> **Online Study Materials on**
> # WORLD RELIGIONS

15

HINDUISM AND HINDU PHILOSOPHY: ELEMENTS AND DIMENSIONS

HINDUISM

Hinduism is a religious tradition that originated in the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism is often referred to as Sanâtana *Dharma* by its practitioners, a Sanskrit phrase meaning "*the eternal law*".

Hinduism is the world's oldest major religion that is still practised. Its earliest origins can be traced to the ancient Vedic civilisation. A conglomerate of diverse beliefs and traditions, Hinduism has no single founder. It is the world's third largest religion following Christianity and Islam, with approximately a billion adherents, of whom about 905 million live in India and Nepal. Other countries with large Hindu populations include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

Hinduism contains a vast body of scriptures. Divided as Shruti (revealed) and Smriti (remembered) and developed over millennia, these scriptures expound on theology, philosophy and mythology, and provide spiritual insights and guidance on the practice of *dharma* (religious living). In the orthodox view, among such texts, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* are the foremost in authority, importance and antiquity. Other major scriptures include the *Tantras*, the sectarian *Agamas*, the *PurâGas* and the epics *Mahâbhârata* and *RâmâyaGa*. The *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, a treatise excerpted from the *Mahâbhârata*, is sometimes called a summary of the spiritual teachings of the *Vedas*.

ETYMOLOGY

The Persian term *Hindû* is derived from *Sindhu*, Sanskrit for the Indus River. The *Rig Veda* mentions the land of the Indo-Aryans as

Sapta Sindhu (the land of the seven rivers in northwestern South Asia, one of them being the Indus). This corresponds to *Hapta Hyndu* in the *Avesta* (*Vendidad or Videvdad: Fargard* 1.18)—the sacred scripture of Zoroastrianism. The term was used for those who lived in the Indian subcontinent on or beyond the "Sindhu".

BELIEFS

Hinduism is an extremely diverse religion. Although some tenets of the faith are accepted by most Hindus, scholars have found it difficult to identify any doctrines with universal acceptance among all denominations. Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include *Dharma* (ethics/duties), *Samsâra* (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 spanning monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, pantheism, monism and atheism. It is sometimes referred to as henotheistic (devotion to a single God while accepting the existence of other gods), but any such term is an oversimplification of the complexities and variations of belief.

Most Hindus believe that the spirit or soul—the true "self" of every person, called the âtman—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. Brahman is described as "The One Without a Second;" hence these schools are called "non-dualist." The goal of life according to the Advaita school is to realize that one's âtman is identical to Brahman, the supreme soul. The *Upanishads* state that whoever becomes fully aware of the âtman as the innermost core of one's own self, realises their identity with Brahman and thereby reaches *Moksha* (liberation or freedom)

Other dualistic schools (see Dvaita and Bhakti) understand Brahman as a Supreme Being who possesses personality and worship Him or Her thus, as Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva or Shakti depending on the sect. The âtman is dependent on God while *Moksha* depends on love towards God and on God's grace. When God is viewed as the supreme personal being (rather than as the infinite principle) God is called *Ishvara* ("The Lord"), *Bhagavan* ("The Auspicious One"), or *Parameshwara* ("The Supreme Lord"). However, interpretations of *Ishvara* vary—ranging

from non-belief such as followers of Mimamsakas, in *Ishvara* to identifying *Brahman* and *Ishvara* as one as in Advaita. There are also schools like the Samkhya which have atheistic leanings.

Devas and Avatars

The Hindu scriptures refer to celestial entities, called *Devas* (or *devî* in feminine form; *devatâ* used synonymously for Deva in Hindi), "the shining ones", which may be translated into English as "gods" or "heavenly beings". The *devas* are an integral part of Hindu culture and are depicted in art, architecture and through icons, and mythological stories about them are related in the scriptures, particularly in the Indian epic poetry and Puranas. They are however often distinguished from Ishvara, a supreme personal God, with many Hindus worshipping Ishvara in a particular form as their *icma devatâ*, or chosen ideal; the choice being based upon their individual preference, and regional and family traditions.

Hindu epics and the Puranas relate several episodes of the descent of God to Earth in corporeal form, in order to restore *dharma* in society and guide humans to *moksha* (liberation from the cycle of rebirth). Such an incarnation is called an *avatar*. The most prominent avatars are of Vishnu, and include Rama (protagonist in *Ramayana*) and Krishna (a central figure in the epic *Mahabharata*).

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 samskaras (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 one's personality, characteristics and family. *Karma* threads 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 that:

> "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)"

Samsara provides ephemeral pleasures, which lead people to desire rebirth to enjoy the pleasures of a perishable body. However, escaping the world of samsara through *moksha* (liberation) 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 realisation of one's union with God; as realisation of one's eternal relationship with God; realisation of the unity of all existence; perfect unselfishness and knowledge of the Self-attainment of perfect mental peace; or as detachment from worldly desires. Such a realisation liberates one from *samsara* and ends the cycle of rebirth. The exact conceptualisation of *moksha* differs among the various Hindu schools of thought. For example, Advaita Vedanta holds that after attaining *moksha* an atman no longer identifies itself with an individual but as identical with Brahman in all respects. The followers of Dvaita (dualistic) schools identify themselves as part of Brahman and after attaining *moksha* expect to spend eternity in a loka (heaven), in the company of their chosen form of *Ishvara*. Thus, it is said, the followers of *dvaita* wish to "taste sugar," while the followers of Advaita wish to "become sugar."

The Goals of Life

Classical Hindu thought accepts two main life-long dharmas: Grihastha *Dharma* and Sannyasin *Dharma*.

The Grihastha *Dharma* recognises four goals known as the *puruchârthas*. They are:

1. *Kâma*: Sensual pleasure and enjoyment
2. *Artha*: Material prosperity and success
3. *Dharma*: Correct action, in accordance with one's particular duty and scriptural laws
4. *Moksha*: Liberation from the cycle of samsara.

Among these, *dharma* and *moksha* play a special role: *dharma* must dominate an individual's pursuit of kama and artha while seeing *moksha*, at the horizon.

The Sannyasin *Dharma* recognises, but renounces *Kama, Artha* and *Dharma*, focusing entirely on *Moksha*. As described below, the Grihastha *Dharma* eventually enters this stage. However, some enter this stage immediately from whichever stage they may be in.

Yoga

In whatever way a Hindu defines the goal of life, there are several methods (yogas) that sages have taught for reaching that goal. A practitioner of yoga is called a *yogi*. Texts dedicated to Yoga include the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Yoga Sutras, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and, as their philosophical and historical basis, the *Upanishads.* Paths one can follow to achieve the spiritual goal of life (*moksha, samadhi,* or *nirvana*) include:

- *Bhakti Yoga* (the path of love and devotion),
- *Karma Yoga* (the path of right action),
- *Râja Yoga* (the path of meditation) and
- *Jñâna Yoga* (the path of wisdom).

An individual may prefer one or some yogas over others according to his or her inclination and understanding. For instance, some devotional schools teach that bhakti is the only practical path to achieve spiritual perfection for most people, based on their belief that the world is currently in the age of Kaliyuga (one of four epochs part of the Yuga cycle). Practice of one yoga does not exclude others. Many schools believe that the different yogas naturally blend into and aid other yogas. For example, the practice of *jnana yoga*, is thought to inevitably lead to pure love (the goal of *bhakti yoga*), and vice versa. Someone practising deep meditation (such as in *raja yoga*) must embody the core principles of *karma yoga*, *jnana yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, whether directly or indirectly.

HISTORY

The earliest evidence for elements of Hinduism date back to the late Neolithic to the early Harappan period (5500–2600BCE). The beliefs and practices of the pre-classical era (1500–500BCE) are called the "historical Vedic religion". Modern Hinduism grew out of the Vedas, the oldest of which is the Rigveda, dated to 1700–1100BCE. The Vedas center on worship of deities such as *Indra*, *Varuna* and *Agni*, and on the *Soma* ritual. They performed fire-sacrifices, called *yajña* and chanted Vedic mantras but did not build temples or icons. The oldest Vedic traditions exhibit strong similarities to Zoroastrianism and with other Indo-European religions. During the Epic and Puranic periods, the earliest versions of the epic poems *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were written roughly from 500–100BCE, although these were orally transmitted for centuries prior to this period. The epics 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 demons.

Three major movements underpinned the naisance of a new epoch of Hindu thought: the advents and spread of Upanishadic, Jaina, and Buddhist philosophico-religious thought throughout the broader Indian landmass. The *Upanishads*, Mahavira (founder of Jainism) and Buddha (founder of Buddhism) taught that to achieve *moksha* or nirvana, one did not have to accept the authority of the Vedas or the caste system. Buddha went a step further and claimed that the existence of a Self/soul or God was unnecessary. Buddhism and Jainism adapted elements of Hinduism into their beliefs. Buddhism (or at least Buddhistic Hinduism) peaked during the reign of Asoka the Great of the Mauryan Empire, who unified the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century BCE. After 200CE, 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. Between 400BCE and 1000CE, Hinduism expanded at the expense of Buddhism.

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 converted to Islam. Some Muslim rulers such as Aurangzeb destroyed Hindu temples and persecuted non-Muslims, while others, 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 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 Shri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi. Prominent Hindu philosophers, including Sri Aurobindo and Swami 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 Swami 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.

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Hinduism is based on "the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times." The scriptures were transmitted orally in verse form to aid memorisation, for many centuries before they were written down. Over many centuries, sages refined the teachings and expanded the canon. In post-Vedic and current Hindu belief, most Hindu scriptures are not typically interpreted literally. More importance is attached to the ethics and metaphorical meanings derived from them. Most sacred texts are in Sanskrit. The texts are classified into two classes: *Shruti* and *Smriti*.

Shruti (lit: that which is heard) refers to the *Vedas* which form the earliest record of the Hindu scriptures. While many Hindus revere the Vedas as eternal truths revealed to ancient sages (*Zcis*), some devotees do not associate the creation of the Vedas with a God or person. They are thought of as the laws of the spiritual world, which would still exist even if they were not revealed to the sages. Hindus believe that because the spiritual truths of the Vedas are eternal, they continue to be expressed in new ways.

There are four *Vedas* (called *Zg-*, *Sâma-Yajus-* and *Atharva-*). The *Rigveda* is the first and most important *Veda*. Each Veda is divided into four parts: the primary one, the *Veda proper*, being the *SaChitâ*, which contains sacred *mantras*. The other three parts form a three-tier ensemble of commentaries, usually in prose and are believed to be slightly later in age than the *SaChitâ*. These are: the *BrâhmaGas*, *ÂraGyakas*, and the *Upanishads*. The first two parts were subsequently called the *Karmakâda* (ritualistic portion), while the last two form the *Jñânakâda* (knowledge portion). While the *Vedas* focus on rituals, the *Upanishads*

focus on spiritual insight and philosophical teachings, and discuss Brahman and reincarnation.

Hindu texts other than the *Shrutis* are collectively called the *Smritis* (memory). The most notable of the smritis are the epics, which consist of the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Râmâyana*. The *Bhagavad Gîtâ* is an integral part of the *Mahabharata* and one of the most popular sacred texts of Hinduism. It contains philosophical teachings from *Krishna*, an incarnation of *Vishnu*, told to the prince Arjuna on the eve of a great war. The *Bhagavad Gîtâ* is described as the essence of the *Vedas.* The Smritis also include the *PurâGas*, which illustrate Hindu ideas through vivid narratives. There are texts with a sectarian nature such as *Devî Mahâtmya*, the *Tantras*, the *Yoga Sutras*, *Tirumantiram*, *Shiva Sutras* and the *Hindu Âgamas*. A more controversial text, the *Manusmriti*, is a prescriptive lawbook which epitomises the societal codes of the caste system.

PRACTICES

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 pûjâ (worship or veneration) either at home or at a temple. At home, Hindus often create a shrine with icons dedicated to the individual's 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. In fact, many visit temples only during religious festivals. Hindus perform their worship through icons (murtis). The icon serves as a tangible link between the worshipper and God. The image is often considered a manifestation of God, since God is immanent. The Padma Purana states that the *mûrti* 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 Ârya Samâj, 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 symbolises 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* extolls 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 AND CEREMONIES

The vast majority of Hindus engage in religious rituals on a daily basis. Most Hindus observe religious rituals at home. However, observation of rituals greatly vary among regions, villages, and individuals. Devout Hindus perform daily chores such as worshipping at the 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. Religious acts presuppose some degree of impurity or defilement for the practitioner, which must be overcome or neutralised before or during ritual procedures. Purification, usually with water, is thus a typical feature of most religious action. Other characteristics include a belief in the efficacy of sacrifice and concept of merit, gained through the performance of charity or good works, that will accumulate over time and reduce sufferings in the next world. Vedic rites of fire-oblation (yajna) are now only occasional practices although they are highly revered in theory. In Hindu wedding and burial ceremonies, however, the *yajña* and chanting of Vedic mantras are still the norm.

Occasions like birth, marriage, and death involve what are often elaborate sets of religious customs. In Hinduism, lifecycle rituals include *Annaprashan* (a baby's first intake of solid food), *Upanayanam* ("sacred thread ceremony" undergone by upper-caste children at their initiation into formal education.), *Shraadh* (ritual of treating people to feasts in the name of the deceased). For most people in India, the betrothal of the young couple and the exact date and time of the wedding are matters decided by the parents in consultation with astrologers. On death, cremation is considered obligatory for all except sanyasis, hijra, and children under five. Cremation is typically performed by wrapping the corpse in cloth and burning it on a pyre.

PILGRIMAGE AND FESTIVALS

Pilgrimage is not mandatory in Hinduism though many adherents undertake them. Hindus recognise several Indian holy cities, including Allahabad, Haridwar, Varanasi, and Vrindavan. Notable temple cities include Puri, which hosts a major Vaishnava Jagannath temple and Rath Yatra celebration; Tirumala—Tirupati, home to the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple; and Katra, home to the Vaishno Devi temple. The four holy sites Puri, Rameswaram, Dwarka, and Badrinath (or alternatively the Himalayan towns of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri) compose the *Char Dham* (*four abodes*) pilgrimage circuit. The Kumbh Mela (the "pitcher festival") is one of the holiest of Hindu pilgrimages that is held every four years; the location is rotated among Allahabad, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain. Another important set of pilgrimages are the Shakti Peethas, where the Mother Goddess is worshipped, the two principal ones being Kalighat and Kamakhya.

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. Some widely observed Hindu festivals are Maha Shivaratri, Holi, Ram Navami, Krishna Janmastami,Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussera or Durga Puja, Diwali (the festival of lights).

SOCIETY

Denominations

Hinduism has no central doctrinal authority and many practising Hindus do not claim to belong to any particular denomination. However, academics categorize contemporary Hinduism into four major denominations: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism. The denominations differ primarily in the God worshipped as the Supreme One and in the traditions that accompany worship of that God.

Vaishnavas worship *Vishnu*; Shaivites worship *Shiva*; Shaktas worship *Shakti* (power) personified through a female divinity or Mother Goddess, *Devi*; while Smartists believe in the essential sameness of all deities. Other denominations like Ganapatya (the cult of *Ganesha*) and Saura (Sun worship) are not so widespread.

There are movements that are not easily placed in any of the above categories, such as Swami Dayananda Saraswati's *Arya Samaj*,

which rejects image worship and veneration of multiple deities. It focuses on the *Vedas* and the Vedic fire sacrifices (*yajña*). The Tantric traditions have various sects, as Banerji observes:

> "Tantras are ... also divided as *âstika* or Vedic and *nâstika* or non-Vedic. In accordance with the predominance of the deity the *âstika* works are again divided as Úâkta (Shakta), Úaiva (Shaiva), Saura, Gâgapatya and Vaicgava (Vaishnava)."

As in every religion, some view their own denomination as superior to others. However, many Hindus consider other denominations to be legitimate alternatives to their own. Heresy is therefore generally not an issue for Hindus.

Ashramas

Traditionally the life of a Hindu is divided into four *Âshramas* (phases or stages; unrelated meanings include monastery).

The first part of one's life, *Brahmacharya*, the stage as a student, is spent in celibate, controlled, sober and pure contemplation under the guidance of a Guru, building up the mind for spiritual knowledge. *Grihastha* is the householder's stage, in which one marries and satisfies *kâma* and *artha* in one's married and professional life respectively. The moral obligations of a Hindu householder include supporting one's parents, children, guests and holy figures. *Vânaprastha*, the retirement stage, is gradual detachment from the material world. This may involve giving over duties to one's children, spending more time in religious practices and embarking on holy pilgrimages. Finally, in *Sannyâsa*, the stage of asceticism, one renounces all worldly attachments to secludedly find the Divine through detachment from worldly life and peacefully shed the body for *Moksha*.

Monasticism

Some Hindus choose to live a monastic life (Sannyâsa) in pursuit of liberation or another form of spiritual perfection. Monastics commit themselves to a life of simplicity, celibacy, detachment from worldly pursuits, and the contemplation of God. A Hindu monk is called a *sanyâsî*, *sâdhu*, or *swâmi*. A female renunciate is called a *sanyâsini*. Renunciates receive high respect in Hindu society because their outward renunciation of selfishness and worldliness serves as an inspiration to householders who strive for *mental* renunciation. Some monastics live in monasteries, while others wander from place to place, trusting in God alone to provide for their needs. It is considered a highly meritorious

act for a householder to provide sâdhus with food or other necessaries. Sâdhus strive to treat all with respect and compassion, whether a person may be poor or rich, good or wicked, and to be indifferent to praise, blame, pleasure, and pain.

Varnas and the Class System

Hindu society has traditionally been categorised into four classes, called *Varnas* (*Sanskrit*: "colour, form, appearance");

- 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 caste system is an integral part of Hinduism sanctioned by the scriptures or an outdated social custom. Although the scriptures, since the Rigveda (10.90), contain passages that clearly sanction the *Varna* system, they contain indications that the caste system is not an essential part of the religion. Both sides in the debate can find scriptural support for their views. The oldest scriptures, the *Vedas*, strongly sustain the division of society into four classes (varna) but place little emphasis on the caste system, showing that each individual should find his strengths through different ways such as his astrological signs, actions, personality, and appearance, and do his job for the good of that individual as well as society. Being casted into a class because of what parents he was born from was a political problem and not from the actual science of the religion. A verse from the *Rig Veda* indicates that a person's occupation was not necessarily determined by that of his family:

"I am a bard, my father is a physician, my mother's job is to grind the corn." (*Rig Veda* 9.112.3) "

In the Vedic Era, there was no prohibition against the *Shudras* listening to the *Vedas* or participating in any religious rite, as was the case in the later times. Some mobility and flexibility within the *varnas* challenge allegations of social discrimination in the caste system, as has been pointed out by several sociologists.

Many social reformers, including Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar, criticised caste discrimination. The religious teacher Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) taught that

"Lovers of God do not belong to any caste.... A brahmin without this love is no longer a brahmin. And a pariah with the love of God is no

longer a pariah. Through bhakti (devotion to God) an untouchable becomes pure and elevated."

Ahimsa and Vegetarianism

Hindus advocate the practice of *ahinsâ* (non-violence) and respect for all life because divinity is believed to permeate all beings, including plants and non-human animals. The term *ahinsâ* appears in the *Upanishads*, the epic *Mahabharata* and *ahinsâ* is the first of the five *Yamas* (vows of self-restraint) in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

In accordance with, many Hindus embrace vegetarianism to respect higher forms of life. While vegetarianism is not a requirement, it is recommended for a *satvic* (purifying) lifestyle. Estimates of the number of lacto vegetarians in India (includes inhabitants of all religions) vary between 20 per cent and 42 per cent. The food habits vary with the community and region, for example, some castes having fewer vegetarians and coastal populations relying on seafood. Some Hindus avoid onion and garlic, which are regarded as *rajasic* foods. Some avoid meat on specific holy days.

Observant Hindus who do eat meat almost always abstain from beef. The largely pastoral Vedic people and subsequent generations relied heavily on the cow for protein-rich milk and dairy products, tilling of fields and as a provider of fuel and fertilizer. Thus, it was identified as a caretaker and a maternal figure. Hindu society honors the cow as a symbol of unselfish giving. Cow-slaughter is legally banned in almost all states of India.

Conversion

Since the Hindu scriptures are essentially silent on the issue of religious conversion, the question of whether Hindus should evangelize is open to interpretation. Those who see Hinduism mainly as a philosophy or a way of life generally believe that one can convert to Hinduism by incorporating Hindu beliefs into one's life and considering oneself a Hindu. Others view Hinduism as an ethnicity more than as a religion and believe one can only become a Hindu by being born into a Hindu family. Such people tend to assume that only people with Indian ancestry can be Hindus. The Supreme Court of India has taken the former view, holding that the question of whether a person is a Hindu should be determined by the person's belief system, not by their ethnic or racial heritage.

There is no formal process for converting to Hinduism, although in many traditions a ritual called *dîkshâ* ("initiation") marks the beginning

of spiritual life. Most Hindu sects do not actively recruit converts because they believe that the goals of spiritual life can be attained through any religion, as long as it is practised sincerely. Nevertheless, Hindu groups operate in various countries to provide spiritual guidance to persons of any religion. Examples include the Vedanta Society, Parisada Hindu *Dharma*, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Arya Samaj and the Self-Realisation Fellowship.

AN OVERVIEW OF HINDUISM

EARLY HISTORY OF HINDUISM

In this introduction to Hinduism there are sections on:

- Early History
- Secred Texts
- Beliefs and Practices
- Sects and Denominations

Hinduism is derived from the Persian word for Indian. It differs from Christianity and other Western religions in that it does not have a single founder, a specific theological system, a single system of morality, or religious organisation. Its roots are traceable to the Indus valley civilisation circa 4000 to 2200 BCE. Its development was influenced by many invasions over thousands of years. One of the major influences occurred when Indo-Europeans invaded Northern India (circa 1500 to 500 BCE) from the steppes of Russia and Central Asia. They brought with them their religion of Vedism. These beliefs became mixed with the indigenous Indian native beliefs.

During the first few centuries CE, many sects were created, each dedicated to a specific deity. Typical among these were the Goddesses Shakti and Lakshmi, and the Gods Skanda and Surya. Hinduism grew to become the world's third largest religion, claiming about 13 per cent of the world's population. They form the dominant religion in India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Hindus totaled 1,57,015 in Canada's 1991 census.

Sacred Texts

The most important of all Hindu texts is the *Bhagavad Gita* which is a poem describing a conversation between a warrior Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna. Vedism survives in the Rigveda, a collection of over a thousand hymns. Other texts include the Brahmanas, the Sutras, and the Aranyakas.

Hindu Beliefs and Practices

- At the heart of Hinduism is the monotheistic principle of Brahman, that all reality is a unity; the entire universe is one divine entity. Deity is simultaneously visualised as a triad:

- Brahma the Creator who is continuing to create new realities

- Vishnu, the Preserver, who preservers these new creations. Whenever *dharma* (eternal order, righteousness, religion, law and duty) is threatened, Vishnu travels from heaven to earth in one of ten incarnations.

- Shiva, the Destroyer, is at times compassionate, erotic and destructive.

Simultaneously, many hundreds of Hindu Gods and Goddesses are worshipped as various aspects of that unity. Depending upon ones view, Hinduism can be looked upon as a monotheistic, trinitarian or polytheistic religion.

The Rigveda defined five social castes. Ones caste determined the range of jobs or professions from which one could choose. Marriages normally took place within the same caste. One normally was of the same caste as one's parents. In decreasing status, the five castes are:

- Brahmins (the priests and academics)
- Kshatriyas (the military),
- Vaishyas (farmers and merchants)
- Sudras (peasants and servants).
- Harijan (the outcasts, commonly known as the untouchables).

Although the caste system was abolished by law in 1949, it remains a significant force throughout India, particularly in the south. Humans are perceived as being trapped in *samsara*, a meaningless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. *Karma* is the accumulated sum of ones good and bad deeds. *Karma* determines how you will live your next life. Through pure acts, thoughts and devotion, one can be reborn at a higher level. Eventually, one can escape *samsara* and achieve enlightenment. Bad deeds can cause a person to be reborn as a lower level, or even as an animal. The unequal distribution of wealth, prestige, suffering are thus seen as natural consequences for ones previous acts, both in this life and in previous lives.

Meditation is often practised, with Yoga being the most common. Other activities include daily devotions, public rituals, and puja a ceremonial dinner for a God.

Hindu Sects and Denominations

About 80 per cent of Hindus are Vaishnavites, who worship Lord Vishnu. Others follow various reform movements or neo-Hindu sects.

Various sects of Hinduism have evolved into separate religious movements, including Hare Krishna, Sikhism and Theosophy. Transcendental Meditation was derived from a Hindu technique of meditation. The New Age movement has taken many of its concepts from Hinduism.

Holy Days in Hinduism

1. Maha Shivarathri, is a festival dedicated to Shiva in mid-February.

2. Holi, a spring festival, is held in early March. It is a carnival-like celebration featuring bright colours, bonfires, and pilgrimages. It is dedicated to Krishna or Kama, the God of Pleasure.

3. Ramnavami, the anniversary of the birth of Lord Rama, is held in late March. Rama was an incarnation of Vishnu.

4. Wesak, the birthday of the Lord Buddha is celebrated in early April by Buddhists in the Mahayana tradition.

5. Dusserah, a festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil is in early October. It is derived from early Hindu stories of struggles between a Goddess and a demon.

6. Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights is held in mid-November. It is mainly dedicated to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. It is the Hindu new year.

HINDU PHILOSOPHY

In the history of the Indian subcontinent, following the establishment of Vedic culture, the development of philosophical and religious thought over a period of two millennia gave rise to what came to be called the six schools of *aastika*, or orthodox, Indian philosophy or Hindu philosophy. These schools have come to be synonymous with the greater religion of Hinduism, which was a development of the early Vedic Religion.

DARSHANAS

Hindu philosophy is divided into six orthodox (Sanskrit *âstika*) schools of thought, or *darshanas*, listed below.

Sankhya

Sankhya is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems in Hinduism. Samkhya postulates that everything in reality stems from purusha (Self or soul) and prakriti (Matter, creative agency, energy). There are many souls and they possess consciousness, but they are devoid of all qualities. *Prakriti*/Matter consists of three dispositions: steadiness (sattva), activity (rajas), and dullness (tamas), known as the three gunas, or qualities. Because of the intertwined relationship between the soul and these dispositions, an imbalance in disposition causes the world to evolve. Liberation occurs with the realisation that the soul and the dispositions are different. Samkhya is a dualistic philosophy, but there are differences between Samkhya and other forms of dualism. In the West, dualism is between the mind and the body, whereas in Samkhya it is between the self and matter. The concept of the self is roughly equivalent to the Western concept of the mind. Samkhya was originally not theistic, but in confluence with Yoga it developed a theistic variant.

Yoga

In Indian philosophy, Yoga is the name of one of the six orthodox philosophical schools. The Yoga philosophical system is closely allied with the Samkhya school. The Yoga school as expounded by Patanjali accepts the Samkhya psychology and metaphysics, but is more theistic than the Samkhya, as evidenced by the addition of a divine entity to the Samkhya's twenty-five elements of reality. The parallels between Yoga and Samkhya were so close that Max Müller says that "the two philosophies were in popular parlance distinguished from each other as Samkhya with and Samkhya without a Lord...." The intimate relationship between Samkhya and Yoga is explained by Heinrich Zimmer:

> "These two are regarded in India as twins, the two aspects of a single discipline. SâEkhya provides a basic theoretical exposition of human nature, enumerating and defining its elements, analysing their manner of co-operation in a state of bondage (*bandha*), and describing their state of disentanglement or separation in release (*mokca*), while Yoga treats specifically of the dynamics of the process for the disentanglement, out outlines practical techniques for the gaining of release, or 'isolation-integration' (*kaivalya*)."

The foundational text of the Yoga school is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, who is regarded as the founder of the formal Yoga philosophy. The Sutras of the Yoga philosophy are ascribed to Patanjali, who, may

have been, as Max Müller explains, "the author or representative of the Yoga-philosophy without being necessarily the author of the Sutras."

Nyaya

The Nyaya school is based on the Nyaya Sutras. They were written by Aksapada Gautama, probably in the second century B.C.E. The most important contribution made by this school is its methodology. This methodology is based on a system of logic that has subsequently been adopted by the majority of the Indian schools. This is comparable to the relationship between Western science and philosophy, which was derived largely from Aristotelian logic.

Nevertheless, Nyaya was seen by its followers as more than logical in its own right. They believed that obtaining valid knowledge was the only way to gain release from suffering, and they took great pains to identify valid sources of knowledge and distinguish these from mere false opinions. According to Nyaya, there are exactly four sources of knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony. Knowledge obtained through each of these is either valid or invalid. Nyaya developed several criteria of validity. In this sense, Nyaya is probably the closest Indian equivalent to analytic philosophy. The later Naiyanikas gave logical proofs for the existence and uniqueness of Ishvara in response to Buddhism, which, at that time, was fundamentally non-theistic. An important later development in Nyaya was the system of *Navya-NyÄ•ya*.

Vaisheshika

The Vaisheshika school was founded by Kanada and postulates an atomic pluralism. All objects in the physical universe are reducible to certain types of atoms, and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms.

Although the Vaisheshika school developed independently from the Nyaya, the two eventually merged because of their closely related metaphysical theories. In its classical form, however, the Vaisheshika school differed from the Nyaya in one crucial respect: where Nyaya accepted four sources of valid knowledge, the Vaisheshika accepted only two—perception and inference.

Purva Mimamsa

The main objective of the Purva Mimamsa school was to establish the authority of the *Vedas*. Consequently, this school's most valuable contribution to Hinduism was its formulation of the rules of Vedic

interpretation. Its adherents believe that one must have unquestionable faith in the *Vedas* and perform the *yajñas*, or fire-sacrifices, regularly. They believe in the power of the mantras and yajñas to sustain all the activity of the universe. In keeping with this belief, they place great emphasis on *dharma*, which consists of the performance of Vedic rituals.

The Mimamsa accepted the logical and philosophical teachings of the other schools, but felt they did not sufficiently emphasize attention to right action. They believed that the other schools of thought that aimed for release (*moksha*) did not allow for complete freedom from desire and selfishness, because the very striving for liberation stemmed from a simple desire to be free. According to Mimamsa thought, only by acting in accordance with the prescriptions of the *Vedas* may one attain salvation.

The Mimamsa school later shifted its views and began to teach the doctrines of Brahman and freedom. Its adherents then advocated the release or escape of the soul from its constraints through enlightened activity. Although Mimamsa does not receive much scholarly attention, its influence can be felt in the life of the practising Hindu, because all Hindu ritual, ceremony, and law is influenced by this school.

Vedanta

The Vedanta, or later Mimamsa school, concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the *Upanishads* rather than the ritualistic injunctions of the Brahmanas.

While the traditional Vedic rituals continued to be practised as meditative and propitiatory rites, a more knowledge-centered understanding began to emerge. These were mystical aspects of Vedic religion that focused on meditation, self-discipline, and spiritual connectivity, more than traditional ritualism.

The more abstruse Vedanta is the essence of the *Vedas*, as encapsulated in the *Upanishads*. Vedantic thought drew on Vedic cosmology, hymns and philosophy. The Brihadaranyaka *Upanishad* is believed to have appeared as far back as 3,000 years ago. While thirteen or so *Upanishads* are accepted as principal, over a hundred exist. The most significant contribution of Vedantic thought is the idea that self-consciousness is continuous with and indistinguishable from consciousness of Brahman.

The aphorisms of the *Vedanta sutras* are presented in a cryptic, poetic style, which allows for a variety of interpretations. Consequently,

the *Vedanta* separated into six sub-schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own series of sub-commentaries. Four of them are given here.

Advaita

Advaita is probably the best-known of all *Vedanta* schools. *Advaita* literally means "non-duality." Its first great consolidator was Adi Shankaracharya (788-820), who continued the line of thought of some of the Upanishadic teachers, and that of his teacher's teacher Gaudapada. By analysing the three states of experience——waking, dreaming, and deep sleep——he established the singular reality of Brahman, in which the soul and Brahman are one and the same. *Ishvara* is the manifestation of Brahman to human minds under the influence of an illusionary power called *Avidya*.

Visishtadvaita

Ramanujacharya (1040-1137) was the foremost proponent of the concept of the Supreme Being having a definite form, name, and attributes. He saw this form as that of Vishnu, and taught that reality has three aspects: Vishnu, soul (jiva), and matter (prakrti). Vishnu is the only independent reality, while souls and matter are dependent on Vishnu for their existence. Thus, Ramanuja's system is known as *qualified* non-dualism.

Dvaita

Like Ramanuja, Madhvacharya (1218-1317) identified Brahman with Vishnu, but his view of reality was pluralistic. According to Dvaita, there are three ultimate realities: Vishnu, soul, and matter. Five distinctions are made: (1) Vishnu is distinct from souls; (2) Vishnu is distinct from matter; (3) Souls are distinct from matter; (4) A soul is distinct from another soul, and (5) Matter is distinct from other matter. Souls are eternal and are dependent upon the will of Vishnu. This theology attempts to addresses the problem of evil with the idea that souls are not created.

Dvaitadvaita (Bhedabheda)

Dvaitadvaita was proposed by Nimbarka, a 13th century Vaishnava Philosopher from the Andhra region. According to this philosophy there are three categories of existence: Brahman, soul, and matter. Soul and matter are different from Brahman in that they have attributes and capacities different from Brahman. Brahman exists independently,

while soul and matter are dependent. Thus, soul and matter have an existence that is separate yet dependent. Further, Brahman is a controller, the soul is the enjoyer, and matter the thing enjoyed. Also, the highest object of worship is Krishna and his consort Radha, attended by thousands of *gopis*, or cowherdesses; of the celestial Vrindavana; and devotion consists in self-surrender.

Shuddhadvaita

Shuddhadvaita was proposed by Vallabhacharya (1479—1531), who came from the Andhra region but eventually settled in Gujarat.

Acintya Bheda Abheda

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534), a devotee of Krishna, proposed a synthesis between the monist and dualist philosophies by stating that the soul is both distinct and non-distinct from God, whom he identified as Krishna, and that this, although unthinkable, may be experienced through a process of loving devotion (*bhakti*). This philosophy of "inconceivable oneness and difference" is followed by a number of modern Gaudiya Vaishnava movements, including ISKCON, sometimes called the *Hare Krishna* movement. ISKCON has recently participated in bringing the academic study of Krishna-related philosophies into Western academia through the theological discourse on Krishnology.

HINDUISM BY COUNTRY

The percentage of Hindu population of each country was taken from the US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*. Other sources used were CIA Factbook and adherents.com. The total population of each country was taken from census.gov (2007 estimates).

BY COUNTRY

Hinduism by Country

Region	Country	Total Popu-lation (2007 est)	% of Hindus	Hindu total
Central Asia	Afghanistan	31,889,923	0.4%	127,560
Balkans	Albania	3,600,523	n/a	n/a
North Africa	Algeria	32,531,853	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	Angola	12,263,596	n/a	n/a
South America	Argentina	40,301,927	0.01%	4,030
Middle East	Armenia	2,971,650	n/a	n/a

Oceania	Australia	20,434,176	0.5%	102,171
Central Europe	Austria	8,199,783	0.1% (approx)	8,200
Middle East	Azerbaijan	8,120,247	n/a	n/a
Middle East	Bahrain	708,573	6.25%	44,286
South Asia	Bangladesh	150,448,339	9.2%—10.5%	13,841,247—15,797,076
Eastern Europe	Belarus	9,724,723	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Belgium	10,392,226	0.06%	6,235
Central America	Belize	294,385	2.3%	6,771
West Africa	Benin	8,078,314	n/a	n/a
South Asia	Bhutan	2,327,849	2%—25%	46,557—581,962
South America	Bolivia	9,119,152	n/a	n/a
Balkans	Bosnia and Herzegovina	4,552,198	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	Botswana	1,815,508	0.17%	3,086
South America	Brazil	190,010,647	0.0016%	3,040
Southeast Asia	Brunei	374,577	0.035%	131
Balkans	Bulgaria	7,322,858	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Burkina Faso	14,326,203	n/a	n/a
Central Africa	Burundi	8,390,505	0.1%	8,391
Southeast Asia	Cambodia	13,995,904	0.3%	41,988
West Africa	Cameroon	18,060,382	n/a	n/a
North America	Canada	33,390,141	1%	333,901
Central Africa	Central African Republic	4,369,038	n/a	n/a
Central Africa	Chad	9,885,661	n/a	n/a
South America	Chile	16,284,741	n/a	n/a
East Asia	China	1,321,851,888	n/a	n/a
South America	Colombia	44,379,598	0.02%	8,876
East Africa	Comoros	711,417	0.1% (approx)	711
Central Africa	Congo (Brazzaville)	3,800,610	n/a	n/a
Central Africa	Congo (Kinshasa)	65,751,512	0.18%	118,353
Central America	Costa Rica	4,133,884	n/a	n/a
Balkans	Croatia	4,493,312	0.01% (approx)	449
North America	Cuba	11,394,043	0.21%	23,927
Middle East	Cyprus	788,457	n/a	n/a
Central Europe	Czech Republic	10,228,744	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Côte d'Ivoire	18,013,409	0.1%	18,013
Western Europe	Denmark	5,468,120	0.1%	5,468
East Africa	Djibouti	496,374	0.02%	99
Caribbean	Dominica	72,386	0.2%	145
Caribbean	Dominican Republic	9,365,818	n/a	n/a
Southeast Asia	East Timor	1,084,971	n/a	n/a
South America	Ecuador	13,755,680	n/a	n/a
North Africa	Egypt	80,335,036	n/a	n/a
Central America	El Salvador	6,948,073	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Eritrea	4,906,585	0.1% (approx)	4,907

Eastern Europe	Estonia	1,315,912	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Ethiopia	76,511,887	n/a	n/a
Oceania	Fiji	918,675	30% – 33%	275,603—303,163
Western Europe	Finland	5,238,460	0.01%	524
Western Europe	France	63,718,187	0.1%	63,718
West Africa	Gabon	1,454,867	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Gambia	1,688,359	n/a	n/a
Middle East	Georgia	4,646,003	0.01% (approx)	465
Western Europe	Germany	82,400,996	0.119%	98,057
West Africa	Ghana	22,931,299	0.05% (approx)	11,466
Balkans	Greece	10,706,290	n/a	n/a
Caribbean	Grenada	89,971	0.7%	630
Central America	Guatemala	12,728,111	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Guinea	9,947,814	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Guinea-Bissau	1,472,780	n/a	n/a
South America	Guyana	769,095	28.3%- 33%	217,654—253,801
Caribbean	Haiti	8,706,497	n/a	n/a
Central America	Honduras	7,483,763	n/a	n/a
Central Europe	Hungary	9,956,108	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Iceland	301,931	n/a	n/a
South Asia	India	1,129,866,154	80.5%	909,542,254
Southeast Asia	Indonesia	234,693,997	2%	4,693,880
Middle East	Iran	65,397,521	0.02% (appox)	13,079
Middle East	Iraq	27,499,638	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Ireland	4,109,086	0.08%	3,100
Middle East	Israel	6,426,679	0.1% (appox)	6,427
Western Europe	Italy	58,147,733	0.02% (appox)	11,630
Caribbean	Jamaica	2,780,132	0.06%	1,668
East Asia	Japan	127,433,494	0.004% (approx)	5,097
Middle East	Jordan	6,053,193	n/a	n/a
Central Asia	Kazakhstan	15,284,929	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Kenya	36,913,721	1%	369,137
East Asia	Korea, North	23,301,725	n/a	n/a
East Asia	Korea, South	49,044,790	0.005% (appox)	2,452
Middle East	Kuwait	2,505,559	12%	300,667
Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	5,284,149	n/a	n/a
Southeast Asia	Laos	6,521,998	n/a	n/a
Eastern Europe	Latvia	2,259,810	0.006%	136
Middle East	Lebanon	3,925,502	0.1% (approx)	3,926
Southern Africa	Lesotho	2,125,262	0.1% (approx)	2,125
West Africa	Liberia	3,195,931	0.1% (approx)	3,196
North Africa	Libya	6,036,914	0.1%	6,037
Eastern Europe	Lithuania	3,575,439	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Luxembourg	480,222	0.07% (approx)	336
Balkans	Macedonia	2,055,915	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	Madagascar	19,448,815	0.1%	19,449

Southern Africa	Malawi	13,603,181	0.02%—0.2%	2,721—27,206
Southeast Asia	Malaysia	24,821,286	6.3%	1,563,741
South Asia	Maldives	369,031	0.01%	37
West Africa	Mali	11,995,402	n/a	n/a
North Africa	Mauritania	3,270,065	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	Mauritius	1,250,882	48%—50%	600,423—625,441
North America	Mexico	108,700,891	n/a	n/a
Eastern Europe	Moldova	4,328,816	0.01% (approx)	433
Central Asia	Mongolia	2,951,786	n/a	n/a
Balkans	Montenegro	684,736	n/a	n/a
North Africa	Morocco	33,757,175	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	Mozambique	20,905,585	0.05%—0.2%	10,453—41,811
Southeast Asia	Myanmar	47,373,958	0.5%	236,870
Southern Africa	Namibia	2,055,080	n/a	n/a
South Asia	Nepal	28,901,790	80.6%—81%	23,294,843—23,410,450
Western Europe	Netherlands	16,570,613	0.58%	96,110
Oceania	New Zealand	4,115,771	1%	41,158
Central America	Nicaragua	5,675,356	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Niger	12,894,865	n/a	n/a
West Africa	Nigeria	135,031,164	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Norway	4,627,926	0.5%	23,140
Middle East	Oman	3,204,897	3%—5.7%	96,147—182,679
South Asia	Pakistan	164,741,924	1.5%—2.02%	2,471,129—3,327,787
Middle East	Palestine	4,018,332	n/a	n/a
Central America	Panama	3,242,173	0.3%	9,726
Oceania	Papua New Guinea	5,795,887	n/a	n/a
South America	Paraguay	6,669,086	n/a	n/a
South America	Peru	28,674,757	n/a	n/a
Southeast Asia	Philippines	91,077,287	0.05% (approx)	45,539
Central Europe	Poland	38,518,241	n/a	n/a
Western Europe	Portugal	10,642,836	0.07%	7,396
Caribbean	Puerto Rico	3,944,259	0.09%	3,550
Middle East	Qatar	907,229	7.2%	65,320
East Africa	Réunion	784,000	6.7%	52,528
Balkans	Romania	22,276,056	n/a	n/a
Eastern Europe	Russia	141,377,752	0.043%	60,792
East Africa	Rwanda	9,907,509	n/a	n/a
Middle East	Saudi Arabia	27,601,038	0.6%—1.1%	165,606—303,611
West Africa	Senegal	12,521,851	n/a	n/a
Balkans	Serbia	10,150,265	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Seychelles	81,895	2%	1,638
West Africa	Sierra Leone	6,144,562	0.04%- 0.1%	2,458—6,145
Southeast Asia	Singapore	4,553,009	4%	262,120
Central Europe	Slovakia	5,447,502	0.1% (approx)	5,448
Central Europe	Slovenia	2,009,245	n/a	n/a

East Africa	Somalia	9,118,773	n/a	n/a
Southern Africa	South Africa	43,997,828	1.25%	549,973
Western Europe	Spain	40,448,191	n/a	n/a
South Asia	Sri Lanka	20,926,315	7.1%—15%	1,485,768—3,138,947
North Africa	Sudan	39,379,358	n/a	n/a
South America	Suriname	470,784	20%- 27.4%	94,157—128,995
Southern Africa	Swaziland	1,133,066	0.15%—0.2%	1,700—2,266
Western Europe	Sweden	9,031,088	0.078%—0.12%	7,044—10,837
Western Europe	Switzerland	7,554,661	0.38%	28,708
Middle East	Syria	19,314,747	n/a	n/a
East Asia	Taiwan	22,858,872	n/a	n/a
Central Asia	Tajikistan	7,076,598	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Tanzania	39,384,223	0.9%	354,458
Southeast Asia	Thailand	65,068,149	0.0045%	2,928
West Africa	Togo	5,701,579	n/a	n/a
Caribbean	Trinidad and Tobago	1,056,608	22.5%	237,737
North Africa	Tunisia	10,276,158	n/a	n/a
Middle East	Turkey	71,158,647	n/a	n/a
Central Asia	Turkmenistan	5,097,028	n/a	n/a
East Africa	Uganda	30,262,610	0.2%—0.8%	60,525—242,101
Eastern Europe	Ukraine	46,299,862	n/a	n/a
Middle East	United Arab Emirates	4,444,011	21.25%	944,352
Western Europe	United Kingdom	60,776,238	1%	607,762
North America	United States	301,139,947	0.4%	1,204,560
South America	Uruguay	3,460,607	n/a	n/a
Central Asia	Uzbekistan	27,780,059	0.01% (approx)	2,778
South America	Venezuela	26,023,528	n/a	n/a
Southeast Asia	Vietnam	85,262,356	0.059%	50,305
North Africa	Western Sahara	382,617	n/a	n/a
Middle East	Yemen	22,230,531	0.7%	155,614
Southern Africa	Zambia	11,477,447	0.14%	16,068
Southern Africa	Zimbabwe	12,311,143	0.1%	123,111
Total		6,671,226,000	14,468% –14,553%	965,211,399 –970,921,642

By Region

These percentages were calculated by using the above numbers. The first percentage, 4th column, is the percentage of population that is Hindu in a region (Hindus in the region 100/total population of the region). The last column shows the Hindu percentage compared to the total Hindu population of the world (Hindus in the region 100/total Hindu population of the world).

(Note: Egypt, Sudan, and other Arab Maghreb countries are counted as part of North Africa, not Middle East).

Hinduism in Africa

Region	Total Population	Hindus	% of Hindus	% of Hindu total
Central Africa	83,121,055	0	0%	0%
East Africa	193,741,900	667,694	0.345%	0.071%
North Africa	202,151,323	5,765	0.003%	0.001%
Southern Africa	137,092,019	1,269,844	0.926%	0.135%
West Africa	268,997,245	70,402	0.026%	0.007%
Total	**885,103,542**	**2,013,705**	**0.228%**	**0.213%**

Hinduism in Asia

Region	Total Population	Hindus	% of Hindus	% of Hindu total
Central Asia	92,019,166	149,644	0.163%	0.016%
East Asia	1,527,960,261	130,631	0.009%	0.014%
Middle East	274,775,527	792,872	0.289%	0.084%
South Asia	1,437,326,682	929,515,433	64.67%	98.475%
Southeast Asia	571,337,070	6,386,614	1.118%	0.677%
Total	**3,903,418,706**	**936,975,194**	**24.004%**	**99.266%**

Hinduism in Europe

Region	Total Population	Hindus	% of Hindus	% of Hindu total
Central Africa	83,121,055	0	0%	0%
Balkans	65,407,609	0	0%	0%
Central Europe	74,510,241	163	0%	0%
Eastern Europe	212,821,296	717,101	0.337%	0.076%
Western Europe	375,832,557	1,306,052	0.348%	0.138%
Total	**728,571,703**	**2,023,316**	**0.278%**	**0.214%**

Hinduism in The Americas

Region	Total Population	Hindus	% of Hindus	% of Hindu total
Caribbean	24,898,266	279,515	1.123%	0.030%
Central America	41,135,205	5,833	0.014%	0.006%
North America	446,088,748	1,806,720	0.405%	0.191%
South America	371,075,531	389,869	0.105%	0.041%
Total	**883,197,750**	**2,481,937**	**0.281%**	**0.263%**

Hinduism in Oceania

Region	Total Population	Hindus	% of Hindus	% of Hindu total
Oceania	30,564,520	411,907	1.348%	0.044%

== Top 25 ==

Top 25 by population on the left and by percentage on the right.

Top 25

Rank	Country	Hindu	% Hindu Population	Country	% Hindu	Hindu Population
1.	India	885,816,798	80%	India	80%	885,816,798
2.	Nepal	21,919,825	82%	Nepal	79.2	21,919,825
3.	Indonesia	16,938,171	7%	Mauritius	52%	615,301
4.	Bangladesh	15,473,362	10.5%	Guyana	35%	267,849
5.	Pakistan	3,026,600	1.02%	Suriname	27%	118,298
6.	Fiji	294,882	0.6%	Trinidad & Tobago	22.5%	244,944
7.	Philippines	1,757,150	2%	Sri Lanka	15%	3,009,806
8.	Malaysia	1,509,047	6.3%	Bangladesh	10.5%	15,473,362
9.	United States	1,478,670	0.5%	Bahrain	7.7%	53,002
10.	United Kingdom	906,621	1.5%	United Arab Emirates	7.5%	192,240
11.	Russia	717,101	0.5%	Malaysia	6.3%	1,509,047
12.	Mauritius	615,301	50%	Singapore	4%	177,028
13.	Bhutan	44,645	2%	Pakistan	1.85%	3,026,600
14.	South Africa	532,129	1.2%	Bhutan	2%	44,645
15.	Kenya	338,295	1%	Philippines	2%	1,757,150
16.	Canada	328,050	1%	Kuwait	2%	46,712
17.	Fiji	294,806	33%	Grenada	2%	1,790
18.	Guyana	267,849	35%	Indonesia	1.81%	4,379,727
19.	Saudi Arabia	264,175	1%	United Kingdom	1.5%	906,621
20.	Trinidad and Tobago	244,944	22.5%	South Africa	1.2%	532,129
21.	Uganda	218,155	0.8%	Jamaica	1.2%	32,781
22.	Myanmar	214,547	0.5%	New Zealand	1.01%	40,758
23.	United Arab Emirates	192,240	7.5%	Kenya	1%	338,295
24.	Singapore	177,028	4%	Canada	1%	328,050
25.	Netherlands	164,074	1%	Saudi Arabia	1%	264,175

KARMA IN HINDUISM

Karma is a concept in Hinduism which explains causality through a system where beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions and harmful effects from past harmful actions, creating a system of actions and reactions throughout a person's reincarnated lives.

The doctrine of transmigration of the soul, or fateful retribution for acts committed, does not appear in the *Rig Veda*. The concept of *karma* appeared in Hindu thought during the period 800-200 BC and became widespread during the period considered as "Classical Hinduism" 200 BC-1100 AD.

Axel Michaels explains that codification of these ideas appeared only in late texts, and then as only one of many explanations for why things happen as they do:

> With the early *Upanicads*, diverse and incoherent speculations about the transmigration of the soul appeared, which were expanded into a ramified system in the legal texts and PurâGas. Only with these texts do we find the concept of the repeated transmigration linked with desires for deliverance from the eternal cycle of rebirth... and a continuous ethicisation of retribution for acts in the form of catalogues of new existences. Thus, the doctrine of *Karma* is a theodicy, and explanation of the suffering and unjust earthly world as a result of previous acts, and an eschatology, a doctrine of liberation. Both doctrines do not belong together in every case, and countless other explanations for fate exist alongside them.

DEFINITION

"*Karma*" literally means "deed" or "act", and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction, which Hindus believe governs all life. It is believed that only beings that can distinguish right from wrong, such as adult humans, can accumulate *Karma*. Animals and young children are not responsible to accumulate *Karma* as they are incapable of discriminating between right and wrong. However, all sentient beings can feel the effects of *Karma*, which are pleasure and pain. *Karma* is not fate; humans are believed to act with free will, creating their own destinies. According to the Vedas, if an individual sows goodness, he or she will reap goodness; if one sows evil, he or she will reap evil. *Karma* refers to the totality of mankind's actions and their concomitant reactions in current and previous lives, all of which determine the future. However, many *karmas* do not have an immediate effect; some accumulate and return unexpectedly in an individual's later lives. The conquest of *karma* is believed to lie in intelligent action and dispassionate reaction.

Unkindness yields spoiled fruits, called *paap*, and good deeds bring forth sweet fruits, called *punya*. As one acts, so does he become: one becomes virtuous by virtuous action, and evil by evil action.

There are three types of *karma* in Hinduism:

1. *sanchita karma*, the sum total of past *karmas* yet to be resolved;
2. *prarabdha karma*, that portion of *sanchita karma* that is to be experienced in this life; and
3. *kriyamana karma*, the *karma* that humans are currently creating, which will bear fruit in future.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami explains in the lexicon section of his book, *Dancing with Siva*, that *karma* literally means "deed or act" and more broadly names the universal principle of cause and effect, action and reaction which governs all life. As he explains it, *karma* is not fate, for man acts with free will creating his own destiny. The *Vedas* tell us that if we sow goodness, we will reap goodness; if we sow evil, we will reap evil. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami further notes that *karma* refers to the totality of our actions and their concomitant reactions in this and previous lives, all of which determine our future. The conquest of *karma* lies in intelligent action and dispassionate reaction. Not all *karmas* rebound immediately. Some accumulate and return unexpectedly in this or other births.

THE ROLE OF DIVINE FORCES

Several different views exist in Hinduism regarding the role of divine beings. In Hinduism, many see the *devas* as playing some kind of role. Still others such as followers of *Vedanta* consider *Ishvara*, a personal supreme God, as playing that role. Examples of a personal supreme God include Shiva in Shaivism or Vishnu in Vaishnavism. Other Hindus, such as the Mimamsakas, reject such notions of divinity being responsible and see *karma* as acting independently, considering the natural laws of causation sufficient to explain the effects of *karma*.

These differing views are explicitly noted in a series of passes in the *Brahma Sutras* (III.2.38-40), an important text in *Vedanta*, the major school of Hinduism, which endorses the concept of *Ishvara* i.e., a personal supreme God, as the source of fruits of *karma*, but note opposing views in order to refute them. For example, Swami Sivananda's commentary on verse III.2.38 from the *Brahma Sutras* refers to the role of *Ishvara* (the Lord) as the dispenser of the fruits of *karma*. A commentary by Swami Vireswarananda on the same verse says that the purpose of

this verse is specifically to refute the views of the Mimamsakas, who say that *karma* (work) and not *Ishvara*, gives the fruits of one's actions. According to the Mimamsakas it is useless to set up an *Ishvara* for that purpose, since *Karma* itself can give the result at a future time.

Some interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gita* suggest an intermediate view, that *karma* is a law of cause and effect yet God can mitigate *karma* for His devotees. Another view holds that a Sadguru, acting on God's behalf, can mitigate or work out some of the *karma* of the disciple.

Two Examples from the Puranas

The story of Markandeya, who was saved from death by Siva, illustrates that God's grace can overcome *Karma* and death for His beloved devotee.

The story of Ajamila in the Bhagavata Purana also illustrates the same point. Ajamila had committed many evil deeds during his life such as stealing, abandoning his wife and children, and marrying a prostitute. But at the moment of death, he involuntarily chanted the name of Narayana and therefore received *Moksha* or union with God, and was saved from the messengers of Yama. Ajamila was actually thinking of his youngest son, whose name was also Narayana. But the name of God has powerful effects, and Ajamila was forgiven for his great sins and attained salvation, despite his bad *Karma*.

VIEWS OF HINDU TRADITIONS ON KARMA

Scriptures divide *Karma* into three kinds: *Sanchita* (accumulated), *Prarabdha* (fruit-bearing) and *Kriyamana* (current) *karma*. All *kriyamana karmas* become *sanchita karma* upon completion. From this stock of *sanchita karma*, a handful is taken out to serve one lifetime and this handful of actions which has begun to bear fruit and which will be exhausted only on their fruit being enjoyed and not otherwise, is known as *prarabdha karma*. In this way, so long as the stock of *sanchita karma* lasts, a part of it continues to be taken out as *prarabdha karma* for being enjoyed in one lifetime, leading to the cycles of birth and death. A *jiva* cannot attain *Moksha* until the accumulated *sanchita karmas* are completely exhausted.

Advaita Vedanta

Shankara: Swami Sivananda's Translation

Swami Sivananda, an Advaita scholar, reiterates the same views in his commentary synthesising *Vedanta* views on the Brahma Sutras,

a Vedantic text. In his commentary on Chapter 3 of the Brahma Sutras, Sivananda notes that *karma* is insentient and short-lived, and ceases to exist as soon as a deed is executed. Hence, *karma* cannot bestow the fruits of actions at a future date according to one's merit. Furthermore, one cannot argue that *karma* generates apurva or punya, which gives fruit. Since *apurva* is non-sentient, it cannot act unless moved by an intelligent being such as God. It cannot independently bestow reward or punishment.

There is a passage from Swami Sivananda's translation of the Svetasvatara *Upanishad* (4:6) illustrating this concept:

Two birds of beautiful plumage—inseparable friends—live on the same tree. Of these two one eats the sweet fruit while the other looks on without eating.

In his commentary, the first bird represents the individual soul, while the second represents Brahman or God. The soul is essentially a reflection of Brahman. The tree represents the body. The soul identifies itself with the body, reaps the fruits of its actions, and undergoes rebirth. The Lord alone stands as an eternal witness, ever contented, and does not eat, for he is the director of both the eater and the eaten.

Swami Sivananda also notes that God is free from charges of partiality and cruelty which are brought against him because of social inequality, fate, and universal suffering in the world. According to the Brahma Sutras, individual souls are responsible for their own fate; God is merely the dispenser and witness with reference to the merit and demerit of souls.

In his commentary on Chapter 2 of the Brahma Sutras, Sivananda further notes that the position of God with respect to *karma* can be explained through the analogy of rain. Although rain can be said to bring about the growth of rice, barley and other plants, the differences in various species is due to the diverse potentalities lying hidden in the respective seeds. Thus, Sivananda explains that differences between classes of beings are due to different merits belonging to individual souls. He concludes that God metes rewards and punishments only in consideration of the specific actions of beings.

NYAYA

The Nyaya school, one of six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, states that one of the proofs of the existence of God is *karma*. It is seen that some people in this world are happy, some are in misery. Some are rich and some poor. The Naiyanikas explain this by the concept of *Karma* and reincarnation. The fruit of an individual's actions does not

always lie within the reach of the individual who is the agent. There ought to be, therefore, a dispenser of the fruits of actions, and this supreme dispenser is God. This belief of *Nyaya*, accordingly, is the same as that of *Vedanta*.

SHAIVISM

Thirugana Sambanthar

Thirugana Sambanthar writes about *karma* in his outline of Saivism. He explains the concept of *karma* in Hinduism by distinguishing it from that of Buddhism and Jainism, which do not require the existence of an external being like God. In their beliefs, just as a calf among a large number of cows can find its mother at suckling time, so also does *karma* find the specific individual it needs to attach to and come to fruition. However Hindus posit that *karma*, unlike the calf, is an unintelligent entity. Hence, *karma* cannot locate the appropriate person by itself. Shri Sambantha concludes that an intelligent Supreme Being with perfect wisdom and power (Shiva, for example) is necessary to make *karma* attach to the appropriate individual. In such sense, God is the Divine Accountant.

Appaya Dikshita

Appaya Dikshita, a Saivite theologian and proponent of Siva Advaita, states that Siva (God) only awards happiness and misery in accordance with the law of *karma*. Thus persons themselves perform good or evil actions according to their own, inclinations as acquired in past creations, and in accordance with those deeds, a new creation is made for the fulfilment of the law of *karma*. Shaivas believe that there are cycles of creations in which souls gravitate to specific bodies in accordance with *karma*, which as an unintelligent object depends on the will of Siva alone. Thus, many interpret the caste system in accordance with *karma*, as those with good deeds are born into a highly spiritual family (probably the *brahmana* caste).

Srikantha

Srikantha, another Saivite theologian, believes that individual souls themselves do things which may be regarded as the cause of their particular actions, or desisting from particular actions, in accordance with the nature of the fruition of their past deeds. Srikantha further believes that Siva only helps a person when he wishes to act in a particular way or to desist from a particular action. Regarding the view that *karma* produce their own effects directly, Srikantha holds

that *karma* being without any intelligence cannot be expected to produce manifold effects through various births and various bodies; rather fruits of one's *karma* can be performed only by the will of God operating in consonance with man's free will, or as determined in later stages by man's own *karma* so the prints of all *karma* are distributed in the proper order by the grace of God Shiva. In this way, God is ultimately responsible on one hand for our actions, and on the other for enjoyment and suffering in accordance with our *karmas*, without any prejudice to humans' moral responsibility as expressed through free will or as determined later by our own deeds.

VAISHNAVISM

Ramanuja addresses the problem of evil by attributing all evil things in life to the accumulation of evil *karma* of jivas (human souls) and maintains that God is amala, or without any stain of evil.

Madhva

Madhva, the founder of the Dvaita school, on the other hand, believes that there must be a root cause for variations in *karma* even if *karma* is accepted as having no beginning and being the cause of the problem of evil. Since jivas have different kinds of *karma*, from good to bad, all must not have started with same type of *karma* from the beginning of time. Thus, Madhva concludes that the jivas are not God's creation as in the Christian doctrine, but are rather entities co-existent with Vishnu, although under His absolute control. Souls are thus dependent on Him in their pristine nature and in all transformations that they may undergo.

According to Madhva, God, although He has control, does not interfere with Man's free will; although He is omnipotent, that does not mean that He engages in extraordinary feats. Rather, God enforces a rule of law and, in accordance with the just deserts of jivas, gives them freedom to follow their own nature. Thus, God functions as the sanctioner or as the divine accountant, and accordingly jivas are free to work according to their innate nature and their accumulated *karma*, good and bad. Since God acts as the sanctioner, the ultimate power for everything comes from God and the jiva only utilises that power, according to his/her innate nature. However, like Shankara's interpretation of the Brahma Sutras as mentioned earlier, Madhava, agrees that the rewards and punishments bestowed by God are regulated by Him in accordance with the good and sinful deeds performed by them, and He does so of out of His own will to keep himself firm in

justice and he cannot be controlled in His actions by *karma* of human beings nor can He be accused of partiality or cruelty to anyone.

Swami Tapasyananda further explains the Madhva view by illustrating the doctrine with this analogy: the power in a factory comes from the powerhouse (God), but the various cogs (*jivas*) move in a direction in which they are set. Thus, he concludes that no charge of partiality and cruelty can be brought against God. The jiva is the actor and also the enjoyer of the fruits of his/her own actions.

Madhva differed significantly from traditional Hindu beliefs, owing to his concept of eternal damnation. For example, he divides souls into three classes: one class of souls which qualify for liberation (*Mukti-yogyas*), another subject to eternal rebirth or eternal transmigration (Nitya-samsarins), and a third class that is eventually condemned to eternal hell or Andhatamas (Tamo-yogyas). No other Hindu philosopher or school of Hinduism holds such beliefs. In contrast, most Hindus believe in universal salvation: that all souls will eventually obtain *moksha*, even if it is after millions of rebirths.

Gita Interpretations and Role of Guru

Some interpretations of certain verses in the *Bhagavad Gita* suggests an intermediate view, that *karma* is a law of cause and effect yet God can mitigate *karma* for His devotees. Another view holds that a Sadguru, acting on God's behalf, can mitigate or work out some of the *karma* of the disciple.

CASTE AND KARMA

As stated earlier, there are cycles of creations in which souls gravitate to specific bodies in accordance with *karma*, which as an unintelligent object depends on the will of God alone. Thus, many interpret the caste system in accordance with *karma*, as those with good deeds are born into a spiritual family, which is synonymous with the *brahmana* caste. However, Krishna said in the *Gita* that characteristics of a brahmin are determined by behaviour, not by birth. A verse from the *Gita* illustrates this point: "The duties of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas as also of Sudras, O scorcher of foes, are distributed according to the gunas (behaviour) born of their own nature." (*Bhagavad Gita* 18.41)

HINDU DENOMINATIONS

Hinduism encompasses many movements and brahminic schools are fairly organised within Hindu denominations. A religious

denomination shares a common ground of beliefs but embraces many different movements and schools inside its philosophical branches.

BASIC OVERVIEW

Hinduism is a very rich and complex religion. Each sect is like a denomination with rich religious practices. Professional priestly brahmins have denominations like Shaivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, and Smartha. Each of these four denominations share rituals, beliefs, traditions and personal Gods with one another, but each denomination has a different philosophy on how to achieve life's ultimate goal (mokœa, liberation) and different views of the Gods. Each follows different methods of self-realisation and worships different aspects of the One Supreme God. However, each respects and accepts all others, and conflict of any kind is rare. Among Hindu followers as a whole, there is a strong belief that there are many paths leading to the One God or the Source, whatever one chooses to call that ultimate Truth.

An established philosophical school within a denomination is called a *sampradaya* and a traditional lineage of teachers from any sampradaya is a *parampara*.

The presence of different denominations and schools within Hinduism should not be viewed as a schism. On the contrary, there is no animosity between the schools. Instead there is a healthy *cross-pollination* of ideas and logical debate that serves to refine each school's philosophy. It is not uncommon, or disallowed, for an individual to follow one school but take the point of view of another school for a certain issue. As per Hinduism Adherents.com the majority of Hindus are Vaishnavas, though often mixing in some aspects of the Smarta viewpoint.

VAISHNAVISM

Vaishnavas worship Vishnu, or his avataras (especially Krishna and Rama) as the supreme deity. This is the largest denomination, with approx. 580 million followers.

The different Vaishnava schools (sampradayas) and the principle teachers (acharyas) connected with them are as follows:

- Rudra Sampradaya: principle acharya—Vallabhacharya
- Brahma Sampradaya: principle acharya—Madhvacharya. Gaudiya Vaishnavism is a branch of this sampradaya, began by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

- Lakshmi Sampradaya (also known as Sri Vaishnavism, *Sri Sampradaya*): principle acharya—Ramanujacharya
- Kumara Sampradaya: principle acharya—Nimbarka, hence Nimbarka Sampradaya
- Vaikhanasa Sampradaya: principle acharya—Vaikhanasa

Modern Vaishnava groups attached to the main sampradayas:

- Swaminarayan—Ramanuja sampradaya; although they are slanted towards Vaishnavism, Swaminarayan also believed in a Smarta view; he adopted panchadevata system. (five forms of God, as per Smarta theology.
- International Society for Krishna Consciousness—Madhva / Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya
- Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mission—Madhva / Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya

SAIVISM

Saivites are those who primarily worship God Siva as Supreme God, both Immanent and Transcendent. There are approx. 220 million followers of Saivism.

Saivism embraces at the same time Monism (specifically Nondualism) and Dualism. It focuses on yoga, meditation and love for all beings.

Major theological schools of Saivism include Kashmir Saivism, Saiva Siddhanta and Virasaivism.

To Saivites God Siva is both with and without form; He is the Supreme Dancer, Nataraja; He is the linga, without beginning or end.

- Siddha Yoga
- Lingayats in Karnataka

SHAKTISM

Shaktas worship Shakti, the divine Mother, in her many forms like (Kali, Durga, Laxmi, Saraswati etc.).

Shakta form was one of the oldest forms of Hindu religion (evidences even from Indus valley civilisation), but with evolution of civilisation and emergence of various doctrines, various other forms of Hindu philosophy emerged. Shaivism and Shakta forms are really inseparable, as is the description of Shiva and Shakti/Sati/Parvati. Vaishanvism

has also its connections with Shakta philosophy as Goddess Durga herself is called Narayani.

Shakta in behaviour are identical to the Shaivites or Vaishanvites in the fundamental philosophy, but they tend to be very liberal in their thinking. Typically in a Shakta family/household, all Ishwar forms are worshipped alongside. Shaktas many times do not identify themselves as Shaktas but as Hindus in general. In India, Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Bihar are the main regions where detailed Devi Pujan or Shakta rituals are followed. Madhya Pradesh (Chamunda Pujan), Maharashtra and Gujrat (Nav Durga) are also equally zealous and various rituals for Devi Pujan and celebration take place in these regions. It is actually unfair and very hard to identify or isolate Shaktas amongst any other denominations. Shaktas do not believe in denominations, and believe that these ideas of classification are a very Christian way of classification. This might be true as Devi Pujan (worship) is actually a nationwide phenomenon.

One of the unique features of Shaktas is that there is immense respect for women as mothers in common household. Young sons and daughters touch the feet of their mother, seeking her blessings on festive/important occasions. Simultaneously mothers typically pray/ worship for the well-being of their family and children.

To roughly cover the Shakta centers all over India, one could begin with all the Shakti Peeth in India. There are typically 51 Shakti Peeth all over India, which are typically revered as places of pilgrimage. The mythological background behind these temples or Shakti Peeth goes back to the story of Shiva performing "Tandava" (the dance of fury) carrying the dead and burnt body of Sati in immense anger, effectively destroying the entire Universe. Seeing Shiva's rage, Vishnu realised that Shiva's strength emerged from the dead body of Sati/ Shakti and decided to cut her dead body to pieces with his Sudarshan chakra, which led to halting of Shiva's wrath. There were 51 pieces of her dead body which fell on earth at 51 places and those are the spots of Shakti Peeth. To name a few are the Kalighat Mandir at Kolkata, the Kamakhya Mandir at Assam, the Vaishnav Devi Mandir at Jammu and many others.

Typically in Shakta philosophy dominated regions, various forms of Hindu religion thrive harmoniously. It is the understanding of Shaktas, that everyone is the son/daughter of the same Divine Mother, and hence harmonious existence is "Mother's" desire. Various stalwarts of Hindu Philosophy viz. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev and Swami

Vivekananda who guided the Hindu world with their depth of understanding of humanity and religion, were Shaktas.

Shaktas celebrate all festivals like Dussera/Durga Puja, Diwali/ Kali Puja/Lakshmi Puja, Satya Narayan Puja, Ganesha Puja, Saraswati Puja, Kartik Puja, Janmashtami, Shivaratri, Sankranti etc. including all possible days. Shaktas never refuse to worship one or the other form of God unlike some Vaishnavites in South India. Shaktas also have diverse philosophy and rituals including Mantra and Tantra. Several Hindu rituals like putting sindoor and bindi and basically the entire attire of Hindu bride has originated from the concept of Goddess Durga and Lakshmi.

Shakta being the oldest form has its origin in *Vedas*, and *Puranas. Durga Puran*, *Kalika Puran* and *Skanda Puran* are some of the basic sources. *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat* and *Shrimad Bhagvat Gita* also form the basic texts, read and revered by every Shakta. It is very common to see Krishna Pujan and Shiva Pujan in Shakta families. One of the possible explanations could be the fact that Sri Rama the very revered and worshipped avatar of Narayan himself is described to be an ardent Shakti worshipper. It is known that celebration of Durga Puja in Bengal was started, marking the worship performed by Rama himself. In addition, the legends of the demons, Madhu and Kaitabh, also mention the spell cast by Goddess Kali on the demons, which made it easy for Narayan to kill them and save mankind. Apparently, the scriptures and mythology are not classified into such denominations, and after all its those scriptures that still dictate the basic "psyche" of Hindu philosophy.

SMARTISM

Smarthas have free rein to choose whichever deity they wish to worship. They usually worship five deities (pancopasana) or panchadevata as personal formful manifestations of the impersonal Absolute, Brahman. Smartas accept and worship the six manifestations of God, (Ganesha, Shiva, Shakti, Vishnu, Surya and Skanda) and the choice of the nature of God is up to the individual worshipper since different manifestations of God are held to be equivalent. It is a liberal and eclectic sect.

- It is the Smarta view that dominates the view of Hinduism in the West as Smarta belief includes Advaita belief and the first Hindu saint, who significantly brought Hinduism to the west was Swami Vivekananda, an adherent of Advaita. Not till much

later, gurus, such as A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and others, brought a Vaishnavite perspective to the West. By contrast with Smarta/Advaita belief, Vaishnavism and Shaivism follows a singular concept of God, or panentheistic monotheism or panentheistic monism.

Some prominent Smarta communities:

- In south India
  - Havyaka
  - Iyer
  - Vaidiki Mulukanadu
  - Vaidiki Velanadu
  - Vaidiki Veginadu
  - Vaidiki Telanganya
  - Namboothiri
  - Badaganadu
  - Hoysala Kannada
  - Kota brahmin
  - Babboor Kamme
  - Arvel Niyogi Brahmins
- In Maharashtra
  - Karhade
  - Deshastha
  - Konkanastha or Chitpavan
  - Devrukhe
- Saraswat Brahmins
  - Gaud Saraswat Brahmins (GSB's)

NEWER DENOMINATIONS

Agama Hindu Dharma

The newest and least numerous denominations are comprised Balinese Hindus, who make up a sect of Hinduism that once flourished on the nearby island of Java until late 16th century, when a vast majority of its adherents converted to Islam. Theologically, it is closer to Shaivism than to other major sects of Hinduism.

The term "Agama Hindu *Dharma*" can also refer to the traditional practices in Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi and other places in Indonesia,

where people have started to identify and accept their agamas as Hinduism.

DHARMA

The Sanskrit term *Dharma* signifies the underlying order in nature and life (human or other) considered to be in accord with that order. The word *dharma* is generally translated into English as 'law' and literally translates as 'that which upholds or supports' (from the root 'Dhr'—to hold), here referring to the order which makes the cosmos and the harmonious complexity of the natural world possible. As in the West, the concept of natural or divine law, has, throughout the history of Indian civilisation, governed ideas about the proper conduct of living. The symbol of the *dharma*—the wheel—is the central motif in the national flag of India.

In its most frequent usage (in the sphere of morality and ethics) *dharma* means 'right way of living', 'proper conduct', 'duty' or 'righteousness'. With respect to spirituality, *dharma* might be considered the Way of the Higher Truths. What is in the West called religion in India comes within the general purview of *dharma*. Thus, the various Indian religions (sanatana *dharma*, Buddhadharma, Jain *dharma* etc.) are so many versions of *Dharma* — versions of what is considered to be 'right' or in truest accord with the deepest realities of nature.

Each of the various Indian religions emphasize *Dharma* as the correct understanding of Nature (or God, as the origin of nature) in their teachings. In these traditions, beings that live in accordance with *Dharma* proceed more quickly toward *Dharma* Yukam, *Moksha* or Nirvana (personal liberation). *Dharma* also refers to the teachings and doctrines of the founders of these traditions, such as those of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira. In traditional Hindu society with its caste structure, *Dharma* constituted the religious and moral doctrine of the rights and duties of each individual. (*see dharmasastra*). *Dharma* in its universal meaning shares much in common with the way of Tao or Taoism. The antonym of *dharma* is *adharma* meaning unnatural or immoral.

ETYMOLOGY

The word is from a root common Indo-Iranian root *dhar* "to fasten, to support, to hold", continuing PIE *dher*, in the IEW connected with Latin *frçnum* "rein, horse tack", Germanic words for "hidden, held back" (OHG *tarni* "*latens*"), and extended to *dher-gh*, with OCS *drúë, drúati* "to hold, possess". Etymological identity of *dharma* with Latin *firmus* (whence English *firm*) has been suggested, but remains uncertain.

In the Rigveda, the word appears as an *n*-stem, *dhárman-*, with a range of meanings encompassing "something established or firm" (in the literal sense of prods or poles), figuratively "sustainer, supporter" (of deities), and in the abstract, similar to the semantics of Greek ethos, "fixed decree, statute, law".

From the Atharvaveda and in Classical Sanskrit, the stem is thematic, *dhárma* and in Pâli, it takes the form *dhamma*. It is also often rendered *dharam* in contemporary Indo-Aryan. Monier-Williams attempts to gesture at the semantic field of the spiritual and religious meanings of the term with "virtue, morality, religion, religious merit". It being used in most or all philosophies and religions of Indian origin, sometimes summarised under the umbrella term of *Dharmic faiths*, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, it is difficult to provide a single concise definition for *Dharma*. The word has a long and varied history and straddles a complex set of meanings and interpretations.

In modern Indian languages, such as Hindi, *dharma* can also mean simply "religion." Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are called *Hindu Dharma*, *Buddha Dharma*, *Jain Dharma* and *Sikh Dharma*, respectively.

In scripture translations *dharma* is often best left untranslated, as it has acquired a lively life of its own in English that is more expressive than any simplistic translation. Common translations and glosses include "right way of living," Divine Law, Path of Righteousness, order, faith, "natural harmony," rule, fundamental teachings, and duty. *Dharma* may be employed to render the rules of the entwining operation and relationship of bodymind and Universe, microcosm and macrocosm; the binding metaphysical system, laws of reciprocity and comportment in, and of, an ethical and energetic complex.

IN HINDUISM

Rene Guenon, father of the 20th century school of perennial philosophy, said:

It *dharma* is, so to speak, the essential nature of a being, comprising the sum of its particular qualities or characteristics, and determining, by virtue of the tendencies or dispositions it implies, the manner in which this being will conduct itself, either in a general way or in relation to each particular circumstance. The same idea may be applied, not only to a single being, but also to an organised collectivity, to a species, to all the beings included in a cosmic cycle or state of existence, or even to the whole order of the Universe; it then, at one level or

another, signifies conformity with the essential nature of beings… (from Guenon's "Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines").

Development

The idea of *dharma* as appropriate action or righteousness becomes possible when the concept of a universal order is reached within early Vedic culture. In the *Rig veda* the belief (or observation) that a natural justice and harmony pervades the natural world becomes manifest in the concept of rita. Rita is both 'nature's way' and the order implicit in nature. Thus, rita bears a resemblance to the ancient Chinese concept of tao and the Heraclitan or stoic conception of the logos.

This power that lay behind the marvel of nature keeping everything in balance becomes a natural forerunner or precuror to the idea of *dharma* as one can see in this early Vedic prayer, preempting the liturgical strains of classical Hindu mantras involving *dharma*:

"O Indra, lead us on the path of Rta, on the right path over all evils." (RV 10.133.6)

Thus, we see the logical progression of an early 'course of things' into an all-encompassing moral order, a path and way of righteousness, a universal harmony, in the Vedic conception of Rta.

An early and insightful demonstration of the continuity of thought from rta to *dharma* is a brief but "pregnant definition" of *dharma* given in the Brihadaranyaka *Upanishad*, a part of the *Veda*. Founded upon the Hindu ideas of, as R. E. Hume puts it, "intelligent monism," with Brahman as the monad, the *Upanishads* saw *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, a major tenet of Hinduism. This hearkens back to the conception of the *Rig Veda* that "*Ekam Sat*," (Truth Is One), of the idea that Brahman is "*Sacchidananda*" (Truth-Consciousness-Bliss). *Dharma* has imbibed the rarefied and sublime principles of Truth, and as such is the central guiding principle in the Dharmic Traditions' conception of existence. *Dharma* is not just law, or harmony, it is pure Reality. In the Brihadaranyaka's own words:

"Verily, that which is Dharma is truth.
Therefore, they say of a man who speaks truth, 'He speaks the Dharma,'
or of a man who speaks the Dharma, 'He speaks the Truth.'
Verily, both these things are the same."

(Brh. Upanishad, 1.4.14)

Sage Kanada, founder of the Vaisheshika system of philosophy, has given this definition of *Dharma*, in his Vaisheshika Sutras: "Yato-bhyudayanihsreyasa-siddhih sa dharmah", that which leads to the attainment of prosperity (in this life) and eternal bliss (beyond life) is *Dharma*.

In *Mahabharata*, Krishna defines *Dharma* as: "Dhaaranaad *dharma* ity aahur dharmena vidhrtaah prajaah, Yat syaad dhaarana sanyuktam sa *dharma* iti nishchayah", *Dharma* upholds both this-worldly and the other-worldly affairs (Mbh 12.110.11).

Dharma as a Purushartha

In moving through the four stages of life, viz. *Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha, Sanyaasa*, a person also seeks to fulfill the four essentials (purushaartha) of *Dharma, Artha* (worldly gain), *Kama* (sensual pleasures), and *Moksha* (liberation from reincarnation or rebirth). *Moksha*, although the ultimate goal, is emphasised more in the last two stages of life, while *Artha* and *Kama* are primary only during *Grihasthaashram*. *Dharma*, however, is essential in all four stages.

Kane's View

According to Dr. Pandurang Vaman Kane, the word "*Dharma*" acquired a sense of "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the Aryan community, as a member of the caste and as a person in a particular state of life."

The God *Dharma*

Dharma is also the name of a *Deva* in charge of *Dharma*. He is born from the right breast of Brahma, is married to ten daughters of Daksha and fathers Shama, Kama and Harahsa. He is also the father of the celebrated Rishis Hari, Krishna, Nara-Narayana.

In the Epic *Mahabharata*,he is incarnate as Vidura. Also, *Dharma* is invoked by Kunti and she begets her eldest son Yudhisthira from him. As such Yudhisthira is known as Dharmaputra. There is also an assimilation of God *Dharma* and Yama, the God of the Dead in the *Mahabharata*.

In Technical Literature

In technical literature, e.g., in Sanskrit grammar, *dharma* also means "property" and *dharmin* means "property-bearer".In a Sanskrit sentence like *shabdo 'nityah* , "sound is impermanent", "sound" is the bearer of the property "impermanence". Likewise, in the sentence *iha ghatah*,

"here, there is a pot", "here" is the bearer of the property "pot-existence"—this just goes to show that the categories property and property-bearer are closer to those of a logical predicate and its subject-term, and not to a grammatical predicate and subject.

IN BUDDHISM

For many Buddhists, the *Dharma* most often means the body of teachings expounded by the Buddha. The word is also used in Buddhist phenomenology as a term roughly equivalent to phenomenon, a basic unit of existence and/or experience.

In East Asia, the character for *Dharma* is pronounced *fa* in Mandarin, *beop* in Korean, and *hô* in Japanese.

Buddha's Teachings

For practising Buddhists, references to "*dharma*" or *dhamma* in the singular, particularly as "the" *Dharma*, is used to mean the teachings of the Buddha, commonly known throughout the east as *Buddha Dharma*. This latter signification has nothing to do with the personality of the spiritual teacher Siddhartha Gautama but rather signifies the importance of the attitude of bodymind that enables an adept or practitioner to re-harmonise their personal nature with the underlying principle (*Dharma*) behind natural phenomena leading towards the undoing of all egoistic falsehood constituted by the aggregates and ultimately release in nirvana—generically referred to in Indian religions as liberation (*moksha*).

The status of the *Dharma* is regarded variably by different traditions. Some regard it as an ultimate and transcendent truth utterly beyond worldly things, somewhat like the Christian logos. Others, who regard the Buddha as simply an enlightened human being, see the *Dharma* as the 84,000 different teachings that the Buddha gave to various types of people based on their propensity and capacity.

"*Dharma*" usually refers not only to the sayings of the Buddha but also to the later traditions of interpretation and addition that the various schools of Buddhism have developed to help explain and expand upon the Buddha's teachings. For others still, they see the *dharma* as referring to the "truth" or ultimate reality or "the way things are" (Tib. Cho).

The *Dharma* is one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism of which practitioners of Buddhism seek refuge in (what one relies on for his/her lasting happiness). The three jewels of Buddhism are the Buddha

(mind's perfection of enlightenment), the *Dharma* (teachings and methods), and the Sangha (awakened beings who provide guidance and support).

Qualities of Buddha Dharma

The Teaching of the Buddha also has six supreme qualities:

1. (Svakkhato) The *Dharma* is not a speculative philosophy, but is the Universal Law found through enlightenment and is preached precisely. Therefore, it is excellent in the beginning (Sîla—Moral principles), Excellent in the middle (Samadhi—Concentration) and Excellent in the end (Pañña—Wisdom).

2. (Samditthiko) The *Dharma* can be tested by practice and therefore he who follows it will see the result by himself through his own experience.

3. (Akâliko) The *Dharma* is able to bestow timeless and immediate results here and now, for which there is no need to wait until the future or next existence.

4. (Ehipassiko) The *Dharma* welcomes all beings to put it to the test and come and see for themselves.

5. (Opâneyiko) The *Dharma* is capable of being entered upon and therefore it is worthy to be followed as a part of one's life.

6. (Paccattam veditabbo viññûnhi) The *Dharma* can be perfectly realised only by the noble disciples (Ariyas) who have matured and enlightened enough in supreme wisdom.

Knowing these attributes, Buddhists believe that they will attain the greatest peace and happiness through the practice of the *Dharma*. Each person is therefore fully responsible for himself to put it in the real practice.

Here the Buddha is compared to an experienced and skilful doctor, and the *Dharma* to proper medicine. However, efficient the doctor or wonderful the medicine may be, the patients cannot be cured unless they take the medicine properly. So the practice of the *Dharma* is the only way to attain the final deliverance of Nibbâna.

These teachings ranged from understanding *karma* (cause and effect) and developing good impressions in one's mind, to how to reach full enlightenment by recognising the nature of mind.

Dharmas in Buddhist Phenomenology

Other uses include *dharma*, normally spelled with a small "d" (to differentiate), which refers to a *phenomenon* or *constituent factor* of

human experience. This was gradually expanded into a classification of constituents of the entire material and mental world. Rejecting the substantial existence of permanent entities which are qualified by possibly changing qualities, Buddhist Abhidharma philosophy, which enumerated seventy-five dharmas, came to propound that these "constituent factors" are the only type of entity that truly exists. This notion is of particular importance for the analysis of human experience: Rather than assuming that mental states inhere in a cognising subject, or a soul-substance, Buddhist philosophers largely propose that mental states alone exist as "momentary elements of consciousness" and that a subjective perceiver is assumed.

One of the central tenets of Buddhism, is the denial of a separate permanent "I", and is outlined in the three marks of existence. The three signs:

1. Dukkha—Suffering (Pali: Dukkha),
2. Anitya—Change/Impermanence (Pali: Anicca),
3. Anatman—No-I (Pali: Annatta).

At the heart of Buddhism, is the denial of an "I" (and hence the delusion) as a separate self-existing entity.

Later, Buddhist philosophers like Nâgârjuna would question whether the dharmas (momentary elements of consciousness) truly have a separate existence of their own. (i.e. Do they exist apart from anything else?) Rejecting any inherent reality to the dharmas, he asked (rhetorically):

> When all dharmas are empty, what is endless? What has an end?
>
> What is endless and with an end? What is not endless and not with an end?
>
> What is *it*? What is *other*? What is permanent? What is impermanent?
>
> What is impermanent and permanent? What is neither?
>
> Auspicious is the pacification of phenomenal metastasis, the pacification of all apprehending;
>
> There is no *dharma* whatsoever taught by the Buddha to whomever, whenever, wherever.—Mulamadhyamakakarika, nirvnanapariksa, 25:22-24.

Dharma as Righteousness

According to S.N. Goenka, teacher of Vipassana Meditation, the original meaning of *dhamma* is "*dhareti ti dhamma*", or "that which is contained". *Dharma* in the Buddhist scriptures has a variety of meanings,

including "phenomenon" and "nature" or "characteristic". *Dharma* also means 'mental contents' and is paired with citta, which means heart/mind. The pairing is paralleled with the pairing of *kaya* (body) and *vedana* (feelings or sensations, that which arise within the body but experienced through the mind), in major *sutras* such as the *Mahasatipatthana sutra*. *Dharma* is also used to refer to the teachings of the Buddha, not in the context of the words of one man, even an enlightened man, but as a reflection of natural law which was re-discovered by this man and shared with the world. A person who lives their life with an understanding of this natural law, is a "dhammic" person, which is often translated as "righteous".

Dharma in Ch'an

Dharma is employed in Ch'an in a specific context in relation to transmission of authentic doctrine, understanding and bodhi; recognised in *Dharma* transmission.

IN SIKHISM

For Sikhs, the word "*Dharma*" means the "path of righteousness". What is the "righteous path"? That is the question that the Sikh scriptures attempt to answer. The main holy scriptures of the Sikhs is called the *Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS.) It is considered to be more than a holy book of the Sikhs. The Sikhs treat this Granth (*holy book*) as a living Guru. The holy text spans 1430 pages and contains the actual words spoken by the Sikh Gurus and various other Saints from other religions including Hinduism and Islam.

Sikh *Dharma* is a distinct religion revealed through the teachings of ten Gurus who are accepted by the followers as if they were spiritually the same. The Gurus are considered "the divine light" and they conveyed Gurbani (the word of God) in the form of the *Guru Granth Sahib* to the world. In this faith, God is described as both Nirgun (transcendent) and Sargun (immanent). Further, God pervades in His creation and is omnipresent, but cannot be incarnate. The principal Sikh belief lays stress on one's actions and deeds rather than people's religious labels, rituals or outward appearance or signs.

Background

The primary object of a Sikh's life is to seek union with God and hence, liberation from the cycle of births and deaths (cycle of re-incarnation) which is dictated by a person's thought, deeds and actions in this life. Liberation can be achieved through meditating on God,

truthful living and sharing ones wealth in the context of a normal family life and through divine grace. Amrit Pahul – Sikh baptism for both men and women – was instituted in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru. All Sikhs, on taking Amrit, are enjoined to lead a disciplined life by following a code of ethics leading to a "Saint-Soldier" way of life. In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh vested spiritual authority in the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh Scriptures) as the eternal Guru and hence Sikh *Dharma* acknowledges the end of human Guruship. At the same time, the temporal authority was vested in the Khalsa Panth (a community of Sikhs who have taken Amrit).

Other important aspects of a Sikh's life include Sewa (dedication to the service of God's creation) where the emphasis is often upon manual work, undertaking of goodwill towards other faiths and their followers, to defend for justice and assistance of the oppressed. In contrast to many other faiths, Sikhs believe that when all other means to achieve justice are exhausted, then it is just to wield the sword.

Congregational worship includes the following:

1. Paath—Reading of the Holy scriptures
2. Kirtan—Singing of Shabads (hymns).
3. Langar—A communal vegetarian meal also call free kitchen is an important feature of the Sikh way of life, and food is served to everyone at the end of a Sikh service.
4. Community Centre—Today, in most countries, a Gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, also serves as a centre to promote Sikh culture and such other needs of the community.
5. Ardas—Sikhs conclude their prayers by doing the Ardas and invoking God's blessings on everyone – not just on Sikhs.

Scriptures and Dharma

The *Guru Granth Sahib* lays down the foundation of this "righteous path" and various salient points are found.

1. ***Sikh is bound by Dharma:*** The followers of this faith are bound by *Dharma* as advocated in their holy scriptures. The committed Sikh is encouraged to follow this path at all times. The first recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* called the Japji Sahib says the following: *"The path of the faithful shall never be blocked. The faithful shall depart with honor and fame. The faithful do not follow empty religious rituals. The faithful are firmly bound to the Dharma. Such is the Name of the Immaculate Lord. Only one who has faith*

comes to know such a state of mind." (14) (*Guru Granth Sahib Japji*, p. 3.)

2. ***Deeds are recorded:*** The persons thoughts and deeds are said to be recorded and the faithful is warned that these will be read out in the presence of the "Lord of *Dharma*". Two scribes called *"Chitr and Gupt"* the angels of the conscious and the subconscious mind are busy writing ones thought and deeds. On death the soul of the person he brought before "Lord of *Dharma*" are these account are read out as recoded in this quote: *"Day and night are the two nurses, in whose lap all the world is at play. Good deeds and bad deeds—the record is read out in the Presence of the Lord of Dharma. According to their own actions, some are drawn closer, and some are driven farther away."* (*Guru Granth Sahib Japji*, p. 8, Salok.)

3. ***Dharma administered by God:*** The scriptures further outline how the "Judge of *Dharma*" administers justice depending on the way that one has conducted life on Earth. The soul is either "cleared" or "subject to God's command" depending on the review of the person history. The holy text says: *"The Righteous Judge of Dharma, by the Hukam of God's Command, sits and administers True Justice"*. (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 38) and those followers who "chant the name of the Lord" are cleared as outlined thus: *"Her account is cleared by the Righteous Judge of Dharma, when she chants the Name of the Lord, Har, Har."* (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 78).

Karma and *Dharma*

Karma and *Dharma* are intrinsically linked in the Sikh faith. *Karma* is the baggage of ones thoughts, deeds and action in ones present and past lives. When ones mind is not fixed on the Almighty, one is governed by the Five Evils – Lust, Rage (anger), Ego, Attachment and Greed. The Sikh text tell the faithful that these "Five Evils" have the effect of restricting the person's spiritual development and the person falls into the trap of Maya (worldly affairs) which then begins to control the person's daily life and routine. Yogi Harbhanjan Singh Khalsa said the following regarding the influence of the "Five Evils"—"The folly of man is that all he seeks is self-praise for all that he has no right over – he grooms himself and compliments himself over how he looks like when he sees his reflection in the mirror; expects his wife and children to regard him as good.…"

IN JAINISM

Dharma is natural. Jain Acharya Samantabhadra writes: "Vatthu sahavo dhammo" the *dharma* is the nature of an object. It is the nature of the soul to be free, thus for the soul, the *dharma* ia paralaukika, beyond worldly. However the nature of the body is to seek self-preservation and be engaged in pleasures.

Thus, there are two dharmas.

The Two Dharmas

Acharya Haribhadra (approx. 6-7th cent.) discusses *dharma* in *Dharma*-Bindu. he writes (Translation by Y. Malaiya):

Because of the difference in practice, *dharma* is of two kinds, for the householders and for the monks.

Of the householder's *dharma*, there are two kinds,"ordinary" and "special"

The ordinary *dharma* of the householder should be carried out according to tradition, such that it is not objectionable, according to ones abilities such as wealth, in accordance with *nyaya* (everyone treated fairly and according to laws).

Somadeva Suri (10th c.) terms the "ordinary" and "special" dharmas *laukika* ("worldly") and *pralaukika* ("extra-worldly") respectively:

A householder follows both *laukika* and the *pralaukika* dharmas at the same time.

REFERENCES IN POP CULTURE

TV

- *Dharma* is a frequent allusion on ABC's hit show *Lost*.
- The female lead character in *Dharma and Greg* is named *Dharma*. She was raised by hippie parents, is a practitioner of yoga and an adherent of Eastern spiritualities.

Music

- In the 1968 Jethro Tull album, *This Was*, there is a song called *Dharma for One*, which Tull also played two years later at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival
- Donald Roeser, guitarist for Blue Öyster Cult listed his name on albums as "Buck *Dharma*."

- Up *Dharma* Down, a Filipino band, whose curious name is from the idea that everything in existence is connected no matter how diverse they are.

Literature

- Jack Kerouac wrote *The Dharma Bums* loosely based on his own spiritual awakening with friends Gary Snyder and John Montgomery in the late 1950s.

ARTHA

Artha is a Sanskrit term meaning "purpose, cause, motive, meaning, notion".

It may refer to the idea of material prosperity. In Hinduism, *artha* is one of the four goals of life, known as purusharthas. It is considered to be a noble goal as long as it follows the dictates of *Vedic* morality. The concept includes achieving widespread fame, garnering wealth and having an elevated social standing. It is the second lowest rung on the ladder of purusharthas, above *kama* (physical or emotional pleasure) but below *dharma* (righteousness) and *moksha* (salvation).

MOKSHA

Moksha or *Mukti* refers in Indian religions to liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth and all of the suffering and limitation of worldly existence. In Hindu philosophy, it is seen as a transcendence of phenomenal being, a state of higher consciousness, in which time, space, causation (*karma*) and the other features of empirical reality are understood as *maya*. Liberation is to Indian religions as salvation is to Christianity. Rather than being a reward for good deeds that is achieved after death, however, liberation is experienced in this very life as a dissolution of the sense of self as an egoistic personality by which the underlying, eternal, pure spirit is uncovered. This desireless state concludes the yogic path through which conditioned mentality-materiality or *nama-roopa* (lit. name-form) has been dissolved uncovering one's eternal identity prior to the mind/spirit's identification with material form. Liberation is achieved by (and accompanied with) the complete stilling of all passions—a state of being known as *Nirvana*. Buddhist thought differs slightly from the Advaita Vedantist reading of liberation.

HINDUISM

Moksha is seen as a final release from one's worldly conception of self, the loosening of the shackle of experiential duality and a re-establishment in one's own fundamental nature which is true being, pure consciousness and bliss (*see satcitananda*) an experience which is ineffable and beyond sensation. According to the branch of Hinduism known as Advaita Vedanta, at liberation the individual soul (human mind/spirit) or *jîvatman* becomes fully united with the Ground of all being—the Source of all phenomenal existence known as Brahman. The self-as-individual becomes no more—having become indistinguishable from Brahman. In other (dvaita) traditions it is held that the identification between the liberated human being and God is not total but there remains always some distinction between me and the two. In Vaishnavism, the largest branch of Hinduism, *Moksha* involves forsaking everything material and establishing one's existence as a purely devoted servant of Vishnu (Bhagavan or God; also known by many other names such as Krishna, Rama, Narayana, etc.). Hindu scripture like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and so on especially emphasize this personal, devotional conception of *Moksha*, which is achieved through the practice of Bhakti Yoga. On the other hand, works of the non-dualistic Hindu school, Advaita Vedanta or Brahmavada whose doctrinal position is derived from the *Upanishads*, say that the Self or Super-Soul is formless, beyond being and non-being, beyond any sense of tangibility and comprehension. These two Hindu concepts of *Moksha*—personal and impersonal—are seen differently depending on one's beliefs.

- In Dvaita (dualist) and qualified advaitic schools of the personal Vaishnava traditions, *Moksha* is defined as the loving, eternal union with God (Ishvara) and considered the highest perfection of existence. The *bhakta* (devotee) attains the abode of his supreme Lord in a perfected state but maintains his or her individual identity, with a spiritual form, personality, tastes, pastimes, and so on.

- In Advaita philosophy, the ultimate truth is not a singular Godhead, *per se*, but rather is oneness without form or being, something that essentially is without manifestation, personality, or activity. *Moksha* is union with this oneness. The concepts of impersonal *Moksha* and Buddhist Nirvana are comparable. Indeed, there is much overlap in their views of higher consciousness and attainment of enlightenment. For liberal Advaitists, *Moksha*

is seen as complementing, rather than denying, the 'voidness' of Buddhism.

In Hinduism also, *Moksha* is different from Nastik religions such as Jainism and Buddhism, although there are many Jains and some Buddhists that believe in the Hindu *Moksha*. In Hinduism, it is a union with God and to the Nastiks it is a union with all that is, regardless of whether there is a God or not. After Nirvana, one obtains *Moksha*. The Nirvana of Hinduism is Brahma-Nirvana meaning that it will lead to God.

Means to Achieve Moksha

In Hinduism, self-realisation (*atma-jnana*) is the key to obtaining *Moksha*. The Hindu is one who practices *karma* and *bhakti*, knowing that God is unlimited and exists in many different forms, both personal and impersonal.

There are believed to be four yogas (disciplines) or margas (paths) for the attainment of *Moksha*. These are: working for the Supreme (*Karma* Yoga), realising the Supreme (*Jnana* Yoga), meditating on the Supreme (Raja Yoga) and serving the Supreme in loving devotion (Bhakti Yoga). Different schools of Hinduism place varying emphasis on one path or other, some of the most famous being the tantric and yogic practices developed in Hinduism. Today, the two major schools of thought are Advaita Vedanta and Bhakti branches.

1. Bhakti sees God as the most worshippable object of love, for example, a personified monotheistic conception of Vishnu. Unlike in Abrahamic traditions, for example, Smarta Hinduism, this monotheism does not prevent a Hindu from worship of other aspects of God, as they are all seen as rays from a single source. However, it is worthy of note that the *Bhagavad Gita* discourages the worship of demigods, as it does not lead to *Moksha*. The concept is essentially of devotional service in love, since the ideal nature of being is seen as that of harmony, euphony, its manifest essence being love. By immersing oneself in the love of God, one's *Karmas* (good or bad, regardless) slough off, one's illusions about beings decay and 'truth' is soon known and lived. Both the worshiped and worshipper maintain their identities in a personal, divine loving relationship.

2. Vedanta finds itself split threefold, though the dualist and modified non-dualist schools are primarily associated with the foregoing thought of Bhakti. The most famous today is Advaita

Vedanta, a non-dual (i.e. no separation between the individual and reality/God/etc.) perspective which often played the role of Hindu foil to contemporary Buddhist philosophy. In general, it focused on intense meditation and moral realignment, its bedrock being the *Upanishads*, Brahma Sutras and the teachings of its putative founder, Adi Shankara. Through discernment of the real and the unreal, as a peeling of the layers of an onion, the *sadhak* (practitioner) would unravel the *maya* (illusion) of being and the cosmos to find nothing within, a nothingness which was paradoxically being, and transcendentally beyond both such inadequate descriptions. This was *Moksha*, this was atman and Brahman realised as the substance and void of existential duality. The impersonalist schools of Hinduism also worship various deities, but with the idea that such worship is ultimately abandoned—both the worshipped and worshipper lose their individual identities.

Moksha in the sacred Hindu temple dance, as in the classical Indian dance too, is symbolised by Shiva raising his right leg, as if freeing himself from the gravitation of the material world.

One must achieve *Moksha* on his or her own under the guidance of a guru—one who has already achieved success in *Moksha*. An Arhant or a Siddha inspires but does not intervene.

Bunduism

Now you may be thinking to yourself, what is Bunduism? Well here is your answer. It is a fine blend between Buddhism and Hinduism, obviously some aspects of this religion are possible. On the other hand Buddhist don't beleive in a God and Hindus do. Bundus simply believe that Buddha was and incarnation of the God Vishnu but this time he became a normal human and not a God.

Components of Moksha

Within *Moksha* or *Mukti*, there lies the ultimate peace (*Shanti*), the ultimate knowledge (*Videh*), the ultimate enlightenment (*kaivalya*) and the ultimate paradise (*Swarga*).

BUDDHISM

In Buddhism, the concept of liberation, Nirvana, is slightly different from Jainism and Hinduism. It occurs when the self is *extinguished* from the cycle of rebirth. (In Hinduism too, the cycle of rebirth ends on liberation.)

JAINISM

In Jainism, *Moksha* and Nirvana (Buddhism) are the same. When a soul (atman) achieves Nirvana, it is released from the cycle of births and deaths, and achieves its pure self. It then becomes a Siddha or Buddha (literally means one who has accomplished his ultimate objective).

In Jainism, attaining *Moksha* requires annihilation of all *karmas*, good and bad; because if *karma* is left, it must bear fruit.

NON-ALIGNED SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS

Surat Shabda Yoga

In Surat Shabda Yoga beliefs, attaining self-realisation and above results in Jivan *Moksha*/*Mukti* (liberation/release from the cycle of *karma* and reincarnation while in the physical body – spiritual freedom here and now).

SAMSARA

Samsara refers to the cycle of reincarnation or rebirth in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other related religions.

ETYMOLOGY

Samsara is derived from "to flow together," to go or pass through states, to wander. Mostly a great revolving door between life and death and a new life reincarnated cycle of life. Also known as a game in ancient India.

CYCLE OF REBIRTH

In most Indian philosophical traditions, including the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain systems, an ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is assumed as a fact of nature. However, these systems differ widely in the terminology with which they describe the process and in the metaphysics they use in interpreting it. Most of these traditions, in their evolved forms, regard SaCsâra negatively, as a fallen condition which is to be escaped. Some, such as Advaita Vedanta regard the world and SaCsâric participation in it as fundamentally illusory. Some later adaptations of these traditions identify Sacsâra as a mere metaphor.

SAMSARA IN HINDUISM

In Hinduism, it is avidya, or ignorance, of one's true self, that leads to ego-consciousness of the body and the phenomenal world.

This grounds one in desire and the perpetual chain of *karma* and reincarnation. The state of illusion is known as *Maya*.

In some types of Hinduism, SaCsâra is seen as ignorance of the True Self, Brahman, and thus the soul is led to believe in the reality of the temporal, phenomenal world. Hinduism has many terms for the ultimate place like *moksha*, *mukti*, *nirvana*, and *mahasamadhi*.

The Hindu Yoga traditions hold various beliefs. *Moksha* may be achieved by love of Ishwar/God (see bhakti movement), by psycho-physical meditation (*Raja Yoga*), by discrimination of what is real and unreal through intense contemplation (*Jnana Yoga*) and through *Karma* Yoga, the path of selfless action that subverts the ego and enforces understanding of the unity of all. Advaita Vedanta, which heavily influenced Hindu Yoga, believes that Brahman, the ultimate Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, is the infinite, impersonal reality (as contrasted to the Buddhist concept of *shunyata*) and that through realisation of it, all temporal states like deities, the cosmos and *samsara* itself are revealed to be nothing but manifestations of Brahman.

SAMSARA IN JAINISM

In Jainism, *karma, anuva* (ego) and the veil of maya are central. Liberation from *samsara* is called *bukahcki* or *mukti*. See also *Karma* in Jainism.

SAMSARA IN BUDDHISM

The concept of Samsara cyclic existence is taught by many Buddhist teachers. To understand the concept of Samsara it is important to know about the six realms, what cyclic existence is, and enlightenment or the liberation from the uncontrolled cycle of existence.

SAMSARA IN SIKHISM

In Sikhism, it is thought that due to the commendable past actions and deeds (known as *karma* or *kirat*) that people obtain the chance of human birth, which is regarded in Sikhism as the highest possible on Earth and therefore an opportunity that should not be wasted. And only by continued good actions and the "Grace of the Almighty" can one obtain liberation from the continuous cycle of births and deaths of various bodily forms that the soul has been undergoing since the creation of the universe. The end of the cycle of transmigration of the soul is known as *mukti*. For Sikhs, the state of *mukti* can be achieved whilst still alive, known as "Jivan Mukat", literally "liberated whilst alive".

SAMSARA IN SURAT SHABDA YOGA

In Surat Shabda Yoga, attaining self-realisation results in *jivan moksha/mukti*, liberation/release from samsara, the cycle of *karma* and reincarnation while in the physical body.

Surat Shabda Yoga cosmology presents the constitution of the initiate (the microcosm) as an exact replica of the macrocosm. Consequently, the microcosm consists of a number of bodies, each one suited to interact with its corresponding plane or region in the macrocosm. These bodies developed over the yugas through involution (emanating from higher planes to lower planes) and evolution (returning from lower planes to higher planes), including by *karma* and reincarnation in various states of consciousness.

YOGA

Yoga is a group of ancient spiritual practices originating in India. As a general term in Hinduism. It has been defined as referring to "technologies or disciplines of asceticism and meditation which are thought to lead to spiritual experience and profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence." Yoga is also intimately connected to the religious beliefs and practices of the other Indian religions.

Outside India, Yoga is mostly associated with the practice of asanas (postures) of Hatha Yoga or as a form of exercise, although it has influenced the entire Indian religions family and other spiritual practices throughout the world.

Hindu texts discussing different aspects of yoga include the *Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Shiva Samhita*, and many others.

Major branches of Yoga include: *Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga*, established by the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, and known simply as Yoga in the context of Hindu philosophy, is one of the six orthodox schools of thought.

ETYMOLOGY

The Sanskrit term *yoga* has a wide range of different meanings. It is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, "to control", "to yoke", or "to unite". Common meanings include "joining" or "uniting", and related ideas such as "union" and "conjunction". Another conceptual definition is that of "mode, manner, means" or "expedient, means in general".

HISTORY OF YOGA

Indus Valley Seals

Several seals discovered at Indus Valley Civilisation (c. 3300–1700 BC) sites depict figures in a yoga or meditation like posture. There is considerable evidence to support the idea that the images show "a form of ritual discipline, suggesting a precursor of yoga" according to archaeologist Gregory Possehl. He points to sixteen other specific "yogi glyptics" in the corpus of Mature Harappan artifacts as pointing to Harappan devotion to "ritual discipline and concentration." These images show that the yoga pose "may have been used by deities and humans alike." Possehl suggests that yoga goes back to the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The most widely known of these images was named the "Pashupati seal" by its discoverer, John Marshall, who believed that it represented a "proto-Shiva" figure. Many modern authorities discount the idea that this "Pashupati" (Lord of Animals, Sanskrit *paœupati*) represents a Shiva or Rudra figure. Gavin Flood also characterises these views as "speculative", saying that it is not clear from the 'Pashupati' seal that the figure is seated in a yoga posture, or that the shape is intended to represent a human figure. Authorities who support the idea that the 'Pashupati' figure shows a figure in a yoga or meditation posture include Archaeologist Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, current Co-director of the Harappa Archaeological Research Project in Pakistan and Indologist Heinrich Zimmer.

In 2007, terracotta seals were discovered in the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan. Punjab University Archaeology Department Chairman Dr. Farzand Masih described one of the seals as similar to the previously discovered Mohenjodaro seals, with three pictographs on one side and a "yogi" on the other side.

Literary Sources

Ascetic practices (*tapas*) are referenced in the BrâhmaGas (900 BCE and 500 BCE), early commentaries on the vedas. In the *Upanishads*, an early reference to meditation is made in Brihadaranyaka *Upanishad*, one of the earliest *Upanishads* (approx. 900 BCE). The main textual sources for the evolving concept of Yoga are the middle *Upanishads*, (ca. 400 BCE), the *Mahabharata* (5th c. BCE) including the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 200 BCE), and the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (200 BCE-300 CE).

Bhagavad Gita

The *Bhagavad Gita* ('Song of the Lord'), uses the term *yoga* extensively in a variety of senses. Of many possible meanings given to the term in the *Gita*, most emphasis is given to these three:

- *Karma* yoga: The yoga of action
- Bhakti yoga: The yoga of devotion
- *Jnana* yoga: The yoga of knowledge

The influential commentator Madhusudana Sarasvati (b. circa 1490) divided the *Gita's* eighteen chapters into three sections, each of six chapters. According to his method of division the first six chapters deal with *Karma* yoga, the middle six deal with Bhakti yoga, and the last six deal with *Jnana* (knowledge). This interpretation has been adopted by some later commentators and rejected by others.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

In Indian philosophy, Yoga is the name of one of the six orthodox philosophical schools. The Yoga philosophical system is closely allied with the Samkhya school. The Yoga school as expounded by Patanjali accepts the Samkhya psychology and metaphysics, but is more theistic than the Samkhya, as evidenced by the addition of a divine entity to the Samkhya's twenty-five elements of reality. The parallels between Yoga and Samkhya were so close that Max Müller says that "the two philosophies were in popular parlance distinguished from each other as Samkhya with and Samkhya without a Lord...." The intimate relationship between Samkhya and Yoga is explained by Heinrich Zimmer:

> These two are regarded in India as twins, the two aspects of a single discipline. Sânkhya provides a basic theoretical exposition of human nature, enumerating and defining its elements, analysing their manner of co-operation in a state of bondage (*bandha*), and describing their state of disentanglement or separation in release (*mokca*), while Yoga treats specifically of the dynamics of the process for the disentanglement, and outlines practical techniques for the gaining of release, or 'isolation-integration' (*kaivalya*).

The sage Patanjali is regarded as the founder of the formal Yoga philosophy. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are ascribed to Patanjali, who, may have been, as Max Müller explains, "the author or representative of the Yoga-philosophy without being necessarily the author of the Sutras." Indologist Axel Michaels is dismissive of claims

that the work was written by Patanjali, characterising it instead as a collection of fragments and traditions of texts stemming from the second or third century. Gavin Flood cites a wider period of uncertainty for the composition, between 100 BCE and 500 CE.

Patanjali's yoga is known as Raja yoga, which is a system for control of the mind. Patanjali defines the word "yoga" in his second sutra, which is the definitional sutra for his entire work:

yogas citta-vitti-nirodhah — *Yoga Sutras* 1.2

This terse definition hinges on the meaning of three Sanskrit terms. I. K. Taimni translates it as "Yoga is the inhibition (*nirodhah*) of the modifications (*vitti*) of the mind (*citta*)". Swami Vivekananda translates the sutra as "Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (*Citta*) from taking various forms (*Vrittis*)." Gavin Flood translates the sutra as "yoga is the cessation of mental fluctuations".

Patanjali's writing also became the basis for a system referred to it as "Ashtanga Yoga" ("Eight-Limbed Yoga"). This eight-limbed concept derived from the 29th Sutra of the 2nd book became a feature of Raja yoga, and is a core characteristic of practically every Raja yoga variation taught today. The Eight Limbs of yoga practice are:

1. *Yama* (The five "abstentions"): non-violence, truth, non-covetousness, chastity, and abstain from attachment to possessions.
2. *Niyama* (The five "observances"): purity, contentment, austerities, study, and surrender to god
3. *Asana*: Literally means "seat", and in Patanjali's Sutras refers to seated positions used for meditation. Later, with the rise of Hatha yoga, *asana* came to refer to all the "postures"
4. *Pranayama* ("Lengthening Prâna"): *Prâna*, life force, or vital energy, particularly, the breath, "âyâma", to lengthen or extend
5. *Pratyahara* ("Abstraction"): Withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects.
6. *Dharana* ("Concentration"): Fixing the attention on a single object
7. *Dhyana* ("Meditation"): Intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation.
8. *Samadhi* ("Liberation"): merging consciousness with the object of meditation.

It details every aspect of the meditative process, and the preparation for it. The book is available in as many as 40 English translations, both in-print and on-line.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Hatha Yoga is a particular system of Yoga described by Yogi Swatmarama, a yogic sage of the 15th century in India, and compiler of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. *Hatha Yoga* is a development of—but also differs substantially from—the Raja Yoga of Patanjali, in that it focuses on *shatkarma*, the purification of the physical as leading to the purification of the mind (*ha*), and *prana*, or vital energy (*tha*). In contrast, the Raja Yoga posited by Patanjali begins with a purification of the mind (*yamas*) and spirit (*niyamas*), then comes to the body via *asana* (body postures) and *pranayama* (breath). Hatha yoga contains substantial tantric influence, and marks the first point at which chakras and kundalini were introduced into the yogic canon. Compared to the seated asanas of Patanjali's Raja yoga which were seen largely as a means of preparing for meditation, it also marks the development of asanas as full body 'postures' in the modern sense.

Hatha Yoga in its many modern variations is the style that most people actually associate with the word "Yoga" today. Because its emphasis is on the body through *asana* and *pranayama* practice, many western students are satisfied with the physical health and vitality it develops and are not interested in the other six limbs of the complete Hatha yoga teaching, or with the even older Raja Yoga tradition it is based on.

YOGA IN OTHER TRADITIONS

Yoga and Buddhism

Yoga is intimately connected to the religious beliefs and practices of the Indian religions. The influence of Yoga is also visible in Buddhism, which is distinguished by its austerities, spiritual exercises, and trance states.

Yogacara Buddhism

Yogacara (Sanskrit: "Practice of Yoga [Union]"), also spelled yogâchâra, is a school of philosophy and psychology that developed in India during the 4th to 5th centuries.

Yogacara received the name as it provided a *yoga*, a framework for engaging in the practices that lead to the path of the bodhisattva. The Yogacara sect teaches *yoga* in order to reach enlightenment.

Chan (Zen) Buddhism

Zen (the name of which derives from the Sanskrit "dhyana" via the Chinese "ch'an") is a form of Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayana

school of Buddhism is noted for its proximity with Yoga. In the west, Zen is often set alongside Yoga; the two schools of meditation display obvious family resemblances. This phenomenon merits special attention since the Zen Buddhist school of meditation has some of its roots in yogic practices. Certain essential elements of Yoga are important both for Buddhism in general and for Zen in particular.

Tibetan Buddhism

Yoga is central to Tibetan Buddhism. In the Nyingma tradition, practitioners progress to increasingly profound levels of yoga, starting with Mahâ yoga, continuing to Anu yoga and ultimately undertaking the highest practice, Ati yoga. In the Sarma traditions, the Anuttara yoga class is equivalent. Other tantra yoga practices include a system of 108 bodily postures practiced with breath and heart rhythm. Timing in movement exercises is known as Trul khor or union of moon and sun (channel) prajna energies. The body postures of Tibetan ancient yogis are depicted on the walls of the Dalai Lama's summer temple of Lukhang.

Yoga and Tantra

Tantrism, is a practice that is supposed to alter the relation of the individual practitioner of Tantrism to the ordinary social, religious, and logical reality in which he or she lives. Through Tantric practice an individual perceives reality as maya, illusion, and the individual achieves liberation from it.

This particular path to salvation among the several offered by Hinduism, links Tantrism to those practices of Indian religions, such as yoga, meditation, and social renunciation, which are based on temporary or permanent withdrawal from social relationships and modes.

During tantric practices and studies, the student is instructed further in meditation technique, particularly chakra meditation. This is often in a limited form in comparison with the way this kind of meditation is known and used by Tantric practitioners and yogis elsewhere, but is more elaborate than the initiate's previous meditation. It is considered to be a kind of Kundalini Yoga for the purpose of moving the Goddess into the chakra located in the "heart," for meditation and worship.

GOAL OF YOGA

There are numerous opinions on what the goal of Yoga may be, although generally they involve some kind of union, either of a personal or a non-personal nature.

Within the monist schools of Advaita Vedanta and Shaivism this perfection takes the form of *Moksha*, which is a liberation from all worldly suffering and the cycle of birth and death (Samsara) at which point there is a cessation of thought and an experience of blissful union with the Supreme Brahman. For the dualistic bhakti schools of Vaishnavism, *bhakti* itself is the ultimate goal of the yoga process, wherein perfection culminates in an eternal relationship with Vishnu or one of his associated avatars such as Krishna or Rama.

BHAKTI

Bhakti is a word of Sanskrit origin meaning *devotion*. Within Hinduism the word is used exclusively to denote devotion to a particular deity or form of God. Within Vaishnavism bhakti is only used in conjunction with Vishnu or one of his associated incarnations; however, it is likewise used toward Shiva by some traditions of Shaivism and Shakti by some traditions of Shaktism.

Bhakti as a process of yoga (*Bhakti yoga*) is described in detail famously within the *Bhagavad Gita*, wherein it is given as the ultimate form of religious expression, for which all other dharmas should be abandoned and also in other texts such as the Narada Bhakti Sutra.

HISTORY

There is no exact information as to the early origins of Bhakti, however it is believed that it was present to at least some extent in Vedic times. It appears to have started in Tamil Nadu and spread slowly northwards, eventually becoming an accepted doctrine within a number of paths within Hinduism. The Alvars are known to have been particularly influential throughout this time. Between 1200-1700 A.D., the Bhakti Movements in India increased in popularity and numbers, growing into the various branches known today.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

The forces that cause creation sustain and maintain that which has become created and eventually cause the destruction of that which was created – named Brahman, by the *Upanishads* – permeates everything in the Creation. Brahman is the self creating force that is in all that has a name and form as well as that which remains formless and nameless.

The *Bhagavata Purana* describes three different levels of Brahman realisation. The first is an impersonal state of blissful consciousness, similar to nirvana where one is aware of the great universal Brahman

effulgence permeating everything; the second is classified as Paramatma realisation, wherein one is actually able to see the Form of Godhead alongside one's own soul (atma); the third and ultimate realisation is described as Bhagavan, in this state one has a direct loving relationship with The Supreme Personality of Godhead himself, in one or more of His transcendental forms.

The main difference between bhakti philosophy and all others is that the goal is also the means of attaining the goal. In other words, bhakti, devotional service to the Supreme, is attained by engaging in devotional service to the Supreme. The difference between the starting and concluding stages is that in the beginning the activity of bhakti is a *forced* engagement, whereas in the conclusion it is a spontaneous, loving reciprocation.

ARCHANA: DEITY WORSHIP

The Smarta tradition of Hinduism recommends that each person may choose a deity of worship (*ishta-devata*) to which they are most attracted. If the grossest manifestation is the only thing that suits one's taste, or mood, or psychological make-up or intellect, one is free to worship God in that form, as long as the form itself is bonafide and from scripture (not imaginary). It is in this spirit that Sahasranama stotras (1000 names of God) and ashtottara-stotras (poems of praise through 108 names) are found in abundance in Hindu religious literature for almost every deity. It is this train of thought in the Smarta Hindu mind that lives with different puranas though they extoll different deities.

In contrast, the Vaishnava tradition teaches that only Vishnu is to be worshipped. Meanwhile, the Saivite tradition teaches that only Shiva is to be worshipped.

SIX TRADITIONAL FAVOURITES

There are six popular traditions which embrace bhakti as a process of worship to a particular deity:

- Vishnu, belonging to the classic Trinity and His concrete manifestations in the forms of Rama, Krishna and other avatars.
- Maheshvara or Shiva, the third God of the classic Trinity.
- Devi, the Mother Goddess, in her three forms of Durga or Parvati, Lakshmi and Saraswati.
- Ganesha, the elephant-faced deity who is said to remove obstacles on the path of devotion.

- Suryadev, the Sun-God.
- Subrahmanya, the six-faced deity known also as Murugan or Kumaran to the Tamil world.

ALL-ENCOMPASSING ELECTICISM

In addition, the choice of ishta-devata became, over the centuries, a choice of one among the thousands of temples scattered throughout the country and the deity chosen may very well be the particular deity enshrined in a specific temple, though certainly belonging to one of the six major streams listed above.

It is this variety and possibility of 'to each according to his needs and capabilities' that brings together under one banner of Hinduism people with varying practices, attitudes and states of evolution. Accordingly carving of images of deity forms both for worship at home and in the temples became one of the most highly developed art and profession in India. The religious life of India was thus nourished through the ages on a visual statement, unmatched perhaps, in the history of civilisation.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF BHAKTI

The scripture known as the Narad Bhakti Sutra, believed to be spoken by the sage Narada distinguishes eleven forms of bhakti based on the different relationship to God that the devotee can assume.

The devotee Prahlada, as explained in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, enunciates Nine Expressions of Bhakti. *See also Bhakti yoga.*

According to Adi Shankara, bhakti is the seeking after one's real nature. Adi Shankara, in verse 61 of his Sivanandalahari lists five analogies of Bhakti. *See Five Graded Analogies of Bhakti.*

THEORY OF DIVINE GRACE

In any theory of grace it is the surrender to God's will and humility that matters. The practitioner has to surrender by their own free will with the understanding that living people have the free will to obey or disobey God. The fatalist view of reality is only a fragmentary part of Hinduism. A person's fate is reflected mainly in the tendencies that he has created for himself through committed actions. He has total free will to surrender to God or not. But if he surrenders to Him heart and soul, He promises that He will take care of his pure devotee. This is famously illustrated in one of Krishna's final statements to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

- "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear". (*Bhagavad Gita* 18.66)

MAYA (ILLUSION)

Maya, in Indian religions, is a polyvalent term. Maya, is the principal deity who creates, perpetuates and governs the phantasmagoria, illusion and dream of duality in the phenomenal Universe. For some mystics this manifestation is real, but it is a fleeting reality; it is a mistake, although a natural one, to believe that Maya represents a fundamental reality or Truth. Each person, each physical object, from the perspective of eternity is like a brief, disturbed drop of water from an unbounded ocean. The goal of enlightenment is to understand this — more precisely, to experience this: to see intuitively that the distinction between the self and the Universe is a false dichotomy. The distinction between consciousness and physical matter, between mind and body (refer bodymind), is the result of an unenlightened perspective.

MAYA IN PHYSICS

There is interesting similarity in applied mathematics—physics. Maya practically means that matter and energy is the same thing. Therefore we should strive to see it. Which allows us to understand basic concepts of exact science.

MAYA IN REAL LIFE

The brain is a composition of matter—neurons. This matter is able to change when given stimuli. This change is called thinking. Our thoughts are therefore just a product of this matter (grey and white brain matter), reacting to instant stimuli. Our brains create an illusion of time-flow. The fact that our bodies and our brain are derived from same matter as a rock or grass is taught in modern schools' chemistry courses.

MAYA IN PROGRAMMING

Data equals algorithms. For the machine there is no difference between them (although some machines tried to separate it but it caused them to constrain finite amount space which can be maximally given to each one). It has been separated for and by humans (programmers), so that they can easily operate with it.

GREAT CIRCLE OF KNOWLEDGE

There is a great knowledge in such religions, which defined and declared those things and concepts. Existence of this concept thousands years after its birth is living proof of ability of preservation of exact informations in religion. One can easily see how inexact, religious and spiritual is reborn exact and material. Although this circle spans for very long period. See samsara or first Newton's law for further refence.

MAYA IN HINDUISM

In Hinduism, Maya is to be seen through, like an epiphany, in order to achieve *moksha* (liberation of the soul from the cycle of samsara). Ahamkar (ego-consciousness) and *karma* are seen as part of the binding forces of Maya. Maya may be understood as the phenomenal Universe of perceived duality, a lesser reality-lens superimposed on the unity of Brahman. The samskaras of perceived duality perpetuate samsara. Maya may also be visualised as a guise or aspect of the Divine Mother (Devi) concept of Hinduism. In the Hindu scripture *Devi Mahatmyam*, Maya covers Vishnu's eyes in Yoganidra (Divine Sleep) during cycles of existence when all is resolved into one. By exhorting Mahamaya to release Her illusory hold on Vishnu, Brahma is able to bring Vishnu to aid him in killing two demons, Madhu and Kaitabh, who have manifested as thoughtforms from Vishnu's sleeping form. Shri Ramakrishna often spoke of Mother Maya and combined deep Hindu allegory with the idea that Maya is a lesser reality that must be overcome so that one is able to realize their true Self.

Maya in Hindu Philosophy

In Advaita Vedanta philosophy, **Maya** is the limited, purely physical and mental reality in which our everyday consciousness has become entangled. Maya is held to be an illusion, a veiling of the true, unitary Self—the Cosmic Spirit also known as Brahman. The concept of Maya was expounded in the Hindu scriptures known as the *Upanishads*. Many philosophies or religions seek to "pierce the veil" of Maya in order to glimpse the transcendent truth, from which the illusion of a physical reality springs, drawing from the idea that first came to life in the Hindu stream of Vedanta. Maya is neither true nor untrue. Since Brahman is the only truth, Maya cannot be true. Since Maya causes the material world to be seen, it cannot be untrue. Hence, Maya is described as indescribable. She has two principle functions — one is to veil Brahman and obscure and conceal it from our

consciousness. The other is to present and promulgate the material world and the veil of duality instead of Brahman. The veil of Maya is piercable and with dilligence and grace, may be permanently rent. Consider an illusion of a rope being confused as a snake in the darkness. Just as this illusion gets destroyed when true knowledge of the rope is perceived, similarly, Maya gets destroyed for a person when they perceive Brahman with transendental knowledge. A metaphor is also given—when the reflection of Brahman falls on Maya, Brahman appears as God (the Supreme Lord). Pragmatically, where the duality of the world is regarded as true, Maya becomes the divine magical power of the Supreme Lord. Maya is the veritable fabric of duality and she performs this role at the behest of the Supreme Lord. God is not bound by Maya, just as a magician is not illusioned and deluded by their own magic.

By Sri Sankaracharya

1. The Supreme Self (or Ultimate Reality) who is Pure Consciousness perceived Himself by Selfhood (i.e. Existence with "I"-Consciousness). He became endowed with the name "I". From that arose the basis of difference.

2. He exists verily in two parts, on account of which, the two could become husband and wife. Therefore, this space is ever filled up completely by the woman (or the feminine principle) surely.

3. And He, this Supreme Self thought (or reflected). Thence, human beings were born. Thus, say the *Upanishads* through the statement of sage Yajnavalkya to his wife.

4. From the experience of bliss for a long time, there arose in the Supreme Self a certain state like deep sleep. From that (state) Maya (or the illusive power of the Supreme Self) was born just as a dream arises in sleep.

5. This Maya is without the characteristics of (or different from) Reality or unreality, without beginning and dependent on the Reality that is the Supreme Self. She, who is of the form of the Three Guna (qualities or energies of Nature) brings forth the Universe with movable and immovable (objects).

6. As for Maya, it is invisible (or not experienced by the senses). How can it produce a thing that is visible (or experienced by the senses)? How is a visible piece of cloth produced here by threads of invisible nature?

7. Though the emission of ejaculate onto sleeping garments or bedclothes is yielded by the natural experience of copulation in a wet dream, the stain of the garment is perceived as real upon waking whilst the copulation and lovemaking was not true or real. Both sexual partners in the dream are unreal as they are but dream bodies, and the sexual union and conjugation was illusory, but the emission of the generative fluid was real. This is a metaphor for the resolution of duality into lucid unity.

8. Thus, Maya is invisible (or beyond sense-perception). (But) this universe which is its effect, is visible (or perceived by the senses). This would be Maya which, on its part, becomes the producer of joy by its own destruction.

9. Like night (or darkness) Maya is extremely insurmountable (or extremely difficult to be understood). Its nature is not perceived here. Even as it is being observed carefully (or being investigated) by sages, it vanishes like lightning.

10. Maya (the illusive power) is what is obtained in Brahman (or the Ultimate Reality). Avidya (or nescience or spiritual ignorance) is said to be dependent on Jiva (the individual soul or individualised consciousness). Mind is the knot which joins Consciousness and matter.

11. Space enclosed by a pot, or a jar or a hut or a wall has their several appellations (e.g., pot space, jar space etc.). Like that, Consciousness (or the Self) covered here by Avidya (or nescience) is spoken of as jiva (the individual soul).

12. Objection: How indeed could ignorance become a covering (or an obscure factor) for Brahman (or the Supreme Spirit) who is Pure Consciousness, as if the darkness arising from the night (could become a concealing factor) for the sun which is self-luminous?

13. As the sun is hidden by clouds produced by the solar rays but surely, the character of the day is not hidden by those modified dense collection of clouds, so the Self, though pure, (or undefiled) is veiled for a long time by ignorance. But its power of Consciousness in living beings, which is established in this world, is not veiled.

Understanding Maya Through *Bhagavad Gita* verses

Spoken by Krishna (sic, also spelled Krishna) to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra *Bhagavad Gita, Ch.14, Verse 3*. "My womb is

the great Nature (Prakriti or MAYA). In that I place the germ (embryo of life). Thence is the birth of all beings".

Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 14, Verse 4 "Whatever forms are born, O Arjuna, in any womb whatsoever, the great Brahma (Nature) is their womb and I am the seed-giving father."

Explanation: Prakriti (Nature), made up of the three qualities (Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas), is the material cause of all beings.

In the great Prakriti, I place the seed for the birth of Brahma (the creator, also known as Hiranyagarbha, or Ishwar, or the conditioned Brahman); and the seed gives birth to all beings. The birth of Brahma (the creator) gives rise to the birth of beings.

The primordial Nature (prakriti) gives birth to Brahma, who creates all beings.

(I am the father; the primordial Nature is the mother).

Bhagavad Gita, Ch.13, verse 26. "Wherever a being is born, whether unmoving or moving, know thou Arjuna, that it is from the union between the field and the knower of the field". (Purusha is the knower of the field; Prakriti is the field; Shiva is another name for the knower of the field and Shakti is the field; Spirit is another name for the knower of the field and Matter (Prakriti) is the field).

Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 7, Verse 4. "I am endowed with two Shaktis, namely the superior and the inferior natures; the field and its knower (spirit is the knower of the field; matter is the field.) I unite these two".

Bhagavad Gita Ch.7, Verse 6. "Know these two—my higher and lower natures—as the womb of all beings. Therefore, I am the source and dissolution of the whole universe".

Bhagavad Gita, Ch.13, Verse 29. "He sees, who sees that all actions are performed by nature alone, and that the Self is action less".

(The Self is the silent witness).

Bhagavad Gita, Ch.9, Verse 17. "I am the father of this world, the mother, the dispenser of the fruits of actions and the grandfather; the one thing to be known, the purifier, the sacred monosyllable (AUM), and also the Rg, the Sama and the Yajur Vedas".

Bhagavad Gita, Ch.18, Verse 61. "The sovereign Lord dwells in the heart space of beings and moves them to act by his divine Maya, as though mounted on a machine".

Maya in Hindu Mythology

Maya is also the name of an Asura, who was the father-in-law of the Lord of Lanka, Ravana and the father of Mandodari. He is the archnemesis of Vishwakarma, the celestial architect of the Gods. His knowledge and skills are compatible with Vishwakarma. When Lanka was destroyed by Hanuman, it was the King of Demons, Maya, who had re-installed the beauty of that Island Kingdom.

Maya as the Goddess

In Hinduism, Maya is also seen as a form of Laksmi, a Divine Goddess. Her most famous explication is seen in the Devi Mahatmyam, where she is known as Mahamaya.

Essentially, Mahamaya (great Maya) both blinds us in delusion (moha) and has the power to free us from it. Maya, superimposed on Brahman, the one divine ground and essence of monist Hinduism, is envisioned as one with Laxmi, Durga, etc. A great modern (19th century) Hindu sage who often spoke of Maya as being the same as the Shakti principle of Hinduism was Shri Ramakrishna.

In the Hindu scripture 'Devi Mahatmyam,' Mahamaya (Great Maya) is said to cover Vishnu's eyes in Yoganidra (Divine Sleep) during cycles of existence when all is resolved into one. By exhorting Mahamaya to release Her illusory hold on Vishnu, Brahma is able to bring Vishnu to aid him in killing two demons, Madhu and Kaitabh, who have manifested from Vishnu's sleeping form. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa often spoke of Mother Maya and combined deep Hindu allegory with the idea that Maya is a lesser reality that must be overcome so that one is able to realize his or her true Self. Maya as Mahalaxmi was called upon when the gods and goddesses were helpless against the demon Mahisasura. The combined rage of all the gods including Brahma Vishnu and Shiva created her. She is the most powerful of all the gods and goddesses in heaven. The gods gave her ornaments, weapons and her bearer, the lion. She was unassailable. She called upon the demon, had a fierce battle against Mahisasura and his huge army herself. She killed the demon and restored heaven back to the gods and goddesses. Thus, She is even now the protector of the universe which is lying in her lap.

MAYA IN BUDDHISM

There is a range of beliefs in Buddhist thought regarding the question of the reality of the world. Some schools in the Tibetan tradition

espousing the doctrine of Dzogchen posit that the world is illusory, as a dream:

The real sky is (knowing) that samsara and nirvana are merely an illusory display.

—Mipham Rinpoche, *Quintessential Instructions of Mind*, p. 117

MAYA IN SIKHISM

In Sikhism, the world is transitory and a passing phase. However, it is viewed as relatively real. God is viewed as the only reality, but within God exist both conscious souls and unconscious objects; these created objects are also real.

CONCEPTS ANALOGOUS TO MAYA

Some dialogues of Plato also contain ideas reminiscent of Maya, especially the famous "Allegory of the cave".

La vida es sueño ("Life is a dream") is a play by the Spanish Baroque playwright Calderón de la Barca derived from the Legend of young Buddha and the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat. From a Catholic Counter-Reformation position, Calderón explores the concept of free will and moral behaviour in a world of illusion.

Arthur Schopenhauer uses the term "Veil of Maya" to describe his view of *The World as Will and Representation*.

A Course in Miracles regards the perceptual world as an illusion. Its metaphysics comes close to Advaita Vedanta.

Christian Science teaches that the physical world is "error" and the reality is actually entirely spiritual.

There are numerous adaptations and references to the concept in popular culture, notably in The Matrix trilogy, where Maya is represented by the character of the Oracle. In the final scene, the Architect tells the Oracle that she "played a dangerous game this time", which is a reference to concept of Lila.

PUJA

Puja is a religious ritual that Hindus perform on a variety of occasions to pray or show respect to their chosen Gods or Goddesses. Puja basically involves making offerings to a chosen deity(s) so as to seek their blessings. The offerings are made with an acknowledgement— "I dedicate to you O God, what is truly yours." The whole Puja is

thus an acknowledgement of one's smallness and humility, i.e. performance of Puja removes Ego, which is truly the only hurdle on the path to success. Puja of murtis is recommended in the early medieval text Pañcaratra.

Pujas vary in their scale, which depends on their duration, the number of deities being honoured, and whether it is being performed by and for public or private benefit. Most practising Hindus perform puja once or twice a day. Puja should be done after a shower or bath and it is recommended that rites be performed before food intake to ensure sattvic qualities and full concentration (dhyana). Puja is also performed on special occasions in addition to the daily ritual. These include Durga Puja, Pongal and Lakshmi Puja and other religious occasions.

The Pujas performed daily in a temple or dwelling differ from those performed in a special occasion. It takes larger quantities of resources and manpower to perform larger Pujas and more than one priest, including a Tantradharak (Supervisor) are usually employed. But regardless of scale, all Pujas follow the same simple principle – treat the deity like an esteemed (human) guest.

Puja or Pooja is also a very popular Hindu female first name.

PUJA RITUALS

Before the Puja actually begins, a formality called the Sankalpa or Vow must be undertaken. In it, the devotee(s) or the Yajamana(s) declares the exact time, the location, the occasion, the deity, his/her name and other particulars, and the motive behind the performance of the Puja. As and when required, permission is granted to the priest(s) to perform the Puja on behalf of the Yajamana(s).

Although the presence of a priest is not mandatory, it adds "value" to the Puja. This is because a priest is "twice-born"; once mortally, and another time when he begins his education in the *Vedas*. Hence he possesses the 'sacred thread' which symbolize his mastery over the *Vedas*, which are really "the sciences of the universe". On account of this, he is able to bless the offerings used and properly invoke the deity.

Puja consists of meditation (dhyana), austerity (tapa), chanting (mantra), scripture reading (svadhyaya), offering food (bhog) and prostrations (panchanga or ashtanga pranama, dandavat). The individual also applies a tilaka mark on the forehead with sandalwood paste,

and then a vermillion (kumkum) dot (chandlo) in its centre. This signifies submission to the Almighty and also His Omnipresence. Puja is usually concluded with aarti to the Lord.

Large pujas request the presence of fellow believers and pray to the god or goddesses in question. This usually involves a full day ritual where people are present for the actual puja ceremony and have puja prasad, followed by bhajans (religious prayer songs) and an all-vegetarian dinner.

STEPS OF A PUJA

The actual Puja can be divided into the following steps:

1. Invocation (*Bodhan, Aamantran/Aavahan*)
2. Offering
3. Prayer
4. Conclusion (*Aarti*)
5. Immersion (*Visarjan*)

Invocation

The deity is first either invoked in a permanent consecrated icon (as in a temple or dwelling) or invited into a temporary icon (as in a public Puja). The icon, or Vigraha, could be an idol or a special collection of items symbolising the deity, e.g.

- Inkpot, Pen and a paddy inflorescence for Sarasvati (Goddess of Speech and Knowledge)
- Lingam stone for Shiva
- Ammonite stone (Shalagram) for Vishnu

Most Pujas, however, use a clay pot filled with Ganga water and stoppered with a germinating or dry coconut placed on mango leaves – called a Kalash or Ghot – as the icon. More than one icon is often used in some Pujas, and the presence of Vishnu in the ammonite form is a must no matter who the deity is. The Dhyaanam forms a part of the invocation.

Offerings

This ceremony involves welcoming the deity and dedicating to them a series of offerings in a particular order. These include:

1. *Aasanam Samarpayami* (Offer a seat)
2. *Paadyam Samarpayami* (Offer water to wash the feet)

3. *Arghyam Samarpayami* (Offer water to wash the hands)
4. *Aachamaneeyam Samarpayami* (Offer water to drink)
5. *Snaanam Samarpayami* (Give bath)
6. *Maha Abhishekam Samarpayami* (Main head bath)
7. *Pratishtaapayaami* (Make Him seated)
8. *Vasthram Samarpayami* (Offer clothes)
9. *Yajnopaveetham Samarpayami* (Offer the Holy Thread)
10. *Gandham Samarpayami* (Offer sandlewood paste/powder)
11. *Akshatham Samarpayami* (Offer Akshatha (rice))
12. *Pushpam Samarpayami* (Offer flowers)
13. *Ashthothtra Poojam Samarpayami* (Say the holy names of the Lord)
14. *Dhoopam Aaghraapayaami* (Offer fragrance)
15. *Deepam Darshayaami* (Offer light)
16. *Neivedyam Samarpayami* (Offer food)
17. *Phalam Samarpayami* (Offer fruit(s))
18. *Taamboolam Samarpayami* (Offer betel nut and leaves).

Most of these are actually the items that an Indian host would offer to an esteemed guest. The offerings are accompanied by a simple chant: Aete Gandhapushpe— Namah. Om — Namah. Aetad Adhipataye Shri Vishnave Namah. As mentioned earlier, the presence of an ammonite is mandatory, as Vishnu is the lord of all offerings and is honoured with a Tulsi leaf after each offering. The offering of food is done most elaborately, usually accompanied by aarti. Further, the ceremony of offering food is veiled by a cloth (usually a red sari).

Prayers

The most creative part of the Puja is when the actual prayers begin. This includes the chanting of holy texts, singing and dancing. It also includes either a sacrifice or the offering of flowers accompanied by sacred chants (Pushpanjali and Japam).

Aarti

The aarti is the true conclusion to the Puja – a sort of summary of the whole ceremony. It involves rededicating all the offerings by slowly rotating them in front of the deity and praying for one's welfare and forgiveness. It is the most extravagant part of any Puja and is accompanied by singing, dancing, chanting and the sacred music of conches, bells, gongs and drums.

Immersion

If the deity was invoked in a temporary icon, an additional ceremony of farewell is performed and the now lifeless icon(s) are immersed in a water body, usually accompanied by a procession. After the Puja, the sanctified offerings – called Prasada – are distributed among the devotees and the priests. The devotees usually get eatables, and the other goodies go to the priests. This practice is a remnant of the days when priests actually lived off these offerings and their fees for performing the Puja alone (Many poor priests still do)

LIST OF COMMONLY PERFORMED PUJAS

- Durga Puja
- Kali Puja
- Saraswati Puja
- Lakshmi Puja
- Narayana Puja
- Shiva Ratri Broto
- Ganesh Puja
- Monosha Puja

FESTIVALS

I. DEEPAVALI

Deepavali (also called Diwali) is a major Hindu, Jain, Sikh and Buddhist festival/celebration. Known as the "Festival of Lights," it symbolises the victory of good over evil, and lamps are lit as a sign of celebration and hope for mankind. Celebrations focus on lights and lamps, particularly traditional diyas (as illustrated). Fireworks are associated with the festival in some regions of the country. Deepavali is celebrated for five consecutive days in the Hindu month of Ashwayuja. It usually occurs in October/November, and is one of the most popular and eagerly awaited festivals of India. Hindus, Jains and Sikhs alike regard it as a celebration of life and use the occasion to strengthen family and social relationships. For Jains it is one of the most important festivals, and beginning of the Jain year. It is also a significant festival for the Sikh faith.

DATES IN VARIOUS CALENDARS

The date of Diwali is based on the Hindu calendar, which has solar sidereal years and lunar months. Although the festival is worshipped on exactly the same set of days across India, it falls in

different months depending on the version of the Hindu calendar being used in the given region.

The *Amanta* ("ending on the no-moon") version of the Hindu calendar has been adopted as the Indian national calendar. According to this calendar, which is prevalent in southern India and Maharashtra, Deepavali falls in the middle of the month of Ashwayuja. According to the *Purnimanta* ("ending on the full-moon") version prevalent in northern India, the 5-day celebration is spread over the last three days of the month of Ashwayuja and the first two days of the new month of Kartika. According to this calendar, the festival of Deepavali marks the new year's day of this calendar and is therefore an especially significant festival. In the Gregorian calendar, it falls generally in the months of October or November. In 2005, the new moon day which is the third and most important day of the festival fell on November 1. In 2006, it will be celebrated on October 21 (Saturday).

SIGNIFICANCE IN HINDUISM

The festival marks the victory of good over evil. The Sanskrit word Deepavali means array of lights that stands for victory of brightness over darkness. As the knowledge of Sanskrit diminished, the name was popularly modified to Diwali, especially in northern India.

On the day of Diwali, many wear new clothes, share sweets and light firecrackers. The North Indian business community usually starts their financial new year on Diwali and new account books are opened on this day.

Hindus find cause to celebrate this festival for different reasons:

- As per sacred texts, according to Skanda Purana, the goddess Shakti observed 21 days of austerity starting from ashtami of shukla paksha (waxing period of moon) to get half part of the body of Lord Shiva. This vrata is known as kedhara vrata. Deepavali is the completion day of this austerity. This is the day Lord Shiva accepted Shakti into the left half of the form and appeared as Ardhanarishvara. The ardent devotees observe this 21 days vrata by making a kalasha with 21 threads on it and 21 types of offerings for 35 days. The final day is celebrated as kedhara gauri vrata.
- Diwali also celebrates the return of Lord Rama, King of Ayodhya, with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana to Ayodhya from a war in which he killed the demon king Ravana. It is believed

that the people lit oil lamps along the way to light their path in the darkness. In North India, the festival is held on the final day of the Vikram calendar. The following day marks the beginning of the North Indian new year, and is called Annakut.

- It commemorates the killing of Narakasura, an evil demon who created havoc, by Lord Krishna's wife Sathyabhama. This happened in the Dwapara Yuga during this time of Lord Krishna's avatar. In another version, the demon was killed by Lord Krishna himself. In South India, Diwali does not coincide with the beginning of a new year as South Indians follow a different calendar, the Shalivahana calendar.

- In Bhavishyottara and Bramhavaivarta Purana, Diwali is associated with the Daitya king Bali, who is allowed to return to earth once a year.

THE FIVE DAYS OF DIWALI

Diwali is celebrated over five days in most of North India. All the days except Diwali are named using the designation in the Indian calendar. A lunar half-month is 15 days. Diwali as a new-moon day, marks the last day of a 15-day period.

1. *Dhan-trayodashi* or *Dhan teras*: Dhan means "wealth" and Trayodashi means "13th day". Thus, as the name implies, this day falls on the 13th day of the first half of the lunar month. It is an auspicious day for shopping. (Gujarati: Dhan Teras)

2. *Naraka Chaturdasi*: *Narak* means 'of a new era of Light and Knowledge'. *Chaturdasi* implies fourteenth day. (Gujarati: Kali Chaudas)

3. *Diwali*: the actual day of Diwali, is celebrated on the third day of the festival, when the moon completely wanes and total darkness sets in the night sky.

4. *Varsha-pratipada* or *Padwa*: Beginning of the New Year (Kartikadi Vikram). Pratipada means the first. (Gujarati: Bestu Varas)

5. *Bhayiduj* (also Bhayyaduj, Bhaubeej or Bhayitika) — on this day, brothers and sisters meet to express their love and affection for each other. (Gujarati: Bhai Bij)

The celebrations vary in different regions:

- In Southern India, *naraka chaturdashi* is the main day, with firecrackers at dawn.

- The main festival is on *Amavasya* evening with *Lakshmi Puja* which is followed by lighting of oil lamps around the house.

CELEBRATED BY JAINS

Lord Mahavira, the last of the Jain Tirthankaras, attained Nirvana on this day at Pavapuri. According to Jain tradition the chief disciple of Mahavira, Ganadhar Gautam Swami also attained complete knowledge on this very day, thus making Diwali a really special occasion for the Jains to celebrate. Diwali is first mentioned in Jain books as the date of the nirvana of Lord Mahavira. The oldest use of the word "Diwali/Dipavali" occurs in Harivamsha-Purana written by Acharya Jinasena, composed in Shaka Samvat 705. The sample of text containing the word Diwali is below:

> *Thus, people in Bharata every year celebrate famous "Dipalikaya", to reverently worship the Jinendra on the occasion of his nirvana on the amavasya of Kartika month.*

Significance of lamps: The Kalpasutra by Acharya Bhadrabahu, 3rd century BC, explains the significance of lights: *"with light of knowledge gone, we make light of ordinary matter."*

The way Jains celebrate Diwali is different in many respects. There is a note of asceticism in whatever the Jains do, and the celebration of Diwali is not an exception. The Jains celebrate Diwali during the month of Kartik for three days. During this period, among the Shvetambaras, devoted Jains observe fasting and chant the Uttaradhyayan Sutra, which contain the final pravachans of Lord Mahavira, and meditate upon him. Vira Nirvana Samvat: The Jain year starts with Pratipada following Diwali. Vira Nirvana Samvat 2532 starts with Diwali 2005. The Jain businessmen traditionally started their accounting year from Diwali.

CELEBRATED BY SIKHS

Sikhs also celebrate Diwali to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone for the Golden Temple in 1577. It is also known as Bandi Chhorh Divas. The Mughal emperor Jahangir arrested the Sikh Guru Hargobind and imprisoned him in Gwalior. Later Jehangir relented and released the Guru. The Guru asked that 52 rulers imprisoned with him should also be released. To the joy of the Sikhs the Guru returned to Amritsar on Diwali and it prompted the followers to celebrate the day with joy and happiness. On Diwali the Sikhs illuminate their Gurdwaras and homesare with Deewé (earthen oil lamps) or

candles. Early in the morning, Sikh pilgrims take a dip in the sacred tank while reciting Japji Sahib, and then pray at the Golden Temple. Circumambulation of the tank is done.

MELAS

To add to the festival of Diwali, fairs called *Melas* are held throughout India. Melas are to be found in many towns and villages. A mela generally becomes a market day in the countryside when farmers buy and sell produce. Girls and women dress attractively during the festival. They wear colourful clothing, new jewellery and their hands are decorated with henna designs.

There are plenty of activities that take place at a mela. These activities include performances from jugglers, acrobats, snake charmers and fortune tellers. Food stalls are set up, selling sweet and spicy foods. A variety of rides are present during the fair, which include Ferris wheels and rides on animals such as elephants and camels.

CELEBRATED DIWALI IN THE WORLD

Diwali is celebrated in various parts of the world, in countries such as Britain, The Netherlands, Suriname, Canada, Guyana, Mauritius, Fiji, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Australia, much of Africa, and the United States.

With more and more Indians now migrating to various parts of the world, the number of countries where Diwali is celebrated has been gradually increasing. While in some countries it is celebrated mainly by Indian expatriates, in others it has become part of the general local culture. In most of these countries Diwali is celebrated on the same lines as described in this article with some minor variations. Some important variations are worth mentioning.

In Malaysia, Diwali is known as "Hari Deepavali," and is celebrated during the seventh month of the Hindu solar calendar. It is a federal public holiday. In many respects it resembles the traditions followed in the Indian subcontinent.

In Nepal, Diwali is known as *Tihar* and celebrated during the October/November period. Here, though the festival is celebrated for five days, the traditions vary from those followed in India. On the first day, cows are given offerings, in appreciation of the food they have given and agricultural work they have performed.. On the second

day, dogs and all living animals are revered and offered special food. On the third day, celebrations follow the same pattern as in India, with lights and lamps and much social activity. On the fourth day Yama, the Lord of Death, is worshipped and appeased. On the fifth and final day, brothers and sisters meet and exchange pleasantries.

In Singapore, the festival is called "Deepavali", and is a gazetted public holiday. Observed primarily by the minority Indian community, it is typically marked by a light-up in the Little India district and is most known for the fire-walking ceremonies not practised as part of the festival in other countries.

In Sri Lanka, this festival is called as Deepavali and is celebrated by the Tamil community. On this day people wear new clothes and exchange pleasantries. It's a "sweet" day, literally!!

Diwali is celebrated in the Caribbean Islands as well. Especially in Trinidad and Tobago, Diwali is marked as a special occasion and celebrated with much fanfare. It is observed as a national holiday in this part of the world and some Ministers of the Government also take part in the celebrations publicly. Diwali is also celebrated in the South American country of Guyana.

ECONOMICS OF DIWALI

Diwali is an annual stimulus for the Indian economy. Indians purchase gold, gifts, decorations, crackers and household appliances during this festival. Companies offer huge discounts during the Diwali season to attract customers, which helps the economy and also helps the poor. It also helps the community in hunger since this festival shares it food. It also brings tourists to the country.

Since Diwali period also marks school holidays in most parts of India, many Bollywood movies are released during this period.

II. VIJAYADASHAMI

Vijayadashami (*also known as* Dussehra) is a festival celebrated across India. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the bright half of the Hindu month of Ashwayuja or Ashwina, and is the grand culmination of the 10-day annual festival of Dasara or Navaratri. The legend underlying the celebration, as also its mode of conduct, vary vastly by region; however, all festivities celebrate the victory of the forces of Good over Evil. It is also considered to be an auspicious day to begin new things in life.

SIGNIFICANCE

In Southern India, Eastern India and Western India, the festival of Navaratri which culminates with Vijayadashami commemorates the legend in which the Goddess Durga, also known as *Chamundeshwari* or *Mahishasura Mardini*, vanquishes the demon Mahishasura, an event that is said to have taken place in the vicinity of the present day city of Mysore in Karnataka.

In Northern India, the same 10-day festival commemorates the victory of Rama, prince of Ayodhya in present-day Uttar Pradesh, over Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, who according to the *Ramayana* had abducted Sita Devi, the consort of the former, and held her captive in his realm.

LEGEND OF THE SHAMI TREE

There is another and little-known legend associated with this festival, one associated with the *Mahabharata*. For reasons impossible to delineate here, the Pandavas underwent a period of exile, being 12 years of dwelling in the forest followed by a year of exile *incognito*. Disguise being indispensable during the latter period, the Pandavas found it necessary to lay aside, for the length of that year, the many divine and distinctive weapons that they possessed. These they secreted in a 'Shami' tree in the vicinity of their chosen place of *incognito* residence. It is said that the *Shami* tree chosen by the Pandavas stood inside a cremation ground. It was chosen to render detection that much less likely. The Pandavas wrapped their weapons in a white cloth and concealed this on that shami tree, making the weapons look like a dead body. At the end of a year, they returned to the spot, found their weaponry intact, and worshipped in thanksgiving both the *Shami* tree and the Goddess Durga, presiding deity of strength and victory. Meanwhile, the Kauravas had invaded that area, suspecting the residence of the Pandavas there. Upon finishing their devotions, the Pandavas made straight to battle, and won the contest comprehensively. The day that all these events occurred on has since been known as *"Vijayadashami"*, where *"Vijaya"* is the Sanskrit word for "Victory".

The fact of the comprehensive success of the Pandavas in their endeavour has been extrapolated to the everyday ventures of the common man today. Even to this day, people exchange *Shami* leaves and wish each other victory in their own ventures and efforts. The following *shloka* is used, sometimes, to signify this:

sham I shamayate paapam shamI shaTruvinaashinI |
arjunasya dhanurdhaari raamsya priyadasrshinI | |
karishyamaa Nayaatraayaa yayaakaalam sukham mayaa |
tatranirvi Gnakrtr Itvam bhava shrIraamapUjitaa | |

CELEBRATION

Interestingly, the legend associated with the *Shami* tree finds commemoration during the renowned Navaratri celebrations at Mysore, which otherwise strongly emphasises the Durga legend described above, as may be expected in the city built at the very site of the events of the Durga legend. On Vijaydashami day, at the culmination of a colourful 10-day celebration, the goddess Chamundeshwari is worshipped and then borne in a Golden *Ambari* or elephant-mounted throne, in a grand procession, through the city of Mysore, from the historical Mysore Palace to the Banni Mantapa. *Banni* is the Kannada word for the Sanskrit *Shami*, and *Mantapa* means "Pavilion".

The festival is celebrated with much fervour and splendour in Southern India. Please see also the dasara and Mysore Dasara pages for further details.

In Northern India, the festival commemorates the victory of Rama, prince of Ayodhya and avatara of Vishnu, over Ravana, the lord of Lanka who had abducted Rama's wife, Sita Devi. The festival is celebrated with much gusto. Crackers are burnt, and huge melas or fetes are organised. The Ramlila—an abriged dramatisation of the *Ramayana*—is enacted with much public fervour all over northern India during the period of the festivities. The burning of the effigies of Ravana on Vijayadashami, signifying the victory of good over evil, brings the festivities to a colourful close.

III. GANESH CHATURTHI

Ganesh Chaturthi, (Ganesh Festival) is an occasion or a day on which Lord Ganesha, the son of Shiva and Parvati, makes his presence on earth for all his devotees. It is also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi in Sanskrit, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu. It is the birthday of Lord Ganesha. The festival is observed in the Hindu calendar month of Bhaadrapada, starting on the shukla chaturthi (fourth day of the waxing moon period). This typically comes sometime between 20th of August and 15th of September. The festival lasts for 10 days, ending on Ananta Chaturdashi.

Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, is widely worshipped as the supreme god of wisdom, prosperity and good fortune.

While held all over India, it is at its most elaborate in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and other areas which were former states of the Maratha Empire.

RITUALS

During the Ganesh festival, a household worships a murti of Shri Ganesha. The worship lasts an odd number of days (from 1 to 11 days, sometimes 13).

This festival starting with the installation of beautifully engraved (sculptured) Ganesh idols in colorfully decorated homes and *mandapas* (*pendals*). The *mandapas* have been depicted by religious themes or current events. The idols are worshipped with families and friends. An enthusiastic spiritual atmosphere prevails.

The main sweet-dish during the festival is modak, also known as modagam [kozhakottai] in South India and karanjis. A modak is a dumpling made from rice flour/wheat flour with a stuffing of coconut, jaggery and some other condiments. It can be either steam-cooked or fried and the coconut can be fresh/dry grated. A karanji is similar but has the shape of the 4th day moon.

There are also public celebrations of the festival, with local communities (*mandals*) vying with each other to put up the biggest murti. The festival is the time for a lot of cultural activities like songs, dramas and orchestra.

Wordly meaning of MODAK—*MODA* means happiness and *K* is a suffix. Modak means *"That which gives (or brings) happiness"*.

Today, the Ganesh Festival is not only a popular festival—it has become a very critical and important economic activity for Maharashtra. Many artists, industries, and businesses survive on this mega-event. Ganesh Festival also provides a stage for budding artists to present their art to the public. For the year 2006 in the Western Calendar, Ganesh Chaturthi has commenced on Sunday, August 27th.

LEGEND

Legends say that Lord Ganapati (meaning "Lord"[pati] of the "semi-divine creatures that serve Lord Shiva"[ganas]) was created by goddess Parvati; wife of Lord Shiva. Parvati created Ganesha out of sandalwood paste that she used for her bath and breathed life into the figure. Letting him stand guard at the door she went to have her bath. However, while Parvati was taking her bath, Lord Shiva returned and as Ganesha

didn't know him, he didn't allow him to enter. Lord Shiva became enraged and severed the head of the child and entered his house. After realising that he had beheaded his own son, Lord Shiva fixed the head of an elephant in place of Ganesha's head. In this way, Lord Ganesha acquired the image of the elephant-headed God.

To know more about this deity, please read "Ganesh Purana".

GANESH FESTIVAL IN PUNE

There are five "Ganpati of Honour." They are as follows: First Ganpati of Honour—Kasba Ganpati; Second Ganpati of Honour—Tambadi Jogeshwari; Third Ganpati of Honour—Guruji Talim; Fourth Ganpati of Honour—Tulsibaug Ganpati; and Fifth Ganpati of Honour—Kesariwada Ganpati. Shrimant Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati Mandal and Akhil Mandai Mandal are also worshipped by crores of people across globe.

During the festival, people sing prayers called *Aartis*. They visit the homes of their friends and relatives who have Ganesh idols at their homes.

HISTORY

Rooted in Tradition

From then onwards, this festive occasion has grown in acceptance and today, commands the respect of millions of citizens all over Maharashtra. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak brought Ganesha as a deity out on the streets. It was a unique move by this freedom fighter, which he achieved with the Ganpati visarjana or immersion procession, wherein the mass output of several Ganesh mandals is taken out on a parade on the final day of the Ganesh festival and taken to be immersed. This process was started in 1892 and is now prevalent virtually all over Maharashtra, with special emphasis on Mumbai and Pune. Lokmanya Tilak attached this mass celebration to increase national awareness about the Freedom movement. Herein, neighbourhood Ganeshas are worshipped and brought to immersion sites, where huge crowds gather to bid him an emotional and frenzied farewell.

In Pune, as the sun sets over darkening rivers, the images are taken out in boats and as each one is immersed, a cry is raised asking him to return the next year. It is an emotional and public farewell to their beloved god as parthiva (of the earth), who like the Phoenix, will rise once again the following year.

The first day commemorates certain events connected with Ganesha. It is the day on which he materialised as Mayureshwara, to kill the demon Sindhu, who had acquired extraordinary powers through the worship of Surya. Mayureshwara is also one of the ashtavinayakas (the eight forms of Ganesha). This is also the birth that Shiva has chosen to celebrate in Kailasa.

A special puja is performed for Ganesha. The worship of the deity involves getting a corner ready to receive the god. Ganesha is invited with a special phrase and with material and verbal offerings, the puja begins. It involves the panchamrut (five nectars), which includes milk, curd, ghee, honey and jaggery, with which the god's icon is bathed, cleansing in between with water.

Ganesha is then given a red garment and the sacred thread—saying it is silver. He is then smeared with red sandal paste and offered red or yellow flowers. A lamp is lit, bells chime and food is offered in six symbolic mouthfuls—not to the god's body, but to his five panchapranas or 'vital breaths' and the one beyond—the absolute.

During the festival, puja is performed twice every day, once in the morning and again in the evening. Ganesha is offered special leaves and flowers, 21 of each and white durva grass. The murti is formally installed on the first day and given life in the presence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and the Vedas. Touching the murti with blades of durva grass, he is brought to life step by step and made to go through 15 of the 16 rites of passage that each Hindu goes through in his lifetime. (The sixteenth one, which is for death, is omitted.)

The Ganesha mantra is chanted, followed by a Ganesha prayer. Ganesha is called by his 108 good names. The last puja done, the family or congregation gathers around and rice grains are placed on the head of the murti, which is moved, symbolically unseating him.

As a matter of interest there are about 91 different figures of Ganesha according to research done by several scholars. The details of their make up may vary from figure to figure, but with no change in the main set-up. It is the enigma of certain striking variations in details that the sublime in the figures of Ganesha has to be sought for.

Some figures are seen sitting with their trunks turned towards the left side, invariably reaching a bowl of modaks (a sweet edible and festive preparation), while in some figures, the trunks are seen turning towards the right and in yet others, the trunk is straight, hanging down, with or without a pot of nectar in the curve of their trunks.

In some images, Ganesha is seen standing, resting his right foot on a lion and his left foot on a mouse (his chosen mode of transport), while in some other images, his left foot is found resting on a mouse and his right foot lifted in an effort to touch the serpent girdle—his mount carrying a jewel in its mouth.

PROBLEMS

Despite the well meaning idea behind this festival, in modern times there have been a few stray incidents of religious tensions between the Hindus and Muslims during the *visarjan* (immersion) rallies. This happens when the Ganesh procession uses those routes (sometimes as a result of lack of alternative routes due to factors like size of the procession, size of the Ganesh murti and/or the vehicle used to carry it, length of the route, etc.), that pass through places inhabited by other religious groups. However, there are examples of Muslims (and even Christians) involved in Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, such as the *Shri Sarvajanik Ganesh Mitra Mandal* at Shri Sunder Kamala Nagar, King's Circle. As of 10th September 2005, a Muslim heads this particular *Ganesh mandal* (a small group that organises the local celebrations), which was founded by Wilson Brooks (a Christian) some 24 years ago. See news item on the Mid-day website.

Environmentalists too have questioned the submerging of the murtis made increasingly with chemicals (paintings in particular) which pollute the lakes and seas. On September 2004, the Chennai High Court imposed a temporary ban on such immersions. Every year there are at least a couple of casualties associated with accidents (while immersion of the murtis) or clashes associated with this. In some cities (including Bangalore and Mumbai), the immersion takes place in dedicated tanks in the border of the lakes, instead of the lakes themselves as it used to be the case in 2000.

IV. KRISHNA JANMAASHTAMI

Krishna Janmaashtami also known as "Krishnaashtami", "Gokulaashtami", "Srikrishna Jayanti", "Sree Jayanthi" or sometimes merely as "Janmaashtami", is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna, the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu.

DATE

Krishna Janmaashtami is observed on the eighth day of the dark half (*Krishna Paksha*) of the month of Shravana in the Hindu calendar, when the Rohini Nakshatram is ascendent. The Hindu calendar being

lunar, these two events [the day being the eighth of the waning moon (*Krishna-paksha Ashtami*) and the *Rohini Nakshatram* being ascendent] may overlap for only a few hours. In such an event, the festival may be celebrated on different (but successive) days by different people, depending on their local or family traditions.

The festival falls sometime in the months of August/September of the Gregorian calendar. In 2006, Krishnaashtami was celebrated on August 15 or August 16.

CELEBRATIONS

The pious begin the festival by fasting on the previous day (*Saptami*). This is followed by a night-long vigil commemorating the birth of Krishna at night, and his immediate removal by his father to a foster-home for safe-keeping. At midnight, the deity of the infant Krishna is bathed, placed in a cradle and worshipped. In the early morning, ladies draw patterns of little children's feet outside the house with rice-flour paste, walking towards the house. This symbolises the entry of the infant Krishna into his foster-home. This custom is popular in some communities of South India. After ablutions, morning prayers and worship, the devout break their fast with Prasadam, food that has first been offered to God. During the fore-noon hours, the "Dahi-Handi" (see below) custom is celebrated in some parts of the deccan. This is followed by sumptuous mid-day feasts, where extended families customarily get together. Sweets made of milk and other dairy products, especially butter, are traditionally prepared on this occasion.

The festival is celebrated differently in North India. The temples at Vrindavan and Mathura witness a colourful, even boisterous celebration on this occasion, and festivities at these places may extend for several days. Devotional songs and dances mark the celebration. The Rasa Lila is performed to recreate incidents from the life of Krishna and commemorate his love for Radha.

Care is taken among certain circles not to imitate the Rasa Lila in a mundane way. It is said that one should not imitate the Rasa Lila even in dreams. The idea is that Krishna, or God's pastimes cannot be understood by the mundane mind-set and discussing them should therefore be avoided altogether. Krishna's pastimes with Srimati Radha can never be understood by materialistic people, they are transcendental and great care should be taken to present them in such manner.

While the Rasa Lila recreates the youthful Krishna's dalliance with the milkmaids of his native land, the "Dahi-Handi" tradition of

Maharashtra re-enacts his childhood pranks, wherein Krishna and his young friends helped themselves to butter and other goodies in the houses of their neighbours. Clay pots called "Dahi-Handi", filled with curd and butter, are suspended high above the ground. To a constant chorus of "Govinda, Govinda" from all those present, teams of young men form human pyramids to reach the pot and break it, to the merriment of the youths and of the assembly. The festival is thus celebrated with great joy and communal togetherness by one and all.

JANMAASHTAMI CELEBRATIONS IN MUMBAI

In Mumbai, Janmaashtami, popularly known here as Dahi Handi is celebrated with enormous zeal and enthusiasm. Various Handis are set up locally in almost every nook and corner of the city, and groups of youngsters, called Govinda Pathaks (English: Troupes of Lord Krishna) travel around in trucks trying to break as many handis as possible during the day. Many such Govinda Pathaks compete with each other, especially for the handis that dole out hefty rewards. The event, in recent times, has gathered a political flavor, and it is not uncommon for political parties, and rich community groups to offer prizes amounting to lakhs of rupees. Some of the most famous handis are at Dadar, Mazgaon, Lalbaug and some in Thane a neighboring district of Mumbai.

V. DURGA PUJA

Durga Puja, is the biggest festival of Bengali Hindus. It is also called *Akalbodhan, Vijaya Dashami, Dashain, and Dussehra.*

The actual period of the worship however may be over the preceding nine days Navaratri or five days (*"Sasthi", "Saptami", "Asthami", "Nabami" & "Vijaya Dashami"*).

DURGA PUJA IN BENGAL

The worship of Durga (Bengali: *Durgapuja*) in the autumn (*Shôrot*) is the year's largest Hindu festival in West Bengal, Orissa, Tripura, Assam and other parts of East India as well as in Bangladesh. Durga Puja is also celebrated in Nepal and Bhutan according to local traditions and variations. *Puja* means "worship," and Durga's Puja is celebrated from the sixth to tenth day of the waxing moon in the month of *Ashshin*, which is the sixth month in the Bengali calendar. Occasionally however, due to shifts in the lunar cycle relative to the solar months, it may also be held in the following month, *Kartik*. In the Gregorian calendar, these dates correspond to the months of September/October.

In the Krittibas *Ramayana*, Rama invokes the goddess Durga in his battle against Ravana. Although she was traditionally worshipped in the spring, due to contingencies of battle, Rama had to invoke her in the autumn (*akaal bodhan*). Today it is this Rama's date for the puja that has gained ascendancy, although the spring puja, known as Basanti Puja, is also present in the Hindu almanac. Since the season of the puja is *Shôrot* (autumn), it is also known as *Sharodia*. The pujas are held over a five-day period, which is traditionally viewed as the coming of the married daughter, Durga, to her father, Himalaya's home. It is the most important festival in Bengal, and Bengalis celebrate with new clothes and other gifts, which are worn on the evenings when the family goes out to see the *pandals* (temporary structures set up to venerate the goddess). Although it is a Hindu festival, religion takes a backseat on these five days: Durga Puja in Bengal is a carnival, where people from all backgrounds, regardless of their religious beliefs, participate and enjoy themselves to the hilt.

KOLKATA

In Kolkata alone more than ten thousand *pandals* are set up, all clamouring for the admiration and praise of the populace. The city is adorned with lights. People from all over the country visit the city at this time, and every night is one mad carnival where thousands of people go 'pandal-hopping' with their friends and family. Traffic becomes a nightmare, and indeed, most people abandon their vehicles to travel by foot after a point.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh, with its 10 per cent Hindu population celebrates the puja in many temples, an estimated 18,000 puja *mandaps* set up across the country, including more than 140 pujas taking place in the capital Dhaka alone. The Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad is one of the largest bodies overseeing the annual celebrations across the country. Unlike in India where politicians usually keep a low profile at the pujas, in Bangladesh Durga Puja is a major occasion for leading politicians of the major political parties to reach out to their Hindu constituents. Official statements are made by the President, Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, and leaders of the political parties are seen at the largest Durga Puja *mandaps* such as those at *Dhakeshwari Mandir* and Rama Krishna Mission. The last day of Durga Puja, *Bijaya Dasami* is a national holiday in Bangladesh, and all government offices and most private companies remain closed.

AMONG THE DIASPORA

Across the world, Durga Puja serves as a community gathering and a connection to roots for the widespread Bengali diaspora. Tokyo has nearly ten Pujas, and North America has several hundred. Some of the oldest Durga Puja celebrations outside Bengal have been taking place in the United Kingdom for over seventy years. In recent years, Bengali communities in Australia, France and Germany have also started annual Durga Puja celebrations.

In the Middle East, restrictions by local governments on minority religious practices have prevented many Bengali communities from celebrating. The most consistent Durga Puja in the Gulf region has been celebrated in Muscat, Oman, since 1982. The permanent venue for the annual celebration since 1994 has been the Hindu temple in Sohar, in old Muscat. Bengali Cultural Society Kuwait started Durga Puja as Sharadotsav in 1996 and continued till 2000. After 9/11, this has become a five-day get together and cultural programmes.

HISTORY

A considerable literature exists around Durga in the Bengali language and its early forms, including *Durgotsavnirnaya* (11th century), *Durgabhaktitarangini* by Vidyapati (14th century), etc. Durga Puja was popular in Bengal in the medieval period, and records exist of it being held in the courts of Rajshahi (16th century) and Nadia (18th century). It was during the 18th century, however, that the worship of Durga became popular among the landed elite of Bengal, Zamindars. Prominent Pujas were conducted by the landed zamindars and jagirdars, enriched by British rule, including Raja Nabakrishna Deb, of Shobhabajar, who initiated an elaborate Puja at his residence. Many of these old pujas exist to this day. Today, the culture of Durga Puja has shifted from the princely houses to *Sarbojanin* (literally, "involving all") forms.

Durga Puja mood starts off with the *Mahishasuramardini'* – a radio programme that has been popular with the community since the 1950s. While earlier it used to be conducted live, later a recorded version began to be broadcast. Bengalis traditionally wake up at 4 in the morning on Mahalaya day to listen to the enchanting voice of of the late Birendra Kishore Bhadra and the late Pankaj Kumar Mullick on All India Radio. as they recite hymns from the scriptures *Devi Mahatmyam.*

During the week of Durga Puja, in the entire state of West Bengal as well as in large enclaves of Bengalis everywhere, life comes to a

complete standstill. In play grounds, traffic circles, ponds — wherever space may be available — elaborates structures called *pandals* 'are set up, many with nearly a year's worth of planning behind them. The word *pandal* means a temporary structure, made of bamboo and cloth, which is used as a temporary temple for the purpose of the puja. While some of the pandals are simple structures, others are often elaborate works of art with themes that rely heavily on history, current affairs and sometimes pure imagination.

Somewhere inside these complex edifices is a stage on which Durga reigns, standing on her lion mount, wielding ten weapons in her ten hands. This is the religious center of the festivities, and the crowds gather to offer flower worship or *pushpanjali* on the mornings, of the sixth to ninth days of the waxing moon fortnight known as *Devi Pakshya* (lit. Devi = goddess; Pakshya = period; Devi Pakshya meaning the period of the goddess). Ritual drummers – *dhaakis*, carrying large leather-strung *dhaak*– show off their skills during ritual dance worships called *aarati*. On the tenth day, Durga the mother returns to her husband, Shiva, ritualised through her immersion into the waters — *Bishorjon* also known as *Bhaashan* and *Niranjan*.

Today's Puja, however, goes far beyond religion. In fact, visiting the *pandals* recent years, one can only say that Durga Puja the largest outdoor art festival on earth. In the 1990s, a preponderance of architectural models came up on the *pandal* exteriors, but today the art motif extends to elaborate interiors, executed by trained artists, with consistent stylistic elements, carefully executed and bearing the name of the artist.

The sculpture of the idol itself has evolved. The worship always depicts Durga with her four children, and occasionally two attendant deities and some banana-tree figures. In the olden days, all five idols would be depicted in a single frame, traditionally called *pata*. Since the 1980s however, the trend is to depict each idol separately.

At the end of six days, the idol is taken for immersion in a procession amid loud chants of 'Durga mai-ki jai' (glory be to Mother Durga') and 'aashchhe bochhor abar hobe' ('it will happen again next year') and drumbeats to the river or other water body, and it is cast in the waters symbolic of the departure of the deity to her home with her husband in the Himalayas. After this, in a tradition called *Vijaya Dashami*, families visit each other and sweetmeats are offered to visitors (*Dashami* is literally "tenth day" and *Vijay* is "victory").

Durga Puja is also a festivity of Good (Ma Durga) winning over the evil (Maheshasoora the demon). It is a worship of power of Good which always wins over the bad.

DURGA PUJA IN OTHER PARTS OF INDIA

Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, Durga Puja is a fun occasion. Puja is performed each day and devotees don't remove the flower garland that is put each day on the idol or image of the deity. After nine days all nine are removed together. Young girls who have not attained maturity are invited to eat, play games, dance and sing. An elephant is drawn with rangoli and the girls play guessing games. Then they are fed a meal of their choice.

Punjab

People of Punjab strictly observe Navratri. Some Punjabis have only milk for seven days before breaking the fast on ashtami or navami. They worship Durga Ma and do the aarti at home. Some of them have fruit or a complete meal once a day, and intoxicating drinks or meat and other forms of entertainment are completely avoided. At the end of the fast devotees feed beggars or worship little girls who spell the Shakti of the Mother Goddess.

Orissa

It is one of the prime festival of Orissa as well. People in Orissa celebrate it in a very large scale and Durga Mata is one among the scared goddess of Orissa.

Karnataka

It is celebrated in a grand way in this state too. In Mysore, Dussehra is easily the most popular festival. It is celebrated on a grandiose scale here. Elephants are decked up with robes and jewellery and taken in processions through the streets of the city. In fact, many people visit Mysore from all over the country to watch this colourful event. There is also a floating festival in the temple tank at the foot of Chamundi Hill and a procession of chariots around the temple at the top.

Gujarat

Navratri is devoted to Amba Mataji. In some homes, images of Mataji are worshipped in accordance with accepted practice. This is also true of the temples, which usually have a constant stream of

visitors from morning to night. The most common form of public celebration is the performance of garba and dandia-ras/ras-garba (a form of garba with sticks), Gujarat's popular folk-dance, late throughout the nights of these nine days in public squares, open grounds and streets.

Kerala

In Kerala, Durga Puja signifies the beginning of formal education for every child aged 3-5 years. While puja goes on in the temple for all ten days, it is only the concluding three days which are really important. Ashtami is the day of Ayudya Puja, when all the tools at home are worshipped. Custom dictates that no tools be used on this day. On navami day, Goddess Saraswati is honored by worshipping the books and records at home. Thousands throng the Saraswati temple at Kottayam during this period to take a dip in the mysterious holy pond whose source is yet unknown. Large gatherings are also seen at the famous temples at Thekkegram (Palghat), in which there are no idols—only huge mirrors. A devotee finds himself bowing before his own reflection which indicates that God is within us.

Kashmir

Hindus are a minority in Jammu and Kashmir but they celebrate their festivals with pomp and show. These days, festivities are subdued, though. The favorite deities of Kashmir are Lord Shiva and Serawali Ma Durga, the one who rides the tiger. Pundits and Muslims alike vouch that Navratri is important. No big pandals here, each Hindu household does the pooja at home. All the adult members of the household fast on water. In the evenings, fruit may be taken. As elsewhere, Kashmiris grow barley in earthen pots. They believe that if the growth in this pot is good, there is prosperity all year. The most important ritual for Kashmiri Pandits is to visit the temple of guardian goddess Kheer Bhawani on all nine days. On the last day of Navratri, an aarti is held at the temple after which people break their fast. On Dussehra day, Ravana's effigy is burnt.

VI. NAVRATRI

Navratri, Navaratri or Navaratra is a Hindu festival of worship and dance. The word *Navaratri* literally means nine nights in Sanskrit; *Nava*—Nine and *Ratri*—nights. The following 9 forms of goddesses are worshipped during these nine days: Durga, Bhadrakali, Amba or Jagadamba, Annapurna, Sarvamangala, Bhairavi, Chandika or Chandi,

Lalita, and Bhavani. The festival is celebrated for nine nights twice every year during mid-March and the beginning of October, although as the dates of the festival are determined according to the Hindu lunar calendar, the festival may be held for a day more or a day less depending on the calendar.

Navratri is divided into sets of three days to adore three different aspects of the supreme goddess or goddesses. On the first three days, the goddess is invoked as a powerful spiritual force called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. During the next three days, the Mother is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth, Lakshmi, who is considered to have the power of bestowing on her devotees inexhaustible wealth. The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the consort of Brahma as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. In order to have all-round success in life, believers seek the blessings of all three aspects of the divine femininity, hence the nine nights of worship.

During Navratri, some devotees of Durga observe a fast and prayers are offered for the protection of health and property. A period of introspection and purification, Navratri is traditionally an auspicious time for starting new ventures. On the tenth day of October Navratri, the holiday of Dussehra, an effigy of Ravana is burnt to celebrate the victory of good (Rama) over evil.

Navratri is also significant in a large part of Indian homes, for the nine nights of the mother goddess who appears in 9 forms, each one being worshipped for a day. The nine forms signify various traits that the goddess influences us with. The Devi Mahatmya and other texts invoking the Goddess who vanquished demons are cited.

VII. MAHA SHIVARATRI

Maha Shivratri or Shivaratri (*Night of Shiva*) is a Hindu festival celebrated every year on the 14th day in the Krishna Paksha of the month Phalguna in the Hindu Calendar. The most significant practices on this day are offerings of Bheel (Bilva) leaves to the Lord Shiva, fasting and all night long vigil.

LEGENDS

There are many stories associated with Shivaratri and its origins.

Samudra Manthan

During the samudra manthan by the gods and demons, haalaahala, a poison came out of the ocean. It was so toxic, that it effects

would have wiped out the entire creation. At this juncture, as per the advice of Vishnu, the gods approached Mahadev and prayed to him to protect their lives by consuming this poison. Pleased with their prayers, out of compassion for living beings, Lord Shiva drank this poison and held it in his throat by binding it with a snake. The throat became blue due to the poison (Thus, Lord Shiva is also know as Neelakantha) and Shiva remained unharmed. The doctors advised the gods to keep Lord Shiva awake during the night as part of the therapy. To amuse Shiva and to keep him awake, the gods took turn performing various dances and playing music. A vigil was thus kept by the gods in contemplation of Shiva. As the day broke out, Shiva, pleased with their devotion blessed them all. Since then, on this day and night—devotees fast, keep vigil, sing glories of Lord and meditate.

ASSURANCE

After creation was complete, Parvati asked Shiva of which rituals pleased him the most. The Lord replied that the 14th night of the new moon, during the month of Phalgun, is my most favourite day. It is known as Shivaratri. Parvati repeated these words to her friends, from whom the word spread over all creation.

THE HUNTER

Once upon a time, a hunter worshipped Lord Shiva unknowingly on Shivaratri. He did this by dropping bheel leaves on a shiva linga at the base of a bheel tree from its branches where he was hiding and fasting all night. For this he was forgiven of all his sins. This forms the basis behind the offerings of bheel to the Lord on Shivaratri.

THE STORY OF KING CHITRABHANU

In the Shanti Parva of the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma, whilst resting on the bed of arrows and discoursing on *Dharma*, refers to the observance of Maha Shivaratri by King Chitrabhanu. The story goes as follows:

Once upon a time King Chitrabhanu of the Ikshvaku dynasty, who ruled over the whole of Jambudvipa, was observing a fast with his wife, it being the day of Maha Shivaratri. The sage Ashtavakra came on a visit to the court of the king.

The sage asked the king the purpose of his observing the fast. King Chitrabhanu explained that he had the gift of remembering the incidents of his previous birth.

The king said to the sage that in his previous he was a hunter in Varanasi and his name was Suswara. His only livelihood was to kill

and sell birds and animals. One day while roaming through forests in search of animals he was overtaken by the darkness of night. Unable to return home, he climbed a tree for shelter. It happened to be a Bael tree. He had shot a deer that day but had no time to take it home. So he bundled it up and tied it to a branch on the tree. As hunger and thirst tormented him, he was kept awake throughout the night. He shed profuse tears when he thought of his poor wife and children who were starving and anxiously waiting for his return. To pass away the time that night he engaged himself in plucking the Bael leaves and dropping them down onto the ground.

The next day he returned home and sold the deer and then bought some food for himself and his family. The moment he was about to break his fast a stranger came to him, begging for food. He served the food first to stranger and then had his own.

At the time of his death, he saw two messengers of Lord Shiva. They were sent down to conduct his soul to the abode of Lord Shiva. He learnt then for the first time of the great merit he had earned by the unconscious worship of Lord Shiva during the night of Shivaratri. The messengers told him that there was a Lingam at the bottom of the tree. The leaves he dropped fell on the Lingam. His tears, which had shed out of pure sorrow for his family, fell onto the Lingam and washed it and he had fasted all day and all night. Thus, he unconsciously worshipped the Lord.

As the conclusion of the tale the King said that he lived in the abode of the Lord and enjoyed divine bliss for long ages and now he has reborn as Chitrabhanu.

VIII. BHAUBEEJ

Bhaubeej/Bhau-Beej (in Marathi), Bhai-Dooj (in Hindi), Bhai Beej (in Gujarati) or Bhai Phota (in Bengali) is a ceremony performed by Hindus on the second day after Diwali.

THE CEREMONY

Women celebrate their love for their brothers by putting an auspicious tilak (made from vermilion or sandalwood paste) on their brothers' foreheads. Women also bless their younger brothers. They perform an aarti to their brothers to honour them for taking care of them and protecting them, and pray for their well-being. Sisters are lavished with gifts and blessings (to younger sisters) from their brothers.

The name *Dooj* (or *Beej*) means the second day after the new moon, the day of the festival, and *Bhai* means brother. *Phota* means round

dot. Bhai-Dooj is also called *Yama Dwiteeya* as it's believed that on this day, Yama, the God of death and the custodian of *Naraka* visits his sister Yamuna, who puts the auspicious mark on his forehead and prays for his well-being. So it's held that anyone who receives a tilak from his sister on this day would never be hurled into hell. The festival usually occurs in October or November of the Gregorian calendar.

IX. RAMA NAVAMI

Rama Navami falls on the ninth day of a Hindu lunar year (or *Chaitra Masa Suklapaksha Navami*). This day is the birthday of Rama. People normally perform *Kalyanotsavam* (marriage celebration) for small murtis of Rama and Sita in their houses, and at the end of the day the deity is taken to a procession on the streets. This day also marks the end of the nine-day utsavam called *Vasanthothsavam* (festival of Spring), that starts with Ugadi.

Some highlights of this day are:

- *Kalyanam* (Ceremonial wedding performed by temple priests) at Bhadrachalam on the banks of the river Godavari in Khammam district.
- *Panakam*, a sweet drink prepared on this day with jaggery and pepper.
- *Procession* of idols in the evening that is accompanied with play of water and colours.

For the occasion, Hindus are supposed to fast (or restrict themselves to a specific diet). Temples are decorated and readings of the *Ramayana* take place. Along with Shri Ram, people also pray to Sita (Ram's wife), Lakshman (his brother who went on exile with him) and Hanuman (monkey god, ardent devotee of Ram and Ram's chief of army).

X. HANUMAN JAYANTI

Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman, the monkey god widely venerated throughout India. It is celebrated during the month of Chaitra. Hanuman was an ardent devotee of Lord Rama, and is worshipped for his unflinching devotion to the God. From the early morning, devotees flock Hanuman temples to worship the monkey god.

Hanuman Jayanti is an important festival of Hindus. Hanuman is the symbol of strength and energy. Hanuman is said to be able to assume any form at will, wield rocks, move mountains, dart through

the air, seize the clouds and rival Garuda in swiftness off light. He is worshipped in folk tradition as a deity with magical powers and the ability to conquer evil spirits.

The devotees will visit temples and apply tilak of sindhoor to their foreheads from the Hanumans body as this is considered to be good luck. According to the legend Sita was applying sindhoor to her head, Hanumans Ji questioned why and replied that this would ensure a long life for her husband. Hanuman then smeared his entire body with sindhoor, in an effort to ensure Rama's immortality.

Cultural programmes are organised in most of the Hindu temples on this day.

In 2006, the Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated on April 13.

XI. CHHATH

Chhath or Dala Chhath is a Hindu festival, which is unique to Bihar state, India and Terai of Nepal. This festival is also celebrated in the north-east parts of India; Madhya Pradesh; Uttar Pradesh; and some regions of Chhattisgarh.

ETYMOLOGY

The word "chhath" denotes the number 6 in Hindi and the festival begins on the sixth day of the Hindu lunar calendar month of kartik, which corresponds to months of October-November in the Gregorian calendar. The festival of *Chhath* begins a week after Diwali. Chhath is the holiest Hindu festival of Bihar and extends to four days.

THE FESTIVAL

Chhath is a festival dedicated to the Sun God. It is considered to be a means to thank the Sun for bestowing the bounties of life in earth, as also for fulfilling particular wishes. Worship of the Sun has been practised in different parts of India, and the world from time immemorial. Worship of sun has been described in the Rigveda, the oldest Hindu scriptures, and hymns praying to the sun in the Vedas are found. In the ancient epic, the *Mahabharata*, references to worshipping of the sun by Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas, are found. It was believed that worshipping of the sun would help cure a variety of diseases, including leprosy, and also ensure longevity and prosperity of the family members.

CHHATH SONGS

There is lot of devotional songs dedicared to Chhath festival.These songs purifying the whole atmosphere. Click Here To Listen Chhath Song.

XII. HOLI

Holi or Phagwah (Bhojpuri), is an annual and popular Hindu spring festival. It takes place over two days in the latter part of March or early April. As per the Hindu calendar, it falls on the Phalgun Purnima (or Pooranmashi, Full Moon). It is also called the Festival of Colours.

On the first day, a bonfire is lit at night to signify burning Holika. On the second day, known as *Dhulandi*, people go around until afternoon throwing coloured powder and water at each other, although the powder stings their eyes badly. A special drink called 'thandai' or bhang is also consumed sometimes, which actually contains small amounts of marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*). People invite each other to their houses for feasts and celebrations later in the evening. Rangapanchami occurs a few days later on a Panchami (fifth day of the full moon), marking the end of festivities involving colours.

This festival occurs at the onset of spring. This period, during which the weather changes, is prone to cause viral fever and cold. Thus, the playful throwing of the coloured powders has a medicinal significance as the coloured powders are made of Neem, Kumkum, Haldi, Bilva, and other medicinal herbs prescribed by Âyurvedic doctors.

In 2006, the burning of Holika was on March 14, and then Dhuleti on March 15.

SIGNIFICANCE

In Vaishnava Theology, Hiranyakashipu is the king of demons, and he had been granted a boon by Brahma, which made it almost impossible for him to be killed. The boon was due to his long penance, after which he had demanded that he not be killed "during day or night; inside the home or outside; not on earth or on sky; neither by a man nor an animal; neither by *astra* nor by *shastra*". Consequently, he grew arrogant, and attacked the Heavens and the Earth. He demanded that people stop worshipping gods and start praying to him.

Despite this, Hiranyakashipu's own son, Prahlad, was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. In spite of several threats from Hiranyakashipu, Prahlad

continued offering prayers to Lord Vishnu. He was poisoned but the poison turned to nectar in his mouth. He was ordered to be trampled by elephants yet remained unharmed. He was put in a room with hungry, poisonous snakes and survived. All of Hiranyakashipu's attempts to kill his son failed. Finally, he ordered young Prahlad to sit on a pyre on the lap of his sister, Holika, who could not die by fire by virtue of a shawl which would prevent fire affecting the person wearing it. Prahlad readily accepted his father's orders, and prayed to Vishnu to keep him safe. When the fire started, everyone watched in amazement as the shawl flew from Holika, who then was burnt to death, while Prahlad survived unharmed, after the shawl moved to cover him. The burning of Holika is celebrated as Holi.

It is also said that later Lord Vishnu came in the form of a Narasimha (who is half-man and half-lion) and killed Hiranyakashipu at dusk (which was neither day nor night), on the steps of the porch of his house (which was neither inside the house nor outside) by restraining him on his lap (which is neither in the sky nor on the earth) and mauling him with his claws (which are neither *astra* nor *shastra*).

In Vrindavan and Mathura, where Lord Krishna grew up, the festival is celebrated for 16 days (until Rangpanchmi in commemoration of the divine love of Radha for Krishna). Lord Krishna is believed to have popularised the festival by playing pranks on the gopis here. Krishna is believed to be complained to his mother about the contrast between his dark colour and his consort Radha's fair colour. Krishna's mother decided to apply colour to Radha's face. The celebrations officially usher in spring, the celebrated season of love.

There is another story about the origin of Holi. Kamadeva is a god of love. Kama's body was destroyed when he shot his weapon at Shiva in order to disrupt his penance and help Parvati to marry Shiva. Shiva then opened his third eye, the gaze of which was so powerful that Kama's body was reduced to ashes. For the sake of Kama's wife Rati (passion), Shiva restored him, but only as a mental image, representing the true emotional and mental state of love rather than physical lust. The Holi bonfire is believed to be celebrated in commemoration of this event.

XIII. MAKAR SANKRANTI

Makar Sankranti is a mid-winter festival of India. The day celebrates the northward journey of the Sun.

Sankranti means the day the Sun enters a new zodiac sign according to Hindu astrology. There is a Sankranti for every month of the year. *Makar* means Capricorn. Makar Sankranti is the day the Sun enters Capricorn. The reason why Makar Sankranti is celebrated more than any other is that it marks the day the Sun starts moving north and the auspicious half of the year characterised by increasing daylight begins.

The celebration is similar to winter solstice celebrations in other ancient cultures. Instead of the celebrating on the day of the Winter Solstice—Makar Sankranti is celebrated on January 14, the day the Sun enters the next zodiac sign according to Hindu astrology.

Makar Sankranti is celebrated in regional festivals all over India. Some of the regional celebrations that take place on Jan 14th are:

- Makara Sankranthi (Typically on Jan 14), Bhogi (Jan 13), Kanuma (Jan 15), Mukkanuma (Jan 16) (Andhra)
- Lohri (Punjab)
- Bhogali Bihu (Assam, Bengal)
- Pongal (Tamil Nadu)
- Makar Sankranti (Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat, UP and other northern states etc)

Many Melas or fairs are held on Makar Sankranti the most famous being the Kumbh Mela, held every 12 years at one of four holy locations, namely *Haridwar*, *Prayag* (*Allahabad*), *Ujjain* and *Nadiad*. The *Magh Mela* (or *mini-Kumbh Mela* held annually at Prayag) and the *Gangasagar Mela* (held at the head of the Ganges River, where it flows into the Bay of Bengal).

The festival is celebrated by the flying of kites in most of northern India.

Makar Sankranti falls on January 14 on non-leap years and on January 15 on leap years. It is the only Hindu festival which is based on the Solar calendar rather than the Lunar calendar. The day is a holiday in the state of Gujarat.

Makar Sankranti is celebrated in Kerala at Sabarimale where the Makara Jyothi is visible followed by the Makara Vilakku celebrations.

Kites are flown for most of the day in the region. The objective of this sport is to cut as many rival kites as possible to attain air superiority. Additionally, a cut kite may be also picked up by another kite giving the collector a free kite. The diamond shaped kites come in various

designs. The thread, known as *manja* is sharpened with finely crushed glass pieces. The season also is perfect for spending a day in a sun. The season is windy, making it ideal for kite flying. At night special lantern kites with candles embedded are flown which give the skies an eerie feeling.

In Maharashtra, when two Maharashtrians greet each other or visit each other during Makar Sankranti, they exchange Tilache Ladoo— a special sweet made for this day. When they give the ladoo to an elder they do namaskar and say "til gul ghya, ani god god bola" (let us be sweet to each other and let friendship prevail between us). Til or sesame seeds is one of the important ingredients in this festival. The married ladies in Maharashtra arrange "haldi kum kum", an auspicious religious get-together by way of which they call upon their friends and relatives and distribute sweets and gifts.

XIV. PONGAL

Pongal is an Indian festival to give thanks for the harvest. *Pongal* in Tamil means 'boiling over'. It is traditionally celebrated at the time of harvest of crops and hence is a celebration of the prosperity associated with the event.

Pongal is celebrated by all people in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. While Pongal is predominantly a Tamil festival, the same period also marks similar festivals celebrated in several other places under different names. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the harvest festival *Sankranthi* is celebrated. In northern India, it is called *Makar Sankranti*. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, it is the date of the annual kite-flying day, *Uttarayan*. It also coincides with the harvest festival in Punjab and Haryana, known as *Lohri*.

CELEBRATION

Pongal is also known as *Tamizhar Thirunal* or 'The Festival of Tamils' among the Tamil people. The Tamil language saying *Thai Pirandhal Vazhi Pirakkum*—meaning 'the birth of the month of Thai will pave the way for new opportunities'—is often quoted with reference to the Pongal festival.

Usually the festival falls in the middle of the month of January in the Western or Gregorian calendar. The festival is celebrated for four days from the last day of the Tamil month *Maargazhi* (December/January) to the third day of *Thai* (January/February). The first day, *Bhogi*, is celebrated by throwing away and destroying old clothes and

materials by setting them on fire to mark the end of the old and the emergence of the new.

The second day, *Pongal*, is the main day which falls on the first day of the Tamil month *Thai* (January 14 or January 15 in the Gregorian calendar). *Pongal day* is celebrated by boiling rice with fresh milk and jaggery early in the morning and allowing it to boil over the vessel—this is the tradition that gives the festival of Pongal its name. The moment the rice boils over and bubbles out of the vessel, it is offered to the chief Hindu solar deity Surya, a gesture which symbolises thanksgiving to the sun for providing prosperity. People also prepare savories and sweets, visit each others' homes, and exchange greetings.

The third day, *Maattu Pongal*, is for the purpose of offering thanks to cattle, as they provide milk and are used to plough lands. Jallikattu, a violent 'taming the wild bull' contest, is the main event of this day. During this final day, *Kaanum Pongal*—the word *kanum* means 'to view'—youths used to gather at river banks to view and select their future life partners, but that practice has declined. In modern times people, especially storekeepers, visit beaches and theme parks during this day. During the Pongal season, people also chew sugarcane and decorate the houses with kolam.

ASTRONOMICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The astronomical significance of the festival is that it marks the beginning of Uttarayana, the Sun's movement northward for a six month period. In Hinduism, Uttarayana is considered auspicious, as opposed to Dakshinaayana, or the southern movement of the sun. All important events are scheduled during this period. Makara Sankranti refers to the event of the Sun entering the zodiac sign of Makara or Capricorn.

XV. RAKHI

Raksha Bandhan (*the bond of protection in Hindi*) or Rakhi is a Hindu festival which celebrates the relationship between brothers and sisters. It is celebrated on the full moon of the month of Shraavana and in 2006 it falls on August 9.

The festival is marked by the tying of a rakhi, or holy thread by the sister on the wrist of her brother. The brother in return offers a gift to his sister and vows to look after her. The brother and sister traditionally feed each other sweets.

It is not necessary that the rakhi can be given only to a brother by birth; any male can be "adopted" as a brother by tying a rakhi on the person, whether they are cousins or a good friend. Indian history is replete with women asking for protection, through rakhi, from men who were neither their brothers, nor Hindus themselves. Rani Karnavati of Chittor sent a rakhi to the Mughal Emperor Humayun when she was threatened by Bahadur Shah of Mewar. Humayun abandoned an ongoing military campaign to ride to her rescue.

The rakhi may also be tied on other special occasions to show solidarity and kinship (not necessarily only among brothers and sisters), as was done during the Indian independence movement.

ORIGINS

The origin of the festival is mostly attributed to one of following mythological incidents:

1. Indra's fight with Vritra—Indra, the king of *devtas* (gods), had lost his kingdom to the *asura* (demon) Vritra. At the behest of his Guru Brihaspati, Indra's wife Sachi tied a thread around her husband's wrist to ensure his victory in the upcoming duel.

2. Draupadi and Krishna during the *Rajsuya yagya*—After Shishupal's death, Krishna was left with a bleeding finger. Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, had torn a strip of silk off her sari and tied it around Krishna's wrist to staunch the flow of blood. Touched by her concern, Krishna had declared himself bound to her by her love. He further promised to repay the debt manifold. Many years later when Draupudi was about to be shamed by being disrobed in front of the whole court by her evil brother-in-law Duryodhana, she called on Krishna to help her, and he did by divinely elongating her sari so it could not be removed.

HISTORY

Alexander The Great and King Puru

One of the oldest legendary references to the festival of Rakhi goes back to 300 B.C. At this time Alexander the Great, was invading India. Alexander was shaken by the fury of the Indian King Puru in his first attempt. Upset by this, Alexander's wife, who had heard of the Rakhi festival, approached King Puru. King Puru accepted her as his sister and when the opportunity came during the war, he refrained from fighting Alexander. In the war, when Alexander fell from his

chariot and King Puru was about to slay him, King Puru saw the rakhi on his wrist and he drew his sword back.

Rani Karnawati and Emperor Humayun

One of the earliest origins of Raksha Bandhan in documented history can be traced to the medieval era. During this period the Rajputs were fighting Muslim invasions. Rakhi at that time was a spiritual symbol associated with protection of the sister. History has it that when Queen Karnawati the widow of the then King of Chittor realised that she could in no way defend the invasion of the Sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah, she sent a rakhi to Emperor Humayun.

The Emperor touched by the gesture, accepted the rakhi thereby accepting Queen Karnawati as a "sister" and immediately started off with his vast troops to protect Queen Karnavati.

THE HISTORY OF RAKSHA BANDHAN

There are many references to the significance of the Rakhi festival in Vaishnava Theology.

Indra

The origin of this festival is usually traced back to the historical incidents of Indra's fight with Indra that resulted in Indra's loss. Then, his wife had tied a thread around his wrist and empowered it with divine powers to make sure Indra emerged victorious in the duel that followed.

Krishna and Draupadi

Another incident is the one that concerns Krishna and Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas. She had torn a strip of silk off her sari and tied it around Krishna's wrist to stop the flow of blood. Krishna was so touched by her action that he found himself bound to her by love. He promised to repay the debt and then spent the next 25 years doing just that. Draupadi inspite of being married to 5 great warriors and being a daughter of a powerful monarch only trusted and depended wholly on Krishna.

King Bali and Goddess Laxmi

According to another legend the Demon King Bali was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu had taken up the task to guard his kingdom leaving his own abode in Vaikunth. Goddess Lakshmi wished to be with her Lord back in her abode. She went to Bali disguised as a Brahmin woman to seek refuge till her husband came back. During

the Shravan Purnima celebrations, Lakshmi tied the sacred thread to the King. Upon being asked she revealed who she was and why she was there. The king was touched by her goodwill for his family and her purpose and requested the Lord to accompany her. He sacrificed all he had for the Lord and his devoted wife.

Thus, the festival is also called Baleva that is Bali Raja's devotion to the Lord. It is said that since then it has been a tradition to invite sisters in Shravan Purnima for the thread tying ceremony or the Raksha Bandhan.

Yama and the Yamuna

According to another legend, Raksha Bandhan was a ritual followed by Lord Yama (the Lord of Death) and his sister Yamuna. Yamuna tied rakhi to Yama and bestowed immortality. Yama was so moved by the serenity of the occasion that he declared that whoever gets a rakhi tied from his sister and promised her protection will become immortal.

RAKSHA BANDHAN CELEBRATIONS IN INDIA

While Rakhsa Bandhan is celebrated all over the country, different parts of the country mark the day in different ways. These celebrations happen to fall on the same day, and may not have anything to do with Raksha Bandhan itself or Rakhi.

Tying of Rakhi

Perhaps the single-most important way of celebrating Raksha Bandhan is by tying the rakhi. A sister ties a rakhi to the wrist of her brother. The tying of a rakhi signifies her asking of her brother for his protection and love for the sister. The brother in turn, accepts the rakhi, confirms his love and affection for his sister and shows this with gifts and money. It is a family event where all members of family, dressed in finery, gather and celebrate. The tying of rakhi is followed by a family feast.

Rakhi Purnima

Rakhi is celebrated as Rakhi Purnima in North India as well as in parts of Northwest India. The word "Purnima" means a full moon night.

Nariyal Purnima

In western India and parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Karnataka, this day is celebrated as Nariyal Purnima. On this day an

offering of a coconut (nariyal) is made to the sea, as a mark of respect to Lord Varuna, the God of the Sea. Nariyal Purnima marks the beginning of the fishing season and the fishermen, who depend on the sea for a living, make an offering to Lord Varuna so that they can reap bountiful fish from the sea.

Avani Avittam or Upakarman

In southern parts of India including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa, this day is celebrated by the Brahmin community as Avani Avittam. This day is the traditional day of the beginning of Vedic studies. As part of the Upakarman ritual, they also change their sacred thread or *yajnopavitam*, the Sanskrit word for the thread. It is also called "janeyu" in Hindi, "poonool" in Tamil and "jhanjyam" in Telugu.

Kajari Purnima

In central parts of India such as Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkand and Bihar this day is celebrated as Kajari Purnima. It is an important day for the farmers and women blessed with a son. On the ninth day after Shravana Amavasya, the preparations of the Kajari festival start. This ninth day is called Kajari Navami and varied rituals are performed by women who have sons until Kajari Purnima or the full-moon day.

Pavitropana

In parts of Gujarat, this day is celebrated as Pavitropana. On this day people perform the grand pooja or the worship of Lord Shiva. It is the culmination of the prayers done throughout the year.

XVI. UGADI

Ugadi (literally—the start of an era) is the new year's day for the people of the Deccan region of India. While the people of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka use the term Ugadi for this festival, the people of Maharashtra term the same festival, observed on the same day, Gudi Padwa.

THE LUNAR ALMANAC OF THE DECCAN

The festival marks the new year day for people who follow the southern Indian lunar calendar, pervasively adhered to in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. This calendar reckons dates based on the Salivahana era (Salivahana Saka), which begins its

count from the supposed date of the founding of the Empire by the legendary hero Salivahana. This Empire is generally accepted as being that of the "Andhra Dynasty". The Salivahana era begins its count of years from the year corresponding to 78 AD of the Gregorian calendar. Thus, the year 2000 AD corresponds to the year 1922 of the Salivahana Era.

In the terminology used by this lunar calendar, Ugadi falls on *Chaitra Sudhdha Paadyami* or the first day of the bright half of the Hindu month of Chaitra. This generally falls in the months of March or April of the Gregorian calendar. In 2006, Ugadi fell on March 30th.

OBSERVANCE IN ANDHRA AND KARNATAKA

The Telugu and Kannada people celebrate the festival with great fanfare; gatherings of the extended family and a sumptuous feast are *de rigueur*. The day, however, begins with ritual showers followed by prayers, and then the eating of a specific mixture of—

- Neem Buds/Flowers for *Bitterness*
- Jaggery for *Sweetness*
- Raw Mango for *Vagaru*
- Tamarind Juice for *Sour*

This mixture, called "Ugadi Pachhadi" in Telugu and "Bevu-Bella" in Kannada, symbolises the fact that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, which should be accepted together and with equanimity. Certain communities in Andhra Pradesh prepare a more elaborate sauce, called *Ugadi Pachchadi*, which is a paste of tamarind, jaggery, mango, neem buds/flowers etc. The symbolism and significance of the preparation is the same.

Later, people traditionally gather to listen to the recitation of the religious almanac (Panchangam) of the coming year, and to the general forecast of the year to come. This is the *Panchanga Sravanam*, an informal social function where an elderly and respected person opens the new almanac pertaining to the coming year and makes a general benediction to all present. The advent of television has changed this routine somewhat, especially in the cities. Nowadays, people turn on the TV to watch the recitation.

Ugadi celebrations are marked by literary discussions, poetry recitations and recognition of authors of literary works through awards and cultural programmes. Recitals of classical carnatic music and dance are held in the evenings.

OBSERVANCE IN MAHARASHTRA

The festival is called "Gudi Padwa" in Maharashtra; it heralds the advent of new year and is one of the most auspicious days for Maharashtrians.

It is customary to erect 'Gudis' on the first day (Padwa) of the Marathi New Year. 'Gudi' is a bamboo staff with a coloured silk cloth and a garlanded goblet atop it, which symbolises victory or achievement. Hence, this day is known as "Gudipadwa" in Maharashtra. The New Year is ushered in with the worship of the "Gudi" and the distribution of a specific "Prasadam" comprising tender neem leaves, gram-pulse and jaggery. The symbolism of tastes is the same as what is described above.

XVII. GUDI PADWA

THE CELEBRATION OF SPRINGTIME AND HARVEST

The New Year day of Maharashtrians, Gudi Padwa is also known as Ugadi in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It is celebrated on the first day of the Hindu month of Chaitra, which according to the Gregorian calendar would fall sometime at the end of March and the beginning of April. This festival is supposed to mark the beginning of *Vasant* or spring. According to the Brahma Purana, this is the day on which Brahma created the world after the deluge and time began to tick from this day forth.

This is a time of the year when the sun's rays increase in intensity, going from mellow to hot. The crops have been harvested and the fruits of the harvest are making their way to the marketplaces. Mangoes, called "the king of fruit" in India, are in season once again. The ripe smell of jackfruit fills the air. Shrubs and trees are bursting into flower. Everything is fresh and new. It looks and smells like spring (or the best impersonation of quintessential springtime that the climate can do).

India was, and still is to a certain extent, a predominantly agrarian society. Thus, celebrations and festivals were often linked to the turn of the season and to the sowing and reaping of crops. There is a theory that the word 'padwa' might have its roots in the Sanskrit word for crop, which is 'Pradurbhu.' The word 'padwa' as used contemporarily means 'New Year', but this day also marks the end of one harvest and the beginning of a new one, which for an agricultural community would signify the beginning of a New Year. In the case of

Gudi Padwa, it is celebrated at the end of the Rabi season. The term 'padava' or 'padavo' is also associated with Diwali, another New Year celebration that comes at the end of the harvesting season, thus substantiating the agricultural link to the festival.

THE FESTIVITIES

On the festive day, courtyards in village houses will be swept clean and plastered with fresh cowdung. Even in the city, people take the time out to do some springcleaning. Women and children work on intricate rangoli designs on their doorsteps, the vibrant colours mirroring the burst of colour associated with spring. Everyone dresses up in new clothes and it is a time for family gatherings. Specialities like soonth panak and chana usal are eaten on this day.

Traditionally, families are supposed to begin the festivities by eating the bittersweet leaves of the neem tree. Sometimes, a paste of neem leaves is prepared and mixed with ajwain, gul (called as jaggery in english), and tamarind. All the members of the family consume this paste, which is believed to purify the blood and strengthen the body's immune system against diseases.

THE 'GUDI'

While the 'padwa' part has been explained, you're probably wondering what a 'gudi' is. A 'gudi' is a pole on top of which an upturned brass or silver pot called a kalash is placed. The gudi is covered with a colourful silk cloth and decorated with coconuts, marigolds and mango leaves that symbolize nature's bounty. On Gudi Padwa, you will find gudis hanging out of windows or otherwise prominently displayed in traditional Maharashtrian households.

Some Maharashtrians see the gudis as a symbol of victory associated with the conquests of the Maratha forces lead by the great hero Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Gudis are also displayed as they are expected to ward off evil and invite prosperity and good luck into the house.

XVIII. GURU PURNIMA

The day of full moon, *Purnima*, in the month of *Ashadh* of the Hindu calendar is traditionally celebrated as Guru Purnima by Hindus. On this day, devotees offer puja (worship) to their Guru.

This was the day when Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa – author of the *Mahabharata* – was born. *Vyasa-maharsi*, as he is known, did yeoman

service to the cause of Vedic studies by gathering all the Vedic hymns extant during his times, dividing them into four parts based on their use in the sacrificial rites, and teaching them to his four chief disciples – Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Sumantu. It was this dividing and editing that earned him the honorific "Vyasa" (vyas = to edit, to divide). The spiritual Gurus are revered on this day by remembering their life and teachings.

XIX. VAISAKHI

Vaisakhi also known as Baisakhi marks the the Punjabi New Year and the beginning of the harvest season in Punjab, India.

Vaisakhi falls in the Nanakshahi calendar (neither in the Amantha-nor in the Purnimantha-calendar) on the first day of Vaisakh month and marks the sun entering Mesha Rasi (this fact is called Mesha Sankranti). Vaisakhi is therefore determined by the solar calendar. Baisakhi usually falls on April 13, and on April 14 once every thirty-six years.

It coincides with Rongali Bihu in Assam, Naba Barsha in Bengal, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu, 'Pooram Vishu' in Kerala, and the Sinhala/Tamil new year festival in Sri Lanka.

VAISAKHI IN SIKHISM

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs founded the Akal Khalsa (Community of the Pure) at the Vaisakhi gathering in 1699, at Keshgarh Sahib near Anandpur. Guru Gobind Singh, had organised for followers from all over India to meet him at the Vaisakhi Fair in Anandpur.

The legend goes that Guru Gobind Singh emerged from a tent with a sword, and asked for volunteers to offer his life for his faith. A young Sikh volunteered, followed the Guru into a tent. Shortly after, the Guru reappeared alone with his sword covered with blood, and asked for a second volunteer. Another Sikh stepped forward and again the Guru took him into the tent, and re-appeared alone, his sword covered in more blood. This was repeated for a third, fourth and fifth volunteer. The crowd became very unnerved, as many believed that the Guru had killed the five Sikhs. He soon came out of the tent again, this time followed by all five Sikhs who were alive and well and dressed in turbans and other symbols that have since become symbols of Sikh identity. He called the five Sikhs the Panj Pyare—the beloved five.

Then the Guru puts water in a bowl for sprinkling over the five in a simple initiation ceremony. He said prayers as he stirred the water with a short steel sword; symbolising the need for strength. The Guru's wife, Mata Sundri, then came forward and placed some sugar crystals into the holy water or amrit as a reminder that strength must always be balanced by sweetness of temperament. After completing his prayers, the Guru then sprinkled the amrit over the five.

He declared them to be the first members of a new community of equals, to be called the Khalsa, meaning "pure". These "saint soldiers" were to dedicate their lives to the service of others and the pursuit of justice for people of all faiths. The Panj Pyare were asked to wear five distinctive symbols of their new identity, The Five Ks.

In a move to end social divisions the five dropped their surnames—traditionally associated with one's caste—and took the common name *Singh*, meaning "lion", a reminder of the need for courage. At the same time, the Guru gave Sikh women the name or title *Kaur*, meaning "princess", to emphasise dignity and complete equality.

The Guru then knelt before the five and asked them to initiate him. Hence, the Khalsa became a community in which master and disciple were equal.

For Sikhs, this seasonal festival also has great importance as the founding of the (Soldiers of the Timeless One) at Anandpur Sahib, the famous Golden Temple of Amritsar, India. The Akal Khalsa played an important role in resistance against Mughal rule. This act of total surrender of one's life to the service of the AKAL(God), the Timeless One, and at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh created the Sikh religion. For many centuries after that, the first male child of many Hindu families in Punjab was ordained as a Sikh.

CELEBRATIONS

To mark the celebrations, devotees, irrespective of their religion, throng gurdwaras—the Sikh place of worship—and temples in different parts of the area. The celebrations start early as devotees, with flowers and offerings in their hands, proceed towards the gurdwaras and temples before dawn. Processions through towns are also common.

XX. ONAM

Onam is an annual harvest festival, celebrated mainly in the Indian state of Kerala. It is the foremost festival among the cultural repertoire

of Malayalees, and falls during the month of *Chingam* (August-September as per the Gregorian calendar), the first month of the Malayalam calendar and lasts for ten days. Though it is essentially a harvest festival of Malayalees, mythologically it is linked to Malayalee-Hindu folktales. Like many other religious festivals in India, Onam is celebrated by people across all castes and faiths.

SIGNIFICANCE

Onam has been part of Malayalee psyche for centuries. There are records of Onam being celebrated during the Sangam Age. Onam festivities have been recorded during the time of Kulasekhara Perumals around A.D 800. It is believed that during those days the whole of *Chingam* was celebrated as Onam season. After the rain drenched month of *Karkidakam* with its privations, *Chingam* is a welcome month for people in the state of Kerala. The festival is the harbinger of spring — signalling the start of the harvest season. Onam epitomises the newfound vigour and enthusiasm of the season, and is celebrated with traditional fervour with visit to temples, family get-togethers, gifting each other clothes called *Onakkodi* and lots of merry-making.

LEGEND

"Kashyapa had two wives, Diti and Aditi, who were the parents of demons and demigods (Asuras and Devas) respectively. As the common practice in those days, for a King invading another kingdom to acquire additional territory, Indra, the king of demigods went on war with the king of Asuras. Mahabali, the King of Asuras defeated Indra and proceed to occupy Indra's territory. Kashyapa, who had gone to the Himalayas to do penance, on his return, found Aditi weeping over the defeat of her son, Indra. By divine insight, Kashyapa recognised the cause of grief. Kashyapa tried to console Aditi who was wailing in grief, saying that nothing happens in the world without God's will and people should go on doing their duties. Kashyapa asked Aditi to pray to Lord Narayana and taught her Payovrata, ritual that has to be observed from the twelfth day of the bright half Karthika (Sukla-paksha Dwaadasi). Since Aditi carried out the Vrata with a pious heart, Lord Narayana appeared before her and informed her that he would himself take birth in her womb and help Indra. Later, on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of Bhadrapada, Aditi gave birth to a son of uncommon effulgence. That child, "Vamana-murti", demonstrated His divine powers by doing marvelous deeds even when He was a child.

Balichakravarthi (Bali, The Emperor) or Mahabali, was the grandson of the devout Prahlad, the son of Hiranyakasipu. Bali, like Prahlada, too engaged in the glorification of God and in the spiritual and material uplife of his subjects. Mahabali who was performing the sacrificial rite called Viswajith declared that he would give anything that anyone sought from him during this Yagna. Bali wanted to propitiate the Gods so much that, with their blessings, he could extend his beneficent rule over the entire world. Lord Narayan, in the form of Vamana, utilised this opportunity to shower Grace on him.

Vamana came to the Yaga-shala. As he was approaching them, the sages assembled there perceived the extraordinary effulgence form of the young lad. Mahabali went forth to receive the Brahmin boy with all traditional honours and gave him an eminent seat befitting the status of a holy person. Bali told him 'Master! It is my good fortune that you have chosen to honour me with your presence. Whatever you desire, I am here ready to fulfil the same'. Vamana smiled and said: "You need not give me anything great. It is enough if you give me that extend of land covered by three footsteps of mine".

On hearing him, Bali's preceptor, Shukracharya, who could have vision of the future told Bali that the one, who had come to seed a gift from Bali was not an ordinary Brahmin but Lord Narayana Himself who had assumed this form. He advised Bali not to promise the lad anything. But Bali was a king who would never go back on his word and told his Guru that he would never break his promise. He was determined to give Vamana whatever he wanted since breaking one's word was a sin and he had to keep his pledge Shukracharya insisted that he should not fulfil the demand of Vamana as he had come to deprive Bali of all His possessions. He said that Vamana was not really in need of anything as everything was in his hands.

Bali, however, was determined to honour the word given to Vamana, begged pardon of his Guru for disregarding his advice. Earlier, while Bali was embarking on the war with Indra, he had prostrated at the feet of his preceptor, Shukracharya, and on his advice he performed the Vishwajit Yagna from which he secured very powerful weapons. It was only because of Shukracharya's help that he was able to conquer Indra. On this occasion, Bali was not prepared to heed the advice of the same preceptor. Shukracharya cursed Bali, saying: 'As you have not heeded your Guru's words, you will be reduced to ashes'. Bali was firm and replied: 'I am prepared to face any consequence but will not go back on my word'.

Saying so, he asked Vamana to measure the three feet of land as desired by him. All attempts of Shukracharya to dissuade Bali from offering the land desired by Vamana proved futile. Bali told his Guru: "Prana (life) and Maana (honour) are the two eyes of a person. Even if life goes, honour should be protected. Granting that the person that has come now is the Lord Himself, I should be the most fortunate one as the Lord, who gives everything to mankind, is seeking something from me." Vamana then came to his cosmic form, measured all the earth with one foot, the skies with the other, and stood there for the third foot of land. Mahabali immediately offered his head for the same purpose. Vamana placed his foot on his head and sent him to the netherworld.

Emperor Bali, the most benevolent ruler, was liberated by being sent to the netherworld by Lord Mahavishnu who incarnated as Vamana. Vamana grew and grew in size until he towered above the heavens. With one foot, he measured all of the earth. With the other, he claimed all of heaven. There was still one foot of territory that Bali owed him. Bali offered his head to be measured as the third step of land which Lord Vamana had asked for as alms. Honouring the great devotion and sense of sacrifice of Bali, the Lord granted him permission to visit his subjects once a year. Thus, Keralites celebrate Onam festival to commemorate the Advent of Lord Mahavishnu as Vamana Avatar and to rejoice the annual visit of Emperor Mahabali to meet his subjects.

During Onam, the feast and festive mood of the people, dressed in their best, is considered reminiscent of the prosperous and truthful life of the subjects during Bali's flawless reign. People wear new clothes (Vastra) during Onam. The 'Vastra' also stands for heart. Thus the significance of wearing new clothes is about making the heart new by removing all bad thoughts and feelings. People forgetting their sectarian outlooks, join together to welcome the auspicious 'Thiruvonam' day.

THE TEMPLE

It is said that a temple was erected around the location where this incident took place. This temple stands over a large area in Thrikkakara, Ernakulam, in Kerala. Onam is celebrated here with great fanfare every year, and concludes with a well-known fireworks show.

ATHAM PATHINU PONNONAM

The ten-day celebrations of Onam start on Atham day. Earthen mounds, which look somewhat like square pyramids, representing

Mahabali and Vishnu are placed in the dung-plastered courtyards in front of the house and beautifully decorated with flowers. Known as 'Onapookkalam', it is a carpet made out of the gathered blossoms with one or two varieties of foliage of differing tints pinched up into little pieces to serve the decorator's purpose. It is a beautiful work of art accomplished with a delicate touch and a highly artistic sense of tone and blending. (In a similar manner North Indians make something called "Rangoli" which is made of powders of various colours.) When completed, a miniature pandal, hung with little festoons is erected over it.

The important part of the festival opens in some localities on Thiruvonam day and in others on the previous day known as *Utradam*. On Thiruvonam day, King Mahabali is believed to visit every Malayalee home and meet his people. Houses are cleaned and decorated with flowers and traditional lamps. A fabulous display of fireworks turns the capital Thiruvananthapuram into a veritable fairyland. Sumptuous feasts are prepared in every household. The eldest member of each family presents clothes to all the members of the family. Even the poorest of the poor manage to find something for himself to celebrate the national festival in his own humble way.

Onam comes in the month of "Chingam" according to Malayalam calendar. People put flower mats in front of their houses, to welcome the King. There will be competition for the laying of flower mats; Keralites all over the world will be celebrating this ten days with pomp and gaiety. They will wear new dresses, will be visiting almost all temples which they can, they will be performing lot of dances like *Thiruvathira Kali Thumbi Tullal* etc. to name a few and the most important thing is the Grant lunch they will be having on the Thiuruvonam day, which is also called the *Fourth Onam*. Whatever may happen they will not miss the Grant lunch (*sadhya*). There is a saying in Malayalam that "Kanam Vittum Onam Unnanam" which means "We should have the Thiruvonam lunch even if we have to sell all our properties" which shows the importance of the Grant lunch on the Thiruvonam day.

Onam is celebrated with focus on different cultural aspects in each place. *Athachamayam*—a cultural procession takes place in the royal town of Tripunithura near Ernakulam-Kochi, on the Atham day of *Chingam*, which also marks the beginning of Onam celebrations. At the Vamanamoorthy temple in Thrikkakara, the annual temple festival coincides with Onam. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vamana and is directly linked to the mythological background of Onam.

At Shornur, Kathakali dancers in gorgeous costumes enact the legends. A strikingly impressive procession of caparisoned elephants is taken out at Thrissur.

The celebrations begin within a fortnight of the Malayalam New Year and go on for ten days. The last day called the Thiruvonam is the most important. All over the state, rituals along with new clothes, traditional cuisine, dance, and music mark this harvest festival.

In Thrissur, a vibrant procession with resplendently caparisoned elephants is taken out while at Cheruthuruthy, people gather to watch Kathakali performers enact scenes from epics and folk tales. Pulikali, also known as Kaduvakali is a common sight during Onam season. Performers painted like tigers in bright yellow, red and black, dance to the beats of instruments like Udukku and Thakil. At Aranmula, during Onam days the famous Aranmula Vallam Kali is conducted.

The swing is another integral part of Onam, especially in the rural areas. Young men and women, decked in their best, sing Onappaattu, or Onam songs, and rock one another on swings slung from high branches.

ONAM ACTIVITIES

The most important things about Onam are the *onakkodi*, the new dress worn on this day and *onam sadhya*, a feast which is quite elaborate. This is usually a feast served on banana leaves and serves rice along with at least an array of 4 dishes. Traditional pickles and papadam are also served. Dessert—is usually 'payasam' a sweet dish made of milk, sugar and other traditional Indian savories.

During Onam, people create a multi-coloured floral decoration on the ground in the front of their home called *pookkalam*. Young children especially girls are often entrusted with the task of gathering and laying out the flowers in elaborate patterns. Competions are held on Onam day to create this floral design. It is usually 1.5m in diameter usually in circular shape. A lamp is usually placed as part of the design. The *Vallamkali* (the snake boat race) is another event that is synonymous with Onam. Well-known races include the Aranmula Boat Race and the Nehru Trophy Boat Race. About 100 oarsmen row huge and graceful snake boats and men and women come from far and near to watch the snake boats skim through the water.

This festival is also important because of its popularity with all communities within Kerala. Although the festival of Onam originated

with, and is connected to the Hindu religion, it is celebrated today with equal fervour by the Hindus, Muslims and Christians of Kerala.

XXI. KARWA CHAUTH

Karwa Chauth is a traditional Hindu festival for married women (*Suhagans*), and is celebrated in some parts of India. Married women fast one whole day without food or water for the long life of their husbands. The ritual signifies extreme love and devotion to the husband, as evidenced by the wife's willingness to suffer for his well-being.

It is celebrated on the fourth night after the full moon in the month of kartik in the Hindu calendar. *Karwa* means clay pot and *chauth* means fourth night after the full moon. It has great social and cultural significance and is mostly practised in northern India. Wives start their fast at night just after the appearance of the moon, within sight of their husbands. They then wait until the next night's moonrise to begin the fast-breaking ceremonies, without consuming any food or drink. In the evening women dress in their best clothing, and adorn themselves with jewellery and henna. On sighting the moon, they look and offer prayers and worship to it, and then receive their first bite of food and water from their husbands. Thereafter, women consume their special meal prepared for the occasion.

Worshipping the moon involves filling up the *karwa* with specially prepared food and jewellery and offering it to the god. *Karwa*s are also exchanged with other women after that. Further practices involve telling and listening to stories regarding origin of *Karwa Chauth*.

There are variations within regions, groups, and communities in India about rituals of starting and breaking the fast, and worshipping the moon. In Punjab, for example, women start their fast by consuming food called *sergi* sent or given by her mother-in-law before the dawn. The fast-breaking ceremony involves looking at the moon through a sieve, and then looking at her husband's face. They often close their eyes in the process and do not see anyone but their husbands just after seeing the moon. In other parts of India, there is no provision of *sergi*.

CONTEMPORARY INDIA

In contemporary India, numerous Bollywood movies have glorified this festival, and several unmarried girls have started to observe the fast for their future husbands or fiancées. Rituals have also been modified, as it is not always possible to see the (future) husband

before breaking the fast. Subsequently, the fast is broken using the man's photograph or a telephone call. Unmarried girls that observe the fast may do it to get good future husbands, or to ensure the health of their future husbands.

There is an increasing trend in urban areas among educated women to disregard this festival as a male chauvinistic tradition or for being unduly harsh on women. An equally observable trait is husbands starting to fast on *Karwa Chauth* along with their wives to show companionship and love. Some people view this as an Indian version of Valentine's Day, marked by selfless love, devoid of any materialistic gift-receiving expectations. This tradition, however, is viewed with respect in general, and is becoming fashionable and gaining penetration in the rest of India as well.

XXII. THAIPUSAM

Thaipusam is a Hindu festival celebrated mostly by the Tamil community on the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (Jan/Feb). *Pusam* refers to a star that is at its highest point during the festival. The festival commemorates both the birthday of Lord Murugan (also *Subramaniam*), the youngest son of Shiva and Parvati, and the occasion when Parvati gave Murugan a *vel* (lance) so he could vanquish the evil demon Soorapadman.

Devotees prepare for the celebration by cleansing themselves through prayer and fasting. On the day of the festival, devotees will shave their heads undertake a pilgrimage along a set route while engaging in various acts of devotion, notably carrying various types of *kavadi* (burdens). At its simplest this may entail carrying a pot of milk, but mortification of the flesh by piercing the skin, tongue or cheeks with *vel* skewers is also common. The most spectacular practice is the *vel kavadi*, essentially a portable altar up to two meters tall, decorated with peacock feathers and attached to the devotee through 108 vels pierced into the skin on the chest and back. Fire walking and flagellation may also be practised. It is claimed that devotees are able to enter a trance, feel no pain, do not bleed from their wounds and have no scars left behind. However, some of the more extreme masochistic practices have been criticised as dangerous and contrary to the spirit and intention of Hinduism.

The largest Thaipusam celebrations take place in Singapore and Malaysia. The temple at the Batu Caves, near Kuala Lumpur, often attracts over one million devotees and tens of thousands of tourists.

The procession to the caves starts at the Maha Mariamman Temple in the heart of the city and proceeds for 15 kilometers to the caves, an 8-hour journey culminating in a flight of 272 steps to the top. In Malaysia, although rare, scenes of people from different ethnic groups and faiths bearing "kavadi" can also be seen. Interestingly, Thaipusam is also increasingly being celebrated by the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia.

Thaipusam is also celebrated at another cave site, the Sri Subramaniar Temple in Gunong Cheroh, Ipoh, Perak. Other than abovementioned places Thaipusam is also celebrated in large scale at Penang. The temple is at Jalan Waterfall. For the year 2006 Thaipusam will be held at 1st February 2006. In year 2007, Thaipusam will be celebrated on the 1st of February 2007.

XXIII. RATH YATRA

Ratha Yatra is one of the major Hindu festivals associated with Lord Jagannath held at Puri in Orissa state, India.

It is a large annual festival originating in the city of Puri. Most of the city's society is based around the worship of Lord Jagannath with the ancient temple being the fulcrum of the area.

Usually the deities—Jagannath (Krishna), Baladeva and Subhadra are worshipped within the temple, but on this one day they are taken through the streets so that everyone can have the fortune of seeing them. This commemorates the annual journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and their sister Subhadra to their aunt's temple which is situated at a distance of 2 kilometres from their temple. This is the only day when devotees who are not allowed in the temple premises such as non-Hindus and foreigners, can get their glimpse of the deities openly. The Rath carts themselves are some 50-60 feet high and are pulled by the thousands of pilgrims who turn up for the event. Millions of people congregate at Puri for this annual event from all over the country and abroad.

The festival commemorates Krishna's return to His home in Vrindavan after a long period of separation from the people there.

ETYMOLOGY

Rath Yatra consists of two words: *rath*, meaning a chariot; and *yatra*, which means a pilgrimage, a journey or a procession. Accordingly, *rath yatra* describes a procession of chariots, generally drawn by horses. Vedic scripture speaks of *Rath* in various contexts, and in the epic

wars of the *Mahabharath*, *Rathas* formed a major means of movement of warriors. There were many famous *Rath Yatras* in Hindu legend.

INTERNATIONAL RATHA YATRAS

The *Ratha Yatra* festival has become a common sight in most major cities of the world since 1968 through the Hare Krishna movement. Its leader A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada successfully transplanted the festival which now happens on an annual basis in places such as London, Paris and New York.

XXIV. GITA JAYANTI

Gita Jayanti or *Gita* Jayanthi is the celebration of the birthday of sacred Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Hindus believe that the *Bhagavad Gita* was spoken by the Lord Krishna some 5,000 years ago.

In Singapore, *Gita* Jayanti celebrations are held each year at the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple on Serangoon Road.

XXV. KUMBH MELA

Kumbh Mela (the Urn Festival) is a Hindu pilgrimage that occurs four times every twelve years and rotates between four locations: Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. Each twelve-year cycle includes one *Maha Kumbh Mela* (Great Kumbh Mela) at Prayag, which is attended by millions of people, making it the largest gathering anywhere in the world.

ASTRONOMY AND KUMBH MELA

The precise dates of the *Kumbh Mela* are astronomically determined, based upon precise calculations of the positions of the Sun, the Moon and Jupiter. At Prayag, the *Maha Kumbh Mela* is held in the month of Magha (January/February in the Gregorian calendar). The highest spiritual merit is attached to bathing on the new moon day, Amavasya, when Jupiter is in Taurus and both the Sun and Moon are in Capricorn. At Haridwar, the *Kumbh Mela* is held in the months of Phalgun and Chaitra (February/March/April), when the Sun passes to Aries, the Moon is in Sagittarius and Jupiter is in Aquarius. In Ujjain, the festival is held in the month of Vaishakha (May), when other planets are in Libra, the Sun and Moon are in Aries and Jupiter is in Leo. At Nashik, the Kumbh Mela takes place in the month of Shravana (July), when the Sun and Moon are in Cancer and Jupiter is in Scorpio.

It is also said that the elixir of life is filled in a *Kumbh* (Pot) in *Swarg* (heaven) so with certain combination of Sun—Moon—Jupiter

combination, the elixir falls from heaven to earth, and *kumbh mela* is held on those locations.

THE LEGEND

The observance of *Kumbh Mela* is based upon the following legend: Thousands of years ago, in the Vedic period, gods and demons made a temporary agreement to work together churning amrita (the nectar of immortality) from the *Ksheera Sagara* (primordial ocean of milk), and to share the nectar equally.

However, when the *Kumbh* (urn) containing the amrita appeared, the demons ran away with it and were chased by the gods. For twelve days and twelve nights (equivalent to twelve human years) the gods and demons fought in the sky for possession of this pot of amrita. It is said that during the battle, drops of amrita fell at four places: Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik. Thus, the *Kumbh Mela* is observed at these four locations where the nectar fell.

RITUALS OF KUMBH MELA

Kumbh Mela is attended by millions of people on a single day. The major event of this festival is a ritual bath at the banks of the rivers in each town. Other activities include religious discussions, devotional singing, mass feeding of holy men and women and the poor, and religious assemblies where doctrines are debated and standardised. *Kumbh Mela* (especially the Maha *Kumbh Mela*) is the most sacred of all the Hindu pilgrimages. Thousands of holy men and women (monks, saints and sadhus) attend, and the auspiciousness of the festival is in part attributable to this.

KUMBH MELA 2003

When the *Kumbh Mela* was held in Nashik, India, from July 27 to September 7, 2003, 39 pilgrims (28 women and 11 men) were trampled to death and 57 were injured (keeping in mind that the number of devotees attending the fair was around 70 million). Devotees had gathered on the banks of the Godavari river for the *maha snaan* or holy bath. Over 30,000 pilgrims were being held back by barricades in a narrow street leading to the Ramkund, a holy spot, so the sadhus could take the first ceremonial bath. Reportedly, a sadhu threw some silver coins into the crowd and the subsequent scramble led to the stampede (possibly considering the coin from a sadhu as an object of reverence, as a sadhu is considered, although not necessarily in this particular case, a highly respected and enlightened human being).

KUMBH MELA 2007

Every six years there is an *Ardh* or half Mela at Allahabad (2007). The actual dates are dependent on stellar constellations and will be announced nearer to the time.

XXVI. THRISSUR POORAM

Thrissur Pooram is the most colourful temple festival of Kerala, south India. Thrissur Pooram attracts large masses of devotees and spectators from all parts of the State and even outside.

Celebrated in Medom (April-May) it consists of processions of richly caparisoned elephants from various neighbouring temples to the Vadakumnathan temple, Thrissur. The most impressive processions are those from the Krishna Temple at Thiruvambadi and the Devi Temple at Paramekkavu which is quite a significant event for its devotees.

This festival was introduced by Sakthan Thampuran, the Maharaja of the erstwhile Cochin State in the late eighteenth century. Perhaps, there is no other festival in Kerala that draws such an unbelievable number of people to a single event. However, Vadakkunnathan is a mere spectator at this festival, lending its premises and grounds for the great event. The pooram festival is also well-known for the magnificent display of fireworks. Fireworks start in the early hours and the dazzling display last three to four hours.

The Pooram Festival is celebrated by two rival groups representing the two divisions of Thrissur Paramekkavu and Thiruvambadi vying with each other in making the display of fireworks grander and more colourful. Each group is allowed to display a maximum of fifteen elephants and all efforts are made by each party to secure the best elephants in South India and the most artistic parasols, several kinds of which are raised on the elephants during the display. Commencing in the early hours of the morning, the celebrations last till the break of dawn, the next day.

The procession of the Thiruvambadi Pooram to the grounds of Vadakkumnatha Temple and back is not only important, but also quite enlivening. The marvellous as well as magical effect of the Panchavadyam, a combination of five percussion and wind instruments is to be felt and enjoyed. Among the varieties of festivals celebrated in Kerala, Thrissur Pooram is the most thunderous, spectacular and dazzling. There are three temples participating in the event. It is an

expression of popular fascination for sound and colour, and because of the pageantry, it appeals to all people. The images of the deities from all temples of the village are taken on elephants to the main temple. The climax of the festival is the exhibition of thirty elephants and the famous fireworks at 2.30 am local time.

MORE DETAILS ON THRISSUR POORAM

Thrissur Pooram is considered to be the mother of all poorams, it is a cultural highlight par excellence, celebrated in the Malayalam month Medam (April/May) pooram nakshatram.

The two century old festival of spectacular procession of caparisoned elephants and enthralling percussion performances in a never ending succession is an 36 hours marathon event of incredible beauty, a feast for the eye and the ear, unfolding between 6 a.m. to noon the other day. Different from the usual temple festival, Thrissur Pooram is participated and conducted by people across all barriers of religion and caste.

Before the advent of Thrissur Pooram, the largest temple festival during summer in central Kerala was the one-day festival held at Arattupuzha, 12 km south of the town. Temples in and around Thrissur were regular participants of this religious exercise until they were once denied entry by the responsible chief of the Peruvanam area of Cherpu, known for its Namboodiri supremacy. As an act of reprisal and also in a bid to assuage their wounded feelings, Raja Rama Varma (1751-1805), also known as Sakthan Thampuran the ruler of the Cochin state invited all these temples to bring their deities to Thrissur where they could pay obeiance to Lord (Sri) Vadakunnathan, the deity of the Vadakkunnathan Temple. Further he directed the main temples of Thrissur, Thiruvambadi and Paramekkavu, to extend all help and support to these temples. It is this historical background that determines the course of the Pooram programme and it is specifically the ruler's antipathy to the Brahmin aristocracy to open Thrissur pooram for the common man.

Adhering to the medieval Peruvanam tradition, the festival is confined to the temples of Devi (goddess) and Sastha (divine combination of Shiva and Vishnu). Ten deities from the neighboring temples pay obeisance to the presiding deity of Thrissur and only spectator of the Pooram events, Lord Siva at the Sree Vadakkunnathan temple, situated in the heart of the town.

Principle participants are Paramekkavu and Tiruvambadi, close to the Vadakunnathan temple. Also participating and known as 'Cherupooram' are the suburban temples at Kanimangalam, Karamukku, Choorakkattukara, Laloor, Ayyanthole, Neithilakkavu, Chembukkavu and Panamukkampilly altogether 8 deities. The sprawling Thekkinkadu maidan, encircling the Vadakumnathan temple, is the main venue of the festival and usually known as Thrissur Swaraj Round.

XXVII. VASANT PANCHAMI

Vasant Panchami is a Hindu festival celebrating Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music, and art. It is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the Indian month Magh (January-February), the first day of spring. During this festival children are taught their first words; brahmins are fed; ancestor worship (Pitri-Tarpan) is performed; the god of love, Kamadeva, is worshipped; and most educational institutions organise special prayer for Saraswati. The colour yellow also plays an important role in this festival, in that people usually wear yellow garments, Saraswati is worshipped dressed in yellow, and yellow sweetmeats are consumed within the families.

XXVIII. AMAVASYA

Amavasya is the Indic name for a new-moon. The word *Amavasya* is common to many Indian languages especially Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati.

The fortnight containing the new-moon is considered auspicious by Hindus. They believe that during this period, the offerings they make, reach their late forefathers. Every month, the new-moon day is considered auspicious and poojas are made. However, no travel ought to be scheduled the first day of the new moon, as travel without moonlight in the ancient times was forbidden.

The dark fortnight of Aswayuja (September-October) is known as the Mahalaya Paksha or the fortnight specially sacred for offering oblations to the departed ancestors. The last day of this period, the new moon day, is considered as the most important day in the year for performing obsequies and rites.

The renowned hero of the *Mahabharata*, Karna, when he left the mortal coil, ascended to the higher worlds and the great charity he had done here was returned to him hundredfold. But, it was all gold and silver; there was no food, as he had not done any food-charity! He prayed to the god of death. So, he was sent back to Earth for

fourteen days, to make up for this deficiency. For fourteen days, he fed Brahmins and the poor, and offered oblations of water. On his return to the higher regions, he had food in plenty. It is these fourteen days that are commemorated in the Mahalaya Paksha. Due to the grace of the Yama, it has been ordained that offerings made during this period benefit all the departed souls, whether they are connected to you or not.

Charity in the form of food is important during this observance. Life depends upon food. You cannot preach religion to empty stomachs. This human body is the most important vehicle for realising God. How precious most food be which keeps the body fit for Yoga! The gift of food is the greatest gift. Therefore, give food in plenty, not only during the Mahalaya fortnight but all through the year.

XXIX. KOJAGIRI PURNIMA

This festival is observed on the night of full moon in the month of Ashvina (September-October). The word "Kojagra" means "who is awake?". It is an exclamation of Goddess Laxmi, who descends on the earth on this auspicious night and blesses with wealth and prosperity all those who are awake. Hence, the night is spent in festivity and various games of amusement, in honour of the goddess.

It is a harvest festival and is celebrated throughout the country. Laxmi is worshipped and night vigil is observed. According to a folk-tale, once a king fell on evil days, and was in great financial straits, but then his queen observed this fast and night vigil, and worshipped the goddess of wealth, Laxmi. Consequently, they were blessed by the goddess and they regained their prosperity.

XXX. ANANT CHATURDASHI

Anant Chaturdashi is the last day of the Hindu festival of Ganeshotsav. It is generally the tenth or eleventh day after Ganesh Chaturthi and all the Ganesh idols brought into homes and communities are immersed into the sea or nearby lakes and rivers. On this day, people travel to the water front with the idols, big and small, dancing and singing in large processions. Lord Ganesha is departed, only to be welcomed the next year with equal excitement.

XXXI. EKADASHI

Hindu Vaishnavas observe Ekadashi or Gyaaras by fasting on that day. Ekadashi means Ek +Dus=11.

Gyaaras comes from the word gyaarah which means 11. It refers to the 11th day of a fortnight belonging to a lunar month—the bright (Shukla Paksh) and the dark (Krishna Paksh). The moon influences the tides, and also the moods of man.

We have energy centers in our body called 'chakras'. The moon's influence on the body has an influence on the chakras, which tells upon the mind ultimately.

On Ekadashi the mind finds itself in its own abode which is the 'eye-brow center' (chakra) and the 'heart' center (chakra). So the mind gets concentrated and collected easily on these days. Seekers take advantage of these two and try to practise deep meditation. Hindus treat Ekadashi as a very holy day and fast on that day.

On Ekadashi day fasting is observed from all grains and cereals.

The table below describes the various ekadashis that fall at different time of the year.

Ekadashi	Month Vedic	Month Julian
Saphala Ekadashi	Pausha Krishna Paksh	Dec—Jan
Putrada Ekadashi	Pausha Shukla Paksh	Dec—Jan
Sat Tila Ekadashi	Magha Krishna Paksh	Jan—Feb
Bhaimi Ekadashi	Magha Shukla Paksh	Jan—Feb
Vaikuntha Ekadashi	Phalgun Krishna Paksh	Feb—Mar
Amalaki Ekadashi	Phalgun Shukla Paksh	Feb—Mar
Papamochani Ekadashi	Chaitra Krishna Paksh	Mar—Apr
Kamada Ekadashi	Chaitra Shukla Paksh	Mar—Apr
Varuthini Ekadashi	Vaisakh Krishna Paksh	Apr—May
Mohini Ekadashi	Vaisakh Shukla Paksh	Apr—May
Apara Ekadashi	Jyeshtha Krishna Paksh	May—Jun
Pandava Ekadashi	Jyeshtha Shukla Paksh	May—Jun
Yogini Ekadashi	Ashaad Krishna Paksh	Jun—Jul
Sayana Ekadashi	Ashaad Shukla Paksh	Jun—Jul
Kamika Ekadashi	Shravan Krishna Paksh	Jul—Aug
Pavitropana Ekadashi	Shravan Shukla Paksh	Jul—Aug
Ananda Ekadashi	Bhadrapad Krishna Paksh	Aug—Sep
Parsva Ekadashi	Bhadrapad Shukla Paksh	Aug—Sep
Indira Ekadashi	Ashwin Krishna Paksh	Sep—Oct
Padmini Ekadashi	Purushottam Shukla Paksh	-
Parama Ekadashi	Purushottam Krishna Paksh	-

Pasankusha Ekadashi	Ashwin Shukla Paksh	Sep—Oct
Rama Ekadashi	Kartik Krishna Paksh	Oct—Nov
Utthana Ekadashi	Kartik Shukla Paksh	Oct—Nov
Utpanna Ekadashi	Margasirsha Krishna Paksh	Nov—Dec
Mokshada Ekadashi	Margasirsha Shukla Paksh	Nov—Dec

XXXII. NAG PANCHAMI

Nâga Panchamî is a Hindu festival celebrated by Hindus in most parts of India. It is celebrated on Panchami in Shravan month. On this day, they worship Nâga Devata (Cobras). Cobras are considered devine in Hindu mythology. People go to temples and snake pits and they worship the snakes. They offer milk, and silver jewellery to the Cobras to protect them from all evils.They also fast. this festival is to celebrate the day Lord Krishna defeated the serpent Kalia.

The festival of *Nâga panchami* is celebrated in Hindus to pay respect to Nâgas. The five Nâgas worshipped on Nâga panchami are Ananta, Vâsuki, Taxak, Karkotaka and Pingala. According to a Puranic myth Brahma's son Kashyapa had four wives. Kashyapa's first wife gave birth to Devas, second to Garudas, third to Nâgas and fourth to Daityas. (*Dainik Jagran*, 25 July 2006). The third wife of Kashpa was called Kadroo, who gave birth to Nâgas. So Nâgas are also known as Kadroojâ. They were the rulers of *Pâtâl-Loka*. There is a Sanskrit *shloka* to remember important nine Nâgas as under: (*Dainik Bhaskar* 30 July 2006)

Anantam Vâsukim Shesham Padmanâbham cha Kambalam
Shankhapâlam Dhârtarâshtram Taxakam Kâliyam tathâ
Etâni navanâmâni cha mahâtmanâm.

XXXIII. SANKRANTHI

Sankranthi, or Sankranti, is a festival that signifies the beginning of the harvest season for the farmers of India.

Also called 'Makara Sankranthi', it is celebrated primarily in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. From this day onwards the sun with respect to the earth starts moving towards north signalling the oncoming of summer. The grand sire of *Mahabharatha*, Bheeshmacharya, waited for this day to die and ascend to Brahmaloka.

The auspicious day of Sankranthi is celebrated as Pongal in Tamil Nadu. Typically in Andhra Pradesh, the festival is celebrated for three days. The day before Makara Sankranthi is known as Bhogi. On this day, early in the morning, old items in the house such unusable clothes,

broken furniture are set on fire. Also while the old items are burnt, people start drumming on a small hand-held drum which is also thrown into the fire, in the end. A small twig, with *dambar* on the end is prepared as the stick used for drumming. On Sankranti, people wear new clothes and visit temples to celebrate the harvest. The third day is known as Kanuma. As cinema is a highly popular medium in the state of Andhra Pradesh, a bounty of films, featuring the biggest of stars release on this day. The winner of this battle, is generally crowned the "King of the Box Office" for the year.

Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious days for the Hindus, and is celebrated in almost all parts of the country in myriad cultural forms, with great devotion, fervor and gaiety. Lakhs of people take a dip in places like Ganga Sagar and Prayag and pray to Lord Sun. It is celebrated with pomp in southern parts of the country as Pongal, and in Punjab is celebrated as Lohri and Maghi. Gujarati's not only look reverentially up to the sun, but also offer thousands of their colourful oblations in the form of beautiful kites all over the skyline. They may be trying to reach up to their glorious God or bring about greater proximity with the one who represents the best. It is a day for which Bhishma Pitamah kept waiting to leave his mortal coil.

Makar Sankranti is the day when the glorious Sun-God of Hindus begins its ascendancy and entry into the Northern Hemisphere. Sun for the Hindus stands for Pratyaksha-Brahman—the manifest God, who symbolises, the one, non-dual, self-effulgent, glorious divinity blessing one and all tirelessly. Sun is the one who transcends time and also the one who rotates the proverbial Wheel of Time. The famous Gayatri Mantra, which is chanted everyday by every faithful Hindu, is directed to Sun God to bless them with intelligence and wisdom. Sun not only represents God but also stands for an embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. Lord Krishna reveals in *Gita* that this manifested divinity was his first disciple, and we all know it to be indeed a worthy one too. No Sundays for the Sun, may be because one who revels in its very 'being', the very essence of his own Self, is always in the Sunday mood.

The co-relation of cosmic events with individual life and values is one of the most astounding traits of Hindu Masters. Once this co-relation is brought about thereafter these cosmic events become instrumental to remind us the best which we cherish and value. Of all the cosmic bodies Sun is the most glorious and important, thus every sun-centric cosmic event became very important spiritual, religious

and cultural events. On Makar Sankranti day the Sun begins its ascendancy and journey into the Northern Hemisphere, and thus it signifies an event wherein the Gods seem to remind their children that 'Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya'. May you go higher and higher—to more and more Light and never to darkness.

XXXIV. VAT POURNIMA

Vat Pournima is a celebration observed in Maharashtra, India. Pournima means "full moon" and is celebrated on this day in June. Women pray for their husbands by tying threads around a banyan tree on this day. It honours Savitri, the legendary wife who escaped death for her husband's life.

XXXV. ZATRA

Zatra is the Konkani language term for the pilgrimage festivals celebrated at Hindu temples in Goa; the Hindi and Marathi language equivalents are *Yatra* and *Jatra*.

During the Zatra, the idol(s) or murtis of the Hindu deity or deities are taken out on special procession either in a "Palkhi" (sort of a Palanquin) or in a large, multi-storied chariot called the Rath. Traditionally, every temple observes this festival once a year on the traditional day. All zatras usually occur after Diwali in October and continues until the Shigmo festival in March. The most famous Zatra of Goa is that of the temple of the Hindu deity Damodar at Zambaulim, a place located roughly 40 km away from Margao when people walk on burning coals with bare legs.

Also occurring during the Zatra is the phenomenon of possession, usually but not exclusively of women, by the spirit of the deity; this is called *Bhar*, whereby they act as oracles and claim to predict furture events. Outside of Goa, the most famous Zatra is the *Rath Yatra* of the Jagannath Temple in Puri, Orissa, India, which contributed the word *Juggernaut* to the English language.

HINDU TEMPLE

A Hindu temple is a house of worship for followers of Hinduism. They are usually specifically reserved for religious and spiritual activities.

A Hindu temple can be a separate structure or a part of a building. A feature of most temples is the presence of *murtis* of the Hindu deity to whom the temple is dedicated. They are usually dedicated to one primary deity, called the presiding deity, and other subordinate deities

associated with the main deity. However, some temples are dedicated to several deities, and some have symbols instead of a *murti*.

WHY TEMPLES?

Hindu temples are not just worshipping places. They are denoting the cultural, art (including music, dance drama), Martial art, depiction of history. It also for meditation, center for passing knowledge from generation to generation. Some places it is used as storage center of foodgrains (Bhandar) for the entire village or town. In some places it is used as a fort of the kingdom.

ETYMOLOGY

Hindu temples are known by different names in different parts of the world, depending upon the language. The word *mandir* or *mandira* is used in many languages, including Hindi, and is derived from a Sanskrit word, *mandira*, for 'house' (of God by implication). Temples are known as *Devasthana or Gudi* in Kannada, as *Gudi, Devalayam or Kovela* in Telugu and *Mondir* in Bengali, as *Kshetram or Ambalam* in Malayalam.

MANAGEMENT

The Archaeological Survey of India has taken control of most ancient temples of archaeological importance in India.

In India and many countries, each temple is managed by a temple board committee which administers its finances, management and events. Each committee is headed by a president and can have a number of committee members.

In some villages the more prominent and respected families are entrusted with leadership and management of the temple. Their families become patrons of the temple.

SYADVADA

Syadvada is the Doctrine of Postulation of Jainism. In other words Syâdvâda provides the body of teachings or instruction which one uses to derive a postulate or axiom. The starting assumption or postulate is given as saptabhanginaya from which other statements are logically derived. By using saptabhanginaya the theory of relativity encompasses the truths about one system or thought which are the same in one system as in another system in uniform motion relative to it. It is henceforth impossible to determine the truth of a system within its

own thought structure, and such development or furtherance of various claims of truth can be observed only in relation to other systems in uniform motion resulting in a *qualified prediction* as shown in the theory of Manifold Predictions.. Therefore each truth is valid within its one system, various truths are synthesised and are mutually exclusive. Amongst several truths about a particular thing, one or the other or both may in fact be valid.

SANSKRIT

The Sanskrit language is the liturgical language of Jainism. This article gives translations and interpretations of meanings of Sanskrit words into English. For in the English language there is no direct translation of the one word Sanskrit terms given above, but rather a concept in the English language is given to portray the thought symbol of Mahavira's philosophy. The etymology of syadvada comes from two roots. Syat means "may be" whereas vada means "assertion". Placed together syâdvâda becomes the assertion of what may be, the assertion of possibilities.

THEORY OF MANIFOLD PREDICTIONS

From Jain Epistemology describes the saptabhanginaya or sevenfold predication.

1. syadasti = Perhaps or maybe,... it is.
2. syatnasti = Perhaps or maybe,... it is not.
3. syadasti nasti ca = Perhaps or maybe,... it is, it is not.
4. syadavaktavyah = Perhaps or maybe,... it is indeterminate or indescribable.
5. syadasti ca avaktavya sca = Perhaps or maybe,... it is and also indeterminate or indescribable.
6. syatnasti ca avaktavyasca = Perhaps or maybe,... it is not and also indeterminate or indescribable.
7. syadasti nasti ca avaktav-yasca = Perhaps or maybe,... it is and it is not and also indeterminate or indescribable.

BLIND MEN AND AN ELEPHANT

There is a conundrum put forth in the story of Blind Men and an Elephant. This story can be analysed from several perspectives of spirituality, with the Jain version of the Blind Men and an Elephant bringing together all statements in synthesis.

ENLIGHTENMENT

The ability to dogmatically uphold and support the theory of manifold predictions appears self-defeating. The question for the truth, therefore feels unatttainable once the reality is seen to be multifaceted from various points of view. However, this dilemma is resolved because Kevalis, are those who have found infinite knowledge and they can arrive at the ultimate truth or wisdom of the matter. Those who are not Kevali, and only exist in the mundane world would have only a portion of the truth and arrive at sevenfold predication.

▶▶▶

16

CHRISTIANITY:
AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is a monotheistic religion centered on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as depicted in the New Testament. Christianity teaches that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, and that the New Testament records the Gospel that was revealed by Jesus.

Christianity began as a sect within Judaism, and includes the Hebrew Bible (known to Christians as the Old Testament) as well as the New Testament as its canonical scriptures. Like Judaism and Islam, Christianity is classified as an Abrahamic religion.

The name *"Christian"* was first applied to the disciples in Antioch, as recorded in Acts 11:26. The earliest recorded use of the term *"Christianity"* is by Ignatius of Antioch.

BELIEFS

In spite of important differences of interpretation and opinion, Christians in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions share a common faith. Although Christianity has always had a significant diversity of belief on controversial issues, most Christians share a common set of doctrines that they hold as essential to their faith. This common Christian heritage of beliefs has been given such titles as "the Good News of Jesus Christ," "the Way" and "mere Christianity," among others.

Jesus the Christ

As indicated by the name "Christianity," the focus of a Christian's life is a firm belief in Jesus as the Son of God and the *Messiah* or

Christ. The title "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word meaning *anointed one*. The Greek translation (*Christos*) is the source of the English word *Christ*.

Christians believe that, as the Messiah, Jesus was anointed as ruler and savior of humanity, and hold that Jesus' coming was the fulfillment of messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The Christian concept of the Messiah differs significantly from the contemporary Jewish concept. The core Christian belief is that, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, sinful humans can be reconciled to God and thereby are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life.

While there have been theological disputes over the nature of Jesus, Christians generally believe that Jesus is God incarnate and "true God and true man" (or both fully divine and fully human). Jesus, having become fully human in all respects, suffered the pains and temptations of a mortal man, yet he did not sin. As fully God, he defeated death and rose to life again. According to the Bible, "God raised him from the dead," he ascended to heaven, to the "right hand of God," and he will return again to fulfil the rest of Messianic prophecy such as the Resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment and establishment of the physical Kingdom of God.

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, are well documented in the Gospels contained within the New Testament. The Biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry include: his baptism, miracles, preaching, teaching, and deeds.

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Christians consider the resurrection of Jesus to be the cornerstone of their faith and the most important event in human history.

According to the Gospels, Jesus and his followers went to Jerusalem the week of the Passover where they were eagerly greeted by a crowd. In Jerusalem, Jesus drove money changers from the Temple, and predicted its destruction—heightening conflict with the Jewish authorities who were plotting his death.

After sharing his last meal with his disciples, Jesus went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane where he was betrayed by his disciple Judas Iscariot and arrested by the temple guard on orders from the Sanhedrin and the high priest Caiaphas. Jesus was convicted by the

Sanhedrin of blasphemy and transferred to the Roman governor Pilate. Pilate was pressured into crucifying Jesus by the nearly rioting crowds. Although the crowds were incited by the religious authorities, Jesus was sentenced to death for "inciting rebellion." Jesus died by late afternoon and was entombed.

Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day, that Jesus appeared to his apostles and other disciples, commissioned his disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son (Jesus) and of the Holy Spirit" and then ascended to heaven. Christians also believe that God the Father sent the Holy Spirit (or Paraclete) to the disciples.

The purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection is described in various doctrines of atonement. Some see Jesus as a Sacrifice (substitutionary atonement) made to *take away the sin of the world* (John 1:29} in a manner similar to Old Testament sacrifices. Others see Jesus' dying and suffering on the cross as a sign and demonstration from God the Father that His Son was willing to endure the shame and suffering of the cross because of his agape (parental, self-sacrificing) love for humanity. In other Scriptures which record Jesus' death and resurrection, *The Gospel According to St. John* compares the crucifixion of Jesus to the lifting up of the Nehushtan (brass serpent) saying that "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:14-16)

Many modern writers such as members of the Jesus Seminar and other Biblical scholars such as Michael Ramsey (a former Archbishop of Canterbury) have argued that the historical Jesus never claimed to be divine. John Hick observes that it is generally agreed among scholars today that Jesus did not claim to be God. Many also reject the historicity of the empty tomb (and thus a bodily resurrection) and many other events narrated in the gospels. They assert that Gospel accounts describing these things are probably literary fabrications. However, many other scholars and historians maintain that the Gospel accounts of Jesus are, in fact, historically reliable: In terms of ancient history, the New Testament sources were written a short time after the events, and having been written, they encountered insignificant changes in later transcriptions and translations, according to scholars such as the late Sir Frederic Kenyon.

Salvation

Christians believe salvation is a gift by means of the unmerited grace of God, a gift from a loving heavenly Father who sent His only begotten Son Jesus to be their savior. Christians believe that, through faith in Jesus, one can be saved from sin and eternal death. The crucifixion of Jesus is explained as an atoning sacrifice, which, in the words of the Gospel of John, "takes away the sins of the world." One's reception of salvation is related to justification.

The operation and effects of grace are understood differently by different traditions. Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy teach the necessity of the free will to cooperate with grace. Reformed theology places distinctive emphasis on grace by teaching that individuals are completely incapable of self-redemption, but the grace of God overcomes even the unwilling heart.

The Trinity

Trinitarians

Most Christians believe that God is spirit (John 4:24), an uncreated, omnipotent, and eternal being, the creator and sustainer of all things, who works the redemption of the world through his Son, Jesus Christ. With this background, belief in the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit is expressed as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which describes the single Divine *substance* existing as three distinct and inseparable *persons*: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ the eternal Word), and the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7). According to this doctrine, God is not divided in the sense that each person has a third of the whole; rather, each person is considered to be fully God. The distinction lies in their relations, the Father being unbegotten, the Son begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeding. "Begotten," in these formulae, refers to the idea that Jesus was *uncreated* and "eternally begotten" of the Father.

Christians of Reformed theology also conceive salvation to be one work of the triune God in which "the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics" with the agency of the Holy Spirit as an essential element."

Trinitarian Christians trace the orthodox formula of the Trinity — The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost — back to the resurrected Jesus himself who spoke these words, and which words were subsequently recorded in Matthew 28:16-20, and are commonly referred to as the Great Commission.

The "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit" has been called the "common privilege of all believers." John 20:22 quotes Jesus as saying to His apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit." They were to receive the Holy Spirit Himself in some way. Nearly all Christians speak of the "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit." The person who has "received the Holy Spirit" thereafter not only has a sinful nature and carnal desires. According to this theological position, there now is also a second, competing, moral presence, that of the Holy Spirit, forever indwelling within him/her. From that point on, the person is able to see daily situations from either of two perspectives, and as a result, can choose to respond in a moral, Christian manner. However, the Christian often ignores these ethical, moral, positive thoughts inspired by the presence (indwelling) of the Holy Spirit, and respond in some selfish or lustful way as their own original nature desires. (John 16:7-14; 1 Corinthians 2:10ff)

In Catholic, Orthodox, and some Anglican theology, this indwelling is received through the *sacrament* called Confirmation or, in the East, Chrismation. In most Protestant traditions, the "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit" takes place in the action of becoming a Christian. The New Testament also teaches that the Holy Spirit inspired all Scripture, a belief shared by most Christians.

Non-Trinitarians

In antiquity, and again following the Reformation, several sects advocated views contrary to the Trinity. These views were rejected by many bishops such as Irenaeus and subsequently by the Ecumenical Councils. During the Reformation (though most Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants accepted the value of many of the Councils) some groups rejected these councils as spiritually tainted. Clemens Ziegler, Casper Schwenckfeld, and Melchior Hoffman, advanced the view that Christ was only divine and not human. Michael Servetus denied that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity was necessary to defend the divinity of Christ. He claimed that Jesus was God Himself in the flesh.

Modalists, such as Oneness Pentecostals, regard God as a single person, with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit considered modes or roles by which the unipersonal God expresses himself.

Latter-day Saints (commonly called Mormons) accept the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but deny that they are the same being. Rather, they believe them to be separate beings united perfectly

in will and purpose, thus making up one single Godhead. They believe that the Father, like the Son, has a glorified physical body.

Present-day groups who do not consider Jesus to be God include: Unitarians, descendants of Reformation era Socinians, Christadelphians, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Scriptures

Christianity regards the Holy Bible, a collection of canonical books in two parts (the Old Testament and the New Testament) as authoritative: written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore the inerrant Word of God. Protestants believe that the Holy Scriptures contain all revealed truth necessary for salvation.

The Old Testament contains the entire Jewish Tanakh, though in the Christian canon, the books are ordered differently, and some books of the Tanakh are divided into several books by the Christian canon. While these books are part of the Christian canon, scholars of Judaism generally teach that Christians misinterpret passages from the Old Testament, or Tanakh. The Catholic and Orthodox canons include the Hebrew Jewish canon and other books (from the Septuagint Greek Jewish canon) which Catholics call Deuterocanonical, while Protestants consider them Apocrypha.

The first four books of the New Testament are the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), which recount the life and teachings of Jesus. The first three are often called synoptic because of the amount of material they share. The remainder of the New Testament consists of:

1. a sequel to Luke's Gospel which describes the very early history of the Church (the Acts of the Apostles),

2. a collection of letters from early Christian leaders to congregations or individuals, (the Pauline and General epistles), and the

3. Apocalyptic Book of Revelation.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church maintains two canons,

1. the Narrow Canon (itself larger than any Biblical canon outside Ethiopia), and

2. the Broad Canon (which has even more books).

Campaigning to be a restoration of the Christian church, denominations of the Latter-Day Saint movement (commonly called Mormons) are distinct from other forms of Christianity in that they consider the Book of Mormon holy scripture and comparable to the

Bible. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also considers the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price scriptural. Along with the Bible (the preferred English translation is the King James Version), these books are collectively called the *Standard Works* of the church.

Interpretation

Though Christians largely agree on the content of the Bible, there is significant divergence in its interpretation, or exegesis. In antiquity, two schools of exegesis developed in Alexandria and Antioch. Alexandrine interpretation, exemplified by Origen, tended to read Scripture allegorically, while Antiochene interpretation adhered to the literal sense, holding that other meanings (called *theoria*) could only be accepted if based on the literal meaning.

CATHOLIC

Catholic theology distinguishes two senses of scripture: the literal and the spiritual.

Literal

The *literal* sense of understanding scripture is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation. It has three subdivisions: the allegorical, moral, and anagogical (meaning mystical or spiritual) senses.

- The *allegorical* sense includes typology. An example would be the parting of the Red Sea being understood as a "type" (sign) of baptism.
- The *moral* sense understands the scripture to contain some ethical teaching.
- The *anagogical* interpretation includes eschatology and applies to eternity and the consummation of the world.

Catholic theology also adds other rules of interpretation which include:

1. the injunction that all other senses of sacred scripture are based on the *literal*
2. that the historicity of the Gospels must be absolutely and constantly held
3. that scripture must be read within the "living Tradition of the whole Church" and

4. that "the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome"

PROTESTANT

Many Protestants stress the literal sense or historical-grammatical method, even to the extent of rejecting other senses altogether. Other Protestant interpreters make use of typology. Protestants characteristically believe that ordinary believers may reach an adequate understanding of Scripture because Scripture itself is clear (or "perspicuous"), because of the help of the Holy Spirit, or both. Martin Luther believed that without God's help Scripture would be "enveloped in darkness." He advocated "one definite and simple understanding of Scripture." And John Calvin wrote, "all who…follow the Holy Spirit as their guide, find in the Scripture a clear light." The Second Helvetic (Latin for "Swiss") Confession, composed by the pastor of the Reformed church in Zurich (successor to Protestant reformer Zwingli) was adopted as a declaration of doctrine by most European Reformed churches. The *Confession* contains this statement about interpreting Scripture:

> "We hold that interpretation of the Scripture to be orthodox and genuine which is gleaned from the Scriptures themselves (from the nature of the language in which they were written, likewise according to the circumstances in which they were set down, and expounded in the light of like and unlike passages and of many and clearer passages)." The writings of the Church Fathers, and decisions of Ecumenical Councils, though "not despise[d]," were not authoritative and could be rejected.
>
> *– Second Helvetic Confession (1566)*

Creeds

Creeds (from Latin *credo* meaning "I believe") are concise doctrinal statements or confessions, usually of religious beliefs. They began as baptismal formulas and were later expanded during the Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries to become statements of faith.

The Apostles Creed (*Symbolum Apostolorum*) was developed between the second and ninth centuries. It is the most popular creed used in worship by Western Christians. Its central doctrines are those of the Trinity and God the Creator. Each of the doctrines found in this creed can be traced to statements current in the apostolic period. The creed was apparently used as a summary of Christian doctrine for baptismal candidates in the churches of Rome. An even earlier creed was Paul's doctrinal statement recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:1-9.

The Nicene Creed, largely a response to Arianism, was formulated at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in 325 and 381 respectively, and ratified as the universal creed of Christendom by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

The Chalcedonian Creed, developed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, though not accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches, taught Christ "to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably": one divine and one human, and that both natures are perfect but are nevertheless perfectly united into one person.

The Athanasian Creed (English translations), received in the western Church as having the same status as the Nicene and Chalcedonian, says: "We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons not dividing the Substance."

Most Protestants accept the Creeds. Some Protestant traditions believe Trinitarian doctrine without making use of the Creeds themselves, while other Protestants, like the Restoration Movement, oppose the use of creeds.

Afterlife and Eschaton

Most Christians believe that upon bodily death the soul experiences the particular judgment and is either rewarded with eternal heaven or condemned to an eternal hell. The elect are called "saints" (Latin *sanctus*: "holy") and the process of being made holy is called sanctification. In Catholicism, those who die in a state of grace but with either unforgiven venial sins or incomplete penance, undergo purification in purgatory to achieve the holiness necessary for entrance into heaven.

At the last coming of Christ, the *eschaton* or end of time, all who have died will be resurrected bodily from the dead for the Last Judgement, whereupon Jesus will fully establish the Kingdom of God in fulfillment of scriptural prophecies.

Some groups do not distinguish a particular judgment from the general judgment at the end of time, teaching instead that souls remain in stasis until this time. These groups, and others that do not believe in the intercession of saints, generally do not employ the word "saint" to describe those in heaven. Universalists hold that eventually all will experience salvation, thereby rejecting the concept of an eternal hell for those who are not saved.

WORSHIP AND PRACTICES

Christian Life

Christians believe that all people should strive to follow Christ's commands and example in their everyday actions (Romans 13:14). For many, this includes obedience to the Ten Commandments. Jesus made it clear that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). In response to a "catch" question from a Pharisee as to which is the greatest commandment in the Old Testament Law, Jesus replied:

> 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

In the KJV, this kind of love was usually translated "charity" to differentiate it as being intentional and decisional, not an emotional response. This love includes such injunctions as "feed the hungry" and "shelter the homeless," and applies to friend and enemy alike. The relationship between charity and religious practice is sometimes taken for granted today as Martin Goodman has observed: "charity in the Jewish and Christian sense was unknown to the pagan world." Other Christian practices include acts of piety such as prayer and Bible reading.

Christianity teaches that one can overcome sin only through divine grace: moral and spiritual progress can occur only with God's help through the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer. It also teaches that, by believing in Christ, and sharing in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God's children become dead to sin and are resurrected to a new life with Him.

Christian Love (Agape)

A prominent Christian belief is that love is a primary value. Matthew '*agape*' has been used in different ways by a variety of contemporary and ancient sources, including Biblical authors. Many have supposed that '*agape*' represents divine, unconditional, self-sacrificing, active, volitional, and thoughtful love. Greek philosophers at the time of Plato and other ancient authors, used '*agape*' to denote love of a spouse or family, or affection for a particular activity, in contrast to *philia*—an affection that could denote either brotherhood or generally non-sexual affection, and *eros*, an affection of a sexual nature, usually between man and woman. The Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all. The word *agape*

is rarely used in ancient manuscripts, but was used by the early Christians to refer to the self-sacrificing love of God for humanity, which they were committed to reciprocating and practicing toward God and among one another. *agape* has been expounded upon by many Christian writers in a specifically Christian context. Thomas Jay Oord has defined *agape* as "an intentional response to promote well-being when responding to that which has generated ill-being." *agape* received a broader usage under later Christian writers as the word that specifically denoted "Christian" love or "charity" (1 Corinthians 13:1-8), or even God himself [*Theos ein agape*,.. "for God is Love." (1 John 4:8)]. Various senses of *agapç* are used throughout the New Testament, some expanding the meanings used in ancient texts, and rendered as: brotherly love, love of one's spouse or children, and the love of God for all people.

Christian writers have generally described '*agape*' as a form of love which is both unconditional and voluntary; that is, it is non-discriminating, has no pre-conditions, and is something that one decides to do. Tertullian, in his 2nd century defense of Christians remarks how Christian love attracted pagan notice: "What marks us in the eyes of our enemies is our loving kindness. 'Only look' they say, 'look how they love one another'" (*Apology* 39).

Worship

Justin Martyr described second century Christian liturgy in his *First Apology* (*c*. 150) to Emperor Antoninus Pius, and his description remains relevant to the basic structure of Christian liturgical worship:

> "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need."

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. Often these are arranged on an annual cycle, using a book called a lectionary. Instruction is given based on these readings, called a sermon, or homily. There are a variety of congregational prayers, including thanksgiving, confession, and intercession, which occur throughout the service and take a variety of forms including recited, responsive, silent, or sung. The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, is regularly prayed. The Eucharist (also called Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper) consists of a ritual meal of consecrated bread and wine, discussed in detail below. Lastly, a collection occurs in which the congregation donates money for the support of the Church and for charitable work.

Some groups depart from this traditional liturgical structure. A division is often made between "High" church services, characterised by greater solemnity and ritual, and "Low" services, but even within these two categories there is great diversity in forms of worship. Seventh-day Adventists meet on Saturday (the original Sabbath), while others do not meet on a weekly basis. Charismatic or Pentecostal congregations may spontaneously feel led by the Holy Spirit to action rather than follow a formal order of service, including spontaneous prayer. Quakers sit quietly until moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. Some Evangelical services resemble concerts with rock and pop music, dancing, and use of multimedia. For groups which do not recognize a priesthood distinct from ordinary believers the services are generally lead by a minister, preacher, or pastor. Still others may lack any formal leaders, either in principle or by local necessity. Some churches use only a cappella music, either on principle (e.g. many Churches of Christ object to the use of instruments in worship) or by tradition (as in Orthodoxy).

Worship can be varied for special events like baptisms or weddings in the service or significant feast days. In the early church Christians and those yet to complete initiation would separate for the Eucharistic part of the worship. 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 (Sunday schools are often held before rather than during services).

Sacraments

A sacrament is a Christian rite that is an outward sign of an inward grace, instituted by Christ to sanctify humanity. Catholic, Orthodox,

and some Anglican Christians describe worship in terms of seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist (communion), Penance (reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick (last rites), Holy Orders (ordination), and Matrimony. Many Protestant groups, which grew out of the Reformation, recognize the sacramental nature of Baptism and Eucharist, but not usually the other five in the same way, while other Protestant groups reject sacramental theology. Some Christian denominations who believe these rites to do not communicate grace prefer to call them *ordinances*. Though not sacraments, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Holiness Churches emphasize "gifts of the Spirit" such as spiritual healing, prophecy, exorcism, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), and laying on of hands where God's grace is mysteriously manifest.

Eucharist

The Eucharist is the part of liturgical worship that consists of a consecrated meal, usually bread and wine. Justin Martyr described the Eucharist as follows:

> "And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

Orthodox, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and many Anglicans believe that Jesus Christ is present in the elements of bread and the cup (the doctrine of the Real Presence). Most other Protestants, especially Reformed, believe the bread and wine merely *represent* the body and blood of Christ. These Protestants may celebrate it less frequently, while in the Roman Catholic Church the Eucharist is celebrated daily (but not on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.). Some Christian denominations view communion as indicating those who are already united in the church, restricting participation to their members not in a state of mortal sin (closed communion). Most other churches view communion as a means to unity, rather than an end, and invite all Christians or even anyone to participate (open

communion). In some denominations, participation is by prior arrangement with a church leader.

Liturgical Calendar

In the New Testament Paul of Tarsus organised his missionary travels around the celebration of Pentecost. (Acts 20.16 and 1 Corinthians 16.8) This practice draws from Jewish tradition, with such feasts as the Feast of Tabernacles, the Passover, and the Jubilee. Today Catholics, Eastern Christians, and traditional Protestant communities frame worship around a liturgical calendar. This includes holy days, such as solemnities which commemorate an event in the life of Jesus or the saints, periods of fasting such as Lent, and other pious events such as memoria or lesser festivals commemorating saints. Christian groups that do not follow a liturgical tradition often retain certain celebrations, such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. A few churches make no use of a liturgical calendar.

Symbols

Today the best-known Christian symbol is the cross, which refers to the method of Jesus' execution. Several varieties exist, with some denominations tending to favor distinctive styles: Catholics the crucifix, Orthodox the crux orthodoxa, and Protestants an unadorned cross.

An earlier Christian symbol was the 'ichthys' fish (Greek Alpha—a) symbol and anagram. Other text based symbols are Greek abbreviations for Jesus Christ, originally with superlineation, to include IHC and ICXC and chi-rho (the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek). In the Greek alphabet, the Chi-Rho appears like an *X* with a large *P* overlaid and above it. It is said Constantine saw this symbol prior to converting to Christianity (see History and origins section below). The variation IHS of the *nomina sacra* is latinised Greek representing the first three letters of the Latin name, Iesus. Another ancient symbol is an anchor, which denotes faith and can incorporate a cross within its design.

HISTORY AND ORIGINS

The history of Christianity is the history of the Christian religion and Church, from Jesus and his Twelve Apostles to contemporary times. In the mid-first century, Christianity spread beyond its Jewish origins. The New Testament depicts this as occurring under the leadership of the Apostles, especially Peter and Paul. Some scholars even consider Paul to be the founding figure of Christianity, pointing

to the extent of his writings and the scope of his missionary work. Within a generation an episcopal hierarchy can be seen, and this would form the structure of the Church. In 301 Christianity became a state-religion in Armenia being the first country to accept Christianity. Christianity spread east to Asia and throughout the Roman Empire, despite persecution by the Roman Emperors until its legalisation by Emperor Constantine in 313. During his reign, questions of orthodoxy lead to the convocation of the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea.

In 391 Theodosius I established Nicene Christianity as the official and, except for Judaism, only legal religion in the Roman Empire. Later, as the political structure of the empire collapsed in the West, the Church assumed political and cultural roles previously held by the Roman aristocracy. Eremitic and Coenobitic monasticism developed, originating with the hermit St Anthony of Egypt around 300. With the avowed purpose of fleeing the world and its evils *in contemptu mundi*, the institution of monasticism would become a central part of the medieval world.

Christianity became the established church of the Axumite Kingdom (presently encompassing Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia) under King Ezana in the 4th century through the efforts of a Syrian Greek named Frumentius, known in Eritrea and Ethiopia as Abba Selama, Kesaté Birhan ("Father of Peace, Revealer of Light"), thus making Eritrea and Ethiopia one of the first Christian states even before most of Europe. As a youth, Frumentius had been shipwrecked with his brother Aedesius on the Eritrean coast. The brothers managed to be brought to the royal court, where they rose to positions of influence and converted Emperor Ezana to Christianity, causing him to be baptised. Ezana sent Frumentius to Alexandria to ask the Patriarch, St. Athanasius, to appoint a bishop for the Kingdom of Aksum. Athanasius appointed Frumentius himself, who returned to Aksum as Bishop with the name of Abune Selama.

During the Migration Period of Late Antiquity, various Germanic peoples adopted Christianity. Meanwhile, as western political unity dissolved, the linguistic divide of the Empire between Latin-speaking West and the Greek-speaking East intensified. By the Middle Ages distinct forms of Latin and Greek Christianity increasingly separated until cultural differences and disciplinary disputes finally resulted in the Great Schism (conventionally dated to 1054), which formally divided Christendom into the Catholic west and the Orthodox east. Western Christianity in the Middle Ages was characterised by cooperation and

conflict between the secular rulers and the Church under the Pope, and by the development of scholastic theology and philosophy.

Beginning in the 7th century, Muslim rulers began a long series of military conquests of Christian areas, and it quickly conquered areas of the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, and even captured southern Spain. Numerous military struggles followed, including the Crusades, the Spanish Reconquista, the Fall of Constantinople and the aggression of the Turks.

In the early sixteenth century, increasing discontent with corruption and immorality among the clergy resulted in attempts to reform the Church and society. The Protestant Reformation began after Martin Luther published his 95 theses in 1517, whilst the Roman Catholic Church experienced internal renewal with the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-1563). During the following centuries, competition between Catholicism and Protestantism became deeply entangled with political struggles among European states. Meanwhile, partly from missionary zeal, but also under the impetus of colonial expansion by the European powers, Christianity spread to the Americas, Oceania, East Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Modern Era, Christianity was confronted with various forms of skepticism and with certain modern political ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and socialism. This included the anti-clericalism of the French Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, and general hostility of Marxist movements, especially the Russian Revolution.

Persecution

Starting with Jesus, the early Christian church was persecuted by state and religious establishments from its earliest beginnings. Notable early Christians such as Stephen, eleven of the Apostles as well as Paul died as martyrs according to tradition. Systematic Roman persecution of Christians culminated in the Great Persecution of Diocletian and ended with the Edict of Milan. Persecution of Christians persisted or even intensified in other places, such as in Sassanid Persia. Later Christians living in Islamic countries were subjected to various legal restrictions, which included taxation and a ban on building or repairing churches. Christians at times also suffered violent persecution or confiscation of their property.

There was persecution of Christians during the French Revolution (see Dechristianisation of France during the French Revolution). State restrictions on Christian practices today are generally associated with

those authoritarian governments which either support a majority religion other than Christianity (as in Muslim states), or tolerate only churches under government supervision, sometimes while officially promoting state atheism (as in the Soviet Union). The People's Republic of China allows only government-regulated churches and has regularly suppressed house churches and underground Catholics. The public practice of Christianity is outlawed in Saudi Arabia. Areas of persecution include other parts of the Middle East, the Sudan, and Kosovo.

Christians have also been perpetrators of persecution against other religions and other Christians. Christian mobs, sometimes with government support, destroyed pagan temples and persecuted or even killed adherents of paganism (e.g. the philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria). Also, Jewish communities have periodically suffered violence at Christian hands. Christian governments have suppressed or persecuted groups seen as heretical, later in cooperation with the Inquisition. Denominational strife escalated into religious wars. Witch hunts, carried out by secular authorities or popular mobs, were a frequent phenomenon in parts of early modern Europe and, to a lesser degree, North America.

Modern Membership Trends

With an estimated number of adherents that ranges between 1.5 billion and 2.1 billion, Christianity is one of the world's largest religions. It is the predominant religion in Europe, the Americas, Southern Africa, and the Philippines.

However, it is declining in some areas including Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), Great Britain, France, Germany, and the Middle East, and in Asia it remains a minority religion.

CHRISTIAN DIVISIONS

There is a diversity of doctrines and practices among groups calling themselves Christian. These groups are sometimes classified under denominations, though for theological reasons many groups reject this classification system. Christianity may be broadly represented as being divided into three main groupings:

- *Roman Catholicism:* The Roman Catholic Church, or "Catholic Church," includes the 23 particular churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome. It is the largest single body, with more than 1 billion baptized members.

- *Eastern Orthodoxy:* Those churches in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the other Patriarchal

Sees of the East. A 1992 agreement amongst American theologians resolved theological differences between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians—although this has yet to be universally recognised. Together with the "Church of the East", these can be considered a single large grouping.

- *Protestantism:* Virtually every church body outside Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are considered to be Protestant. In the 16th century, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin inaugurated what has come to be called the Protestant Reformation. Luther's primary theological heirs are known as Lutherans (Also known as Evangelicals in Germany and elsewhere). Zwingli and Calvin's heirs are far broader denominationally, and are broadly referred to as the Reformed Tradition. Most Protestant traditions branch out from the Reformed tradition in some way. In addition to the Lutheran and Reformed branches of the Reformation, there is also the Anabaptist tradition, which was largely ostracized by the other Protestant parties at the time, but have achieved a measure of affirmation in more recent history. Restorationism may be considered to be another Protestant branch should one consider them to be properly called Christians.

The oldest Protestant and Reformed groups separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century Protestant Reformation, followed in many cases by further divisions. Estimates of the total number of Protestants and Reformed are very uncertain, partly because of the difficulty in determining which denominations should be placed in these categories, but it seems to be unquestionable that Orthodox Christianity is the second major group of Christians (after Roman Catholicism) in number of followers.

Some Reformed Christians identify themselves simply as *Christian*, or *born-again Christian*; they typically distance themselves from the confessionalism of Protestant communities by calling themselves "non-denominational" — often founded by individual pastors, they have little affiliation with historic denominations. Furthermore, many members of the the Anglican Communion, a group of Anglican and Episcopal Churches that are descended from the Church of England, claim to be both Protestant and *Catholic*. Finally, various small communities, such as the Old Catholic and Independent Catholic Churches, are similar in name to the Roman Catholic Church, but are not in communion with the See of Rome (the Old Catholic Church is

in communion with the See of Canterbury). The term "Roman Catholic" was created to distinguish the Roman Catholics from other groups.

Restorationists are historically connected to Early 19th century Camp Meetings in the Midwest and Upstate New York. American Millennialism and Adventism, which arose from Evangelical Protestantism, produced certain groups such as the Jehovah's Witness Movement (p. 807), and, as a reaction specifically to William Miller, Seventh Day Adventists (p. 381). These groups usually describe themselves as *restoring* the Church that they believe was lost at some point and not as "reforming" a Christian Church continuously existing from the time of Jesus. Restorationists include Churches of Christ with 2.6 million members, Disciples of Christ with 8,00,000 members, and Jehovah's Witnesses with 6.6 million members, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the largest denomination of the Latter-Day Saint movement with over 12 million members. Though Restorationists have some superficial similarities, their doctrine and practices vary significantly.

Mainstream Christianity

Mainstream Christianity is a widely used term, used to refer to collectively to the common views of major denominations of Christianity (such as Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Orthodox Christianity) as against the particular tenets of other sects or Christian denomination. The context is dependent on the particular issues addressed, but usually contrasts the orthodox majority view against heterodox minority views. In the most common sense, "mainstream" refers to Nicene Christianity, or rather the traditions which continue to claim adherence to the Nicene Creed.

Ecumenism

Most churches have long expressed ideals of being reconciled with each other, and in the 20th century Christian ecumenism advanced in two ways. One way was greater cooperation between groups, such as the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of Protestants in 1910, the Justice, Peace and Creation Commission of the World Council of Churches founded in 1948 by Protestant and Orthodox churches, and similar national councils like the National Council of Churches in Australia which also includes Roman Catholics.

The other way was institutional union with new United and uniting churches. Congregationalist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches united in 1925 to form the United Church of Canada and in 1977 to

form the Uniting Church in Australia. The Church of South India was formed in 1947 by the union of Anglican, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches.

Steps towards reconciliation on a global level have also been taken in 1965 by the Catholic and Orthodox churches mutually revoking the excommunications that marked their Great Schism in 1054; the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) working towards full communion between those churches since 1970; and the Lutheran and Catholic churches signing The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999 to address conflicts at the root of the Protestant Reformation. In 2006 the Methodist church also adopted the declaration.

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Christianity and other religions appear to share some elements. In a look at Christianity's relationship with other world religions, this article investigates the differences and similarities of Christianity to other religions.

RELATIONSHIP WITH JUDAISM

Historically, the relationship between Christianity and Judaism has been strained, to say the least. In the past, Christians were often taught that "the Jews" killed Christ, for which "murder" they bear a collective guilt (an interpretation which most major denominations now reject). Jews meanwhile have tended to associate Christianity with various pogroms, or in better times, with the dangers of assimilation. Anti-Semitism has a long history in Christianity, and indeed is far from dead (for example, in contemporary Russia). However, since the Holocaust, much dialogue aimed at Christian-Jewish reconciliation has taken place, and relations have greatly improved. Today, many conservative evangelicals support Christian Zionism, much to the irritation of Arab Christians, based partly on the Millenialist belief that the modern state of Israel represents the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

The phenomenon of Messianic Judaism has become something of an irritant to Jewish / Christian relations. Messianic Jews—who generally seek to combine a Jewish identity with the recognition of Jesus— are rejected by mainstream Jewish groups, who dismiss Messianic Judaism as little more than Christianity with Jewish undertones.

The Jewish conception of the messiah holds certain similarities to that of Christians, yet there are substantial differences. According to

Jews, the Hebrew Scriptures contain a small number of prophecies concerning a future descendant of King David, who will be anointed (Hebrew: moshiach) as the Jewish people's new leader and will establish the throne of David in Jerusalem forever. In the Jewish view, this fully human and mortal leader will rebuild the land of Israel and restore the Davidic Kingdom. This subject is covered in the section on Jewish eschatology. Christians have a different understanding of the term *messiah*, and believe that Jesus is the messiah referred to in the Old Testament prophecies; that the kingdom in these prophecies was to be a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one; and that Jesus' words and actions in the New Testament provide evidence of his identity as *messiah*.

RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLAM

Islam shares a number of beliefs with Christianity. They share similar views on monotheism, judgment, heaven, hell, spirits, angels, and a future resurrection. Jesus is acknowledged and respected by Muslims as a great prophet. However, while Islam relegates Jesus to a lesser status than God—"in the company of those nearest to God" in the Qur'an, mainstream Christianity believes quite firmly and without question that Jesus is God, one of the three *hypostases* (persons) of Christianity's Holy Trinity, equally God as are the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The religions both share a belief in the virgin birth of Jesus, his miracles and healings, and that he ascended bodily into heaven. However, Jesus is not accepted as the Person of the Son within the Trinity by Muslims, except in the sense of being someone loved by God. They believe only in God as a single entity, not as the Trinity accepted by the vast majority of Christians. Neither do Muslims accept Jesus' crucifixion. Since Muslims believe only in the worship of a strictly monotheistic God who never assumed human flesh, they do not accept the use of icons, and see this as shirk (idolatry). Muslims were the first instigators of iconoclasm and their conquests caused the iconoclasm in the Byzantine Empire. For the same reason, they do not worship or pray to Muhammad, Jesus, or any other prophets; only to God.

Adherents of Islam have historically referred to themselves, Jews, and Christians (among others) as People of the Book since they all base their religion on books that are considered to have a divine origin. Christians however neither recognize the Qur'an as a genuine book of divine revelation, nor agree with its assessment of Jesus as a

mere prophet, on par with Muhammad, nor for that matter accept that Muhammad was a genuine prophet.

Muslims, for their part, believe that parts of the Gospels, Torah and Jewish prophetic books have been forgotten, misinterpreted, or distorted by their followers. Based on that perspective, Muslims view the Qur'an as correcting the errors of Christianity. For example, Muslims reject belief in the Trinity, or any other expression of the divinity of Jesus, as incompatible with monotheism. Not surprisingly, the two faiths have often experienced controversy and conflict (an example being the Crusades). At the same time, much fruitful dialogue has occurred as well. The writings of superlative Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas frequently cite those of the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides as well as Muslim thinker Averoes ('Ibn-Rushd).

On May 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II, the first pope to pray in a mosque, delivered an address at Omayyad Mosque in Damascus, saying: "It is important that Muslims and Christians continue to explore philosophical and theological questions together, in order to come to a more objective and comprehensive knowledge of each others' religious beliefs. Better mutual understanding will surely lead, at the practical level, to a new way of presenting our two religions not in opposition, as has happened too often in the past, but in partnership for the good of the human family."

In countries dominated by Islam, Christians typically practice their faith under severe restrictions. Proselytizing Muslims is often a criminal act, and any Muslim who converts to Christianity would likely face severe censure from family and friends, if not also legal repercussions.

RELATIONS WITH HINDUISM

Hinduism and Christianity differ on fundamental beliefs on heaven, hell and reincarnation, to name a few. From the Hindu perspective, heaven and hell are temporary places, where every soul has to live, either for the good deeds done or for their sins committed. After a soul suffers its due punishment in hell, or after a soul has enjoyed enough in the heaven, it again enters the life-death cycle. There is no concept of 'permanent' hell or heaven.

In Hinduism, the concept of *moksha* is akin to that of Buddhism's nirvana. Christian-Hindu relations are a mixed affair. On one hand, Hinduism's natural tendency has been to recognize the divine basis of various other religions, and to revere their founders and saintly

practitioners. On the other hand, perceptions of aggressive proselytism on the part of some Christian groups have led to occasional incidents of anti-Christian violence, often fueled by Hindu nationalist political parties. In Western countries, Vedanta has influenced some Christian thinkers, while others in the anti-cult movement have reacted against the activities of immigrant gurus and their followers. (See also: Pierre Johanns, Abhishiktananda, Bede Griffiths, Dalit theology.)

RELATIONS WITH BUDDHISM

Buddhism and Protestantism came into political conflict in 19th century Sri Lanka and in Tibet circa 1904 (the Francis Younghusband Younghusband Expedition). Various events have cooperated to introduce various strains of Buddhist theology and meditation to several generations of Western spiritual seekers (including some Catholic religious). Relations are generally good, except perhaps in South Korea and Vietnam. The Russian republic of Kalmykia recognises both Tibetan/ Lamaist Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy as its official religions.

POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH ZOROASTRIANISM THROUGH JUDAISM

Many scholars believe the eschatology of Judaism and possibly the idea of monotheism originated in Zoroastrianism, and may have been transferred to Judaism during the Babylonian captivity, thus eventually influencing Christian theology. Bible scholar P.R. Ackroyd states: "the whole eschatological scheme, however, of the Last Judgment, rewards and punishments, etc., within which immortality is achieved, is manifestly Zoroastrian in origin and inspiration." However, the theory is questioned by some mainstream historians and scholars. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* states "There is little if any effect of Zoroastrian elements on Judaism in the Persian period.". Nevertheless scholars such as Soloman Nigosian contend, in regarding the similar ideas of Zoroaster and later Jewish writers, that "the ideas were indigenous to Iran...it is hardly conceivable that some of the characteristic ideas and practices in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam came into being without Zoroastrian influence." The new faith (Zoroastrianism) emerged in lager Persian empires. "Zoroastrianism reflected the cosmopolitan society of the empires". During this time Zoroastrianism profoundly effected the beliefs and values of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam ("Traditions and Encounters: A brief global History", Jerry H. Bentley. pg. 93). It is also possible that Zoroastrianism and later Jewish theology came from a common source.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PAGANISM

Christianity and the pagan religions of classical antiquity are popularly understood to have been rivals, with each seeking to persecute and destroy the other. This is a gross simplification. Even the pagan, anti-Christian emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) conceded that "These godless Galileans (i.e. Christians) feed not only their own poor but ours: our poor lack our care". The Church Fathers had a wide spectrum of attitudes toward pagan learning which ranged from utter rejection, to recognition of the partial inspiration of philosophers such as Plato (whose image is found among the saints in a number of church and monastery walls).

RELATIONSHIP WITH MITHRAISM

There are many parallels between Mithraism and Christianity. These include the central figures of each religion having virgin births celebrated on the same date (December 25th), the stories of Christ and Mithra as children being visited by shepherds, the trinity, and the immortal soul. Mithraism was popular in the Roman administered regions before the advent of Christianity, and some have theorised that these themes were transferred to early Christianity by proponents of Mithraism.

However, writers of Christian apologetics have argued that because the Gospels were written before 100 and that since little is known of Roman Mithraism until after 100 that it is not possible to definitively state that Christianity borrowed any of its doctrines from Mithraism; some have even suggested it is more likely the flow was the other way. Ronald H. Nash has stated "allegations of an early Christian dependence on Mithraism have been rejected on many grounds. Mithraism had no concept of the death and resurrection of its god and no place for any concept of rebirth — at least during its early stages...During the early stages of the cult, the notion of rebirth would have been foreign to its basic outlook...Moreover, Mithraism was basically a military cult. Therefore, one must be skeptical about suggestions that it appealed to non-military people like the early Christians."

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

The Bahá'í Faith believes that there is one God who throughout time sends divine messengers to guide humanity through progressive revelation. They believe in the divine knowledge and essence of Jesus, among other messengers such as Muhammad, Zoroaster, and Moses. Interpretations vary, but the Bahá'í Faith is sometimes considered an

Abrahamic faith. The followers of the Bahá'í Faith believe in God, as do Christians, and recognize Jesus' teachings, but they have different views of the Trinity and divinity of Jesus. The Bahá'í view of prophets is that although they have both human and divine characteristics, they are not themselves God, but rather "divine manifestations." They also see the Trinity as symbolic where Jesus and the Holy Spirit are polished mirrors that reflect the pure light from God.

Bahá'ís share some views with Christianity regarding moral and immoral behaviour. Bahá'ís condemn polygamy, premarital sex, and homosexual acts while treating everyone, including homosexuals, with love, respect, and dignity.

SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The spread of Christianity has been international, in some cases entirely displacing the religions and altering the customs encountered among those people to whom it has come. This centuries-long process has been met with violent opposition at times, and likewise the spread of Christianity has in some cases been carried out with martial force. The relationship of Christianity to other faiths is encumbered to some extent by this history, with modern Christians, particularly in the West, expressing embarrassment over the violence in Christianity's past.

Converting adherents of other religions, without martial force, is widely accepted within Christianity. Many Christian organisations believe that they have a duty to make converts among every people. In recent years, ecumenism and dialogue between different religions has been endorsed by many official representatives of the Christian churches, as a way of effecting reconciliation between Christian people and people of other faiths, leading to many cases of reconciliation. In some cases, this endorsement is accompanied by a complete disavowal of all proselytizing efforts under the banner of religious pluralism.

This is specially marked by the inauguration, or installation, of Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu from Uganda, on November 29, 2005. Dr Sentamu is the first black African Archbishop of the Church of England. He is also the first Archbishop to beat bongo drums in the cathedral at his own inauguration. The newspaper *Guardian*, which dedicated its double middle page of the following day to a full picture of the grinning Archbishop in full apparel at the porch of the cathedral, says that: "Dr Sentamu's sermon was a stern lecture to the Church of England to grow out of being a 'judgmental and moralising'

congregation of 'pew-fillers, sermon-taters, Bible readers, even born-again believers and Spirit-filled charismatics' and go out to make friends in the world. 'We have lost the joy and power that makes real disciples and we've become consumers of religion, not disciples of Jesus-Christ', he said. 'Christians, go and make friends among Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, agnostics, atheists, not for the purpose of converting them to your beliefs but for friendship, understanding, listening, hearing.' His remarks were greeted with applause, not with silence as the order of the service instructed."

A special case is the issue of Christian-Jewish reconciliation, in which significant reconciliation has been reached.

Syncretism

Christian converts have often carried some of their previous customs to their new faith. This on occasion has led to syncretisms, that are often not accepted by mainstream Christians:

- In Cuban Santeria, the West African orishas are venerated in the shape of Catholic saints.
- The Chinese Taiping Rebellion put the Bible in the place of the Confucian classics.
- The God's Army of Myanmar mixed Karen traditions with Protestantism.

SEVEN LAWS OF NOAH

The Seven Laws of Noah often referred to as the Noahide Laws, are a set of seven moral imperatives which, according to the Talmud, were given by God to Noah as a binding set of laws for all mankind. According to Judaism any non-Jew who lives according to these laws is regarded as a Righteous Gentile and is assured of a place in the world to come (Olam Haba), the Jewish concept of heaven. Adherents are often called "B'nei Noah" (Children of Noah) or "Noahides" and may often network in Jewish synagogues.

The Noahide Laws were predated by six laws given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Later at the Revelation at Sinai the Seven Laws of Noah were regiven to humanity and embedded in the 613 Laws given to the Children of Israel along with the Ten Commandments. These laws are mentioned in the Torah. According to Judaism, the 613 mitzvot or "commandments" given in the written Torah, as well as their reasonings in the oral Torah, were only issued to the Jews and are therefore only binding upon them, having inherited the obligation

from their ancestors. At the same time, at Mount Sinai, the Children of Israel were given the obligation to teach other nations the embedded laws. It is actually forbidden by the Talmud for non-Jews on whom the Noahide Laws are still binding, to elevate their observance to the Torah's mitzvot as the Jews do.

While some Jewish organisations, such as Chabad have worked to promote the acceptance of Noahide laws, there are no figures for how many actually do. Noahides exist predominantly in the United States, South America and Europe.

THE SEVEN LAWS

The seven laws listed by the Talmud are:
1. Prohibition of Idolatry:—There is only one God. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
2. Prohibition of Murder:—You shall not murder.
3. Prohibition of Theft:—You shall not steal.
4. Prohibition of Sexual Promiscuity:—You shall not commit adultery.
5. Prohibition of Blasphemy:—Revere God and do not blaspheme.
6. Prohibition of Cruelty to Animals:—Do not eat flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive.
7. Requirement to have just Laws:—You shall set up an effective judiciary to fairly judge observance of the preceding six laws.

BACKGROUND

According to rabbinic Judaism, as expressed in the Talmud, the Noahide Laws apply to all humanity through mankind's descent from one paternal ancestor who in Hebrew tradition is called Noah (the head of the only family to survive during The Flood). In Judaism, áðé ðç *B'nei Noah* (Hebrew, "Descendants of Noah", "Children of Noah") refers to all of mankind.

The Talmud also states: "Righteous people of all nations have a share in the world to come" (Sanhedrin 105a). Any non-Jew who lives according to these laws is regarded as one of "the righteous among the gentiles". Maimonides writes that this refers to those who have acquired knowledge of God and act in accordance with the Noahide laws out of obedience to Him. According to what scholars consider to be the most accurate texts of the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides continues on to say that anyone who upholds the Noahide laws only because they appear logical is not one of the "*righteous* among the nations,"

but rather he is one of the *wise* among them. The more prolific versions of the Mishneh Torah say of such a person: "..nor is he one of the wise among them."

According to the Biblical narrative, the Deluge covered the whole world killing every surface-dwelling creature except Noah, his family and the creatures of Noah's Ark. After the flood, God sealed a covenant with Noah with the following admonitions (Genesis 9):

- Food: "However, flesh with its life-blood [in it] you shall not eat." (9:4)
- Murder: "Furthermore, I will demand your blood, for [the taking of] your lives, I shall demand it [even] from any wild animal. From man too, I will demand of each person's brother the blood of man. He who spills the blood of man, by man his blood shall be spilt; for in the image of God He made man." (9:5-6)

The Talmud (tractate Sanhedrin 56a/b, quoting Tosefta Sanhedrin 9:4) states that the instruction to not eat "flesh with the life" was given to Noah, and that Adam and Eve had already received six other commandments. Adam and Eve were not enjoined from eating from a living animal since they were forbidden to eat any animal. The remaining six are exegetically derived from a seemingly superfluous sentence in Genesis 2:16

Judaism holds that gentiles (or goyim, non-Jews, [literally "nations"]) are not only not obligated to adhere to all the laws of the Torah (indeed, they are forbidden to fulfill some laws, such as the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath in the exact same manner as Israel). Rabbinic Judaism and its modern-day descendants discourage proselytisation. The Noahide Laws are regarded as the way through which non-Jews can have a direct and meaningful relationship with God or at least comply with the minimal requisites of civilisation and of divine law.

A non-Jew who keeps the Noahide Law in all its details is said to attain the same spiritual and moral level as Israel's own Kohen Gadol (high priest). Maimonides states in his work Mishneh Torah that a non-Jew who is precise in the observance of these Seven Noahide commandments is considered to be a *Righteous Gentile* and has earned a place in the world to come. This follows a similar statement in the Talmud. However, according to Maimonides, a gentile is considered righteous only if a person follows the Noahide laws specifically because he or she considers them to be of divine origin (through the Torah) and not if they are merely considered to be intellectually compelling or good rules for living.

Noahide law differs radically from the Roman law for gentiles (*Jus Gentium*), if only because the latter was an enforceable judicial policy. Rabbinic Judaism has never adjudicated any cases under Noahide law (per Novak, 1983:28ff.), although scholars disagree about whether the Noahide law is a functional part of Halakha ("Jewish law") (cf. Bleich).

In recent years, the term "Noahide" has come to refer to non-Jews who strive to live in accord with the seven Noahide Laws; the terms "Observant Noahide" or "Torah-centered Noahides" would be more precise but are infrequently used. The rainbow, referring to the Noahide or First Covenant (Genesis 9), is the symbol of many organised Noahide groups, following Genesis 9:12-17. A non-Jewish person of any ethnicity or religion is referred to as a *bat* ("daughter") or *ben* ("son") of Noah, but most organisations that call themselves are composed of gentiles who are keeping the Noahide Laws.

SUBDIVIDING THE SEVEN LAWS

Various rabbinic sources have different positions on the way the seven laws are to be subdivided in categories. Maimonides lists one additional Noahide commandment forbidding the coupling of different kinds of animals and the mixing of trees. Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Abi Zimra (*Radbaz*), a contemporary commentator on Maimonides, expressed surprise that he left out castration and sorcery which were listed in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 56b).

The tenth century Rabbi Saadia Gaon added tithes and levirate marriage. The eleventh century Rav Nissim Gaon included "listening to God's Voice", "knowing God" and "serving God" besides going on to say that all religious acts which can be understood through human reasoning are obligatory upon Jew and Gentile alike. The fourteenth century Rabbi Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi added the commandment of charity.

The sixteenth century work *Asarah Maamarot* by Rabbi Menahem Azariah of Fano (*Rema mi-Fano*) enumerates thirty commandments, listing the latter twenty-three as extensions of the original seven. Another commentator, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes (*Kol Hidushei Maharitz Chayess* I, end Ch. 10) suggests these are not related to the first seven, nor based on Scripture, but were passed down by oral tradition. The number thirty derives from the statement of the Talmudic sage Ulla in tractate Hullin 92a, though he lists only three other rules in addition to the original seven, consisting of the prohibitions against homosexuality and cannibalism, as well as the imperative to honor the Torah.

Talmud commentator Rashi remarks on this that he does not know the other Commandments that are referred to. Though the authorities seem to take it for granted that Ulla's thirty commandments included the original seven, an additional thirty laws is also possible from the reading.

The tenth century Shmuel ben Hophni Gaon lists thirty Noahide Commandments based on Ulla's Talmudic statement, though the text is problematic. He includes the prohibitions against suicide and false oaths, as well as the imperatives related to prayer, sacrifices and honoring one's parents.

Prohibition Against Idolatry

- No idolatry
- To pray only to God
- To offer ritual sacrifices only to God

Prohibition Against Blasphemy

- To believe in the singularity of God
- No blasphemy
- No idolatrous rituals
- No divination
- No astrology
- No following omens
- No witchcraft
- No incantations
- No necromancy
- No mediums
- To honor one's father and mother

Prohibition Against Murder

- No murder
- No suicide
- No Moloch worship (infant sacrifice)
- According to Maimonides's interpretation, no abortion

Prohibition Against Theft

- No stealing
- No kidnapping of persons

Prohibition Against Sexual Immorality

- No adultery
- Formal legal marriages
- No incest with close relatives
- No Sodomy (i.e. male to male)
- No bestiality
- Not to crossbreed animals
- No castration

Prohibition Against Eating the Limb of a Living Animal

- Not to eat a limb of a living creature (whilst it is still alive)
- Not to eat or drink blood
- Not to eat carrion (for those recognised by a Beth Din)

Establish Courts of Justice

- To establish courts and a system of justice
- No false oaths

The contemporary Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein counts 66 instructions but Rabbi Harvey Falk has suggested that much work remains to be done in order to properly identify all of the Noahide Commandments, their divisions and subdivisions.

Theft, robbery and stealing covers the appropriate understanding of other persons, their property and their rights. The establishment of courts of justice promotes the value of the responsibility of a corporate society of people to enforce these laws and define these terms. The refusal to engage in unnecessary lust or cruelty demonstrates respect for the Creation itself as renewed after the Flood. To not do murder would include human sacrifice.

LEGAL STATUS OF AN OBSERVER OF NOAHIDE LAWS

From the perspective of traditional halakhah, if a non-Jew keeps all of the laws entailed in the categories covered by the Seven Noahide Commandments, then he or she is considered a *Ger Toshav* "Sojourning Alien" amid the people of Israel. A "Ger Toshav" is the only kind of non-Jew who Jewish law permits to live among the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Jewish law only allows the official acceptance of a "Ger Toshav" as a sojourner in the Land of Israel during a time when the Year of Jubilee (*yovel*) is in effect.

A Ger Toshav should not be confused with a Ger Tzedek. A *Ger Tzedek* is a person who prefers to proceed to total conversion to Judaism, a procedure that is traditionally discouraged by Judaism and allowed only after much thought and deliberation over the conversion has taken place.

NOAHIDE LAWS AS A BASIS FOR SECULAR GOVERNANCE

Some Jewish thinkers regard the determination of the details of the Noahide Law as something to be left to Jewish rabbis. This, in addition to the teaching of the Jewish law that punishment for violating one of the seven Noahide Laws includes a theoretical death penalty (Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 57a), is a factor in modern opposition to the notion of a Noahide legal system. Jewish scholars respond by noting that Jews today no longer carry out the death penalty, even within the Jewish community. Jewish law, in contemporary practice, sees the death penalty as an indicator of the seriousness of an offense; violators are not actually put to death.

Some Jewish thinkers believe that penalties are a detail of the Noahide Laws and that Noahides themselves must determine the details of their own laws for themselves. According to this school of thought—see N. Rakover, *Law and the Noahides* (1998); M. Dallen, *The Rainbow Covenant* (2003)—the Noahide Laws offer mankind a set of absolute values and a framework for righteousness and justice, while the detailed laws that are currently on the books of the world's states and nations are presumptively valid.

PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF NOAHIDE LAWS

United States Congress

The Seven Laws of Noah have officially been recognised in the United States Congress:

> "Whereas Congress recognises the historical tradition of ethical values and principles which are the basis of civilised society and upon which our great Nation was founded; Whereas these ethical values and principles have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilisation, when they were known as the Seven Noahide Laws."

Israeli Druze

In January 2004, the spiritual leader of the Druze community in Israel, Sheikh Mowafak Tarif, signed a declaration calling on all non-Jews in Israel to observe the Noahide Laws as laid down in the Hebrew Bible and expounded upon in Jewish tradition. The mayor of the

Galilean city of Shefa-'Amr (Shfaram)—where Muslim, Christian and Druze communities live side by side—also signed the document. The declaration includes the commitment to make a better, more humane world based on the Seven Noacide Commandments and the values they represent commanded by the Creator to all mankind through Moses on Mount Sinai.

Support for the spread of the Seven Noahide Commandments by the Druze leaders reflects the Biblical narrative itself. The Druze community reveres the non-Jewish father-in-law of Moses, Jethro, whom Arabs call Shoaib. According to the Biblical narrative, Jethro joined and assisted the Jewish people in the desert during the Exodus, accepted monotheism, but ultimately rejoined his own people. In fact, the tomb of Jethro in Tiberias is the most important religious site for the Druze community.

CHRISTIAN OBSERVANCE OF NOAHIDE LAWS

The 18th century rabbi, Jacob Emden proposed that Jesus, and Paul after him, intended to convert the gentiles to the Noahide laws. Jacob Emden's and others proposals notwithstanding, it is difficult to directly compare Christian ethical obligations to the Noahide laws because Christianity is a principle based, rather than a rule-based religion, principles presumably being rules subject to personal interpretation. Christian ethics is rooted in Jesus answer to the question, "Which of the commandments is most important". Jesus answered that (1) one should love God, who is One, with all one's heart (2) one should love one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:28-34). These are well known *Old Testament* teachings, known respectively as the Shema (Deut 6:4-9) and the *Great Commandment* (Lev 19:18), see also Ministry of Jesus#General Ethics and The Law of Christ.

Over the last 2000 years Christians have used a variety of ethical philosophies to convert these very general commandments (principles?) into a specific set of obligations. They include natural law theory, the divine command theory, moral relativism, and cultural relativism. According to the Natural Law theory of ethics, there is an immutable set of moral rules which govern the universe, society, and the human person. These rules can be perceived by a rational analysis of human nature and society. A classic example of this approach can be seen in the ethics of the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas. However, even Thomas Aquinas was forced to acknowledge that some moral norms are simply revealed law. For these laws, Thomas Aquinas turned to the Bible.

According to the divine command theory of ethics, God's revealed will is the basis of all ethics. This theory does not of itself provide a set of rules. It needs a source for identifying God's commands. For Christians, this source is the Bible. In the early Church there was considerable debate about which (if any, see Antinomianism) particular commands in the Bible applied to gentiles. The major Christian bodies (e.g. the Catholic and Orthodox and some Protestant) believe the Ten Commandments to be binding on themselves. They also accept the command to rule and subdue the earth.

Two of the Noahide laws—the injunction to set up courts of justice and the prohibition against eating the limb of a live animal—are not explicitly mentioned in the ten commandments, but were considered a natural implication of the commandments to love God, love one's fellow human being, and take responsibility for creation. Christians prohibit cruelty to animals because God considers God's creation good and human kind is responsible for it. Christians also accept the obligation to set up courts of justice and maintain the social order as a natural consequence of the responsibility to love one's neighbor as oneself.

The Christian Trinity and the Prohibition Against Idolatry

Christians perceive themselves as monotheist and so consider themselves as non-idolators. However, some rabbis have questioned whether Christians can be said to obey the prohibition against idolatry. Much of the debate centers on how rabbis have understood the Christian concept of Trinity.

Some rabbis have understood the Trinity in terms of *shittuf* (trans. "participation, joining, sharing, forming a partnership"). *Shittuf* is defined as any doctrine that recognises one Supreme God, but ascribes power, albeit secondary, to a created being (the term refers to one who does not deny the monotheistic and exclusionary aspect of God, but "associates" something else with Him). Rabbinic sources clearly prohibit any form of *shittuf* for Jews, but it is a matter of dispute if it is prohibited for non-Jews. The Tosafist Rabbeinu Tam (Rashi's grandson), in Bekhorot 2b and Sanhedrin 63b, imply that trinitarianism could be permitted to gentiles as a form of *shittuf*. This view was echoed by Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet (*Rivash*, responsa 119) and apparently accepted by Rabbi Moses Isserles (*Rema*, Orah Hayyim 156:1.) Nevertheless, many rabbinic sources disagree and prohibit *shittuf* to gentiles as well.

Louis Berkhof describes the doctrine of the Trinity requiring belief in a "simplex unity" and not a partnership or composite being. "There

is in the Divine Being but one indivisible essence" and "The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons." Whether this type of division should be considered *shittuf* is not clear.

Most Christian denominations reject a *shittuf* definition of the Trinity. They understand the Trinity as a form of monotheism and hold that this type of partnership is in contradiction to monotheism. Currently the only major Christian group that clearly holds a concept of *shittuf* is the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which translates John 1:1 so that Jesus is not God Himself, but a secondary being with godlike attributes. In Christian theological terms this type of view is often referred to as Arianism.

Joseph Telushkin formulates an understanding of Christianity without the concept of *shittuf*: "the majority of Jewish scholars concluded that although Christianity speaks of a trinity, it does not conceive of the three forces as separate with different and conflicting wills. Rather, the trinity represents three aspects of one God. While Jews are forbidden to hold such a belief, it is not *avodah zarah*."

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

Progressive Christianity is the name given to a movement within contemporary Protestant Christianity characterised by willingness to question tradition, acceptance of human diversity (including the affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people), and strong emphasis on social justice. Progressive Christians have a deep belief in the centrality of the instruction to "love one another" within the teaching of Jesus Christ. This leads to a focus on compassion, promoting justice and mercy, and working towards solving the societal problems of poverty, discrimination, and the environment.

This movement is by no means the only significant movement of progressive thought among Christians but it is currently a focus of such issues in many parts of the world.

In recent years the term Progressive Christianity has incorrectly been used interchangeably with the term Liberal Christianity. Progressive Christians are theologically distinct from liberal Christian thought, in that Progressive Christianity draws on theological insights of multiple theological streams including: 19th century evangelicalism, 19th and early 20th century Christian liberalism, 20th centuries neo-orthodoxy, and late 20th and 21st century liberation theology. Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of a progressive Christian point of view is

"Progressive Christian Beliefs: An Introduction..." found at http://progressivetheology.wordpress.com/, by Delwin Brown, apparently a reformed liberal theologian.

The characteristics of Progressive Christianity, and its distinction from Liberal Christianity, have been articulated in an article by Hal Taussig. These can be summarised as:

- A spiritual vitality and expressiveness, including participatory, arts-infused, and lively worship as well as a variety of spiritual rituals and practices such as meditation
- Intellectual integrity including a willingness to question
- An affirmation of human diversity, including, most topically, the affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people
- An affirmation of the Christian faith with a simultaneous sincere respect for other faiths
- Strong ecological and social justice commitments

ORIGINS

A priority of justice and care for the downtrodden are a recurrent theme in the Hebrew prophetic tradition inherited by Christianity. This has been reflected in many later Christian traditions of service and ministry, and more recently in the United States of America through Christian involvement in political trends such as the Progressive Movement and the Social Gospel.

Throughout the 20th century, a strand of progressive or liberal Christian thought outlined the values of a 'good society'. It stresses fairness, justice, responsibility, and compassion, and condemns the forms of governance that wage unjust war, rely on corruption for continued power, deprive the poor of facilities, or exclude particular racial or sexual groups from fair participation in national liberties. It was influential in the US mainline churches, and reflected global trends in student activism. It contributed to the ecumenical movement, as represented internationally by the World Student Christian Federation and the World Council of Churches internationally, and at the national level through groups such as the National Council of Churches in the USA and Australian Student Christian Movement.

THE CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT

The ascendancy of Evangelicalism in the US, particularly in its more socially reactionary forms, challenged many people in mainline

churches. Recently, a focus for those who wish to challenge this ascendancy has been provided by Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, who described himself as a progressive evangelical Christian. This has enabled many Christians who are uncomfortable with conservative evangelicalism to identify themselves explicitly as "Progressive Christians." At the onset of this new movement to organize Progressive Christians, the single largest force holding together was a webring, *The Progressive Christian Bloggers Network*, and supporters frequently find and contact each other through dozens of online chat-rooms.

Notable initiatives within the movement for progressive Christianity include the Center for Progressive Christianity (TCPC) in Cambridge, MA, the campaigning organisation CrossLeft, the technology working group Social Redemption.

CrossLeft joined with Every Voice Network and Claiming the Blessing in October 2005 to stage a major conference, Path to Action, at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Among the speakers were E. J. Dionne, Richard Parker, Jim Wallis, Senator Danforth, and David Hollinger.

Examples of statements of contemporary Progressive Christian beliefs include:

- the Eight Points produced by TCPC: a statement of agreement about Christianity as a basis for tolerance and human rights;

- the Phoenix Affirmations produced by Crosswalk (Phoenix, AZ)—include twelve points defining Christian love of God, Christian love of neighbor, and Christian love of self.

- the article, "Grassroots Progressive Christianity: A Quiet Revolution" by Hal Taussig published in 'The Fourth R,' May-June 2006.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

The relationship between Christianity and politics is a historically complex subject. Christianity, like some religions practiced collectively, has a political dimension.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Hebrew Bible contains a complex chronicle of the Kings of Israel and Judah, written over the course of many generations by authors whose relationships and intimacy with the rulers of the several kingdoms fluctuated widely in both intimacy and respect. Some

historical passages of the Hebrew Bible contain intimate portrayals of the inner workings of the royal households of Saul, David, and Solomon; the accounts of subsequent monarchs are frequently more distanced and less detailed, and frequently begin with the judgment that the monarch "did evil in the sight of the Lord."

The Christian New Testament, instead, begins with the story of Jesus, crucified as a criminal who had offended both the Jewish priesthood and the Roman imperial authorities. At least to outward appearances, Jesus was at the periphery of political life and power in the Roman province of Judea. Nevertheless, a number of political currents appear in New Testament writings

Render unto Caesar

All three synoptic Gospels portray Jesus as saying "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25) Jesus gives this answer to Pharisees who ask him whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not; Jesus begins by asking them whose portrait appears on a Roman coin.

The incident can be read to support a position that Jesus announced that his religious teachings were separate from earthly political activity. This reading finds support in John 18:36, where Jesus responds to Pontius Pilate about the nature of his kingdom, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." A certain quietistic indifference to earthly politics is one possible reading of these teachings.

Have all Things Common

The first Christian communities, as described in Acts of the Apostles, were organised along a principle of communal ownership of goods. This is first mentioned in Acts 2:44-45, then reiterated in Acts 4:32-37.

Acts 2: And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (King James Version)

Acts 4: And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses

sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (King James Version).

These verses seem to indicate that the ideal Christian society would be similar to the modern ideas of socialism or communism. They are part of the inspiration for political currents such as Christian socialism and Christian communism.

Be Subject to Ruling Authorities

The Apostle Paul takes a very conciliatory approach to earthly governments. Jesus advised cultivation of an unworldly kingdom of Heaven; Paul went further, and taught a positive duty to submit to and obey earthly governments, in several passages, most extensively in Romans 13:1-7:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (ESV)

All authority comes from God; even pagan rulers have been established as legitimate by divine providence, and obedience is therefore a positive obligation. These passages were much quoted by later writers who wished to establish a divine right of kings. Paul's message of submission to the established social order extends even to acceptance of slavery, as evidenced by the Epistle to Philemon.

The Apocalyptic View

On the other hand the political view that comes from the several apocalyptic texts of the New Testament seems sharply contrary to the above interpretations of Paul.

Apocalyptic texts frequently couch radical criticism of existing regimes under the form of allegory; this, at least, is a frequently mentioned interpretation of the Book of Daniel, frequently interpreted by secular scholars as a second-century diatribe against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who persecuted the Jews and provoked the revolt of the Maccabees. The Book of Revelation contains even more vehement imagery, which many secular scholars believe was directed against the Roman empire. The empire, or the city of Rome itself, are identified by these scholars as the Whore of Babylon, and the Roman emperor becomes the Beast or Antichrist. Both divine punishment and economic and military catastrophe are prophesied against "Babylon", which most scholars agree is John's code name for Rome.

No call to arms is contained within the Christian apocalypse. Instead, the calamities that doom the oppressive regime represented by these allegorical figures are expected from divine intervention alone. Nevertheless, if the books are properly read in this way, they seem to evidence deep hostility to the Roman government, no doubt a reaction to the persecution of Christians by the Roman state.

What the Biblical Texts Do Not Contain

All of these Biblical sources, whether counselling separation from political concerns, submission to governing authorities, or expecting divine retribution against their corruption and oppression, share one thing in common. They all assume that the Christians will be members of a religious minority, outside of power, without great political influence. Similar assumptions underlie Jesus' advice to his followers to avoid lawsuits (Matthew 5:25) and Paul's advice that they should avoid litigation before pagan judges (1 Cor. 6:1-8)

There is nothing in the New Testament that suggests that any of its writers anticipated that Christians would themselves wield political authority, and no specific advice about how to manage things if they do ascend to political power.

THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

When the Roman persecution of Christianity was ended under Constantine I, and Christianity became the favoured religion of the Roman empire, Christians confronted issues that they had not hitherto had to confront. Could a Christian ruler legitimately wage war? If Christians were discouraged in Scripture from entering litigation against one another, how were Christians supposed to function as officers

within a judicial system? What civil rights were to be afforded to non-Christians in a civil Commonwealth governed by Christians?

The City of God

Saint Augustine of Hippo was one religious figure who confronted these issues in *The City of God*; in this work, he sought to defend Christians against pagan charges that the abandonment of official sponsorship of pagan worship had brought civil and military calamities upon the Roman empire by the abandoned pagan deities. Augustine sought to reaffirm that the City of God was a heavenly and spiritual matter, as opposed to an earthly and political affair. The City of God is contrasted with, and in conflict with, the city of men; but the City of God's eventual triumph is assured by divine prophecy.

Christians, War, and Peace

Christians historically have had a wide variety of positions on issues of war and peace. The historical peace churches are now the chief exponents of Christian pacifism, but this was an issue that first came to light during the Roman Empire.

Soldiers in the Roman military who converted to Christianity were among the first who had to face these issues. The Christian in the Roman military had to confront a number of issues, that go beyond the obvious one about whether the institutionalised homicide of war could be reconciled with Christian faith. Paganism saturated Roman military institutions; idols of the Greco-Roman gods appeared on the legionary standards, and soldiers were expected to revere these idols. Military service, then as now, involved oaths of loyalty that may contradict Christian teachings even if they did not invoke pagan gods. The duties of Roman military personnel included law enforcement as well as defense, and as such Roman soldiers were sometimes obliged to participate in the persecution of Christians themselves. Sexual licentiousness was considered to be a moral hazard to which military personnel were exposed.

The conversion of Constantine I transformed the relationship of the Christian churches with the Roman military even as it transformed the relationship of the churches with the Roman state. A strongly contrary idea, sometimes called "caesaropapism", identified the now Christian Empire with the Church militant. The Latin word *Christianitas* originally meant the body of all Christians conceived as a political body, or the territory of the globe occupied by Christians, something

akin to the English word Christendom. Apocalyptic texts were reinterpreted; the Christian empire was no longer the "Whore of Babylon," but was the armed force of saints, depicted in Revelation as participating in the triumph of God and Christ. The idea of a Christian empire continued to play a powerful role in Western Europe even after the collapse of Roman rule there; the name of the Holy Roman Empire bears witness to its claims to sanctity as well as to universal rule. An apocryphal apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, written during the seventh century, depicts a saintly Last Roman Emperor who holds his earthly kingdom in anticipation of Christ's return. According to Pseudo-Methodius, the Last Emperor will wage war in the last days against God's enemies, including Gog and Magog and the Antichrist. He will surrender his imperial dignities to Christ at the Second Coming.

In Western Europe, after the collapse of Roman rule, yet more issues arose. The Christian church expressed periodic unease with the fact that, in the absence of central imperial rule, Christian princes made war against each other. An attempt to limit the volume and permitted times of warfare was proclaimed in the *Truce of God*, which sought to set limits upon the times and places where warfare could be conducted, and to protect Christian non-combatants from the hazards of war. Because the Truce actually provided a military incentive to gain the element of surprise by breaking it, the Truce was not successful.

On the other hand, greater success attended the proclamation of various Crusades, which were at least in theory the declaration of war by the entire armed body of Christendom against an enemy that was implicitly labelled an enemy of God and his church. Most Crusades were proclaimed to recover Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslims; other Crusades were proclaimed against the Cathari, and by the Teutonic Knights against non-Christians in the Baltic Sea area. In Spain, the Crusader mindset continued for several centuries after the last crusade in the Middle East, in the form of the *Reconquista*, a series of wars fought to recover the Iberian peninsula from the Muslim Moors. These latter wars were local affairs, and the participation of the entire armed body of Christians was only theoretical.

FAMOUS CHURCHES OF WORLD

INDIA

The following is a list of cathedrals in India. For more information, see Christianity in India.

- St. George's Cathedral Chennai (CSI—Diocese of Madras)

- St. Mary's JSO Cathedral, Bangalore (Syrian Malankara Orthodox)
- Holy Trinity Cathedral, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli (Anglican)
- St Joseph's Cathedral, Allahabad (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Robson Memorial Cathedral, Ajmer
- Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Asansol (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Bagdogra (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Bangalore (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Mark's Cathedral, Bangalore (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Alphonsus Cathedral, Bareilly (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Thomas' Pro-Cathedral, Sulthan Bathery (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bettiah (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of St Albert, Bongaigaon (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of Our Lady of the Rosary, Kolkata (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Santa Cruz Cathedral Basilica, Kochi (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Michael Cathedral, Coimbatore (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Sacred Heart Cathedral, New Delhi (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral St John, Dindigul (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Mary's Cathedral Basilica, Kochi (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Our Lady of Ports Cathedral, Ernakulam (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Sé Cathedral of Santa Catarina, Goa (St Catherine's Cathedral), Old Goa (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Joseph's Cathedral, Gorakhpur (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Gwalior (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Joseph's Cathedral, Hyderabad (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Thomas Cathedral, Irinjalakuda (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)

- St Mary's Cathedral, Jammu Cantt (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of St Anthony, Jhansi (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Dominic's Cathedral, Kanjirapally (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Kannur (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St. Paul Cathedral, Kolkata (Anglican)
- Christ the King Cathedral, Kottayam (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- St Thomas Cathedral Basilica, Santhome, Chennai (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Joseph's Cathedral, Lucknow
- Cathedral St Mary's Cathedral, Madurai (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of the Holy Name, Mumbai (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Thomas' Cathedral, Mumbai (Anglican)
- St Joseph's Cathedral, Muvattupuzha (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Cathedral of St Thomas, Palai (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- St Joseph's Pro-Cathedral, Patna (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malabar)
- Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Pondicherry (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Patrick's Cathedral, Poona (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Peter's Cathedral, Purnea (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Mary's Cathedral, Ranchi (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Infant of Jesus Cathedral, Arisipalayam (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians, Shillong (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Cathedral of St Michael and St Joseph, Shimla (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Sacred Heart Cathedral, Thanjavur (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St John's Cathedral, Tiruvalla ((Roman Catholic—Syro-Malankara)
- St Mary's Cathedral, Pattom, Trivandrum (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malankara)

- St Joseph's Cathedral, Trivandrum (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- Mother of God Pro-Cathedral, Palayam (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malankara)
- Cathedral of Our Lady of Grace, Papdy (Roman Catholic—Syro-Malankara)
- St Francis Assisi Cathedral, Kochi (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)
- St Xavier's Cathedral, Kottar, Nagercoil (Roman Catholic—Latin Rite)

LONDON

London is the location of many famous churches, chapels and cathedrals, in a density unmatched anywhere else in England.

Camden

- All Saints, Camden Town (originally St Stephen's, and now All Saints Greek Orthodox Cathedral)
- Regent Square United Reformed Church
- St George's, Bloomsbury
- St George's, Camden
- St Giles in the Fields
- St John's Chapel, Bedford Row
- St Pancras New Church
- St Pancras Old Church
- Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road
- St Michael's Church, Camden Town

London

In 1666 there were 96 parishes within the bounds of the City. Today the following continue Christian witness in one form or another in the heart of London:

- All Hallows-by-the-Tower
- All Hallows-on-the-Wall (1767)
- All Hallows, Staining (partly destroyed)
- Christ Church, Greyfriars (also known as *Christ Church Newgate*—partly destroyed)
- City Temple (United Reformed)
- Dutch Church, Austin Friars (1550)

- St Alban, Wood Street (tower remains)
- St Alphage London Wall (essentially destroyed... a few ruins remain)
- St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe (1695)
- St Andrew, Holborn (1690)
- St Andrew Undershaft (1532)
- St Anne and St Agnes (1680)
- St Augustine, Watling Street (partly destroyed)
- St Bartholomew-the-Great (12th century)
- St Bartholomew-the-Less
- St Benet, Paul's Wharf (also known as *St Benet Welsh Church*) (1683)
- St Botolph Aldersgate
- St Botolph's Aldgate (1791)
- St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate (1729)
- St Bride's, Fleet Street (1698)
- St Clement, Eastcheap (1687)
- St Dunstan-in-the-East (partly destroyed)
- St Dunstan-in-the-West (1833)
- St Edmund, King and Martyr (1679)
- St Ethelburga, Bishopsgate (1411?)
- St Etheldreda's Church (1251)
- St Giles' Cripplegate (c.1550)
- St Helen's, Bishopsgate (13th century)
- St James, Garlickhythe (1683)
- St Katherine Cree (1631)
- St Lawrence Jewry (1687)
- St Leonard, Foster Lane
- St Magnus the Martyr (1676)
- St Margaret Lothbury (1690)
- St Margaret Pattens (1687)
- St Martin, Ludgate (1684)
- St Mary Abchurch (1686)
- St Mary Aldermary (1682)

- St Mary-at-Hill (1676)
- St Mary-le-Bow (1683)
- St Mary Moorfields (1686/1903)
- St Mary Somerset (tower remains)
- St Mary Woolnoth (1727)
- St Michael, Cornhill (1672)
- St Michael, Paternoster Royal (1694)
- St Nicholas, Cole Abbey (1677)
- St Olave, Hart Street (c.1450)
- St Olave Jewry (tower remains)
- St Paul's Cathedral
- St Peter upon Cornhill (1682)
- St Sepulchre-without-Newgate (also known as *Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Holborn)*)
- St Stephen Walbrook (1677)
- St Vedast alias Foster (1673)
- Temple Church (12th century)

Greenwich

- St Alfege's Church (1714)
- St Paul's, Deptford
- The Meeting Room (ca. 1865)
- Christian Gospel Hall (ca. 1900)

Hackney

- Abney Park Chapel
- Church of Good Shepherd
- St Leonard's, Shoreditch
- St Patrick's Church

Hammersmith and Fulham

- All Saints Church, Fulham
- St Peter's Church, Hammersmith
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Islington

- St Mary Magdalene Church (1814)

Kensington and Chelsea

- Brompton Oratory
- Chelsea Old Church (All Saints)
- St Luke, Chelsea, Sydney Street
- Holy Redeemer and St Thomas Moore, Cheyne Row
- Holy Trinity Brompton
- Holy Trinity, Sloane Street
- St Barnabas, Kensington
- St Columba's, Pont Street—*Church of Scotland*
- St Mary Abbots, Kensington
- Westbourne Grove Church (1823) (formerly Westbourne Grove Baptist Church—now part of Salt and Light Ministries)

Lambeth

- Church.co.uk, Waterloo
- St John the Divine, Kennington (1874)

Lewisham

- Wildfell Hall, Catford

Southwark

- All Saints Church, Peckham—Church of England
- All Saints, Rotherhithe
- New Park Street Chapel—Reformed Baptist
- Finnish Church and Seamen's Mission (1958)
- St George's Cathedral—Roman Catholic
- Norwegian Church (1927)
- St George the Martyr (1122}
- St Mary's Rotherhithe, (1714) (Church of England)
- St Peter's Church, Walworth—(Church of England)
- Southwark Cathedral (St Saviour and St Mary Overie) (1220)—(Church of England)
- Metropolitan Tabernacle—Reformed Baptist

Tower Hamlets

- Christ Church, Spitalfields
- St Anne's, Limehouse

- St Dunstan's, Stepney
- St Mary-le-Bow, Bow, (1311, rebuilt 15th century, 19th century)
- St Paul's Church, Shadwell
- St George in the East
- St George's German Lutheran Church
- Trinity Independent Chapel

Westminster

- All Saints, Margaret Street (1859)
- All Souls, Langham Place (1824)
- Crown Court Church (1711, rebuilt 1909)—*Church of Scotland*
- St Anne's Church, Soho
- St Clement Danes (1682)
- St George's, Hanover Square (1724)
- St James's, Piccadilly (1684)
- St John's, Smith Square
- St Margaret's, Westminster (1523; orig. 12th century)
- St Martin-in-the-Fields (1726)
- St Mary-le-Strand (1717)
- St Patrick's Church, Soho Square, Roman Catholic, c. 1854
- St Paul's, Covent Garden (1638)
- Swedish Church (1911) = *Church of Sweden Abroad*
- Westminster Abbey (parts 1065; orig. 616)
- Westminster Cathedral (1903)—Roman Catholic
- Westminster Chapel (1840)—*Independent Church*

HAMPSHIRE

Basingstoke and Deane

- Sandham Memorial Chapel
- St. Michael's Church, Basingstoke

East Hampshire

- St. Peter's Church, Petersfield

Eastleigh

- Allbrook Evangelical Free Church

- Bishopstoke Evangelical Church
- Bishopstoke Methodist Church
- Chandler's Ford Methodist Church
- Church of St. Mary, Bishopstoke
- Community Church
- Eastleigh Baptist Church
- Eastleigh Methodist Church
- Elim Church
- Emmanuel Baptist Church
- Grace Community Church
- Hedge End United Reformed Church
- Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church
- King's Community Church
- New Apostolic Church
- Salvation Army, Eastleigh Corps
- St Andrew's Methodist Church
- St Boniface Church and Centre
- St Edward the Confessor Roman Catholic Church
- St Francis' Church
- St Martin in the Wood
- St Paul's Church
- St Peter's Church Boyatt Wood
- St Swithun Wells Roman Catholic Church
- United Reformed Church—Chandlers Ford
- Velmore Chapel

Portsmouth

- Domus Dei
- King's Church Portsmouth
- Portsmouth Cathedral
- Southwick Priory

Southampton

- Above Bar Church
- Avenue St Andrew's United Reformed Church

- Bitterne United Reformed Church
- Bitterne Park Baptist Church
- Bitterne Park United Reformed Church
- Bridge Christian Fellowship Church
- Calvary Chapel Church Southampton
- Central Baptist Church
- Christ Church Freemantle
- City Life Church
- Community Church
- Highfield Church
- Holy Family Catholic Church
- Holyrood Church, Southampton
- King's Church
- Mercy Vineyard Church
- New Life International Church
- Northam Methodist Church
- Pear Tree Church
- Peartree Green United Reformed Church
- Portswood Church
- Shirley Baptist Church
- Shirley Parish Church
- Southampton Christian Fellowship
- Southampton Vineyard Church
- Spring Road Evangelical Church
- St Alban's Church
- St Joseph's Church, Southampton
- St Mary's Church, Southampton
- St Michael's Church, Southampton
- St Michael and All Angels Bassett
- Swaythling Baptist Church
- Swaythling Methodist Church
- Thornhill Baptist Church
- Waterfront Church
- Woolston Methodist Church

Test Valley

- Romsey Abbey

Winchester

- New Minster, Winchester
- Old Minster, Winchester
- Winchester Cathedral
- Winchester Family Church
- Winchester United Church—United Reformed and Methodist church

▶▶▶

17

CATHOLICISM, JUDAISM AND CHRISTIAN–JEWISH RECONCILIATION

CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RECONCILIATION

In recent years there has been much to note in the way of reconciliation between some Christian groups and the Jewish people.

A number of Progressive Christian denominations have publicly declared that they will no longer proselytize Jews.

POST-HOLOCAUST RELATIONS

As a reaction to the Holocaust, many theologians, religious historians and educators dedicated their efforts to seek reconciliation between Christians and Jews.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Second Vatican Council, commonly known as *Vatican II*, was a pastoral ecumenical council of the Catholic church opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965. One of the most revolutionary changes that resulted from interpretations of this council's documents are those which concerned the document *Nostra Aetate*.

> True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against

any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

In 1971 the Catholic Church established an International Liaison Committee for itself and the International Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations (this Committee is not a part of the Church's Magisterium).

In March 2000, Pope John Paul II went to Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Israel and touched the holiest shrine of the Jewish people, the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He placed in the Western Wall a prayer that read, "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your name to the nations. We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who, in the course of history, have caused these children of yours to suffer." Pope John Paul II Visits the Holy Land.

On May 4, 2001, at the 17th International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in NYC, Church officials stated that they would change how Judaism is taught about within Catholic seminaries and schools. In part, they state:

> The curricula of Catholic seminaries and schools of theology should reflect the central importance of the church's new understanding of its relationship to Jews....Courses on Bible, patristics, early church history and liturgy should incorporate recent scholarship on Christian origins. Illumining the complex developments by which both the church and rabbinic Judaism emerged from early Judaism will establish a substantial foundation for ameliorating "the painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians" (Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching and Catechesis, #27, 1985).

> ...Courses dealing with the biblical, historical and theological aspects of relations between Jews and Christians should be an integral part of the seminary and theologate curriculum, and not merely electives. All who graduate from Catholic seminaries and theology schools should have studied the revolution in Catholic teaching on Jews and Judaism from Nostra Aetate to the prayer of Pope John Paul II in Jerusalem at the Western Wall on March 26, 2000....For historic reasons, many Jews find it difficult to overcome generational memories of anti-Semitic oppression. Therefore: Lay and Religious Jewish leaders need to advocate and promote a programme of education in our Jewish schools and seminaries—about

the history of Catholic-Jewish relations and knowledge of Christianity and its relationship to Judaism....Encouragement of dialogue between the two faiths does involve recognition, understanding and respect for each other's beliefs, without having to accept them. It is particularly important that Jewish schools teach about the Second Vatican Council, and subsequent documents and attitudinal changes which opened new perspectives and possibilities for both faiths.

This new understanding of the relationship between Christians and Jews is reflected in the revised liturgy of Good Friday in a particular way. The ancient Good Friday Prayer of the Roman Rite had Catholics praying for the "perfidious Jews" that they might be converted to the truth. The ancient sense of the Latin word "perfidis" in that context was "unbelieving", yet the English cognate "perfidious" had, over the centuries, gradually acquired the sense of "treacherous." In order to eliminate misunderstanding on this point, Pope Pius XII ordered in 1955 that, in Catholic liturgical books, the Latin word "perfidis" be properly translated "unbelieving", ensuring that the prayer be understood in its original sense: praying for the Jews who remained "unbelieving" concerning the Messiah. Indeed, the same adjective was used in many of the ancient rituals for receiving non-Christian converts into the Catholic Church. Owing to the enduring potential for confusion and misunderstanding because of the divergence of English usage from the original Latin meaning, Pope John XXIII ordered that the Latin adjective "perfidis" be dropped from the Good Friday prayers for the Jews; in 1960 he ordered it removed from all rituals for the reception of converts. See: Time Magazine August 15 1960. The current prayer of the Roman Liturgy for Good Friday prays for "the Jewish people, first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of His name and in faithfulness to His covenant."

The term "traditional Catholics" often is used to apply to Catholic Christians who are particularly devoted to practising the ancient traditions of the Church; yet there are also groups calling themselves "traditional Catholics" that either reject many of the changes made since Vatican II, or regard Vatican II as an invalid Council, or who broke away entirely from the Catholic Church after Vatican II. Some of these so-called traditional Catholics believe that the Pope at the time, and all Popes since, have led the majority of Catholic clergy and laity into heresy. They view interfaith dialogue with Jews as unnecessary and potentially leading to a "watering-down" of the Catholic faith. In the view of some traditional Catholics, Jews are believed to be damned unless they convert to Christianity. This, of course, is not the view of all who identify themselves as "traditional."

PROTESTANT CHURCHES

In 1981 the Assembly of the Church of Scotland declared "its belief in the continuing place of God's people of Israel within the divine purpose."

In 1982 the Lutheran World Federation issued a consultation stating that "we Christians must purge ourselves of any hatred of the Jews and any sort of teaching of contempt for Judaism."

The *European Lutheran Commission on the Church and the Jewish People* (Lutherische Europäische Kommission Kirche und Judentum, LEKKJ) is an umbrella organisation representing twenty-five Lutheran church bodies in Europe. On May 12, 2003 they issued *A Response to Dabru Emet*:

> In its Driebergen Declaration (1991), the European Lutheran Commission on the Church and the Jewish People...rejected the traditional Christian "teaching of contempt" towards Jews and Judaism, and in particular, the anti-Jewish writings of Martin Luther, and it called for the reformation of church practice in the light of these insights. Against this background, LEKKJ welcomes the issuance of Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity. We see in this statement a confirmation of our own work of these past years....We know that we must reexamine themes in Lutheran theology that in the past have repeatedly given rise to enmity towards Jews....Fully aware that Dabru Emet is in the first instance an intra-Jewish invitation to conversation, we see in this statement also an aid to us in expressing and living out our faith in such a way that we do not denigrate Jews, but rather respect them in their otherness, and are enabled to give an account of our own identity more clearly as we scrutinize it in the light of how others see us.

In March 1995 the Alliance of Baptists issued "A Baptist Statement on Jewish-Christian Relations"; a revision of this statement was released on April 25, 2003. In part, is says:

> As Baptist Christians we are the inheritors of and, in our turn, have been the transmitters of a theology which lays the blame for the death of Jesus at the feet of the Jews; a theology which has taken the anti-Jewish polemic of the Christian Scriptures out of its first century context and has usurped for the Church the biblical promises and prerogatives given by God to the Jews...The madness, the hatred, the dehumanizing attitudes which led to the events known collectively as the Holocaust did not occur overnight or within the span of a few years, but were the culmination of centuries of such Christian theology, teaching and church-sanctioned action directed against the Jews simply because they were Jews.

This document lists recommended actions that they asked all Christians to join them in:

- "Affirming the teaching of the Christian Scriptures that God has not rejected the community of Israel, God's covenant people (Romans 11:1-2), since 'the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable' (Romans 11:29);

- Renouncing interpretations of Scripture which foster religious stereotyping and prejudice against the Jewish people and their faith;

- Seeking genuine dialogue with the broader Jewish community, a dialogue built on mutual respect and the integrity of each other's faith;

- Lifting our voices quickly and boldly against all expressions of anti-Semitism;

- Educating ourselves and others on the history of Jewish-Christian relations from the first century to the present, so as to understand our present by learning from our past.

- Commit ourselves to rigorous consideration of appropriate forms of Christian witness for our time.

The United Church of Canada issued a statement in May 1998 entitled "Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church-Jewish Relations Today." This calls upon Christians to:

- Stop trying to convert Jews to Christianity; Reject Biblical interpretations which negatively stereotype Jews, as this leads to anti-Semitism; Reject the idea that Christianity is superior to, or a replacement for, Judaism; recognize that anti-Semitism is an element of historic Christianity, but not an inherent part of it—therefore one can remove it from Christianity and still remain faithful to Christianity.

Bearing Faithful Witness, has continued within the Church as a study programme; on August 13, 2003, the 38th General Council of The United Church of Canada received a new report from Bearing Faithful Witness; it then approved a statement on relations with Jews today. Their report states, in part, "No other religion is as closely related to Christianity as Judaism. The Christian God is the God of Israel. Jesus and all the apostles were of Israel. Christian scripture includes the scriptures of Israel." They call for no longer seeking the conversion of Jews. The statement, *United Church-Jewish Relations Today*, "acknowledges a history of interpreting the New Testament in a way

that has failed to acknowledge the context within Judaism in which many passages are rooted; rejects all teaching of contempt toward Jews and Judaism and the belief that God has abolished the covenant with the Jewish people; affirms the significance of Judaism as a religion, a people, and a covenant community and that the State of Israel has the right to exist in peace and security."

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS GROUP

The Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, a group of 22 Christian scholars, theologians, historians and clergy from six Christian Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, works to "develop more adequate Christian theologies of the church's relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people." They issued a statement in September 2002, "A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People".

This document states, in part, "For most of the past two thousand years, Christians have erroneously portrayed Jews as unfaithful, holding them collectively responsible for the death of Jesus and therefore accursed by God. In agreement with many official Christian declarations, we reject this accusation as historically false and theologically invalid. It suggests that God can be unfaithful to the eternal covenant with the Jewish people. We acknowledge with shame the suffering this distorted portrayal has brought upon the Jewish people.... We believe that revising Christian teaching about Judaism and the Jewish people is a central and indispensable obligation of theology in our time." They then offer ten positions, with detailed explanations, "for the consideration of our fellow Christians. We urge all Christians to reflect on their faith in light of these statements." The ten positions, in brief, are:

1. God's covenant with the Jewish people endures forever.
2. Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew.
3. Ancient rivalries must not define Christian-Jewish relations today.
4. Judaism is a living faith, enriched by many centuries of development.
5. The Bible both connects and separates Jews and Christians.
6. Affirming God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people has consequences for Christian understandings of salvation.
7. Christians should not target Jews for conversion.
8. Christian worship that teaches contempt for Judaism dishonors God.

9. We affirm the importance of the land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people.

10. Christians should work with Jews for the healing of the world.

   The Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations

   (The statement may or may not reflect the views of the scholars' various denominations)

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

Orthodox Christianity has a better history of relations between its adherents and the Jewish community than that of Catholic or Protestant Christianity. Tolerance towards the Jewish people is seen in a 16th century encyclical written by Ecumenical Patriarch Metrophanes III (1520-1580).

> This document was written to the Greek Orthodox in Crete (1568) following reports that Jews were being mistreated. The Patriarch states, "Injustice... regardless to whomever acted upon or performed against, is still injustice. The unjust person is never relieved of the responsibility of these acts under the pretext that the injustice is done against a heterodox and not to a believer. As our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels said do not oppress or accuse anyone falsely; do not make any distinction or give room to the believers to injure those of another belief."

> Rev. Protopresbyter George C. Papademetriou, *An Orthodox Christian View of Non-Christian Religions* writes:

The Fifth Academic Meeting between Judaism And Orthodox Christianity was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, on May 27-29, 2003. The meeting was organised by Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, who heads the Office of International and Intercultural Affairs to the Liaison Office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the European Union, Brussels, in cooperation with the International Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations, New York, Co-Chaired by Rabbi Israel Singer who is also Chairman of the World Jewish Congress, and Rabbi Joel Meyers who is also the Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Assembly. In his opening remarks, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew denounced religious fanaticism and rejected attempts by any faith to denigrate others. The following principles were adopted at the meeting:

- Judaism and Christianity while hearkening to common sources inviolably maintain their internal individuality and particularity.

- The purpose of our dialogue is to remove prejudice and to promote a spirit of mutual understanding and constructive cooperation in order to confront common problems.

- Specific proposals will be developed to educate the faithful of both religions to promote healthy relationships based on mutual respect and understanding to confront bigotry and fanaticism.

- Being conscious of the crises of ethical and spiritual values in the contemporary world, we will endeavor to identify historical models of peaceful coexistence, which can be applied to minority Jewish and Orthodox communities in the Diaspora.

- We will draw from our spiritual sources to develop programmes to promote and enhance our common values such as peace, social justice and human rights, specifically addressing the concerns of religious minorities.

Participants agreed to establish a permanent coordinating committee to maintain and foster continuing relationships. The Committee would jointly monitor principles enunciated at the meeting and would further enhance the dialogue and foster understanding between the respective religious communities.

The traditional Jewish view is that non-Jews may receive God's saving grace, and this view is reciprocated in Orthodox Christianity. Writing for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Rev. Protopresbyter George C. Papademetriou has written a summary of classical Christian and Greek Orthodox Christian views on the subject of the salvation of non-Christians. In his paper *An Orthodox Christian View of Non-Christian Religions* writes:

> In our times. Professor John N. Karmiris, University of Athens, based on his studies of the Church Fathers, concludes that the salvation of non-Christians, non-Orthodox and heretics depends on the all-good, allwise and all-powerful God, who acts in the Church but also through other "ways." God's saving grace is also channelled outside the Church. It cannot be assumed that salvation is denied non-Christians living in true piety and according to natural law by the God who "is love" (1 John 4:8), In his justice and mercy God will judge them worthy even though they are outside the true Church. This position is shared by many Orthodox who agree that God's salvation extends to all who live according to His "image" and "participate in the Logos." The Holy Spirit acted through the prophets of the Old Testament and in the nations. Salvation is also open outside the Church.

JOINT EFFORTS

The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) is an umbrella organisation of 38 national Jewish-Christian dialogue organisations worldwide.

In 1993 (March 1) International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) published "Jews and Christians in Search of a Common Religious Basis for Contributing Towards a Better World." This document "contains both separate Jewish perspectives and Christian perspectives concerning mutual communication and cooperation as well as a joint view of a common religious basis for Jews and Christians to work together for a better world....These considerations are not 'the' official theological, philosophical nor ideological underpinnings of the ICCJ and its member organisations, but are an invitation to consider what our work is all about. They have no authority other than their intrinsic world..."

Jews and Christians in Search of a Common Religious Basis for Contributing Towards a Better World

The ICCJ runs a website, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, "which is devoted to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Christians and Jews around the world."

Jewish-Christian Relations

According to their website, "Founded in 1987 by an interfaith coalition of laity and clergy, the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies offers a variety of educational programmes that highlight the distinctiveness of the Jewish and Christian traditions and confront the dangerous misunderstandings that have evolved in our two communities."

The Center for Catholic Jewish Studies

Another important initiative to promote joint initiatives between Jews and Christians was realised October 27, 2002, with the establishment and approval of the bylaws of the Council of Centers of Jewish-Christian Relations (CCJR). The Council is an association of centers and institutes in the United States and Canada devoted to enhancing mutual understanding between Jews and Christians. Although most of these centers or institutes are located in the United States, there are also affiliate members from Europe and Israel. Representatives from major Christian and Jewish agencies and religious bodies in the United States are also members.

The Council of Centers of Jewish-Christian Relations

Jewish Responses

Robert Gordis, a Conservative rabbi, wrote an essay on *Ground Rules for a Christian Jewish Dialogue*; through his writings and similar

writings of other rabbis in all Jewish denominations, one form or another of these rules eventually became more or less accepted by all parties engaging in interfaith dialogue.

People should not label Jews as worshipping an inferior "the Old Testament God of Justice" while saying that Christians worship a superior "God of Love of the New Testament." Gordis brings forth quotes from the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) which shows that this view is a misleading caricature of both religions, created by selective quotation.

Christians should stop "the widespread practice of contrasting the primitivism, tribalism and formalism of the Old Testament with the spirituality, universalism, and freedom of the New, to the manifest disadvantage of the former." Gordis brings forth quotes from the Tanakh which shows that this view is a misleading caricature of both religions that was created by selective quotation.

"Another practice which should be surrendered is that of referring to Old Testament verses quoted in the New as original New Testament passages. Many years ago, Bertrand Russell, whose religious orthodoxy is something less than total, described the Golden Rule 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' as New Testament teaching. When the Old Testament source (Leviticus 19:18) was called to his attention, he blandly refused to recognize his error."

Christians should understand that while Judaism is based in the Hebrew Bible, it is not identical to the religion described in it. Rather, it is based on the Bible as understood through the lens of rabbinic literature such as the Mishnah and Talmud. "To describe Judaism within the framework of the Old Testament is as misleading as constructing a picture of American life in terms of the Constitution, which is, to be sure, the basic law of the land but far from coextensive with our present legal and social system." The Jewish Encyclopedia indicates "... and with the destruction of the Temple the Sadducees disappeared altogether, leaving the regulation of all Jewish affairs in the hands of the Pharisees. Henceforth Jewish life was regulated by the teachings of the Pharisees; the whole history of Judaism was reconstructed from the Pharisaic point of view, and a new aspect was given to the Sanhedrin of the past. A new chain of tradition supplanted the older, priestly tradition. Pharisaism shaped the character of Judaism and the life and thought of the Jew for all the future." In other words, "Old Testament Judaism" is quite different from post-Temple Judaism.

Jews must "rise above the heavy burden of historical memories which have made it difficult for them to achieve any real understanding, let alone an appreciation, of Christianity. It is not easy to wipe out the memories of centuries of persecution and massacre, all too often dedicated to the advancement of the cause of the Prince of Peace.....[It is] no easy task for Jews to divest themselves of the heavy burden of group memories

from the past, which are unfortunately reinforced all too often by personal experiences in the present. Nevertheless, the effort must be made, if men are to emerge from the dark heritage of religious hatred which has embittered their mutual relationships for twenty centuries. There is need for Jews to surrender the stereotype of Christianity as being monolithic and unchanging and to recognize the ramifications of viewpoint and emphasis that constitute the multicoloured spectrum of contemporary Christianity."

Jews should "see in Christian doctrine an effort to apprehend the nature of the divine that is worthy of respect and understanding" and that "the dogmas of the Christian church have expressed this vision of God in terms that have proved meaningful to Christian believers through the centuries." Gordis calls on Jews to understand with tolerance and respect the historical and religious context which led Christians to develop the concepts of the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Resurrection, even if Jews themselves do not accept these ideas as correct. Similarly, Gordis calls on Christians to understand with tolerance and respect that Jews do not accept these beliefs, since they are in contradiction to the Jewish understanding of the unity of God. (*The Root and the Branch*, Chapter 4, Robert Gordis, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962)

Rabbis from all the non-Orthodox movements of Judaism became involved in interfaith theological dialogue with a number of Christian churches. Conservative Jews and Reform Jews now commonly engage in interfaith theological dialogue; a small number of Modern Orthodox rabbis engage in such dialogue as well.

Most Orthodox rabbis do not engage in such dialogue. The predominant position of Orthodoxy on this issue is based on the position of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik; he held that Judaism and Christianity are "two faith communities (which are) intrinsically antithetic". In his view "the language of faith of a particular community is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different faith community. Hence the confrontation should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane human level... the great encounter between man and God is a holy, personal and private affair, incomprehensible to the outsider..." As such, he ruled that theological dialogue between Judaism and Christianity was not possible. However, Rabbi Soloveitchik advocated closer ties between the Jewish and Christian communities. He held that communication between Jews and Christians was not merely permissible, but "desirable and even essential" on non-theological issues such as war and peace, the war on poverty, the struggle for people to gain freedom, issues of morality and civil rights, and to work together against the perceived threat of secularism. As a result of his ruling, Orthodox Jewish groups did not cooperate in interfaith discussions

between the Catholic Church and Judaism, nor did they participate in the later interfaith dialogues between Protestant Christian groups and the Jewish community.

National Council of Synagogues

The National Council of Synagogues (NCS) is a partnership of the non-Orthodox branches of Judaism. (Orthodox Jews have always been welcome to join; Orthodox leaders have ruled that an Orthodox rabbi may not work with non-Orthodox rabbis as a matter of religious principle.) This group often deals with interfaith matters, and meets regularly with the representatives of the United States Catholic Bishops Conference, the National Council of Churches of Christ and various other denominations and religions. Their goal is to foster religious conversation and dialogue in the spirit of religious pluralism.

Reflections on Covenant and Mission is a statement developed jointly by the NCS and the Catholic Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs.

Dabru Emet

Recently, more than 120 rabbis from all branches of Judaism signed a document called Dabru Emet ("Speak the Truth") that has since been used in Jewish education programmes across the U.S.

RELATIONS BETWEEN CATHOLICISM AND JUDAISM

This study on relations between Catholicism and Judaism deals with the current relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism, focusing on changes over the last fifty years, and especially during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. For an overview historical relations, see anti-Judaism.

1978–2005

Pope John Paul II wrote and delivered a number of speeches on the subject of the Church's relationship with Jews, and often paid homage to the victims of the Holocaust in many nations. He was the first pope to visit the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, in 1979. One of the few popes to have grown up in a climate of flourishing Jewish culture, one of the key components of pre-war Kraków, his interest in Jewish life dated from early youth. His visit to The Great Synagogue of Rome was the first known visit to a synagogue by a modern pope.

On 2 April 2005, after John Paul II's death, the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish organisation, stated that the Pope had revolutionised

Catholic-Jewish relations, saying that "more change for the better took place in his 27 year Papacy than in the nearly 2000 years before." (*Pope John Paul II: An Appreciation: A Visionary Remembered*)

Modern Catholic Teachings About Judaism

On May 4, 2001, at the *17th International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee in NYC*, they stated that they would seek changes in how Judaism is dealt with in Catholic seminaries. In part, they state:

> *The curricula of Catholic seminaries and schools of theology should reflect the central importance of the church's new understanding of its relationship to Jews....Courses on Bible, developments by which both the church and rabbinic Judaism emerged from early Judaism will establish a substantial foundation for ameliorating "the painful ignorance of the history and traditions of Judaism of which only negative aspects and often caricature seem to form part of the stock ideas of many Christians"* (Notes on the *Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching and Catechesis*, #27, 1985).

> *...Courses dealing with the biblical, historical and theological aspects of relations between Jews and Christians should be an integral part of the seminary and theologate curriculum, and not merely electives. All who graduate from Catholic seminaries and theology schools should have studied the revolution in Catholic teaching on Jews and Judaism from Nostra Aetate to the prayer of Pope John Paul II in Jerusalem at the Western Wall on March 26, 2000....For historic reasons, many Jews find it difficult to overcome generational memories of anti-Semitic oppression. Therefore: Lay and Religious Jewish leaders need to advocate and promote a programme of education in our Jewish schools and seminaries—about the history of Catholic–Jewish relations and knowledge of Christianity and its relationship to Judaism....Encouragement of dialogue between the two faiths does involve recognition, understanding and respect for each other's beliefs, without having to accept them. It is particularly important that Jewish schools teach about the Second Vatican Council, and subsequent documents and attitudinal changes which opened new perspectives and possibilities for both faiths.*

This new understanding of the relationship between Christians and Jews is reflected in the revised liturgy of Good Friday in a particular way. The pre-1962 version of the Good Friday Prayer had Catholics praying for the "perfidis Judaeis", the "unfaithful Jews", that they might convert to the truth. Pope John XXIII excised from the text the Latin adjective "perfidis", whose derivations in modern languages had taken on a strongly pejorative sense. As part of the revision of the Roman Missal, the prayer was completely rewritten, so that the Catholic Church now prays for "the Jewish people, first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant".

The Carmelite Nun Convent at Auschwitz

The Polish national Catholic bishops conferences supported the attempt of Carmelite Nuns to establish a convent at the former World War II Nazi-run death camp located at Auschwitz, so crucial to the Holocaust. Differences over the place of this convent caused some sectors of the Jewish community to become hostile to the idea of building a Catholic institution on the ground where mass genocide of Jews and the deaths of millions of Poles was carried out. Jewish groups believed that this was inappropriate, and some groups engaged in peaceful protest. The nuns at the convent accused Modern Orthodox Rabbi Avi Weiss, of Riverdale, Bronx, NY, of attempting to assault them when he silently protested at the site. The Vatican did not support this convent, but since Vatican II each national bishop's conference had local autonomy. Rabbi Leon Klenicki, founding member the of *Interfaith Theological Forum* of the *John Paul II Center* in Washington, D.C., said:

> *Since Vatican II, each national bishops' conference has its freedom to deal with local issues. Once the nuns took that place, that was under the jurisdiction of the Polish national bishops' conference, not the Vatican. The pope couldn't say anything. The pope intervened when the bishops' conference was not strong enough to stop the convent. When he realised that nothing was being done, he issued an order for the nuns to move.* (Lipman, 2005)

Visit to the State of Israel

In March 2000, Pope John Paul II went to the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Israel and touched the holiest outward remaining shrine of the Jewish people, the Western Wall in Jerusalem, in the hope of promoting Christian-Jewish reconciliation. The Pope has said that Jews are "our elder brothers."

In October 2003, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) issued a statement congratulating Pope John Paul II on entering the 25th year of his papacy:

> *"His deep commitment to reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people has been fundamental to his papacy. Jews throughout the world are deeply grateful to the Pope. He has defended the Jewish people at all times, as a priest in his native Poland and during his pontificate... We pray that he remains healthy for many years to come, that he achieves much success in his holy work and that Catholic-Jewish relations continue to flourish."*

Jewish Critiques of Catholic Positions: 1980s-2005

Despite considerable progress in improving relations during the period covered by this article, points of contention still exist between

the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. Several decisions supported by Pope John Paul II prompted criticism among some members of the Jewish community, including:

- The beatification of Pope Pius XII, whom many Jewish groups believe did little to aid Jews during the Holocaust.

- The Vatican's continued policy of allowing only partial access to its extensive World War II era archives. Many Jewish groups believe that full access to this archive might demonstrate that Pope Pius XII deliberately did not do enough to help Jews, or even that he demonstrated some sympathy for the Nazi regime.

- The canonisation of Edith Stein as Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Stein was a Jewish convert to Catholicism who took on the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross upon entering a Carmelite convent. She died in the Nazi death camp, Auschwitz.

- Official positions and statement regarding Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict that some Jews believe are insufficiently balanced and might reflect the continuing traces of theological opposition to the renewal of a Jewish state.

In addition, although the Jewish community appreciated John Paul II's 1994 statement, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, which offered a *mea culpa* for the role of Christians in the Holocaust, some Jewish groups felt that the statement was insufficient, as it focused on individual members of the Church who helped the Nazis, portraying them as acting against the teachings of the Church. Some critics consider the statement to be a akin to the so-called "No true Scotsman" defense, as it absolved the Church itself of any blame. Lingering disputes also remain about some of the practical aftereffects of the Holocaust, including the question of how to deal with Jewish children baptized during the Second World War who were never returned to their Jewish families and people.

Finally, and least consequentially to the broader theme of inter-religious relations, the Jewish and Catholic communities tend to disagree about certain matters of public policy. For example, while the Church condemns all abortion as murder, even the most "pro-life" understandings of Jewish tradition would conclude that, under some circumstances, abortion is not only permissible but actually required.

▶▶▶

18

ISLAM, ISLAMIC PRACTICES AND NEW WORLD ORDER

AN OVERVIEW OF ISLAM

INTRODUCTION

Islam, major world religion. The Arabic word islam literally means "surrender" or "submission". As the name of the religion it is understood to mean "surrender or submission to God". One who has thus surrendered is a Muslim. In theory, all that is necessary for one to become a Muslim is to recite sincerely the short statement of faith known as the shahadah: I witness that there is no god but God [Allah] and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Although in an historical sense Muslims regard their religion as dating from the time of Muhammad in the early 7th century ad, in a religious sense they see it as identical with the true monotheism which prophets before Muhammad, such as Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), and Jesus (Isa), had taught. In the Koran, Abraham is referred to as a Muslim. The followers of these and other prophets are held to have corrupted their teachings, but God in His mercy sent Muhammad to call mankind yet again to the truth.

Traditionally, Islam has been regarded by its followers as extending over all areas of life, not merely those (such as faith and worship) which are commonly viewed as the sphere of religion today. Thus, many Muslims prefer to call Islam a way of life rather than a religion. It is for this reason too that the word Islam, especially when referring to the past, is often used to refer to a society, culture or civilisation, as well as to a religion. While a history of Christianity will usually cover only matters relating to religion in a narrow sense, a history of Islam may discuss, for example, political developments, literary and artistic

life, taxation and landholding, tribal and ethnic migrations, etc. In this wider sense Islam is the equivalent not only of Christianity but also of what is often called Christendom.

Adherents of a religion may differ among themselves regarding what constitutes the essence of the religion, what is more important or less important, what is right belief and what heresy, etc. Modern students of religions, when attempting to describe a particular religion, may attempt to get around this problem by accepting the definitions given by some authoritative body or individual such as a Church council or the pope in Roman Catholicism. Such an expedient is not really possible for someone wishing to discuss Islam, however, since, at least before the modern period, there has been no body claiming to be the central authority for all Muslims. Instead, religious authority and power has been diffused at a local level among countless scholars and religious officials who lack a clearly defined hierarchy or organisation. An individual obtains religious authority as a result of a consensus regarding his learning and piety. In theory, at least, most positions of such authority are open to all.

In modern times there have been attempts to promote the idea that particular bodies or individuals have a special authority in Islam. In Sunni Islam, for example, the council of the Azhar university in Cairo is sometimes regarded as having a special authority while among the Shiites of Iran a hierarchy of religious scholars has developed and been recognised by the state. Even so, no body or individual has managed to establish itself as authoritative for all Muslims, and claims to be so are always contested.

It is not possible, therefore, to make many general statements about what Islam is or is not, without their being open to contest by groups or individuals with a different view of the religion. Certain ideas and especially practices have become so widely accepted among Muslims in general that they might be viewed as distinguishing features of Islam but even then there will be groups or individuals who reject them but still regard themselves as Muslims. In general, one should avoid terms like "orthodoxy" and "heresy" when discussing Islam.

THE EMERGENCE AND EARLY EXPANSION OF ISLAM

Traditional accounts of the emergence of Islam stress the role of Muhammad, who lived in western Arabia (Al ?ijaz) at the beginning of the 7th century ad. Muhammad experienced a series of verbal revelations from God. Among other things, these revelations stressed

the oneness of God, called mankind to worship Him, and promised that God would reward or punish men according to their behaviour in this world. Muhammad was to proclaim God's message to the people among whom he lived, most of whom practised polytheism.

After an initial period in which he was rejected in his home town of Mecca, Muhammad was able to found a community and a state with himself as its head in the town which soon came to be called Medina. By the time of his death in 632, several of the Arab tribes and a number of towns, including Mecca, had submitted to Muhammad and accepted Islam. Following his death the caliphate was established to provide for succession to Muhammad in his role as the head of the community, although prophecy, in the form of immediate verbal revelations from God, ceased with Muhammad.

Shortly after his death the process of collecting together all the revelations which he had received in his lifetime began. The tradition is not unanimous, but it is widely accepted that this work was completed under Uthman (caliph 644-656) and that it was in his time that the revelations were put together to form the text of the Koran as we know it.

The most important beliefs, institutions, and ritual practices of Islam are traditionally seen as originating in the time of Muhammad, and frequently they are understood to be the result of divine revelation. Sometimes a Koranic passage is seen as the source or justification of a practice or belief. Not all of them, however, can be associated with a relevant Koranic text and often they are seen to have originated in the practice of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Since he was a prophet, much of what he said and did is understood not as merely the result of personal and arbitrary decisions but as a result of divine guidance. Thus, the practice of Muhammad, which came to be known as the Sunna, serves as an example and a source of guidance for Muslims alongside the Koran, especially for Sunnis.

Under the caliphs who governed the community and state following Muhammad, a period of territorial expansion began, first in Arabia and then beyond its borders. By about 650 Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the western parts of Persia had been conquered by Arab forces which acknowledged the leadership of the caliphs in Medina. In about 660 the caliphate passed into the control of the Umayyad dynasty which was based in Syria. Under the Umayyads a second wave of expansion took place. By the time that dynasty was overthrown in 750 it controlled

territories extending from Spain and Morocco in the west to Afghanistan and central Asia in the east.

Modern scholarship has tended to show the emergence and expansion of Islam as a more gradual and complex process than is apparent from the traditional accounts. By emphasising the relative lateness of the Muslim accounts of the early history of Islam (there is little which can be dated in the form in which we have it to before about 800), it has raised the possibility that the traditional accounts should be understood as reflecting rather late views. It has suggested that the period when Islam was developing outside Arabia following the Arab conquest of the Middle East is of crucial importance. It has emphasised, as is clear from the traditional sources themselves, that the Arab conquests may have expanded the area under the control of the caliphs but that the spread of Islam at a personal level was much slower. The conquerors did not force the people they conquered to become Muslims and probably did not even intend that they should do so. The acceptance of Islam as a religion by the non-Arab peoples under the rule of the caliphs was a slow, uneven, and never-completed process, motivated by many things, some of which are not properly understood. It is also now better understood that these non-Arab peoples, gradually accepting Islam (and identifying themselves as Arabs at the same time), had much to do with the emergence of Islam as we know it.

Main Beliefs

Muslims believe that there is one God, Allah; that Muhammad was a prophet sent by God to mankind; and that the Koran is the collection of the revelations which God made to Muhammad. The Koran thus contains the words of God in a literal sense and is often referred to as the Speech of God (kalam Allah).

The vast majority of Muslims accept that Muhammad was the last in a series of prophets sent by God and that there can be no other after him. The Koranic phrase "the seal of the prophets" is understood by them in this sense. Some groups have regarded themselves as Muslims while recognising prophets, or something like prophets, after Muhammad, but their status as Muslims has been contested by the majority of the community.

The concept of "prophet" in Islam shares much with the idea as it had developed in Judaism and Christianity by the early centuries of the Christian era. The Arabic word nabi, which is one of the two most

frequent words for "prophet" in Islam, is related to the Hebrew nebi, the most usual word for "prophet" in the Old Testament. The basic idea is of someone who is given a message by God to deliver either to mankind as a whole or to a specific group. Muslim tradition recognises numerous prophets sent by God before Muhammad, and most of them are known in Jewish and Christian tradition from the Bible and other writings.

In Muslim belief, it came to be commonly held that some of the earlier prophets had been entrusted with a revelation just as Muhammad had been sent with the Koran, and in essence these revelations were identical with one another. The revelation of Moses was the Torah and that of Jesus the Gospel (injil in Arabic, ultimately from Greek evaggelion). According to this concept, there is only one Gospel and it is the book of revelation entrusted to Jesus. It is not the same as any one of the four gospels preserved in the New Testament, which are different accounts of the life of Jesus. In the Koran and other writings Jesus is referred to as the Messiah (Masih) and as the Word of God. He was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary and his life was asociated with many miracles. Nevertheless he was not the "Son of God", a concept which Islam rejects as a physical and logical impossibility. He did not die on the Cross, even though it seemed so to those who were present. Instead someone else died in his place and God raised Jesus up to Himself.

Some of the Muslim ideas about prophets and prophethood, and about Jesus, are similar to those associated with Judaeo-Christian groups whose existence is attested in the early centuries of the Christian era. Some scholars have suggested that descendants of those groups had an influence on the emergence of Islam.

In addition to the physical world, God has also created angels and spirits. The angels have various roles, among them the conveyance of God's revelation to the prophets. The spirits are usually known as the jinni. They inhabit this world and may affect human beings in various ways. Some are good and capable of obtaining salvation, others are evil and sometimes known as satans. The chief satan, the Devil, known as Satan or Iblis, is sometimes thought of as a disobedient angel, sometimes as a jinni. He has been allowed by God to roam the world and do evil deeds.

The world will end, and Islam has a rich body of eschatological and apocalyptic tradition. Before the world ends the Mahdi, a sort of Messiah figure, will appear to inaugurate a short period in which the

world will be filled with justice and righteousness. The idea of the Mahdi is more prominent in Shiite Islam (see below) but is not limited to the Shiite tradition. After death, each human being will be judged and will either achieve salvation or be consigned to damnation according to his or her beliefs and deeds while alive.

Islamic Law

Although the essence of Islam is acceptance of the one God and of the prophethood of Muhammad, in practice adherence to Islam has traditionally been manifested by living a life according to Islamic law within an Islamic community. The law is regarded as of divine origin: although it is administered and interpreted by human beings (and, as in most religions, that means men rather than women), it is understood as the law of God. The law is known as the Shari'ah. To obey the law is to obey God. One should not underestimate the importance of questions of belief and dogma in Islam, but generally speaking for Muslims, Islam has been more a matter of right behaviour than of concern with the niceties of belief.

Traditionally, Muslims have held that the law was revealed by God in the Koran and in the Sunna. In addition to those two theoretical sources, different groups within Sunni and Shiite Islam accept that law may be derived from certain subsidiary sources such as the consensus of the Muslims (usually called ijmaa), the informed reasoning of individual scholars (often called ijtihad), and various more specific and limited forms of these.

Many modern scholars have accepted the views of Joseph Schacht, who argued that the idea of the Sunna and the theory of the sources of Islamic law did not really develop until the 9th century and that Islamic law is not really derived from the Koran and the Sunna. Rather, according to this view, it has evolved gradually from a variety of sources (such as earlier legal systems and *ad hoc* decisions made by early Arab rulers), and the classical Muslim theory of the sources of Islamic law was developed by the early Muslim scholars (culminating in the work of al-Shafii) in order to put the positive law which had evolved in the first centuries of Islam on a proper Islamic basis. These scholars, it is argued, looked at the law as it existed in their own day; reformed, rejected or accepted it; and then sought to portray it as deriving from the Koran, the Sunna or one of the other classical sources. Since there was a limit to what could be attributed to the Koran (which is relatively short and only partly concerned with establishing

legal rules on a few questions), it was the Sunna (as reported in the hadiths) which was in practice most important. Since there was virtually no limit to the way in which hadiths could be interpreted or reworded, and new ones put into circulation, it was usually easier to find a hadith to support a particular legal rule than it was a Koranic text.

After the classical theory of the sources of law had come to be accepted, many and voluminous law books and hadith collections were produced, and law became the predominant expression of Islam. Islamic law concerns itself with far wider areas of public and private life than does a modern secular legal system. Economics, politics, matters of diet and dress, penal and civil law, warfare, and many other aspects of social and private life are, in theory at least, regulated by Islamic law. To live a life according to the law has probably been the main religious ideal for most Muslims, although one should not conclude that Islam is merely a legalistic religion.

Modern Islamic states have frequently adopted legal codes based on those of the West and have limited the sphere governed by Islamic law to personal and family matters: inheritance, marriage and divorce, etc. Even in these areas reforms have been made to traditional Islamic law, but these reforms are usually justified by reference to the traditional doctrine of the sources.

The Practices of Islam

Five duties have traditionally been seen as obligatory for all Muslims, although some mystics (Sufis) have allegorized them and many Muslims observe them only partially. These duties are the so-called five pillars of Islam: bearing witness to the unity and uniqueness of God and to the prophethood of Muhammad (*shahadah*); prayer at the prescribed times each day (salat); fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm); pilgrimage to Mecca, and the performance of certain prescribed rituals in and around Mecca at a specified time of the year (hajj); and paying a certain amount out of one's wealth as alms for the poor and some other categories of Muslims (zakat). The first of these pillars balances external action (the recitation of the shahadah) with internal conviction (although different groups within Islam have held different views about the relative importance of recitation and belief in the shahadah); the other four, although they take belief for granted, consist predominantly of external acts.

There are other duties and practices regarded as obligatory. As in Judaism, the eating of pork is prohibited and male circumcision is the

norm (the latter is not mentioned in the Koran). Consumption of alcohol is forbidden. Meat must be slaughtered according to an approved ritual or else it is not halal.

In some Muslim communities practices which are essentially local customs have come to be identified as Islamic: the wearing of a sari, for example. There are variant practices concerning the covering of the head or face of a woman in public. A Koranic text is interpreted by some to mean that the entire head and face of a woman should be covered, by others as indicating that some sort of veil or head scarf should be worn. Others argue that the Koran does not require any such covering.

Sacred Places

The centre of Muslim life, apart from the home, is the mosque or masjid (Arabic, "place of prostration in prayer") where the prescribed prayers are performed five times daily (in some Shiite groups only three times daily). The prayers are performed while facing Mecca, the site of the Kaaba and the birthplace of Muhammad, and the mosque wall which is closest to Mecca has a niche known as the mihrab built into it to show the direction of the holy city.

The Kaaba at Mecca, a simple and relatively small cubical building, is often referred to as the "house of God", although without any implication that He is present there more than anywhere else. It is explained as having been built by Abraham at the command of God. At the time when he built it, Abraham called all peoples at all times to come there and perform the ceremonies of the hajj. In the south-east corner of the Kaaba on the outside wall is fixed a black stone which receives special reverence and is often said to have originated from Paradise. It was sent down to comfort Adam in his grief when he was expelled from there. By the time of Muhammad the pure monotheism which, according to Muslim belief, had been instituted at Mecca by Abraham, had become corrupted by idolatry and polytheism, and it was the task of Muhammad to restore the pure religion and re-establish monotheistic worship at the Kaaba. Around the Kaaba there has grown up a huge mosque known as al-Masjid al-Haram ("the sacred mosque").

In addition to Mecca various other places have a special status in Islam. At Medina, the town to which Muhammad moved when his preaching in Mecca had aroused opposition, the second holiest mosque in Islam grew up around his tomb. Jerusalem is the third most revered sanctuary, in part because of its association with prophets before

Muhammad, in part because of the tradition that Muhammad was miraculously taken there from Mecca by night. From there he is said to have been taken up to heaven before being returned on the same night to the place where he had been sleeping in Mecca. Above the huge rock in Jerusalem which is regarded as the very place from which Muhammad's ascension began, the Dome of the Rock was built. This is one of the earliest and most beautiful buildings of Islam, first constructed around 690 on the orders of the caliph Abd al-Malik.

For Shiite Muslims other cities, often associated with their Imams, achieved a special status: An Najaf and Karbala' in Iraq, and Mashhad and Qom in Iran, are the most important.

The Islamic Year and Festivals

The Islamic era is known as that of that of the hijra (sometimes Latinized and Anglicized as Hegira) since its starting point is the year in which Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina (ad 622), an event known in Muslim tradition as the hijra (variously translated as "flight", "emigration" or "exodus"). The calendar is based on the Moon rather than the Sun, a year consisting of 12 months, each counted as the time between the appearance of one new moon and that of the next. The year thus lasts for about 354 days, approximately 11 days less than the solar year used in the common calendar. Since intercalation is forbidden in the law, the Islamic year bears no fixed relationship to the seasons. Relative to the solar year, each day in the Muslim year falls 11 days earlier each year. Thus, the festivals and major events of the Muslim year eventually circulate through all the seasons.

The Hijri year begins with the month of Muharram, but no special significance is attached to the new year's day. The ninth month of the year, Ramadan, is the obligatory month of fasting, and every Muslim who has the duty to fast (there are some who are relieved of it because of illness or another reason) should abstain from food, drink, and sexual pleasure during the hours of daylight. The first day of the tenth month, Shawwal, marks the end of the fast and is a day of great rejoicing. It is the major festival of the year and is variously known as "the great festival", "the festival of the breaking of the fast" or simply "the festival" (al-eed). The last month of the year is Dhul-Hijjah, and the first half of it is the time for the annual ceremonies connected with the hajj at Mecca. The core of the hajj, when all the pilgrims take part together, occurs between the eighth and tenth of the month. On the tenth the pilgrims sacrifice a great number of animals at Mina, close

to Mecca, and in many parts of the Islamic world sacrifices are also performed on this day. This is known as "the lesser festival" (al-eed al-sagheer) or "the festival of the sacrifice" (eed al-qurban or eed al-adha). The tenth day of the first month, Muharram, is called Ashura (an Aramaic word meaning "tenth"). This has a special importance for Shiite Muslims. On it they commemorate what in their view was the martyrdom of their third Imam, Husain, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib. He was killed on Ashura day in 680 at Karbala' in Iraq, fighting against a Muslim ruler whom the Shiites regard as a usurper and tyrant. For Shiites the day is a sad one, marked in some places by processions, public weeping, and even sometimes self-flagellation.

Other events and festivals occur at various times during the year but do not have the official religious significance of those just mentioned. For example, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (mawlid al-nabee) is widely celebrated in the fifth month of the year and in some places is marked by the recitation of poems in his honour. This festival, however, seems to be quite late in origin. Since the precise date of Muhammad's birth is not known, the month was probably chosen because it is the most widely accepted date for his death and a symmetry between birth and death was assumed. For the Shiites the birthdays of Ali and his wife Fatima are also celebrated.

One of the odd-numbered days towards the end of Ramadan (the precise day is disputed) is marked with reverence as the "night of power" (lailat al-qadr) when, it is widely believed, God makes His decrees concerning everything which is to occur in the following year.

Friday is sometimes referred to as the Muslim sabbath, like Saturday for Jews and Sunday for Christians. It is not officially a day of rest, but the mid-day prayer service on Friday is the most important of the week, should be observed, if possible, in a large congregational mosque, and has a more elaborate form than that of the normal prayer service. The ritual contains a special sermon (khutba) delivered by a preacher who stands on a minbar, a sort of pulpit which is a prominent part of the furniture of a mosque.

The Main Groups of Islam

In the period of its early development Islam developed three main divisions: Sunni, Shiite, and Kharijii. Historically, the division between them is said to go back to a civil war between the Arabs between ad 656 and 661, following their conquest of the heartlands of the Middle East. As religious groups in the form in which we know them, however,

the three traditions took considerably longer than that to emerge. The two most important of them, the Sunni and the Shiite, did not really crystallize before the 3rd to 9th centuries. The fundamental issue which divides the three groups is that of authority—who should be the source of authority in Islam and what sort of authority they should have.

Muslim Mysticism

From an early period in the development of Islam some individuals and groups began to feel that it was not enough simply to live according to the law and hope to achieve salvation in that way. They desired a stronger religious experience and sought to become closer to God through a variety of devotional and meditational practices, and sometimes through an austere ascetic way of life. Those who engaged in such practices came to be called Sufis. The characteristic aim of Sufism was to obtain a direct experience of God. This is a form of spirituality which has similarities in religions other than Islam and is usually referred to as mysticism. It has often been viewed with suspicion by non-mystical religious authorities who see it as a threat to institutional religion. The practices and beliefs of the Sufis came to be feared as possible rivals to those followed by the majority of ordinary Muslims.

In 922 a leading Muslim mystic, al-Hallaj, was executed by the ruling authorities for claiming, so it was alleged, that his experience of God had been so immediate that he had become completely united with the divinity. This was described as a form of polytheism by his opponents. Nevertheless, Sufi ideas remained attractive to many. It is al-Ghazali, one of the pivotal figures in the history of Sunni Islam, who is credited with bringing about the compromise which made it possible henceforth for Sufism to be regarded as a legitimate and important expression of Islam. Al-Ghazali argued that it is important to understand the deeper meaning of the law and not just to adhere to it blindly.

In the centuries following al-Ghazali the influence of Sufism in Islam became more widespread as various orders or "paths" (tariqas) came into existence. These are brotherhoods of Sufis which are distinguished by the allegiance they owe to a particular Sufi master. They involve a process of initiation and they appeal to various social classes. Some of them have a local basis, others cover large areas of the Islamic world. They provide not only an important means for the expression of spirituality in Islam but also a focus of loyalty within a universalist religion.

Islam in the Modern World

From the end of the 18th century onwards the Islamic world began to experience the increasing pressure of the military and political power and technological advances of the modern West. After centuries of Islamic political and cultural strength and self-confidence, it became clear that at the economic and technical level at least the world of Islam had fallen behind. Part of the shock came from the fact that the Western countries were at least nominally Christian, and yet Muslims regarded Islam as the final revelation which had supplanted Christianity.

In the 20th century the creation of the state of Israel in an area which was regarded as one of the heartlands of Islam strengthened the feeling of many Muslims that there was a crisis facing them which involved their religion.

One response was to argue that Islam needed to be modernised and reformed. This point of view has been held by a number of intellectuals, and various proposals for reforming the religion in what is understood as a modernist direction have been made.

Islamic Fundamentalism

The second half of the 20th century has seen the rise and domination of what may be seen as the opposite approach to discovering a solution to the perceived "crisis of Islam". It has been argued by many that the crisis facing the Muslims was a result of the willingness of many Muslims to follow the false ideas and values of the modern secular West. What is needed, it is argued, is a reassertion of traditional values. From this point of view, the crisis of Islam is seen as the result of the corruption of nominally Muslim governments and the creeping growth of secularism and Western influence in the Muslim world. Frequently, but not always, those who argue in this way espouse the use of violence in the cause of overthrowing unjust and corrupt governments. This approach is often referred to as Islamic fundamentalism.

The validity of this expression is open to question and is frequently rejected by Muslims themselves. The ideas of religious "fundamentalism" seems to have originated in discussions of Christianity, where it is usually used with reference to those groups of Christians who insist that the Bible is literally the word of God and that it alone should be regarded as authoritative by Christians. In this context "tradition" is usually regarded negatively as something which has corrupted the original true form of Christianity taught by Jesus.

Many Muslims do not like the use of the expression with regard to Islam since, they say, all Muslims accept that the Koran is the word of God in a very literal sense and so all Muslims are fundamentalist. Furthermore, although some "fundamentalists" try to argue that only the Koran is the true source of Islam, most accept many parts of non-Koranic tradition even though they may reject other parts. Muslim groups which are often lumped together under the heading of "fundamentalist" in fact have many differences between them.

Modern proponents of this style of Islam can find their precursors in earlier centuries. Ibn Taymiyya is often cited by them since he argued for a purification of Islam from what he considered to be accretions and corruptions which had entered it by his own day. Ibn Taymiyya influenced later figures such as Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the father of Wahhabi, and it is perhaps ironic that the Saudi kingdom which came to power as a result of the strength of Wahhabi in Arabia is now one of the most prominent targets of the charge of corruption and of serving as a vehicle for Western influence in the Islamic world.

Among the Sunni Muslims one of the oldest of the modern "fundamentalist" movements is that of the Muslim Brothers, which was founded in 1929. Its most influential theorist was Sayyid Qutb who was executed by the Egyptian government in 1966. More recently groups such as Hamas in Gaza and Palestine, Gamaat al-Islamiyya in Egypt, and the Fronte Islamique de Salvation (FIS) in Algeria have emerged with individual local aims but with the common objective of installing what they see as a proper Islamic government, running a state based on Islamic law, in the country where they are active. In Europe the Hizb ut-Tahrir has attracted some following, and in Malaysia the Arqam movement.

Among Shiite Muslims this form of Islam achieved its greatest success with the overthrow of the ruling dynasty in Iran (Persia) and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. The Islamic Republic governed by Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors then offered support to groups such as Hizbollah in Lebanon as well as to Sunni movements like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The ability of such groups to capture the headlines, and the difficulties they have posed for governments, Muslim and non-Muslim, in many parts of the world, has sometimes led to the claim that Islam is of its very nature fundamentalist (which in this context usually means aggressive and expansionist). This claim is sometimes supported

by reference to the importance of the doctrine of jihad (holy war) in traditional Islam and the importance of the Arab conquests in the earliest stages of the emergence of Islam.

In reality, however, Muslims, like followers of other religions, have behaved in a variety of ways and presented various images of their religion according to differing historical contexts. While it would be wrong to underestimate the strength of movements such as those named above, or their ability to attract the sympathy of other Muslims, it would equally be wrong to overestimate the degree of unity between the various manifestations of "Islamic fundamentalism" or to fall into the trap of thinking that each religion is characterised by a particular spirit or quality which is unchanging and always dominant.

Islam as a World Religion

There are no exact figures for the number of Muslims in the world today. It seems clear, however, that in terms of numbers Islam at least matches those of Christianity, the other most widespread religion today.

From its heartlands in the Middle East and North Africa the religion spread before the modern period to many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, to central Asia, to the Indian subcontinent, and to East and South East Asia. In Europe, Sicily and most of Spain were part of the Islamic world during the Middle Ages, and most of the Balkans came to be ruled by the Muslim Ottoman Empire, with its capital at Istanbul, at various times between about 1300 and the end of World War I. In modern times Islam has spread as a result of emigration so that there are now large Muslim communities in parts of western Europe, North America, South Africa, and Australia.

The Sunni form of the religion is dominant in most countries apart from Iran, but there are large Shiite populations in Iraq and Lebanon, in Bahrain and eastern Saudi Arabia, and, to a lesser extent, in Central and South Asia. It is a mistake to think that Islam has always been spread by warfare. Although, as has been noted above, its birth was associated with the Arab conquest of the Middle East and North Africa in the 7th century, and although it entered the Balkans as a result of the Ottoman expansion from 1300 onwards and spread in west Africa following a jihad in the 18th century, the religion of Islam has not generally been forced upon people by the sword. Periods of military conquest have usually been aimed at expanding the territories under Muslim rule rather than at forcing the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam.

Conversion to Islam has usually followed quite slowly, sometimes against the wishes of the Muslim rulers, after a territory has come under Muslim rule. The adoption of Islam as their religion has usually resulted from the wishes and actions of people wanting to become Muslim, not because it was forced upon them against their will. Why some people have been attracted to Islam and others not is a complex question involving many different religious, social, political,and economic factors. In some parts of the world, trade and the cultural attraction of Islamic civilisation have been as important as preaching in the spread of the religion. Sufi brotherhoods have also done much to spread the religion in particular areas.

Like Christianity (and like Buddhism) Islam is a universal religion open to all irrespective of nationality, gender or social status. Of course, normal ethnic and social divisions exist among Muslims, but one of the attractions of Islam is its insistence on the fundamental equality of all Muslims before God. One of its greatest strengths has been the way in which various peoples have been able to find a sense of their own identity in Islam.

Islam is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion originating with the teachings of Muhammad, a 7th century Arab religious and political figure. The word *Islam* means "submission", or the total surrender of oneself to God. An adherent of Islam is known as a Muslim, meaning "one who submits (to God)". There are between 1.1 billion and 1.8 billion Muslims, making Islam the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity.

Muslims believe that God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, God's final prophet, and regard the Qur'an and the Sunnah (words and deeds of Muhammad) as the fundamental sources of Islam. They do not regard Muhammad as the founder of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original monotheistic faith of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets. Islamic tradition holds that Judaism and Christianity distorted the messages of these prophets over time either in interpretation, in text, or both.

Islam includes many religious practices. Adherents are generally required to observe the Five Pillars of Islam, which are five duties that unite Muslims into a community. In addition to the Five Pillars, Islamic law (*sharia*) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on virtually all aspects of life and society. This tradition encompasses everything from practical matters like dietary laws and banking to warfare.

Almost all Muslims belong to one of two major denominations, the Sunni and Shi'a. The schism developed in the late 7th century following disagreements over the religious and political leadership of the Muslim community. Roughly 85 per cent of Muslims are Sunni and 15 per cent are Shi'a. Islam is the predominant religion throughout the Middle East, as well as in parts of Africa and Asia. Large communities are also found in China, the Balkan Peninsula in Eastern Europe and Russia. There are also large Muslim immigrant communities in wealthier and more developed parts of the world such as Western Europe. About 20 per cent of Muslims live in Arab countries.

ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING

The word *Islâm* is derived from the Arabic verb *Aslama*, which means to accept, surrender or submit. Thus, Islam means acceptance of and submission to God, and believers must demonstrate this by worshipping him, following his commands, and avoiding polytheism. The word is given a number of meanings in the Qur'an. In some verses (*ayat*), the quality of Islam as an internal conviction is stressed: "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam." Other verses connect *islâm* and *dîn* (usually translated as "religion"): "Today, I have perfected your religion (*dîn*) 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.

BELIEFS

According to the Qur'an all Muslims have to believe in God, his revelations, his angels, his messengers, and in the "Day of Judgment". Also, there are other beliefs that differ between particular sects. The Sunni concept of pre-destination is called divine decree, while the Shi'a version is called divine justice. Unique to the Shi'a is the doctrine of *Imamah*, or the political and spiritual leadership of the Imams.

Muslims believe that God revealed his final message to humanity through the Islamic Prophet Muhammad via the angel Gabriel. For them, Muhammad was God's final prophet and the Qur'an is the revelations he received over more than two decades. In Islam, prophets are men selected by God to be his messengers. Muslims believe that prophets are human and not divine, though some are able to perform miracles to prove their claim. Islamic prophets are considered to be the closest to perfection of all humans, and are uniquely the recipients of divine revelation—either directly from God or through angels. Islamic

theology says that all of God's messengers since Adam preached the message of Islam—submission to the will of the one God. Islam is described in the Qur'an as "the primordial nature upon which God created mankind", and the Qur'an states that the proper name *Muslim* was given by Abraham.

As a historical phenomenon, Islam originated in Arabia in the early 7th century. Islamic texts depict Judaism and Christianity as prophetic successor traditions to the teachings of Abraham. The Qur'an calls Jews and Christians "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitâb*), and distinguishes them from polytheists. Muslims believe that parts of the previously revealed scriptures, the *Tawrat* (Torah) and the *Injil* (Gospels), had become distorted—either in interpretation, in text, or both.

God

Islam's fundamental theological concept is *tawhîd*—the belief that there is only one God. The Arabic term for God is *Allâh*; most scholars believe it was derived from a contraction of the words *al-* (the) and *¾ilâh* (deity, masculine form), meaning "the God" (*al-ilâh*), but others trace its origin to the Aramaic *Alâhâ*. The first of the Five Pillars of Islam, *tawhîd* is expressed in the *shahadah* (testification), which declares that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is God's messenger. In traditional Islamic theology, God is beyond all comprehension; Muslims are not expected to visualize God but to worship and adore him as a protector. Although Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet, they reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, comparing it to polytheism. In Islamic theology, Jesus was just a man and not the son of God; God is described in a chapter (*sura*) of the Qur'an as "…God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him."

Qur'an

Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the literal word of God; it is the central religious text of Islam. Muslims believe that the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Muhammad by God through the angel Gabriel on many occasions between 610 and his death on July 6, 632. The Qur'an was written down by Muhammad's companions (*sahabah*) while he was alive, although the prime method of transmission was orally. It was compiled in the time of Abu Bakr, the first caliph, and was standardised in the time of Uthman, the third caliph. From textual evidence, modern Western academics find that the Qur'an of today has not changed over the years.

The Qur'an is divided into 114 suras, or chapters, which combined, contain 6,236 *âyât*, or poetic verses. The chronologically earlier suras, revealed at Mecca, are primarily concerned with ethical and spiritual topics. The later Medinan suras mostly discuss social and moral issues relevant to the Muslim community. The Qur'an is more concerned with moral guidance than legal instruction, and is considered the "sourcebook of Islamic principles and values". Muslim jurists consult the *hadith*, or the written record of Muhammad's life, to both supplement the Qur'an and assist with its interpretation. The science of Qur'anic commentary and exegesis is known as *tafsir*.

The word *Qur'an* means "recitation". When Muslims speak in the abstract about "the Qur'an", they usually mean the scripture as recited in Arabic rather than the printed work or any translation of it. To Muslims, the Qur'an is perfect only as revealed in the original Arabic; translations are necessarily deficient because of language differences, the fallibility of translators, and the impossibility of preserving the original's inspired style. Translations are therefore regarded only as commentaries on the Qur'an, or "interpretations of its meaning", not as the Qur'an itself.

Angels

Belief in angels is crucial to the faith of Islam. The Arabic word for Angels (*malak*) means "messenger", like its counterparts in Hebrew (*malakh*) and Greek (*angelos*). According to the Qur'an, angels do not possess free will, and worship God in perfect obedience. Angels' duties include communicating revelations from God, glorifying God, recording every person's actions, and taking a person's soul at the time of death. They are also thought to intercede on man's behalf. The Qur'an describes angels as "messengers with wings—two, or three, or four (pairs): He [God] adds to Creation as He pleases…"

Muhammad

Muhammad (c. 570 – July 6, 632) was an Arab religious, political, and military leader who founded the religion of Islam as a historical phenomenon. Muslims view him not as the creator of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original, uncorrupted monotheistic faith of Adam, Abraham and others. In Muslim tradition, Muhammad is viewed as the last and the greatest in a series of prophets—as the man closest to perfection, the possessor of all virtues. For the last 23 years of his life, beginning at age 40, Muhammad reported receiving revelations from God. The content of these revelations, known as the Qur'an, was memorised and recorded by his companions.

During this time, Muhammad preached to the people of Mecca, imploring them to abandon polytheism. Although some converted to Islam, Muhammad and his followers were persecuted by the leading Meccan authorities. After 13 years of preaching, Muhammad and the Muslims performed the *Hijra* ("emigration") to the city of Medina (formerly known as *Yathrib*) in 622. There, with the Medinan converts (*Ansar*) and the Meccan migrants (*Muhajirun*), Muhammad established his political and religious authority. Within years, two battles had been fought against Meccan forces: the Battle of Badr in 624, which was a Muslim victory, and the Battle of Uhud in 625, which ended inconclusively. Conflict with Medinan Jewish clans who opposed the Muslims led to their exile, enslavement or death, and the Jewish enclave of Khaybar was subdued. At the same time, Meccan trade routes were cut off as Muhammad brought surrounding desert tribes under his control. By 629 Muhammad was victorious in the nearly bloodless Conquest of Mecca, and by the time of his death in 632 he ruled over the Arabian peninsula.

In Islam, the "normative" example of Muhammad's life is called the *Sunnah* (literally "trodden path"). This example is preserved in traditions known as hadith ("reports"), which recount his words, his actions, and his personal characteristics. The classical Muslim jurist ash-Shafi'i (d. 820) emphasised the importance of the Sunnah in Islamic law, and Muslims are encouraged to emulate Muhammad's actions in their daily lives. The Sunnah is seen as crucial to guiding interpretation of the Qur'an.

Resurrection and Judgment

Belief in the "Day of Resurrection", *yawm al-Qiyâmah* (also known as *yawm ad-dîn*, "Day of Judgment" and *as-sâ`a*, "the Last Hour") is also crucial for Muslims. They believe that the time of *Qiyâmah* is preordained by God but unknown to man. The trials and tribulations preceding and during the *Qiyâmah* are described in the Qur'an and the hadith, and also in the commentaries of Islamic scholars. The Qur'an emphasises bodily resurrection, a break from the pre-Islamic Arabian understanding of death. It states that resurrection will be followed by the gathering of mankind, culminating in their judgment by God.

The Qur'an lists several sins that can condemn a person to hell, such as disbelief, usury and dishonesty. Muslims view paradise (*jannah*) as a place of joy and bliss, with Qur'anic references describing its features and the physical pleasures to come. There are also references

to a greater joy—acceptance by God (*ridwân*). Mystical traditions in Islam place these heavenly delights in the context of an ecstatic awareness of God.

Predestination

In accordance with the Islamic belief in predestination, or divine preordainment (*al-qadâ wa'l-qadar*), God has full knowledge and control over all that occurs. This is explained in Qur'anic verses such as "Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector'…" For Muslims, everything in the world that occurs, good or evil, has been preordained and nothing can happen unless permitted by God. In Islamic theology, divine preordainment does not suggest an absence of God's indignation against evil, because any evils that do occur are thought to result in future benefits men may not be able to see. According to Muslim theologians, although events are pre-ordained, man possesses free will in that he has the faculty to choose between right and wrong, and is thus responsible for his actions. According to Islamic tradition, all that has been decreed by God is written in *al-Lawh al-Mahfûz*, the "Preserved Tablet".

The Shi'a understanding of predestination is called "divine justice" (*Adalah*). This doctrine, originally developed by the Mu'tazila, stresses the importance of man's responsibility for his own actions. In contrast, the Sunni deemphasize the role of individual free will in the context of God's creation and foreknowledge of all things.

Duties and Practices

Five Pillars

The Five Pillars of Islam are five practices essential to Sunni Islam. Shi'a Muslims subscribe to eight ritual practices which substantially overlap with the Five Pillars. They are:

- The *shahadah*, which is the basic creed or tenet of Islam: "I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God." This testament is a foundation for all other beliefs and practices in Islam (although technically the Shi'a do not consider the *shahadah* to be a separate pillar, just a belief). Muslims must repeat the *shahadah* in prayer, and non-Muslims wishing to convert to Islam are required to recite the creed.
- *Salah*, or ritual prayer, which must be performed five times a day. (However, the Shi'a are permitted to run together the noon

with the afternoon prayers, and the evening with the night prayers). Each *salah* is done facing towards the Kaaba in Mecca. *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. In many Muslim countries, reminders called Adhan (call to prayer) are broadcast publicly from local mosques at the appropriate times. The prayers are recited in the Arabic language, and consist of verses from the Qur'an.

- *Zakat*, or alms-giving. This is the practice of giving based on accumulated wealth, and is obligatory for all Muslims who can afford it. A fixed portion is spent to help the poor or needy, and also to assist the spread of Islam. The zakat is considered a religious obligation (as opposed to voluntary charity) that the well-off owe to the needy because their wealth is seen as a "trust from God's bounty". The Qur'an and the hadith also suggest a Muslim give even more as an act of voluntary alms-giving (*sadaqah*). Many Shi'ites are expected to pay an additional amount in the form of a *khums* tax, which they consider to be a separate ritual practice.

- *Sawm*, or fasting during the month of Ramadan. Muslims must not eat or drink (among other things) from dawn to dusk during this month, and must be mindful of other sins. 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. *Sawm* is not obligatory for several groups for whom it would constitute an undue burden. For others, flexibility is allowed depending on circumstances, but missed fasts usually must be made up quickly.

- The *Hajj*, which is the pilgrimage 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. When the pilgrim is about ten kilometers from Mecca, he must dress in *Ihram* clothing, which consists of two white seamless sheets. Rituals of the Hajj include walking seven times around the Kaaba, touching the Black Stone, running seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, and symbolically stoning the Devil in Mina. The pilgrim, or the

hajji, is honored in his or her community, although Islamic teachers say that the Hajj should be an expression of devotion to God instead of a means to gain social standing.

In addition to the *khums* tax, Shi'a Muslims consider three additional practices essential to the religion of Islam. The first is jihad, which is also important to the Sunni, but not considered a pillar. The second is *Amr-Bil-Ma'rûf*, the "Enjoining to Do Good", which calls for every Muslim to live a virtuous life and to encourage others to do the same. The third is *Nahi-Anil-Munkar*, the "Exhortation to Desist from Evil", which tells Muslims to refrain from vice and from evil actions and to also encourage others to do the same.

Law

The *Sharia* (literally: "the path leading to the watering place") is Islamic law formed by traditional Islamic scholarship. In Islam, *Sharia* is the expression of the divine will, and "constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon a Muslim by virtue of his religious belief".

Islamic law covers all aspects of life, from matters of state, like governance and foreign relations, to issues of daily living. The Qur'an defines *hudud* as the punishments for five specific crimes: unlawful intercourse, false accusation of unlawful intercourse, consumption of alcohol, theft, and highway robbery. The Qur'an and Sunnah also contain laws of inheritance, marriage, and restitution for injuries and murder, as well as rules for fasting, charity, and prayer. However, these prescriptions and prohibitions may be broad, so their application in practice varies. Islamic scholars (known as *ulema*) have elaborated systems of law on the basis of these rules and their interpretations.

Fiqh, or "jurisprudence", is defined as the knowledge of the practical rules of the religion. The method Islamic jurists use to derive rulings is known as *usul al-fiqh* ("legal theory", or "principles of jurisprudence"). According to Islamic legal theory, law has four fundamental roots, which are given precedence in this order: the Qur'an, the Sunnah (actions and sayings of Muhammad), the consensus of the Muslim jurists (*ijma*), and analogical reasoning (*qiyas*). For early Islamic jurists, theory was less important than pragmatic application of the law. In the 9th century, the jurist ash-Shafi'i provided a theoretical basis for Islamic law by codifying the principles of jurisprudence (including the four fundamental roots) in his book *ar-Risâlah*.

Religion and State

Islamic law does not distinguish between "matters of church" and "matters of state"; the ulema function as both jurists and theologians. In practice, Islamic rulers frequently bypassed the Sharia courts with a parallel system of so-called "Grievance courts" over which they had sole control. As the Muslim world came into contact with Western secular ideals, Muslim societies responded in different ways. Turkey has been governed as a secular state ever since the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In contrast, the 1979 Iranian Revolution replaced a mostly secular regime with an Islamic republic led by the Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini.

Etiquette and Diet

Many practices fall in the category of *adab*, or Islamic etiquette. This includes greeting others with "*as-salamu `alaykum*" ("peace be unto you"), saying *bismillah* ("in the name of God") before meals, and using only the right hand for eating and drinking. Islamic hygienic practices mainly fall into the category of personal cleanliness and health, such as the circumcision of male offspring. Islamic burial rituals include saying the *Salat al-Janazah* ("funeral prayer") over the bathed and enshrouded dead body, and burying it in a grave. Muslims, like Jews, are restricted in their diet, and prohibited foods include pig products, blood, carrion, and alcohol. All meat must come from a herbivorous animal slaughtered in the name of God by a Muslim, Jew, or Christian, with the exception of game that one has hunted or fished for oneself. Food permissible for Muslims is known as halal food.

Jihad

Jihad means "to strive or struggle," and is considered the "sixth pillar of Islam" by a minority of Muslim authorities. Jihad, in its broadest sense, is classically defined as "exerting one's utmost power, efforts, endeavors, or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation." Depending on the object being a visible enemy, the devil, and aspects of one's own self, different categories of Jihad are defined. Jihad when used without any qualifier is understood in its military aspect.

Within Islamic jurisprudence, jihad is usually taken to mean military exertion against non-Muslim combatants in the defense or expansion of the Islamic state, the ultimate purpose of which is to establish the

universal domination of Islam. Jihad, the only form of warfare permissible in Islamic law, may be declared against states which refuse to convert to Islam or submit to Islamic rule. It ceases when Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians submit to the authority of Islam and agree to pay the *jizya* (a poll tax) and *kharaj* (a land tax), and when polytheists convert to Islam. Treaties (*'ahd*) may be established, subject to payment of the *kharaj*, although jurists differ over its permitted longevity. One common understanding of Jihad by Muslims today is that it should only be defensive, and that the concept includes a struggle to make the Islamic societies conform to the Islamic norms of justice.

Under most circumstances and for most Muslims, jihad is a collective duty (*fard kifaya*): its performance by some individuals exempts the others. Only for those vested with authority, especially the sovereign (imam), does jihad become an individual duty. For the rest of the populace, this happens only in the case of a general mobilisation. Some Muslim authorities, especially among the Shi'a and Sufis, distinguish between the "greater jihad", which pertains to spiritual self-perfection, and the "lesser jihad", defined as warfare. Jihad also refers to one's striving to attain religious and moral perfection.

HISTORY

Islam's historical development resulted in major political, economic, and military effects inside and outside the Islamic world. Within a century of Muhammad's first recitations of the Qur'an, an Islamic empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to Central Asia in the east. This new polity soon broke into civil war, and successor states fought each other and outside forces. However, Islam continued to spread into regions like Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia. The Islamic civilisation was one of the most advanced in the world during the Middle Ages, but was surpassed by Europe with the economic and military growth of the West. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Islamic dynasties such as the Ottomans and Mughals fell under the sway of European imperial powers. In the 20th century new religious and political movements and newfound wealth in the Islamic world led to both rebirth and conflict.

Rise of Empire (632–750)

Muhammad began preaching Islam at Mecca before migrating to Medina, from where he united the tribes of Arabia into a singular Arab Muslim religious polity. With Muhammad's death in 632, disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as leader of the

Muslim community. Umar ibn al-Khattab, a prominent companion of Muhammad, nominated Abu Bakr, who was Muhammad's intimate friend and collaborator. Others added their support and Abu Bakr was made the first caliph. This choice was disputed by some of Muhammad's companions, who held that Ali ibn Abi Talib, his cousin and son-in-law, had been designated his successor. Abu Bakr's immediate task was to avenge a recent defeat by Byzantine (or Eastern Roman Empire) forces, although he first had to put down a rebellion by Arab tribes in an episode known as the Ridda wars, or "Wars of Apostasy".

His death in 634 resulted in the succession of Umar as the caliph, followed by Uthman ibn al-Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib. These four are known as *al-khulafâ' ar-râshidûn* ("Rightly Guided Caliphs"). Under them, the territory under Muslim rule expanded deeply into Persian Empire and Byzantine territories. When Umar was assassinated in 644, the election of Uthman as successor was met with increasing opposition. In 656, Uthman was also killed, and Ali assumed the position of caliph. After fighting off opposition in the first civil war (the "First Fitna"), Ali was assassinated by Kharijites in 661. Following this, Mu'awiyah, who was governor of Levant, seized power and began the Umayyad dynasty.

These disputes over religious and political leadership would give rise to schism in the Muslim community. The majority accepted the legitimacy of the three rulers prior to Ali, and became known as Sunnis. A minority disagreed, and believed that Ali was the only rightful successor; they became known as the Shi'a. After Mu'awiyah's death in 680, conflict over succession broke out again in a civil war known as the "Second Fitna". Afterward, the Umayyad dynasty prevailed for seventy years, and was able to conquer the Maghrib as well as the Al-Andalus (the Iberian Peninsula, former Visigothic Hispania) and the Narbonnese Gaul. While the Muslim-Arab elite engaged in conquest, some devout Muslims began to question the piety of indulgence in a worldly life, emphasising rather poverty, humility and avoidance of sin based on renunciation of bodily desires. Devout Muslim ascetic exemplars such as Hasan al-Basri would inspire a movement that would evolve into Sufism.

For the Umayyad aristocracy, Islam was viewed as a religion for Arabs only; the economy of the Umayyad empire was based on the assumption that a majority of non-Muslims (Dhimmis) would pay taxes to the minority of Muslim Arabs. A non-Arab who wanted to

convert to Islam was supposed to first become a client of an Arab tribe. Even after conversion, these new Muslims (*mawali*) did not achieve social and economic equality with the Arabs. The descendants of Muhammad's uncle Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib rallied discontented *mawali*, poor Arabs, and some Shi'a against the Umayyads and overthrew them with the help of their propagandist and general Abu Muslim, inaugurating the Abbasid dynasty in 750. Under the Abbasids, Islamic civilisation flourished in the "Islamic Golden Age", with its capital at the cosmopolitan city of Baghdad.

Golden Age (750–1258)

By the late 9th century, the Abbasid caliphate began to fracture as various regions gained increasing levels of autonomy. Across North Africa, Persia, and Central Asia emirates formed as provinces broke away. The monolithic Arab empire gave way to a more religiously homogenised Muslim world where the Shia Fatimids contested even the religious authority of the caliphate. By 1055 the Seljuq Turks had eliminated the Abbasids as a military power, nevertheless they continued to respect the caliph's titular authority. During this time expansion of the Muslim world continued, by both conquest and peaceful proselytism even as both Islam and Muslim trade networks were extending into sub-Saharan West Africa, Central Asia, Volga Bulgaria and the Malay archipelago.

The Golden Age saw new legal, philosophical, and religious developments. The major hadith collections were compiled and the four modern Sunni Madh'habs were established. Islamic law was advanced greatly by the efforts of the early 9th century jurist al-Shafi'i; he codified a method to establish the reliability of hadith, a topic which had been a locus of dispute among Islamic scholars. Philosophers Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Farabi sought to incorporate Greek principles into Islamic theology, while others like the 11th century theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali argued against them and ultimately prevailed. Finally, Sufism and Shi'ism both underwent major changes in the 9th century. Sufism became a full-fledged movement that had moved towards mysticism and away from its ascetic roots, while Shi'ism split due to disagreements over the succession of Imams.

The spread of the Islamic dominion induced hostility among medieval ecclesiastical Christian authors who saw Islam as an adversary in the light of the large numbers of new Muslim converts. This opposition resulted in polemical treatises which depicted Islam as the religion of

the antichrist and of Muslims as libidinous and subhuman. In the medieval period, a few Arab philosophers like the poet Al-Ma'arri adopted a critical approach to Islam, and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides contrasted Islamic views of morality to Jewish views that he himself elaborated.

Starting in the 9th century, Muslim conquests in Christian Europe began to be reversed. The Reconquista was launched against Muslim principalities in Iberia, and Muslim Italian possessions were lost to the Normans. From the 11th century onwards a series of wars known as the Crusades brought the Muslim world into conflict with Christendom. Successful at first in their capturing of the Holy land which resulted in the establishment of the Crusader states, Crusader gains in the Holy Land were reversed by later Muslim generals such as Saladin, who recaptured Jerusalem during the Second Crusade. The Mongol Empire put an end to the Abbasid dynasty at the Battle of Baghdad in 1258, which saw the Muslims overrun by the superior Mongol army. Meanwhile in Egypt, the slave-soldier Mamluks took control in an uprising in 1250.

Ottomans and Islamic Empires in India (1258–1918)

The Seljuk Turks fell apart rapidly in the second half of the 13th century. In the 13th and 14th centuries the Ottoman empire (named after Osman I) was established with a string of conquests that included the Balkans, parts of Greece, and western Anatolia. In 1453 under Mehmed II the Ottomans laid siege to Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium. The Byzantine fortress succumbed shortly thereafter, having been battered by superior Ottoman cannonry.

Beginning in the 13th century, Sufism underwent a transformation, largely as a result of the efforts of al-Ghazzali to legitimize and reorganize the movement. He developed the model of the Sufi order—a community of spiritual teachers and students. Also of importance to Sufism was the creation of the Masnavi, a collection of mystical poetry by the 13th century Persian poet Rumi. The Masnavi had a profound influence on the development of Sufi religious thought; to many Sufis it is second in importance only to the Qur'an.

In the early 16th century, the Shi'ite Safavid dynasty assumed control in Persia and established Shi'a Islam as an official religion there, and despite periodic setbacks, the Safavids remained powerful for two centuries. Meanwhile, Mamluk Egypt fell to the Ottomans in 1517, who then launched a European campaign which reached as far

as the gates of Vienna in 1529. After the invasion of Persia, and sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, Delhi became the most important cultural centre of the Muslim east. Many Islamic dynasties ruled parts of the Indian subcontinent starting from the 12th century. The prominent ones include the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal empire (1526–1857). These empires helped in the spread of Islam in South Asia. but by the mid-18th century the British empire had ended the Mughal dynasty. In the 18th century the Wahhabi movement took hold in Saudi Arabia. Founded by the preacher Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Wahhabism is a fundamentalist ideology that condemns practices like Sufism and the veneration of saints as un-Islamic.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, despite attempts at modernisation, the Ottoman empire had begun to feel threatened by European economic and military advantages. In the 19th century, the rise of nationalism resulted in Greece declaring and winning independence in 1829, with several Balkan states following suit after the Ottomans suffered defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. The Ottoman era came to a close at the end of World War I. In the 19th century, the Salafi, Deobandi and Barelwi reform movements were initiated.

Modern Times (1918–present)

After World War I losses, the remnants of the empire were parceled out as European protectorates or spheres of influence. Since then most Muslim societies have become independent nations, and new issues such as oil wealth and relations with the State of Israel have assumed prominence.

The 20th century saw the creation of many new Islamic "revivalist" movements. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan advocate a totalistic and theocratic alternative to secular political ideologies. Sometimes called Islamist, they see Western cultural values as a threat, and promote Islam as a comprehensive solution to every public and private question of importance. In countries like Iran and Afghanistan (under the Taliban), revolutionary movements replaced secular regimes with Islamist states, while transnational groups like Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda engage in terrorism to further their goals. In contrast, Liberal Islam is a movement that attempts to reconcile religious tradition with modern norms of secular governance and human rights. Its supporters say that there are multiple ways to read Islam's sacred texts, and stress the need to leave room for "independent thought on religious matters".

In modern times Islam has come under criticism from idealogues such as Robert Spencer and Ibn Warraq, who criticize Islamic law and question the morality of the Qur'an; for example, they say that its contents justify mistreatment of women and encourage anti-Semitic remarks by Muslim theologians; such claims are disputed by Muslim scholars. Montgomery Watt, Norman Daniel, and Edward Said dismiss many of the criticisms as the product of old myths and medieval European polemics. The rise of Islamophobia, according to Carl Ernst, had contributed to the negative views about Islam and Muslims in the West.

COMMUNITY

Demographics

Commonly cited estimates of the Muslim population in 2007 range from 1.1 billion to 1.8 billion. Approximately 85 per cent are Sunni and 15 per cent are Shi'a, with a small minority belonging to other sects. Some 30–40 countries are Muslim-majority, and Arabs account for around 20 per cent of all Muslims worldwide. South Asia and Southeast Asia contain the most populous Muslim countries, with Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh having more than 100 million adherents each. According to U.S. government figures, in 2006 there were 20 million Muslims in China. In the Middle East, the non-Arab countries of Turkey and Iran are the largest Muslim-majority countries; in Africa, Egypt and Nigeria have the most populous Muslim communities. Islam is the second largest religion after Christianity in many European countries.

Mosques

A mosque is a place of worship for Muslims, who often refer to it by its Arabic name, *masjid*. The word *mosque* in English refers to all types of buildings dedicated to Islamic worship, although there is a distinction in Arabic between the smaller, privately owned mosque and the larger, "collective" mosque (*masjid jâmi`*). 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.

Family Life

The basic unit of Islamic society is the family, and Islam defines the obligations and legal rights of family members. The father is seen

as financially responsible for his family, and is obliged to cater for their well-being. The division of inheritance is specified in the Qur'an, which states that most of it is to pass to the immediate family, while a portion is set aside for the payment of debts and the making of bequests. The woman's share of inheritance is generally half of that of a man with the same rights of succession. Marriage in Islam is a civil contract which consists of an offer and acceptance between two qualified parties in the presence of two witnesses. The groom is required to pay a dowry (*mahr*) to the bride, as stipulated in the contract.

A man may marry up to four wives if he believes he can treat them equally, while a woman may marry one man only. In most Muslim countries, the process of divorce in Islam is known as *talaq*, which the husband initiates by pronouncing the word "divorce". Scholars disagree whether Islamic holy texts justify traditional Islamic practices such as veiling and seclusion (purdah). Starting in the 20th century, Muslim social reformers argued against these and other practices such as polygamy, with varying success. At the same time, many Muslim women have attempted to reconcile tradition with modernity by combining an active life with outward modesty. Certain Islamist groups and regimes like the Taliban mostly seek to continue traditional law as applied to women.

Calendar

The formal beginning of the Muslim era was chosen to be the Hijra in 622 CE, which was an important turning point in Muhammad's fortunes. The assignment of this year as the year 1 AH (*Anno Hegirae*) in the Islamic calendar was reportedly made by Caliph Umar. It is a lunar calendar, with nineteen ordinary years of 354 days and eleven leap years of 355 days in a thirty-year cycle. Islamic dates cannot be converted to CE/AD dates simply by adding 622 years: allowance must also be made for the fact that each Hijri century corresponds to only 97 years in the Christian calendar. The year 1428 AH coincides almost completely with 2007 CE.

Islamic holy days fall on fixed dates of the lunar calendar, which means that they occur in different seasons in different years in the Gregorian calendar. The most important Islamic festivals are *Eid al-Fitr* on the 1st of *Shawwal*, marking the end of the fasting month *Ramadan*, and *Eid al-Adha* on the 10th of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, coinciding with the pilgrimage to Mecca.

OTHER RELIGIONS

According to Islamic doctrine, Islam was the primordial religion of mankind, professed by Adam. At some point, a religious split occurred, and God began sending prophets to bring his revelations to the people. In this view, Abraham, Moses, Hebrew prophets, and Jesus were all prophets of Islam, but their message and the texts of the Torah and the Gospels were corrupted by Jews and Christians. Similarly, children of non-Muslim families are born Muslims, but are converted to another faith by their parents. The idea of Islamic supremacy is encapsulated in the formula "Islam is exalted and nothing is exalted above it." Pursuant to this principle, Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men, defamation of Islam is prohibited, and the testimony of a non-Muslim is inadmissible against a Muslim.

Islamic law divides non-Muslims into several categories, depending on their relation with the Islamic state. Christians and Jews who live under Islamic rule are known as *dhimmis*. *Dhimmis* must pay tribute (*jizya*) to the Islamic state, and as such are considered "protected peoples." Historically, *dhimmis* enjoyed a measure of communal autonomy under their own religious leaders, but were subject to legal, social and religious restrictions as well as humiliating regulations meant to highlight the inferiority of non-Muslim subjects. The status was extended to Zoroastrians and sometimes to polytheists (such as Hindus), but not to atheists or agnostics. Those who live in non-Muslim lands (*dar al-harb*) are known as *harbis*, and upon entering into an alliance with the Muslim state become known as *ahl al-ahd*. Those who receive a guarantee of safety while residing temporarily in Muslim lands are known as *ahl al-amân*. Their legal position is similar to that of the *dhimmi* except that they are not required to pay the jizya. The people of armistice (*ahl al-hudna*) are those who live outside of Muslim territory and agree to refrain from attacking the Muslims. Apostasy is prohibited, and is punishable by death.

DENOMINATIONS

Islam consists of a number of religious denominations that are essentially similar in belief but which have significant theological and legal differences. The primary division is between the Sunni and the Shi'a, with Sufism generally considered to be a mystical inflection of Islam rather than a distinct school. According to most sources, approximately 85 per cent of the world's Muslims are Sunni and

approximately 15 per cent are Shi'a, with a small minority who are members of other Islamic sects.

Sunni

Sunni Muslims are the largest group in Islam. In Arabic, *as-Sunnah* literally means "principle" or "path". The Sunnah (the example of Muhammad's life) as recorded in the Qur'an and the hadith is the main pillar of Sunni doctrine. Sunnis believe that the first four caliphs were the rightful successors to Muhammad; since God did not specify any particular leaders to succeed him, those leaders had to be elected. Sunnis recognize four major legal traditions, or madhhabs: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali. All four accept the validity of the others and a Muslim might choose any one that he or she finds agreeable, but other Islamic sects are believed to have departed from the majority by introducing innovations (*bidah*). There are also several orthodox theological or philosophical traditions within Sunnism. For example, the recent Salafi movement sees itself as restorationist and claims to derive its teachings from the original sources of Islam.

Shi'a

The Shi'a, who constitute the second-largest branch of Islam, believe in the political and religious leadership of infallible Imams from the progeny of Ali ibn Abi Talib. They believe that he, as the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, was his rightful successor, and they call him the first *Imam* (leader), rejecting the legitimacy of the previous Muslim caliphs. To them, an Imam rules by right of divine appointment and holds "absolute spiritual authority" among Muslims, having final say in matters of doctrine and revelation. Although the Shi'a share many core practices with the Sunni, the two branches disagree over the proper importance and validity of specific collections of hadith. The Shi'a follow a legal tradition called Ja'fari jurisprudence. Shi'a Islam has several branches, the largest of which is the Twelvers (*ionâ¿aðariyya*), while the others are the Ismaili, the Seveners, and the Zaidiyyah.

Sufism

Not strictly a denomination, Sufism is a mystical-ascetic form of Islam. By focusing on the more spiritual aspects of religion, Sufis strive to obtain direct experience of God by making use of "intuitive and emotional faculties" that one must be trained to use. Sufism and Islamic law are usually considered to be complementary, although Sufism has been criticised by some Muslims for being an unjustified

religious innovation. Most Sufi orders, or *tariqas*, can be classified as either Sunni or Shi'a.

Others

The Kharijites are a sect that dates back to the early days of Islam. The only surviving branch of the Kharijites is Ibadism. Unlike most Kharijite groups, Ibadism does not regard sinful Muslims as unbelievers. The Imamate is an important topic in Ibadi legal literature, which stipulates that the leader should be chosen solely on the basis of his knowledge and piety, and is to be deposed if he acts unjustly. Most Ibadi Muslims live in Oman.

The Yazidi, Druze, Ahmadiyya, Bábí, Bahá'í, Berghouata and Ha-Mim religions either emerged out of Islam or came to share certain beliefs with Islam. Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak in late fifteenth century Punjab, incorporates aspects of both Islam and Hinduism.

MUSLIM MARITIME CULTURES

This primarily military failure had cultural dimensions. Muslim involvement in the exploitation of marine resources and in maritime trade has been limited in both modern and contemporary times. In the Mediterranean all foreign trade with the North African coast was conducted by European ships. Fairly perfunctory explanations have been offered for this state of affairs: the danger inquisition for renegades, who could not have been employed in Christian ports, and harassment of captains of Moorish origin by the merchants of Marseilles and the French authorities (Emerit 1955). We need only make a comparison with the eastern basin of the Mediterranean during the same modern period to see that neither of these factors could have had any real influence. For here, even though the seas were controlled by the Ottomans (with the exception of the Black Sea, which was closed to outsiders until the late eighteenth century), most trade was conducted in the same way, by 'maritime caravan', a system by which Ottoman traders chartered European, mainly French, ships (Panzac 1982, 1985). In 1785, for example. 40 per cent of intra-Ottoman trade in Alexandria was conducted using European vessels. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was almost entirely represented by Greek ships. This situation prevailed in Salonika and elsewhere throughout the eighteenth century (1956). In the seventeenth century most trade conducted under the Ottoman flag in the port of Istanbul was carried out by Greek captains, and the few Turks involved rarely ventured beyond the Aegean Sea (Mantran 1962: 120,184,352,421,450-1,488,491).

The same was true of fishing. The Mediterranean coast of Morocco, Algeria and northern Tunisia was colonised by Spanish fishermen. As naturalised Frenchmen, they provided the main body of French fishermen in Algerian waters-underlining the almost total lack of indigenous activity. Indeed, Italian trawlers and Greek fishermen from Rhodes almost entirely dominated the Levantine Coast until the Second World War (Weulersse 1940: Vol. I, 168, 170). Even where the Muslim flag was flown, it could be deceptive. The Muslim sailors of Sitia, the eastern peninsula of Crete, who fished for sponges off the Tunisian coast until the beginning of the twentieth century, were Greek (Berard 1900: 233). Most of the Muslim fishing communities to be found today in the eastern Mediterranean basin are actually very recent developments, and exhibit European acculturation. Likewise with the Berber fishermen of the Faroua Peninsula in Tripolitania, near the Tunisian border, whose activities can be traced to Italian colonisation (Paradisi 1962). Again, it is Greek Cretan Muslims who have developed fishing, mostly for sponges, at Bodrum on the Turkish coast, and this only since 1930 (Mansur 1972: 45-52; Nicolas 1971). Egyptian fishing along the Nile Delta did not really take off until the nineteenth century, in the wake of European influence.

Overall, authentic traditional maritime cultures among the Muslims of the Mediterranean are rare indeed, and can be counted on the fingers of one hand. There are a few small islands off the Rifian coast, like Alhucemas, where the tradition seems to be of ancient origin. But even here these fishing communities seem to have sprung from a mixed population that Jean-Leon I'Africain (1956: 274—6) has referred to as 'Brothers of the Coast'. Christian and Muslim pirates who lived together on friendly terms (see also Grohmann- Kerrouach 1977: 134-40). In fact, there are only two significant exceptions to this almost universal absence of authentically Muslin maritime cultures. First, there is the very isolated case of the island of round on the Syrian coast (Charles 1973; Waulersse 1940: Vol. I, 173-90). This was an overpopulated island refuge where the maritime calling was virtually a pre-requisite for survival. Second, the head of the Gulf of Gabes and the Kerkenna Islands were the source of numerous technical innovations, including flat boats of a uniquely local construction. Here the maritime culture appears to have been a spontaneous development, arising from a specific physical environment with a large number of sandbanks (Louis 1961-3). This is the only originally Muslim maritime domain of real significance in the Mediterranean, and it can certainly be attributed to these natural conditions.

Maritime life was similarly impoverished in the Atlantic prior to French colonisation. There were some scattered fishing centres on the Moroccan coast in the estuary ports and on the shores of the High Atlas from the Oued Draa to Cap Cantin (Ras Bedouzza) (Montagne 1923). These scattered communities were recent developments linked to the overpopulation of the mountains in the Chleuh region. Regional navigation, which was still active on the coastal fringes of Muslim Andalusia and from Morocco to the Sous (Picard 1997) in the Middle Ages, had almost completely disappeared by modern times. In Mauritania, before contemporary developments, there were only very primitive groups of Chenagla (north of Cap Blanc) and of Imragen (to the south of Cap Blanc). These were inshore fishermen without boats, who were widely despised by Mauritanian society, and probably belonged to low castes (Anthonioz 1967-8). In Senegal there were only a few groups of Islamised fishermen (Sy 1965; Vanchi-Bonnardel 1967, 1985). Muslim sailors never dared to venture on to the Atlantic Ocean itself. It remained for them 'the sea where no ship sails' (Ibn Rostih 1949: 67), 'the dark sea' (Picard 1997: 31-2), the exclusive realm of fantastic stories (Picard 1995). All regular relations with the Canaries had ceased, and the Guanches of these islands had themselves lost the skills of sailing. Muslims were never involved in the great transoceanic discoveries.

Muslim non-involvement in seafaring was similarly striking in the inland waterways of continental Eurasia where Islam was long dominant. The Turks preserved the Black Sea from European commercial intrusion until the late eighteenth century, but they were nonetheless incapable of organising maritime activity systematically. Such activity remained a confused swarming of irregular traffic, largely entrusted to indigenous Caucasians, and lacking sufficient nautical equipment. The southern shores of the Caspian Sea had constituted the northern frontier of Muslim civilisation from the eighth to the twelfth century, abutting the Khazar steppes where the conversion of the Mongols had created a Muslim zone in the thirteenth century. Christian adventures (notably the Genoese of Caffa) nevertheless penetrated the area at an early stage and were the most active exploiters of the Caspian until the arrival of the Russians, who, from the sixteenth century onwards, progressively gained exclusive supremacy in commercial navigation, eliminating all Persian competition, even before the treaty of Torkeman Tchay in 1828 awarded them a monopoly on owning warships there. The only Muslim maritime activity that survived in the Caspian was that of the Torkeman initially pirates (emerging from a population

surplus in a saturated nomats coastoral society), then reverting to coastal navigation on the southern coasts at the end of the nineteenth century (see Planhol 1992).

The South Seas were a more favourable area for peaceful Muslim maritime expansion from early on, although maritime development there was not fundamentally different from that already described for other areas. The great maritime trade routes leading to the Far East, inherited from the Sassanids, which led the Arabs and Persians as far as China at the time of the Abbasid Caliphase (Fernand 1945; Hourani 1951: 40-1, 46-50, 61-79; Whitehouse 1977; Whitehouse and Williamson 1973: 46-8), declined considerably from the eleventh century, to the point where it is not clear whether there was any continuity at all in these maritime relations (Aubin 1963; Sauvaget 1948). Although a real maritime, power still endured in the western part of the Indian Ocean from the end of the fifteenth century, in the form of the kingdom of Hormuz (Aubin 1973), the geographical horizons revealed by the tests of Ibn Madjid hardly extended beyond the western coast of Malaysia (Ferrand 1921-8; Khoury 1971, 1985-6, 1987-8, Tibbetts 1971). The arrival of the Europeans only served to deliver the final blow to what in any case had only ever been 'a small trade in costly products transported by a multitude of hawkers from Suez to Nagasaki' (Van Leur 1955:219). Meantime activity in the whole western sector of the Indian Ocean, in trade as well as in fishing, remains to this day very fragmented and limited, consisting of isolated and distant outposts operating coastal routes using ships that are still very primitive, and that owe most of their profits to smuggling. It is only in Malaysian waters where true 'people of the sea' assembled in any significant numbers (and here not exclusively) under the Muslim flag, which most of them adopted while maintaining a way of life whose origins clearly predate the advent of Islam (Lombard 1990: Vol. II, 80ff.; Sopher 1965). More ambitious developments did actually occur among these people, such as the trade of the Bugis of Sulawesi, who began crossing the high seas in the sixteenth century in sailing ships of up to 250 tonnes. This trade, which is documented in precise written legal texts and portrayed in literature (an exceptional phenomenon), is a unique case in traditional Islam, evidently linked to the very particular atmosphere of the society that had emerged in the Strait of Malacca and the Indonesian 'Mediterranean,' and whose evolution had resisted Islamisation.

Yet the general impression of Muslims at sea is of mediocrity, even of deficiency. The most clear-sighted Muslims have always been aware of this. In 1540, to the height of the Turks' maritime presence in

the Mediterranean, when the western basin was wide open to them after their triumphal expedition to Toulon at the time of the alliance with Francois I, the grand Vizier Lutfi Pasha wrote that 'many Sultans of the past dominated on land, but few ruled the seas. In the organisation of naval expeditions, the unbeliever is our superior' (cited in Tschudi 1910: 30-3). Even in 1668, when the Ottoman Empire had just taken possession of Crete thanks to its fleet, an interlocutor for the secretary of the British Embassy in Constantinople declared to him that 'God has given the sea to the Christians but the land to the Turks' (Rycaut 1668: 216). The Mamluk Sultan Baybars I (1260-77) adopted the same tone in a letter addressed to the King of Cyprus in 1270, praising Shri actions of his cavalry, in which he acknowledged the Frankish superiority at sea: '[As for] you, your horses are [your] ships, whereas [for] us, our ships are [our] horses' (that is, at sea you are strong, but our power lies on land and on horseback; cited in Ayalon 1967: 6). At the end of the seventeenth century, at a time when the power of the Sale corsairs was still its height, the Moroccan Sultan Moulay Ismail wrote to the dispossessed King of England, James II, apologising for his inability to help him because 'we are Arabs and unversed in maritime matters' (cited in Barbour 1970). One could cite many other examples.

For their part, Christian observers were not to be outdone and were quick to pinpoint the weaknesses of the enemy. As early as 1390, on the subject of the Christian expedition to the coasts of Tunisia, Jean Froissart (1837: Vol. III. 89-90) reported that

> the Saracens nave no strength at sea in the form of galleys or vessels, unlike the Genoese and Venetians. And when the Saracens put to sea they do nothing except plundering and thieving, neither can they catch Christians unless they are right on top of them, for an armed Christian galley could defeat four of Saracens.

Texts such as this succeed one another through the generations, and an unsophisticated Christian faith lost no opportunity to boast. A somewhat 'hagiographical' biographer of Christopher Columbus even wrote at the end of the nineteenth century: 'A French philosopher rightly noted that all the great navigators were Christian. The Prince who pioneered the navigation of the Atlantic Ocean was also a true Catholic (Dom Henrique)' (Roselly de Lorgues 1880: 15).

ISLAM'S INCOMPATIBILITY WITH THE SEA

The almost total absence of seafaring Muslims has not failed to attract the attention of modern Orientalists. Herbert Jansky (1920), Louis Brunot (192). Wilhelm Hoemebach (1950-5), Eckehard Eickhoff

(1954), David Ayalon (1967) and Nevill Barbour (1970), to name but a few, have written highly pertinently on the subject, and have assembled numerous texts that underline this incompatibility between Islam and the sea. But they have confined themselves almost exclusively to reporting and even explaining the fact without really looking for its causes, which I will attempt to uncover here. Why this inferiority?

Initially one might think of technical deficiency. Certainly, this was strikingly obvious in the modern era in the Indian Ocean. The superiority of the solid European iron-clad sailing ships over the native boats, whose frames were held together by palm thread (Moreland 1939), was never in question. Nor was the fact that all significant maritime innovation in the Mediterranean during that period originated in Europe. However, this is somewhat deceptive. The practical advantages of being the source of maritime innovation at the time were negligible, for the intermixing of people, ideas and things that characterised the Mediterranean in the modern era meant that innovations spread remarkably quickly. The role of pirates in this technology transfer was fundamental. Advances made by Christian navies were rapidly assimilated by those on the north African cost, as well as by the great Ottoman fleet. In the sixteenth century, for example, the Venetians revolutionised the speed and manoeuvrability of galleys by having all oarsmen on the same bench operate a single oar, an innovation that immediately spread to Algiers (Boyer 1985: 97). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Algiers was equally quick to adopt three-masted sailing ships like those that plied the Atlantic, imitating the pirate vessels by also furnishing these ships with oars (Boyer 1985). This kind of borrowing never ceased. A nineteenth-century signal book of the Algiers navy reveals a close familiarity with the practices of the western navies (Devoulx 1868). The transfer of technical innovations to the Ottomans was also very rapid, down to the smallest detail. There were certainly some discrepancies, but these were short-lived. In 1571 at Lepanto, the Venetians used galeasses, which combined the advantages of galley and galleon by arranging artillery on their flanks that could fire broadsides, whereas traditional galleys still only had cannon in their bows. In the following year the Ottomans introduced such galeasses to their own fleet (Imber 1980: 180). Their role in the battle at Lepanto had not been decisive, but the rapidity of the imitation is clear. In 1650, the first high-sided vessel in the fleet was immediately shipwrecked (Katip Celebi 1329/1911: 13. 128). But two decades later at the siege of Candia, this type of ship was widespread in the Ottoman fleet, and it was their presence that

eventually accounted for the successful conquest of the city and the island in 1669. In fact, the Ottoman navy was much quicker to borrow from the West than was the army, which was rather more resistant to change. It was through the navy that Selim III, the 'enlightened' late eighteenth-century Sultan, was to undertake the first serious effort to modernise the country, an effort that was actually to cost him his throne (Shaw 1969).

The facts are naturally less clear concerning the earliest confrontations. The Byzantines were definitely superior in certain areas, such as Greek fire for example, though this was not a specifically maritime technique. But many innovations at this time passed from the Arab world to Christianity. It was from the Arabs that Byzantium introduced types of ships *saktoura (koumbarion)* previously unknown there. The Arabs can also be credited with the first use of sailing vessels as warships, which was not widespread in Byzantium until the tenth century (Ahrweiler 1966: 414-5, 418). As to the triangular "lateen' sail, which entered general use in the Mediterranean at this time (the earliest evidence of this innovation was long thought to be a Byzantine manuscript of 830; Brindley 1926), and which was often considered to be of Arab design, originating in the South Seas and transferred to the Mediterranean with the expansion of Islam, we now know this to have been used on large boats from the beginning of the seventh century, and perhaps from even earlier on small boats (Adam 1970; Basch 1989, 1991; Casson 1956; Sottas 1939). But even if it was not specifically an Arab sail, it was certainly the dominant sail of the Arab era, and it was mainly Arabs who popularised its use, if only because its versatility made it particularly well suited to the nature of their maritime enterprises, notably piracy. We also know the intermediary role played by classical Muslim civilisation in the introduction of Far Eastern technologies to the West, such as the compass (Klaproth 1834; Saussure 1925). On the whole, the situation of cultural and technical intermixing does not seem to have been fundamentally different in the medieval Mediterranean than in the modern era (see Christides 1988).

However, the Muslim fleets remained unquestionably second-rate during this period. It has been possible to demonstrate that for the most part their ships were still slow and heavy, much less mobile than those of the Christians, and to estimate their maximum speed at a little over four knots, which was around one knot slower than the Byzantine ships (Eickhoff 1954). This difference in speed had serious

consequences in combat, especially at a time when the only known rudder was the very inadequate lateral one. Less manoeuvrable, these ships were also unsuited to navigating dangerous shoal-waters, and this inadequacy had not escaped that shrewd observer Leon VI (*Taktika*, XIX, 69; of. Eickhoff 1954: 88).

Why this contrast? The same Coptic carpenters from Alexandria had built ships for me Byzantines as well as for the first Muslim fleets launched against Constantinople. They also constructed the ships that the Muslim conquerors of the Maghreb berthed at Tunis when they created their first arsenal there in about 700 (Bekri 1965 [1911-13]: 80). Great store has been set by certain natural constraints that could have impeded the construction of the Muslim fleets, such as the lack of mature timber on the southern shores of the Mediterranean (Lombard 1972: 107-76). On this point we know how the loss of the Maghreb and of Sicily played an important role in the decline of the Fatimid fleet of Egypt in the eleventh century. But this is applicable neither to the preceding centuries, when timber supplies came from the northern Algerian and Tunisian *tell*, or from Cyprus, nor, with greater reason, to the Ottoman era. Besides, prodigious feats were sometimes accomplished to obtain supplies of wood. When Nader Shah wanted to construct the last great Persian fleet in the 1740s, he brought tree trunks from the Caspian forest to Bouchir on the Gulf, transporting them across the passes of the Alborz and the dreadful roads of the Fars escarpment (Lockhart 1936). This explanation is far too simple.

We must look instead to human and cultural factors. One major initial observation is worth making. None of the three main ethnic groups that embarked on the Mediterranean Sea under the banner of Islam at different moments in history had a continuous maritime tradition. This fact is obvious in the case of the Arabs and the Turks, who came from the interiors of continental landmasses. The former had, at the time of the birth of Islam, almost entirely forfeited the gains of the Himyarite navy, which had ruled the Red Sea several centuries before. Their maritime vocabulary was almost entirely foreign, and indeed borrowed from different languages on the two fronts of their expansion, where the vocabularies differ profoundly: essentially from Persian in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean, and from Aramaic in the Mediterranean (Ferrand 1924; Fraenkel 1886: 209-32) Even today, despite the subsequent development of a specifically Arabic maritime vocabulary, lexical statistics taken at various points, and particularly on the Syrian and Lebanese coasts (Mutlak 1973), show that the proportion of foreign terms is still considerable. The picture is identical

in the case of the Turks, who, on their arrival in the Middle East, even lacked a specific word to designate the sea, and who today still use a term that was initially applied to lakes. Almost all of the seafaring vocabulary used in the Turkish spoken in Turkey is of Italian origin (Kahane and Kahane 1942), whereas that concerning fishing is borrowed largely from the Greeks.

Although the causes of the phenomenon are much more enigmatic in the case of the third ethnic group—the Berbers—we must in any event acknowledge that they had always shown, before their Islamisation, a deep reluctance to take to the sea, a reluctance that they largely retained. The very rare cases of specifically Berber maritime activity in antiquity (Strabon III, 4, 2; Pliny VI, 203, 205; cf. Gsell 1913-28: Vol. V, 151-2) do not alter this general fact, which is in large part responsible for the various colonisations (Phoenician, Greek in Cyrenaica, Roman) that succeeded one another on the North African coast. Berber piracy of the Barbary cities is an exception that developed from very particular circumstances only from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onwards. It was only the invasion by the great Arab Hilalian nomads, shortly before the time when Ibn Khaldun was writing, that forced these Arabized Berbers to reorientate their activity towards the sea by cutting them off from the cities of the interior (Marcais 1946: 215-28). Ibn Khaldun (1934: III, 777) was the first to record this transformation, some three centuries before a massive influx of renegades triggered the definitive expansion of corsairing, as we will see below. Apart from this special case, neither the Mediterranean, nor, more understandably, the Atlantic Ocean, has ever really witnessed Berber seamen. When the Europeans arrived on the Canary Islands the Guanches no longer had boats, and the different islands no longer communicated with each other. Among the Kabyles, forced back to their coastal massif, and of whom one might have expected a similar evolution to that which pushed the Imragen towards the sea, or the few Chleuh fishermen referred to earlier, no such thing happened. For them the sea remained, an unknown, the domain of ogresses and genies, and a place of no return. Even its shores were the object of taboo. Only pious individuals, protected by their virtue, could settle and live there (Lacoste-Dujardin 1982: 118-19). Here again, the maritime vocabulary is revealing. That of the Berbers is almost all borrowed from Arabic and only post-dates their Islamisation (Serra 1973).

In these conditions of almost total ignorance of the sea, it is not surprising that when Muslims did venture onto it, they had to draw on the knowledge of others. Even apart from the activities of the

Coptic carpenters mentioned earlier, it was entirely Christian crews who sailed the first Egyptian fleets, and this was the case at least until the mid-ninth century. Only the soldiers who sailed with them, and who played the decisive role in the battles, were Muslims (for the sources, see Bell 1910; Kubiak 1970: 46, 49). The omnipresence of the renegades over the centuries is the most striking manifestation of this deficiency. It was almost always they, Venetians or Greeks, or recruits from the *devsirme,* who led the Ottoman fleets (Imber 1980:255). For example, in Algiers in 1588 a survey covering thirty-four *rais* (a 'chief captain of the vessel') allows us to identify the presence of at least nineteen renegades (eighteen Christians and one Jew) and two sons of renegades, not to mention those of the second generation who can no longer be distinguished (Boyer 1985: 97; Vovard 1951: 208). At that time the Pasha of the city and approximately half of its fifty thousand inhabitants were renegades (Buyer 1985: 94). Renegades can also be credited with the great expansion of the corsairing at Sale at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Coindreau 1948: 41, 57, 66ff). While there are no similar statistical records for the period of the first great confrontation in the Mediterranean, the role of the renegades was also certainly considerable then. Two of their number particularly distinguished themselves at the head of the Abbasid fleets at the beginning of the tenth century. These were Damien of Tarsus, who died in 913, and Leon of Tripoli, director of the expedition that ended in 904 with the sack of Salonika (Fahmy 1966: 109, 161-2). A little later, it was the Slavs who played a decisive role in the development of the Fatimid navy (Dachraoui 1981: 152, 155, 290, 301-3, 384, 393-4; nothing comparable can be reported in the land-based forces). Through Jewish merchant intermediaries, Christians were then selling to Muslims great numbers of Slavs as slaves, who subsequently adopted the faith of their new masters.

SOME EXCEPTIONS

However, by itself the 'ethnic' interpretation of Muslim absence at sea is inadequate. We need only remember that the Persians—who so distanced themselves from the sea that they were almost totally absent from it by the nineteenth century—preserved for several centuries after their Islamisation the great maritime tradition they had inherited in the South Seas (Planhol 1996). The lack of seafaring Muslims was far from absolute. There were some remarkable maritime vocations among them. We may consider the exemplary destiny of Bosr ibn Abi Artat, a companion of the Prophet born at Mecca some ten years

before the Hijra, who was to be the first admiral of the Arab fleets launched against Constantinople. We might also remember Malikite Kadi Asad ben al-Forat (759-828), a charismatic character, who, when approaching the end of his life in 827, at the 'Council of the Wise', which met at Sousse to examine the possibility of an expedition to Sicily on the occasion of the betrayal of the Byzantine admiral Euphemios, influenced, alone in his opinion, the decision of the reluctant assembly, and placed himself at the head of the fleet that was to initiate the conquest of the island (Talbi 1966: 411-12, 417-18). Or the first Turkish sailor whose memory has been preserved by history, Caka. Emir of Smyrna, who from the end of the eleventh century was to build a fleet and threaten Constantinople. (It is true that in his youth he had been a prisoner at the Byzantine court and had certainly familiarised himself there with matters of the sea; see Hess 1970: 1896; Sevim and Yucel 1990: 82-4). There was also the creator of the second Turkish fleet, Umuz Emir of Aydin, in the first half of the fourteenth century, but this was to be more than three centuries later, and the interval is significant in itself. But how many *rais,* beginning with the most prestigious ones in the final period of corsairing, such as those of Embarak or Hamidou (Devoulx 1872, 1911 [1859]), were pure products of the human environment of Algiers at a time when the renegades had made themselves scarce and when successive injections of 'new blood' had largely ceased? The overall conclusion is clear. There was no intrinsic ineptitude, no individual incompatibility. We must search further.

The problem really remains that of the *rarity* of these maritime vocations. Here we must introduce an element of another order, one more general than personal attitudes. This is what can be regarded as Muslim society's global lack of interest in, even its persistent repugnance towards, the sea.

This was already clearly evident in the orientation of the Caliphate. Despite the construction of great fleets, the sea was never at the heart of the Caliphate's preoccupations. Its capitals, at Damascus and later at Baghdad, were continental. In Egypt, Cairo was to replace Alexandria as the focal point of the nation. The titles of the Caliph were never to include any reference whatever to sovereignty of the sea, while in contrast Byzantine texts always emphasised the fact that the empire stretched 'over all the Mediterranean and as far as the columns of Hercules' (Hoemebach 1950-5: 391, 395). For one of the two great powers then sharing the eastern Mediterranean, the sea was an essential

constituent. This was not the case for the other. The situation was to be no different at the end of the sixteenth century when the Portuguese and the Ottomans clashed on the Red Sea. In 1499, Manuel I proclaimed himself "Lord of Guinea and of the Conquests, *Seavays and Trade* of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India" (emphasis added). But some years later, at the time of the conquest of the Arabian provinces. Sultan Selim announced that

> now all the *territories* of Egypt, Malatya, Aleppo, Syria, the *city* of Cairo, *Upper* Egypt, Ethiopia, Yemen, the *lands* up to the Tunisian border, the Hijaz the *cities* of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, may Cod fully and completely increase their honour and respectability, have been added to the Ottoman Empire, (cited in Hess *1970:* 1911 emphases added).

This attitude was widespread. The Muslim states were never really interested in the sea for any length of time. Their great maritime policies, white not entirely lacking, were only episodes, sporadic impulses followed by long periods of neglect and abandonment. Thus, it has been possible to calculate that daring the period of Mamluk domination in Egypt and Syria (1250-1517) no fewer than six or seven fleets were constructed: that is, one around every forty years on average. Quickly and badly built, the ships soon fell into disuse and disappeared until the next revival.

These fits of interest in the sea were only responses to circumstantial chance (Ayalon 1967: 6). It was ever so. The naval policies of the Omayyads of Cordoba in the mid-ninth century were purely a response to the Norman invasions (Picard 1997: 99). It has been suggested that those of the Aghlabids of Kairouan some years earlier were the product of 'geographical chance', linked to the proximity of Sicily and to the betrayal of Euphemios (Eickhoff 1954: *65-6).* These bursts of active naval construction were followed by periods of total inaction. The capriciousness of the leaders could reach such a point that ships were sometimes left half-built. This was the case after the attack on Alexandria by the Fianks of Cyprus in 1365. The Mamluks started to construct an enormous fleet in their Egyptian and Syrian ports, then suddenly changed their minds. The ships under construction in the arsenal at Beirut were abandoned and the local inhabitants looted the metal components, while the wooden frameworks were left to rot (Hamblin 1986: 77). During the era or the great Ottoman fleet, which was a powerful and continuous force for almost three centuries, the lack of maintenance and the widespread slackness in daily practice is evidence of the same deficiency. In 1588, the Venetian ambassador, Antonio Barbarigo, described the

ships as 'lasting no more than a year, so that when they come back to be decommissioned, it is pitiful to see their state of decline' (cited in Imber 980: 225). It is understandable that under these circumstances naval officers always held a relatively interior rank in the social hierarchy. When the Mamluk fleet was defeated in 1270 in Cypriot waters, the naval command fell almost entirely into the hands of the Franks, including the governors of the three ports of Alexandria, Damietta and Rosetta. A long list of the names of these officers has survived. It does not contain a single Mamluk name. No member of Egypt's ruling caste was among them. What is more, in the thousands of biographies preserved from the historical literature of the Mamluk period, not one concerns a seafarer or a naval commander (Ayalon 1967: 5). Obviously it did not occur to the elite of this military society to take to the sea, and it was certainly not the route to fame and fortune. Ibn Khaldun, during the same period, stated that in Ifriqya as in the other eastern Berber states, the commander of the navy held a lower rank than the commander-in-chief of the land army. 'In many cases', he adds, "he is obliged to obey his orders" (*Prolegomenes* II, 37).

It was to be no different for the Turks at the time of the great Ottoman fleet. The *kapudan pasha,* who commanded it, was a very weak figure in the imperial hierarchy. He was normally a *sancak beyi* a provincial governor—of whom there were dozens—a rank below a commander of the land forces, who held the title of *beylerbeyi.* Because of his personal merits, Hayreddin (Barbarossa) was to attain the rank of *beylerbeyi,* along with certain of his successors, like Piyale Pasha in 1555, but this was exceptional. In any event, the *kapudan pasha* was never a member of the imperial *divan,* with the unique exception of Barbarossa. This rank was well below Chat of the viziers. It is also astonishing to see that the *kapudan pasha,* who effectively commanded the fleet (it was by no means an honorific title), was very often someone with no maritime experience, and whose relationship with the naval experts under his command, almost all of them renegades, was always difficult. Throughout the sixteenth century there were only to be two who were men of the sea—Barbarossa again, and Kilic Ali Pasha, who was appointed after the battle of Lepanto at a moment when there was an obvious need for someone with experience. At Lepanto itself, the *kapudan pasha* was Muezzinzade Ali Pasha, an aga of the Janissaries, and his mistakes were the main cause of the disaster. As for the troops, matters were even worse. There were no specialised naval troops in the Ottoman fleet. The Janissaries served at sea under the command

of their regular officers, among them many Kurds who had never even seen the sea before embarking. The galley slaves, mainly Anatolian peasants recruited from the land army, had no maritime experience either (Imber 1980:247-69). Any comparison with the European navies of the period would be cruel and superfluous. The Muslim navies were remarkably specific with regard to the recruitment of the sailors themselves. Like more or less every navy in the world, they practised forced enlistment, 'the press gang', but whereas in Europe this was carried out exclusively in ports, at the expense of a transient population of vagabonds and sailors in breach of enlistment, but who were nonetheless always familiar with the sea, in Islam it was brought to bear on people who lived far in the Egyptian or Ifriqyan interior. which gives an idea of the execrable quality of human material it might provide. Baybars, after the disaster of 1270, congratulated himself on having lost only 'peasants and riffraff (cited in Ayalon 1967: 5). Such views on the part of the rulers were in fact only the expression of attitudes even more widespread in civil society.

Lack of any real interest in the sea manifested itself above all in the rarity of texts concerning it. It has often been noted that Christian sources alone are insufficient to compile the history of the Muslim navies, but that Muslim writings on the subject are extremely scarce (Ayalon 1967: 4; Fahmy 1966: 149; Guichard 1983: 55; Kubiak 1970: 45; Lev 1984: 246). Knowledge of the South Seas, for example, declined when they were under Muslim control. At the time of the great Abbasid voyages of discovery to the Far East, the first texts, like the account of the journey attributed to the merchant Suleiman composed in 851 (Suleiman 1948), bear witness to a good working knowledge of the South Seas. But from the tenth century onwards, in the *Supplement* of Abu Zaid, written around 915 (Ferrand 1922), and more strikingly in the *Book of Wonders of India*, written around 950 (Devic 1873), the tone changed: the role of myth becomes disproportionately inflated, and precise facts disappear, to be buried for centuries under a jumble of extraordinary tales and stories. Why did all this fantastic material get the better of objective knowledge? The controversy that has arisen on this subject is significant. Jean Sauvaget (1948) suggested that it was because voyages had ceased at the time of the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, and it required all the erudition of Jean Aubin (1963) to find evidence, pre-emptory in tone but actually little in quantity, that this was not the case, and that maritime activity had been continuous until the texts of Ibn Madjid at the end of the fifteenth century. How could that tremendous Arabic

scholar Jean Sauvaget have made such an error? The fact is that this great expert on classical Arabic literature found no mention of the sea or any accounts of it. There is here the clear indication of a deep rift, of a chasm, between the culture of the lettered society of Baghdad and matters of the sea. Although now, several centuries later, the stories of Sinbad have been bracketed together with the collection of *A Thousand and One Nights*, it is clear that these sailors' tales held no interest for the pious individuals whose works have mainly survived. Let us remember that the *Haouiya*, Ibn Madjid's most important text, is only known in six manuscripts, while the great religious, philosophical and even historical texts of Muslim culture are known by dozens, even hundreds of copies. Things have hardly changed today. We need only recall the words of a Kuwaiti captain on board whose ship Alan Villiers took passage in 1939 during his voyage along the east coast of Africa. When he learned that his passenger wanted to write a book about the journey, his only reaction was that not a single Arab would read it (Villiers 1940: 13).

We need not dwell on this. The apathy and neglect on the part of Muslim society towards the sea were absolute. Prior to really recent times, nothing can be found in the literature, whereas the sea has profoundly marked the emotions and the imagination of Christianity since the Middle Ages. While in almost all western languages the image of the voyage is maritime, in Muslim countries it is linked to a journey by land (Lewis 1991). Sailors' songs, such a rich genre in the West, are here notably impoverished, confined to invocations of the greatness of God and his mercy. When compared to the flowering of ex-votos and the liturgy of the sea in Catholic Christianity, there is no particular spirituality, but rather, at most, a few superstitions (Brunot 1921: 10-12, 19-23, 54).

There have, of course, been exceptions to this general picture. For example, in Muslim Andalusia the navy rose to prominence in society on at least several occasions: under the Omayyads in the ninth and tenth centuries, under the *Reyes de Taifas,*, and again under the Almohads. Under Abd-ur-Rahman III (912-61), the commander of the fleet was one of the three principal figures of state, together with the commanding general at Zaragoza and the Kadi of Cordoba (Eickhoff 1954: 173; Lirola Delgado 1993; Morales Belda 1970; Picard 1997). One text even states that he shared 'power with the Caliph, one governing on land, the other at sea' *(Kitab az-Zahrat*, cited by Levi-Provencal 1932: 85-86). A number of factors converge to underline the special case of Andalusia,

among them the early and important role played by Spanish pirates who in the ninth century carried out the conquest of Crete at the other end of the Mediterranean before making numerous forays into the Aegean Sea (Brooks 1913: Christides 1981, 1984); and the flourishing of a specialised legal maritime literature that, from the eleventh century onwards, demonstrated the place of commercial maritime activity in civilian society (Picard 1997: 302, 468-72). These factors combine with other characteristics to indicate that Andalusia was a province culturally distinct from the Muslim zone, a 'European' culture before the term existed, where the Christians, whether Islamised or not, constituted an essential substratum and played an active part in maritime life (Picard 1997: 499-501). The same interpretation can be offered for the Malaysian exception already mentioned (Lombard 1990; Sopher 1965). Such exceptions only confirm the rule.

WHY WERE MUSLIMS INDIFFERENT TO THE SEA?

However, by considering these exceptions we only shift the emphasis of the problem, to the core of which we now return. Why this widespread Muslim indifference to the sea? In fact, this indifference expresses an intrinsic incompatibility. 'Islam as we know, means 'submission'. The Muslim is 'he who has submitted'. The sailor is essentially rebellious, or at least independent. 'Homme libre, toujours tu cheriras la merl", remarks Baudelaire in *Les fleurs du mal* (XV). In the eyes of Muslim society, sailors remain marginal, suspicious characters, even if they are generally good believers. In the South Seas, even today, only a few Omani and Kuwaiti captains enjoy respect, and this merely because of their involvement in trade and their links by origin and alliance to the social aristocracy of merchants. The fishing communities along the Indian coast, in contrast, were originally peopled by low castes or by former slaves (Siddiqi 1956: 33-5). Sailors were a bunch of vagabonds and men who had gone down in the world (Villiers 1940: 142, 347). Their conduct was far removed from conventional morality. They provoked unanimous retribution. 'Any country bordering the sea... abounds in fornicators and paederasts,' wrote Moqaddasi at the end of the tenth century (Moqaddasi 1963: 80-1). When his contemporary, the pious Ibn Hauqal, discussed the *ribat* of Palermo, a coastal fortress where seafarers assembled, charged with being the privileged defenders of the faith, he deplored the disorderly behaviour and debauchery of its occupants (Ibn Hauqal 1964: Vol. I, 120). Is this the over-reaction of men of letters and religion? In fact, it expresses the scorn that an entire society had always felt about sailors. A famous and frequently

cited text by Maqrisi (*Kithath,* II, 194, 17-22; of Ehrenkreutz 1955; Levi della Vida 1944-5: 218) informs us that service at sea, after Saladin's death and the end of his naval policies, 'had become a shameful thing which was grounds for insult. When one addressed a man in Egypt with the words: "Hey, sailor!", he would become very angry.' This text (from the late fifteenth century) was clearly intended as a counterpoint to the highpoints of Muslim maritime history, first under the Caliph Mutawakkil who developed the fleet after the Byzantine raid on Damietta in 853, and then under Saladin at the end of the twelfth century. The text clearly incorporates a constant in the attitude of the Egyptian population that was already evident by the eleventh century in relations between Cairo and Alexandria, as illustrated by the subordinate role and low esteem in which the maritime inhabitants of the latter were held (Udovitch 1978). This perception of sailors and boatmen has not changed to this day, and many pejorative proverbs in contemporary Egyptian still target them. All this can be explained, and here we come to the heart of the problem, by the fact that the culture of seafarers is quite unlike normal Muslim culture (cf. Prins 1965: 263-75). Seafaring culture is fragmented and schizophrenic, in perpetual conflict between the pragmatic values of adaptability and flexibility necessitated by life at sea, and the normative values of Islam, to which one was forced to return on land. It is a culture veering between excitement and inaction, based on discontinuity, while the life of the Muslim is fundamentally ordered, rejecting excess and over-indulgence, the expression of the urban bourgeois ideal of the cities of the Hijaz-Sailors are really no better integrated into Muslim society than nomads (Planhol 1968: 25-6). Islam has always considered them to be outsiders.

But if sailors are undesirable, the sea itself also invites condemnation. Such condemnation has often been repeated, showing the reluctance of the true believer to venture on to the water. The first unequivocal expression dates back to Omar himself, when he refused Mu'awiyya, then governor of Syria, authorisation to build a fleet to attack Cyprus. 'The Syrian Sea, I am told, is longer and wider than the desert, and threatens the Lord himself, night and day, trying to swallow him up... no, no, my friend, the safety of my people is more precious than all the treasures of Greece.' Such texts were common from this point on. Shortly after the founding of the arsenal at Tunis, at the beginning of the eighth century, when Mousa, the governor of the city, wanted to develop its shipbuilding, the Kadi told him clearly that no man of normal behaviour would even think of going to sea. One was even

justified in withdrawing the civic rights of a man who entrusted himself to a ship (Al-Maqqari 1840: Vol. I, lxvi; Eickhoff 1954: 16, 246-7). There had to be a supreme sanction for all this: that of the Prophet himself. This was provided in numerous *Hadiths*. We will simply note one, vouched for by Ibn Hanbal, one of the four great doctors of Islam. It is of very doubtful attribution, but even more significant if it is apocryphal in that it clearly indicates the general attitude of Muslim society during the first centuries of the Hijra. 'The sea', the Prophet is supposed to have said, 'is Hell, and Satan reigns over the waters' (Ibn Hanbal 1313/1895: Vol. III. 66. 333; see also Hoernebach 1950-5:385).

So the believers turned their backs on this infernal element. As we have seen, there were certainly transgressions into the forbidden; remarkable individual enterprises since that of Mu'awiyya, who, some years after Omar's refusal, obtained from his successor Othman, in 648-9, the authorisation to equip a fleet for an attack on Cyprus. Many farsighted minds in Islam perceived the need to "break the taboo', whose disastrous effects they witnessed. In order to attract believers to service at sea, certain individuals had recourse to expedients like favourable pay, endeavouring at least to align it with that of the land army (compared to which it was much lower). Such individuals include Saladin in 1172 (Ehrenkreutz 1955: 105), and Al-Mu'izz, the fifth Fatimid Caliph (953-975) and conqueror of Egypt (Eickhoff 1954: 167; Hamblin 1986: 78). When the lure of worldly goods was not enough, there was always the promise of the hereafter. Contact with such an odious element must be possible and even desirable if in pursuit of a good cause. Thus, exceptional merits were attributed to seafaring warriors, and corresponding rewards announced, the promise of which was even put in the mouth of the Prophet. Those who suffered from seasickness, as well as those who drowned, were credited with martyrdom. One seaborne expedition in a holy war was worth ten on land. A simple look towards the sea was serving God (Hoemebach 1950-5: 384-5). With a surprising pragmatism, the *hadiths* associate with the unequivocal condemnation of the sea the compensation essential for the righteous pursuit of *jihad*. Thus, the Fatimids accorded believers who ventured on to the water the prestigious title of *Ghazi al'Bahr*, `warrior for the faith at sea.' Even earlier, in the Omayyad period, many of the Qureish (the tribe of the Prophet) and the *Ancar* (his first companions and their descendants) had insisted on participating in the first maritime expeditions to show their ardour in overcoming their disgust (Eickhoff 1954: 167). We find movements of this kind periodically across the centuries. They never lasted long. Faith could

sometimes triumph over the waters, but social pressure always remained the strongest force.

The consequences of all this are worth considering, even briefly. Much has been written about the decline, or relative decline, of Islam. The causes, which are certainly many and various, have been sought. We must acknowledge that this incompatibility of Islam and Muslim society with life at sea is one of them, if not the principal one. Two points in particular must be mentioned. First, the almost total absence of Muslims among the great maritime traders at the end of the Middle Ages and in modern and contemporary times, and their consequent failure to benefit from increasing prosperity in a period when the so-called 'global economy' was emerging. And, second, their non-participation in the great transoceanic discoveries of the fifteenth century, at a time when Muslim power was still more or less equal to that of Europe. Had they been resolute and ventured to sea, the fate of the world could well have been different.

IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM: A CRITICAL PARADIGM

Despite the pioneering leads by Marx (1867), Weber (1904) and Durkheim [1964 (1912)], the sociology of religion has been until recently one of the least developed areas in sociology. Even at the college level, especially in American sociology, courses in religion are poorly attended and only rarely offered. When it comes to Islam, sociological literature is very limited. This deficiency in sociology did not go unnoticed. Writing over twenty-five years ago. Turner (1974: 1-2) noted that an examination of any sociology of religion textbook published in the last fifty years will show... that sociologists are either not interested in Islam or have nothing to contribute to Islamic scholarship.... There is consequently a need for studies of Islam which will raise important issues in Islamic history and social structure within a broad sociological framework which is relevant to contemporary theoretical issues.

Even when they did focus on Islam, western sociologists were often inconsistent in their approach. This is true of no less a sociologist than Max Weber:

> ... Weber also made a massive contribution to contemporary sociology by outlining a special philosophy of social science and a related methodology which attempts to present the social actor's constitution of social reality by subjective interpretations. In Weberian sociology, we must start any research inquiry with an adequate account or description of the actor's subjective world... my argument will be that in his

observation on Islam and Muhammed Weber was one of the first sociologists to abandon his own philosophical guide-lines. (Turner 1974: 3)

Weber is not alone in being inconsistent. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) points out a widespread flaw in western scholarship when it comes to the study of non-western cultures in general and Islam and Muslims in particular. Said argues that the representation of Islam in western scholarly writings is deeply implicated in the power relations between researcher and researched, and is partly constructed not so much by independent observation and evidence as by the pre-existing biases of the scholars themselves. Whatever their flaws in studying 'other' cultures, sociologists of religions and the Orientalists have had a rare attraction in the 'five pillars' of Islam. Their interest in this specific aspect of Islam does not seem to be altogether out of place.

After all, these are the five pillars that bring Islam closer to other religions in function if not in form. Religion is often defined as communion with and commitment to the supernatural, with the accompanying acts that promote piety, a sense of selflessness and a degree of empathy with others, qualities that have the effect of promoting internal social solidarity (Durkheim 1964 [1912]). No wonder that religion has been considered to be a crucial social institution, especially, in the Parsonian model (Parsons 1951; Wuthnow 1988). Inasmuch as this is the case, a focus on the five pillars fits neatly into a functional analysis, especially into a structural-functional model.

However, in this chapter I depart from rather than support this approach in its entirety. Much of the literature on Islam, by Muslim and western scholars alike, points out that Islam does not distinguish between religion and politics (Kedouri 1992; Martin 1982); and that, far from being just a formula for worship, Islam, in fact, provides an overall societal ideology (Arjomand 1992; Esposito 1984). Sensitivity to similar concerns has prompted some (Kessler 1972) to assert that either Islam is not a religion or that, as a religion, it is in a category all by itself. Following the ideological approach, it is possible, as we shall see, to reject the treatment of Islam as a social institution and yet retain the integrity of the Parsonian model. We may treat Islam as a social system.

DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC ECONOMY

An Islamic economy has three features: it respects private property, it promotes a free market of exchange of goods and services, and it

aims at minimising the differential between the rich and the poor. Three strategies are used progressively in order to achieve these objectives. First, Islam emphasises the work ethic, dedication to one's calling and enjoying the fruits of one's labour. Like Weber's 'Protestant ethic' (1904), Islam calls for hard work in order to earn a living and to take care of one's family, rather than forsaking the world or surviving on handouts, donations and charity; but unlike the Protestant ethic, Islam does not necessarily take material success in this world as a sign of God's approval of what one is doing. Material success in this world might just as well be a test—a trial from God—of one's conviction and faith in the Almighty. Consequently, the more successful one is in this world, the more God-fearing one ought to be. Moreover, much as Islam emphasises hard work in order to make a living, it is averse to materialism, opportunistic profiteering and seemingly unending pursuit of wealth—a bottomless abyss, as Durkheim (1966 [1897]) put its— and an obsession with this worldly pleasures (Qur'an 87:16).

Second, at the same time as Islam favours acquisition of property and a market economy, it institutes a prohibition on the sources of 'making a fast buck' or excessive accumulation such as gambling, hoarding and dealing in interest (taking as well as giving). The Islamic economy must not deal in *riba* or interest. This does not mean that banking is prohibited. Indeed, Muslim economists (for instance, Siddiqui 1975) recommend banks as highly efficient machines that make large amounts of capital available to the investor. Islamic banks deal in profit- and loss-sharing rather than interest, something thought to be quite feasible (Anderson et al. 1990), and in which there is a growing interest among Muslim and non-Muslim economists alike.

Third, inasmuch as sources of excessive accumulation of wealth are denied by Qur'anic prohibition, dispersion of property is facilitated by Islamic folkways (through various forms of voluntary acts of charity, generosity and hospitality), as well as through explicit Qur'anic commandments of inheritence or *wiratha* (4:7, 11) and the poor tax or the *zakat*. In the case *of wiratha,* the property of the deceased should be distributed not only among the nearest surviving relatives (wife, sons and daughters), but also among other near relatives such as surviving parents, and brothers and sisters of the deceased, as well as among other less prosperous relatives, and even among needy neighbours and the chronic poor in the community (Qur'an 4:7, 8). The idea is to distribute the property of the deceased widely, rather than allowing it to remain in a few hands.

Zakat, on the other hand, which is not to be confused with a state-levied tax, is the requirement among Muslims to set aside (or contribute to a fund with a similar objective), for the exclusive use of the poor and the needy, 2.5 per cent of one's property left unused for one whole year. *Zakat* should also not be confused with voluntary acts of charity. It is supposed to be the exclusive *right* of the poor, who deserve a share in one's success. If property is invested, then no *zakat* is payable. In other words, property must not be kept lying idle. It should either be kept in circulation *or zakat* should be paid on it. When property is in circulation, it helps the overall community, including the poor. When not in circulation, *zakat* ensures that it still helps the economy.

When Muslims abide by these requirements, they are free to use their property as they like for the benefit of their family. No human system, whether economic or otherwise, is without restrictions that regulate it. Non-Islamic economic systems have their own regulations. An Islamic economy has its own. Islam encourages worldly success while recommending a redistribution of property far in excess of what modern capitalism would accept, yet far below the level that socialism would tolerate. Briefly, Islam allows capitalism minus material obsessions. While defying any socialist solutions, however, it also restricts accumulation of resources in a limited number of hands.

SOCIOLOGICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

All human beings have two fundamental needs. First, they must have food, clothing and shelter, as well as a means of energy, transportation and communication. These are economic needs that must be satisfied one way or another. Second, human sexual and reproductive needs can only be satisfied by interacting with others.

However, pursuit of these needs can potentially disrupt social relationships unless people are subjected to some sort of normative controls. Polity or the collective exercise of power, then, is a third major element that humans require while living a social life. Exercise of power itself may vary from arbitrary and coercive to responsive and responsible, yet this need for normative controls in society (even to control arbitrary exercise of power) cannot be denied. Humans have also shown a need for the supernatural and for some way of communicating with the being or beings beyond the mortal.

All societies see to it that these four human needs are satisfied through highly regulated patterns of interaction. Parsons (1951) called

these patterns of interaction "social institutions'—of economy, family, polity and worship. Without the first three of these, human society is unthinkable. Without all four of them, society has not existed historically. Taken together, norms governing these social institutions describe most essential ingredients of the culture of human society universally. As dissimilar as these institutional patterns of social interaction are, ideally they must be interdependent and mutually reinforcing. This is the American version of the so-called 'organic metaphor' that has been handed down to us from the beginning of classical sociology through Comte, Spencer and Durkheim via Parsons. However, with the possible exception of very simple preliterate societies, this harmonious functioning of societal institutions is rarely the case in reality. In fact, as a society becomes more complex, indeed with every new development, its institutions tend to exert centrifugal pressure upon one another.

Last in a long chain of major religions of the world, Islam came at the threshold of accelerating societal complexity. Human population, with few exceptions, had already become sedantary. As horticulture was widely replaced by irrigation-based agricultural civilisations, nomadism and animal husbandry gave way to urbanisation and international commercial settlements, while the barter system was slowly replaced by the gold and monetary standards.

At this juncture in human history, Islam came with a full compliment of social institutions (the Qur'an calls it *deen)* essential to human society. We do not know of any other 'ism', religion, philosophy of life or ideology that deals with these four indispensable aspects of human life at once, as a manifestation of the same source that provides them with organic unity. A common ideological root in Islam, obviously, is meant to keep the complex society of human beings from coming apart at its institutional seams. This claim stands in defiance of all other ideologies of the past and the present that have failed to provide a singular design of institutional unity for human society.

When practised in its totality, the *deen* of Islam aims at creating what the Qur'an calls the 'Middle Nation' (2:143). This centralising tendency in Islam has the potential of negotiating ideological extremes and providing them with a common ground by seeking a median course between, say, ascetic spiritualism and obsessive materialism, between selfishness and altruism, between complete freedom and restriction in mate selection, between monogamy and polygamy; and, in a more modern context, between capitalism and socialism, and

between democracy and authoritarianism. From the Qura'nic point of view, humans are prone to taking extreme positions. The Qur'an presents Islam as a *deen* in order to guard against such extremes.

DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC FAMILY

Although a Muslim does not have to get married, celibacy is not considered to be especially virtuous in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying that marriage what makes a man perfect, that one must many as soon as circumstances allow. Islamic institutions of marriage and the family neither wholly restrict choice of marriage partner, nor permit complete freedom. Marriage in Islam is asocial contract, not a sacrament. It is a contract exclusively between the groom and the bride, with full and explicit knowledge and consent of the two, and in the stark contrast to those practices in which a bride has no say in her own marriage or is sold to the highest bidder.

However, this freedom of choice in mate selection in Islam does not permit pre-marital courting, dating, intimacy or sexual intercourse. In fact, according to the established tradition *(sunnah)* of the Prophet, unrelated men and women cannot so much as even touch one another. Consequently, men and women are supposed to distance themselves from each other through the practice of *hijab* or 'modesty', often manifest in the veil, a practice that divides many Muslim societies into two gender-specific subcultures. In such circumstances, a 'love marriage' is extremely uncommon. As Lipskey (1961: 53) put it, "the general attitude is that love should grow out of marriage, not precede it. Not romantic love but proper social arrangements and satisfactory material circumstances are regarded as essential foundations for a successful marriage". In this situation, it is generally left up to the parents and other relatives, even to friends and neighbours, to find a suitable mate for marriageable offspring. Because marriage is a contract, there is generally a protracted period of time during which the two sides are supposed to discuss and finalize the pre-nuptial conditions. However, in no circumstances should the right of the bride or the groom to say 'no' be denied.

After the bride and groom have agreed to the pre-nuptial conditions, they proclaim their consent to the marriage contract in the presence of at least two adult and sane Muslim witnesses. The marriage is then solemnised. Marriage in Islam thus brings together two families as well as uniting two individuals. Islam creates a system in which differentiation between the family of orientation and the family of

procreation appears to diminish. Indeed, the family of orientation (parental family) necessarily plays a significant role in shaping the family of procreation.

No Islamic marriage is solemnised unless the groom has agreed at the time of the wedding itself to give the bride on demand *(mua'jjal)* or later *(mowajjal)* a piece of property as *mehr.* A number of historians and Orientalists have translated *mehr* as dowry. However, *mehr* must not be confused with dowry, which is generally given to the bride's parents or her family before the wedding takes place. *Mehr,* on the other hand, is the exclusive right of the wife and wife alone. No one else—not her parents, her guardian, nor even her husband—can claim a right to the property that is premised to her in her marriage contract. As its sole beneficiary, she has the legal right to dispose of this property as she wishes.

According to Levy (1962: 5), *mehr* reflects a stage in the emancipation of woman from concubinage and slavery through bride-price to the Islamic stage, where a gift is paid to the bride alone. Evidently, the practice of *mehr* has been instituted in Islam to support women in the event of marital conflict. No wonder that the amount of *mehr* is often much disputed in pre-nuptial negotiations. Thus, when entering marriage, a Muslim woman not only becomes a wife, she also becomes a propertied person, perhaps for the first time in her life. It is perhaps because of this that even most modern and educated Muslim women seem to favour the practice *of mehr* in their marriage (Ba-Yunus 1990).

Islam opens the door for polygamy, and yet puts it under severe restriction. Although permitting up to four wives, it all but forbids this in practice:

> If you are afraid that you shall not do justice among them then [marry] only one. (Qur'an 4:3)

> But you will not be able to do justice among them. (Qur'an 4:129)

Muslims thus do not have a free licence to practise polygamy. Because the Qur'an does not oblige believers to practise it, polygamy may actually on occasion be legally prohibited (for example, by civil court justices or by judge or *qadi).* Some circumstances, however, may make polygamy desirable; for instance, in times of war when children are orphaned or left homeless (which are, in fact, the kinds of circumstance specified by the Qur'an in the verses cited above). The sex ratio may also change to favour females in the reproductive age, owing, for instance, to an epidemic that takes a heavier toll of men

than of women. Cultural conditions may evolve so that eligible men are more at risk due, for example, to increasing mobility, highway accidents, juvenile delinquency and violent crime. Or a Muslim community may have to accommodate large numbers of female converts to Islam, as in contemporary North America (Shaft 1990).

In modern industrial democratic societies, a falling sex ratio is a well-known demographic phenomenon. After its initial advantage at birth, the male population, especially in developed societies, seems to decline faster than the female population. While the lowest sex ratio is generally in the post-retirement age bracket, it is present among those of marriageable age as well. However, in modern western societies that have adopted a 'new morality' or 'alternative life-styles' (such as postponement of marriage, cohabitation and greater freedom in sexual practices), a gradual decrease in the male population may not necessarily pose an immediate social problem. Evidently, Islam would not favour this 'new morality' as a 'solution' to the problem of eligible females remaining unmarried.

In defence of polygamy in Islam, the typical male response, occasionally supported by some jurists, has been to assert that men are sexually more aggressive than women. Thus, as the argument goes, those whose sexual urges are not satisfied by their wives alone are allowed to take additional wives, rather than engage in such disdainful acts as prostitution. As chauvinistic as this explanation may sound, it stresses the fact that in Islam the foremost function of marriage is to regulate the sexual act.

Islam thus does not commit the male believer to monogamy. But it does not commit him to polygamy either. In Islam neither monogamy nor polygamy is supposed to be ideal. Monogamy may remain an ideal form of marriage, with husband and wife, as the Qur'an (2:187) puts it, living like beautiful attire as adornment for another, with mutual love masking one another's defects. However, at other times this ideal may not be so ideal any more. What is supposed to be ideal in all marriages, whether monogamous, or polygamous is justice; and in the broadest terms justice in marriage means that it has the function (in addition to regulating sexual behaviour) of providing homes and family life fall of love and mutual care for women who otherwise may remain unmarried (Qur'an 30:21). Lastly, it may be pointed out that because of her right to say 'no', a Muslim woman cannot be forced to enter into a polygamous union. Consequently, although polygamy is permitted, Islamic society has with few exceptions remained monogamous and mostly chaste throughout history.

DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC POLITY

Unlike the Shi'a minority view, which is explicitly dynastic and authoritarian, the majority Sunni view on Islamic polity fails midway between authoritarianism and democratic ideals. After all, Islam functions by virtue of the authority of none other than God, because He is the creator, the sustainer and the law-giver. Policy in Islam, like all other things, derives from His will. Because He is the law-giver, in Islam He is the head of state. Man is only His vicegerent who rules on His behalf according to His directives (as laid down in the Qur'an and as put into practice by the *sunnah).* His directives cannot but result in a form of polity that involves public participation and the right to dissent and criticize. This is how the first Islamic system emerged soon after the death of the Prophet. The system introduced by the Prophet's immediate successors, the *khalifah,* remains the main source of inspiration for today's Islamic ideologues and activists, in essence if not in detail. It is considered to be the embodiment, however rudimentary, of the Qur'anic verse quoted above.

This verse identifies the three parameters of the Islamic polity quite clearly. First is God, who put down the law; second is the Prophet, who put God's commandments into practice; and third are those who rule the community of believers in obedience to the commandments of God and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. But, then, who are these rulers, what are their qualifications, and how do they assume power? These questions are not clearly answered in the Qur'an. The Shi'a point of view is that those with authority are the descendants of the Prophet through his cousin, the fourth *Khalifah,* Ali. The Sunni point of view is that after the Prophet, the men of authority in the Islamic policy come only through a process of *Shura* or mutual consultation as ordained in the Qur'an: 'And Shura is the decision [maker] among them' (42:38). This is one of the most encompassing verses from the Qur'an. It describes in the broadest terms a problem-solving technique for use in daily life as well as for solving issues in society as a whole.

It is unfortunate that the real meanings of *Shura* as reflected in the *sunnah* of the Prophet seem to have been lost during the centuries-long monarchical rule in the Muslim world. Roughly translated into English as 'mutual consultation', this concept was rarely invoked in Islamic juristic discourse for obvious reasons (the dynastic rulers and the sultans would not allow any talk of public participation in politics). It is only lately that the full implications of *Shura* have been explored by Muslim scholars and activists (for instance, Ba-Yunus and Ahmed 1985; El-Awa-1980).

No sociological approach to the understanding of Islam can afford to ignore the meanings and implications of *Shura* which seems to be a dynamic process of seeking solutions to the problems of living in a plural society. In the political arena, *Shura* is the process through which political authority emerges. This process is further specified by a saying *(hadith)* of the Prophet, emphasising that after his death the believers should install *arbab alhal wa alaqd* ('men of solution and resolution') as their rulers. Combining the two Qur'anic verses cited above with the saying of the Prophet, a basis for a democratic polity in Islam seems to take shape: believers should elect as their leaders through mutual consultation people capable of making wise decisions, and obey them as long as they obey God and His Prophet. This is how *Khalifah al Rashidun,* or the pious Caliphate, emerged following the Prophet's death.

Does this mean that Islam preaches democracy in its political programme? Although democracy is the only political system that seems to approximate Islam, Islam is Islam. It emerged long before the term 'democracy' came into existence. Hence, Islam must not be confused with democracy as practised in contemporary western capitalist polities. Islam does not preach a 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.' In its political form *Shura* stems from the will of God, by the authority of God and for the pleasure of God. The election in the process of *Shura* is not an election so much as it is an emergence of political *taqwa,* or piety, among the believers. Hence, in *Shura* Muslims do not seek power. They are actively brought forward for the sake of 'stopping what is evil and promoting what is good' (Qur'an 3:101, 110).

Those who come to power in an Islamic polity thus cannot supersede or negate what is ordained in the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. In short, the Qur'an and the *sunnah* describe the constitutional limits or the outer parameters of Islamic democracy. They cannot be amended by public pressure or demand. But who, then, decides whether or not those in authority have acted in accordance with the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the Prophet? The answer is the *qadi* or the judge. An independent judiciary specialising in *shariah* (law) and fiqah (jurisprudence) is a necessary condition of Islamic democracy. Evidently, an Islamic polity must not be confused with theocracy. Nor does it accommodate monarchy either.

DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC WORSHIP

Worship in Islam has both broad and specific meanings. In its broad sense, worship *(ibadah)* in Islam literally means obedience to all

the commandments laid down in the Qur'an, including all institutional and extra-institutional rules of conduct. Thus, when a person avoids involvement in interest transactions, pays *zakat* regularly, refrains from extramarital indulgence, or participates in and promotes Islamic polity, then he or she is worshipping God. Likewise person tries to develop his or her personal character in accordance with Qur'anic injunctions, he or she is worshipping God. In a general sense, then, worship Islam means obedience to the divine directives.

In a more limited sense, as in its dictionary meanings, worship in Islam means observation of the 'five pillars': the proclamation of faith *(shahada);* observation of the five prescribed daily prayers *(salat),* regular payment *of zakat;* fasting from dawn to dusk in Ramadan; and, lastly, *hajj,* the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime for those who can afford to undertake it.

These micro-dimensions of Islamic worship are not mere supplications. They are not left up to the believer's convenience. They are duties imposed upon the believer by the Creator. These are the duties that must be performed conscientiously at their proper times and in their proper manner as practised and instructed by the Prophet. Not that God needs the believer's worship or sacrifice; on the contrary, what is emphasised is that it is the believer who needs to worship Him in order to strengthen his or her own moral fibre and personal commitment *(taqwa)* to divine injunction and to the Islamic institutional order.

Because both aspects of worship in Islam—the institutional and the personally—belong to the same generic root, that is, the Qur'an, the relationship between the two ought to be close and reciprocal. There is little doubt that wither personal commitment or *taqwa,* the institutional order of Islam would not endure. It is equally true that without an emergent Islamic institutional order, *taqwa* would soon be rendered useless and meaningless.

Ritualistic worship at the individual level has the same function in Islam as in other religions: inculcation of personal commitment, piety and altruism. However, where other religions stop at ritualistic worship, they do not provide personal piety with an appropriate environment within which to promote and nourish itself. Consequently, in many contemporary societies personal piety has a short lifespan. In fact, it may even be irrelevant, because the contemporary social institutions of modernised and modernising societies have no generic relationship with, and often go against, the very spirit of personal piety.

In Islam personal worship and obedience to the rules of other institutions are the two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. This broadening of the meaning of worship seems to be unique to Islam. Above all means that for a Muslim to be pious, altruistic and peaceful within and without not only is a personal and ritualistic devotion to God a requirement, but also an Islamic institutional environment in which to live as a Muslim.

Islam is perhaps one of the most misunderstood religions in the world. Mary non-Muslims do not even seem to know it by its real name. It has been called Mohammedanism, Mohammadism Islamism, Moslemism or the moslem religion Likewise, Islam has become all things to all people. Many equate Islam with esoteric Sufi thought. For others, Islam has meant mobs in the streets or terrorists trying to blow up public buildings. For many others, it invokes images of harems and the exploitation of women. Even in the academia, as Said (1978) and others have pointed out, Islam has sufferred from cultural and political biases. In order to avoid this confusing array of perceptions, a more holistic approach has been adopted in this chapter: if there was a living Islamic society today, what would it look like?

However, the functional theoretical analysis of Islam as presented in this chapter must not be confused with the reality of the Muslim world. In fact, in its totality Islam survived only a few decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the centuries that followed, Muslims saw the rise and fall of their civilisation, the colonisation and domination of their lands by western powers, and the emergence of a dismembered and dispirited Muslim world as it exists today. Although Muslim countries are now mostly free of foreign occupation, they are afflicted with extensive poverty, political instability, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies, sexist chauvinism, widespread illiteracy and technological underdevelopment. Hence, Ahmed's (1988) argument about the sociology of Islam requiring the juxtaposition of the 'Islamic ideal' with contemporay Muslim realities.

For a long time it was hoped that as colonialism receded, the situation in the Muslim world would improve. However, with few exceptions, it looks like the underdevelopment of the Muslim world will continue well into the twenty-first century. As Avineri (1992) points out, the Muslim world has tried just about every recipe in the book but to no avail. Now there seems to be a growing demand for a return to Islam, especially among the educated and restive youth: where everything else has failed, Islam deserves a chance.

The model of Islam presented in this chapter only represents a sociological readition of the vision of Islam as reflected in hundreds of Muslim publications often not easily accessible to a western readership. I do not claim that the model of Islam presented here is the last word. There may be a number of unintended omissions. However, in its broadest outlines, this model comes close to capturing the *verestehen* of contemporary Islamic movements. Insofar as this is the case, this model may be used to measure the relative departure of Muslim society—and, for that Matter, any society—from Islam,

ASLIM TASLAM

Aslim Taslam is a phrase meaning "accept Islam and you will be saved", that was taken from the letters sent by the Islamic Prophet Muhammad to various kings and rulers in which he urged them to convert to Islam.

LETTERS OF MUHAMMAD

Muhammad sent ambassadors with such letters to Heraclius the emperor of Byzantium, Chosroes II the emperor of Persia, the Negus of Ethiopia, Muqawqis the ruler of Egypt, Harith Gassani the governor of Syria and Munzir ibn Sawa the ruler of Bahrain. The account as transmitted by Muslim historians reads as follows:

In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful:

"(This letter is) from Muhammad the slave of Allah and His Apostle to Heraclius the ruler of Byzantine. Peace be upon him, who follows the right path. Furthermore I invite you to Islam, and if you become a Muslim you will be safe, and Allah will double your reward, and if you reject this invitation of Islam you will be committing a sin by misguiding your Arisiyin (peasants). (And I recite to you Allah's Statement:)

Say (O Muhammad): 'O people of the scripture! Come to a word common to you and us that we worship none but Allah and that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords beside Allah.' Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims' (those who have surrendered to Allah).„

The letter to Chosroes II is similar except that it refers to Magians instead of the Arisiyin.

REFERENCES IN HADITH

Sahih Muslim narrates in Kitab Al-Jihad wa'l-Siyar (The Book of Jihad and Expedition) Book 19, Number 4294, Chapter 2: Appointment

of the Leaders of Expeditions by the Imam and His Advice to Them on Etiquettes of War and Related Matters: "Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them."

In Kitab Al-Iman (The Book of Faith), Book 1, Number 29, Chapter 9, the same author narrates: Command for Fighting Against the People So Long as They Do Not Profess That There is No God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger: 'Umar b. Khattab said to Abu Bakr: "...the Messenger of Allah Muhammad declared: I have been directed to fight against people so long as they do not say: There is no god but Allah..."

Sahih Bukhari states in Volume 4, Book 52, Number 187 and 191, that 'Abdullah bin Abbas narrates: "Allah's Apostle (Muhammad) wrote a letter to Caesar saying, 'If you reject Islam, you will be responsible for the sins of the peasants (i.e. your people).'"

Sahih Bukhari also states in Volume 4, Book 52, Number 196, that 'Allah's Apostle said, "I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' and whoever says, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' his life and property will be saved by me except for Islamic law, and his accounts will be with Allah, (either to punish him or to forgive him.)"

Imam Malik narrates in al-Muwatta, Book 21, Number 21.3.11: "Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz wrote to one of his governors, It has been passed down to us that when the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad), may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent out a raiding party, he would say to them, 'Make your raids in the name of Allah in the way of Allah. Fight whoever denies Allah'".

DAWA/DAWAH

The word "Da'wah" in Arabic simply means to invite (call) to something. When it is used in conjunction with Islam it is understood to mean "Inviting to the Way of submission and surrender to Allah." Dawah is an obligation for all Muslims.

> "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance."

> "You are the best of people raised up, for you call to all that is right and righteous and you forbid the evil, and you believe in Allah."

CRITICAL RESPONSES

In response to the *aslim taslam* invitation to submit to Islam, the Italian author and journalist Oriana Fallaci asserted the rejoinder "lan astaslem" (Arabic: áä ÇÓÊÓáã) meaning "I will not surrender". Michelle Malkin has taken up this slogan as a response to the WTC terrorist attacks.

On September 17, 2006, in response to the Pope Benedict XVI Islam controversy, Imad Hamto, a Palestinian religious leader, said: "We want to use the words of the Prophet Muhammad and tell the pope: *Aslim Taslam*." This was interpreted as a warning.

ISLAM AND A NEW WORLD ORDER

Speaking in a joint session of both houses of the Congress on 11 September 1990. President George Bush outlined his idea of a 'new world order': "A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavour. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we have known, a world in which nations recognise the shared responsibility for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respect the rights of the weak." Few could have failed to be stirred by President Bush's vision of a 'new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace—an era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South can prosper and live in peace. The call for a world based on 'the rule of law' where all countries will enjoy 'freedom and justice' and in which 'the strong respect the rights of the weak' might have appeared to many in the Third World a belated recognition by the United States of their earlier demand for a 'New International Economic Order' enshrined in the UN General Assembly resolution of May 1974. But that is not so.

The Divergence

The vision of a 'new world order' appears to have caught the popular imagination both in the West and in the Third World and yet there is little consensus on what it really means. President Bush was, perhaps, understandably reluctant to spell out his ideas. While there is no doubt that he was motivated by the need to stop Iraqi aggression, his primary concern was to secure Western strategic and economic interests: to prevent President Saddam Hussain's capture of Kuwait from dislocating Western oil supplies and to destroy Iraq's military

power which might threaten Israeli security. So long as Iraq was seen as a counterpoise to Iran, the West had itself helped strengthen Iraq and virtually ignored its acquisition of sophisticated weaponry. However, by invading the oil-rich state of Kuwait, President Saddam had threatened both the *status quo* in the region and the vital interests of the West. Moreover, the Israelis were concerned at the Iraqi military buildup and feared that it threatened their own security. A combination of these two factors meant that the former ally Saddam had to be cut to size.

The slogan, in other words, of the 'new world order' was a convenient cloak. It enabled President Bush to reconcile his need to win over those at home who were opposed to shedding American blood in a foreign war—a legacy of Vietnam—and abroad it helped him to hold together the ramshackled coalition of Muslim governments many of whom had grave doubts about joining an American-led coalition against a fellow Muslim state. In most Muslim countries. Arab and non-Arab alike the decision of the government to send troops to help the US-led coalition was extremely unpopular as street protests so vividly demonstrated. But in most cases the governments had to take sides because of their economic dependence on the US and Saudi Arabia.

The promise of a 'new world order' based on justice and respect for the weak was also essential to dispel amongst the Muslims President Saddam Hussain's opportunistic but emotively powerful attempt to confuse the issue by linking a possible withdrawal from Kuwait to the liberation of Palestinian land occupied by the Israelis.

It was not only the hypocrisy but also the inconsistency and the fickleness of the Western powers which many in the Third World found so perplexing. The great powers quite correctly argued—and no one would dispute—that Iraq had to be forced to leave Kuwait as the UN resolution required. And yet these powers who now flexed their muscles against Iraq were the very same powers who were largely indifferent to the Israeli occupation of Arab territory. The American influence in compelling the Israelis to evacuate parts of Egypt and Syria following the Camp David agreement did not escape the notice of the Arabs. It, in fact, reinforced the Arab belief that the Israelis could not have perpetuated the occupation of their territories in defiance of the American wishes. The American diffidence is seen as evidence of collusion with Israel and naturally contrasted with the vigorous reaction of the US and its Western allies against the Iraqi aggression.

President Saddam Hussain's attempt to link Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait with that of the evacuation of Israeli occupied territories was no doubt opportunistic. But the logic of his argument could not be altogether denied. The West not only dismissed the issue of 'linkage' as rewarding an aggressor but also sought to explain away other UN resolutions as irrelevant to the Gulf crisis. Yet to the countries of the region, as indeed to much of the Third World, the crisis in the Gulf was merely a symptom of a much deeper malaise. According to them, there could be no lasting peace in the Middle East unless the Palestinian issue was resolved.

It would be tempting to attribute the divergence in outlook between the West and the Third World to a difference in perceptions or to the application of differing yardsticks reflecting the mutually antagonistic cultural values. That is probably true; but that is only a partial explanation. The crisis in the Gulf was not simply about Kuwait. The US and the West were admittedly concerned about the need to ensure the free flow of oil, but it could be argued, without in any sense justifying President Saddam's unprovoked aggression, that the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait had not in itself posed a threat to the supply of oil to the Western world. The crunch of the matter was that Iraq, which had been earlier strengthened to resist the disruption of the *status quo* by the Iranian revolution, had a decade Inter itself become a threat to the *status quo* and the balance of power in the region. The annexation of Kuwait would have doubled Iraq's oil reserves and thereby invested it with regional dominance. This was not only seen as a threat by Saudi Arabia and the other smaller oil-producing sheikhdoms but also by Israel and the West.

A major concern of the US, notwithstanding its earlier support for decolonisation, is to maintain the existing international system so that the vital interests and the predominance of the industrialised states are not jeopardised. The Western industrial states have not obstructed the economic development or industrialisation of the developing countries. Indeed, the newly industrialised countries like South Korea. Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong have joined the ranks of Industrial powers. Their entry into the ranks of industrial states is seen as strengthening the existing international economic structure. However, any challenge to the international structure which attempts to upset the *status quo* and is likely to threaten the economic dominance of the existing industrial powers will not be tolerated.

The Non-transformation

It is a common knowledge that the international system has been remarkably transformed since the rapid collapse of the European empires after the Second World War; but there appears to be no substantial agreement as to the nature and significance of the change. While it is obvious that colonialism as an organising principle of the international system has lost its legitimacy, there appears to be little consensus on the legal, philosophical and power-political bases which might replace it. At one level the changes were revolutionary: in 1945 much of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific were under colonial rule and yet two decades later only fragments of the European empires had survived. The people of the former colonial dependencies had asserted their 'independence', destroyed colonialism as an organising principle of the international system, and rid themselves of formal inequalities embodied in unequal treaties and capitulations by asserting their equal sovereign status.

While there is no doubt that decolonisation brought about some dramatic and qualitative changes, it would be rash to view the end of formal empires and the emergence of so-called global international order as the culmination of the Third World revolt against the West. While some of the basic assumptions of the international system have changed, there is much that has not. In terms of technology power and economy the balance is still very heavily tilted in favour of the Western states. Political independence has not brought economic emancipation, and for much of the population of the Third World there has been little discernible improvement in the standard of living. While the fiction of state sovereignty has been preserved there is little evidence to suggest that the developing countries as a whole exert any significant influence in the comity of nations. A quarter of a century or more after the end of formal empires, the non-European world is today much affected by the functioning of the world economy and more dependent upon the developed states than it was in 1945; the technological, economic and power gap between developed and developing countries has widened; and the intellectual and cultural penetration of the former colonies is probably deeper than ever before. Decolonisation, as one scholar has pointed out, 'was a subtle', intricate and deceptive process. External alterations concealed inner continuities.

Seen with the benefit of hindsight, decolonisation was no more than a change in the mode or mechanics of imperialism. Formal control had made way for informal, as in previous centuries mercantalist

controls had been replaced by the imperialism of free trade, which in turn had made way for direct rule following the scramble for colonies in the closing decades of the 19th century. The domination of the weak by the strong or transfer of resources from the poor to the rich had not altogether ceased with the collapse of formal empires. It was just that direct intervention was no longer in vogue.

To suggest that imperialism was not laid to rest with the demise of formal empires is not to argue that nothing had changed. Indirect control through economic coercion or covert subversion could not be as effective as direct political and physical control of a country. Moreover, the changed intellectual and international environment not only ruled out old-style gunboat diplomacy but it also became apparent that there were obvious limits to the use of force, especially against ideologically inspired nationalists as the great powers learnt to their cost in Algeria, Vietnam and Afghanistan. Most interventions today are indirect, covert and subtle, and often engineered through the unwitting cooperation of a section of the population or willing participation of aspiring military dictators. But these are not always successful: there are numerous instances of imperial powers burning their fingers.

The revolt against the West is far from complete—the Third World still remains separate and unequal in the international society in many respects. The underlying conflict between the West and the Third World has not disappeared; indeed, it may be argued that in the last two decades it has sharpened. The oft-repeated charges that the West is attempting to establish a new imperial domination over the Third World need not be taken seriously. However, it can be argued that the Western industrialised states are committed to preserving the *status quo*, and since the structure of the international order is tilted against the Third World, the very continuance of the system institutionalises their subordinate and unequal status.

The rules and institutions of the international system are clearly the products of European tradition, evolved to serve the interests of the European states which originally made up the international society. In the multi-cultural international society, there are bound to be tensions and differences about institutions which evolved during a period when European dominion over non-Europeans went unquestioned and colonial empires were seen as a legitimate organising principle of the international order. At the root of the schism is the refusal or reluctance of the West to redress the Third World complaints of economic injustice

and the enormous power imbalance which has emaciated its negotiating position. For *the Third World, the pursuit of economic justice and power are inseparable; power is a means of securing wealth, and without wealth power is difficult to acquire.*

For the developing world there is a serious dilemma. With its slender economic resources it cannot hope to compete with the developed world militarily; nor is it in any way desirable that impoverished states, with so many competing claims on their resources, indulge in wasteful military adventures. On the other hand, these states, in the absence of any effective leverage, have found it difficult to secure economic justice. The spectacular success of the newly industrialised countries of Asia owe their 'miracle' to extraordinary circumstances and are exceptions which do not belie the iniquitous nature of the current international regime.

The Attitudinal Change

Although the scholars of the 'dependency school' in Latin America had long drawn attention to the dynamics of post-colonial imperialism, until the late 1960s the question of economic justice was not seen as a source of confrontation by the newly emerging Afro-Asian states. The full implications of the integration of the colonial economies to those of the metropolis were not fully perceived. The economic development of the Third World was thought to be linked to the prosperity of the West: the Third World was vital to the West for its markets and investment while the former was content to be the recipient of economic assistance so that it could expand its exports. It was only in the 1970s that the realisation fully dawned that the achievement of the political kingdom had failed to alleviate the economic backwardness of the Third World or narrow the economic gap between the West and the developing countries.

The disillusionment in the Third World also coincided with a change in the intellectual environment in the West: there were not only doubts whether economic development would enhance peace and stability in the Third World but there were also serious anxieties about the limits to growth and about the wisdom of diverting non-renewable resources from the future needs of its own people. In the Third World too, there was a corresponding radicalisation of opinion. They were no longer content with aid and charity but sought to end monopolisation of resources by a minority of the world's population. The concept of partnership in development gave way to confrontation. A call for

restructuring of the international order to bring about effective redistribution of wealth replaced the earlier requests for International development assistance. The stonewalling of the demands for a *New International Economic Order* (NIEO) confirmed the opinion in the Third World that the only way to get rid of economic dependence was to alter the balance of political power. The pursuit of nuclear weapons by some of the Third World states, their opposition to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the attempts to form producer cartels, the oblique support of terrorism by many Third World governments and the selective disruption of international order—haphazard and uncoordinated no doubt—was essentially the Third World's way of seeking economic justice by redressing the power imbalance.

From the mid 1960s upto about 1980, there were numerous efforts in the UN and elsewhere to correct Third World's economic vulnerability and power imbalance but nothing very substantial was achieved. Except for some minor concessions the *status quo* prevailed. The prospect of establishing a more equitable system through the NIEO was consigned to the realm of fancy. The experience convinced many in the Third World that while the West is essentially sympathetic to their basic economic needs that sympathy did not extend to helping them overcome their dependence and vulnerability. It was proof, if proof were needed, that nations do not voluntarily plan their own decline by enabling their adversaries to become stronger in relation to themselves. The *status quo* remained largely undisturbed.

The Status Quo's New Garb

In the aftermath of the Second World War the colonial empires of Europe were overthrown. In the bi-polar world that emerged one in which the two superpowers were inextricably locked in ideological rivalry and the struggle for global mastery the newly emergent states enjoyed the illusion of freedom through the ability to play one superpower against the other. *Pax Britannica* gave way to the American and *Soviet Pax* as old style formal colonial rule had become obsolete.The post-war imperialism was a much more subtle construct. The departing imperial powers had bequeathed to successive regimes an instable and inchoate state. The cohesion of the newly independent states was undermined by the artificiality of the boundaries with their heterogeneous population. Moreover, by setting up a number of kingdoms, sheikdoms and emirates whose very continuance depended upon external props, the former imperial powers had assured themselves of the loyalty of the surrogate regimes. The arrangements would survive

only so long as the authoritarian regimes could repress demands for popular participation or prevent the infiltration of democratic ideas from outside. Occasionally, the post-colonial order and the surrogate rulers were challenged by mass upsurge or by charismatic nationalist leaders but such uprisings were easily quelled, often with the help of their external patrons. The relationship of dependence has proved to be remarkably enduring.

In a bipolar international system in which the two superpowers were locked in a global rivalry, neither side could easily intervene directly in the Third World without provoking a countervailing intervention. At the same time, both superpowers were beneficiaries of the existing international system and were committed to preserving it. Since formal empires were no longer feasible, each side secured its interests through the creation of a network of surrogate rulers in the Third World states. Since these 'surrogate rulers' had little political legitimacy and were mainly dependent upon their external patrons for their survival, they too had a vested interest in not seeking to disrupt the *status quo.*

Although the charismatic and populist leaders of the Third World, like Gemal Abdel Nasser and Fidel Castro, had earlier challenged the influence of the extra-regional powers, the most serious threat to the Western surrogate regimes came from the Iranian revolution. Ayutollah Ruhollah Khomeini's anti-monarchist revolution spilled into neighbouring countries and threatened to undermine all the regimes that lacked popular legitimacy. But the Iranian revolution contained with the help of external powers; under American pressure the Gulf states banded together in the Gulf Cooperation Council; Saudi Arabia sought to weaken the appeal of Islamic ideology which had proved a formidable mobilisation force in Iran, by emphasising the Shia-Sunni schism (*albeit* with only a limited success); and finally the Iraqi invasion of Iran, backed by the two superpowers, warded off the revolutionary threat. Direct intervention by the US was ruled out at that juncture because the USSR was unwilling to allow the US a foothold on its borders; and was, perhaps, also restrained by the memories of Vietnam and the Soviet experience of Afghanistan, which showed the impotence of the superpowers in the face of the ideologically inspired nationalist movements. It took nearly ten years of military pressure, together with economic and diplomatic isolation of Iran, to neutralise Iran's threat to the regional order. Although President Saddam Hussain had his own economic and political motives for annexing Kuwait, the ousting

of the Al-Sabah family was seen as a similar threat to Western influence through surrogate rulers in a strategically important region. For the West the most important issue was not the demise of Kuwait but its implication for the informal empire. It was also precisely for this reason that Saddam's action struck a sympathetic chord amongst the Third World masses while Saddam himself remained the most despised leader both inside Iraq and in the Third World, even though his policy of repression and genocide had been condoned by his erstwhile Western allies.

The experience of the last half century has brought home to the industrial North that indirect control through surrogate regimes while largely successful in preserving the *status quo* in the international system has been irksome. Nationalists like Nasser, Mossadeq, Gaddafi, Khomeini and more recently Saddam Hussain have sought to end the foreign stranglehold on the Third World. But the Western powers have sought to preserve their interests either through the system of 'surrogate rule' or by the cooption of the Third World elites through the 'aid regime'. Direct occupation of the territory or the re-establishment of formal colonies was precluded both because of the rivalry between the superpowers and to a lesser extent because formal empires were cumbersome, costly and no longer in fashion. But with the end of the cold war, which has removed the fissure in the ranks of the industrialised states and called the bluff of the former Soviet Union's claim to the superpower status and exposed China as a paper tiger, the US appears to have emerged as the sole dominant superpower in the international system. For the first time in the history of the UN, the five permanent members of the Security Council are working in union. In these changed circumstances, the US, unconstrained by the fears of any countervailing superpower, is determined to create a new security system in the Third World to ensure that the Western strategic and economic interests are not disrupted by periodic assertions of autonomy by Third World nationalists.

A closer examination of President Bush's speech of 11 September 1990 and earlier statement of 8 August reveals his concern for preserving the *status quo* by eliminating the threat posed by President Saddam to the 'surrogate regime system'. The other 'objectives' also mentioned in the speech were the restoration of 'Kuwait's legitimate government', the protection of 'the security and stability of the Persian Gulf and the Vital economic interests' which the US could not allow 'to be dominated by one so ruthless'. When the speech is shorn of rhetoric and platitudes,

the meaning is not in doubt. The so-called 'new world order' was after all not very new but essentially a device for the perpetuation of the *status quo ante bellum.*

The Iniquitous World Order

This particular 'new world order' is patently iniquitous. The attempt to extend the rule of international law to permit collective intervention for peace and security, even in areas which are traditionally recognised as within the domain of 'domestic affairs' of a country might have been acceptable for *principled purposes.* But this is scarcely likely to happen. Such thinking, as Dr Andrew Hurrell points out, is premised on the recurrence of a blatant violation of international law as was done by Iraq in Kuwait;

"This was not just an attempt to alter a disputed border, to intervene on behalf of one's client in a civil war, or even to force a change in the nature of a government. All those have been all too common and have seldom elicited such a whole-hearted international condemnation. Rather Iraq's action involved the total extinction of a state whose existence had been universally recognised, both regionally and globally. No widely recognised independent state has had its flag hauled down in this way in the post war period, and it is the brutality of the aggression and the failure of Iraq to offer any plausible justification that goes a long way in explaining the breadth and solidity of the international response.

It is extremely implausible that a crisis of this nature will be replicated; nor it is likely that issues in future crises will be as clear cut for the international community to line up behind 'the angel' as it happened in the case of Iraq's attempt to wipe out Kuwait's sovereignty. In most circumstances collective intervention for 'principled purposes' will not be feasible because the Issues at dispute are likely to be many and complicated.

From the perspective of the Third World, there is another serious objection to the new found enthusiasm for collective intervention. The Gulf crisis has demonstrated that in the post-cold war period in the absence of ideological rift between the two superpowers (or more pertinently with the demise of the Soviet Union both as a state and a superpower), the chances of the veto being used in the Security Council have been greatly reduced in a conflict in which none of the permanent members has a direct interest to protect. In other word the UN has now become much freer, if it so chooses, to import economic sanctions

or even intervene militarily to preserve collective security. However, as Hurrell again points out, since the five permanent members of the Security Council wield a great part of military power, 'collective security could not be plausibly undertaken against the interest or wishes of either the Russian Federation or the United States; or for that matter against any of the major powers of Western Europe.

In other words, with the balance of military force so decisively concentrated in a few hands, the principle of collective security would increasingly come to resemble the Concert of Europe set up after the Napoleonic wars. The great powers had arrogated to themselves the right to intervene in the affairs of smaller states with the ostensible purpose of preventing the disruption of the *status quo* in Europe. The principles of balance of power and dynastic legitimacy were used to prevent both territorial changes and the overthrow of oppressive regimes irrespective of the popular demands. In theory, of course, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a Third World power and has a veto in the Security Council. However, China's ability to strike an independent stance at the Security Council or in other international fora is extremely doubtful as was evidenced during the Gulf crisis and subsequently during the Security Council debate on Libya's alleged involvement in the explosion of the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie. In both instances China did not endorse the resolutions by the Western—mainly the US and Britain—powers but nevertheless refrained from using its veto.

The developed industrial states have no apparent reasons to wish the disruption of the international system of which they are the main beneficiaries. The main victims of the 'new world order' and collective intervention will, therefore be the weak and Third World states who are already marginalised and have a limited stake in the existing international society and would like to see a 'world order' where the voice of the developing world will be less feeble. Bush's new 'world order', like post-Vienna order, will rule out not only changes in the international balance of power but also in the domestic political structures of those Third World states in which the West has a strategic and economic interest. Not only has the authoritarian ruler of Kuwait been restored as the 'legitimate' authority with scant concern for his claim to legitimacy but also other sheikhs, sultans, emirs and monarchs in the region with equally dubious claims to legitimacy have been assured of future international intervention on their behalf in the event of a threat to their position, either from internal or external sources.

The New International Contours

Even though the promise of a 'New World Order' is no more than an empty rhetoric, the end of the cold war does hold some promise for the Third World generally and especially for South Asia. In the last few years, momentous changes have taken place in the international system which is changing the familiar contours of the international order. Many of the assumptions upon which the post-war global alignment was based have virtually disappeared. The end of the cold war the disintegration of the Soviet Union's claim to the status of a superpower and the emergence of three economic blocs—the USA, the European Community and Japan—has signalled the virtual demise of the post-war bipolar international order. The second Gulf crisis has heightened the prospect of a world order dominated by the United States even though the suggestions of unipolar international system are probably premature.

The end of the cold war and the lifting of the 'iron curtain' has not only led to the virtual collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe but also the East-West divide has disappeared: the great European schism is over and Europe is once again Europe. Eastern Europe no longer exists as a separate socio-economic entity: Germany is already reunited, and in time Eastern Europe will also become a part of the extended European Community. All this is bound to have a profound impact on the global security alignment, on regional conflicts and on the pattern of international economic linkages and world trade.

The impact of superpower detente on the bilateral relationship between the US and the former Soviet Union (now renamed Commonwealth of Independent States) is already very much in evidence. There have been revolutionary changes in Europe: the end of communism in the Soviet Union, the collapse of the one party communist dictatorship in Poland, the execution of the Romanian dictator, the breach of the Berlin wall and the unification of the two Germanies, and the break-up of the Soviet Union with the secession of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with other republics following in train, are only the more spectacular instances of change in international affairs in the last few years.

The Third World is inextricably linked to the international system and will inescapably experience the roll-on impact of the global transformation resulting from the revolutionary changes in Europe. It is no coincidence that in 1988 when the superpowers began to build

bridges, there was a profound impact on numerous conflicts in the Third World. The Iraq-Iran War ended after eight years; Soviet troops were pulled out of Afghanistan after nine years of bloodletting; Vietnam began a process of disengagement of troops from Cambodia; the People's Republic of China's hostility towards Vietnam began to be toned down; the Palestinians accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338 and implicitly recognised the existence of Israel; Morocco and the Polisario Front began working their way to a negotiated settlement; the Soviets persuaded the Cubans to withdraw from Angola; South Africa was compelled to withdraw its forces from Angola and Namibia; Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations seemed to be on the mend; and even the North and South Koreans began talking of reunion.

Neither of the two superpowers had any direct stake in the Indo-Pakistan rivalry; nor was South Asia over an area of high priority for either of them. The geo-strategic significance of the region is due only to its location between West Asia and Southeast Asia, the two areas of concern to the superpowers. The intervention of the US, the Soviet Union and China in the region arose, however, not from an intrinsic interest in the subcontinent but principally from their concern about each other. The region was sucked into global rivalries of the cold war in the 1950s as each of the superpowers sought to check the influence of the other through the so-called policy of 'containment' and 'counter-containment'. With the superpowers lined up behind each of the belligerents, political and military stalemate became entrenched. Since the main purpose of the two superpowers was to limit the influence of the other in the region, neither had any incentive to resolve or, on the other hand, risk the escalation of the conflict. At the same time India could not compel Pakistan, which had been greatly bolstered by its external ally, into an acquiescence of the *status quo* in Kashmir. On the other hand, while Pakistan remained committed to reversing Kashmir's 'accession' to India, its enhanced military prowess was more than offset by Soviet support for India. As long as the superpowers' rivalries endured, the *status quo* in the subcontinent was virtu ally assured.

It might even be argued that because the central concern of the outside powers was more with each other than with the local states, the fact of their involvement in South Asia proved more durable than any particular form of alignment. There were no ideological underpinnings of significance to any of these alliances between the South Asian states and the outside powers. To that extent they are all

alliances of convenience reflecting classical balance of power behaviour. Following that classical logic, and keeping in mind the motives of both the local and external states, it is not at all difficult to imagine a scenario in which the Soviet Union was aligned with Pakistan, and China and the US with India. In 1962, following the Sino-Indian conflict, the US and Britain rushed to India's assistance notwithstanding that India was allied to the Soviet Union. The threat of communist China to India was considered sufficient to reverse US policy of hostility to India. And again when Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, the US began to view Pakistan's improved relations with China with approval since in the higher level of conflict China and Pakistan would be useful allies against the Soviet Union. The essence of that logic is also that once the higher level of rivalry between the external powers is much reduced or eliminated, the compulsion for intervention in the region is greatly weakened.

The New Scenario, Not a New Order

It follows, therefore, that with the end of the cold war the superpower policy of global containment has virtually become obsolete. Both the Warsaw Pact and NATO have lost their earlier objectives and are in search of a new role. The European schism has also ended, and the former European adversaries are now set to evolve a European security community. They no longer perceive each other as a threat but actually see the need for collective security to keep away threats from outside Europe and North America. The possible rapprochement between the USSR and China and between China and India, will further remove the incentive for the superpower intervention in the region. At the same time as the utility of the South Asian states to their patrons diminishes, the ability of these states to draw the superpowers into their conflicts, or play one against the other, will correspondingly decline. The most dramatic evidence of the end of the cold war can be seen in Afghanistan.

It is as yet too early to assess the full impact of superpower detente on South Asia, but there is already enough evidence to suggest that changes of far-reaching significance are imminent in the 1990s. These may not be as dramatic as in eastern Europe, but the ramifications for the region will nonetheless be quite considerable. Global changes, together with domestic compulsions, on all sides of the borders could make old policies of confrontation untenable or at least anachronistic. The superpowers' disengagement from the subcontinent could bring about decisive changes in the military balance, or the access of the

region to concessional credit, markets and technology; and they might also inject a new realism into the region.

The 'new world order' is a euphemism for the preservation of the *status quo* and in a post-cold war international system, where there is no longer another superpower to countervail the power of the United States, the ability of the South Asian states to resist Western dominance will be greatly circumscribed. Moreover, the Western powers (including the Russian republics), freed from any military threat from each other, are poised to become instead some sort of a European security community which will be in a far stronger position to resist any challenge to the *status quo* by the developing countries. However, it will also be argued that superpower detente and the end of European ideological schism may not be entirely detrimental to the interests of South Asia if it leads to the disengagement of the external powers from active intervention in the domestic and regional affairs of the states of the region.

In fact, in a bi-polar international system, the smaller and weaker states, both European and non-European, had to learn to live within the constraints of a great-power dominated system which greatly circumscribed their room for manoeuvre. The smaller, and especially the newly emerging states had precious little autonomy in international affairs and their choice was often confined to 'aligning' with one superpower or the other and sacrificing their autonomy for the doubtful benefit of securing economic assistance and the 'security umbrella' of their superpower patron. Since neither of the two superpowers had any direct concern for the majority of the developing states—the exceptions being states which were strategically located or those possessing natural resources which a superpower either needed or wished to deny to its rival—the Third World states were used or discarded in furtherance of the global objectives of their superpower patron; and the flow of aid ensured that the Third World elites who controlled the governments had no incentive to disrupt the dependency relations. The non-aligned movement, which most of the Third World states endorsed, was intended to allow these states the option of exercising independent stance in the cold war rivalry but the movement had only a limited success. Not only were both the superpowers opposed to it but also individual members notwithstanding their pledges, had entered into 'alliances' and 'pacts' with one or the other superpowers. The very few states who resisted the temptation of becoming allied were marginalised and deprived of economic or military assistance. It

is only after the end of the cold war that some scholars in the Third World have begun to discover the disadvantages of a bipolar world for developing countries. In reality this had probably never existed. Very few Third World states were able to play one superpower against the other—this is more in the realm of fiction; in reality they had little room for manoeuvre and could not defy the wishes of the patron they had opted for. The IMF, the World Bank and other Western funded multilateral agencies laid down the limits to which the Third World states could exercise autonomy.

In a world of power politics the small and poor states will always remain vulnerable. In fact, there is little to lament about the demise of the cold war. While the small states had illusions of being able to manipulate the superpowers. In reality the superpowers were using the smaller states in their own global policy of containment or counter-containment in the cold war rivalry. In return for the self-induced dependence or subservience, the elites of the developing states were amply rewarded for their loyalty. In this sense, the disengagement of the superpowers from a policy of counter-containment may have created an environment conducive to easing the core-periphery dependent relationship and provide the impetus for the development of regional cooperation and the emergence of domestic regimes more responsive to popular control.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT ISLAM

- *ISLAM*, as an Arabic word, means 'submission (to God)', or 'acceptance of (God's) guidance'. It is the name of a monotheistic religion belonging to the Abrahamic tradition that, today, has a global following of approximately 1.4 billion adherents, accounting for 23.5 per cent of the world population (according to estimates published by the World Conference on Religion and Peace, New York, 1999). The world's two other Abrahamic religions are Judaism and Christianity.

- Although the first MUSLIMS were Arabs, the community quickly expanded to include members of other ethnic groups, for instance, Persians (who are now commonly known as Iranians). Today, the vast majority of Muslims are not Arabs and the largest Muslim population is that of Indonesia, estimated at 210 million.

- MUHAMMAD, the Prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca in c. AD 570, received his first revelations in 610, migrated with his companions to Medina in 622 to establish the first organised

Muslim community (called the *umma*), and died in 632. The year of the Prophet's migration (Arabic, *hijra*) to Medina is the first year of the Muslim, or HIJRA, calendar.

- The holy book of Islam is the KORAN (or *Qur'an*), which contains the revelations received by Muhammad in Mecca and Medina. The Koran is made up of 114 *suras*, or chapters, of varying length, each composed of a number of *ayas*, or verses. Its text remains unchanged since its compilation was completed in 645.

- ISLAM enjoins belief in God as well as (a) His revealed books; (b) His angels; (c) His messengers or prophets, (d) the Latter Day (of Resurrection, or Judgement); and (e) the graceful acceptance of whatever comes from God. Regarding some of these points, the following needs to be understood:

  1. ALLAH is the Arabic name for God and not the name of a special god of Islam. Jews, Christians and Muslims who speak Arabic all refer to God as Allah.

  2. ISLAM regards the original Torah of MOSES (the first five books of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible), the Psalms of DAVID and the teachings of JESUS as being no less divinely revealed than the KORAN, although the Koran is believed to be God's final, complete, unadulterated and authoritative revelation.

  3. ISLAM reveres the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets (especially ABRAHAM and MOSES) as true messengers of God, and considers Jesus as a virgin-born prophet of special pre-eminence, in whom the Word and Spirit of God were manifest. MUHAMMAD is regarded by Muslims as the last of God's messengers and, hence, 'the seal of the prophets'.

  4. MARY, the mother of Jesus, is considered especially holy in Islam and is, in fact, the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran, "Mary" (Arabic, *Maryam*) being the name of one of the Koran's most often-read chapters.

- Muslims are taught to regard the following as the five 'PILLARS', or basic foundations, of Islam: (a) the testimony that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's messenger; (b) the five daily prayers, with their set rites; (c) the daytime fast during the holy month of Ramadan (the ninth of the Hijra calendar); (d) the annual payment of a proportion of one's wealth for charitable and communal use; and (e) the pilgrimage to the

holy city of Mecca during the last month of the Hijra year, made at least once in a lifetime, if possible.

- The law of Islam (called the SHARIA) derives basically from: (a) the teachings of the Koran; (b) the authenticated sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the precedents he set, collectively called the Sunna, or 'Tradition'; (c) the consensus of learned opinion, explicit or implicit (called *ijma`*); and (d) reasoning by analogy (called *qiyas*), to help Muslims decide how to deal with new situations that arise in new places or with the passage of time. In general, if any action is not prohibited by the Sharia, it is permissible to Muslims; however, some permissible actions are less socially acceptable than others.

- The ETHICAL CODE of Islam emphasises (a) the equality of all believers; (b) communal solidarity; (c) truth, honesty and justice in dealings with Muslims and non-Muslims alike; (d) modesty, humility and clemency; (e) honouring parents and caring for the family; (f) caring for the poor and the stranger; (g) kindliness, especially toward neighbours; and (h) patience in the face of adversity. The code also commands believers to encourage virtue and discourage wrongdoing, and warns against aggression, corruption, pride, avarice, greed, envy and waste.

- In principle, the Muslim community, or *umma*, is indivisible. After the Prophet Muhammad's death, however, disagreements over the choice of a new leader for the *umma* eventually resulted in the emergence of THREE BASIC FORMS OF ISLAM: the 'Sunnite' or *Sunni* (meaning 'traditional'), the 'Shiite' or *Shi`i* (meaning 'partisan') and the 'Kharijite' or *Khariji* (meaning 'dissident').

  (1) Probably more than 80 per cent of all Muslims today are SUNNIS. They represent those Muslims who did not question the legitimacy of the 'caliphs' (or 'successors' to the Prophet) who headed the *umma* from the time of the Prophet's death until the dissolution of the 'caliphate' (as this institution was called) in 1924.

  (2) The SHIITES originated as the Muslim party (Arabic, *shi'a*) maintaining that the succession to the Prophet should be restricted to his first cousin and son-in-law Ali, and his descendants after him. In due course, the Shiites came to be organised into different communities, each developing special doctrines and rites. The majority Shiite group today, called

the Twelver Shiites, predominates in Iran, and has a following in a number of other Muslim countries. Other important groups of Shiites are the Zaydi community of Yemen, and the Ismaili community now headed by the Aga Khan. Offshoots of such Shiite groups include the Druze, principally found in Lebanon, and the Alawites (or Nusayris) of the coastal mountains of Syria.

(3) The KHARIJITES dissented from both the Sunnis and the Shiites by maintaining that the leaders of the *umma* after the Prophet Muhammad should be elected, and that any believing and capable Muslim was eligible for election. Today, the Kharijites are represented by the Ibadi Muslims of Oman and some parts of North Africa.

- An essential part of Islam is observance of the Sharia as the law of God. While the Shiites and the Kharijites maintain their own interpretations of this law, Sunnite Islam recognises four different SCHOOLS OF JURISPRUDENCE, each bearing the name of its founder: (a) the HANAFITE (founded by Abu Hanifa, d. 767); (b) the MALIKITE (founded by Malik ibn Anas, d. 795); (c) the SHAFIITE (founded by al-Shafi'i, d. 819); and (d) the HANBALITE (founded by Ibn Hanbal, d. 855); A Sunni Muslim may choose to follow any of these four schools singly or in combination. In general, the Hanafite is seen as the most liberal, while the Hanbalite is considered the most strict. The Muslims of Turkey have been historically Hanafite and, in the Arab world, the Malikites predominate in North Africa and the Sudan, the Hanbalites in Saudi Arabia, and the Shafiites in Egypt, Syria and other adjacent countries.

- Muslims celebrate two official RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: the three-day holiday marking the end of the Ramadan fast (called *'Id al-Fitr*, meaning 'the feast of the breaking of the fast'), and the four-day one concluding the annual pilgrimage rituals (called *'Id al-Adha*, meaning 'the feast of the sacrifice'). These two holidays are occasions for the Muslim family to come together, particularly during the main meal of the day, and to visit other families to pay their respects and maintain community bonds. In addition, Muslims honour such occasions as the Prophet Muhammad's birthday and the Hijra New Year. Since the Hijra year is lunar, and hence eleven days shorter than the solar Christian year, Muslim holidays vary from one year to another from the

perspective of Christians. Hence, the same holiday falls in each of the four seasons in succession, being delayed eleven days from one solar year to the next.

- There is no Muslim equivalent to the Christian Church as a religious institution, nor are there Muslim sacraments or an ordained Muslim clergy. In principle, Muslims, guided by the Koran and the Sharia, are responsible for their religious lives and for the performance of their religious duties. Each Muslim, man or woman, is considered individually accountable before God. In practice, however, religious guidance may be sought from any scholar with a specialised knowledge of Islam. The *MUFTI* is a recognised expert qualified to give considered opinions on points of law concerning all aspects of life; when a Muslim has a question, it may be submitted to the mufti, who gives a legal opinion. However, the mufti's opinions are not binding and other expert opinions on the same legal point may, in fact, be sought. In the MOSQUE, which is the place where Muslims meet and worship, prayers may be led by any believer, although a professional *IMAM*, or prayer-leader, normally fills that role. Likewise, any believer may deliver the oration/sermon before the communal FRIDAY prayer, although a special mosque functionary, called the *KHATIB* (meaning 'orator', but often translated as 'preacher') is usually appointed for the purpose. Apart from their official responsibilities, functionaries like the *imam* and the *khatib* wield no religious authority, although they may have personal followings. Mosques are maintained by special, permanent endowments called *AWQAF* (singular *waqf*) that may be made by individuals or groups, or by the state.

ISLAMIC PRACTICES

Five duties have traditionally been seen as obligatory for all Muslims, although some mystics (Sufis) have allegorised them and many Muslims observe them only partially. These duties are the so-called five pillars of Islam: bearing witness to the unity and uniqueness of God and to the prophethood of Muhammad (shahadah); prayer at the prescribed times each day (salat); fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm); pilgrimage to Mecca, and the performance of certain prescribed rituals in and around Mecca at a specified time of the year (hajj); and paying a certain amount out of one's wealth as alms for the poor and some other categories of Muslims (zakat). The first of these pillars balances external action (the recitation of the shahadah) with internal conviction

(although different groups within Islam have held different views about the relative importance of recitation and belief in the shahadah); the other four, although they take belief for granted, consist predominantly of external acts.

There are other duties and practices regarded as obligatory. As in Judaism, the eating of pork is prohibited and male circumcision is the norm (the latter is not mentioned in the Koran). Consumption of alcohol is forbidden. Meat must be slaughtered according to an approved ritual or else it is not halal.

In some Muslim communities practices which are essentially local customs have come to be identified as Islamic: the wearing of a sari, for example. There are variant practices concerning the covering of the head or face of a woman in public. A Koranic text is interpreted by some to mean that the entire head and face of a woman should be covered, by others as indicating that some sort of veil or head scarf should be worn. Others argue that the Koran does not require any such covering.

TERRORISM: CHALLENGE FOR WORLD

Terrorism and "terrorist" (someone who engages in terrorism) carry a strong negative connotation. These terms are often used as political labels to condemn violence or threat of violence by certain actors as immoral, indiscriminate, or unjustified. Those labeled "terrorists" rarely identify themselves as such, and typically use other generic terms or terms specific to their situation, such as: separatist, freedom fighter, liberator, revolutionary, vigilante, militant, paramilitary, guerrilla, rebel, jihadi or mujaheddin, or fedayeen, or any similar-meaning word in other languages.

Terrorism is a term used to describe violence or other harmful acts committed against civilians. Most definitions of terrorism include only those acts which are intended to create fear or "terror", are perpetrated for an ideological goal (as opposed to a "madman" attack), and deliberately target "non-combatants". As a form of unconventional warfare, terrorism is sometimes used when attempting to force political change by: convincing a government or population to agree to demands to avoid future harm or fear of harm, destabilisation of an existing government, motivating a disgruntled population to join an uprising, escalating a conflict in the hopes of disrupting the *status quo*, expressing the severity of a grievance, or drawing attention to a neglected cause. Terrorism has been used by a broad array of political organisations in

furthering their objectives; both right-wing and left-wing political parties, nationalistic, and religious groups, revolutionaries and ruling governments. The presence of non-state actors in widespread armed conflict has created controversy regarding the application of the laws of war. An International Roundtable on Constructing Peace, Deconstructing Terror (2004) hosted by Strategic Foresight Group recommended that a distinction should be made between terrorism and acts of terror. While acts of terror are criminal acts as per the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and domestic jurisprudence of almost all countries in the world, terrorism refers to a phenomenon including acts, perpetrators of acts of terror and motives of the perpetrators.

There is a disagreement on definition of terrorism because some of the motives are considered legitimate by certain schools of political thought. However, there is an intellectual consensus globally that acts of terror should not be accepted under any circumstances. This is reflected in all important conventions including the United Nations counter terrorism strategy, outcome of the Madrid Conference on terrorism and outcome of the Strategic Foresight Group and ALDE roundtables at the European Parliament. Few words are as politically or emotionally charged as *terrorism*. A 1988 study by the US Army counted 109 definitions of terrorism that covered a total of 22 different definitional elements.

Terrorism expert Walter Laqueur in 1999 also has counted over 100 definitions and concludes that the *"only general characteristic generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence"*. For this and for political reasons, many news sources avoid using this term, opting instead for less accusatory words like "bombers", "militants", etc. In many countries, acts of terrorism are legally distinguished from criminal acts done for other purposes.. Common principles amongst legal definitions of terrorism provide an emerging consensus as to meaning and also foster cooperation between law enforcement personnel in different countries.

Among these definitions, several do not recognize the possibility of the legitimate use of violence by civilians against an invader in an occupied country, and would thus label all resistance movements as terrorist groups. Others make a distinction between lawful and unlawful use of violence. Russia for example includes in their terrorist list only those organisations which represent the greatest threat to their own security. Ultimately, the distinction is a political judgment.

It has also been argued that the political use of violent force and weapons that deliberately target or involve civilians, and do not focus mainly on military or government targets, is a common militant, terrorist, or guerilla tactic, and a main defining feature of these kinds of people.

As terrorism ultimately involves the use or threat of violence with the aim of creating fear not only to the victims but among a wide audience, it is fear which distinguishes terrorism from both conventional and guerrilla warfare. While both conventional military forces may engage in psychological warfare and guerrilla forces may engage in acts of terror and other forms of propaganda, they both aim at military victory. Terrorism on the other hand aims to achieve political or other goals, when direct military victory is not possible. This has resulted in some social scientists referring to guerrilla warfare as the "weapon of the weak" and terrorism as the "weapon of the weakest".

KEY CRITERIA

Some definitions determine counter-terrorism policy and are often developed to serve it. Most government definitions outline the following key criteria: target, objective, motive, perpetrator, and legitimacy or legality of the act. Terrorism is also often recognizable by a following statement from the perpetrators.

Psychological impact and fear – The attack was carried out in such a way as to maximize the severity and length of the psychological impact. Each act of terrorism is a "performance," a product of internal logic, devised to have an impact on many large audiences. Terrorists also attack national symbols to show their power and to shake the foundation of the country or society they are opposed to. This may negatively affect a government's legitimacy, while increasing the legitimacy of the given terrorist organisation and/or ideology behind a terrorist act.

Violence – According to Walter Laqueur of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "the only general characteristic generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence". However, the criterion of violence alone does not produce a useful definition, as it includes many acts not usually considered terrorism: war, riot, organised crime, or even a simple assault. Property destruction that does not endanger life is not usually considered a violent crime, but some have described property destruction by the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front as terrorism.

Perpetrated for a Political Goal – Something all terrorist attacks have in common is their perpetration for a political purpose. Terrorism is a

political tactic, not unlike letter writing or protesting, that is used by activists when they believe no other means will effect the kind of change they desire. The change is desired so badly that failure is seen as a worse outcome than the deaths of civilians. This is often where the inter-relationship between terrorism and religion occurs. When a political struggle is integrated into the framework of a religious or "cosmic" struggle, such as over the control of an ancestral homeland or holy site such as Israel and Jerusalem, failing in the political goal (nationalism) becomes equated with spiritual failure, which, for the highly committed, is worse than their own death or the deaths of innocent civilians.

Deliberate targeting of non-combatants – It is commonly held that the distinctive nature of terrorism lies in its intentional and specific selection of civilians as direct targets. Much of the time, the victims of terrorism are targeted not because they are threats, but because they are specific "symbols, tools, animals or corrupt beings" that tie into a specific view of the world that the terrorist possess. Their suffering accomplishes the terrorists' goals of instilling fear, getting a message out to an audience, or otherwise accomplishing their political end.

Unlawfulness or illegitimacy – Some official (notably government) definitions of terrorism add a criterion of illegitimacy or unlawfulness to distinguish between actions authorised by a "legitimate" government (and thus "lawful") and those of other actors, including individuals and small groups. Using this criterion, actions that would otherwise qualify as terrorism would not be considered terrorism if they were government sanctioned. For example, firebombing a city, which is designed to affect civilian support for a cause, would not be considered terrorism if it were authorised by a "legitimate" government. This criterion is inherently problematic and is not universally accepted, because: it denies the existence of state terrorism; the same act may or may not be classed as terrorism depending on whether its sponsorship is traced to a "legitimate" government; "legitimacy" and "lawfulness" are subjective, depending on the perspective of one government or another; and it diverges from the historically accepted meaning and origin of the term. For these reasons this criterion is not universally accepted. Most dictionary definitions of the term do not include this criterion.

REASONS FOR CONTROVERSY

The definition of terrorism is inherently controversial. The use of violence for the achievement of political ends is common to state and

non-state groups. The difficulty is in agreeing on a basis for determining when the use of violence (directed at whom, by whom, for what ends) is legitimate. The majority of definitions in use have been written by agencies directly associated with a government, and are systematically biased to exclude governments from the definition. Some such definitions are so broad, like the Terrorism Act 2000, as to include the disruption of a computer system wherein no violence is intended or results.

The contemporary label of "terrorist" is highly pejorative; it is a badge which denotes a lack of legitimacy and morality. The application "terrorist" is therefore always deliberately disputed. Attempts at defining the concept invariably arouse debate because rival definitions may be employed with a view to including the actions of certain parties, and excluding others. Thus, each party might still subjectively claim a legitimate basis for employing violence in pursuit of their own political cause or aim.

TERRORISM TYPES

In the spring of 1975, Law Enforcement Assistant Administration in the United States formed the National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. One of the five volumes that the committee was entitled *Disorders and Terrorism*, produced by the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism under the direction H.H.A. Cooper, Director of the Task Force staff. The Task Force classified terrorism into six categories.

- *Political Terrorism* – Violent criminal behaviour designed primarily to generate fear in the community, or substantial segment of it, for political purposes.

- *Quasi-Terrorism* – The activities incidental to the commission of crimes of violence that are similar in form and method to genuine terrorism but which nevertheless lack its essential ingredient. It is not the main purpose of the quasi-terrorists to induce terror in the immediate victim as in the case of genuine terrorism, but the quasi-terrorist uses the modalities and techniques of the genuine terrorist and produces similar consequences and reaction. For example, the fleeing felon who takes hostages is a quasi-terrorist, whose methods are similar to those of the genuine terrorist but whose purposes are quite different.

- *Civil Disorders* – A form of collective violence interfering with the peace, security, and normal functioning of the community.

- *Non-Political Terrorism* – Terrorism that is not aimed at political purposes but which exhibits "conscious design to create and

maintain high degree of fear for coercive purposes, but the end is individual or collective gain rather than the achievement of a political objective."

- *Limited Political Terrorism* – Genuine political terrorism is characterised by a revolutionary approach; limited political terrorism refers to "acts of terrorism which are committed for ideological or political motives but which are not part of a concerted campaign to capture control of the State.

- *Official or State Terrorism* – referring to nations whose rule is based upon fear and oppression that reach similar to terrorism or such proportions."

CRITICISMS

Jason Burke, an expert in radical Islamic activity, has this to say on the word "terrorism":

"There are multiple ways of defining terrorism, and all are subjective. Most define terrorism as 'the use or threat of serious violence' to advance some kind of 'cause'. Some state clearly the kinds of group ('sub-national', 'non-state') or cause (political, ideological, religious) to which they refer. Others merely rely on the instinct of most people when confronted with innocent civilians being killed or maimed by men armed with explosives, firearms or other weapons. None is satisfactory, and grave problems with the use of the term persist. Terrorism is after all, a tactic. the term 'war on terrorism' is thus effectively non-sensical. As there is no space here to explore this involved and difficult debate, my preference is, on the whole, for the less loaded term 'militancy'. This is not an attempt to condone such actions, merely to analyse them in a clearer way." ("Al Qaeda", ch.2, p.22)

Other arguments include that:

- There is no strict worldwide commonly accepted definition.

- Any definition that could be agreed upon in, say, English-speaking countries would be biased towards those countries.

- Almost every serious attempt to define the term have been sponsored by governments who instinctively attempt to draw a definition which excludes bodies like themselves.

- Most groups called "terrorist" deny such accusations. Virtually no organisation openly calls itself terrorist.

- Many groups call all their enemies "terrorist".

- The word is very loosely applied and very difficult to challenge when it is being used inappropriately, for example in war situations or against non-violent persons.

- It allows governments to apply a different standard of law to that of ordinary criminal law on the basis of a unilateral decision.
- There is no hope that people will ever all agree who is "terrorist" and who is not.
- The term as widely used in the West reflects a bias towards the *status quo*. Violence by established governments is sold as "defence", even when that claim is considered dubious by some; any attempt to oppose the established order through military means, however, is often labelled "terrorism".
- If we labelled groups terrorist on the basis of how their opponents perceive them, such labels would be very controversial, for example:
- State of Israel, USA, but also the states of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban
- The Contemporary Palestine Liberation Organisation
- Groups conducting revolution, such as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), are routinely denigrated as "terrorist"
- Almost all guerrilla groups (like Tamil Tigers or Chechen rebels) are accused of being "terrorist", but almost all guerrilla groups accuse countries they fight against of likewise being "terrorist".
- Resistance movement during World War II. Some historians even claim that resistance in Poland used biological weapons.

DEMOCRACY AND DOMESTIC TERRORISM

The relationship between domestic terrorism and democracy is complex. Research shows that such terrorism is most common in nations with intermediate political freedom and that the nations with the least terrorism are the most democratic nations. However, one study suggests that suicide terrorism may be an exception to this general rule. Evidence regarding this particular method of terrorism reveals that every modern suicide campaign has targeted a democracy- a state with a considerable degree of political freedom. The study suggests that concessions awarded to terrorists during the 80s and 90s for suicide attacks increased their frequency.

Some examples of "terrorism" in non-democracies include ETA in Spain under Francisco Franco, the Shining Path in Peru under Alberto Fujimori, and the Kurdistan Workers Party when Turkey was ruled by military leaders. Democracies such as the United States, Israel, and the Philippines also have experienced domestic terrorism.

While a democratic nation espousing civil liberties may claim a sense of higher moral ground than other regimes, an act of terrorism within such a state may cause a perceived dilemma: whether to maintain its civil liberties and thus risk being perceived as ineffective in dealing with the problem; or alternatively to restrict its civil liberties and thus risk delegitimising its claim of supporting civil liberties. This dilemma, some social theorists would conclude, may very well play into the initial plans of the acting terrorist(s); namely, to delegitimize the state.

PEJORATIVE USE

The difference between the words "terrorist" or "terrorism" and the terms above can be summed up by the aphorism, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." This is exemplified when a group that uses irregular military methods is an ally of a State against a mutual enemy, but later falls out with the State and starts to use the same methods against its former ally. During World War II the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was allied with the British, but during the Malayan Emergency, members of its successor, the Malayan Races Liberation Army, were branded terrorists by the British. More recently, Ronald Reagan and others in the American administration frequently called the Afghan Mujahideen freedom fighters during their war against the Soviet Union, yet twenty years later when a new generation of Afghan men are fighting against what they perceive to be a regime installed by foreign powers, their attacks are labelled terrorism by George W. Bush. Groups accused of terrorism usually prefer terms that reflect legitimate military or ideological action. Leading terrorism researcher Professor Martin Rudner, director of the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies at Ottawa's Carleton University, defines "terrorist acts" as attacks against civilians for political or other ideological goals, and goes on to say:

> "There is the famous statement: 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.' But that is grossly leading. It assesses the validity of the cause when terrorism is an act. One can have a perfectly beautiful cause and yet if one commits terrorist acts, it is terrorism regardless.""

Some groups, when involved in a "liberation" struggle, have been called terrorist by the Western governments or media. Later, these same persons, as leaders of the liberated nations, are called statesmen by similar organisations. Two examples are Nobel Peace Prize laureates Menachem Begin and Nelson Mandela.

Sometimes states that are close allies, for reasons of history, culture and politics, can disagree over whether members of a certain organisation

are terrorists. For example for many years some branches of the United States government refused to label members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) as terrorists, while it was using methods against one of the United States' closest allies (Britain) that Britain branded as terrorist attacks. This was highlighted by the Quinn v. Robinson case.

Many times the term "terrorism" and "extremism" are interchangeably used. However, there is a significant difference between the two. Terrorism essentially threat or act of physical violence. Extremism involves using non-physical instruments to mobilise minds to achieve political or ideological ends. For instance, Al Qaeda is involved in terrorism. The Iranian revolution of 1979 is a case of extremism. A global research report An Inclusive World (2007) asserts that extremism poses a more serious threat than terrorism in the decades to come. For these and other reasons, media outlets wishing to preserve a reputation for impartiality are extremely careful in their use of the term

PERPETRATORS

Acts of terrorism can be carried out by individuals, groups, or states. According to some definitions, clandestine or semi-clandestine state actors may also carry out terrorist acts outside the framework of a state of war. The most common image of terrorism is that it is carried out by small and secretive cells, highly motivated to serve a particular cause. However, many of the most deadly operations in recent time, such as 9/11, the London underground bombing, and the 2002 Bali bombing were planned and carried out by a close clique, comprised close friends, family members and other strong social networks. These groups benefited from the free flow of information, and were able overcome the obstacles they encountered where others failed due to lack of information and communication. Over the years, many people have attempted to come up with a terrorist profile to attempt to explain these individuals' actions through their psychology and social circumstances. Others, like Roderick Hindery, have sought to discern profiles in the propaganda tactics used by terrorists.

LIST OF MAIN TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

Most organisations that are accused of being a "terrorist organisation" deny using terrorism as a military tactic to achieve their goals, and there is no international consensus on the bureaucratic definition of terrorism. Therefore, this list is of organisations that are, or have been in the past, proscribed as "terrorist organisations" by other organisations, including the United Nations and national

governments, where the proscription has a significant impact on the group's activities.

This listing does not include states or governmental organisations which are considered under state terrorism.

Religious Terrorists

Religious terrorism is a form of religious violence. As with other forms of terrorism, there is no real consensus as to its definition. Groups are frequently classified as practitioners of religious terrorism for any one of the following reasons:

- The group itself is defined by religion rather than by other factors (such as ideology or ethnicity).
- Religion plays some part in defining or determining the objectives or methods of the group.
- The ultimate objective of the group is religiously defined.

Controversy concerning classification is often found because:

- Religion and ethnicity frequently coincide. Ethnic conflict may thus appear as religious, or religious conflict may appear as ethnic.
- Religious groups, like other groups, frequently pursue political goals. In such cases it is often not clear which is uppermost, the political goal or the religious motivation.

Groups which have used principal religious motives for their terrorist acts and were deemed as such by supranational organisations and governments are listed here in alphabetical order by religion.

Christian

- Army of God
- God's Army A terrorist group in Myanmar.
- Nagaland Rebels (1947-present) Active in predominantly Christian state in Hindu majority India. Involved in several bombings in 2004. Goal: Independence from India after annexing parts of neighboring Indian states and Burma if it has Christian majority.
- National Liberation Front of Tripura (1989-present) A group that seeks the independence of Tripura from India to create a Christian Tripura.
- Phineas Priesthood An American based Christian Identity movement.

- National Democratic Front of Bodoland, active terrorist in the Indian state of Assam, involved in the murder of Bineshwar Brahma, prominent Hindu Bodo activist

Islamist

- Abu Sayyaf (1991-present; Islamist separatists; the Philippines)
  - Based in the southern islands of Jolo, Basilan, and Mindanao.
  - Branched off of the Moro National Liberation Front.
  - Allegedly partnered with Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda.
- Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (Yemen)
- Adolat—Uzbekistan
- Akromiya—Uzbekistan
- Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Late 1970s-present; Islamists; Egypt)
 - Seeks to establish Islamist state in Egypt. Usually targets secular establishments, government buildings, police, the military, minorities, tourists, and "morally offensive" buildings.
- Armed Islamic Group (1992-present; Islamists; Algeria)
  - Seeks to establish Islamist state in Algeria. Began operations in 1992 after the Algerian government ignored election results that gave victory to Islamist political parties.
- Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades
- Ansar al-Islam (December 2001-present; Islamists; Iraq)
  - In Arabic, "Supporters of Islam."
  - Also known as "Partisans of Islam or Helpers of Islam."
- Al-Qaeda (1988-present; Islamists; Afghanistan, Pakistan, and worldwide)
  - In Arabic, "the foundation", "the base", or "the database" kept by intelligence services of anti-Soviet Afghani fighters.
  - Also known as Qa'idat al-Jihad, Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places, World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, Islamic Salvation Foundation, and the Osama bin Laden Network.
  - Related: Alneda (former website), As-Sahab (affiliated public relations organisation),
  - Cells: Buffalo six, Hamburg cell,
- Asbat al-Ansar (early 1990s-present; Lebanese Sunni Islamists; southern Lebanon)

- In Arabic, "the League of the Followers."
- Acronym for "Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya," or Islamic Resistance Movement.

- Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad/Al-Qaeda in Iraq—Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Sunni network, operating in Iraq
  - on U.S. State Department list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations
- Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement—al-Qaeda linked separatist group in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region aiming to establish an Islamic state. Banned by China, along with related groups East Turkestan Liberation Organisation, World Uighur Youth Congress and East Turkistan Information Center
- Egyptian Islamic Jihad—Egypt (active since the late 1970s)
- Hamas—West Bank, Gaza Strip. Listed as a terrorist organisation by Australia, Canada, the European Union, Israel, and the United States
- Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)—Pakistan and Kashmir
- Hizb-an-nusra—Uzbekistan
- Hizb ut-Tahrir—international (legal in Britain and Australia)
- Hezbollah—Lebanon; Listed as a terrorist organisation by Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Israel, and the United States
- Hizbul Mujahideen—Pakistan and Kashmir
- Hofstad Network—Netherlands
- Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain—Defunct
- Islamic Movement of Central Asia—Central Asia (affiliated with Al Qaeda)
  - Islamic Movement of Tajikistan—Tajikistan
  - Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan—Uzbekistan
- Jaish-e-Mohammed—Pakistan
- Jaish Ansar al-Sunna—Iraq
- Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami
- Jemaah Islamiyah—Southeast Asia
- Jihad Rite—Australia (linked with Al Qaeda. Founded in 2001)
- Lashkar-e-Jhangvi—Pakistan
- Lashkar-e-Toiba—Pakistan
- Maktab al-Khadamat—Afghanistan—Defunct
- Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group—Morocco and Spain

- Moro Islamic Liberation Front—(Islamic separatists; the Philippines)
- Palestinian Islamic Jihad—Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip
- People Against Gangsterism and Drugs—South Africa
- Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat—Algeria
- Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan—Pakistan
- Students Islamic Movement of India—India
- Takfir wal-Hijra—Egypt/Sudan/Algeria
- Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi—Pakistan
- Turkish Hezbollah—Kurdish organisation operating in Turkey
- Turkish Islamic Jihad—Turkey

Islamist Fronts

- Al-Barakaat (Al-Qaida front)
- Al-Wafa Humanitarian Organisation (Al-Qaida front)
- Benevolence International Foundation (Al-Qaida front)
- Global Relief Foundation (Al-Qaida front)
- Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (Hamas)
- Konsojaya Trading Company (Jemaah Islamiyah front)

Jewish

- Jewish Defense League
- Kahane Chai (designated as terrorist by Israel, the EU, and USA)

Sikh

- Babbar Khalsa
- Bhinderanwala Tiger Force of Khalistan
- International Sikh Youth Federation
- Dashmesh Regiment
- Khalistan Commando Force
- Khalistan Liberation Force
- Khalistan Liberation Front
- Khalistan National Army
- Khalistan Zindabad Force
- Saheed Khalsa Force

All of these groups demand a Khalistan (Land of the Pure) in the Indian state of Punjab and adjoining areas for Sikhs. Most have a variable amount of support from Sikhs abroad and have been in existence

since the 1980s. Many have been weakened and have cut down on activities, yet they continue. The militancy in Punjab has claimed approximately 1,00,000 lives, according to estimates put forward by Amnesty International: this figure involves killings by both Sikh militants and the Indian forces. With the exception of the first two, the other groups have only been proscribed in India.

OTHER RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS

- Aum Supreme Truth (Aum Shinrikyo)—Japan (homicidal religious cult)
- Lord's Resistance Army Christian/Pagan/Muslim terrorist group that operates in northern Uganda, it seeks to overthrow the Ugandan government and create a country based on the ten commandments.

NATIONALISTIC TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

Irish Nationalists (Northern Ireland)

- Irish National Liberation Army (1974-Present)
  - Splinter group:
    Irish People's Liberation Organisation (1986-1992, defunct)
- Irish Republican Army (1922-1969)split into- 'Official IRA' and 'Provisional IRA'.
- Official IRA (defunct)
- Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) (1969–2002)
  - Supporters of the PIRA split from 'Official' Sinn Féin to form Provisional Sinn Féin. Provisional Sinn Féin was later known simply as Sinn Féin (while 'Official' Sinn Féin eventually became the Workers' Party).
  - Under ceasefire since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998
  - Ended armed campaign in September 2005.
  - Splinter groups:
    Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) (1986-present)
    Also known as the "Continuity Army Council" and "Óglaigh na hÉireann" (Gaelic for 'Volunteers of Ireland')
    Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) (1997-present)*
    Also known as the True IRA and Óglaigh na hÉireann (Gaelic for Volunteers of Ireland).

  Does not recognize Good Friday Agreement.

Ulster Loyalists (Northern Ireland)

- Ulster Volunteer Force (original UVF 1912-1921, current UVF has existed since 1966)
  - Very closely linked with the Red Hand Commandos (1972-present).
  - Splinter group: Loyalist Volunteer Force
- Ulster Defence Association (1971-present)
  - Also called the "Ulster Freedom Fighters," or UFF.
  - On February 22, 2003, announced a "complete and utter cessation" of all acts of violence for one year. It said it will review its ceasefire every three months, although in February 2006, the Independent Monitoring Commission reported that the UDA continued its paramilitary activities, as well as involvement in organised crime, drug trafficking, counterfeiting, extortion, money laundering and robbery
  - Splinter group: Red Hand Defenders
- Red Hand Commandos {created in 1972) allied with the UVF
- Red Hand Defenders (1998-present) an affiliate organisation with both the UDA and LVF who are allies. Opposes ceasefire.
- Loyalist Volunteer Force (1996-2005)
- Ulster Freedom Fighters (created in 1972) an affiliate of the UDA
- Ulster Resistance 1986-1990 Created by the Democratic Unionist Party, now defunct
- Red Branch Knights (1992)
- Orange Volunteers (1998-present)

Indonesia

- Barisan Merah Putih; ultra nationalist group first recruited by KOPASSUS
- Laskar Jihad; Islamic ultra nationist group

Israeli/West Bank/ Gaza

Jewish (Historical)

- Irgun (1931-1948)—regarded as a terrorist group by the British authorities and mainstream Zionist organisations (ceasefire 1940 to 1943).
- Lehi (1940-1948)—regarded as a terrorist group by the British, by Zionist organisations and the UN mediator.

Arab

- Abu Nidal
- Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades
- Black Hand (Palestine)
- Black September (group)
- Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)
- Fatah Hawks
- Force 17
- Hamas—listed as a terrorist organisation by Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Israel, and the United States, and is banned in Jordan.
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)
- Popular Resistance Committees
- Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement
- Palestine Liberation Front
- Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) (1964-present)—On December 14, 1988, the PLO officially renounced the use of terrorist tactics. In 1993 it became the PA (Palestinian Authority). Although it claims it does not support terrorism, documents show that the PA/PLO has actively supported and sponsored various terrorist groups in Israel. According to the NCIS, the PLO is "the richest of all terrorist organisations." (1993)
- The Holy Jihad Brigade
- Tanzim

Tamil Nationalist

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, aka Tamil Tigers)- Sri Lanka. One of the largest groups with an estimated 11,000. Tamil cadres who fight for separation from Sri Lanka. The group has carried out 240+ suicide bombings since the early 80s in the process which they describe as their freedom struggle. Members of the group were convicted for the suicide bomber assassinations of Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa (1988-1993) and former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. UNHCR has reported that this organisation recruits children by force.

Other Nationalist Terrorists

- An gof—an gof—Cornwall—was thought to be inactive but as of March 12th 2007 they have become active once more.
- Anuak Terrorist Militants Western Ethiopia and Eastern Sudan.
- East Turkestan Islamic Movement—Central Asia and China
- East Turkistan Liberation Organisation (China)
- ETA (Basque Fatherland and Liberty)—Spain and southern France (founded 1959)
- GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación) Spanish death squad (1980s)
- Scottish National Liberation Army (SNLA)—Scotland (defunct)
- Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood—Yugoslavia (disbanded)
- Front de Libération du Quebec—Canada (founded 1963)
  - Cells: Chenier Cell, Liberation Cell,
- Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK/KADEK/KONGRA-GEL)—Turkey
- Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA; 1993-1999)—Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
- Los Macheteros—Puerto Rico (founded 1976)
- National Council of Resistance of Iran (MKO front)
- National Front for the Liberation of Corsica (FLNC)—France
- People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK/MKO)—Iran
- Armed Islamic Group (GIA)—France, Algeria
- OJAL (Algeria)
- Ogaden National Liberation Front
- Oromo Liberation Front—1973
- Organisation armée secrète (OAS)—France, Algeria (disbanded)
- VMO (1950-1970 and 1971-1983)—Flanders

Anarchist

- Anti-State Justice
- Black Star
- Conscientious Arsonists
- The Angry Brigade
- New Revolutionary Alternative
- Squamish Five

Leftist, Communist, Leninist, Trotskyst, Maoist and Marxist

- Action Directe—France
- African National Congress—South Africa (renounced violence)
- Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA, disbanded since 1986)—Lebanon, Armenia and the USA
- CCC—Belgium
- Chukaku-Ha—Japan
- Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)—Nepal—currently taking part in disarmament and cooperation in a new interim government for Nepal
- Ejército de Liberación Nacional—Colombia
- Forças Populares 25 de Abril—Portugal (1980—1987)
- GRAPO—Spain
- Japanese Red Army (Sekigun)—Japan
- June 2 Movement—West Germany (disbanded)
- Khmer Rouge—Cambodia (disbanded)
- Naxals or Naxalites—India
- NPA or New People's Army—Philippines
- Revolutionary Organisation 17 November (17N)—Greece
- Pan-Africanist Congress—South Africa (renounced violence)
- People's War Group—India
- Red Army Faction (popularly known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang)—Germany (founded 1967, disbanded)
- Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse)—Italy (founded 1969)
- Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—Colombia
- Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP and DHKP/C)—Turkey
- Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso)—Peru (active since the late 1960s)
- Symbionese Liberation Army—USA (disbanded)
- Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)—Peru
- United Freedom Front—USA (founded in 1976, now disbanded)
- United Liberation Front of Assam—India
- Weathermen—USA (founded in 1969, now disbanded)
  - Spin-off: May 19th Communist Movement (active 1978-85)

Ethnic terrorists (including neo-Nazis and white-supremacists)

- Army for the Liberation of Rwanda—Rwanda (Hutu emancipatory;genocidal)
- Aryan Nations—United States
- Boeremag—South Africa
- Combat 18—United Kingdom
- Column 88—United Kingdom
- CSA—United States
- Creativity Movement—United States
- Jondollah—Iran
- Ku Klux Klan—United States (founded in 1865 and revived several times since).
- Mouvement d'Action et Défense Masada—France (disbanded). This was a French neo-Nazi organisation, disguised as a Zionist extremist group, which attacked Arab targets.
- National Socialist Movement—United Kingdom
- The Order—United States (disbanded)
- Racial Volunteer Force—United Kingdom
- White Aryan Resistance—United States

Anti-Communists

- Contras—Nicaragua
- Alianza Anticomunista Argentina—Argentina
- Alianza Americana Anticomunista—Colombia
- Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia—Colombia
- Ranvir Sena—India

Cuban Exile Groups

All groups recognised by the *International terrorism report* from the United States Central Intelligence Agency. The principle aim of these groups is to forge political change in Cuba.

- Abdala
- Alpha 66
- Anti-Castro Commando
- Anti-Communist Commandos
- Brigade 2506

- Condor
- Coordination of United Revolutionary Organisations (CORU—includes Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles)
- Cuba Action
- Cuba Action Commandos
- Cuban Anti-Communist League
- Cuban C-4
- Movement Cuban Liberation Front
- Cuban National Liberation Front (FLNC)
- Cuban Power (el Poder Cubano)
- Cuban Power
- Cuban Representation in Exile
- Cuban Revolutionary Directorate
- Cuban Revolutionary Organisation
- Cuban Youth Group International
- Secret Revolutionary United Cells
- JCN (expansion unknown)
- Latin American Anti-Communist Army
- Movement of Cuban Justice Movement of the Seventh (M-7)
- National Integration Front (FIN; Cuban Nationalist Front)
- Omega 7
- Pedro Luis Boitel
- Command Pedro Ruiz Botero
- Commandos Pragmatistas
- Scorpion (el Alacran)
- Second Front of Escambray
- Secret Anti-Castro Cuban Army
- Secret Cuban Government
- Secret Hand Organisation
- Secret Organisation Zero
- Young Cubans
- Youths of the Star

Issue-specific

Ecologist

- Animal Liberation Front (ALF)—operates worldwide. Property damage and animal release, related to animal rights issues. Listed as one of the top domestic threats by United States Department of Homeland Security, FBI and ATF.
- Earth Liberation Front (ELF)—Founded 1992; operates in US, Canada, and UK. Property destruction, related to environmental issues. Listed as one of the top domestic threats by United States Department of Homeland Security, FBI and ATF.
- Environmental Life Force—Disbanded in 1972. Used explosive and incendiary devices in defense of the environment.

Abortion

- Army of God — anti-abortion, operates in the United States. Property damage and loss of life in attacks on abortion clinics.

Others

Africa

- Interahamwe—Rwanda—Hutu nationalist, strongly anti Tutsi. Responsible for the 1994 Rwanda genocide
- Janjaweed—Sudan
- Mungiki—Kenya
- Revolutionary United Front—Sierra Leonean rebels

Caribbean

- Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti (FRAPH)—Haiti
- National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Haiti—Haiti
- Tonton Macoutes—Haiti

France

- Action Directe (AD), an anti-NATO organisation responsible for the 1986 murder of Georges Besse.

Portugal

- FLAMA Madeira Archipelago Liberation Front, separatist group from Madeira.
- Frente de Libertação dos Açores (FLA) Azores Liberation Front, separatist group from Azores.

Spain

- ETA Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, main terrorist organisation in Spain responsible of the numerous bombings, seeking an independent Basque Country. See also Kale borroka.
- GAL Grupo Antiterrorista de Liberacion, terrorist organisation of the government in the 1980s.
- GRAPO Grupo Antifacista Primero de Octubre, terrorist organisation of extreme left
- FAG Fuerzas Armadas Guanches, terrorist organisation of the Islas Canarias part of MPAIAC in the 1970s.
- Terra Lliure terrorist group of Catalonia in the 1980s. and 1990s.
- Exercito Guerrilleiro do Povo Galego Ceibe separatist group in Galicia

United Kingdom

- Animal Rights Militia, a terrorist organisation responsible for numerous letter bombs in Great Britain during the 1980s.
- Scottish National Liberation Army, a Scottish terrorist organisation fighting for the cause of Scottish independence.
- An Gof, a Cornish terrorist organisation fighting for the cause of Cornish independence.

United States

- Afro-American Liberation Army (AALA), a terrorist organisation active in Los Angeles during the 1970s.
- Aliens of America, a terrorist organisation active in Los Angeles during the 1970s.
- American Indian Movement (AIM), originally founded as a civil rights organisation, the AIM was involved in the 1972 occupations of the Mayflower II, Mount Rushmore and the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in Washington, D.C. as well as the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee during which members were involved in gun battles with federal agents.
- Americans for Justice, a terrorist organisation active on the west coast during the 1970s.
- Bay Bombers, a radical terrorist organisation active in San Francisco, California during the 1960s.
- Black Afro Militant Movement (BAMM), a militant terrorist organisation

- Black Liberation Army (BLA), an offshoot faction of the Black Panther Party reportedly involved in murders of police officers in San Francisco and New York between 1971 and 1973.

- Black Muslims, a separatist involved in numerous shootouts with police and other violent activities including the "Zebra Killings" in which fourteen people were murdered in the San Francisco-area.

- Black Nation of Islam (BNI), a terrorist organisation active during the 1970s and 80s.

- Black Revolutionary, a terrorist organisation active in New York during the 1970s.

- Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a terrorist organisation responsible for the 1973 murder of Oakland school superintendent Marcus Foster and, most notably, the 1974 kidnapping of Patricia Hearst.

- Weather Underground (WU), radical terrorist organisation responsible for nineteen bombings between 1969 and 1974, including the U.S. Capitol Building in 1971 and The Pentagon in 1974.

State Sponsors

A state can sponsor terrorism by funding a terrorist organisation, harboring terrorism, and also using state resources, such as the military, to directly perform acts of terrorism. Opinions as to which acts of violence by states consist of state-sponsored terrorism or not vary widely. When states provide funding for groups considered by some to be terrorist, they rarely acknowledge them as such.

Tactics

Terrorist attacks are often targeted to maximize fear and publicity. They usually use explosives or poison, but there is also concern about terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction. Terrorist organisations usually methodically plan attacks in advance, and may train participants, plant "undercover" agents, and raise money from supporters or through organised crime. Communication may occur through modern telecommunications, or through old-fashioned methods such as couriers.

Causes

The context in which terrorist tactics are used is often a large-scale, unresolved political conflict.

The type of conflict varies widely; historical examples include:

- Secession of a territory to form a new sovereign state
- Dominance of territory or resources by various ethnic groups
- Imposition of a particular form of government, such as democracy, theocracy, or anarchy
- Economic deprivation of a population
- Opposition to a domestic government or occupying army.

Terrorism is a form of asymmetric warfare, and is more common when direct conventional warfare either cannot be (due to differentials in available forces) or is not being used to resolve the underlying conflict. In some cases, the rationale for a terrorist attack may be uncertain (as in the many attacks for which no group or individual claims responsibility) or unrelated to any large-scale social conflict (such as the Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by Aum Shinrikyo).

A global research report An Inclusive World prepared by an international team of researchers from all continents has analysed causes of present day terrorism. It has reached the conclusions that terrorism all over the world functions like an economic market. There is demand for terrorists placed by greed or grievances. Supply is driven by relative deprivation resulting in triple deficits—developmental deficit, democratic deficit and dignity deficit. Acts of terror take place at the point of intersection between supply and demand. Those placing the demand use religion and other denominators as vehicles to establish links with those on the supply side. This pattern can be observed in all situations ranging from Colombia to Colombo and the Philippines to the Palestine.

RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Responses to terrorism are broad in scope. They can include re-alignments of the political spectrum and reassessments of fundamental values. The term counter-terrorism has a narrower connotation, implying that it is directed at terrorist actors.

Specific types of responses include:

- Targeted laws, criminal procedures, deportations, and enhanced police powers
- Target hardening, such as locking doors or adding traffic barriers
- Pre-emptive or reactive military action
- Increased intelligence and surveillance activities

- Pre-emptive humanitarian activities
- More permissive interrogation and detention policies
- Official acceptance of torture as a valid tool

Mass Media

Media exposure may be a primary goal of those carrying out terrorism, to expose issues that would otherwise be ignored by the media. Some consider this to be manipulation and exploitation of the media. Others consider terrorism itself to be a symptom of a highly controlled mass media, which does not otherwise give voice to alternative viewpoints, a view expressed by Paul Watson who has stated that controlled media is responsible for terrorism, because "you cannot get your information across any other way". Paul Watson's organisation Sea Shepherd has itself been branded "eco-terrorist", although it claims to have not caused any casualties.

The mass media will often censor organisations involved in terrorism (through self-restraint or regulation) to discourage further terrorism. However, this may encourage organisations to perform more extreme acts of terrorism to be shown in the mass media. The Weather Underground was a militant US organisation which, while causing no casualties, performed terrorist acts to bring media attention to various world political issues. Many of the issues were given brief mentions by news services only in relation to the terrorist acts.

HISTORY OF TERRORISM

Although there are earlier related examples, the history of terrorism in the modern sense seems to have emerged around the mid-19th-century.

Origin

The term "terrorism" comes from the French word *terrorisme*, which is based on the Latin verb *terrererin* (to cause to urinate), It has been related to the so-called 1793 Reign of Terror during the Gordon Revolution.

Nineteenth century

The current use of the term "terrorism" is broader and relies more on the example of the 19th-century revolutionaries who used the technique of assassination, particularly the anarchists and Narodniks in Tsarist Russia, whose most notable action was the assassination of

Alexander II. An early example of its use in the current sense is in Joseph Conrad's 1907 story "The Secret Agent", where it is used to describe anarchists attempting to cause terror and foment social disruption by blowing up Greenwich Observatory: "The venomous spluttering of the old terrorist without teeth was heard."

What is one to say to an act of destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable; in fact, mad? Madness alone is truly terrifying, inasmuch as you cannot placate it either by threats, persuasion, or bribes.

In 1867 the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a revolutionary nationalist group with support from Irish-Americans, carried out attacks in England. These were the first acts of "republican terrorism", which became a recurrent feature of British history, and these Fenians were the precursor of the Irish Republican Army. The ideology of the group was Irish nationalism.

In Russia, by the mid-19th century, the intelligentsia grew impatient with the slow pace of Tsarist reforms, and sought instead to transform peasant discontent into open revolution. Anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin maintained that progress was impossible without destruction. Their objective was nothing less than complete destruction of the state. Anything that contributed to this goal was regarded as moral. With the development of sufficiently powerful, stable, and affordable explosives, the gap closed between the firepower of the state and the means available to dissidents. Organised into secret societies like the People's Will, Russian terrorists launched a campaign of terror against the state that climaxed in 1881 when Tsar Alexander II of Russia was assassinated.

At about the same time, Anarchists in Europe and the United States also resorted to the use of dynamite, as did Catalan nationalists such as La Reixa and Bandera Negra.

Two groups within the Ottoman Empire also resorted to techniques considered by some historians to be in the same category as those used by the People's Will and the Anarchists. One group was those fighting for an independent Armenia, divided into two parties, the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party and the Dashnaks or Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The other group was those fighting for an independent Macedonia, divided into two organisations, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) and the External Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (EMRO).

The IMRO was founded in 1893 in Thessaloniki, now in Greece but then part of the Ottoman Empire. The organisation was driven by Slavic nationalism, and later acquired a reputation for ferocious attacks, including the 1934 assassination of Alexander I of Yugoslavia during a state visit to France.

The Fenians/IRA, the Hunchaks and Dashnaks, and the IMRO may be considered the prototype of all 'nationalist terrorism', and equally illustrate the (itself controversial) expression that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". At least one of these groups achieved its goals: an independent Ireland came into being. So did an independent Macedonia, but the original IMRO probably contributed little to this outcome. The territories of today's Armenia, however, are all in the former Russian empire.

Twentieth century

A reincarnation of the 19th century Ku Klux Klan arose in the United States in 1915, and became active for several decades, using terrorist tactics to promote a doctrine of white supremacy.

Some of the most successful terrorist groups were the vast array of guerilla, partisan, and resistance movements that were organised and supplied by the Allies during World War II. The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) conducted operations in every theatre of the war and provided an invaluable contribution to allied victory. They burned bridges and yelled, "London Bridge is falling down". From this act of terrorism we get the modern children's song.The SOE effectively invented modern terrorism, pioneering most of the tactics, techniques and technologies that are the mainstays of modern terrorism.

Throughout the Cold War both sides made extensive use of terrorist organisations to carry on a war by proxy. For example, many of the Islamic terrorists of today were trained by the US and UK to fight the USSR in Afganistan. Similar groups such as the Viet Cong received training from Soviet and Chinese military "advisors".

The most sustained terrorist campaign of the 20th century was that of the Irish Republican Army. Michael Collins led the first campaign which saw 26 of the 32 counties gain independence. A second campaign became know as the Troubles between 1972 and 1997 with the Provisional Irish Republican Army conducting bombings, assassinations and even mortar attacks on 10 Downing Street.

Today, modern weapons technology has made it possible for a "super-empowered angry man" to cause a large amount of destruction

by himself or with only a few conspirators. It can be, and has been, conducted by small as well as large organisations.

Some people considered at some point in their lives to be terrorists, or supporters of terrorism, have gone on to become dedicated peace activists (Uri Avnery), respected statesmen (Yitzhak Shamir) or even Nobel Peace Prize laureates (Nelson Mandela, Yasser Arafat). Though in some instances, the label of terrorist may not follow the standard sense which requires the targeting of non-combatants.

Since 1968, the U.S. State Department has tallied deaths due to terrorism. In 1985, it counted 816 deaths, the highest annual toll until then. The deaths decreased since the late 1980s, then rose to 3,295 in 2001, mainly as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks, which took about 3,000 lives. In 2003, more than 1,000 people died as a result of terrorist acts. Many of these deaths resulted from suicide bombings in Chechnya, Iraq, India and Israel. It does not tally victims of state terrorism.

Data from the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism Terrorism Knowledge Base showed a similar decline since the 1980s, especially in Western Europe. On the other hand, Asia experienced an increase in international terrorist attacks. Other regions experienced less consistent patterns over time. From 1991 to 2003, there was a consistent increase in the number of casualties from international terrorist attacks in Asia, but few other consistent trends in casualties from international terrorist attacks. Three different regions had, in three different years, a few attacks with a large number of casualties. Statistically, distribution of the severity of terrorist attacks follows a power law, much like that for wars and also natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and forest fires.

MAJOR TERRORISM ATTACK

- The 1972 *Munich massacre* during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, West Germany
- The December 1975 hostage taking at the OPEC headquarters in Vienna, Austria
- Bombing of Cubana Flight 455 in 1976 which killed 73 people.
- The June 1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182 originating from Canada
- The destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland on December 21, 1988

- The killing of Nicaraguan civilians during the 1980s by US-sponsored contras who had been trained by the United States in the use of terror.
- The 1993 World Trade Center bombing
- The 1993 Mumbai bombings
- The 1994 AMIA Bombing of the Jewish center in Buenos Aires, where Argentina charges Hezbollah and Iran
- The 1995 sarin gas attacks in Tokyo, Japan
- The Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh on April 19, 1995
- The Centennial Olympic Park bombing in 1996
- The Suicide bombing of Sri Lanka's Central Bank
- The US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998
- The Omagh bombing in Northern Ireland (August 15, 1998)
- The August 31 – September 22: Russian Apartment Bombings kills about 300 people, leading Russia into Second Chechen War
- The September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, and Washington D.C.
- The 2001 Indian Parliament attack on December 13, 2001
- The Passover Massacre on March 27, 2002 in Netanya, Israel
- The Moscow theatre siege and the Beslan school siege in Russia
- The Bali bombing in October 2002
- The March 11, 2004 attacks in Madrid
- The July 7, 2005 bombings in London
- The second Bali bombing on October 1, 2005
- The Mumbai train bombings on 11 July 2006.

Some terrorist attacks or plots were designed to kill thousands of people, but either failed or fell short. Such plans include the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Operation Bojinka, and the 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot.

SOME DEFINITIONS

United Nations

- While the United Nations has not yet accepted a definition of terrorism, the UN's "academic consensus definition," written

by terrorism expert A.P. Schmid and widely used by social scientists, runs:

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby — in contrast to assassination — the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organisation), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought," (Schmid, 1988).

- UN short legal definition, also proposed by A.P. Schmid: an act of terrorism is the "peacetime equivalent of a war crime."
- On March 17, 2005, a UN panel described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act."
- The General Assembly resolution 49/60, adopted on December 9, 1994, contains a provision describing terrorism:

Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.

According to Antonio Cassese, that provision "sets out an acceptable definition of terrorism".

European Union

The European Union employs a definition of terrorism for legal/official purposes which is set out in Art. 1 of the *Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism* (2002). This provides that terrorist offences are certain criminal offences set out in a list comprised largely serious offences against persons and property which, "given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or an international organisation

where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation."

United States

The United States has defined terrorism under the Federal Criminal Code. Chapter 113B of Part I of Title 18 of the United States Code defines terrorism and lists the crimes associated with terrorism. In Section 2331 of Chapter 113b, terrorism is defined as:

> …activities that involve violent… or life-threatening acts… that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State and… appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and… (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States… or]… (C) occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States…"

Edward Peck, former U.S. Chief of Mission in Iraq and ambassador to Mauritania:

> In 1985, when I was the Deputy Director of the Reagan White House Task Force on Terrorism, they asked us — this is a Cabinet Task Force on Terrorism; I was the Deputy Director of the working group — they asked us to come up with a definition of terrorism that could be used throughout the government. We produced about six, and each and every case, they were rejected, because careful reading would indicate that our own country had been involved in some of those activities. […] After the task force concluded its work, Congress got into it, and you can google into U.S. Code Title 18, Section 2331, and read the U.S. definition of terrorism. And one of them in here says — one of the terms, "international terrorism," means "activities that," I quote, "appear to be intended to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping." […] Yes, well, certainly, you can think of a number of countries that have been involved in such activities. Ours is one of them. Israel is another. And so, the terrorist, of course, is in the eye of the beholder.

INDIVIDUALS

- Schmid and Jongman: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-clandestine) individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct

targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims are violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organisation), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are use to manipulate the main target audience(s), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought".

- L. Ali Khan: "Terrorism sprouts from the existence of aggrieved groups."

- Jack Gibbs (1989): "Terrorism is illegal violence or threatened violence directed against human or non-human objects, provided that it: (1) was undertaken or ordered with a view to altering or maintaining at least one putative norm in at least one particular territorial unit or population: (2) had secretive, furtive, and/or clandestine features that were expected by the participants to conceal their personal identity and/or their future location; (3) was not undertaken or ordered to further the permanent defense of some area; (4) was not conventional warfare and because of their concealed personal identity, concealment of their future location, their threats, and/or their spatial mobility, the participants perceived themselves as less vulnerable to conventional military action; and (5) was perceived by the participants as contributing to the normative goal previously described (supra) by inculcating fear of violence in persons (perhaps an indefinite category of them) other than the immediate target of the actual or threatened violence and/or by publicising some cause."

- David Rodin (Oxford Philosopher): "Terrorism is the deliberate, negligent, or reckless use of force against non-combatants, by state or non-state actors for ideological ends and in the absence of a substantively just legal process."

- Walter Laqueur: "Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted."

- James M. Poland: "Terrorism is the pre-meditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience."

- M. Cherif Bassiouni: "'Terrorism' has never been defined..."

Laws and Government Agencies

- U.S. Code of Federal Regulations: "...the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85).

- Current U.S. national security strategy: "pre-meditated, politically motivated violence against innocents."

- United States Department of Defense: the "calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."

- USA PATRIOT Act: "activities that (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the U.S. or of any state, that (B) appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping, and (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S."

- The U.S. National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) described a terrorist act as one which was: "pre-meditated; perpetrated by a subnational or clandestine agent; politically motivated, potentially including religious, philosophical, or culturally symbolic motivations; violent; and perpetrated against a non-combatant target."

- The British Terrorism Act 2000 defines terrorism so as to include not only violent offences against persons and physical damage to property, but also acts "designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system". This latter consideration would include shutting down a website whose views one dislikes. However this, and any of the other acts covered by the definition would also need to be (a) designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, AND (b)be done for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

WHAT IS "RAMADAN"?

MEANING OF RAMADAN

Ramadan is a special month of the year for over one billion Muslims throughout the world. It is a time for inner reflection, devotion to God, and self-control.

Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar that has been specifically designated for greater religious adherence and reflection. People are most familiar with the fasting that takes place during the month. And that is certainly an important aspect of it. Just as important is greater religious adherence and greater goodwill towards other men and women.

WHY DO WE FAST?

It is an example set by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) and an obligation commuted upon by all observant Muslims. The meaning behind it is to strengthen one's self-discipline as well as remind people of the experience of those less fortunate than themselves.

Before sunrise you have a meal called "Sahoor." From dawn to sunset one is to abstain from eating food, drinking water and having sexual activity.

At sunset you break your fast traditionally with a date and water. You pray and then you have a full meal, called "Iftaar," and it starts all over again the next morning.

WHEN DID RAMADAN START THIS YEAR?

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and so in a geographic area Ramadan does not start until the new moon is officially sighted. Different places have different visibility so it could vary a day or so. This year (2007) it will start on or about September 12th.

What is Iftaar?

The Iftaar is the evening meal that breaks the fast. It is usually a time of congregating with friends and family—inviting folks to your house or going over to someone else's house. It is a time of increased friendship and brotherhood.

The meals vary—anything goes.

We stop and remember our friends. You receive a lot of invitations from people you haven't seen in a long time. It revives the feeling of spirit in the Muslim community. It brings people together.

▶▶▶

ONLINE STUDY MATERIALS
ON
WORLD RELIGIONS

**Awareness and Capsule Course
offered under the aegis of Asian Chapter
IAEWP's ONLINE PEACE EDUCATION,
RECONSTRUCTION, ACCORD, NON-VIOLENCE
AND DISARMAMENT INITIATIVE (OPERANDI)**

Board of Editors
Dr. Priyaranjan Trivedi
Dr. Uttam Kumar Singh
Dr. Markandey Rai
Dr. Shyamnarayan Pandey
Dr. Akshay Kumar Nayak

CONTENTS