

Indian Religions

Unit 1 – Religion

Definitions and Concept

Religion and Human Endeavour

Indian Religions: An Overview

Religions and Provisions in the Constitution

Unit 2 – Religions that Originated in India – Hinduism and Jainism

Origin and History

The Concept of God

Philosophy: Karma, Ahimsa, Vegetarianism

Practices: Ceremonies and Customs

Unit 3 – Religions that Originated in India – Sikhism and Buddhism

Origin and History

Philosophy and Teaching

The Concepts of Salvation

Practices: Scriptures, Ceremonies and Customs

Unit 4 – Religions that Entered India – Islam and Christianity

Origin and History - Advent in India

Philosophy and Teaching

The Concepts of God and Judgement

Practices: Scriptures, Ceremonies and Customs

Unit 1 – Religion

Religion

What is Religion?

Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. The word religion is sometimes used interchangeably with faith or belief system, but religion differs from private belief. Many religions have organized behaviours, clergy, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, congregations of worshipers, regular meetings or services for the purposes of veneration of a deity or for prayer, holy places (either natural or architectural), and scriptures. The practice of a religion may also include sermons, commemoration of the activities of a god or gods, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, funerary and matrimonial services, meditation, music, art, dance, and other aspects of human culture. However, there are examples of religions for which some or many of these aspects of structure, belief, or practices are absent.

Definitions

1. A set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing amoral code governing the conduct of human affairs.
2. Belief in, worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny.
3. The attitude and feeling of one who believes in a transcendent controlling power or powers

The development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures. Some religions place an emphasis on belief, while others emphasize practice. Some religions focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual, while others consider the activities of the religious community to be most important. Some religions claim to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone, while others are intended to be practiced only by a closely defined or localized group. In many places religion has been associated with public institutions such as education, hospitals, the family, government, and political hierarchies.

Religion and Science

Religious knowledge, according to religious practitioners, may be gained from religious leaders, sacred texts, scriptures, or personal revelation. Some religions view such knowledge as unlimited in scope and suitable to answer any question; others see religious knowledge as playing a more restricted role, often as a complement to knowledge gained through physical observation. Adherents to various religious faiths often maintain that religious knowledge obtained via sacred texts or revelation is absolute and infallible and thereby creates an accompanying religious cosmology, although the proof for such is often tautological and generally limited to the religious texts and revelations that form the foundation of their belief.

In contrast, the scientific method gains knowledge by testing hypotheses to develop theories through elucidation of facts or evaluation by experiments and thus only answers

cosmological questions about the universe that can be observed and measured. It develops theories of the world which best fit physically observed evidence. All scientific knowledge is subject to later refinement, or even outright rejection, in the face of additional evidence. Scientific theories that have an overwhelming preponderance of favorable evidence are often treated as de facto verities in general parlance, such as the theories of general relativity and natural selection to explain respectively the mechanisms of gravity and evolution.

Religion and Superstition

Superstition has been described as "the incorrect establishment of cause and effect" or a false conception of causation. Religion is more complex and includes social institutions and morality. But religions may include superstitions or make use of magical thinking. Adherents of one religion sometimes think of other religions as superstition. Some atheists, deists, and skeptics regard religious belief as superstition.

Religion and Health

Though religion has no direct relation with health, certain religious practices and psychological dependence have brought about strange and miraculous impacts on physical health. Mayo Clinic researchers examined the association between religious involvement and spirituality, and physical health, mental health, health-related quality of life, and other health outcomes. The authors reported that: "Most studies have shown that religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes, including greater longevity, coping skills, and health-related quality of life (even during terminal illness) and less anxiety, depression, and suicide."

Communalism

Communalism has played a key role in shaping the religious history of modern India. As an adverse result of the British Raj's divide and rule policy, British India was partitioned along religious lines into two states—the Muslim-majority Dominion of Pakistan (comprising what is now the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh) and the Hindu-majority Union of India (later the Republic of India). The 1947 Partition of India instigated rioting among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in Punjab, Bengal, Delhi, and other parts of India. Since its independence, India has periodically witnessed large-scale violence sparked by underlying tensions between sections of its majority Hindu and minority Muslim communities. The Republic of India is secular; its government recognizes no official religion.

Criticism of religion

Religious criticism has a long history, going back at least as far as the 5th century BCE in ancient Greece with Diagoras "the atheist" of Melos. Critics consider religion to be outdated, harmful to the individual (such as brainwashing of children, faith healing, circumcision), harmful to society (such as holy wars, terrorism, wasteful distribution of resources), to impede the progress of science, and to encourage immoral acts (such as blood sacrifice, discrimination against and women). A major criticism of many religions is that they require beliefs that are irrational, unscientific, or unreasonable, because religious beliefs and traditions lack scientific or rational foundations.

Indian Religions

India is the birthplace of four of the world's major religious traditions; namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Throughout its history, religion has been an important part of the country's culture. Religious diversity and religious tolerance are both established in the country by law and custom. A vast majority of Indians associate themselves with a religion.

Hinduism is an ancient religion and also the largest religious grouping in India; Its 828 million adherents (2001) compose 80.5% of the population. The term Hindu, originally a geographical description derives from the Sanskrit, Sindhu -the historical appellation for the Indus River.

Islam is a monotheistic religion centred around the belief in one God and following the example of Muhammad. It is the largest minority religion in India and the nation is world's third-largest Muslim population after those in Indonesia and Pakistan. Muslims represent the majority in Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep and high concentrations in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, and Kerala.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion centred on the life and teachings of Jesus as presented in the New Testament; it is the third largest religion of India, making up 2.3% of the population. St. Thomas is credited with introduction of Christianity in India. Christians comprise a majority in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya and have significant populations in North-East India, Goa and Kerala.

Buddhism is a nontheistic religion and philosophy. Buddhists form majority populations in the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir and a large minority in Sikkim. Around 8 million Buddhists live in India.

Jainism is a non-theistic religion and philosophical system originating in Iron Age India. Jains compose 0.4% of India's population, and are concentrated in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan.

Sikhism began in sixteenth century North India with the teachings of Nanak and nine successive human gurus. As of 2001, there were 19.2 million Sikhs in India. Punjab is the spiritual home of Sikhs, and is the only state in India where Sikhs form a majority. There are also significant populations of Sikhs in neighboring New Delhi and Haryana.

As of the census of 2001, Parsis (followers of Zoroastrianism in India) represent approximately 0.006% of the total population of India, with relatively high concentrations in and around the city of Mumbai.

There are several tribal religions in India, such as Donyi-Polo. Santhal is also one of the many tribal religions followed by the Santhal people who number around 4 million but only around 23,645 follow the religion. About 2.2 million people in India follow the Bahá'í Faith, thus forming the largest community of Bahá'ís in the world.

Judaism is also present in India, a monotheistic religion from the Levant. There is today a very small community of Indian Jews. There were more Jews in India historically,

including the Cochin Jews of Kerala, the Bene Israel of Maharashtra, and the Baghdadi Jews near Mumbai.

Ravidassia, a religion started by a saint of 15th century Guru Ravidass has grown by his spiritual belief and lessons of universal brotherhood, tolerance, message of love your neighbour. He is by far the most revered among the scheduled castes, especially dalits of Northwest and Central India. Today their population stood at around 16.2% of India's total population. g the Guru Ravidas Jayanti in February from all over the world.

Indian diaspora in the West have popularized many aspects of Hindu philosophy like yoga (meditation), Ayurvedic medicine, divination, vegetarianism, karma and reincarnation to a great extent. The influence of Indians abroad in spiritual matters has been significant as several organizations such as the Hare Krishna movement, the Brahma Kumaris, the Ananda Marga and others spread by Indian spiritual figures.

The Constitution of India declares the nation to be a secular republic that must uphold the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion or faith (with activities subject to reasonable restrictions for the sake of morality, law and order, etc.) The Constitution of India also declares the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right.

Law

The preamble to the Constitution of India proclaimed India a "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic". The word secular was inserted into the Preamble by the Forty-second Amendment Act of 1976. It mandates equal treatment and tolerance of all religions. India does not have an official state religion; it enshrines the right to practice, preach, and propagate any religion. No religious instruction is imparted in government-supported educational institutions. The right to freedom of religion is a fundamental right according to the Indian Constitution. The Constitution also suggests a uniform civil code for its citizens as a Directive Principle.

Religion plays a major role in the Indian way of life. Rituals, worship, and other religious activities are very prominent in an individual's daily life; it is also a principal organiser of social life. The degree of religiosity varies among individuals; in recent decades, religious orthodoxy and observances have become less common in Indian society, particularly among young urban-dwellers.

Unit 2 – Religions that Originated in India – Hinduism and Jainism

Hinduism

Hinduism is the predominant religion of the Indian subcontinent, and one of its indigenous religions. Hinduism includes Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Śrauta among numerous other traditions. Among other practices and philosophies, Hinduism includes a wide spectrum of laws and prescriptions of "daily morality" based on karma, dharma, and societal norms. Hinduism is a conglomeration of distinct intellectual or philosophical points of view, rather than a rigid common set of beliefs.

Hinduism is formed of diverse traditions and has no single founder. Among its direct roots is the historical Vedic religion of Iron Age India and, as such, Hinduism is often called the "oldest living religion" or the "oldest living major religion" in the world.

One orthodox classification of Hindu texts is to divide into Śruti ("revealed") and Smriti ("remembered") texts. These texts discuss theology, philosophy, mythology, rituals and temple building among other topics. Major scriptures include the Vedas, Upanishads, Purāṇas, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, Bhagavad Gītā and Āgamas.

Hinduism, with about one billion followers, is the world's third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam.

Etymology

The word Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit word Sindhu, the historic local appellation for the Indus River in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent, which is first mentioned in the Rig Veda.

The word Hindu was borrowed into European languages from the Arabic term al-Hind, referring to the land of the people who live across the River Indus, itself from the Persian term Hindū, which refers to all Indians. By the 13th century, Hindustān emerged as a popular alternative name of India, meaning the "land of Hindus".

History

The Vedic religion shows influence from Proto-Indo-European religion. The oldest Veda is the Rigveda, dated to 1700–1100 BCE. The Vedas center on worship of deities such as Indra, Varuna and Agni, and on the Soma ritual. Fire-sacrifices, called yajña were performed, and Vedic mantras chanted but no temples or idols are known.

The major Sanskrit epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, were compiled over a protracted period during the late centuries BCE and the early centuries CE. They contain mythological stories about the rulers and wars of ancient India, and are interspersed with religious and philosophical treatises. The later Puranas recount tales about devas and devis, their interactions with humans and their battles against rakshasa.

The Brahmanical tradition was paralleled by the non-Vedic Shramana movement. The Buddha was a member of this movement. Shramana also gave rise to Jainism, yoga, the concept of the cycle of birth and death, the concept of samsara, and the concept of liberation. The Brahmanical ashrama system of life was an attempt to institutionalize Shramana ideals within the Brahmanical social structure. The Shramana movement also

influenced the Aranyakas and Upanishads in the Brahmanical tradition. Buddhism was promoted by Asoka the Great of the Mauryan Empire, who unified the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century BCE. After 200 CE several schools of thought were formally codified in Indian philosophy, including Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva-Mimamsa and Vedanta. Charvaka, the founder of an atheistic materialist school, came to the fore in North India in the sixth century BCE.

Though Islam came to India in the early 7th century with the advent of Arab traders and the conquest of Sindh, it started to become a major religion during the later Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent. During this period Buddhism declined rapidly and many Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. Numerous Muslim rulers or their army generals such as Aurangzeb and Malik Kafur destroyed Hindu temples and persecuted non-Muslims; however some, such as Akbar, were more tolerant. Hinduism underwent profound changes, in large part due to the influence of the prominent teachers Ramanuja, Madhva, and Chaitanya. Followers of the Bhakti movement moved away from the abstract concept of Brahman, which the philosopher Adi Shankara consolidated a few centuries before, with emotional, passionate devotion towards the more accessible Avatars, especially Krishna and Rama.

Indology

Indology as an academic discipline of studying Indian culture from a European perspective was established in the 19th century, led by scholars such as Max Müller and John Woodroffe. They brought Vedic, Puranic and Tantric literature and philosophy to Europe and the United States. At the same time, societies such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society attempted to reconcile and fuse Abrahamic and Dharmic philosophies, endeavouring to institute societal reform. This period saw the emergence of movements which, while highly innovative, were rooted in indigenous tradition. They were based on the personalities and teachings of individuals, as with Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi. Prominent Hindu philosophers, including Aurobindo and Prabhupada (founder of ISKCON), translated, reformulated and presented Hinduism's foundational texts for contemporary audiences in new iterations, attracting followers and attention in India and abroad. Others such as Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, B.K.S. Iyengar and Swami Rama have also been instrumental in raising the profiles of Yoga and Vedanta in the West.

Devotionalist Practices

Hinduism does not have a "unified system of belief encoded in declaration of faith or a creed", but is rather an umbrella term comprising the plurality of religious phenomena originating and based on the Vedic traditions. The characteristic of comprehensive tolerance to differences in belief, and Hinduism's openness, makes it difficult to define as a religion according to traditional Western conceptions. Hinduism is characterized by the belief in reincarnation (samsara), determined by the law of karma, and the idea that salvation is freedom from this cycle of repeated birth and death. However, other religions of the region, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, also believe in karma, outside the scope of Hinduism. Hinduism is therefore viewed as the most complex of all of the living, historical world religions. Despite its complexity, Hinduism is not only one of the numerically largest faiths, but is also the oldest living major tradition on earth, with roots reaching back into prehistory.

A definition of Hinduism, given by the first Vice President of India, who was also a prominent theologian, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, states that Hinduism is not "just a faith", but in itself is related to the union of reason and intuition. Radhakrishnan explicitly states that Hinduism cannot be defined, but is only to be experienced.

Beliefs

Hinduism grants absolute and complete freedom of belief and worship. Hinduism conceives the whole world as a single family that deifies the one truth, and therefore it accepts all forms of beliefs and dismisses labels of distinct religions which would imply a division of identity. Hence, Hinduism is devoid of the concepts of apostasy, heresy and blasphemy. Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include (but are not restricted to), Dharma (ethics/duties), Samsāra (the continuing cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth), Karma (action and subsequent reaction), Moksha (liberation from samsara), and the various Yogas (paths or practices).

Concept of God

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought with beliefs and its concept of God is complex and depends upon each individual and the tradition and philosophy followed. It is sometimes referred to as henotheistic (i.e., involving devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of others), but any such term is an overgeneralization. The Rig Veda, the oldest scripture and the mainstay of Hindu philosophy does not take a restrictive view on the fundamental question of God and the creation of universe. It rather lets the individual seek and discover answers in the quest of life.

Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul — the true "self" of every person, called the ātman — is eternal. According to the monistic/pantheistic theologies of Hinduism (such as Advaita Vedanta school), this Atman is ultimately indistinct from Brahman, the supreme spirit. Hence, these schools are called non-dualist. The goal of life, according to the Advaita School, is to realize that one's ātman is identical to Brahman, the supreme soul. The Upanishads state that whoever becomes fully aware of the ātman as the innermost core of one's own self realizes an identity with Brahman and thereby reaches moksha (liberation or freedom).

Karma and Samsara

Karma translates literally as action, work, or deed, and can be described as the "moral law of cause and effect". According to the Upanishads an individual, known as the jiva-atma, develops sanskaras (impressions) from actions, whether physical or mental. The linga sharira, a body more subtle than the physical one but less subtle than the soul, retains impressions, carrying them over into the next life, establishing a unique trajectory for the individual. Thus, the concept of a universal, neutral, and never-failing karma intrinsically relates to reincarnation as well as to one's personality, characteristics, and family. Karma binds together the notions of free will and destiny.

This cycle of action, reaction, birth, death and rebirth is a continuum called samsara. The notion of reincarnation and karma is a strong premise in Hindu thought. The Bhagavad Gita states:

As a person puts on new clothes and discards old and torn clothes,

Similarly an embodied soul enters new material bodies, leaving the old bodies.(B.G. 2:22)[112]

Samsara provides ephemeral pleasures, which lead people to desire rebirth so as to enjoy the pleasures of a perishable body. However, escaping the world of samsara through moksha is believed to ensure lasting happiness and peace. It is thought that after several reincarnations, an atman eventually seeks unity with the cosmic spirit (Brahman/Paramatman).

The ultimate goal of life, referred to as moksha, nirvana or samadhi, is understood in several different ways: as the realization of one's union with God; as the realization of one's eternal relationship with God; realization of the unity of all existence; perfect unselfishness and knowledge of the Self; as the attainment of perfect mental peace; and as detachment from worldly desires. Such realization liberates one from samsara and ends the cycle of rebirth. Due to belief in the indestructibility of the soul, death is deemed insignificant with respect to the cosmic self. Thence, a person who has no desire or ambition left and no responsibilities remaining in life or one affected by a terminal disease may embrace death by Prayopavesa.

Hindu Philosophy: Objectives of Human Life –

Purusharthas – (Initiation) Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa

Classical Hindu thought accepts Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa as the objectives of human life, that which is sought as human purpose, aim, or end, and are known as the puruṣārthas.

Dharma (righteousness, ethikos)

The Upanishad views dharma as the universal principle of law, order, harmony, all in all truth, that sprang first from Brahman. It acts as the regulatory moral principle of the Universe. It is sat (truth).

Artha (livelihood, wealth)

Artha is objective and virtuous pursuit of wealth for livelihood, obligations and economic prosperity. It includes political life, diplomacy and material well-being. The doctrine of Artha is called Arthashastra, amongst the most famous of which is Kautilya Arthashastra.

Kāma (sensual pleasure)

Kāma means desire, wish, passion, longing, pleasure of the senses, the aesthetic enjoyment of life, affection, or love.

Mokṣa (liberation, freedom from samsara)

Moksha or mukti means "release" is the last goal of life. It is liberation from samsara and the concomitant suffering involved in being subject to the cycle of repeated death and reincarnation.

Practices – Varnas

Hindu society has traditionally been categorized into four classes, called Varnas :

The Brahmins: teachers and priests;

The Kshatriyas: warriors, nobles, and kings;

The Vaishyas: farmers, merchants, and businessmen; and

The Shudras: servants and labourers.

Hindus and scholars debate whether the so-called caste system is an integral part of Hinduism sanctioned by the scriptures or an outdated social custom. Among the scriptures, the Varna system is mentioned sparingly and descriptively (i.e., not prescriptive). Many social reformers, including Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar, criticized caste discrimination.

Bhakti Movement

During the 14-17th centuries, when North India was under Muslim rule, The bhakti movement swept through Central and Northern India, initiated by a loosely associated group of teachers or saints. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Vallabhacharya, Surdas, Meera Bai, Kabir, Tulsidas, Ravidas, Namdeo, Tukaram and other mystics spearheaded the Bhakti movement in the North. They taught that people could cast aside the heavy burdens of ritual and caste, and the subtle complexities of philosophy, and simply express their overwhelming love for God. This period was also characterized by a spate of devotional literature in vernacular prose and poetry in the ethnic languages of the various Indian states or provinces. Bhakti movement spawned into several different movements all across North and South India. In North India, the Bhakti movement is not differentiable from the Sufi movement of Shia Muslims of Chisti fame. People of Muslim faith adopted Bhakti as a Sufism while Hindus as a stronger force within Vaishnava bhakti.

Puja, Yajna, Murti, Mandir, Japa, and Mantra,

Symbolism and Iconography

Hindu practices generally involve seeking awareness of God and sometimes also seeking blessings from Devas. Therefore, Hinduism has developed numerous practices meant to help one think of divinity in the midst of everyday life. Hindus can engage in pūjā (worship or veneration), either at home or at a temple. At home, Hindus often create a shrine with icons dedicated to their chosen form(s) of God. Temples are usually dedicated to a primary deity along with associated subordinate deities though some commemorate multiple deities. Visiting temples is not obligatory, and many visit temples only during religious festivals. Hindus perform their worship through icons (murtis). The icon serves as a tangible link between the worshiper and God. The image is often considered a manifestation of God, since God is immanent. The Padma Purana states that the mūrti is not to be thought of as mere stone or wood but as a manifest form of the Divinity. A few Hindu sects, such as the Ārya Samāj, do not believe in worshipping God through icons.

Hinduism has a developed system of symbolism and iconography to represent the sacred in art, architecture, literature and worship. These symbols gain their meaning from the scriptures, mythology, or cultural traditions. The syllable Om (which represents the Parabrahman) and the Swastika sign (which symbolizes auspiciousness) have grown to represent Hinduism itself, while other markings such as tilaka identify a follower of the

faith. Hinduism associates many symbols, which include the lotus, chakra and veena, with particular deities.

Mantras are invocations, praise and prayers that through their meaning, sound, and chanting style help a devotee focus the mind on holy thoughts or express devotion to God/the deities. Many devotees perform morning ablutions at the bank of a sacred river while chanting the Gayatri Mantra or Mahamrityunjaya mantras. The epic Mahabharata extols Japa (ritualistic chanting) as the greatest duty in the Kali Yuga (what Hindus believe to be the current age). Many adopt Japa as their primary spiritual practice.

Rituals

The vast majority of Hindus engage in religious rituals on a daily basis. Most Hindus observe religious rituals at home but observation of rituals greatly vary among regions, villages, and individuals. Devout Hindus perform daily chores such as worshipping at dawn after bathing (usually at a family shrine, and typically includes lighting a lamp and offering foodstuffs before the images of deities), recitation from religious scripts, singing devotional hymns, meditation, chanting mantras, reciting scriptures etc. A notable feature in religious ritual is the division between purity and pollution.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is not mandatory in Hinduism, though many adherents undertake them. While there are different yet similar pilgrimage routes in different parts of India, all are respected equally well, according to the universality of Hinduism.

Festivals

Hindu festivals are considered as symbolic rituals that beautifully weave individual and social life to dharma. Hinduism has many festivals throughout the year. The Hindu calendar usually prescribe their dates. The festivals typically celebrate events from Hindu mythology, often coinciding with seasonal changes. There are festivals which are primarily celebrated by specific sects or in certain regions of the Indian subcontinent.

Hinduism is a major religion in India and, according to a 2001 census, Hinduism was followed by around 80% of the country's population of 1.2 billion (2012 estimate) (960 million adherents). Other significant populations are found in Nepal (23 million), Bangladesh (14 million) and the Indonesian island of Bali (3.3 million).

Countries with the greatest proportion of Hindus from Hinduism by country (as of 2008):

Nepal 86.5%, India 80.5%, Mauritius 54%, Guyana 28%, Fiji 27.9%, Bhutan 25%, Trinidad and Tobago 22.5%, Suriname 20%, Sri Lanka 15%, Bangladesh 9%, Qatar 7.2%, Malaysia 6.3% and Singapore 4%

Ahimsa, Vegetarianism and religion, and Cattle in Hindu Religion

Hindus advocate the practice of ahimsā (non-violence) and respect for all life because divinity is believed to permeate all beings, including plants and non-human animals. The term ahimsā appears in the Upanishads, the epic Mahabharata and in Law of Manu. In accordance with ahimsā, many Hindus embrace vegetarianism to respect higher forms of life. The food habits vary with the community and region, for example some castes

having fewer vegetarians and coastal populations relying on seafood. The cow in Hindu society is traditionally identified as a caretaker and a maternal figure, and Hindu society honours the cow as a symbol of unselfish giving. Cow-slaughter is legally banned in almost all states of India. The followers of this Hindu group also staunchly adhere to a diet that is devoid of meat, eggs, and seafood.

XX

Jainism

Jainism is an Indian religion that prescribes a path of non-violence towards all living beings. Its philosophy and practice emphasize the necessity of self-effort to move the soul toward divine consciousness and liberation. Any soul that has conquered its own inner enemies and achieved the state of Supreme Being is called a jina ("conqueror" or "victor"). The ultimate status of these perfect souls is called siddha. Ancient texts also refer to Jainism as shramana dharma (self-reliant) or the "path of the nirganthas" (those without attachments or aversions). Jain doctrine teaches that Jainism has always existed and will always exist, although historians date the foundation of the organized or present form of Jainism to sometime between the 9th and the 6th century BCE.

Contemporary Jainism is a small but influential religious minority with as many as 6 million followers in India and growing immigrant communities in North America, Western Europe, the Far East, Australia and elsewhere. Jains have significantly influenced and contributed to ethical, political and economic spheres in India. Jains have an ancient tradition of scholarship and have the highest degree of literacy for a religious community in India. Jain libraries are the oldest in the country.

History

Parshvanatha, the twenty-third Tirthankar, is the earliest Jain leader who can be reliably dated. As noted, however, Jain mythology asserts that the line of Tirthankars in the present era began with Rishabhdeva; moreover, Jains themselves believe that Jainism has no single founder, and that it has always existed and will always exist, although it is occasionally forgotten by humans. Emperor Chandragupta Maurya embraced Jainism after retiring. At an older age, Chandragupta renounced his throne and material possessions to join a wandering group of Jain monks. Chandragupta was a disciple of Acharya Bhadrabahu. It is said that in his last days, he observed the rigorous but self-purifying Jain ritual of santhara i.e. fast unto death, at Shravana Belagola in Karnataka.

With 5.5 million followers, Jainism is among the smallest of the major world religions, but in India its influence is much greater than these numbers would suggest. Jains live throughout India. Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat have the largest Jain populations among Indian states. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bundelkhand and Madhya Pradesh have relatively large Jain populations. There is a large following in Punjab, especially in Ludhiana and Patiala, and there used to be many Jains in Lahore (Punjab's historic capital) and other cities before the Partition of 1947, after which many fled to India. There are many Jain communities in different parts of India and around the world. They

may speak local languages or follow different rituals but essentially they follow the same principles.

Outside India, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) have large Jain communities.

Customs and practices

Jains are vegetarians. They avoid eating root vegetables in general, as cutting root from a plant kills it unlike other parts of the plant (leaf, fruit, seed, etc.). Furthermore, according to Jain texts, root vegetables contain infinite microorganisms called nigodas. Followers of Jain dharma eat before the night falls. They filter water regularly so as to remove any small insects that may be present and boil water prior to consumption. Jain monks and nuns practice strict asceticism and strive to make their current birth their last, thus ending their cycle of transmigration. The lay men and women also pursue the same five major vows to the limited extent depending on their capability and circumstances. Following the primary non-violence vow, the worshipers usually choose professions that revere and protect life and totally avoid violent livelihoods.

Jainism has several different traditions. Historically, this has led to traditions refusing to recognize each other's religious texts as authoritative. For example, the Digambaras reject the Svetambara canon. Even though there are some differences in customs and practices among them, the core belief systems are the same. All traditions unanimously accept and believe in the core Jain philosophies including the major vows of Non-violence, Truthfulness, Non-stealing, Celibacy and Non-possession.

Main Principles

Jainism encourages spiritual development through cultivation of one's own personal wisdom and reliance on self-control through vows. The triple gems of Jainism—right vision or view (Samyak Darshana), right knowledge (Samyak Gyana), and right conduct (Samyak Charitra)—provide the path for attaining liberation from the cycles of birth and death. When the soul sheds its karmic bonds completely, it attains divine consciousness. Those who have attained moksha are called siddhas, while those attached to the world through their karma are called samsarin. Every soul has to follow the path, as explained by the Jinas and revived by the tirthankaras, to attain complete liberation or nirvana. Jains believe that to attain enlightenment and ultimately liberation from all karmic bonding, one must practice the following ethical principles not only in thought, but also in words (speech) and action. Such a practice through lifelong work towards oneself is called as observing the Mahavrata ("**Great Vows**"). These vows are:

Ahimsa (Non-violence)

Ahimsa means to cause "no harm" to living beings (on the lines of "live" and "let live"). The vow involves "minimizing" intentional as well as unintentional harm to another living creature. There should even be no room for any thought conjuring injury to others, let alone talking about it or performing of such an act. Besides, it also includes respecting the views of others (non-absolutism and acceptance of multiple views).

Satya (Truthfulness)

To always speak of truth such that no harm is caused to others. A person who speaks truth becomes trustworthy like a mother, venerable like a preceptor and dear to everyone like a kinsman. Given that non-violence has priority, all other principles yield to it whenever there is a conflict. For example, in a situation where speaking truth would lead to violence, it would be perfectly moral to remain silent (for you are neither being untrue, nor causing violence by way of truth)

Asteya (Non-stealing)

Not to take into possession, anything that is not willingly offered. It is the strict adherence to one's own possessions without desiring for the ones that belong to others. One should remain satisfied by whatever is earned through honest labour. Any attempt to squeeze material wealth from others and/or exploit the weak is considered theft. Some of the guidelines for this principle follow as under:

Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

Brahmacharya means to exercise control over senses (including mind) from indulgence. The basic intent of this vow is to conquer passion, thus preventing wastage of energy in the direction of pleasurable desires. During observance of this vow, the householder must not have a sensual relationship with anybody other than one's own spouse. Jain monks and nuns practice complete abstinence from any sexual activity.

Aparigraha (Non-possession, Non-materialism)

It means to observe detachment from people, places and material things. Ownership of an object itself is not possessiveness; however, attachment to the owned object is possessiveness. For householders, non-possession is owning without attachment, because the notion of possession is illusory.

Core beliefs:

The concept of soul

Every living being is a soul.

Every soul is potentially divine, with innate qualities of infinite knowledge, perception, power, and bliss (masked by its karmas).

Therefore regard every living being as you do yourself, harming no one and being kind to all living beings.

Every soul is born as a heavenly being, human, sub-human (animal) or hellish being according to its own karma.

Every soul is the architect of its own life, here or hereafter.

When a soul is freed from karmas, it becomes free and attains divine consciousness, experiencing infinite knowledge, perception, power, and bliss (Moksha).

The triple gems of Jainism ("Right View, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct") provide the way to this realisation. There is no supreme divine creator, owner,

preserver, or destroyer. The universe is self-regulated, and every soul has the potential to achieve divine consciousness (siddha) through its own efforts.

Non-violence (to be in soul consciousness rather than body consciousness) is the foundation of right view, the condition of right knowledge and the kernel of right conduct. It leads to a state of being unattached to worldly things and being non-judgmental and non-violent; this includes compassion and forgiveness in thoughts, words and actions toward all living beings and respecting views of others (non-absolutism).

Jainism stresses the **importance of controlling the senses** including the mind, as they can drag one far away from true nature of the soul.

Limit possessions and lead a life that is useful to yourself and others. Owning an object by itself is not possessiveness; however, attachment to an object is possessiveness. Non-possessiveness is the balancing of needs and desires while staying detached from our possessions.

Enjoy the company of the holy and better-qualified, be merciful to afflicted souls, and tolerate the perversely inclined.

Four things are difficult for a soul to attain: 1. human birth, 2. knowledge of the laws governing the souls, 3. absolute conviction in the philosophy of non-violence, and 4. practicing this knowledge with conviction in everyday life activities.

It is, therefore, important not to waste human life in evil ways. Rather, strive to rise on the ladder of spiritual evolution.

The goal of Jainism is liberation of the soul from the negative effects of unenlightened thoughts, speech, and action. This goal is achieved through clearance of karmic obstructions by following the triple gems of Jainism.

Navkar Mantra also known as Namaskar Mantra is the fundamental prayer in Jainism and can be recited at any time. Praying by reciting this mantra, the devotee bows in respect to liberated souls still in human form (arihants), fully liberated souls forever free from rebirth (siddhas), spiritual leaders (Acharyas), teachers, and all the monks and nuns. By saluting them saying "namo namaha", Jains receive inspiration from them to follow their path to achieve true bliss and total freedom from the karmas binding their souls.

Jainism acknowledges **the existence of powerful heavenly souls** that look after the well-being of Tirthankaras. Usually they are found in pairs around the icons as male (yaksha) and female (yakshini) guardian deities. Even though they have supernatural powers, these deities are also souls wandering through the cycles of births and deaths just like most other souls. Over time, people began worshipping these deities as well.

Pacifism

Compassion for all life, human and non-human, is central to Jainism. Human life is valued as a unique, rare opportunity to reach enlightenment; to kill any person, no matter what crime he may have committed, is considered unimaginably abhorrent. It is a religion that requires monks and laity, from all its sects and traditions, to be vegetarian. Some Indian regions, such as Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka, have been

strongly influenced by Jains and often the majority of the local Hindus of every denomination have also become vegetarian.

Vegetarianism in Jainism

Jains practice strict vegetarianism. The practice of vegetarianism is instrumental for the practice of non-violence and peaceful co-operative co-existence. Basic non-violence principles can be performed depending on one's capability and specific situation in terms of meeting one's life's demands and expectations. Jainism acknowledges that it is impossible to discharge one's duties without some degree of himsa/violence, but encourages to minimise as much as possible. Jains are strictly forbidden to use any leather or silk products since they are derived by killing of animals. Jains are prohibited from consuming root vegetables such as potatoes, garlic, onions, carrots, radishes, cassava, sweet potatoes, turnips, etc., as the plant needed to be killed in the process of accessing these prior to their end of life cycle. Apart from all these, Jains also follow strict diets on "teethees" - eleven days (six days in Shukla Paksha - New Moon Fortnight and five days in Krishna Paksha - Full Moon Fortnight). They do not eat greens on these days, also termed as not to touch / use any sharp cutting object in the kitchen.

Fasting in Jainism

Fasting is one of the main tools for practicing external austerity. It helps to keep the demands of the body under check and assists in the focus on the upliftment of the soul. Spiritually, it helps in melting away the bad karmas accumulated by an individual.

Jain Rituals

Every day most Jains bow and say their universal prayer, the Navakar Mantra which is also known variously as Panch Parmesthi Sutra, Panch Namaskar Sutra. Navakar Mantra is the fundamental prayer in Jainism and can be recited at any time of the day.

Festivals

Jain festivals are characterized by both internal and external celebrations. The internal celebration is through praying (expressing devotion to Jinas), practicing meditation, spiritual studies and renunciation.

Paryushana is the most important festival among the Jain festivals. It is also known as Dashlakshan parva. It happens during late August/September commencing on the twelfth day of the fortnight of the waning moon cycle and ending in the fourteenth of the fortnight of the waxing moon cycle. This is generally a rainy season in Northern parts of India. During this 18 day period Jain scholars and monks visit temples and explain the Jain philosophy. Jains during this period practice external austerities such as fasting, limiting their normal activities so as to reduce the harm to worms and insects that thrive during this season. At the conclusion of the festivities, a reflection on the past is encouraged, and Pratikraman is done for repentance of faults. Forgiveness is given to and asked for from all those considered.

Mahavir Jayanti, The birthday of Mahavir, the last Thirthankar is celebrated on the thirteenth day of the fortnight of the waxing moon, in the month of Chaitra. This day occurs in late March or early April on the Gregorian calendar. Lectures are held to preach the path of virtue. People meditate and offer prayers.

Constitutional status in India

In 2005 the Supreme Court of India declined to issue a writ of mandamus towards granting Jains the status of a religious minority throughout India. The Court noted that Jains have been declared a minority in five states already, and left it to the rest of the States to decide on the minority status of Jain religion. In 2006 the Indian Supreme Court, in a judgment pertaining to an Indian state, opined that "Jain Religion is indisputably not a part of the Hindu Religion".

XX

BRITCS

Unit 3 – Religions that Originated in India – Sikhism and Buddhism

Sikhism

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion founded during the 15th century in the Punjab region, by Guru Nanak Dev and continued to progress with ten successive Sikh gurus (the last teaching being the holy scripture Gurū Granth Sāhib Ji). It is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world, with approximately 30 million Sikhs. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat ('wisdom of the Gurū). Punjab, India is the only region in the world with a majority Sikh population. Sikhs are expected to embody the qualities of a "Sant-Sipāhī"—a saint-soldier. One must have control over one's internal vices and be able to be constantly immersed in virtues clarified in the Guru Granth Sahib.

The principal beliefs of Sikhi are faith in Waheguru, meaning one God, along with a praxis in which the Sikh is enjoined to engage in social reform through the pursuit of justice for all human beings. Sikhi advocates the pursuit of salvation in a social context through the congregational practice of meditation on the name and message of God. The followers of Sikhi are ordained to follow the teachings of the ten Sikh gurus, or enlightened leaders, as well as the holy scripture entitled the Gurū Granth Sāhib Ji, which, along with the writings of six of the ten Sikh Gurus, includes selected works of many devotees from diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth guru. Adherents of Sikhī are known as Sikhs (students or disciples) and number over 30 million across the world. Most Sikhs live in Punjab, India, although there is a significant Sikh diaspora. Until the Partition of India with the division of Punjab and the subsequent independence of Pakistan and later India, millions of Sikhs lived in what is now Pakistani Punjab.

Sikh Philosophy and Teachings: Primary Beliefs and Principles

The Harimandir Sahib, known popularly as the Golden Temple, is a sacred shrine for Sikhs.

The origins of Sikhi lie in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. The essence of Sikh teaching is summed up by Nanak in these words: "Realization of Truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living". Sikh teaching emphasizes the principle of equality of all humans and rejects discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, and gender. Sikh principles encourage living life as a householder.

Sikhi is a monotheistic and a revealed religion. In Sikhi, God—termed Vāhigurū—is shapeless, timeless, and sightless (i.e., unable to be seen with the physical eye): nirañkāṛ, akaal, and alakh. The beginning of the first composition of Sikh scripture is the figure "1"—signifying the universality of God. It states that God is omnipresent and infinite with power over everything, and is signified by the term ēk ōaṅkāṛ. Sikhs believe that before creation, all that existed was God and God's hukam (will or order). When God willed, the entire cosmos was created. From these beginnings, God nurtured "enticement and attachment" to māyā, or the human perception of reality.

While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, Nanak described God as not wholly unknowable. God is omnipresent (sarav viāpak) in all creation and visible

everywhere to the spiritually awakened. Nanak stressed that God must be seen from "the inward eye", or the "heart", of a human being: devotees must meditate to progress towards enlightenment. Guru Nanak Dev emphasized the revelation through meditation, as its rigorous application permits the existence of communication between God and human beings. God has no gender in Sikhi, (though translations may incorrectly present a male God); indeed Sikhi teaches that God is "Akaal Purkh" with characteristic of "Nirankar" [Niran meaning "without" and kar meaning "form", hence "without form"]. In addition, Nanak wrote that there are many worlds on which God has created life.

Pursuing Salvation and Khalsa

Guru Nanak's teachings are founded not on a final destination of heaven or hell, but on a spiritual union with God which results in salvation. The official Khalsa Code of Conduct laid out by the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, makes it clear that human birth is obtained with great fortune, therefore one needs to be able to make the most of this chance. The Sikhs believe in living 'Chakar Vati' – roaming free as freedom, not as slaves or be oppressed.

Māyā—defined as illusion or "unreality"—is one of the core deviations from the pursuit of God and salvation: people are distracted from devotion by worldly attractions which give only illusory satisfaction. However, Nanak emphasised māyā as not a reference to the unreality of the world, but of its values. In Sikhi, the influences of ego, anger, greed, attachment, and lust—known as the Five Evils—are believed to be particularly pernicious.

Nśabad (the divine Word) emphasizes the totality of the revelation. Salvation can be reached only through rigorous and disciplined devotion to God. Nanak distinctly emphasised the irrelevance of outward observations such as rites, pilgrimages, or asceticism. He stressed that devotion must take place through the heart, with the spirit and the soul. According to Gurbani the supreme purpose of human life is to reconnect with Truth.

A key practice to be pursued is nām: remembrance of the divine Name. Nanak described the result of the disciplined application of nām simraṇ as a "growing towards and into God" through a gradual process.

Guru Nanak stressed now kirat karō: that a Sikh should balance work, worship, and charity, and should defend the rights of all creatures, and in particular, fellow human beings. Sikh teachings also stress the concept of sharing—vaṇḍ chakkō—through the distribution of free food at Sikh gurdwaras (laṅgar), giving charitable donations, and working for the good of the community and others (sēvā).

Sikhs believe that no matter what race, sex, or religion one is, all are equal in God's eyes. Men and women are equal and share the same rights, and women can lead in prayers.

Sikh gurus

The term guru comes from the Sanskrit gurū, meaning teacher, guide, or mentor. The traditions and philosophy of Sikhi were established by ten specific gurus from 1469 to 1708. Each guru added to and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak Dev was the first guru and appointed a

disciple as successor. Guru Gobind Singh was the final guru in human form. Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh decreed that the Gurū Granth Sāhib would be the final and perpetual guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Amar Das's successor and son-in-law Guru Ram Das founded the city of Amritsar, which is home of the Harimandir Sahib and regarded widely as the holiest city for all Sikhs. The Sikh gurus established a mechanism which allowed the Sikh religion to react as a community to changing circumstances. The sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, was responsible for the creation of the concept of Akal Takht (throne of the timeless one).

History of Sikhism

Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder of Sikhism, was born in the village of Rāi Bhōi dī Talwandī, now called Nankana Sahib (in present-day Pakistan). His parents were Khatri Hindus of the Bedi clan. As a boy, Nanak was fascinated by God and religion. He would not partake in religious rituals or customs and oddly meditated alone. His desire to explore the mysteries of life eventually led him to leave home and take missionary journeys.

The tenth guru of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh, created the Khalsa in the year 1699, which means "Akal Purakh de fauj" – the Army of God.

Scripture

There is one primary source of scripture for the Sikhs: the Gurū Granth Sāhib. The Gurū Granth Sāhib may be referred to as the Ādi Granth—literally, The First Volume—and the two terms are often used synonymously. Here, however, the Ādi Granth refers to the version of the scripture created by Arjan Dev in 1604. The Gurū Granth Sāhib is the final version of the scripture created by Gobind Singh. There are other sources of scriptures such as the Dasam Granth and so called Janamsakhis. These however, have been the subject of controversial debate amongst the Sikh community.

Sikh festivals/events

Technically, there are no festivals in Sikhism. However, the events mostly centred round the lives of the Gurus and Sikh martyrs are commemorated. The SGPC, the Sikh organisation in charge of upkeep of the historical gurdwaras of Punjab, organises celebrations based on the new Nanakshahi calendar. This calendar is highly controversial among Sikhs and is not universally accepted.

Sikhs celebrate the festival of Visakhi because on this day which fell on 30 March 1699, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, inaugurated the Khalsa, the 11th body of Guru Granth Sahib and leader of Sikhs till eternity.

Ceremonies and customs

Guru Nanak Dev Ji taught that rituals, religious ceremonies, or idol worship are of little use and Sikhs are discouraged from fasting or going on pilgrimages. Sikhs do not believe in converting people but converts to Sikhi by choice are welcomed. The morning and evening prayers take about two hours a day, starting in the very early morning hours.

Upon a child's birth, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened at a random point and the child is named using the first letter on the top left hand corner of the left page. All boys are

given the last name Singh, and all girls are given the last name Kaur. Sikhs are joined in wedlock through the anand kārāj ceremony. Sikhs are required to marry when they are of a sufficient age as child marriage is taboo, and without regard for the future spouse's caste or descent. The marriage ceremony is performed in the company of the Guru Granth Sahib; around which the couple circles four times. After the ceremony is complete, the husband and wife are considered "a single soul in two bodies."

According to Sikh religious rites, neither husband nor wife is permitted to divorce unless special circumstances arise. A Sikh couple that wishes to divorce may be able to do so in a civil court. Upon death, the body of a Sikh is usually cremated. If this is not possible, any means of disposing the body may be employed. The kīrtan sōhilā and ardās prayers are performed during the funeral ceremony.

Sikhism by country

Worldwide, there are 25.8 million Sikhs, which make up only 0.39% of the world's population. Approximately 75% of Sikhs live in the Punjab, where they constitute about 60% of the state's population. Large communities of Sikhs live in the neighboring states such as Indian State of Haryana which is home to the second largest Sikh population in India with 1.1 million Sikhs as per 2001 census, and large communities of Sikhs can be found across India. However, Sikhs only make up about 2% of the Indian population. Apart from the United States, smaller populations of Sikhs are found in within many countries in Western Europe, Mauritius, Malaysia, Fiji, Nepal, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Singapore, Mexico, the United States and many other countries.

Religious prohibitions in Sikhism

There are a number of religious prohibitions in Sikhism.

Prohibited are:

Cutting hair: Cutting hair is strictly forbidden in Sikhism. Sikhs are required to keep unshorn hair.

Intoxication: Consumption of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and other intoxicants is not allowed. Intoxicants are strictly forbidden for a Sikh. However the Nihangs of Punjab take an infusion of cannabis to assist meditation.

Adultery: In Sikhism, the spouses must be physically and mentally faithful to one another.

Blind spirituality: Superstitions and rituals should not be observed or followed, including pilgrimages, fasting and ritual purification; circumcision; idols & grave worship; compulsory wearing of the veil for women; etc.

Sacrifice of creatures: The practice of sati (widows throwing themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands), ritual animal sacrifice to celebrate holy occasions, etc. are forbidden.

Non-family-oriented living: A Sikh is encouraged NOT to live as a recluse, beggar, yogi, monastic (monk/nun) or celibate. Sikhs are to live as saint-soldiers.

Priestly class: Sikhism does not have priests, they were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh (the 10th Guru of Sikhism).

XX

Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion indigenous to the Indian subcontinent that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, who is commonly known as the Buddha (meaning "the awakened one" in Sanskrit and Pāli). The Buddha lived and taught in the eastern part of Indian subcontinent some - time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end suffering (dukkha) through eliminating ignorance (avidyā) and craving (taṇhā), and thus attain the highest happiness, nirvāṇa (nirvana).

Two major branches of Buddhism are recognized: Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle"). Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, Tiantai (Tendai) and Shinnyo-en. In some classifications, Vajrayana—practiced mainly in Tibet and Mongolia, and adjacent parts of China and Russia—is recognized as a third branch, while others classify it as a part of Mahayana. There are other categorisations of these three Vehicles or Yanas.

While Buddhism remains most popular within Asia, both branches are now found throughout the world. Estimates of Buddhists worldwide vary significantly depending on the way Buddhist adherence is defined. Lower estimates are between 350–500 million.

Gautama Buddha

The evidence of the early texts suggests that Siddhārtha Gautama was born in a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the northeastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE. According to the Theravada Tripitaka scriptures, Gautama was born in Lumbini in modern-day Nepal, around the year 563 BCE, and raised in Kapilavastu.

Śuddhodana was determined to see his son become a king, so he prevented him from leaving the palace grounds. But at age 29, despite his father's efforts, Gautama ventured beyond the palace several times. In a series of encounters—known in Buddhist literature as the four sights—he learned of the suffering of ordinary people, encountering an old man, a sick man, a corpse and, finally, an ascetic holy man, apparently content and at peace with the world. These experiences prompted Gautama to abandon royal life and take up a spiritual quest.

Gautama first went to study with famous religious teachers of the day, and mastered the meditative attainments they taught. But he found that they did not provide a permanent end to suffering, so he continued his quest. He next attempted an extreme asceticism,

which was a religious pursuit common among the Shramanas, a religious culture distinct from the Vedic one. Gautama underwent prolonged fasting, breath-holding, and exposure to pain. He almost starved himself to death in the process. He realized that he had taken this kind of practice to its limit, and had not put an end to suffering. So in a pivotal moment he accepted milk and rice from a village girl and changed his approach. He devoted himself to anapanasati meditation, through which he discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way : a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Gautama was now determined to complete his spiritual quest. At the age of 35, he famously sat in meditation under a sacred fig tree — known as the Bodhi tree — in the town of Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise before achieving enlightenment. After many days, he finally destroyed the fetters of his mind, thereby liberating himself from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, and arose as a fully enlightened being. Soon thereafter, he attracted a band of followers and instituted a monastic order. Now, as the Buddha, he spent the rest of his life teaching the path of awakening he had discovered, traveling throughout the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent, and died at the age of 80 (483 BCE) in Kushinagar, India. The south branch of the original fig tree available only in Anuradhapura Sri Lanka is known as Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi.

Buddhist concepts

Saṃsāra

Samsara is "the cycle of birth and death". Sentient beings crave pleasure and are averse to pain from birth to death. In being controlled by these attitudes, they perpetuate the cycle of conditioned existence and suffering (saṃsāra), and produce the causes and conditions of the next rebirth after death. Each rebirth repeats this process in an involuntary cycle, which Buddhists strive to end by eradicating these causes and conditions, applying the methods laid out by the Buddha and subsequent Buddhists.

Karma

Karma (action, work) in Buddhism is the force that drives saṃsāra—the cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. In Buddhism, karma specifically refers to those actions (of body, speech, and mind) that spring from mental intent ("chetana"), and bring about a consequence or fruit, (phala) or result (vipāka).

Rebirth

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception to death. Buddhism rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul, as it is called in Hinduism and Christianity. According to Buddhism there ultimately is no such thing as a self which is independent from the rest of the universe (the doctrine of anatta). Rebirth in subsequent existences must be understood as the continuation of a dynamic, ever-changing process of "dependent arising" ("pratītyasamutpāda") determined by the laws of cause and effect (karma) rather than that of one being, transmigrating or incarnating from one existence to the next.

Four Noble Truths

The teachings on the Four Noble Truths are regarded as central to the teachings of Buddhism, and are said to provide a conceptual framework for Buddhist thought. These four truths explain the nature of dukkha (suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction), its causes, and how it can be overcome. They can be summarized as follows:

The truth of dukkha (suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction)

The truth of the origin of dukkha

The truth of the cessation of dukkha

The truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha

Noble Eightfold Path

The Dharmachakra represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path—the fourth of the Buddha's Noble Truths—is the way to the cessation of suffering (dukkha). It has eight sections, each starting with the word "samyak" (Sanskrit, meaning "correctly", "properly", or "well", frequently translated into English as "right"), and presented in three groups known as the three higher trainings. The practice of the Eightfold Path is understood in two ways, as requiring either simultaneous development (all eight items practiced in parallel), or as a progressive series of stages through which the practitioner moves, the culmination of one leading to the beginning of another.

Middle Way

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the Middle Way (or Middle Path), which is said to have been discovered by Gautama Buddha prior to his enlightenment. The Middle Way can be explained as the practice of non-extremism - a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Buddhist scholars have produced a remarkable quantity of intellectual theories, philosophies and world view concepts (see, for example, Abhidharma, Buddhist philosophy and Reality in Buddhism). Some schools of Buddhism discourage doctrinal study, and some regard it as essential practice.

Nirvana

Nirvana means "cessation", "extinction" (of craving and ignorance and therefore suffering and the cycle of involuntary rebirths (saṃsāra)), "extinguished", "quieted", "calmed"; it is also known as "Awakening" or "Enlightenment" in the West. The term for anybody who has achieved nirvana, including the Buddha, is arahant.

Buddhists believe Gautama Buddha was the first to achieve enlightenment in this Buddha era and is therefore credited with the establishment of Buddhism. A Buddha era is the stretch of history during which people remember and practice the teachings of the earliest known Buddha. This Buddha era will end when all the knowledge, evidence and teachings of Gautama Buddha have vanished. This belief therefore maintains that many Buddha eras have started and ended throughout the course of human existence. The Gautama Buddha, then, is the Buddha of this era, who taught directly or indirectly to all other Buddhas in it.

Buddhism and Brahminic Traditions

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of ancient India during the second half of the first millennium BCE. That was a period of social and religious turmoil, as there was significant discontent with the sacrifices and rituals of Vedic Brahmanism. It was challenged by numerous new ascetic religious and philosophical groups and teachings that broke with the Brahmanic tradition and rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmins. These groups, whose members were known as shramanas, were a continuation of a non-Vedic strand of Indian thought distinct from Indo-Aryan Brahmanism. Scholars have reasons to believe that ideas such as samsara, karma (in the sense of the influence of morality on rebirth), and moksha originated in the shramanas, and were later adopted by Brahmin orthodoxy.

History of Buddhism in India

Buddhism may have spread only slowly in India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who was a public supporter of the religion. The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (Buddhist religious memorials) and to efforts to spread Buddhism throughout the enlarged Maurya empire and even into neighboring lands—particularly to the Iranian-speaking regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia, beyond the Mauryas' northwest border, and to the island of Sri Lanka south of India. These two missions, in opposite directions, would ultimately lead, in the first case to the spread of Buddhism into China, and in the second case, to the emergence of Theravāda Buddhism and its spread from Sri Lanka to the coastal lands of Southeast Asia.

Buddhism today

According to one analysis, Buddhism is the fourth-largest religion in the world behind Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. East Asian forms of Mahayana Buddhism that use Chinese scriptures are dominant in most of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam as well as such communities within Indochina, Southeast Asia and the West. Approximately 500 million to one billion. Tibetan Buddhism is found in Bhutan, Nepal, Mongolia, areas of India - Ladakh; significant population in Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, China and Russia.

Buddhist Schools

There are two Buddhist Schools. Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravada or Mahayana, although an alternative scheme used by some scholars divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas: Theravada, East Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism.

Buddhist texts

Buddhist scriptures and other texts exist in great variety. Different schools of Buddhism place varying levels of value on learning the various texts. Buddhist scriptures are mainly written in Pāli, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese. Some texts still exist in Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text

that is universally referred to by all traditions. However, some scholars have referred to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the common core of all Buddhist traditions. More recently, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar attempted to create a single, combined document of Buddhist principles in "The Buddha and His Dhamma".

Comparative studies

Buddhism provides many opportunities for comparative study with a diverse range of subjects. For example, dependent origination can be considered one of Buddhism's contributions to metaphysics. Additionally, Buddhism's emphasis on the Middle way not only provides a unique guideline for ethics but has also allowed Buddhism to peacefully coexist with various differing beliefs, customs and institutions in countries where it has resided throughout its history. Also, its moral and spiritual parallels with other systems of thought—for example, with various tenets of Christianity—have been subjects of close study.

Buddhism and Jainism are two branches of the Shramana tradition that still exist today. Jainism has historically been largely confined to India, whereas Buddhism flourished beyond the borders of its country of origin where it declined during the Middle Ages. Mahavira and Gautama Buddha were contemporaries and according to the Pali scriptures Gautama Buddha was aware of Mahavira's existence as well as his community of monks. Jainism and Buddhism share many features including much of the same terminology. There is no doubt that there was a mutual influence and reception of both religions although Jainism does appear to be an older spiritual tradition out of which Buddhism may have grown.

Hinduism and Buddhism

The practices and goals of Buddhism and Hinduism have similarities and differences. The Theravada Buddhism is relatively conservative, and generally closest to the early form of Buddhism. The Mahayana and Vajrayana beliefs developed later. Hinduism and Buddhism have shared paralleled beliefs and have existed side by side for thousands of years. The influence of Upanishads, earliest philosophical texts of Hindus, on Buddhism has been a subject of debate among scholars. While Radhakrishnan, Oldenberg and Neumann were convinced of Upanishadic influence on the Buddhist canon, Eliot and Thomas highlighted the points where Buddhism was opposed to Upanishads. Buddhism may have been influenced by some Upanishadic ideas, it however discarded their orthodox tendencies.

Buddhism and Christianity

There is speculation concerning a possible connection between Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, and between Buddhism and Christianity, because of perceived similarities. These similarities may be caused by cultural exchanges between the Hellenistic world and the Indian subcontinent. Buddhism originated in India, about 500 years before the Apostolic Age and the origins of Christianity in Judea. Both Buddhism and Christianity are now proportionally diminished in their countries of origin.

XX

Unit 4 – Religions that Entered India – Islam and Christianity

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a text considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Arabic: Allāh), and by the teachings and normative example (called the Sunnah and composed of Hadith) of Muhammad, 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 love and serve God. Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed at many times and places before, including through Abraham, Moses and Jesus, whom they consider prophets. They maintain that previous messages and revelations have been partially changed or corrupted over time, but consider the Qur'an to be both the unaltered and the final revelation of God.[5] Religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are basic concepts and obligatory acts of worship, and following Islamic law, which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, providing guidance on multifarious topics from banking and welfare, to warfare and the environment.

The majority of Muslims are Sunni, being 75–90% of all Muslims. The second largest sect, Shia, makes up 10–20%. The most populous Muslim-majority country is Indonesia home to 12.7% of the world's Muslims followed by Pakistan (11.0%), Bangladesh (9.2%), and Egypt (4.9%). Sizable minorities are also found in India, Russia, and parts of Europe. With about 1.57 to 1.65 billion followers or 22 to 24% of earth's population, Islam is the second-largest and one of the fastest-growing religions in the world.

Etymology and Meaning

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, completion and bonding/joining. 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 Islām is the infinitive. Believers demonstrate submission to God by serving God and following his commands, and rejecting polytheism. The word sometimes has distinct connotations in its various occurrences in the Qur'an. In some verses (ayat), there is stress on the quality of Islam as an internal conviction: "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam." Other verses connect islām and dīn (usually translated as "religion"): "Today, I have perfected your religion (dīn) for you; I have completed My blessing upon you; I have approved Islam for your religion. Still others describe Islam as an action of returning to God—more than just a verbal affirmation of faith. Another technical meaning in Islamic thought is as one part of a triad of islam, imān (faith), and ihsān (excellence) where it represents acts of service (ʿibādah) and Islamic law (sharia).

The core beliefs of Islam are that there is only one god – unitary and beyond comprehension – and that Muhammad is the prophet of God, the last in a series of prophets beginning with Adam. The Qur'an is upheld as the eternal, literal word of God, and revelations to earlier prophets, as seen in the Jewish Torah and Christian Gospels,

are believed to have become distorted by human intervention. Muslims believe that the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, and belief in angels as God's servants is part of the Islamic tradition. Belief in the Day of Judgment, when all people will undergo bodily resurrection and be judged by God, is another core tenet. While Sunni and Shi'a Muslims adhere to these basic beliefs, Shi'a also believe in the Imamate, the line of infallible spiritual and political leaders who succeeded Muhammad, beginning with his cousin and son-in-law, Ali.

Advent of Islam in India

Though Islam came to India in the early 7th century with the advent of Arab traders, it started to become a major religion during the Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent. Islam's spread in India mostly took place under the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal Empire (1526-1858), greatly aided by the mystic Sufi tradition.

God in Islam

Allah means God in English. Islam's most fundamental concept is a rigorous monotheism, called tawhīd. God is described in chapter 112 of the Qur'an as: "Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." Muslims repudiate the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and divinity of Jesus, comparing it to polytheism, but accept Jesus as a prophet. In Islam, God is beyond all comprehension and Muslims are not expected to visualize God. God is described and referred to by certain names or attributes, the most common being Al-Rahmān, meaning "The Compassionate" and Al-Rahīm, meaning "The Merciful".

Muslims believe that creation of everything in the universe is brought into being by God's sheer command "'Be' and so it is." And that the purpose of existence is to love and serve God. He is viewed as a personal god who responds whenever a person in need or distress calls him. There are no intermediaries, such as clergy, to contact God. Allāh is the term with no plural or gender used by Muslims and Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews to reference God, while 'ilāh is the term used for a deity or a god in general. Other non-Arab Muslims might use different names as much as Allah, for instance "Tanrı" in Turkish or "Khodā" in Persian.

Islamic holy books and Qur'an

The Islamic holy books are the records which most Muslims believe were dictated by God to various prophets. The Qur'an (Reading" or "Recitation) is viewed by Muslims as the final revelation and literal word of God and is widely regarded as the finest piece of literature work in the Arabic language. Muslims believe that the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Muhammad by God through the archangel Gabriel (Jibrīl) on many occasions between 610 CE until his death on June 8, 632 CE. While Muhammad was alive, all of these revelations were written down by his companions (sahabah), although the prime method of transmission was orally through memorization. After the death of Muhammad, it was compiled in the time of Abu Bakr, the first caliph, and was standardized under the administration of Uthman, the third caliph. The Qur'an is divided into 114 suras, or chapters, which combined, contain 6,236 āyāt, or verses.

Resurrection and Judgment

Belief in the "Day of Resurrection", is crucial for Muslims. They believe the time of Qiyāmah is preordained by God but unknown to man.

Muslims believe that on this day all mankind will be judged on their good and bad deeds. The Qur'an lists several sins that can condemn a person to hell. The Qur'an makes it clear God will forgive the sins of those who repent if he so wills. Good deeds, such as charity and prayer, will be rewarded with entry to heaven.

Five Pillars of Islam

The Pillars of Islam are five basic acts in Islam, considered obligatory for all believers. The Quran presents them as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to the faith. They are (1) the shahadah (creed), (2) daily prayers (salat), (3) almsgiving (zakah), (4) fasting during Ramadan and (5) the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime. The Shia and Sunni sects both agree on the essential details for the performance of these acts.

Shahadah

The Shahadah which is the basic creed of Islam that must be recited under oath with the specific statement: "'ašhadu 'al-lā ilāha illā-llāhu wa 'ašhadu 'anna muḥammadan rasūlu-llāh", or "I testify there are no deities other than God alone and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God." This testament is a foundation for all other beliefs and practices in Islam. Muslims must repeat the shahadah in prayer.

Prayer - Salah

Ritual prayers, called Ṣalāh or Ṣalāt must be performed five times a day. Salah is intended to focus the mind on God, and is seen as a personal communication with him that expresses gratitude and worship. Salah is compulsory but flexibility in the specifics is allowed depending on circumstances. The prayers are recited in the Arabic language, and consist of verses from the Qur'an.

A mosque is a place of worship for Muslims, who often refer to it by its Arabic name, masjid. Although the primary purpose of the mosque is to serve as a place of prayer, it is also important to the Muslim community as a place to meet and study. Modern mosques have evolved greatly from the early designs of the 7th century, and contain a variety of architectural elements such as minarets.

Fasting

Fasting, from food and drink (among other things) must be performed from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadhan. The fast is to encourage a feeling of nearness to God, and during it Muslims should express their gratitude for and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and think of the needy.

Pilgrimage - Hajj

The pilgrimage, called the ḥajj during the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah in the city of Mecca. Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it must make the pilgrimage to Mecca

at least once in his or her lifetime. Rituals of the Hajj include walking seven times around the Kaaba, touching the black stone if possible, walking or running seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, and symbolically stoning the Devil in Mina.

World Muslim Population (Pew Research Center, 2009).

A comprehensive 2009 demographic study of 232 countries and territories reported that 23% of the global population, or 1.57 billion people, are Muslims. Of those, it's estimated over 75–90% are Sunni and 10–20% are Shi'a, with a small minority belonging to other sects. Approximately 50 countries are Muslim-majority, and Arabs account for around 20% of all Muslims worldwide. Between 1900 and 1970 the global Muslim community grew from 200 million to 551 million; between 1970 and 2009 Muslim population increased more than three times to 1.57 billion.

The majority of Muslims live in Asia and Africa. Approximately 62% of the world's Muslims live in Asia, with over 683 million adherents in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. In the Middle East, non-Arab countries such as Turkey and Iran are the largest Muslim-majority countries; in Africa, Egypt and Nigeria have the most populous Muslim communities.

XX

Christianity

Christianity is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus as presented in canonical gospels and other New Testament writings. It also considers the Hebrew Bible, which is known as the Old Testament, to be canonical. Adherents of the Christian faith are known as Christians.

The mainstream Christian belief is that Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and fully human and the saviour of humanity. Because of this, Christians commonly refer to Jesus as Christ or Messiah. Jesus' ministry, sacrificial death, and subsequent resurrection, are often referred to as the Gospel message ("good news"). In short, the Gospel is news of God the Father's eternal victory over evil, and the promise of salvation and eternal life for all people, through divine grace. Jesus stated that love is the greatest commandment:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind [and] thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Worldwide the three largest groups of Christianity are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the various denominations of Protestantism.

Christianity began as a Jewish sect in the mid-1st century. Originating in the Levant region of the Middle East (modern Israel and Palestine), it quickly spread to Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Egypt. It grew in size and influence over a few decades, and by the end of the 4th century had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire, replacing other forms of religion practiced under Roman rule. During the Middle

Ages, most of the remainder of Europe was Christianized, with Christians also being a sometimes large religious minority in the Middle East, North Africa, Ethiopian and parts of India. Following the Age of Discovery, through missionary work and colonization, Christianity spread to the Americas, Australasia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the rest of the world.

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, referred to as the "Old Testament" in Christianity. It is believed 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 him for the remission of their sins (salvation). They further maintain that Jesus bodily ascended into heaven where he rules and reigns with God the Father. It is also believed that Jesus will return to judge all humans, living and dead, and grant eternal life to his followers. He is considered the model of a virtuous life, and both the revealer and physical incarnation of God. Christians call the message of Jesus Christ the Gospel ("good news") and generally adhere to the Ten Commandments.

As of the early 21st century, Christianity has approximately 2.2 billion followers. Christianity represents about a third of the world's population and is the world's largest religion. Christianity is the state religion of several countries. Among all Christians, 37.5% live in the Americas, 25.7% live in Europe, 22.5% live in Africa, 13.1% live in Asia, 1.2% live in Oceania and 0.9% live in the Middle East. Christianity has played a role in shaping of Western civilization.

Christianity in India

The works of scholars and Eastern Christian writings claim that Christianity was introduced to India by Thomas the Apostle, who visited Muziris in Kerala in 52 AD to spread the gospel amongst Kerala's Jewish settlements. Although the exact origins of Christianity in India remain unclear, there is a general scholarly consensus that Christianity was rooted in India by the 3rd century AD, including some communities who used Syriac liturgically, and it is a possibility that the religion's existence there extends to as far back as the 1st century. Christianity in India has different denominations, like Roman Catholicism, oriental Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism.

Roman Catholic is a denomination practiced by over 17.3 million people in India which represents less than 2% of the total population. Most Catholics reside in South India. Goa is home to Roman Catholics-the state known for its Christian population. Europeans brought Catholicism in the 13th century (Portuguese) and Protestantism in the 18th century (British and American missionaries). It became popular following European colonisation and Protestant missionary efforts.

Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship, which play a fundamental role in Judaism and most forms of Christianity. They include instructions to worship only God and to keep the Sabbath, and prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, and adultery. Different groups follow slightly different traditions for interpreting and numbering them. According to the synoptic gospels, Christ generalised the law into two underlying principles. The first is:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

While the second is: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

Jesus Christ

The central tenet of Christianity is the belief in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah (Christ). Christians believe that Jesus, as the Messiah, was anointed by God as saviour of humanity, and hold that Jesus' coming was the fulfillment of messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. While there have been many theological disputes over the nature of Jesus over the earliest centuries of Christian history, Christians generally believe that Jesus is God incarnate and "true God and true man" (or both fully divine and fully human). According to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary. Little of Jesus' childhood is recorded in the canonical Gospels, however infancy Gospels were popular in antiquity. In comparison, his adulthood, especially the week before his death, is well documented in the Gospels contained within the New Testament. The Biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry include: his baptism, miracles, preaching, teaching, and deeds.

Death and resurrection of Jesus

Christians consider the resurrection of Jesus to be the cornerstone of their faith and the most important event in Christian Theology, partly because they demonstrate that Jesus has power over life and death and therefore has the authority and power to give people eternal life. According to the New Testament Jesus was crucified, died a physical death, was buried within a tomb, and rose from the dead three days later. Jesus' death and resurrection are commemorated by Christians in all worship services, with special emphasis during Holy Week which includes Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Salvation

Modern Christian churches tend to be much more concerned with how humanity can be saved from a universal condition of sin and death than the question of how both Jews and Gentiles can be in God's family. According to both Catholic and Protestant doctrine, salvation comes by Jesus' substitutionary death and resurrection. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation does not occur without faithfulness on the part of Christians; converts must live in accordance with principles of love and ordinarily must be baptized. Martin Luther taught that baptism was necessary for salvation, but modern Lutherans and other Protestants tend to teach that salvation is a gift that comes to an individual by God's grace, sometimes defined as "unmerited favor", even apart from baptism.

Christians differ in their views on the extent to which individuals' salvation is pre-ordained by God. Reformed theology places distinctive emphasis on grace by teaching that individuals are completely incapable of self-redemption, but that sanctifying grace is irresistible. In contrast Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Arminian Protestants believe that the exercise of free will is necessary to have faith in Jesus.

Trinity

Trinity refers to the teaching that the one God comprises three distinct, eternally co-existing persons; the Father, the Son (incarnate in Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Together, these three persons are sometimes called the Godhead, although there is no single term in use in Scripture to denote the unified Godhead. AS per the Christian belief, "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God".

Death and Afterlife

Some Christian groups, including Anglicans, Lutherans and Seventh-day Adventists hold to mortalism, the belief that the human soul is not naturally immortal, and is unconscious during the intermediate state between bodily death and resurrection. These Christians also hold to Annihilationism, the belief that subsequent to the final judgement, the wicked will cease to exist rather than suffer everlasting torment. Jehovah's Witnesses hold to a similar view.

Worship

Thus, as Justin described, Christians assemble for communal worship on Sunday, the day of the resurrection, though other liturgical practices often occur outside this setting. Scripture readings are drawn from the Old and New Testaments, but especially the Gospels. Worship can be varied for special events like baptisms or weddings in the service or significant feast days. In many churches today, adults and children will separate for all or some of the service to receive age-appropriate teaching. Such children's worship is often called Sunday school or Sabbath school.

Christian symbolism

The cross, which is today one of the most widely recognised symbols in the world, was used as a Christian symbol from the earliest times. Although the cross was known to the early Christians, the crucifix did not appear in use until the 5th century.

Christian Rituals : Baptism

Baptism is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which a person is admitted to membership of the Church.

Prayer

Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount displays a distinct lack of interest in the external aspects of prayer.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God." The Book of Common Prayer in the Anglican tradition is a guide which provides a set order for church services, containing set prayers, scripture readings, and hymns or sung Psalms.

XX