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the entirety of the Islamic teaching rests on the principle of Tawhid. There is an uncompromising monotheism at the heart of the Islamic beliefs which is seen as distinguishing Islam from other major religions.

## 2) Belief in the Angels<sup>11</sup> (Mala'ikah)

Angels or Mala'ikah are heavenly beings mentioned many times in the Qur'an and Hadith. Unlike humans or jinn (supernatural creatures in Islamic mythology), angels have no freewill and therefore can do only what God orders them to do. An example of a task they carry out is testing individuals by granting them abundant wealth and curing their illness. Just as humans are made of clay, and jinn are made of smokeless fire, angels are made of light. There is a set order or hierarchy that exists between angels, defined by the assigned jobs and various tasks to which angels are commanded by God.

- Jibrail/Jibril (Judeo-Christian, Gabriel) is the angel of revelation, who is said to be the greatest of the angels. Jibrail is the archangel responsible for revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad, verse by verse. Jibrail is widely known as the angel who communicates with all of the prophets and also for coming down with God's blessings during the night of Laylat al-Qadr ("The Night of Power").
- Israfil or Israafiyl (Judeo-Christian, Raphael) is an archangel in Islam who will blow the trumpet twice at the end of time. According to the Hadith, Israfil is the angel responsible for signaling the coming of Qiyamah (Judgment Day) by blowing a horn. The blowing of the trumpet is described in many places in the Qur'an. It is said that the first blow will bring all to attention, will end all life, while the second blow will bring all human beings back to life again to meet their Lord for their final judgment.
- Mikail (Judeo-Christian, Michael), who provides nourishments for bodies and souls. Mikail is often depicted as the archangel of mercy who is responsible for bringing rain and thunder to Earth. He is also responsible for the rewards doled out to good people in this life.
- 'Azrael/'Azraaiyl also known as Malak al-maut (Judeo-Christian, Azrael), is the angel of death responsible for parting the soul from the body. He is only referred as malak al-maut, meaning angel of death, in the Qur'an.
- The angels of the Seven Heavens
- Hafaza, (the Guardian Angel):

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<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia: Islamic View of Angels

- \* Kiraman Katibin (Honorable Recorders), two of whom are charged to every human being; one writes down good deeds and the other one writes down evil deeds. They are both described as 'Raqeebun 'Ateed' in the Qur'an.
- \* Mu'qqibat (the Protectors) who keep people from death until its decreed time and who bring down blessings.
- Jundullah, those who help Muhammad in the battle field
- The angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked
- The angels who gently draw out the souls of the blessed
- The angels who distribute (provisions, rain, and other blessings) by God's Command
- The angels who drive the clouds
- Hamalat al-'Arsh, the angels who carry the 'Arsh (Throne of God), comparable to the Christian Seraph
- The angels that give the spirit to the fetus in the womb and are charged with four commands: to write down his provision, his lifespan, his actions, and whether he will be wretched or happy.
- The Angel of the Mountains
- Munkar and Nakir, who question the dead in their graves
- Darda'il (the Journeyers), who travel in the earth searching out assemblies where people remember God's name.
- The angels charged with each existent thing, maintaining order and warding off corruption. Their number is known only to God.
- Ridwan is the angel who is responsible for Jannah (Paradise).
- Maalik is the chief of the angels who govern Jahannam (Hell).
- Zabaniyah are the nineteen angels who torment sinful persons in hell.

### 3) Belief in Divine Books<sup>12</sup>

Islamic holy books are the texts which Muslims believe were authored by God to various prophets throughout humanity's history. All these books, in Muslim belief, promulgated the code and laws that God ordained for those people. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the final revelation of God's word to man, and a completion and confirmation of previous scriptures. Despite the primacy that Muslims place upon the Qur'an as God's final word, Islam speaks of respecting all the previous scriptures, and belief in all the revealed books. These books include the Torah (Tawrat), the Zabur, the Injil (Gospel) and the Qur'an.

1. The Torah or Tawrat was revealed to Moses, but Muslims believe that the current Torah, although it retains the main message, has suffered corruption over the years, and is no longer reliable.

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<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia: Islamic Holy Books

2. The Zabur is often interpreted as being the Book of Psalms, as being the Holy Scripture revealed to King David.
3. The Injil (Gospel) was the holy book revealed to Jesus, according to the Qur'an. It refers not to the New Testament but to an original Gospel, given to Jesus (Isa) as the word of God.
4. The Qur'an was verbally revealed from God to Muhammad through the angel Jibril, gradually over a period of approximately twenty-three years beginning when Muhammad was forty and concluding in 632 (1175 B.E.), the year of his death.

#### 4) **Belief in the Prophets**<sup>13</sup>

Muslims believe that every prophet preached the same main belief, the Oneness of God, worshipping of that one God, avoidance of idolatry and sin, and the belief in the Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgment and life after death. Each came to preach Islam at different times in history and some told of the coming of the final prophet and messenger of God, who would be named "Ahmed" commonly known as Muhammad.

The Qur'an mentions twenty-five prophets by name but also tells that God sent many other prophets and messengers, to all the different nations that have existed on Earth.

1. Adam
2. Idris
3. Noah
4. Hud
5. Saleh
6. Abraham
7. Lot
8. Ishmael
9. Isaac
10. Jacob
11. Joseph
12. Job
13. Shuaib
14. Moses
15. Aaron
16. Dhul-Kifl
17. David
18. Solomon
19. Elijah

20. Elisha
21. Jonah
22. Zechariah
23. John the Baptist
24. Jesus
25. Muhammad

## 5) **Belief in the Day of Judgment**<sup>14</sup> (Yawm al-Qiyamah)

Like other Abrahamic religions, Islam also teaches resurrection of the dead, a final tribulation and eternal division of the righteous and wicked. Islamic apocalyptic literature describing Armageddon is often known as *fitnah*, *malahim*, or *ghaybah* in Shi'a Islam. Righteous are rewarded with pleasures of Jannah, while unrighteous are tortured in Jahannam.

## 6) **Belief in God's Predestination**<sup>15</sup>

Qadar means “fate”, “divine force-ordainment”, “predestination”. Qadar is the concept of divine destiny in Islam

Belief in al-Qadar is based on four things:

1. Al-'Alam – Knowledge: i.e., that Allah knows what His creation will do, by virtue of His eternal knowledge, including their choices that will take place.
2. Kitabat – Writing: i.e., that Allah has written everything that exists including the destiny of all creatures in al-Lauh al-Mahfuz (the Preserved Tablet) prior to creation.
3. Mashii'at – Will: i.e., that what Allah wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. There is no movement in the heavens or on earth but happens by His will. This does not mean that He forces things to happen the way they happen in the area of human beings' voluntary actions. It means that He knew what they will choose, wrote it and now lets it happen.
4. Al-Khalaq – Creation and formation: i.e., that Allah is the Creator of all things, including the actions of His servants. They do their actions in a real sense, and Allah is the Creator of them and of their actions.

There are five stages where Qadar is determined and prescribed/send to creation:

1. The Decree of Allah that is written in Al-Lawh Al-Mahfuz before the creation of the universe. This destiny written in the preserved tablet is never changed and encompasses everything that will be.

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia: Islamic Eschatology

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia: Predestination in Islam



2. Allah made a divine decree after the creation of Adam. Allah took out all of the progeny of Adam (i.e. all of the humans from the beginning of time until the end of time), and asked them, “Am I not your Lord?” and all of the humans responded, “We testify that You are our Lord!” Then Allah decreed to them who shall go to paradise and who shall go to hell.
3. The lifetime decree: This occurs when a person is in the womb of the mother, specifically 120 days after conception. Allah sends an angel to put a soul into the person, and the angel writes down the decree that Allah has made; his lifespan, his sex, his sustenance (how much he will earn throughout his lifetime) and whether he will be a dweller of paradise or a dweller of hell.
4. The yearly decree: This is during the Night of Qadr (Night of Decree) where Allah sends down his decrees from heaven to earth, in it he destines the actions (deeds, sustenance, births, deaths, etc.) of creation for the next year. The word Qadar should not be confused with Qadr; Qadar is destiny, Qadr is that which has been destined, i.e. decree, thus the translation – Night of Decree.
5. The daily decree: Allah decrees the daily actions of his creation.

In spite of predestination, one’s supplications do change destiny and are of much avail; good deeds are a source of an increase in one’s sustenance, and can avert calamities; and sins result in a decrease in one’s sustenance, and invite calamities.

### 13.6.2 Ibadah

The Arabic word ibadah or ibada is connected with related words literally meaning “slavery”, and has connotations of obedience, submission, and humility. The word linguistically means “obedience with submission”. Ibadah is expressed by Muslims through the Five Pillars of Islam<sup>16</sup> which are the five basic acts in Islam, considered mandatory by believers and are the foundation of Muslim life. They are summarized in the famous hadith of Gabriel and include declaration of faith, prayer, concern for the needy, self-purification and the pilgrimage as follows.

#### 1. Shahadah: Faith

Shahada is a declaration of faith and trust that professes that there is only one God (Allah) and that Muhammad is God’s messenger. It is a set statement normally recited in Arabic and translated as “There is no god but God (and) Muhammad is the messenger of God”. It is essential to utter it to become a Muslim and to convert to Islam.

#### 2. Salat (salah): The Islamic Prayer

Salat consists of five daily prayers according to the Sunna; the names are according to the prayer times: Fajr (dawn), Dhuhr (noon), ‘Asr (afternoon), Maghrib (evening), and ‘Isha’ (night). The Fajr prayer is

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia: Five Pillars of Islam

performed before sunrise, Dhuhr is performed in the midday after the sun has surpassed its highest point, Asr is the evening prayer before sunset, Maghrib is the evening prayer after sunset and Isha is the night prayer. All of these prayers are recited while facing the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca and forms an important aspect of the Muslim Ummah. Muslims must wash before prayer; this washing is called wudu (purification). The prayer is accompanied by a series of set positions including; bowing with hands on knees, standing, prostrating and sitting in a special position (not on the heels, nor on the buttocks). A Muslim may perform their prayer anywhere, such as in offices, universities, and fields. However, the mosque is the more preferable place for prayers because the mosque allows for fellowship.

### **3. Zakat: Alms-giving**

Zakat is the practice of charitable giving based on accumulated wealth. The word zakat can be defined as purification and growth because it allows an individual to achieve balance and encourages new growth. The principle of knowing that all things belong to God is essential to purification and growth. Zakat is obligatory for all Muslims who are able to do so. It is the personal responsibility of each Muslim to ease the economic hardship of others and to strive towards eliminating inequality. Zakat consists of spending a portion of one's wealth for the benefit of the poor or needy, like debtors or travelers. A Muslim may also donate more as an act of voluntary charity (sadaqah), rather than to achieve additional divine reward.

There are five principles that should be followed when giving the zakat:

- 1) The giver must declare to God his intention to give the zakat.
- 2) The zakat must be paid on the day that it is due.
- 3) After the offering, the payer must not exaggerate on spending his money more than usual means.
- 4) Payment must be in kind. This means if one is wealthy then he or she needs to pay a portion of their income. If a person does not have much money, then they should compensate for it in different ways, such as good deeds and good behavior toward others.
- 5) The zakat must be distributed in the community from which it was taken.

### **4. Siyam: Fasting**

Three types of fasting (Siyam) are recognized by the Qur'an: Ritual fasting, fasting as compensation for repentance (both from sura Al-Baqara), and ascetic fasting (from Al-Ahzab).

Ritual fasting is an obligatory act during the month of Ramadan. Muslims must abstain from food and drink from dawn to dusk during the month, and are to be especially mindful of other sins. Fasting is necessary for every Muslim that has reached puberty (unless he/she suffers from a medical condition which prevents him/her from doing so).

The fast is meant to allow Muslims to seek nearness and to look for forgiveness from God, to express their gratitude to and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and to remind them of the needy. During Ramadan, Muslims are also expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam by refraining from violence, anger, envy, greed, lust, profane language, gossip and to try to get along with fellow Muslims better. In addition, all obscene and irreligious sights and sounds are to be avoided.

Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory, but is forbidden for several groups for whom it would be very dangerous and excessively problematic. These include pre-pubescent children, those with a medical condition such as diabetes, elderly people, and pregnant or breast-feeding women. Observing fasts is not permitted for menstruating women. Other individuals for whom it is considered acceptable not to fast are those who are ill or traveling. Missing fasts usually must be made up for soon afterward, although the exact requirements vary according to circumstance.

## 5. Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca<sup>17</sup>

The Hajj is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and the largest gathering of Muslim people in the world every year. It is a religious duty which must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his or her lifetime. The state of being physically and financially capable of performing the Hajj is called *istita'ah*, and a Muslim who fulfils this condition is called a *mustati*. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to God (Allah). The word Hajj means “to intend a journey” which connotes both the outward act of a journey and the inward act of intentions.

The pilgrimage occurs from the eighth to the twelfth Dhu al-Hijjah, the twelfth and last month of the Islamic calendar. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar used in the Western world, the Gregorian date of the Hajj changes from year to year. *Ihram* is the name given to the special spiritual state in which pilgrims wear two white sheets of unstitched cloth and abstain from certain things.

The Hajj is associated with the life of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad from the seventh century, but the ritual of pilgrimage to Mecca is considered by Muslims to stretch back thousands of years to the time of Abraham (Ibrahim). Pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people, who simultaneously converge on Mecca for the week of the Hajj, and perform a series of rituals: Each person walks counterclockwise seven times around the Ka'aba, the cube-shaped building which acts as the Muslim direction of prayer, runs back and forth between the hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah, drinks from the Zamzam Well, goes to the plains of Mount Arafat to stand in vigil, and throws stones in a ritual Stoning of the Devil. The pilgrims then shave

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<sup>17</sup> Wikipedia: Hajj

their heads, perform a ritual of animal sacrifice, and celebrate the three-day global festival of Eid al-Adha.

### **Preparations**

During the Hajj, male pilgrims are required to dress only in the Ihram, a garment consisting of two sheets of white unhemmed cloth, with the top draped over the torso and the bottom secured by a white sash; plus a pair of sandals. Women are simply required to maintain their hijab – normal modest dress, which does not cover the hands or face.

The Ihram is meant to show equality of all pilgrims, in front of God: there is no difference between a prince and a pauper. Ihram is also symbolic for holy virtue and pardon from all past sins. A place designated for changing into Ihram is called a Migat.

While wearing the Ihram, a pilgrim may not shave, clip their nails, wear perfume, swear or quarrel, have sexual relations, uproot or damage plants, kill or harm wild animals, cover the head (for men) or the face and hands (for women), marry, wear shoes over the ankles, or carry weapons.

### **Rites**

Upon arrival in Mecca the pilgrim, now known as a Hajji, performs a series of ritual acts symbolic of the lives of Ibrahim (Abraham) and his wife Hajar (Hagar). The acts also symbolize the solidarity of Muslims worldwide.

The greater Hajj (al-hajj al-akbar) begins on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month of Dhu al-Hijjah. On the first day of the Hajj, if they are not already wearing it upon their arrival, pilgrims put on Ihram clothing and then leave Mecca for the nearby town of Mina where they spend the rest of the day. The Saudi government has put up thousands of large white tents at Mina to provide accommodations for all the pilgrims.

### **Tawaf and Sayi**

The pilgrims perform their first Tawaf, which involves all of the pilgrims visiting the Ka'aba and walking seven times counter-clockwise around the Ka'aba. They may also kiss the Black Stone (Al Hajar Al Aswad) on each circuit. If kissing the stone is not possible because of the crowds, they may simply point towards the Stone on each circuit with their right hand. In each complete circuit a pilgrim says "Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am. Here I am at Thy service and Thou hast no partners. Thine alone is All Praise and All Bounty, and Thine alone is The Sovereignty. Thou hast no partners." with seven circuits constituting a complete Tawaf. The place where pilgrims walk is known as "Mutaaf". Only the first three shouts are compulsory, but almost all perform it seven times.

The Tawaf is normally performed all at once. Eating is not permitted but the drinking of water is allowed, because of the risk of dehydration due to the often high humidity in Mecca. Men are encouraged to perform the first three circuits at a hurried pace, followed by four times, more closely, at a leisurely pace.

After the completion of Tawaf, all the pilgrims have to offer two Rakaat prayers at the Place of Abraham (Muqaam Ibrahim), a site inside the mosque that is near the Ka'aba. However, again because of large crowds during the days of Hajj, they may instead pray anywhere in the mosque.

Although the circuits around the Ka'aba are traditionally done on the ground level, Tawaf is now also performed on the first floor and roof of the mosque because of the large crowd.

After Tawaf on the same day, the pilgrims perform sa'i, running or walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah. This is a re-enactment of the frantic search for water for her son Ishmael by Abraham's wife and Ishmael's mother Hajar. As she searched, Hazrat Ismail, an infant, hit his heels on the ground while crying, upon which the water of the Zamzam started gushing from the ground. The back and forth circuit of the pilgrims used to be in the open air, but is now entirely enclosed by the Masjid al-Haram mosque, and can be accessed via air-conditioned tunnels. Pilgrims are advised to walk the circuit, though two green pillars mark a short section of the path where they are allowed to run. There is also an internal "express lane" for the disabled. As part of this ritual the pilgrims also drink water from the Zamzam Well, which is made available in coolers throughout the Mosque. After the visit to the mosque on this day of the Hajj, the pilgrims then return to their tents.

### **Arafat**

The next morning, on the eighth of Dhu al-Hijjah, the pilgrims proceed to Mina where they spend the night in prayer.

On the ninth, they leave Mina for Mt. Arafat where they stand in contemplative vigil and pray and recite the Qur'an, near a hill from which Muhammad gave his last sermon, this mountain is called Jabal Al Rahmah (The Hill of Forgiveness, Mount Arafat). This is known as Wuquf, considered the highlight of the Hajjah. Pilgrims must spend the afternoon within a defined area on the plain of Arafat until after sunset. No specific rituals or prayers are required during the stay at Arafat, although many pilgrims spend time praying, and thinking about the course of their lives. A pilgrim's Hajj is considered invalid if they do not spend the afternoon on Arafat.

### **Muzdalifah**

As soon as the sun sets, the pilgrims leave Arafat for Muzdalifah, an area between Arafat and Mina. Pilgrims spend the night sleeping on the ground with open sky, and in the morning they gather pebbles for the next day's ritual of the stoning of the Devil (Shaitan) after returning to Mina.

### **Ramy al-Jamarat (Stoning of the Devil)**

At Mina the pilgrims perform Ramy al-Jamarat, throwing stones to signify their defiance of the Devil. This symbolizes the trials experienced by Abraham while he was going to sacrifice his son as demanded by God. The Devil challenged him three times, and three times Abraham refused. Each pillar marks the location of one of these refusals. On the first occasion when Ramy al-Jamarat is performed, pilgrims stone the largest pillar known as Jamarat'al'Aqabah. Pilgrims climb ramps to the multi-levelled Jamarat

Bridge, from which they can throw their pebbles at the Jamarat. On the second occasion, the other pillars are stoned. The stoning consists of throwing seven pebbles. Because of the crowds, in 2004 the pillars were replaced by long walls, with catch basins below to collect the pebbles.

### **Eid al-Adha**

After the casting of stones, animals are slaughtered to commemorate the story of Abraham and Ishmael. Traditionally the pilgrims slaughtered the animal themselves, or oversaw the slaughtering. Today many pilgrims buy a sacrifice voucher in Mecca before the greater Hajj begins, which allows an animal to be slaughtered in their name on the tenth, without the pilgrim being physically present. Centralized butchers sacrifice a single sheep for each pilgrim, or a camel can represent the sacrifice of seven people. The meat is then packaged and given to charity (zakat) and shipped to poor people around the world. At the same time as the sacrifices occur at Mecca, Muslims worldwide perform similar sacrifices, in a four-day global festival called Eid al-Adha.

### **Tawaf Al-Ifaadah**

On this or the following day the pilgrims re-visit the Masjid al-Haram mosque in Mecca for another Tawaf, to walk around the Ka'aba. This is called Tawaf al-Ifadah, which symbolizes being in a hurry to respond to God and show love for Him, an obligatory part of the Hajj. The night of the tenth is spent back at Mina.

On the afternoon of the eleventh and again the following day the pilgrims must again throw seven pebbles at each of the three Jamarat in Mina.

Pilgrims must leave Mina for Mecca before sunset on the twelfth. If they are unable to leave Mina before sunset, they must perform the stoning ritual again on the thirteenth before returning to Mecca.

### **Tawaf al-Wida**

Finally, before leaving Mecca, pilgrims perform a farewell Tawaf called the Tawaf al-Wida. 'Wida' means 'to bid farewell'.

## **13.6.3 Ihsan<sup>18</sup>**

The concept of Ihsan is primarily associated with intention. Ihsan constitutes the highest form of worship. It is excellence in work and in social interactions. For example, Ihsan includes sincerity during Muslim prayers and being grateful to parents, family, and God. Ihsan is expressed in a distinct set of customs, traditions and etiquettes. In Islam, the prophets of God directed their followers to conform to a particular set of customs and etiquettes, which would distinguish them as a nation of the followers of God's prophets. However, because the basic objective of all prophetic teachings is to cleanse the human mind, body and soul from all that has the potential of defiling it, the customs and etiquettes for this group of people have also been fixed and promoted with the same target in perspective.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://english.islammessage.com>: General Muslim Customs & Traditions



The Arab culture, originally, being one consisting of adherents of the Abrahamic traditions, had a number of these customs, traditions and etiquettes in vogue, even before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. With only a few minor exceptions, the Prophet did not alter or add anything to these traditions and customs of the Abrahamic legacy. Thus, these traditions, generally, are a more primitive part of Islam, as compared to the Qur'an. After the approval of the Prophet, they have been transmitted to the Muslim community through the conceptual consensus and the practical perpetuation of the companions of the Prophet. Thus, the source of these customs, traditions and etiquettes is the conceptual consensus and the practical perpetuation of the companions of the Prophet and every subsequent generation of Muslims.

The following is an introduction of the Islamic customs, traditions and etiquettes:

### **1) Pronouncing God's Name before Eating or Drinking**

The pronouncement of God's name before eating or drinking is with a twofold purpose; firstly, as a recognition of God's countless blessings upon the believers, and secondly as a supplication for the continuation and abundance of these blessings in future. The Prophet is reported to have stressed strict adherence to this etiquette in a number of sayings ascribed to him. The Prophet is reported to have said:

Whenever anyone of you eats, he should say: '[I begin] with the name of God'. If he forgets, he should then say: 'With the name of God, at the beginning as well as at the end'.

### **2) Using the Right Hand for Eating & Drinking**

After pronouncing God's name before starting to eat or drink, a Muslim should use his right hand for eating and drinking. This practice is a continual reminder for Muslims to strive to be among those, who - on the Day of Judgment - shall get their records in their right hands. Adherence to this practice, on behalf of the individual symbolizes his desire and commitment to be among the people of 'right hand' on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet Muhammad has stressed adherence to this practice in a number of narratives ascribed to him. In one of these narratives, the Prophet is reported to have said:

Whenever one of you eats, he should eat with his right hand and whenever he drinks, he should drink using his right hand.

### **3) Muslim Greeting & its Response**

At the time of meeting, a Muslim should greet his brother with the words: "Assalaam `alaikum". The addressee should subsequently respond with the words: "Wa `alaikum Assalaam". These words are, in fact, a supplication for the addressee for peace and blessings. These words have been referred to in the Qur'an as well as in sayings of the Prophet. As a further etiquette of greeting others, the Prophet is also reported to have said:



“The young should take precedence in greeting the old, the passer-by should take precedence in greeting the one who is sitting and the smaller group should first greet the larger group”.

#### **4) Blessing After Sneeze & its Response**

A sneeze is a relief from a common temporary disorder in the human body. After being relieved from this temporary disorder, a Muslim should thank God with the words: “Al-Hamdulillah”, while those present around him, who hear him praise and thank the Lord, should pray for God's mercy and blessings for him with the words: “Yarhamukallah. The initial utterance is obviously to thank God for the relief one feels after sneezing, while the response - entailing an invocation of God's mercy for the person who has thanked his Lord - signifies a reminder of the fact that God's mercy and His blessings are, in fact, the right only of the thankful. This practice of thanking God after sneezing and then of responding with an invocation of God's mercy for the person who has thanked God is known in the Arabic language as 'Tashmeet'. 'Tashmeet' has been one of the common practices among the followers of God's prophets. The mere fact that there was a word for this practice in the pre-Islamic Arabic language clearly gives evidence to the fact that this practice was also in vogue among the Arabs even before the advent of the Prophet. The Prophet approved and promoted this practice among his followers without any alteration. The Prophet is reported to have said:

When one of you sneezes, he should say: "All gratitude is due to God", his brother or his companion, in response should say: "May God bless you/have mercy upon you", then again as a response, the listener should say: "May God guide you all and make you all more virtuous". (Bukhari)

#### **5) Reciting 'Adhaan' in the Right Ear of a Newly Born**

This tradition was initiated by the Prophet Mohammad.

The words of the Adhaan as fixed by the Prophet, according to God's directive, entail the complete summarized message of Islam. The Adhaan - the call to prayers is, in fact, a call to Islam - a call to complete submission to God's will. Every Muslim is continually being called toward the message entailed in the Adhaan. This message is being delivered through the mosques five times a day.

Recitation of the Adhaan in the right ear of a new born child symbolizes, on behalf of the parents, that like their respective physical contributions in the formation of the child, they have also, through the deliverance of God's message, initiated the transmission of their spiritual beings to the child.

#### **6) Trimming Moustaches, Removing Hair from the Pubic Area and from Under the Armpits, Clipping Nails & Circumcision**

As part of the teachings related to physical cleansing, the Prophet Muhammad directed the Muslims to trim their moustaches, remove the hair from their pubic area and that which grows under the armpits, clip their nails and circumcise their male offspring. These practices were approved, adopted and promoted by the Prophet as symbols of cleanness.

Large and unkempt moustaches have generally been considered a sign of arrogance. Moreover, such moustaches can also soil food and water when eating and drinking. Likewise, long nails are not only a sign of an uncouth and a dirty personality, but also give a wild and beastly appearance. Thus, the Prophet gave the directive regarding the trimming of moustaches and the clipping of nails. In the same manner, removing hair from the pubic area and from under the armpits and circumcising the male offspring are also clearly related to physical cleansing. To stress adherence to all these practices, the Prophet even fixed a time-period for some of these practices. According to one of the narratives, Anas is reported to have said:

“We were directed not to leave our moustaches untrimmed, our nails unclipped and the hair on our pubic area and under our armpits unshaved for over forty days.” (Muslim)

All these practices were generally adhered to by the Arabs, even before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. Adherence to all these practices is, in fact, a part of human nature, which, in view of their significance in one's physical cleansing and purification, have always been a permanent feature of the teachings of the prophets of God. The Prophet is reported to have said:

“Five things are a part of man's nature: Circumcision, removing pubic hair, clipping nails, removing hair from the armpits and trimming moustaches.”

## **7) Keeping the Nose, the Mouth & the Teeth Clean**

As a part of elevating the religious tastes and developing a strong sense of purification and cleanliness among their followers, cleaning the nose, the mouth and the teeth has been a permanent feature of the teachings of the prophets of God. Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, especially, keeping the nose, the mouth and the teeth clean has been mentioned in the history of the Arabs, since pre-Islamic times, as an accepted religious tradition. The Prophet is reported to have strictly adhered to the practice of rinsing his mouth and his nose every time he performed his ablutions. In the same manner, he also greatly stressed the importance of keeping the teeth clean. He is reported to have said:

“Had it not been for the burden that it may have caused for my followers, I would have directed them to brush their teeth before every prayer.” (Muslim)

## **8) Washing after Urination and Defecation**

The Arabic word "Istinjaa" is used as a term for cleaning the related organs after urination and defecation. "Istinjaa", like many of the aforementioned customs and traditions, was also strictly adhered to by the Arabs, since pre-Islamic times. Depending upon the circumstances, "Istinjaa" may be performed with water, with pebbles of dry earth or with any other suitable thing. The Prophet is reported to have preferred using water for the purpose. Abu Hurairah is reported to have said:

“When the Prophet would go to relieve himself (i.e. to urinate or defecate), I would get him water in a pot. He would perform Istinja with the water and brush his hand on the earth.” (Abu Dawud)

#### **9) Refraining from Sexual Contact during a Woman's Menstruation and Puerperal Discharge**

Refraining from sexual contact with a woman during her menstruation and puerperal discharge has been a part of all revealed religions. The Arabs, under the influence of the Abrahamic traditions, strictly adhered to this restraint even before the advent of the Prophet. This restraint is also referred, from various aspects, in the pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. There was no noticeable difference of opinion or practice in this regard. However, the allowable limits of interaction with women during these days were not as clear. There were some extremely strict opinions regarding these limits. Some even considered the touch of a menstruating woman to be defiling and corrupting their physical cleanness. Thus, when people inquired about these limits, the Qur'an clarified these limits (Al-Baqarah 2: 222) in the following words:

They ask you about menstruation. Say: it is a state of uncleanness. Therefore, detach yourselves from women during their menstruation, and do not approach them until they are clean [from menstruation]. Then, when they have cleansed themselves, approach them, from where God has ordained you. Indeed God loves the repentant and He loves those who keep themselves cleansed. (Qur'an: 2:222)

The Qur'an, in the cited verses, has clarified that the 'detachment' from women prescribed during their menstruation, relates only to conjugal (sexual) relations with them. It does not imply that a woman during her menstruation should be rendered 'untouchable' during these days, as is the case in some societies and religions.

In the last part of the verse, a beautiful analogy is drawn between repentance and keeping oneself physically clean. A close look at the two phenomena shows that they essentially refer to the same thing from two different perspectives. Physical cleansing, as we know, refers to relieving the body from all such things that soil and defile it; Repentance, on the other hand, is in fact, the cleansing of the soul - i.e. relieving the soul from all such things that have the potential of soiling and defiling it. Thus, the last part of the verse declares that to deserve God's love, one should continually strive to keep his body as well as his soul cleansed.

#### **10) Bathing After Menstrual & Puerperal Discharge & After Sexual Uncleanness**

Bathing after menstrual and puerperal discharge of blood and after sexual contact has also been a part of all divine religions. It was also a common tradition among the Arabs, even before the advent of Islam, as an Abrahamic tradition. As has been cited above, the Qur'an has referred to a woman's bathing after the discontinuation of her menstrual bleeding. The same rules, as given in the Qur'an for menstruation, should obviously apply to puerperal bleeding as well. Bathing after sexual

contact, especially before offering Salat, is also referred to in the Qur'an. The Qur'an (Al-Nisaa 4: 43) says:

Believers, do not go near prayers, while you are in a state of intoxication, until the time that you are aware of what you say and neither in a state of sexual uncleanness, until you bathe yourselves carefully, except that you only intend to pass through [the mosque].

The example set by the Prophet Muhammad relating to bathing after sexual uncleanness, as reported in a number of narratives, entailed the following, sequential, steps:

1. Carefully washing hands;
2. Carefully washing and cleaning the organ, using the left hand;
3. Conducting the complete ritual ablution, prescribed for prayers, except for washing the feet;
4. Thoroughly washing the head while rinsing the hair;
5. Washing the whole body;
6. Washing the feet.

### **13.7 Islam: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

Islam means submission, total submission to Allah is the single path to salvation. The good Muslim surrenders all pride, sins, and follows explicitly the will of Allah as revealed in the Qur'an by His last and greatest prophet, Mohammad. This and this alone bring a full and meaningful life and avoid the terrors of the hell, which befalls sinners and infidels.

Islam encompasses personal faith and piety, the creed and worship of the community of believers, a way of life, a code of ethics, a culture, a system of laws, an understanding of the function of the state, in short, guidelines and rules for life in all its aspects and dimensions.

It stresses on the brotherhood of believers, non-difference of religious and secular life, obedience to God's Law, abstinence from alcohol, good conduct, and the limitation of all except Allah. Allah is the Supreme Creator and Sustainer, all knowing and transcendent and yet the arbiter of good and evil, the final judge of humans.

Islamic doctrines are commonly discussed and taught widely under six headings: God: The sole creator, the One and Only; Angels: Servants of God, play an important role in the daily life of Muslims; Scriptures: God's speech; Messengers: God's message revealed through His Messengers; The Last Day: Every soul will stand-alone and will have to account for its deeds; and Predestination: The divine initiative is all-decisive in bringing humans to faith ("had God not guided us, we had surely never been guided," 7:43),

The descriptions of creation in the Qur'an are meant to engage the reader in contemplating the lessons to be learned from it. The act of creation, therefore, is frequently spoken of as a way of drawing the reader into thinking about the order in all things, and the All-Knowing Creator Who is behind it all. For example: "Verily in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe. And in the creation of yourselves, and the fact that animals are scattered (through the earth), are signs for those of assured faith. And in the alternation of night and day, and that fact that Allah

sends down sustenance from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death, and in the change of the winds, are signs for those who are wise" (45:3-5). The Qur'an says that "the heavens and the earth were joined together as one unit, before We clove them asunder" (21:30). Following this big explosion, Allah "turned to the sky, and it had been (as) smoke. He said to it and to the earth: 'Come together, willingly or unwillingly.' They said: 'We come (together) in willing obedience'" (41:11). The Qur'an further states that Allah created the sun, the moon, and the planets, each with their own individual courses or orbits. "It is He Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course" (21:33).

The Qur'an states that "Allah created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in six days" (7:54). While on the surface this might seem similar to the account related in the Bible, there are some important distinctions. The verses that mention "six days" use the Arabic word "youm" (day). This word appears several other times in the Qur'an, each denoting a different measurement of time. In one case, the measure of a day is equated with 50,000 years (70:4), whereas another verse states that "a day in the sight of your Lord is like 1,000 years of your reckoning" (22:47). The word "youm" is thus understood, within the Qur'an, to be a long period of time -- an era or eon. Therefore, Muslims interpret the description of a "six-day" creation as six distinct periods or eons. The lengths of these periods are not precisely defined, nor are the specific developments that took place during each period.

After completing the Creation, the Qur'an describes that Allah "settled Himself upon the Throne" (57:4) to oversee His work. A distinct point is made to counter the Biblical idea of a day of rest: "We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us" (50:38). Allah is never "done" with His work, because the process of creation is ongoing. Each new child who is born, every seed that sprouts into a sapling, every new species that appears on earth, is part of the ongoing process of Allah's creation. "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then established Himself on the Throne. He knows what enters within the heart of the earth, and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven, and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees well all that you do" (57:4).

Islam teaches that human beings are a unique life form that was created by Allah in a special way, with unique gifts and abilities unlike any other: a soul and conscience, knowledge, and free will. In short, Muslims do not believe that human beings randomly evolved from apes. The life of human beings began with the creation of two people, a male and a female named Adam and Hawwa (Eve). The Qur'an describes how Allah created Adam: "We created man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape..." (15:26). And, "He began the creation of man from clay, and made his progeny from a quintessence of fluid" (32:7-8). Thus, human beings have a fundamental attachment to the earth. While the creation of Eve is not described in detail, the Qur'an does make it clear that a "mate" was created with Adam, from the same nature and soul. "It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her in love" (7:189). She is not mentioned by name in the Qur'an, but in Islamic tradition she is known as "Hawwa" (Eve). From these two individuals, generations of human beings have inhabited the earth.

Islam teaches that there are three periods before the Day of Judgment, also known as *ashratu's-sa'ah* or *alamatu qiyami's-sa'ah*. The first period began with the death of Muhammad. The second began with the passing of all his Companions, and ended a

thousand years later. Another event of the second period was the Tartar invasion, occurring 650 years after Muhammad. The Mongols, led by Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, attacked Baghdad in 1258 AD and brought the Abbasid caliphate to an end. They massacred millions of Muslims, and the water of the river Tigris turned red with blood. The Qur'an also predicted a fire at Madinah in the Hijaz near Busra in Syria, which Islamic scholars believe occurred in 654 AH (the year-numbering system used in the Islamic calendar). Following the second, the third and final period will be heralded by the appearance of the Mahdi (the prophesied redeemer).

The dead will then stand in a grand assembly, awaiting a scroll detailing their righteous deeds, sinful acts and ultimate judgment. Muhammad will be the first to be resurrected. Punishments will include adhab, or severe pain and embarrassment, and khizy or shame. There will also be a punishment of the grave between death and the resurrection.

There are twelve major signs of Qiyamah (the Day of Judgment), known as amaratu's-sa'ah al- kubra. The first sign will be the appearance of the imam, Mahdi, whose appearance is awaited by the angel Israfil, so that he may sound the horn signaling the end of days. The natural order will become reversed, including the sun, mountains and sea. The twelve signs are as follows:

1. Appearance of the Mahdi atop a white horse
2. The false messiah, Masih ad-Dajjal, shall appear as a creature with one eye good and the other blind, and the mark of Kafir (infidel). He will claim to hold keys to heaven and hell and lead many astray, although believers will not be deceived.
3. Isa, or Jesus, shall return from the seventh sky to assist the Mahdi against Dajjal.
4. Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj, two tribes of vicious beings which had been imprisoned will escape. They will ravage the earth, drink all its water, and destroy all life. Allah will then send worms and insects to destroy them.
5. Medina will be deserted, with true believers going to follow Mahdi and sinners following Dajjal.
6. A short legged and thin ruler of Ethiopia will attack Mecca and destroy the Ka'aba.
7. The Beast of the Earth, or Dabbat al-ard, will populate the entire planet.
8. A pleasant breeze will blow from Yemen that will cause all believers to die peacefully.
9. The sun will rise from the west.
10. The Qur'an will be taken to heaven and even the Hafiz (guardian) will not recall its verses.
11. A first trumpet will sound, and all remaining humanity will die, followed by a period of forty years, at the end of which smoke will envelop the world for forty days.
12. A second trumpet will sound, the dead will return to life, and a fire will start from Hadramawt in Yemen that shall gather all people of the world in Mahshar for the Last Judgment.



## 13.8 Islam: Its Place of Worship

A mosque<sup>19</sup> is a place of worship for followers of Islam. There are strict and detailed requirements in Sunni fiqh for a place of worship to be considered a mosque, with places that do not meet these requirements regarded as musallas. There are stringent restrictions on the uses of the area formally demarcated as the mosque (which is often a small portion of the larger complex), and, in the Islamic Sharia law, after an area is formally designated as a mosque, it remains so until the Last Day.

Many mosques have elaborate domes, minarets, and prayer halls, in varying styles of architecture. Mosques originated on the Arabian Peninsula, but are now found in all inhabited continents. The mosque serves as a place where Muslims can come together for salat (prayer) as well as a center for information, education, and dispute settlement. The imam leads the congregation in prayer.

The first mosque in the world is often considered to be the area around the Ka'aba in Mecca now known as the Masjid al-Haram. Since as early as 638 AD, the Masjid al-Haram has been expanded on several occasions to accommodate the increasing number of Muslims who either live in the area or make the annual pilgrimage known as hajj to the city. Others regard the first mosque in history to be the Quba Mosque in present-day Medina since it was the first structure built by Muhammad upon his emigration from Mecca in 622. Muhammad went on to establish another mosque in Medina, which is now known as the Masjid an-Nabawi, or the Prophet's Mosque. Built on the site of his home, Muhammad participated in the construction of the mosque himself and helped pioneer the concept of the mosque as the focal point of the Islamic city. The Masjid al-Nabawi introduced some of the features still common in today's mosques, including the niche at the front of the prayer space known as the mihrab and the tiered pulpit called the minbar. The Masjid al-Nabawi was also constructed with a large courtyard, a motif common among mosques built since then.

The Ka'aba<sup>20</sup> is a cuboid building at the center of Islam's most sacred mosque, Al-Masjid al-Haram, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is the most sacred point within this most sacred mosque, making it the most sacred location in Islam. Wherever they are in the world, Muslims are expected to face the Ka'aba – i.e. when outside Mecca, to face toward Mecca – when performing salat. The Ka'aba is made of granite quarried from nearby hills. Standing upon a 250 cm marble base that projects outwards about 35 cm, it is approximately 13.1 m high, with sides measuring 11.03 m by 12.86 m. Inside the Ka'aba, the floor is made of marble and limestone. The interior walls are clad with marble halfway to the roof. The marble is inset with Qur'anic inscriptions. The wall directly adjacent to the entrance of the Ka'aba has six tablets inlaid with inscriptions. The top part of the walls is covered with a green cloth embroidered with gold Qur'anic verses. Caretakers anoint the marble cladding with scented oil used on the Black Stone outside. Three pillars stand inside the Ka'aba, with a small altar set between one and the other two. Lamp-like objects hang by a rope above the platform. An enclosed staircase leads to the roof.

Aniconism in Islam is a proscription in Islam against the creation of images of sentient living beings. The most absolute proscription is of images of God in Islam, followed by depictions of Muhammad, and then Islamic prophets and the relatives of Muhammad, but the depiction of all humans and animals is discouraged in the hadith and by the long tradition of Islamic authorities, especially Sunni ones. This has led to Islamic art being dominated by Islamic geometric patterns,

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<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia: Mosque

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia: Kaaba



calligraphy and the barely representational foliage patterns of the arabesque; but figurative art still has a strong tradition, especially on a small scale in private works for the home or palace.

## 13.9 Islam: Its Rites and Rituals<sup>21</sup>

**13.9.1 The Hajj** is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and the largest gathering of Muslim people in the world every year. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and a religious duty which must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his or her lifetime.

**13.9.2 The Ramadan** is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; Muslims worldwide observe this as a month of fasting. This annual observance is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The month lasts 29-30 days based on the visual sightings of the crescent moon, according to numerous biographical accounts compiled in the hadiths. The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic root “ramida”, which means scorching heat or dryness. Fasting is obligatory for adult Muslims, except those who are ill, traveling, pregnant, breastfeeding, diabetic or going through menstrual bleeding. While fasting from dawn until sunset, Muslims refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking, and engaging in sexual relations. According to Islam, the rewards of fasting are many, but in this month they are believed to be multiplied. Fasting for Muslims during Ramadan typically includes the increased offering of salat (prayers) and recitation of the Qur’an.

### 13.9.3 Salat Times (Prayers)

Salat times refer to times when Muslims perform salat. The term is primarily used for the five daily prayers plus the Friday prayer. According to Muslim beliefs, the salat times were taught by Allah to Muhammad. Prayer times are standard for Muslims in the world, especially the obligatory prayer times. They depend on the condition of the Sun and geography.

### 13.9.4 Zakat

The Qur'an talks about the zakat in more than thirty different verses, mainly in the Medinan suras. In the Qur'anic view, zakat is a way to redistribute the wealth, thus defining a charity-based economy with a particular interest in the poor and the dispossessed Muslims. Zakat is considered more than taxation. One must give zakat for the sake of one's salvation: while those who give zakat can expect reward from God in the afterlife, neglecting to give zakat can result in damnation. The giving of the zakat is considered a means of purifying one's wealth and soul.

### 13.9.5 Mawlid

Mawlid is the observance of the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad which occurs on the twelfth day of the Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Often organized in some countries by the Sufi orders, Mawlid is celebrated in a carnival manner, large street processions are held and homes or mosques are decorated. Charity and food is distributed, and

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<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia: Hajj; Ramadan; Salat Times; Zakat; Mawlid; Khitan; Mid Sha'ban; Eid al-Adha; Marriage in Islam; Islamic Funeral; Udhiyyah or Qurban

stories about the life of Muhammad are narrated with recitation of poetry by children. Scholars and poets celebrate by reciting Qaṣīda al-Burda Sharif, the famous poem by thirteenth-century Arabic Sufi Busiri. A general Mawlid appears as "a chaotic, incoherent spectacle, where numerous events happen simultaneously, all held together only by the common festive time and space". These celebrations are often considered an expression of the Sufi concept of the pre-existence of Muhammad . However, the main significance of these festivities is expression of love for the Prophet

#### **13.9.6 Khitan (Circumcision)**

Khitan is the term for male circumcision carried out as an Islamic rite. It is considered by some as a sign of belonging or introduction to the wider Islamic community. Islamic male circumcision is analogous but not identical to Jewish circumcision. Islam is currently the largest single religious group in which the practice is widespread.

Whereas Jewish circumcision is closely bound by ritual timing and tradition, Islamic circumcision does not have a strictly mandated procedure or form of circumcision. Whether or not boys get circumcised and the procedure tends to change across cultures, families, and time. In some Islamic countries, circumcision is performed after Muslim boys have learned to recite the whole Qur'an from start to finish. In Malaysia and other regions, the boy usually undergoes the operation between the ages of ten and twelve, and is thus a puberty rite, serving to introduce him into the new status of an adult. The procedure is sometimes semi-public, accompanied with music, special foods, and much festivity.

#### **13.9.7 Shab-e-barat**

Mid-Sha'ban is the fifteenth day of the eighth month (shaaban) of the Islamic lunar calendar. The preceding night is known as Laylatul Bara'ah or Laylatun Nisfe min Sha'ban in the Arab world, and as Shab-e-barat in Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. These names are translated to the night of records, the night of assignment, the night of deliverance or the night of salvation, and the observance involves a festive nightlong vigil with prayers. In some regions, this is also a night when one's deceased ancestors are commemorated. It is the special night of seeking forgiveness and repenting to Allah, remembering past sins and sincerely settling the mind that one will never commit sins in the future.

#### **13.9.8 Eid al-Adha**

Eid al-Adha is the second of two religious holidays celebrated by Muslims worldwide each year. It honors the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his young first-born son Ishmael (Ismail) as an act of submission to God's command, before God then intervened to provide Abraham with a lamb to sacrifice instead. In the lunar-based Islamic calendar, Eid al-Adha falls on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah and lasts for four days. In the international Gregorian calendar, the dates vary from year to year, drifting approximately eleven days earlier each year.

Men, women and children are expected to dress in their finest clothing to perform Eid prayer in a large congregation in an open waqf ("stopping") field

called Eidgah or mosque. Affluent Muslims who can afford, i.e. Malik-e-Nisaab; sacrifice their best halal domestic animals (usually a cow, but can also be a camel, goat, sheep or ram depending on the region) as a symbol of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son. The sacrificed animals have to meet certain age and quality standards or else the animal is considered an unacceptable sacrifice. The meat from the sacrificed animal is to be divided into three parts. The family retains one third of the share; another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors; and the remaining third is given to the poor and needy. Though the division is purely optional wherein either all the meat may be kept with oneself or may be given away to the poor or needy, the preferred method as per sunnah of Muhammad is dividing it into three parts.

### **13.9.9 Nikah**

In Islam, marriage is a legal contract between two people. The bride is to consent to the marriage of her own free will. A formal, binding contract is considered integral to a religiously valid Islamic marriage, and outlines the rights and responsibilities of the groom and bride. The contract of an Islamic marriage is concluded between the guardian (wali) of the bride and bridegroom, not between bridegroom and bride. There must be two Muslim witnesses of the marriage contract. Divorce is permitted and can be initiated by either party. The actual rules of marriage and divorce (often part of Personal Status Laws) can differ widely from country to country, based on codified law and the school of jurisprudence that is largely followed in that country.

The Qur'an tells believers that even if they are poor they should marry to protect themselves from immorality (Quran 24:33). The Qur'an asserts that marriage is a legitimate way to satisfy one's sexual desire. Islam recognizes the value of sex and companionship and advocates marriage as the foundation for families and channeling the fulfillment of a base need. Marriage is highly valued and regarded as being half of one's faith, according to a saying of Muhammad.

### **13.9.10 Janazah**

Funerals in Islam (called Janazah in Arabic) follow fairly specific rites, though they are subject to regional interpretation and variation in custom. In all cases, however, Sharia (Islamic religious law) calls for burial of the body, preceded by a simple ritual involving bathing and shrouding the body, followed by salat (prayer). Cremation of the body is forbidden. Burial rituals should normally take place as soon as possible and include: Bathing the dead body, except in extraordinary circumstances as in the battle of Uhud; enshrouding dead body in a white cotton or linen cloth; funeral prayer, burial of the dead body in a grave; and positioning the deceased so that the head is faced towards Mecca.

### 13.9.11 Aqeeqah<sup>22</sup>

The Aqeeqah ceremony essentially consists of two acts: the shaving of the hair from the head of a newborn baby, and the sacrifice of an animal (these were also characteristic features of Millat-u-Ibrahim, the religion of the Prophet Ibrahim). The hair on the child's head is shaven and its weight in silver is given as charity. An animal is then sacrificed as a mark of celebration and distributed amongst friends, family, the poor and a portion is kept for the family's own consumption.

Ali (RA) reported that the Messenger of Allah slaughtered a goat on the occasion of Hasan's birth, the son of Fatimha (RA) and Ali (RA) and said "Oh Fatimah! Shave the head of Hasan and pay silver equal to the weight of the hair as charity". Sahih Sunan at-Tirmitheh 2:1226

It is reported by Abdullah bin al-As that the Prophet said, "To whomsoever a child is born and he wants to perform a sacrifice of Aqeeqah on behalf of it, he should sacrifice two goats for a boy and one goat for a girl". Sunan Abu Dawood 2:2836

It is reported by Buraydah (RA) "During the age of ignorance, when a child was born to anyone of us, we used to slaughter a goat and smear the child with its blood. Later, after the dawn of Islam, our practice became (on the advice of the Prophet) that we sacrifice a goat of Aqeeqah on the seventh day after the birth of the child, shave the head of the infant and apply saffron on it". Sunan Abu Dawood 2:2137

### 13.9.12 Qurban

In Shariah, Udhiyya would refer to the sacrifice of a specific animal, offered by a specific person, on specific days to seek Allah's pleasure and reward. The word Qurban appears thrice in the Qur'an and once in Sura Al-Ma'ida in reference to animal sacrifice. In the other two places the Qur'an speaks of sacrifice in the general sense, referring to any act which may bring one closer to Allah. The practice of Qurban can be traced back to Abraham who dreamt that God ordered him to sacrifice his son. Abraham agreed to follow God's command and perform the sacrifice; however, God intervened and sent a ram to be sacrificed in the boy's place. The continued practice of ritual sacrifice acts as a reminder of Abraham's obedience to God.

In Islam, the sacrifice of an animal is legal from the morning of the tenth to sunset of the twelfth Dhu l-Hijjah, the twelfth lunar month of the Islamic calendar. On these days Muslims all over the world offer Qurbani which means a sacrifice/ slaughter of an animal on specific days for the pleasure of Allah. It is understood as a symbolic repetition of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram in place of his son, a crucial notion in Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike. Islamic preachers would use the occasion to comment on the fact that Islam is a religion of sacrifice and use this opportunity to remind Muslims of their duty of serving mankind with their time, effort and wealth. The animals of sacrifice must be killed according to the prohibitions of halal sacrifice and that the animal in question must be: Domesticated goat, either male or female, of at least one year of age. Goats count as one share; domesticated sheep,

either male or female, if six months old and over, the animal must look like one year old. Sheep that are one year old and over are preferred for sacrifice. Sheep count as one share; domesticated cow, ox or buffalo, of at least two years old. These animals count as one to seven shares; domesticated camel, male or female, of at least five years of age. Camels count as one to seven shares. It is imperative to choose animals from healthy stock without any visible defect.

### 13.10 Islam: Its Religious Holidays

Eid means festival or holiday in Arabic. It refers to a number of Muslim holidays as follows.

- **Eid al-Fitr** marks the end of the month of Ramadan.
- **Eid al-Adha** is celebrated to commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God.
- **Eid Milad an-Nabi** is the Festival of the Birth of the Prophet Muhammad.
- **Eid al-Milad** is the Festival of the Birth or a birthday celebration.
- **Eid-e-Shuja'** for Shi'a Muslims marks the end of the mourning period after the events of Karbala.
- **The Hijri New Year**, also known as Islamic New Year is the day that marks the beginning of a new Islamic calendar year, and is the day on which the year count is incremented. The first day of the year is observed on the first day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar. The first Islamic year beginning in 622 AD during which the emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijra.

### 13.11 Islam: Its Denominations<sup>23</sup>

With Muhammad's death, disagreement broke out over who his successor would be. Umar ibn al-Khattab, a prominent companion of Muhammad, nominated Abu Bakr, Muhammad's friend and collaborator. With additional support Abu Bakr was confirmed as the first caliph. This choice was disputed by some of Muhammad's companions, who held that Ali ibn Abi Talib, his cousin and son-in-law, had been designated the successor by Muhammad at Ghadir Khumm.

#### **Sunni**

The largest denomination in Islam is Sunni Islam, which makes up 75%–90% of all Muslims. Sunni Muslims also go by the name Ahl as-Sunnah which means "people of the tradition [of Muhammad]". These hadiths, recounting Muhammad's words, actions, and personal characteristics, are preserved in traditions known as Al-Kutub Al-Sittah (six major books).

Sunnis believe that the first four caliphs were the rightful successors to Muhammad; since God did not specify any particular leaders to succeed him and those leaders were elected. Sunnis believe that anyone who is righteous and just could be a caliph but

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<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia: Islam

they have to act according to the Qur'an and the Hadith, the example of Muhammad and give the people their rights.

The Sunnis follow the Qur'an, then the Hadith. Then for legal matters not found in the Qur'an or the Hadith, they follow four Madh'habs (schools of thought): Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i, established around the teachings of Abū Ḥanīfa, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Malik ibn Anas and al-Shafi'i respectively.

All four accept the validity of the others and a Muslim may choose any one that he or she finds agreeable. The Salafi (also known as the people of hadith), or the pejorative term Wahhabi by its adversaries) is an ultra-orthodox Islamic movement which takes the first generation of Muslims as exemplary models.

## **Shi'a**

The Shi'a constitute 10–20% of Islam and are its second-largest branch.

While the Sunnis believe that a Caliph should be elected by the community, Shi'as believe that Muhammad appointed his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, as his successor and only certain descendants of Ali could be Imams. As a result, they believe that Ali ibn Abi Talib was the first Imam (leader), rejecting the legitimacy of the previous Muslim caliphs Abu Bakr, Uthman ibn al-Affan and Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Shi'a Islam has several branches, the largest of which is the Twelvers, followed by Zaidis and Ismailis. Different branches accept different descendants of Ali as Imams. After the death of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq considered the sixth Imam by the Twelvers, and the Ismaili's, the Ismailis started to consider his son Isma'il ibn Jafar as the Imam and the Twelver Shi'as (Ithna Asheri) started to consider his other son Musa al-Kazim as their seventh Imam. While the Zaydis consider Zayd ibn Ali, the uncle of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, as their fifth Imam.

Other smaller groups include the Bohra and Druze, as well as the Alawites and Alevi. Some Shi'a branches label other Shi'a branches that do not agree with their doctrine as Ghulat.

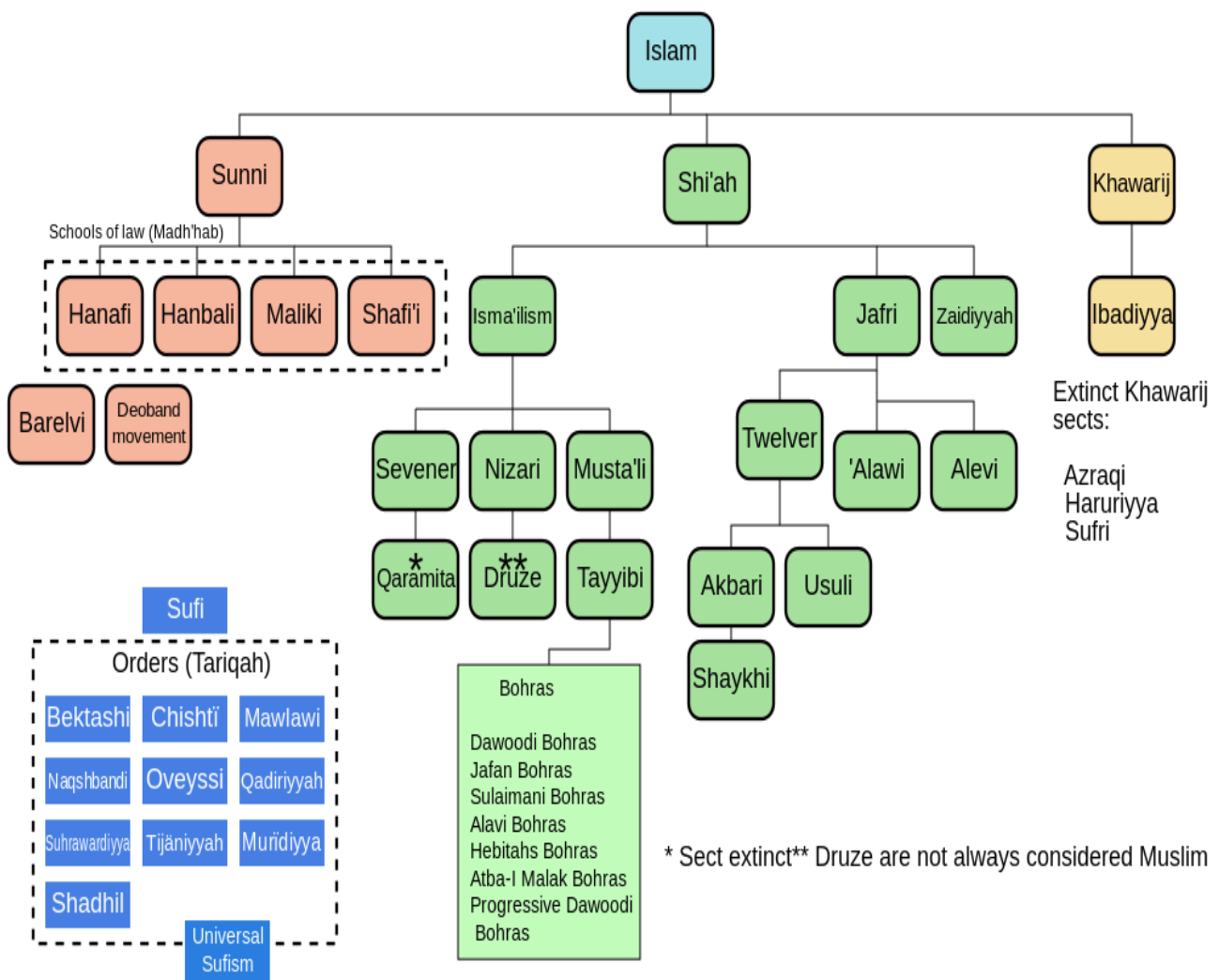
## **Sufism**

Sufism (Tasawwuf) is a mystical-ascetic approach to Islam that seeks to find divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. By focusing on the more spiritual aspects of religion, Sufis strive to obtain direct experience of God by making use of "intuitive and emotional faculties" that one must be trained to use. However, Sufism has been criticized by the Salafi sect for what they see as an unjustified religious innovation. Hasan al-Basri was inspired by the ideas of piety and condemnation of worldliness preached by Muhammad and these ideas were later further developed by Al-Ghazali in his books on Sufism. Sufi-majority countries include Senegal, Chad and Niger.

An overview of the major schools and branches of Islam is shown in the following chart.<sup>24</sup>

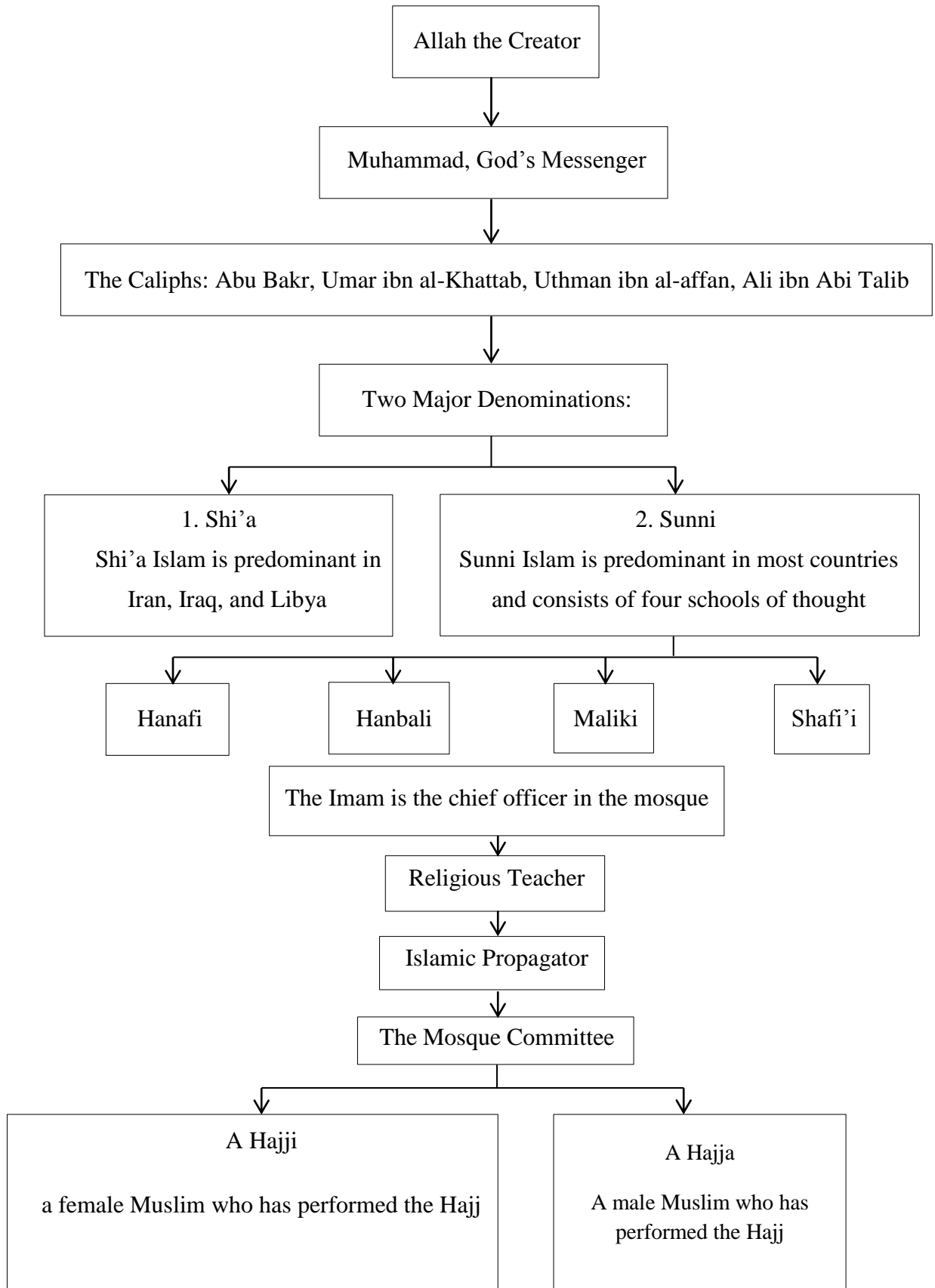
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<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia: Islamic Schools and Branches





## Organization Chart for Islam Hierarchy



### 13.12 Islam: Its Religious Symbols<sup>25</sup>

Islamic symbols express an identification with Islam, or a particular tradition within Islam. They are also used to evoke feelings, or to stand for certain Islamic beliefs and ideas. Some symbols, such as the green color, have been associated with Islam for a long time and in many areas; others are of more limited duration and extent. Muslim art often uses such symbols to represent complex ideas. Islamic architecture may also incorporate such symbols in the decoration of religious edifices such as mosques, khanqahs, and dargahs. The Qur'an does not specify any symbols or colors for Islam; these Islamic symbols are results of the understandings and imaginations of Muslim artists, politicians, and thinkers. As for the "Ay-yıldız" star and crescent, it has long been used by the Turks as a symbol.

### 13.13 Islam: Its Current Status

Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75–90%) or Shi'a (10–20%). About 13% of Muslims live in Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country, 25% in South Asia, 20% in the Middle East, and 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sizable minorities are also found in Europe, China, Russia, and the Americas. Converts and immigrant communities are found in almost every part of the world. With about 1.6 billion followers or 23% of earth's population, Islam is the second-largest religion and the fastest-growing major religion in the world.<sup>26</sup>

In discussing the current status of Islam<sup>27</sup>, it is important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration from Muhammad and the Qur'an, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most obvious division is that between Sunni and Shi'a Islam. The Sunnis draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Qur'an and to the "sunna" in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The "sunna" is the behavior or example of Muhammad and of the early Muslim community. Of course, there are many subdivisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

The other major group of Muslims is the Shi'ites (who reside mainly in Iraq and Iran). The word Shi'ite means "partisan," and refers to the fact that Shi'ites are "partisans of Ali." Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad and one of the early Caliphs or successors to Muhammad as leader of the Muslim people. Shi'ites believe that the leader of Islam should be among the descendants of Ali, whom they believe possess a special divine anointing for this task. The last of these divinely appointed leaders, or "imams" most Shi'ites believe to be in "hiding" in another realm of existence. The Ayatollah Khomeini was believed to have been a spokesman for this "hidden imam."

A third group that should be mentioned are the Sufis--those Muslims (among both Sunni and Shi'a) who seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him, and who also are given to a number of superstitious practices.

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<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia: Symbols of Islam

<sup>26</sup> Wikipedia: Islam

<sup>27</sup> wri.leaderu.com: What is Islam?

In addition to these divisions within Islam, mention must also be made of attitudes among Muslims toward their contact with the Western world in modern times. Though the situation is very complex, two broad trends have been evident within Islam.

One trend is toward some degree of accommodation and adjustment to the West and to modern ways of life. This has manifested itself most obviously in countries like Turkey, which have instituted largely secular forms of government and Western ways of life, while maintaining Islamic religious practices.

The opposite trend is toward a return to a more traditional approach to Islamic life and a rejection of Western and modern ways. The most extreme expression of this trend is manifest in the various forms of Islamic fundamentalism, which insist on the implementation of Muslim law (the Sharia) in every area of life. Fundamentalists have been most successful in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan; but they are active in virtually every Muslim country, at times resorting to violence and terrorism in attempting to implement their agenda.

In understanding this potent religious and political movement, it is important to understand the various divisions and attitudes within Islam and the basic beliefs at Islam's core.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook before proceeding to the next chapter.

# Chapter 14

## The Bahá'í Faith

### **14.1 The History of the Bahá'í Faith**

### **14.2 The History of Its Founder**

#### 14.2.1 His History Prior to Founding the Bahá'í Faith

#### 14.2.2 The History of the Founding of the Bahá'í Faith and Its Founder's History

### **14.3 Its Religious Texts**

### **14.4 Its Doctrines**

#### 14.4.1 The Unity of God

#### 14.4.2 The Unity of Religion

#### 14.4.3 The Unity of Humanity

#### 14.4.4 The Bahá'í God

### **14.5 Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

### **14.6 Its Place of Worship**

### **14.7 Its Rites and Rituals**

### **14.8 Its Religious Holidays**

### **14.9 Its Administration**

### **14.10 Its Religious Symbols**

### **14.11 Its Current Status**

## Concepts

1. The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in nineteenth-century Persia.
2. Some of Bahá'u'lláh's most important writings include the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, literally the Most Holy Book, which is his book of laws, the Kitáb-i-Íqán, literally the Book of Certitude, which became the foundation of much of Bahá'í belief, the Gems of Divine Mysteries, which includes further doctrinal foundations, and the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys which are mystical treatises.
3. Members of the Bahá'í Faith pray each day, observe the nine holy days, fast nineteen days a year, work to abolish prejudice, regard work as a form of worship, make at least one pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Bab and the houses in which Bahá'u'lláh lived. Members of the Bahá'í Faith do not consume alcohol.
4. The Bahá'í Faith teaches that the evolution or development of the soul and its capacities is the basic purpose of human existence. This evolution is towards God and its motive force is knowledge of God and love for Him. As one learns about God, one's love for Him increases; and this, in turn, enables one to attain a closer communion with one's Creator. Also, as one draws closer to God, one's character becomes more refined and one's actions reflect more and more the attributes and qualities of God. (Bahá'í ultimate spiritual aim)
5. The five-pointed star is the symbol of the Bahá'í Faith used to represent the human body and the Messengers of God, more common symbols include the nine-pointed star, the Greatest Name, and the Ringstone symbol, representing perfection, and the Messengers of God.
6. Bahá'ís consider their faith to be the youngest of the world's independent monotheistic religions. Founded in the 1860s, it now has more than five million adherents in 236 countries and territories.

## Objectives

1. To enable the student to gain an overview of the Bahá'í Faith.
2. To enable the student to learn about the history of the Bahá'í Faith, the history of its founder, its religious texts, its doctrines, and its creed and ultimate goal.
3. To enable the student to learn about its place of worship, its rites and rituals, its religious holidays, its administration, and its current status.

# Chapter 14

## The Bahá'í Faith

### 14.1 The History of the Bahá'í Faith<sup>1</sup>

The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in nineteenth-century Persia. Bahá'u'lláh was exiled for his teachings, from Persia to the Ottoman Empire, and died while officially still a prisoner.

On May 23, 1844 Siyyid `Alí-Muhammad of Shiraz, Iran, proclaimed that he was "the Báb" ("the Gate"), referring to his later claim to the station of Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam of Shi'a Islam. His followers were therefore known as Bábís. As the Báb's teachings spread, which the Islamic clergy saw as a threat, his followers came under increased persecution and torture. The conflicts escalated in several places to military sieges by the Shah's army. The Báb himself was imprisoned and eventually executed in 1850.

Bahá'ís see the Báb as the forerunner of the Bahá'í Faith, because the Báb's writings introduced the concept of "He whom God shall make manifest", a Messianic figure whose coming, according to Bahá'ís, was announced in the scriptures of all of the world's great religions, and whom Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, claimed to be in 1863.

After Bahá'u'lláh's death, under the leadership of his son, `Abdu'l-Bahá, the religion spread from its Persian and Ottoman roots, and gained a footing in Europe and America, and was consolidated in Iran, where it suffers intense persecution. After the death of `Abdu'l-Bahá, the leadership of the Bahá'í community entered a new phase, evolving from a single individual to an administrative order with both elected bodies and appointed individuals.

In the Bahá'í Faith, religious history is seen to have unfolded through a series of divine messengers, each of whom established a religion that was suited to the needs of the time and to the capacity of the people. These messengers have included Abrahamic figures as well as Dharmic ones—Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and others. For Bahá'ís, the most recent messengers are the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. In Bahá'í belief, each consecutive messenger prophesied of messengers to follow, and Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings fulfilled the end-time promises of previous scriptures. Humanity is understood to be in a process of collective evolution, and the need of the present time is for the gradual establishment of peace, justice and unity on a global scale.

Mírzá Husayn `Alí Núrí was one of the early followers of the Báb, and later took the title of Bahá'u'lláh. He was arrested and imprisoned for this involvement in 1852. Bahá'u'lláh relates that in 1853, while incarcerated in the dungeon of the Sýáh-Chál in Tehran, he received the first intimations that he was the one anticipated by the Báb.

Shortly thereafter he was expelled from Tehran to Baghdad, in the Ottoman Empire; then to Constantinople (now Istanbul); and then to Adrianople (now Edirne). In 1863, at the time of his banishment from Baghdad to Constantinople, Bahá'u'lláh declared his claim to a divine mission to his family and followers. Tensions then grew between him and Subh-i-Azal, the appointed leader of the Bábís who did not recognize

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia, The Baha'i Faith

Bahá'u'lláh's claim. Throughout the rest of his life Bahá'u'lláh gained the allegiance of most of the Bábís, who came to be known as Bahá'ís. Beginning in 1866, he began declaring his mission as a Messenger of God in letters to the world's religious and secular rulers, including Pope Pius IX, Napoleon III, and Queen Victoria.

In 1868 Bahá'u'lláh was banished by Sultan Abdülâziz a final time to the Ottoman penal colony of `Akká, in present-day Israel. Towards the end of his life, the strict and harsh confinement was gradually relaxed, and he was allowed to live in a home near `Akká, while still officially a prisoner of that city. He died there in 1892. Bahá'ís regard his resting place at Bahjí as the Qiblih to which they turn in prayer each day.

### **`Abdu'l-Bahá**

`Abbás Effendi was Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, known by the title of `Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Bahá). His father left a will that appointed `Abdu'l-Bahá as the leader of the Bahá'í community, and designated him as the "Centre of the Covenant", "Head of the Faith", and the sole authoritative interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. `Abdu'l-Bahá had shared his father's long exile and imprisonment, which continued until `Abdu'l-Bahá's own release as a result of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. Following his release he led a life of travelling, speaking, teaching, and maintaining correspondence with communities of believers and individuals, expounding the principles of the Bahá'í Faith. He died in 1957 under conditions that did not allow for a successor to be appointed.

## **14.2 The History of Its Founder**

### **14.2.1 The Bahá'í Faith: The History of Its Founder and the Founding of the Bahá'í Faith<sup>2</sup>**

Bahá'u'lláh was born on 12 November 1817, in Tehran, the capital of Persia, present-day Iran. His mother was Khadíjih Khánum and his father was Mírzá Buzurg.

Bahá'u'lláh first heard of the Báb when he was twenty-seven, and received a visitor sent by the Báb, Mullá Husayn, telling him of the Báb and his claims. Bahá'u'lláh accepted the Báb's claims, becoming a Bábí and helping to spread the new movement, especially in his native province of Núr, where he became recognized as one of its most influential believers.

After the Báb was executed in 1850, a group of Tehran Bábís, headed by a Bábí known as Azim, who was previously a Shaykhi cleric, plotted an assassination plan against the Shah Nasser-al-Din Shah, in retaliation for the Báb's execution. The policy was opposed by Bahá'u'lláh, who condemned the plan; however, any moderating influence that he may have had was diminished in June 1851 when he went into exile to Baghdad at the chief minister's request, returning only after Amir Kabir's fall from power. On 15 August 1852, the radical group of Bábís attempted to carry out the assassination of the Shah and failed. The group of Bábís linked with the plan, were rounded up and killed, and, notwithstanding the assassins' claim that they were working alone, the entire Bábí community was blamed, precipitating violent riots against the Bábí community by the government. During this time many Bábís were killed, and many of the Bábís who were

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, Bahá'u'lláh



not killed, including Bahá'u'lláh, were imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál (black pit), an underground dungeon of Tehran.

According to Bahá'u'lláh, it was during his imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál that he had several mystical experiences, and received a vision of a maiden from God, through whom he received his mission as a messenger of God and as the one whose coming the Báb had prophesied. After four months in the Síyáh-Chál, owing to the insistent demands of the ambassador of Russia, and after the person who tried to kill the Shah confessed and exonerated the Bábí leaders, the authorities released him from prison, but exiled him from Iran. Instead of accepting the offer of refuge from Russia, Bahá'u'lláh chose to go to Iraq in the Ottoman Empire; in 1853 Bahá'u'lláh and his family travelled from Persia arriving in Baghdad on 8 April 1853.

On 10 April 1854, Bahá'u'lláh left his family to the care of his brother Mirza Musa and traveled with one companion to the mountains of Kurdistan, northeast of Baghdad. He later wrote that he left so as to avoid becoming a source of disagreement within the Bábí community, and that his "withdrawal contemplated no return". For two years, Bahá'u'lláh lived alone in the mountains of Kurdistan.

When Bahá'u'lláh returned to Baghdad he saw that the Bábí community had become disheartened and divided. He tried to revive the Bábí community, mostly through correspondence, writing extensively to give the Bábís a new understanding of the Bábí religion, while keeping his perceived station as the one promised by the Báb and a Manifestation of God hidden. He was soon recognized by the Bábís, as well as government authorities, as the foremost Bábí leader, and there was a growing number of people joining the Bábí movement. He also gained sympathy from government officials and Sunni clerics. Bahá'u'lláh's rising influence in the city, and the revival of the Persian Bábí community, gained the attention of his enemies in Islamic clergy and the Persian government. The Persian government asked the Ottoman government to extradite Bahá'u'lláh to Persia, but the Ottoman government refused and instead chose to move Bahá'u'lláh from the sensitive border region to Constantinople.

On 21 April 1863, Bahá'u'lláh left Baghdad and entered the Najibiyyih gardens, now known to Bahá'ís as the Garden of Ridván, near Baghdad. Bahá'u'lláh and those accompanying him stayed in the garden for twelve days before departing for Constantinople. It was during this time that Bahá'u'lláh declared to a small group of his companions his perceived mission and station as a Messenger of God. Bahá'ís regard this period with great significance and celebrate the twelve days that Bahá'u'lláh spent in this Garden as the festival of Ridván. He referred to the period of messianic secrecy between when he claimed to have seen the Maiden of Heaven in the Síyáh-Chál and his declaration as the ayyam-i butun ("Days of Concealment"). Bahá'u'lláh stated that this period was a "set time of concealment". The declaration in the Garden of Ridván was the beginning of a new phase in the Bábí community which led to the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith as a distinctive movement separate from Bábism.

Bahá'u'lláh was given an order to relocate to the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. Although not a formal prisoner yet, the forced exile from Baghdad was the beginning of a long process which would gradually move him into further exiles and eventually to the penal colony of Akká, Palestine

(now Acre, Israel). Bahá'u'lláh travelled from Baghdad to Constantinople between 3 May and 17 August 1863, accompanied by a large group including family members and followers. During the trip, he was treated with respect in the towns he visited, and when he reached Constantinople, he was treated as a government guest.

in 1866, Bahá'u'lláh made his claim to be Him whom God shall make manifest public, as well as making a formal written announcement to Mirza Yahya (leader of the Bábí Movement nominated by the Bab) referring to his followers for the first time as the "people of Bahá".

The final years of Bahá'u'lláh's life (1879–1892) were spent in the Mansion of Bahjí, just outside `Akká, even though he was still formally a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire. During his years in `Akká and Bahjí, since `Abdu'l-Bahá, his eldest son, had taken care of the organizational work, Bahá'u'lláh was able to devote his time to writing, and he produced many volumes of work including the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, his book of laws. His other works included letters outlining his vision for a united world, as well as the need for ethical action; he also composed many prayers. On 9 May 1892, Bahá'u'lláh contracted a slight fever which grew steadily over the following days, abated, and then finally took his life on 29 May 1892. He was buried in the shrine located next to the Mansion of Bahjí.

After Bahá'u'lláh died, the Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh named his son `Abdu'l-Bahá as Center of the Covenant, successor and interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings, and the appointment was readily accepted by almost all Bahá'ís, since the appointment was written and unambiguous, and `Abdu'l-Bahá had proved himself a capable and devoted assistant. However, the appointment given to `Abdu'l-Bahá was a cause of jealousy within Bahá'u'lláh's family. Bahá'u'lláh had also stated that another one of his sons Mírzá Muhammad `Alí was to be subordinate and second in rank after `Abdu'l-Bahá. Mírzá Muḥammad `Alí, however, insisted that `Abdu'l-Bahá was exceeding his powers, and started a rebellion, at first covert, and then public to discredit `Abdu'l-Bahá. Mírzá Muḥammad `Alí's actions, however, were rejected by the majority of the Bahá'ís. Due to this conflict, `Abdu'l-Bahá later ex-communicated his brother as a covenant-breaker. The conflict was not long lived; after being alienated by the Bahá'í community, Muhammad Ali died in 1937 with a handful of followers.

`Abdu'l-Bahá had shared his father's long exile and imprisonment, which continued until `Abdu'l-Bahá's own release as a result of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. Following his release he led a life of travelling, speaking, teaching, and maintaining correspondence with communities of believers and individuals, expounding the principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

### 14.3 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Religious Texts

The canonical texts are the writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, and the authenticated talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá. The writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are considered as divine revelation, the writings and talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá and the writings of Shoghi Effendi as authoritative interpretation, and those of the Universal House of Justice as authoritative legislation and elucidation. Some measure of divine guidance is assumed for all of these texts. Some of Bahá'u'lláh's most important writings include the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, literally the Most Holy Book, which is his book of laws, the Kitáb-i-Íqán, literally the Book of Certitude, which became the foundation of much of Bahá'í belief, the Gems of Divine Mysteries, which includes further doctrinal foundations, and the Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys which are mystical treatises.

### 14.4 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Doctrines<sup>3</sup>

Shoghi Effendi, the appointed head of the religion from 1921 to 1957, wrote the following summary of what he considered to be the distinguishing principles of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, which, he said, together with the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas constitute the bedrock of the Bahá'í Faith:

The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human-kind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind—these stand out as the essential elements (which Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed).

Three core principles establish a basis for Bahá'í teachings and doctrine: the unity of God, that there is only one God who is the source of all creation; the unity of religion, that all major religions have the same spiritual source and come from the same God; and the unity of humanity, that all humans have been created equal, and that diversity of race and culture are seen as worthy of appreciation and acceptance.

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia: The Bahá'í Faith

#### 14.4.1 Unity of God<sup>4</sup>

The Bahá'í view of God is essentially monotheistic. God is the imperishable, uncreated being who is the source of all existence. He is described as "a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty". Though transcendent and inaccessible directly, his image is reflected in his creation. The purpose of creation is for the created to have the capacity to know and love its creator. God communicates his will and purpose to humanity through intermediaries, known as Manifestations of God, who are the prophets and messengers that have founded religions from prehistoric times up to the present day.

#### 14.4.2 Unity of Religion<sup>5</sup>

The Unity of Religion is a core teaching in the Bahá'í Faith that states that there is a fundamental unity of many of the world's religions. The principle states that the teachings of the major religions are part of a single plan directed from the same God. The Bahá'í teachings state that there is but one religion which is progressively revealed by God, through prophets/messengers, to mankind as humanity matures and its capacity to understand also grows. The outward differences in the religions, the Bahá'í writings state, are due to the exigencies of the time and place the religion was revealed.

#### 14.4.3 Unity of Humanity<sup>6</sup>

The Bahá'í teachings state that since all humans have been created in the image of God, God does not make any distinction between people regardless of race or color. Thus, because all humans have been created equal, they all require equal opportunities and treatment.

From these three core principles are derived the following teachings.

1. **Unity in Diversity<sup>7</sup>**: Unity in diversity is a concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation" that shifts focus from unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and/or psychological differences towards a more complex unity based on an understanding that difference enriches human interactions.

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia: God in the Bahá'í Faith

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and the Unity of Religion

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and the Unity of Humanity

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia: Unity in Diversity

2. **Gender Equality<sup>8</sup>**: One of the fundamental teachings of the Bahá'í Faith is that men and women are equal, and that the equality of the sexes is a spiritual and moral standard that is essential for the unification of the planet and the unfoldment of peace. The Bahá'í teachings note the importance of implementing the principle in individual, family, and community life. While the Bahá'í teachings assert the full spiritual and social equality of women to men, the notion of equality does not imply sameness and there are some aspects of gender distinctiveness or gender differentiation in certain areas of life.
3. **Elimination of All Forms of Prejudice<sup>9</sup>**: It entails non-discrimination against individuals on such bases like race, religion, gender or class. `Abdu'l-Bahá states that while the challenge is large, social prejudices including religious, political, and patriotic lead to war, and thus the elimination of prejudice was essential for human well-being. In that regard, the Bahá'í teachings state that the elimination of all forms of prejudice is a fundamental requirement to achieve world unity and peace.
4. **World Peace<sup>10</sup> and a New World Order<sup>11</sup>**: World peace is an ideal of freedom, peace, and happiness among and within all nations and/or people. World peace is an idea of planetary non-violence by which nations willingly cooperate, either voluntarily or by virtue of a system of governance that prevents warfare. The phrase "New world order" in the Bahá'í Faith refers to a system of teachings, enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the religion, that Bahá'ís belief embodies God's divinely appointed scheme for the unification of mankind in this age. Among the beliefs it includes is the eventual establishment of a world commonwealth based on principles of equity and justice, a commonwealth as vital spiritually as it would be materially.
5. **Harmony of Religion and Science<sup>12</sup>**: Bahá'í scripture asserts that true science and true religion can never be in conflict. `Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the founder of the religion, stated that religion without science leads to superstition and that science without religion leads to materialism. He also admonished that true religion must conform to the conclusions of science.
6. **Independent Investigation of Truth**
7. **Principle of Ever-Advancing Civilization**

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<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and Gender Equality

<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and the Unity of Humanity

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia: World Peace

<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia: New World Order (Bahá'í)

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and Science

8. **Universal Compulsory Education**<sup>13</sup> : The Bahá'í teachings focus on promoting a moral and spiritual education, in addition to the arts, trades, sciences and professions. The emphasis on education is a means for social and national improvement. Since all Bahá'ís have the duty to do work that is useful to humanity, Bahá'í education is meant to prepare Bahá'ís to perform such work.
9. **Universal Auxiliary Language**<sup>14</sup> : The Bahá'í Faith teaches that the world should adopt an international auxiliary language, which people would use in addition to their mother tongue. The aim of this teaching is to improve communication and foster unity among peoples and nations. The Bahá'í teachings state, however, that the international auxiliary language should not suppress existing natural languages, and that the concept of unity in diversity must be applied to preserve cultural distinctions.
10. **Obedience to government and non-involvement in partisan politics unless submission to law amounts to a denial of Faith**
11. **Elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty**
12. **Principle of ever-advancing civilization**

The laws of the Bahá'í Faith primarily come from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, written by Bahá'u'lláh. The following are a few examples of basic laws and religious observances.

- Prayer in the Bahá'í Faith consists of obligatory prayer and devotional (general) prayer. Bahá'ís over the age of fifteen must individually recite an obligatory prayer each day, using fixed words and form. In addition to the daily obligatory prayer, believers are directed to daily offer devotional prayer and to meditate and study sacred scripture. There is no set form for devotions and meditations, though the devotional prayers written by the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith and collected in prayer books are held in high esteem. Reading aloud of prayers from prayer books is a typical feature of Bahá'í gatherings.
- Backbiting and gossip are prohibited and denounced.
- Adult Bahá'ís in good health should observe a nineteen-day sunrise-to-sunset fast each year from March 2 through March 20.
- Bahá'ís are forbidden to drink alcohol or to take drugs, unless prescribed by doctors.
- Sexual intercourse is only permitted between husband and wife, and thus premarital, extramarital and homosexual intercourse are forbidden.
- Gambling is forbidden.
- Fanaticism is forbidden.
- Adherence to ritual is discouraged, with the notable exception of the obligatory prayers.
- Abstaining from partisan politics is required.

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<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and Education

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith and Auxiliary Language



While some of the laws from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas are applicable at the present time and may be enforced to a degree by the administrative institutions, Bahá'u'lláh has provided for the progressive application of other laws that are dependent upon the existence of a predominantly Bahá'í society. The laws, when not in direct conflict with the civil laws of the country of residence, are binding on every Bahá'í, and the observance of personal laws, such as prayer or fasting, is the sole responsibility of the individual.

#### 14.4.4 God<sup>15</sup>

The Bahá'í teachings state that there is only one God and that his essence is absolutely inaccessible from the physical realm of existence and that, therefore, his reality is completely unknowable. Thus, all of humanity's conceptions of God which have been derived throughout history are mere manifestations of the human mind and not at all reflective of the nature of God's essence. While God's essence is inaccessible, a subordinate form of knowledge is available by way of mediation by divine messengers, known as Manifestations of God. The Manifestations of God reflect divine attributes, which are creations of God made for the purpose of spiritual enlightenment, onto the physical plane of existence. All physical beings reflect at least one of these attributes, and the human soul can potentially reflect all of them. Shoghi Effendi, the head of the Bahá'í Faith in the first half of the twentieth century, described God as inaccessible, omniscient, almighty, personal, and rational, and rejected pantheistic, anthropomorphic and incarnationist beliefs.

Bahá'u'lláh writes on this subject: All-praise to the unity of God, and all-honor to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, Who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation, and Who, rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and the perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory. Nothing short of His all-encompassing grace, His all-pervading mercy, could have possibly achieved it.

Bahá'ís believe that God expresses his will at all times and in many ways, and specifically through a series of divine messengers referred to as Manifestations of God or sometimes divine educators. In revealing God's will, these Manifestations establish religion in the world. Since the Bahá'í teachings state that God is too great for humans to ever comprehend or to create more than a limited conception of, the Bahá'í scripture instead focuses on the created divine virtues and attributes which are described in the teachings of the Manifestations. Examples of divine attributes described in Bahá'í scripture include Almighty, All-Powerful, All-loving, All-Merciful, Most-Compassionate, All-Glorious. The Manifestations of God are analogous to divine mirrors which reflect God's created attributes and thus reveal aspects of God without being incarnations of God's essence. It is through these divine educators that humans can approach God, and through them God brings divine revelation and law.

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<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia: God in the Bahá'í Faith



## **14.5 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Creed and Ultimate Goal**

The Bahá'í writings state that human beings have a "rational soul", and that this provides the species with a unique capacity to recognize God's station and humanity's relationship with its creator. Every human is seen to have a duty to recognize God through His messengers, and to conform to their teachings. Through recognition and obedience, service to humanity and regular prayer and spiritual practice, the Bahá'í writings state that the soul becomes closer to God, the spiritual ideal in Bahá'í belief. When a human dies, the soul passes into the next world, where its spiritual development in the physical world becomes a basis for judgment and advancement in the spiritual world. Heaven and Hell are taught to be spiritual states of nearness or distance from God that describe relationships in this world and the next, and not physical places of reward and punishment achieved after death.

The Bahá'í writings emphasize the essential equality of human beings, and the abolition of prejudice. Humanity is seen as essentially one, though highly varied; its diversity of race and culture are seen as worthy of appreciation and acceptance. Doctrines of racism, nationalism, caste, social class, and gender-based hierarchy are seen as artificial impediments to unity. The Bahá'í teachings state that the unification of humanity is the paramount issue in the religious and political conditions of the present world.

## **14.6 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Place of Worship**

Most Bahá'í meetings occur in individuals' homes, local Bahá'í centers, or rented facilities. Worldwide, there are currently seven Bahá'í Houses of Worship, with an eighth under construction in Chile, and a further seven planned as of April 2012. Bahá'í writings refer to an institution called a "Mashriqu'l-Adhkár" (Dawning-place of the Mention of God), which is to form the center of a complex of institutions including a hospital, university, and so on. The first ever Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in `Ishqábád, Turkmenistan, has been the most complete House of Worship.

## **14.7 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Rites and Rituals**

1. Prayer in the Bahá'í Faith consists of obligatory prayer and devotional (general) prayer.
2. In addition to the daily obligatory prayer, believers are directed to daily offer devotional prayer and to meditate and study sacred scripture.
3. Marriage: The purpose of marriage in the Bahá'í faith is mainly to foster spiritual harmony, fellowship and unity between a man and a woman and to provide a stable and loving environment for the rearing of children. The Bahá'í teachings on marriage call it a fortress for well-being and salvation and place marriage and the family as the foundation of the structure of human society. Bahá'u'lláh highly praised marriage, discouraged divorce and homosexuality, and required chastity outside of marriage; Bahá'u'lláh taught that a husband and wife should strive to improve the spiritual life of each other. Interracial marriage is also highly praised throughout Bahá'í scripture.

Bahá'ís intending to marry are asked to obtain a thorough understanding of the other's character before deciding to marry. Although parents should not choose partners for their children, once two individuals decide to marry, they must receive the consent of all living biological parents, even if one partner is not a Bahá'í. The Bahá'í marriage ceremony is simple; the only compulsory part of the wedding is the reading of the wedding vows prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh which both the groom and the bride read, in the presence of two witnesses. The vows are "We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God."

4. Fasting: Adult Bahá'ís in good health should observe a nineteen-day sunrise-to-sunset fast each year from March 2 through March 20.
5. Death<sup>16</sup>: Among the specific rules Bahá'ís are to try to follow concerning death are, depending on the civil law of their country:
  - No cremation or embalming: The body is to be respected, not destroyed or harmed in general. Donation of the body to science is allowed if the other rules can be followed.
  - Suicide is seen as a rejection of God's plan for humans and is forbidden to followers of the religion. The religion teaches that the souls of adherents can suffer spiritually if they commit suicide, but recommends that bereaving families be comforted.
  - There are no mourning rituals specified but there is a shared prayer for the dead to be read for Bahá'ís.
  - There is a ring with an inscription Bahá'ís should wear when buried and the body wrapped in a shroud. The inscription should read (in whatever translation of language) "I came forth from God and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate."
  - Interment of the body should be in a coffin.
  - Burial should be no more than an hour's travel from the place of death.
  - The appropriate marker on the gravestone is a nine-pointed star and/or the word Bahá'í. Other inscriptions are allowed but not required.
  - Bahá'í-run funerals for non- Bahá'ís require none of these requirements.
  - Infants who die are under the mercy and bounty of God.

## 14.8 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Religious Holidays<sup>17</sup>

The Baha'i year consists of 19 months of 19 days each (361 days), with the addition of "Intercalary Days" (four in ordinary and five in leap years) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months to adjust the calendar to the solar year. The months are named after the attributes of God.

The Baha'i New Year coincides with the March equinox (March 21). The Baha'i Era commenced with the year of the Bab's declaration (1844 A.D.). Each Baha'i community holds a Nineteen Day Feast on the first day of each Baha'i month. The Feast has spiritual, administrative and social functions and is the principal gathering of

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith on Life after Death

<sup>17</sup> www.hai.us: The Bahá'í Calendar

Baha'is of a particular locality. Because the Baha'i day lasts from sunset to sunset, the Nineteen Day Feast is generally held in the evening on the day before the first day of the Baha'i month according to the Gregorian calendar.

#### Baha'i Month of Fasting

The last month in the Baha'i calendar, March 2-20, is dedicated to the Baha'i Fast. During this time, Baha'is between fifteen and seventy years of age do not eat or drink for nineteen days from sunrise to sunset and set aside time for prayer and meditation. Exemptions from the Fast occur for illness, pregnancy, nursing mothers, extended travel and arduous physical labor.

In the following table<sup>18</sup>, the Gregorian date indicates the first full day of the month. The month begins at sunset of the Gregorian date previous to the one listed, after which time that month's Nineteen Day Feast may be celebrated.

Month	Arabic Name	Arabic Script	English Translation	Gregorian Dates
1	<b>Bahá</b>	بهاء	Splendour	21 March – 8 April
2	<b>Jalál</b>	جلال	Glory	9 April – 27 April
3	<b>Jamál</b>	جمال	Beauty	28 April – 16 May
4	<b>‘Azamat</b>	عظمة	Grandeur	17 May – 4 June
5	<b>Núr</b>	نور	Light	5 June – 23 June
6	<b>Raḥmat</b>	رحمة	Mercy	24 June – 12 July
7	<b>Kalimát</b>	كلمات	Words	13 July – 31 July
8	<b>Kamál</b>	كمال	Perfection	1 August – 19 August
9	<b>Asmá’</b>	اسماء	Names	20 August – 7 September
10	<b>‘Izzat</b>	عزة	Might	8 September – 26 September
11	<b>Mashíyyat</b>	مشية	Will	27 September – 15 October
12	<b>‘Ilm</b>	علم	Knowledge	16 October – 3 November
13	<b>Qudrat</b>	قدرة	Power	4 November – 22 November
14	<b>Qawl</b>	قول	Speech	23 November – 11 December
15	<b>Masá’il</b>	مسائل	Questions	12 December – 30 December
16	<b><u>Sharaf</u></b>	شرف	Honour	31 December – 18 January
17	<b>Sultán</b>	سلطان	Sovereignty	19 January – 6 February
18	<b>Mulk</b>	ملك	Dominion	7 February – 25 February
	<b><u>Ayyám-i-Há</u></b>	ايام الهاء	The Days of Há	26 February – 1 March
19	<b>‘Alá’</b>	علاء	Loftiness	2 March – 20 March (Month of fasting)

<sup>18</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Calendar

## **Baha'i Holy Days and Commemorative Days**

**World Religion Day** (Third Sunday in January): The day is devoted to proclaiming the oneness of religion and the belief that world religion will unify the peoples of the earth. The Baha'i-sponsored observance was established in 1950 by the Baha'is of the United States.

**Ayyam-i-ha or Intercalary Days** (Feb. 26-March 1): Ayyam-i-ha, or "Days of Ha," are devoted to spiritual preparation for the Fast, celebrating, hospitality, charity and gift giving. They are celebrated the four days (five in leap year) before the last month of the Baha'i year.

**Naw-Rúz** (March 21): The Baha'i New Year's Day coincides with the spring equinox. Naw-Ruz is an ancient Persian festival celebrating the "new day" and for Baha'is it marks the end of the annual 19-Day Fast and is one of the nine holy days of the year when work is suspended.

**Festival of Ridvan** (April 21-May 2): The annual Baha'i festival commemorates the twelve days (April 21-May 2, 1863) when Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, resided in a garden called Ridvan (Paradise) in Baghdad, Iraq. At this time He publicly proclaimed His mission as God's messenger for this age. The first (April 21), ninth (April 29) and twelfth (May 2) days are celebrated as holy days when work is suspended.

**Declaration of the Bab** (May 23): The Baha'i commemorates May 23, 1844, when the Bab, the herald of the Baha'i Faith, announced in Shiraz, Persia (now Iran), that he was the herald of a new messenger of God. It is one of the nine holy days of the year when work is suspended.

**Ascension of Baha'u'llah** (May 29): Baha'is observe the anniversary of the death in exile of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, on May 29, 1892, outside Akko (also known as Akka or Acre), in what is now northern Israel. It is one of the nine holy days of the year where work is suspended.

**Race Unity Day** (Second Sunday in June): The Baha'i-sponsored observance promotes racial harmony and understanding and the essential unity of humanity. It was established in 1957 by the Baha'is of the U.S.

**Martyrdom of the Bab** (July 9): The holy day commemorates the anniversary of the execution of the Bab (Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad), the herald of the Baha'i Faith, by a firing squad on July 9, 1850, in Tabriz, Persia (now Iran). It is one of the nine holy days of the year when work is suspended.

**Birth of the Bab** (Oct. 20): The day is an observance of the anniversary of the birth on Oct. 20, 1819, in Shiraz, Persia (now Iran), of Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, who later took the title of "the Bab," meaning "the Gate." The Bab was the herald of the Baha'i Faith. The day is one of the nine holy days of the year when work is suspended.

**Birth of Baha'u'llah** (Nov. 12): Baha'is observe the anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah (born Mirza Husayn-'Ali) on Nov. 12, 1817, in Tehran, Persia (now Iran). Baha'u'llah, which means the "Glory of God," is the founder of the Baha'i Faith. It is one of the nine holy days of the year when work is suspended.

**Day of the Covenant** (Nov. 26): The festival commemorates Baha'u'llah's appointment of his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, as the Center of His Covenant.

**Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha** (Nov 28): Baha'is observe the anniversary of the death of 'Abdu'l-Baha, son of Baha'u'llah and His appointed successor, on Nov 28, 1921 in Haifa, in what is now northern Israel.

## 14.9 Bahá'í Administration<sup>19</sup>

The Bahá'í administration or Bahá'í administrative order refers to the administrative system of the Bahá'í Faith. It is split into two parts, the elected and the appointed. The supreme governing institution of the Bahá'í Faith is the Universal House of Justice, situated in Haifa, Israel. It is the global governing body; its functions were set out by Baha'u'llah. National Spiritual Assemblies (NSA) supervise affairs in each country. In each locality where there are more than nine adult believers, affairs are administered by local spiritual assemblies. Each of these institutions has nine members and are elected, not appointed. Their functions have been defined by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Some features set apart the Bahá'í administration from similar systems of human government: elected representatives should follow their conscience, rather than being responsible to the views of electors; political campaigning, nominations and parties are prohibited; and religious authority was passed down from its founder to the Universal House of Justice.

The Bahá'í administration has four charter documents,

- Kitáb-i-Aqdas
- Tablets of the Divine Plan
- Tablet of Carmel
- Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá

The highest elected body is the Universal House of Justice, which possesses "the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book." The highest appointed authority is the Institution of the Guardianship, which is a hereditary authority and has the exclusive "right of the interpretation of the Holy Writ solely conferred upon him." (God Passes By) These two institutions are described in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament as having divine authority:

"...The Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty... Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God"

The same Will appoints Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian, and gives further details about the structure of the administration, including election and appointment processes. Shoghi Effendi worked throughout his life to establish the necessary secondary institutions that were required for the election of the Universal House of Justice, which was first elected in 1963.

Having no ordained, professional priesthood, Bahá'ís operate through a type of non-partisan democratic self-government. The traditional functions of community leadership and moral leadership are not vested in individuals, but in an institutional framework with two main branches.

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<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Administration

## 14.10 The Bahá'í Faith: Its Religious Symbols<sup>20</sup>

Bahá'í symbols are symbols that have been used, or are used, to express identification with the Bahá'í Faith. While the five-pointed star is the symbol of the religion, being used to represent the human body and Messengers of God, more common symbols include the nine-pointed star, calligraphy of the Greatest Name, and the Ringstone symbol, representing perfection, and the Messengers of God.



Calligraphy of the Greatest Name



Ringstone Symbol

## 14.11 The Bahá'í Faith: Current Status<sup>21</sup>

Bahá'ís consider their faith to be the youngest of the world's independent monotheistic religions. Founded in the 1860s, it now has more than five million adherents in 236 countries and territories. Baha'is come from nearly every national, ethnic and religious background, making the Baha'i Faith the second-most-widespread religion in the world.

Persecution<sup>22</sup>: Bahá'ís continue to be persecuted in Islamic countries, as Islamic leaders do not recognize the Bahá'í Faith as an independent religion, but rather as apostasy from Islam. The most severe persecutions have occurred in Iran, where over 200 Bahá'ís were executed between 1978 and 1998, and in Egypt. The rights of Bahá'ís have been restricted to greater or lesser extents in numerous other countries, including Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Morocco, and several countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

### ASSIGNMENTS

After you have finished studying this chapter, complete the test and the exercises provided in the workbook.

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Symbols

<sup>21</sup> www.religioustolerance.org: Beliefs and Practices of the Bahá'í Faith

<sup>22</sup> Wikipedia: Bahá'í Faith