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BUDDHISM AND BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY

Buddhist cosmology is the description of the shape and evolution of the universe according to the canonical Buddhist scriptures and commentaries.

INTRODUCTION

The self-consistent Buddhist cosmology which is presented in commentaries and works of Abhidharma in both Theravâda and Mahâyâna traditions, is the end-product of an analysis and reconciliation of cosmological comments found in the Buddhist sûtra and vinaya traditions. No single sûtra sets out the entire structure of the universe. However, in several sûtras the Buddha describes other worlds and states of being, and other sûtras describe the origin and destruction of the universe. The synthesis of these data into a single comprehensive system must have taken place early in the history of Buddhism, as the system described in the Pâli Vibhajyavâda tradition (represented by today's Theravâdins) agrees, despite some trivial inconsistencies of nomenclature, with the Sarvâstivâda tradition which is preserved by Mahâyâna Buddhists.

The picture of the world presented in Buddhist cosmological descriptions cannot be taken as a literal description of the shape of the universe. It is inconsistent, and cannot be made consistent, with astronomical data that were already known in ancient India. However, it is not intended to be a description of how ordinary humans perceive their world; rather, it is the universe as seen through the divyacakcus (Pâli: dibbacakkhu), the "divine eye" by which a Buddha or an arhat who has cultivated this faculty can perceive all of the other worlds

and the beings arising (being born) and passing away (dying) within them, and can tell from what state they have been reborn and into what state they will be reborn. The cosmology has also been interpreted in a symbolical or allegorical sense.

Buddhist cosmology can be divided into two related kinds: spatial cosmology, which describes the arrangement of the various worlds within the universe, and temporal cosmology, which describes how those worlds come into existence, and how they pass away.

SPATIAL COSMOLOGY

Spatial cosmology can also be divided into two branches. The *vertical* (or cakravda) cosmology describes the arrangement of worlds in a vertical pattern, some being higher and some lower. By contrast, the *horizontal* (sahasra) cosmology describes the grouping of these vertical worlds into sets of thousands, millions or billions.

Vertical Cosmology

In the vertical cosmology, the universe exists of many worlds (lokah) —one might say "planes"—stacked one upon the next in layers. Each world corresponds to a mental state or a state of being. A world is not, however, a location so much as it is the beings which compose it; it is sustained by their karma and if the beings in a world all die or disappear, the world disappears too. Likewise, a world comes into existence when the first being is born into it. The physical separation is not so important as the difference in mental state; humans and animals, though they partially share the same physical environments, still belong to different worlds because their minds perceive and react to those environments differently.

The vertical cosmology is divided into thirty-one planes of existence and the planes into three realms, or dhâtus, each corresponding to a different type of mentality. These three (Tridhâtu) are the Ârûpyadhâtu, the Rûpadhâtu, and the Kâmadhâtu. This technical division does not correspond to the more informal categorisation of the "six realms". In the latter scheme, all of the beings born in the Ârûpyadhâtu and the Rûpadhâtu may be classified as "gods" or "deities" (devah), as can a considerable fraction of the beings born in the Kâmadhâtu, even though the deities of the Kâmadhâtu differ more from those of the Ârûpyadhâtu than they do from humans. It is to be understood that deva is an imprecise term referring to any being living in a longer-lived and generally more blissful state than humans. Most of them are not "gods" in the common sense of the term, having little or no concern with the

human world and rarely if ever interacting with it; only the lowest deities of the Kâmadhâtu correspond to the gods described in many polytheistic religions.

The term "brahmâ" is used both as a name and as a generic term for one of the higher devas. In its broadest sense, it can refer to any of the inhabitants of the Ârûpyadhâtu and the Rûpadhâtu. In more restricted senses, it can refer to an inhabitant of one of the nine lower worlds of the Rûpadhâtu, or in its narrowest sense, to the three lowest worlds of the Rûpadhâtu. A large number of devas use the name "Brahmâ", e.g. Brahmâ Sahampati, Brahmâ Sanatkumâra, Baka Brahmâ, etc. It is not always clear which world they belong to, although it must always be one of the worlds of the Rûpadhâtu below the Úuddhâvâsa worlds.

Ârûpyadhâtu

The Ârûpyadhâtu (Sanskrit) or Arûpaloka (Pâli) (Tib: *gzugs.med.pa'i khams*) or "Formless realm" would have no place in a purely physical cosmology, as none of the beings inhabiting it has either shape or location; and correspondingly, the realm has no location either. This realm belongs to those devas who attained and remained in the Four Formless Absorptions (catuh-samâpatti) of the arûpadhyânas in a previous life, and now enjoys the fruits (vipâka) of the good karma of that accomplishment. Bodhisattvas, however, are never born in the Ârûpyadhâtu even when they have attained the arûpadhyânas.

There are four types of Ârûpyadhâtu devas, corresponding to the four types of arûpadhyânas:

- Naivasamjñânâsamjñâyatana or Nevasañ̃ñânâsañ̃ñâyatana (Tib: *'du.shes.med 'du.shes.med.min*) "Sphere of neither perception nor non-perception". In this sphere the formless beings have gone beyond a mere negation of perception and have attained a liminal state where they do not engage in "perception" (samjñâ, recognition of particulars by their marks) but are not wholly unconscious. This was the sphere reachd by Udraka Râmaputra (Pâli: Uddaka Râmaputta), the second of the Buddha's two teachers, who considered it equivalent to enlightenment.
- Âkimanyâyatana or Âkiñcañ̃ñâyatana (Tib: *ci.yang.med*) "Sphere of Nothingness" (literally "lacking anything"). In this sphere formless beings dwell contemplating upon the thought that "there is no thing". This is considered a form of perception, though a very subtle one. This was the sphere reached by Arada Kalama

(Pali: Âlâra Kâlâma), the first of the Buddha's two teachers; he considered it to be equivalent to enlightenment.

- Vijñânânantyâyatana or ViññâGânañcâyatana or more commonly the contracted form Viññânañcâyatana (Tib: *rnam.shes mtha'.yas*) "Sphere of Infinite Consciousness". In this sphere formless beings dwell meditating on their consciousness (vijñâna) as infinitely pervasive.
- Âkâúânantyâyatana or Âkâsânañcâyatana (Tib: *nam.mkha' mtha'.yas*) "Sphere of Infinite Space". In this sphere formless beings dwell meditating upon space or extension (âkâúa) as infinitely pervasive.

Rûpadhâtu

The Rûpadhâtu (Pâli: Rûpaloka; Tib: *gzugs.kyi khams*) or "Form realm" is, as the name implies, the first of the physical realms; its inhabitants all have a location and bodies of a sort, though those bodies are composed of a subtle substance which is of itself invisible to the inhabitants of the Kâmadhâtu. According to the Janavasabha Sutta, when a brahma (a being from the Brahma-world of the Rûpadhâtu) wishes to visit a deva of the TrâyastriCúa heaven (in the Kâmadhâtu), he has to assume a "grosser form" in order to be visible to them.

The beings of the Form realm are not subject to the extremes of pleasure and pain, or governed by desires for things pleasing to the senses, as the beings of the Kâmadhâtu are. The bodies of Form realm beings do not have sexual distinctions.

Like the beings of the Ârûpyadhâtu, the dwellers in the Rûpadhâtu have minds corresponding to the dhyânas (Pâli: jhânas). In their case it is the four lower dhyânas or rûpadhyânas. However, although the beings of the Rûpadhâtu can be divided into four broad grades corresponding to these four dhyânas, each of them is subdivided into further grades, three for each of the four dhyânas and five for the Úuddhâvâsa devas, for a total of seventeen grades (the Theravâda tradition counts one less grade in the highest dhyâna for a total of sixteen).

Physically, the Rûpadhâtu consists of a series of planes stacked on top of each other, each one in a series of steps half the size of the previous one as one descends. In part, this reflects the fact that the devas are also thought of as physically larger on the higher planes. The highest planes are also broader in extent than the ones lower

down, as discussed in the section on *Sahasra cosmology*. The height of these planes is expressed in *yojanas*, a measurement of very uncertain length, but sometimes taken to be about 4,000 times the height of a man, and so approximately 4.54 miles or 7.32 kilometers.

Úuddhâvâsa Worlds

The Úuddhâvâsa (Pâli: Suddhâvâsa; Tib: *gnas gtsang.ma*) worlds, or "Pure Abodes", are distinct from the other worlds of the Rûpadhâtu in that they do not house beings who have been born there through ordinary merit or meditative attainments, but only those Anâgâmins ("Non-returners") who are already on the path to Arhat-hood and who will attain enlightenment directly from the Úuddhâvâsa worlds without being reborn in a lower plane (Anâgâmins can also be born on lower planes). Every Úuddhâvâsa deva is therefore a protector of Buddhism. (Brahma Sahampati, who appealed to the newly enlightened Buddha to teach, was an Anagami from a previous Buddha). Because a Úuddhâvâsa deva will never be reborn outside the Úuddhâvâsa worlds, no Bodhisattva is ever born in these worlds, as a Bodhisattva must ultimately be reborn as a human being.

Since these devas rise from lower planes only due to the teaching of a Buddha, they can remain empty for very long periods if no Buddha arises. However, unlike the lower worlds, the Úuddhâvâsa worlds are never destroyed by natural catastrophe. The Úuddhâvâsa devas predict the coming of a Buddha and, taking the guise of brahmins, reveal to human beings the signs by which a Buddha can be recognised. They also ensure that a Bodhisattva in his last life will see the four signs that will lead to his renunciation.

The five Suddhâvâsa worlds are:

- Akanistha or Akanittha—World of devas "equal in rank" (literally: having no one as the youngest). The highest of all the Rûpadhâtu worlds, it is often used to refer to the highest extreme of the universe. The current Œakra will eventually be born there. The duration of life in Akanistha is 16,000 kalpas (Vibhajyavâda tradition). The height of this world is 167,772,160 yojanas above the Earth.
- Sudarœana or Sudassî—The "clear-seeing" devas live in a world similar to and friendly with the Akanistha world. The height of this world is 83,886,080 yojanas above the Earth.
- Sudrsa or Sudassa—The world of the "beautiful" devas are said to be the place of rebirth for five kinds of anâgâmins. The height of this world is 41,943,040 yojanas above the Earth.

- Atapa or Atappa—The world of the "untroubled" devas, whose company those of lower realms wish for. The height of this world is 20,971,520 yojanas above the Earth.
- Avrha or Aviha—The world of the "not falling" devas, perhaps the most common destination for reborn Anâgâmins. Many achieve arhatship directly in this world, but some pass away and are reborn in sequentially higher worlds of the Pure Abodes until they are at last reborn in the Akanistha world. These are called in Pâli uddhamsotas, "those whose stream goes upward". The duration of life in Avrha is 1,000 kalpas (Vibhajyavâda tradition). The height of this world is 10,485,760 yojanas above the Earth.

Bhatphala Worlds

The mental state of the devas of the Brhatphala worlds corresponds to the fourth dhyâna, and is characterised by equanimity (upeksa). The Bhatphala worlds form the upper limit to the destruction of the universe by wind at the end of a mahâkalpa (see Temporal cosmology below), that is, they are spared such destruction.

- Asañ̃asatta (Sanskrit: Asamjñasattva) (Vibhajyavâda tradition only)—"Unconscious beings", devas who have attained a high dhyâna (similar to that of the Formless Realm), and, wishing to avoid the perils of perception, have achieved a state of non-perception in which they endure for a time. After a while, however, perception arises again and they fall into a lower state.
- Brhatphala or Vehapphala (Tib: *'bras.bu che*)—Devas "having great fruit". Their lifespan is 500 mahâkalpas. (Vibhajyavâda tradition). Some Anâgâmins are reborn here. The height of this world is 5,242,880 yojanas above the Earth.
- Punyaprasava (Sarvâstivâda tradition only; Tib: *bsod.nams skyes*)—The world of the devas who are the "offspring of merit". The height of this world is 2,621,440 yojanas above the Earth.
- Anabhraka (Sarvâstivâda tradition only; Tib: *sprin.med*)—The world of the "cloudless" devas. The height of this world is 1,310,720 yojanas above the Earth.

Subhakrtsna Worlds

The mental state of the devas of the Subhakrtsna worlds corresponds to the third dhyâna, and is characterised by a quiet joy (sukha). These

devas have bodies that radiate a steady light. The Œubhaktsna worlds form the upper limit to the destruction of the universe by water at the end of a mahâkalpa (see Temporal cosmology below), that is, the flood of water does not rise high enough to reach them.

- Subhakrtsna or Subhakinna/Subhakinha (Tib: *dge.rgyas*)—The world of devas of "total beauty". Their lifespan is 64 mahâkalpas (some sources: 4 mahâkalpas) according to the Vibhajyavâda tradition. 64 mahâkalpas is the interval between destructions of the universe by wind, including the Subhakrtsna worlds. The height of this world is 655,360 yojanas above the Earth.
- Apramânasubha or Appamanasubha (Tib: *tshad.med dge*)—The world of devas of "limitless beauty". Their lifespan is 32 mahâkalpas (Vibhajyavâda tradition). They possess "faith, virtue, learning, munificence and wisdom". The height of this world is 327,680 yojanas above the Earth.
- Parîttaúubha or Parittasubha (Tib: *dge.chung*)—The world of devas of "limited beauty". Their lifespan is 16 mahâkalpas. The height of this world is 163,840 yojanas above the Earth.

Âbhâsvara Worlds

The mental state of the devas of the Âbhâsvara worlds corresponds to the second dhyâna, and is characterised by delight (prîti) as well as joy (sukha); the Âbhâsvara devas are said to shout aloud in their joy, crying *aho sukham!* ("Oh joy!"). These devas have bodies that emit flashing rays of light like lightning. They are said to have similar bodies (to each other) but diverse perceptions.

The Âbhâsvara worlds form the upper limit to the destruction of the universe by fire at the end of a mahâkalpa (see Temporal cosmology below), that is, the column of fire does not rise high enough to reach them. After the destruction of the world, at the beginning of the vivartakalpa, the worlds are first populated by beings reborn from the Âbhâsvara worlds.

- Âbhâsvara or Âbhassara (Tib: *'od.gsal*)—The world of devas "possessing splendor". The lifespan of the Âbhâsvara devas is 8 mahâkalpas (others: 2 mahâkalpas). Eight mahâkalpas is the interval between destructions of the universal by water, which includes the Âbhâsvara worlds. The height of this world is 81,920 yojanas above the Earth.
- Apramanabha or Appamanabha (Tib: *tshad.med 'od*)—The world of devas of "limitless light", a concept on which they meditate.

Their lifespan is 4 mahâkalpas. The height of this world is 40,960 yojanas above the Earth.

- Parîttâbha or Parittâbha (Tib: *'od chung*)—The world of devas of "limited light". Their lifespan is 2 mahâkalpas. The height of this world is 20,480 yojanas above the Earth.

Brahmâ Worlds

The mental state of the devas of the Brahmâ worlds corresponds to the first dhyâna, and is characterised by observation (vitarka) and reflection (vicâra) as well as delight (prîti) and joy (sukha). The Brahmâ worlds, together with the other lower worlds of the universe, are destroyed by fire at the end of a mahâkalpa (see Temporal cosmology below).

- Mahâbrahmâ (Tib: *tshangs.pa chen.po*)—the world of "Great Brahmâ", believed by many to be the creator of the world, and having as his titles "Brahmâ, Great Brahmâ, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, the Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be." According to the Brahmajâla Sutta (DN.1), a Mahâbrahmâ is a being from the Âbhâsvara worlds who falls into a lower world through exhaustion of his merits and is reborn alone in the Brahma-world; forgetting his former existence, he imagines himself to have come into existence without cause. Note that even such a high-ranking deity has no intrinsic knowledge of the worlds above his own. Mahâbrahmâ is 1½ yojanas tall. His lifespan variously said to be 1 kalpa (Vibhajyavâda tradition) or 1½ kalpas long (Sarvâstivâda tradition), although it would seem that it could be no longer than $^{3}/_{4}$ of a mahâkalpa, i.e., all of the mahâkalpa except for the SaCvartasthâyikalpa, because that is the total length of time between the rebuilding of the lower world and its destruction. It is unclear what period of time "kalpa" refers to in this case. The height of this world is 10,240 yojanas above the Earth.
- Brahmapurohita (Tib: *tshangs.'khor*)—the "Ministers of Brahmâ" are beings, also originally from the Âbhâsvara worlds, that are born as companions to Mahâbrahmâ after he has spent some time alone. Since they arise subsequent to his thought of a desire for companions, he believes himself to be their creator, and they likewise believe him to be their creator and lord. They are 1 yojana in height and their lifespan is variously said to be ½ of a kalpa (Vibhajyavâda tradition) or a whole kalpa (Sarvâstivâda

tradition). If they are later reborn in a lower world, and come to recall some part of their last existence, they teach the doctrine of Brahmâ as creator as a revealed truth. The height of this world is 5,120 yojanas above the Earth.

- Brahmapârisadya or Brahmapârisajja (Tib: *tshangs.ris*)—the "Councilors of Brahmâ" or the devas "belonging to the assembly of Brahmâ". They are also called Brahmakâyika, but this name can be used for any of the inhabitants of the Brahma-worlds. They are half a yojana in height and their lifespan is variously said to be $^1/_3$ of a kalpa (Vibhajyavâda tradition) or ½ of a kalpa (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The height of this world is 2,560 yojanas above the Earth.

Kâmadhâtu

The beings born in the Kâmadhâtu (Pâli: Kâmaloka; Tib: *'dod.pa'i khams*) differ in degree of happiness, but they are all, other than arhats and Buddhas, under the domination of Mâra and are bound by sensual desire, which causes them suffering.

Heavens

The following four worlds are bounded planes. each 80,000 yojanas square, which float in the air above the top of Mount Sumeru. Although all of the worlds inhabited by devas (that is, all the worlds down to the Câturmahârâjikakâyika world and sometimes including the Asuras) are sometimes called "heavens", in the western sense of the word the term best applies to the four worlds listed below:

- Parinirmita-vaœavartin or Paranimmita-vasavatti (Tib: *gzhan.'phrul dbang.byed*) – The heaven of devas "with power over (others') creations". These devas do not create pleasing forms that they desire for themselves, but their desires are fulfilled by the acts of other devas who wish for their favor. The ruler of this world is called Vaúavartin (Pâli: Vasavatti), who has longer life, greater beauty, more power and happiness and more delightful sense-objects than the other devas of his world. This world is also the home of the devaputra (being of divine race) called Mâra, who endeavors to keep all beings of the Kâmadhâtu in the grip of sensual pleasures. Mâra is also sometimes called Vaúavartin, but in general these two dwellers in this world are kept distinct. The beings of this world are 4,500 feet tall and live for 9,216,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The height of this world is 1,280 yojanas above the Earth.

- Nirmanarati or Nimmânaratî (Tib: *'phrul.dga'*)—The world of devas "delighting in their creations". The devas of this world are capable of making any appearance to please themselves. The lord of this world is called Sunirmita (Pâli Sunimmita); his wife is the rebirth of Visâkhâ, formerly the chief of the upâsikâs (female lay devotees) of the Buddha. The beings of this world are 3,750 feet tall and live for 2,304,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The height of this world is 640 yojanas above the Earth.
- Tusita or Tusita (Tib: *dga'.ldan*)—The world of the "joyful" devas. This world is best known for being the world in which a Bodhisattva lives before being reborn in the world of humans. Until a few thousand years ago, the Bodhisattva of this world was Svetaketu (Pâli: Setaketu), who was reborn as Siddhârtha, who would become the Buddha Sâkyamuni; since then the Bodhisattva has been Nâtha (or Nâthadeva) who will be reborn as Ajita and will become the Buddha Maitreya (Pâli Metteyya). While this Bodhisattva is the foremost of the dwellers in Tucita, the ruler of this world is another deva called Santucita (Pâli: Santusita). The beings of this world are 3,000 feet tall and live for 576,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The height of this world is 320 yojanas above the Earth.
- Yâma (Tib: *'thab.bral*)–Sometimes called the "heaven without fighting", because it is the lowest of the heavens to be physically separated from the tumults of the earthly world. These devas live in the air, free of all difficulties. Its ruler is the deva Suyâma; according to some, his wife is the rebirth of Sirimâ, a courtesan of Râjagrha in the Buddha's time who was generous to the monks. The beings of this world are 2,250 feet tall and live for 144,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The height of this world is 160 yojanas above the Earth.

Worlds of Sumeru

The world-mountain of Sumeru is an immense, strangely shaped peak which arises in the center of the world, and around which the Sun and Moon revolve. Its base rests in a vast ocean, and it is surrounded by several rings of lesser mountain ranges and oceans. The three worlds listed below are all located on or around Sumeru: the Trâyastrimsa devas live on its peak, the Câturmahârâjikakâyika devas live on its slopes, and the Asuras live in the ocean at its base. Sumeru and its surrounding oceans and mountains are the home not just of these

deities, but also vast assemblies of beings of popular mythology who only rarely intrude on the human world.

- Trâyastrimsa or Tâvatimsa (Tib: *sum.cu.rtsa.gsum.pa*) – The world "of the Thirty-three (devas)" is a wide flat space on the top of Mount Sumeru, filled with the gardens and palaces of the devas. Its ruler is Œakra devânâm indra, "lord of the devas". Besides the eponymous Thirty-three devas, many other devas and supernatural beings dwell here, including the attendants of the devas and many apsarases (nymphs). The beings of this world are 1,500 feet tall and live for 36,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition) or 3/4 of a yojana tall and live for 30,000,000 years (Vibhajyavâda tradition). The height of this world is 80 yojanas above the Earth.
- Câturmahârâjikakâyika or Câtummahârâjika (Tib: *rgyal.chen bzhi*) – The world "of the Four Great Kings" is found on the lower slopes of Mount Sumeru, though some of its inhabitants live in the air around the mountain. Its rulers are the four Great Kings of the name, Virûdhaka, Dhrtarâstra, Virûpâksa, and their leader Vaiœravana. The devas who guide the Sun and Moon are also considered part of this world, as are the retinues of the four kings, composed of Kumbhândas (dwarfs), Gandharvas (fairies), Nâgas (dragons) and Yaksas (goblins). The beings of this world are 750 feet tall and live for 9,000,000 years (Sarvâstivâda tradition) or 90,000 years (Vibhajyavâda tradition). The height of this world is from sea level up to 40 yojanas above the Earth.
- Asura (Tib: *lha.ma.yin*) – The world of the Asuras is the space at the foot of Mount Sumeru, much of which is a deep ocean. It is not the Asuras' original home, but the place they found themselves after they were hurled, drunken, from TrâyastriCœa where they had formerly lived. The Asuras are always fighting to regain their lost kingdom on the top of Mount Sumeru, but are unable to break the guard of the Four Great Kings. The Asuras are divided into many groups, and have no single ruler, but among their leaders are Vemacitrin (Pâli: Vepacitti) and Râhu.

Earthly Realms

- Manusyaloka (Tib: *mi*) – This is the world of humans and human-like beings who live on the surface of the earth. The mountain-rings that engird Sumeru are surrounded by a vast ocean, which fills most of the world. The ocean is in turn surrounded by a circular mountain wall called Cakravada (Pâli: Cakkavala) which

marks the horizontal limit of the world. In this ocean there are four continents which are, relatively speaking, small islands in it. Because of the immenseness of the ocean, they cannot be reached from each other by ordinary sailing vessels, although in the past, when the cakravartin kings ruled, communication between the continents was possible by means of the treasure called the cakraratna (Pâli cakkaratana), which a cakravartin and his retinue could use to fly through the air between the continents. The four continents are:

- Jambudvîpa or Jambudîpa is located in the south and is the dwelling of ordinary human beings. It is said to be shaped "like a cart", or rather a blunt-nosed triangle with the point facing south. (This description probably echoes the shape of the coastline of southern India.) It is 10,000 yojanas in extent (Vibhajyavâda tradition) or has a perimeter of 6,000 yojanas (Sarvâstivâda tradition) to which can be added the southern coast of only 3½ yojanas' length. The continent takes its name from a giant Jambu tree (Syzygium cumini), 100 yojanas tall, which grows in the middle of the continent. Every continent has one of these giant trees. All Buddhas appear in Jambudvîpa. The people here are five to six feet tall and their length of life varies between 80,000 and 10 years.
- Pûrvavideha or Pubbavideha is located in the east, and is shaped like a semicircle with the flat side pointing westward (i.e., towards Sumeru). It is 7,000 yojanas in extent (Vibhajyavâda tradition) or has a perimeter of 6,350 yojanas of which the flat side is 2,000 yojanas long (Sarvâstivâda tradition). Its tree is the acacia. The people here are about 12 feet tall and they live for 250 years.
- Aparagodânîya or Aparagoyâna is located in the west, and is shaped like a circle with a circumference of about 7,500 yojanas (Sarvâstivâda tradition). The tree of this continent is a giant Kadambu tree. The human inhabitants of this continent do not live in houses but sleep on the ground. They are about 24 feet tall and they live for 500 years.
- Uttarakuru is located in the north, and is shaped like a square. It has a perimter of 8,000 yojanas, being 2,000 yojanas on each side. This continent's tree is called a kalpavrkca (Pâli: kapparukkha) or kalpa-tree, because it lasts for the entire kalpa. The inhabitants of Uttarakuru are said to be

extraordinarily wealthy. They do not need to labour for a living, as their food grows by itself, and they have no private property. They have cities built in the air. They are about 48 feet tall and live for 1,000 years, and they are under the protection of Vaiœravana.

- Tiryagyoni-loka or Tiracchâna-yoni (Tib: *dud.'gro*) – This world comprises all members of the animal kingdom that are capable of feeling suffering, from the smallest insect to the elephant.
- Pretaloka or Petaloka (Tib: *yi.dvags*) – The pretas, or "hungry ghosts", are mostly dwellers on earth, though due to their mental state they perceive it very differently from humans. They live for the most part in desert and waste places.

Narakas

Naraka or Niraya (Tib: *dmyal.ba*) is the name given to one of the worlds of greatest suffering, usually translated into English as "hell" or "purgatory". As with the other realms, a being is born into one of these worlds as a result of his karma, and resides there for a finite length of time until his karma has achieved its full result, after which he will be reborn in one of the higher worlds as the result of an earlier karma that had not yet ripened. The mentality of a being in the hells corresponds to states of extreme fear and helpless anguish in humans.

Physically, Naraka is thought of as a series of layers extending below Jambudvîpa into the earth. There are several schemes for counting these Narakas and enumerating their torments. One of the more common is that of the Eight Cold Narakas and Eight Hot Narakas.

Cold Narakas

- Arbuda – the "blister" Naraka
- Nirarbuda – the "burst blister" Naraka
- Atata – the Naraka of shivering
- Hahava – the Naraka of lamentation
- Huhuva – the Naraka of chattering teeth
- Utpala – the "blue lotus" Naraka
- Padma – the "lotus" Naraka
- Mahâpadma – the "great lotus" Naraka

Each lifetime in these Narakas is twenty times the length of the one before it.

Hot Narakas

- Sañjîva – the "reviving" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $162*10^{10}$ years long.
- Kâlasûtra – the "black thread" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $1296*10^{10}$ years long.
- SaCghâta – the "crushing" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $10{,}368*10^{10}$ years long.
- Raurava – the "screaming" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $82{,}944*10^{10}$ years long.
- Mahâraurava – the "great screaming" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $663{,}552*10^{10}$ years long.
- Tapana – the "heating" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $5{,}308{,}416*10^{10}$ years long.
- Pratâpana – the "great heating" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $42{,}467{,}328*10^{10}$ years long.
- Avîci – the "uninterrupted" Naraka. Life in this Naraka is $339{,}738{,}624*10^{10}$ years long.

The Foundations of the Earth

All of the structures of the earth, Sumeru and the rest, extend downward to a depth of 80,000 yojanas below sea level – the same as the height of Sumeru above sea level. Below this is a layer of "golden earth", a substance compact and firm enough to support the weight of Sumeru. It is 320,000 yojanas in depth and so extends to 400,000 yojanas below sea level. The layer of golden earth in turn rests upon a layer of water, which is 8,000,000 yojanas in depth, going down to 8,400,000 yojanas below sea level. Below the layer of water is a "circle of wind", which is 16,000,000 yojanas in depth and also much broader in extent, supporting 1,000 different worlds upon it.

Sahasra Cosmology

While the vertical cosmology describes the arrangement of the worlds vertically, the sahasra (Sanskrit: "thousand") cosmology describes how they are grouped horizontally. The four heavens of the Kâmadhâtu, as mentioned, occupy a limited space no bigger than the top of Mount Sumeru. The three Brahmâ-worlds, however, stretch out as far as the mountain-wall of Cakravâda, filling the entire sky. This whole group of worlds, from Mahâbrahmâ down to the foundations of water, constitutes a single world-system. It corresponds to the extent of the universe that is destroyed by fire at the end of one mahâkalpa.

Above Mahâbrahmâ are the Âbhâsvara worlds. These are not only higher but also wider in extent; they cover 1,000 separate world-systems, each with its own Sumeru, Cakravâda, Sun, Moon, and four continents. This system of 1,000 worlds is called a sâhasra-cûdika-lokadhâtu, or "small chiliocosm". It corresponds to the extent of the universe that is destroyed by water at the end of 8 mahâkalpas.

Above the Âbhâsvara worlds are the Œubhaktsna worlds, which cover 1,000 chiliocosms, or 1,000,000 world-systems. This larger system is called a dvisâhasra-madhyama-lokadhâtu, or "medium dichiliocosm". It corresponds to the extent of the universe that is destroyed by wind at the end of 64 mahâkalpas.

Likewise, above the Subhakrtsna worlds, the Suddhâvâsa and Brhatphala worlds cover 1,000 dichiliocosms, or 1,000,000,000 world-systems. This largest grouping is called a trisâhasra-mahâsâhasra-lokadhâtu or "great trichiliocosm".

TEMPORAL COSMOLOGY

Buddhist temporal cosmology describes how the universe comes into being and is dissolved. Like other Indian cosmologies, it assumes an infinite span of time and is cyclical. This does not mean that the same events occur in identical form with each cycle, but merely that, as with the cycles of day and night or summer and winter, certain natural events occur over and over to give some structure to time.

The basic unit of time measurement is the mahâkalpa or "Great Eon". The exact length of this time in human years is never defined exactly, but it is meant to be very long, to be measured in billions of years if not longer.

A mahâkalpa is divided into four kalpas or "eons", each distinguished from the others by the stage of evolution of the universe during that kalpa. The four kalpas are:

- Vivartakalpa "Eon of evolution" – during this kalpa the universe comes into existence.
- Vivartasthâyikalpa "Eon of evolution-duration" – during this kalpa the universe remains in existence in a steady state.
- Samvartakalpa "Eon of dissolution" – during this kalpa the universe dissolves.
- Samvartasthâyikalpa "Eon of dissolution-duration" – during this kalpa the universe remains in a state of emptiness.

Each one of these kalpas is divided into twenty antarakalpas (Pâli antarakappa, "inside eons") each of about the same length. For the SaCvartasthâyikalpa this division is merely nominal, as nothing changes from one antarakalpa to the next; but for the other three kalpas it marks an interior cycle within the kalpa.

Vivartakalpa

The Vivartakalpa begins with the arising of the primordial wind, which begins the process of building up the structures of the universe that had been destroyed at the end of the last mahâkalpa. As the extent of the destruction can vary, the nature of this evolution can vary as well, but it always takes the form of beings from a higher world being born into a lower world. The example of a Mahâbrahmâ being the rebirth of a deceased Âbhâsvara deva is just one instance of this, which continues throughout the Vivartakalpa until all the worlds are filled from the Brahmaloka down to Naraka. During the Vivartakalpa the first humans appear; they are not like present-day humans, but are beings shining in their own light, capable of moving through the air without mechanical aid, living for a very long time, and not requiring sustenance; they are more like a type of lower deity than present-day humans are.

Over time, they acquire a taste for physical nutriment, and as they consume it, their bodies become heavier and more like human bodies; they lose their ability to shine, and begin to acquire differences in their appearance, and their length of life decreases. They differentiate into two sexes and begin to become sexually active. Then greed, theft and violence arise among them, and they establish social distinctions and government and elect a king to rule them, called Mahâsammata, "the great appointed one". Some of them begin to hunt and eat the flesh of animals, which have by now come into existence. These developments are described in the Aggañña Sutta (DN.27).

Vivartasthâyikalpa

First Antarakalpa

The Vivartasthâyikalpa begins when the first being is born into Naraka, thus filling the entire universe with beings. During the first antarakalpa of this eon, human lives are declining from a vast but unspecified number of years (but at least several tens of thousands of years) toward the modern lifespan of less than 100 years. At the beginning of the antarakalpa, people are still generally happy. They live under the rule of a universal monarch or "wheel-turning king"

(cakravartin), who conquer. The Mahâsudassana-sutta (DN.17) tells of the life of a cakravartin king, Mahâsudassana (Sanskrit: Mahâsudarúana) who lived for 336,000 years. The Cakkavatti-sîhanâda-sutta (DN.26) tells of a later dynasty of cakravartins, Dalhanemi (Sanskrit: Drdhanemi) and five of his descendants, who had a lifespan of over 80,000 years. The seventh of this line of cakravartins broke with the traditions of his forefathers, refusing to abdicate his position at a certain age, pass the throne on to his son, and enter the life of a sramana. As a result of his subsequent misrule, poverty increased; as a result of poverty, theft began; as a result of theft, capital punishment was instituted; and as a result of this contempt for life, murders and other crimes became rampant.

The human lifespan now quickly decreased from 80,000 to 100 years, apparently decreasing by about half with each generation (this is perhaps not to be taken literally), while with each generation other crimes and evils increased: lying, adultery, evil speech, greed and hatred, wrong views, incest and other sorts of sexual abnormalities, disrespect for parents and elders. During this period, according to the Mahâpadâna-sutta (DN.14) three of the four Buddhas of this antarakalpa lived: Krakucchanda Buddha (Pâli: Kakusandha), at the time when the lifespan was 40,000 years; Kanakamuni Buddha (Pâli: Konâgamana) when the lifespan was 30,000 years; and Kâúyapa Buddha (Pâli: Kassapa) when the lifespan was 20,000 years.

Our present time is taken to be toward the end of the first antarakalpa of this Vivartasthâyikalpa, when the lifespan is less than 100 years, after the life of Úâkyamuni Buddha (Pâli: Sakyamuni), who lived to the age of 80.

The remainder of the antarakalpa is prophesied to be miserable: lifespans will continue to decrease, and all the evil tendencies of the past will reach their ultimate in destructiveness. People will live no longer than ten years, and will marry at five; foods will be poor and tasteless; no form of morality will be acknowledged. The most contemptuous and hateful people will become the rulers. Incest will be rampant. Hatred between people, even members of the same family, will grow until people think of each other as hunters do of their prey.

Eventually a great war will ensue, in which the most hostile and aggressive will arm themselves and go out to kill each other. The less aggressive will hide in forests and other secret places while the war rages. This war marks the end of the first antarakalpa.

Second Antarakalpa

At the end of the war, the survivors will emerge from their hiding places and repent their evil habits. As they begin to do good, their lifespan increases, and the health and welfare of the human race will also increase with it. After a long time, the descendants of those with a 10-year lifespan will live for 80,000 years, and at that time there will be a cakravartin king named Sankha. During his reign, the current bodhisattva in the Tucita heaven will descend and be reborn under the name of Ajita. He will enter the life of a Sramama and will gain perfect enlightenment as a Buddha; and he will then be known by the name of Maitreya (Pâli: Metteyya).

After Maitreya's time, the world will again worsen, and the lifespan will gradually decrease from 80,000 years to 10 years again, each antarakalpa being separated from the next by devastating war, with peaks of high civilisation and morality in the middle. After the 19th antarakalpa, the lifespan will increase to 80,000 and then not decrease, because the Vivartasthâyikalpa will have come to an end.

Samvartakalpa

The Samvartakalpa begins when beings cease to be born in Naraka. This cessation of birth then proceeds in reverse order up the vertical cosmology, i.e., pretas then cease to be born, then animals, then humans, and so on up to the realms of the deities. When these worlds as far as the Brahmaloka are devoid of inhabitants, a great fire consumes the entire physical structure of the world. It burns all the worlds below the Âbhâsvara worlds. When they are destroyed, the Samvarta-sthâyikalpa begins.

Samvartasthâyikalpa

There is nothing to say about the Samvartasthâyikalpa, since nothing happens in it below the Âbhâsvara worlds. It ends when the primordial wind begins to blow and build the structure of the worlds up again.

Other Destructions

The destruction by fire is the normal type of destruction that occurs at the end of the SaCvartakalpa. But every eighth mahâkalpa, after seven destructions by fire, there is a destruction by water. This is more devastating, as it eliminates not just the Brahma worlds but also the Âbhâsvara worlds.

Every sixty-fourth mahâkalpa, after 56 destructions by fire and 7 destructions by water, there is a destruction by wind. This is the most

devastating of all, as it also destroys the Subhakltsna worlds. The higher worlds are never destroyed.

AN OVERVIEW OF BUDDHISM

HISTORY

Buddhism was founded in Northern India by the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, circa 563-483 BCE). At the age of 29, he left his wife, children and political involvement's in order to seek truth; this was an accepted practice at the time for some men to leave their family and lead the life of an ascetic. He studied Brahminism, but ultimately rejected it. In 535 BCE, he reached enlightenment and assumed the title Buddha (one who has awakened). He is also referred to as the Sakyamuni, (sage of the Sakya clan). He promoted The Middle Way, rejecting both extremes of the mortification of the flesh and of hedonism as paths toward the state of Nirvana. He had many disciples and accumulated a large public following by the time of his death in his early 80's. Two and a half centuries later, a council of Buddhist monks collected his teachings and the oral traditions of the faith into written form, called the Tripitaka. This included a very large collection of commentaries and traditions; most are called Sutras (discourses).

Buddhist Beliefs

Buddhism is a religion which shares few concepts with Christianity. For example, they do not believe in a transcendent or immanent or any other type of God or Gods, the need for a personal savior, the power of prayer, eternal life in a heaven or hell after death, etc. They do believe in reincarnation: the concept that one must go through many cycles of birth, living, and death. After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain Nirvana.

The Buddha's Four Noble Truths may be described (somewhat simplicity) as:

- to be fully understood: the universality of suffering
- to be abandoned: the desire to have and control things which causes suffering
- to be made visible: the supreme truth and final liberation of nirvana which is achieved as the cause of suffering is eliminated. The mind experiences complete freedom and liberation
- to be brought into being: the truth of the eightfold ariya path leading to the cessation of suffering.

His Eightfold Path consists of:

1. right understanding
2. right thinking
3. right speech
4. right conduct
5. right livelihood
6. right effort
7. right mindfulness
8. right concentration

Buddhist Sects

Buddhism is not a single monolithic religion. Many of its adherents have combined the teachings of the Buddha with local religious rituals, beliefs and customs. Little conflict occurs, because Buddhism at its core is a philosophical system to which such additions can be easily grafted.

After the Buddah's death, splits occurred. There are now three main systems of thought within Buddhism which are geographically and philosophically separate. Each tradition in turn has many sects. One source (J.R. Hinnels, A Handbook of Living Religions, Penguin, 1991) divides the religion into three main groups by their location:

Southern Buddhism (known as Therevada Buddhism) has 100 million followers, mainly in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and parts of Vietnam. It started in Sri Lanka when Buddhist missionaries arrived from India. They promoted the Vibhajjavada school (Separative Teaching). By the 15th century, this form of the religion reached almost its present extent.

Concepts and practices include:

- Dana—thoughtful, ceremonial giving
- Sila—accepting Buddhist teaching and following it in practice;
- refraining from killing, stealing, wrong behaviour, use of drugs.

On special days, three additional precepts may be added, restricting adornment, entertainment and comfort.

- Karma—the balance of accumulated sin and merit, which will determine ones future in the present life, and the nature of the next life to come.
- The Cosmos—consists of billions of worlds grouped into clusters; clusters are grouped into galaxies, which are themselves grouped

into super-galaxies. The universe also has many levels: four underworlds and 21 heavenly realms.

- Paritta—ritual chanting

Worship—of relics of a Buddha, of items made by a Buddha, or of symbolic relics.

Festivals—days of the full moon, and three other days during the lunar cycle are celebrated. There is a new year's festival, and celebrations tied to the agricultural year.

Pilgrimages—particularly to Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka and India.

Eastern Buddhism is the predominant religion in China, Japan, Korea and much of Vietnam. Buddhism's Mahayana tradition entered China during the Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE). It found initial acceptance there among the workers; later, it gradually penetrated the ruling class. Buddhism reached Japan in the 6th century. It underwent severe repression during the 1960's in China during the Cultural Revolution. Eastern Buddhism contains many distinct schools: T'ein-t'ai, Hua-yen, Pure Land teachings, and the Meditation school. They celebrate New Years, harvest festivals, and five anniversaries from the lives of Buddha and of the Bodhissattva Kuan-yin. They also engage in Dana, Sila, Chanting. Worship and Pilgrimage.

Northern Buddhism has perhaps 10 million adherents in parts of China, Mongolia, Russia and Tibet. It entered Tibet circa 640 CE. Conflict with the native Tibetan religion of Bon caused it to go largely underground until its revival in the 11th century. The heads of the Gelu school of Buddhist teaching became the Dalai Lama, and ruled Tibet. It has been, until recently, wrongly dismissed as a degenerate form of Buddhism.

Ceremony and ritual are emphasised. They also engage in Dana, Sila, Chanting. Worship and Pilgrimage. They developed the practice of searching out a young child at the time of death of an important teacher. The child is believed to be the successor to the deceased teacher. They celebrate New Years, harvest festivals and anniversaries of five important events in the life of the Buddha. Buddhist and Tibetan culture suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution when an attempt was made to destroy all religious belief.

Buddhism in the West

Southern Buddhism became established in Europe early in this century. The Zen Buddhist tradition of Eastern Buddhism has also

made inroads, particularly in North America. Canadian Buddhists totaled 163,415 in the 1991 census.

With thanks to the Ontario Religious Tolerance Site for this Information

Holy Days in Buddhism

1. Nirvana Day is held in mid-February. It commemorates the death of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.
2. New Year Day is also celebrated in mid-February in China, Korea and Vietnam
3. Wesak is the Buddha's birthday in April or May. In some traditions, it celebrates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.
4. Khao Pansa marks the beginning of the Buddhist lent. It is the preferred day for Buddhist men in some countries to be ordained as monks. It is celebrated in the full moon of the eight lunar month, typically July.
5. Boun Ok Pansa marks the end of Lent. It is at the end of the rainy season, in October.
6. Bodhi Day, in early December, celebrates the Buddha's enlightenment in 596 BCE

KARMA IN BUDDHISM

Karma means "action" or "doing"; whatever one does, says, or thinks is a karma.

In Buddhism, the term karma is used specifically for those actions which spring from :

- mental intent (Pali: *cetana*)
- mental obsessions

which bring about a fruit (Pali, *phala*) or result (vipâka), either within the present life, or in the context of a future rebirth. Karma is the engine which drives the wheel of the cycle of uncontrolled rebirth (samsara) for each being.

KARMA IN BUDDHISM

In the (Anguttara Nikaya Nibbedhika Sutta) the Buddha said :

"Intention (*cetana*), monks, is kamma, I say. Having willed, one acts through body, speech and mind".

Every time a person acts there is some quality of intention at the base of the mind and it is that quality rather than the outward appearance of the action that determines the effect. If a person professes piety and virtue but nonetheless acts with greed, anger or hatred (veiled behind an outward display of well-meaning intent) then the fruit of those actions will bear testimony to the fundamental intention that lay behind them and will be a cause for future unhappiness. The Buddha spoke of wholesome actions (*kusala-kamma*)—that result in happiness, and unwholesome actions (*akusala-kamma*)—that result in unhappiness.

Karma is thus used as an ethical principle and a cosmological explanation for the world. Buddhists believe that the actions of beings determine their own future, and because of this there are no private actions: all actions have a consequence. The emphasis of karma in Buddhism is on mindful action, not on blaming someone else for whatever happens to oneself.

There is a further distinction between worldly, wholesome kamma that leads to samsâric happiness (like birth in higher realms), and path-consciousness which leads to enlightenment and (nirvana). Therefore, there is samsâric good karma, which leads to worldly happiness, and then there is liberating karma, which is supremely good, as it ends suffering forever. Once one has attained liberation one does not generate any further kamma, and the corresponding states of mind are called in Pali *Kiriya*. Nonetheless, the Buddha advocated the practise of wholesome actions: "Refrain from unwholesome actions/Perform only wholesome ones/Purify the mind/ This is the teaching of the Enlightened Ones." Dhp v.183.

In Buddhism, the term karma is often used to refer only to *samsâric karma*, as indicated by the twelve nidanas of dependent origination.

Because of the inevitability of consequence, karma entails the notion of Buddhist rebirth. However, karma is not the sole basis of rebirth. The rebirths of eighth stage (and above) Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition refers to those liberated beings who consciously choose to be reborn in a future life in order to help others still trapped in samsara. However, this is not 'uncontrolled' rebirth anymore.

The Buddha explains what having conviction in karma means:

- First, karma really is happening — it is not an illusion.
- Second, you really are responsible for your actions. There is no outside force like the stars or some good or evil being acting

through you. When you are conscious, you are the one who decides what happens.

- Third, your actions have results — you are not just writing on the water — and those results can be good or bad depending on the quality of the intention behind the act.

WRONG UNDERSTANDINGS OF KARMA

In Buddhism, Karma is not pre-determinism, fatalism or accidentalism, as all these ideas lead to inaction and destroy motivation and human effort. These ideas undermine the important concept that a human being can change for the better no matter what his or her past was, and they are designated as "wrong views" in Buddhism.

1. Pubbekatahetuvada: The belief that all happiness and suffering arise from previous karma (Past-action determinism).
2. Issaranimmanahetuvada: The belief that all happiness and suffering are caused by the directives of a Supreme Being (Theistic determinism).
3. Ahetu-apaccayavada: The belief that all happiness and suffering are random, having no cause (Indeterminism or Accidentalism).

Bhikkhus, adhering to previously done kamma as the essence, there are neither motivation nor effort with what should be done and what should not be done... Not upholding ardently what should be done, nor abandoning what should be abandoned, those ascetics and Brahmins are as if deluded, lacking a control, incapable of having any true teaching. (Buddha)

In Buddhism, Karma is simply there as a guide and an indication of what the reason for your present state is and how one's future can be made better by self effort. Fatalism and pre-determinism is the anti-thesis of the notion of perfection or self-conquest — which is the primary aim of Buddhism.

The Buddha asserts effort and motivation as the crucial factors in deciding the ethical value of these various teachings on kamma. (P.A. Payutto).

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Four Noble Truths (Pali: *Cattâri ariyasaccâni*, Sanskrit: *Catvâri âryasatyâni*, Chinese: *Sìshèngdì*, Thai: *Ariyasaj Sii*) are one of the most fundamental Buddhist teachings. They appear many times throughout the most ancient Buddhist texts, the Pali Canon. They are among the truths Gautama Buddha is said to have realised during his experience of enlightenment.

Why the Buddha is said to have taught in this way is illuminated by the social context of the time in which he lived. The Buddha was a Sramana, a wandering ascetic whose "aim was to discover the truth and attain happiness." He is said to have achieved this aim while under a bodhi tree near the River Neranjana; the Four Noble Truths are a formulation of his understanding of the nature of "suffering", the fundamental cause of all suffering, the escape from suffering, and what effort a person can go to so that they themselves can *"attain happiness."*

These truths are not expressed as a hypothesis or tentative idea, rather the Buddha says:

> "These Four Noble Truths, monks, are actual, unerring, not otherwise. Therefore, they are called noble truths"
>
> The Buddha says that he taught them...
>
> "...because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation of suffering, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana. That is why I have declared it."

This teaching was the basis of the Buddha's first discourse after his enlightenment. In early Buddhism this is the most advanced teaching in the Buddha's Gradual Training.

Mahayana Buddhism regards these as a preliminary teaching for people not ready for its own teachings.

Strictly speaking, "truths" is a mistranslation; "realities" would be better: these are "things", not statements, in the original grammar.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

1. The Nature of Suffering (Dukkha)

"Now this... is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering."

2. Suffering's Origin (Samudaya)

"Now this... is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there, that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination."

3. Suffering's Cessation (Nirodha)

"Now this... is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it."

4. The Way (Magga) Leading to the Cessation of Suffering

"Now this... is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

VARIANT UNDERSTANDING OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS WITHIN MAHAYANA

Certain major Mahayana sutras, including the Mahaparinirvana Sutra and the Angulimaliya Sutra, present variant versions of the Four Noble Truths in line with their own metaphysics and soteriology. The Srimala Sutra accepts the Four Noble Truths, but insists that only the Third—that of the cessation of suffering—is eternally true. In the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Buddha presents a new formulation of the Truths:

- the Truth of Suffering relates to the failure to recognize the eternity of the Buddha;
- the Truth of the Cause of Suffering concerns the perversion and distortion of the True Dharma (i.e. wrongly insisting that the Buddha and Dharma are impermanent);
- the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering relates to the correct meditative cultivation of the tathagatagarbha (indwelling Buddha Essence in all beings) and not erroneously viewing it as non-Self and empty; cessation of suffering also arises with the elimination of inner defilements, when one can then enter into the Buddhic Essence within oneself: "When the afflictions have been eradicated, then one will perceive entry into the tathâgata-garbha";
- the Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering entails envisioning the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as eternal, unshakeable and indestructible. (*Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, tr. by Kosho Yamamoto, ed. by Dr. Tony Page, Nirvana Publications, London, 1999-2000)

The Angulimaliya Sutra similarly emphasises the seeing and knowing of the Buddha's eternality, immutability and peace as the key factors in liberation from suffering; failure to see this eternal nature

of ultimate reality is said to constitute the primary cause of beings' continued entrapment in the sufferings of samsara.

It should be noted that this view is specific to certain Mahayana schools, most notably the Tathagatagarbha tradition. The ideas that the Buddha and his Dharma are eternal and that one's inner Buddhanature is not empty would be denied in other Buddhist traditions such as Madhyamaka and Zen.

SILA

Sîla is usually rendered into English as "behavioural discipline", "morality", or ethics. It is often translated as "precept". It is an action that is an intentional effort. It is one of the *three practices* (sîla—samadhi—paññâ) and the second pâramitâ. It refers to moral purity of thought, word, and deed. The four conditions of úîla are chastity, calmness, quiet, and extinguishment, i.e. no longer being susceptible to perturbation by the passions like greed and selfishness, which are common in the world today.

Sîla refers to overall (principles of) ethical behaviour. There are several levels of sila, which correspond to 'basic morality' (five precepts), 'basic morality with asceticism' (eight precepts), 'novice monkhood' (ten precepts) and 'monkhood' (Vinaya or Patimokkha). Laypeople generally undertake to live by the five precepts which are common to all Buddhist schools. If they wish, they can choose to undertake the eight precepts, which have some additional precepts of basic asceticism.

FIVE PRECEPTS

The five precepts are not given in the form of commands such as "thou shalt not...", but are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate well.

1. To refrain from taking life.
2. To refrain from taking that which is not freely given (stealing).
3. To refrain from sexual misconduct (improper sexual behaviour).
4. To refrain from lying and deceiving.
5. To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness.

EIGHT PRECEPTS

A higher precepts than five precepts, eight precepts specifies in providing atmosphere for meditating by practising celibacy and avoiding all other entertainments.

In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made more strict, and becomes a precept of celibacy.

The three additional rules of the eight precepts are:

6. To refrain from eating at the wrong time (by only eat from sunrise to noon, it ensures that all food eaten that day is digested; thus no night time activities).
7. To refrain from all entertainments and decorations; i.e. dancing, using jewellery, watching movies, going to shows, etc. Especially those entertainments that bring the viewer's mind to sexual scenes.
8. To refrain from using a high, luxurious bed. These beds indicates softness, comfortable, and sleepiness of the sleeper.

TEN PRECEPTS

Novice-monks use the ten precepts, which are the basic precepts for monastics: people who have left the home-life and live in monasteries.

PATIMOKKHA

Vinaya is the specific moral code for monks. It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 rules in the Theravadin recension. The precise content of the vinayapitaka (scriptures on Vinaya) differ slightly according to different schools, and different schools or subschools set different standards for the degree of adherence to Vinaya.

MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

In Mahayana Buddhism, there is also a distinctive Vinaya and ethics contained within the Mahayana Brahmajala Sutra (not to be confused with the Pali text of that name) for Bodhisattvas, where, for example, the eating of meat is frowned upon and vegetarianism is actively encouraged (see vegetarianism in Buddhism). These precepts are, however, not present in the strictest moral code of the Theravadin Patimokkha, and are generally understood to have come in existence at least 500 years after the Buddha.

NIRVANA

Nirvâna is a Sanskrit word that literally means "to cease blowing" (as when a candle flame ceases to flicker) and/or *extinguishing* (that is, of the passions). It is a sramana philosophical concept, used by the Jains and the Buddhists, to describe the enlightenment and liberation of their respective teachers.

Nibbâna is a word used by the Buddha to describe the perfect peace of the mind that is free from craving, anger and other afflictive states (*kilesa*). This peace, which is in reality the fundamental nature of the mind, is revealed when the root causes of the afflictive states are dissolved. The causes themselves (*see sankhara*) lie deep within the mind (that part of the mind that Western psychology calls the unconscious) but their undoing is gradually achieved by living a disciplined life (see eightfold path). In Nibbana the root causes of craving and aversion have been extinguished such that one is no longer subject to human suffering (*dukkha*) or further states of rebirths in samsara. The Buddha in the Dhammapada says of Nirvana that it is "the highest happiness". This is not the sense-based happiness of everyday life, nor the concept of happiness as interpreted by Western culture, but rather an enduring, transcendental happiness integral to the calmness attained through enlightenment or *bodhi*. The knowledge accompanying nirvana is expressed through the word *bodhi*. In Jainism, it means final release from the karmic bondage. When an enlightened human, such as, an Arhat or a Tirthankara extinguishes his remaining aghatiya karmas and thus ends his worldly existence, it is called Nirvana. Technically, the death of an Arhat is called Nirvana of Arhat, as he has ended his wordly existence and attained liberation. Moksa, that is to say, liberation follows Nirvana. An Arhat becomes a siddha, the liberated one, after attaining nirvana.

NIRVANA IN BUDDHISM

The Buddha explains Nirvana as "the unconditioned" (asankhata) mind, a mind that has come to a point of perfect lucidity and clarity due to the absence of volitional formations. This being is described by the Buddha as "deathlessness" (Pali: amata or amaravati) and as the highest spiritual attainment, the natural result that accrues to one who lives a life of virtuous conduct and practise in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path. Such a life dissolves the causes for future becoming (Skt, karma; Pali, kamma) that otherwise keep beings forever wandering through the impermanent and suffering-generating realms of desire, form, and formlessness, termed samsara.

Overview

Nirvâna in sutra is bhavanirodha nibbânam ("The cessation of becoming means Nirvâna"). Nirvâna in sûtra is never conceived of as a place (such as one might conceive heaven), but rather the antinomy of samsâra which itself is synonymous with ignorance (avidyâ, Pâli avijjâ). This said:

> "'the liberated mind (citta) that no longer clings' means Nibbâna" (Majjhima Nikaya 2-Att. 4.68).

Nibbâna is meant specifically—as pertains gnosis—that which ends the identity of the mind (citta) with empirical phenomena. Doctrinally Nibbâna is said of the mind which "no longer is coming (bhava) and going (vibhava)", but which has attained a status in perpetuity, whereby "liberation (vimutta) can be said".

It carries further connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. The realising of Nirvana is compared to the ending of avidyâ (ignorance) which perpetuates the will (cetana) into effecting the incarnation of mind into biological or other form passing on forever through life after life (samsara). Samsara is caused principally by craving and ignorance (see dependent origination). Nirvâna, then, is not a place nor a state, it is an absolute truth to be realised, and a person can do so without dying. When a person who has realised Nirvâna dies, his death is referred as his parinirvâna, his fully passing away, as his life was his last link to the cycle of death and rebirth (samsara), and he will not be reborn again. Buddhism holds that the ultimate goal and end of samsaric existence (of ever "becoming" and "dying" and never truly being) is realisation of Nirvâna; what happens to a person after his parinirvana cannot be explained, as it is outside of all conceivable experience.

In Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta the Buddha likens nibbana to the cessation and extinguishing of a fire where the materials for sustenance has been removed:

> "Profound, Vaccha, is this phenomenon, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise."
>
> "There is that dimension where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor stasis; neither passing away nor arising: without stance, without foundation, without support [mental object]. This, just this, is the end of stress."

Nirvâna and Samsâra

In Mahâyâna Buddhism, calling nirvâna the "opposite" of samsâra or implying that it is apart from samsâra is doctrinally problematic.

According to early Mahâyâna Buddhism, they can be considered to be two aspects of the same perceived reality. By the time of Nâgârjuna, there are teachings of the identity of nirvâna and samsâra. However, even here it is assumed that the natural man suffers from at the very least a confusion regarding the nature of samsâra.

The Theravâda school makes the antithesis of samsâra and Nibbâna the starting point of the entire quest for deliverance. Even more, it treats this antithesis as determinative of the final goal, which is precisely the transcendence of samsâra and the attainment of liberation in Nibbâna. Where Theravada differs significantly from the Mahâyâna schools, which also start with the duality of samsâra and nirvâna, is in not regarding this polarity as a mere preparatory lesson tailored for those with blunt faculties, to be eventually superseded by some higher realisation of non-duality. From the standpoint of the Pâli Suttas, even for the Buddha and the Arahants suffering and its cessation, samsâra and Nibbâna, remain distinct.

In the experience of all, Nirvâna is a state which all six bases (Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body and Mind) cannot feel.

It is probably best to understand the relationship between Nirvâna and samsâra in terms of the Buddha while on earth. Buddha was both in samsâra while having attained to Nirvâna so that he was seen by all, and simultaneously free from samsâra.

Nirvâna in Buddhist Commentaries

Sarvastivâdin commentary, Abhidharma-mahavibhâsa-sâstra, gives the complete context of the possible meanings from its Sanskrit roots:

- Vâna, implying the path of rebirth, + nir, meaning leaving off' or "being away from the path of rebirth."
- Vâna, meaning 'stench', + nir, meaning "freedom": "freedom from the stench of distressing kamma."
- Vâna, meaning "dense forests", + nir, meaning "to get rid of" = "to be permanently rid of the dense forest of the five aggregates" (panca skandha), or the "three roots of greed, hate and delusion" (lobha, dosa, moha) or "three characteristics of existence" (impermanence, anitya; unsatisfactoriness, dukkha, soullessness, anàtma).
- Vâna, meaning "weaving", + nir, meaning "knot" = "freedom from the knot of the distressful thread of kamma."

Nirvâna in the Mahâparinirvâna Sûtra

The nature of Nirvâna assumes a differently aspected Mahâyâna focus in the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra or Nirvana Sutra, which alleges to be the final of all Mahâyâna sutras, delivered—the sutra indicates—by the Buddha on his last day of life on earth. Here, as well as in a number of related "tathagatagarbha" sutras, in which the Tathagatagarbha is equated with the Buddha's eternal Self or eternal nature, Nirvâna is spoken of by the Mahâyâna Buddha in very "cataphatic", positive terms. Nirvâna, or "Great Nirvâna", is indicated to be the sphere or domain (vishaya) of the True Self. It is seen as the state which constitutes the attainment of what is "Eternal, the Self, Bliss, and the Pure". Mahâ-nirvâna ("Great Nirvâna") thus becomes equivalent to the ineffable, unshakeable, blissful, all-pervading and deathless Selfhood of the Buddha himself—a mystery which no words can adequately reach and which, according to the Nirvâna Sutra, can only be fully known by an Awakened Being—a perfect Buddha—directly.

The Buddha of the Mahaparinirvâna Sutra gives the following definition of the attributes of Nirvâna, which includes the ultimate reality of the Self (not to be confused with the "worldly ego" of the five skandhas):

> "The attributes of Nirvâna are eightfold. What are these eight? Cessation (nirodha), loveliness/wholesomeness (subha), Truth (satya), Reality (tattva), eternity (nitya), bliss (sukha), the Self (atman), and complete purity (parisuddhi): that is Nirvâna."

He further states: "Non-Self is samsâra (the cycle of rebirth); the Self (atman) is Great Nirvâna."

An important facet of Nirvana in general is that it is not something that comes about from a concatenation of causes, that springs into existence as a result of an act of creation or an agglomeration of causative factors: it was never created; it always was, is and will be. But due to the moral and mental darkness of ordinary, samsarically benighted sentient beings, it remains hidden from unawakened perception. The Buddha of the Mahâparinirvânasûtra insists on its eternal nature and affirms its identity with the enduring, blissful Self, saying:

> It is not the case that the inherent nature of Nirvâna did not primordially exist but now exists. If the inherent nature of Nirvâna did not primordially exist but does now exist, then it would not be free from taints (âsravas) nor would it be eternally (nitya) present in nature. Regardless of whether

> there are Buddhas or not, its intrinsic nature and attributes are eternally present... Because of the obscuring darkness of the mental afflictions (kileúas), beings do not see it. The Tathâgata, endowed with omniscient awareness (sarvajñâ-jñâna), lights the lamp of insight with his skill-in-means (upâya-kauúalya) and causes Bodhisattvas to perceive the Eternal, Bliss, the Self, and the Pure of Nirvâna.

Vitally, according to these Mahâyâna teachings, any being who has reached Nirvâna is not blotted out or extinguished: there is the extinction of the impermanent and suffering-prone "worldly self" or ego, comprised the five changeful skandhas, but not of the immortal "supramundane" Self of the indwelling Buddha Principle [Buddha-dhatu]. Spiritual death for such a Nirvâna-ed being becomes an utter impossibility. The Buddha states in the "Mahâyâna Mahâparinirvâna Sutra" (Tibetan version): "Nirvâna is deathless... Those who have passed into Nirvâna are deathless. I say that anybody who is endowed with careful assiduity is not compounded and, even though they involve themselves in compounded things, they do not age, they do not die, they do not perish."

Paths to Nirvâna in the Pali Canon

In the Visuddhimagga, Ch. I, v. 6 (Buddhaghosa and Nagamoli, 1999, pp. 6-7), Buddhaghosa identifies various options within the Pali canon for pursuing a path to Nirvana, including:

- by insight (vipassana) alone (see Dh. 277)
- by jhana and understanding (see Dh. 372)
- by deeds, vision and righteousness (see MN iii.262)
- by virtue, consciousness and understanding (7SN i.13)
- by virtue, understanding, concentration and effort (see SN i.53)
- by the four foundations of mindfulness (see Satipatthana Sutta, DN ii.290)

Depending on one's analysis, each of these options could be seen as a reframing of the Buddha's Threefold Training of virtue, mental development and wisdom.

Quotations

Gautama Buddha:

"Nirvana is the highest happiness." [Dp 204]

"Where there is nothing; where naught is grasped, there is the Isle of No-Beyond. Nirvana do I call it — the utter extinction of aging and dying."

"There is, monks, an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated. If there were not that unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, there would not be the case that emancipation from the born—become—made—fabricated would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, emancipation from the born—become—made—fabricated is discerned." [Udana VIII.3]

This said: 'the liberated mind/will (citta) which does not cling' means Nibbâna" [MN2-Att. 4.68]

"'The subjugation of becoming means Nirvana'; this means the subjugation of the five aggregates means Nirvana." [SN-Att. 2.123]

"Parinibbuto thitatto"—"PariNirvana is to be fixed in the Soul" [Sn 372]

Said immediately after the physical death of Gautama Buddha wherein his mind (citta) is =pariNirvana=the essence of liberation:

[DN 2.157] "No longer with (subsists by) in-breath nor out-breath, so is him (Gautama) who is steadfast in mind (citta), inherently quelled from all desires the mighty sage has passed beyond. With mind (citta) limitless (Brahman) he no longer bears sensations; illumined and unbound (nibbana), his mind (citta) is definitely (ahu) liberated."

[SN 3.45] "The mind (citta) being so liberated and arisen from defilements, one is fixed in the Soul as liberation, one is quelled in fixation upon the Soul. Quelled in the Soul one is unshakable. So being unshakable, the very Soul is thoroughly unbound (pariNirvana)."

Sutta Nipâta, tr. Rune Johansson:

accî yathâ vâtavegena khitto
atthaa paleti na upeti sankhaa
evaa muni nâmakâyâ kimutto
atthaa paleti na upeti sankhaa
atthan gatassa na pamâgam atthi
ynea naa vajju taA tassan atthi
sabbesu dhammesu samûhatesu
samûhatâ vâdapathâpi sabbe

Like a flame that has been blown out by a strong wind goes to rest and cannot be defined, just so the sage who is freed from name and body goes to rest and cannot be defined.

For him who has gone to rest there is no measure by means of which one could describe him; that is not for him. When all (dharmas) have gone, all signs of recognition have also gone.

Venerable Sariputta:

The destruction of greed, hatred and delusion is Nirvana.

NIRVANA IN JAINISM

Nirvana in Jainism means:

1. Death of an Arhat, who becomes liberated thereafter, and
2. Moksa

Description of Nirvana of a Tirthankara in Jain Texts

Kalpasutra gives an elaborate account of Mahavira's Nirvana.

"The aghatiya Karma's of venerable Ascetic Mahavira got exhausted, when in this Avasarpini era the greater part of the Duhshamasushama period had elapsed and only three years and eight and a half months were left. Mahavira had recited the fifty-five lectures which detail the results of Karma, and the thirty-six unasked questions (the Uttaradhyana Sutra). The moon was in conjunction with the asterism Svati, at the time of early morning, in the town of Papa, and in king Hastipala's office of the writers, (Mahivira) single and alone, sitting in the Samparyahka posture, left his body and attained nirvana, freed from all pains." (147)

In the fourth month of that rainy season, in the seventh fortnight, in the dark (fortnight) of Karttika, on its fifteenth day, in the last night, in the town of Papa, in king Hastipala's office of the writers, the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died, went off, cut asunder the ties of birth, old age, and death; became a Siddha, a Buddha, a Mukta, a maker of the end (to all misery), finally liberated, freed from all pains. (123)

That night in which the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died, freed from all pains, was lighted up by many descending and ascending gods. (125)

In that night in which the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira, died, freed from all pains, the eighteen confederate kings of Kasi and Kosala, the nine Mallakis and nine Licchavis, on the day of new moon, instituted an illuminations on the Poshadha, which was a fasting day; for they said: 'Since the light of intelligence is gone, let us make an illumination of material matter!' (128)

Nirvana as Moksa

Uttaradhyana Sutra provides an account of Gautama explaining the meaning of Nirvana to Kesi a disciple of Parsva.

"There is a safe place in view of all, but difficult of approach, where there is no old age nor death, no pain nor disease. It is what is called Nirvâna, or freedom from pain, or perfection, which is in view of all; it is the safe, happy, and quiet place which the great sages reach. That is the eternal place, in view of all, but difficult of approach. Those sages

who reach it are free from sorrows, they have put an end to the stream of existence. (81-4)

THREE JEWELS

The Three Jewels, also called the Three Treasures, the Three Refuges, or the Triple Gem, are the three things that Buddhists give themselves to, and in return look toward for guidance, in the process known as *taking refuge*.

The Three Jewels are:

- Buddha who, depending on one's interpretation, can mean the Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, or the Buddha nature or ideal within all beings;
- Dharma which is the Teachings of the Buddha.
- Sangha The Community of those great people who have attained Enlightenment. so that those people (Sangha) will help you to attain Enlightenment.

REFUGE FORMULA

The Three Jewels, also rendered as Three Treasures, Three Refuges or Triple Gem are the three things that Buddhists give themselves to, and in return look toward for guidance, in the process known as *taking refuge*.

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is central to Buddhist lay and monastic ordination ceremonies, as originated by Gautama Buddha.

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is generally considered to make one officially a Buddhist. Thus, in many Theravada Buddhist communities, the following Pali chant, the *Vandana Ti-sarana* is often recited by both monks and lay people:

- Buddham saranam gacchâmi
  I go for refuge in the Buddha.
- Dhammam saranam gacchâmi
  I go for refuge in the Dharma.
- Sangham saranam gacchâmi
  I go for refuge in the Sangha

The Mahayana Chinese/Japanese version differs only slightly from the Theravada:

I take refuge in the Buddha, wishing for all sentient beings to understand the great way and make the greatest vow.

I take refuge in the Dharma, wishing for all sentient beings to deeply delve into the Sutra Pitaka, gaining an ocean of knowledge.

I take refuge in the Sangha, wishing all sentient beings to lead the congregation in harmony, entirely without obstruction.

The prayer for taking refuge in Tibetan Buddhism.

Sang-gye cho-dang tsog-kyi cho-nam-la

I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha

Jang-chub bar-du dag-ni kyab-su-chi

Until I attain enlightenment.

Dag-gi jin-sog gyi-pe so-nam-kyi

By the merit I have accumulated from practising generosity and the other perfections

Dro-la pan-chir sang-gye drub-par-shog

May I attain enlightenment, for the benefit of all migrators.

IMPORTANCE OF THE TRIPLE GEM

The Triple Gem is in the centre of one of the major practices of mental "reflection" in Buddhism; the reflection on the true qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. These qualities are called the Mirror of the Dharma in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta and help the practitioner attain the true "mind like a mirror".

In the Apannaka Jataka Buddha declares:

"Disciples, nowhere between the lowest of hells below and the highest heaven above, nowhere in all the infinite worlds that stretch right and left, is there the equal, much less the superior, of a Buddha. Incalculable is the excellence which springs from obeying the Precepts and from other virtuous conduct."

"By taking refuge in the Triple Gem, one escapes from rebirth in states of suffering. In forsaking such a refuge as this, you have certainly erred. In the past, too, men who foolishly mistook what was no refuge for a real refuge, met disaster."

DISCUSSIONS OF THE THREE JEWELS

The qualities of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are frequently repeated in the ancient texts and are called "Mirror of the Dhamma" or "Dhamma Adassa".

- The Buddha: "The Blessed One is an Arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons

to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One."

In some traditions *the Buddha as refuge* is taken to refer to the historical Buddha and also 'the full development of mind', in other words, the full development of one's highest potential, i.e. recognition of mind and the completion or full development of one's inherent qualities and activities.

- The Dharma: "The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate (eternal or not subject to time), inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise."

Refuge in the Dharma, in the Vajrayana, tradition includes reference not only to the words of the Buddha, but to the living experience of realisation and teachings of fully realised practitioners. In Tibetan Buddhism, it includes both the Kangyur (the teaching of the Buddha) and the Tengyur (the commentaries by realised practioners) and in an intangible way also includes the living transmission of those masters, which can also be very inspiring.

- The Sangha: "The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals—This Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world."

In the Vajrayana, a more liberal definition of Sangha can include all practitioners who are actively using the Buddha's teachings to benefit themselves and/or others. It can be more strictly defined as the 'Realised Sangha' or 'Arya-Sangha', in other words, practitioners and historical students of the Buddha who have fully realised the nature of their mind, also known as realised Boddhisatvas; and 'Ordinary Sangha', which can loosely mean practitioners and students of the Buddha who are using the same methods and working towards the same goal.

THE THREE JEWELS AND THE THREE ROOTS

In Vajrayana traditions, a second formulation of refuge called the Three Roots is added to the three jewels. They are

- the Guru, considered the "Root of Blessing"

- the Ishtadevata, which is the "Root of Methods"
- Dakini or Dharmapalas, considered the "Root of Protection"

These are seen as forms of the Body (Sangha), Speech (Dharma) and Mind (Buddha) of the Buddha. Of these, the guru has the most prominent place in the Vajrayana, as without his personal assitance and guidance, a practitioner cannot achieve proper spiritual progress.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche discusses the Twilight Language equivalences and polyvalence of the *Outer*, *Inner* and *Secret* aspects of the Three Jewels:

> The outer three jewels are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Three jewels have an inner aspect, known as the Three Roots: the Guru (or Teacher), who is the root of blessings; the Yidam, who is the root of accomplishment; and the Dakini, who is the root of enlightened activity. Although the names are different, these three do not in any way differ from the Three Jewels. The Guru is the Buddha [*sic*], the Yidam is the Dharma, and the Dakinis and Protectors are the Sangha. And on the innermost level, the Dharmakaya is the Buddha, the Sambhogakaya is the Dharma, and the Nirmanakaya is the Sangha.

HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE GEM METAPHOR

The three gems are so called because of their treasured value to Buddhists as well as their indestructible and unchanging nature.

The *Three Gems* when used in the process of taking refuge, become the *Three Refuges*. In this form, the metaphors occur very frequently in the ancient Buddhist Texts, and here the Sangha is used more broadly to refer to either the Sangha of Bhikkhus, or the Sangha of Bhikkhunis.

> "I go to Master Gautama for refuge and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus."

"Diond Mind"

Buddha's mind in his earth body or sambhogakaya is frequently associated with the greatest gem of all, the diamond, the hardest natural substance. In the Anguttara Nikaya(3:25), Buddha talks about the diamond mind which can cut through all delusion.

"Gems" in the Ratana-sutta

The expression *Three Gems* are found in the earliest Buddhist literature of the Pali Canon, besides other works there is one sutta in the Sutta-nipata, called the Ratana-sutta which contains a series of verses on the Jewels in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

In the Ratana-sutta, all the qualities of the Sangha mentioned are attributes of the Buddha's enlightened disciples:

- One who is irascible and very irritable, displaying anger, hatred and sulkiness; such a one is said to be a person with a mind like an open sore.
- One who understands the Four Noble Truths correctly is said to have a mind like a flash of lightning.
- One who has destroyed the mind-intoxicating defilements and realised the liberation of mind and the liberation by knowledge is said to have a mind like a diamond

Used as a Metaphor with Jainism and Taoism

In Buddhism, the Triple Gem isn't a metaphor and actually the initiation into the Dhamma that every Buddhist must take. However, it is used metaphorically in Jainism and Taoism. When Buddhism was introduced into China, *ratnatraya* was translated as *sanbao* Wade-Giles: *san-pao*; literally "three jewels/treasures"), a word that first occurs in the *Tao Te Ching*.

In his analysis of the *Tao Te Ching*, Victor H. Mair notes that the jewel metaphor was already widely used in Indian religious metaphor before the *Tao Te Ching* was written. In Jainism too,

For the Jains, the Three Jewels are a metaphor for describing conduct and knowledge:

- *samyag-darœana* (correct perception or insight)
- *samyag-jñâna* (correct knowledge)
- *samyag-câritra* (correct conduct).

SYMBOLISM IN ART

The *Three Jewels* are also symbolised by the *triratna*, composed of (from bottom to top):

- A lotus flower within a circle.
- A diamond rod, or vajra.
- A Gankyil.
- A trident, or trisula, with three branches, representing the threefold jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

On representations of the footprint of the Buddha, the Triratna is usually also surmounted by the Dharma wheel.

The Triratna can be found on frieze sculptures at Sanchi as the symbol crowning a flag standard (2nd century BCE), as a symbol of the Buddha installed on the Buddha's throne (2nd century BCE), as the crowning decorative symbol on the later gates at the stupa in Sanchi (2nd century CE), or, very often on the Buddha footprint (starting from the 1st century CE).

The Triratna is also on the 1st century BCE coins of the Kingdom of Kuninda in northern Punjab, surmounting depictions of stupas, on some the coins of the Indo-Parthian king Abdagases, or the coins of some of the Kushan kings such as Vima Kadphises.

The triratna can be further reinforced by being surmounted with three dharma wheels (one for each of the three jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha).

The triratna symbol is also called *nandipada*, or "bull's hoof", by Hindus.

THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE

According to the Buddhist tradition, all phenomena other than Nirvana, (sankhara) are marked by three characteristics, sometimes referred to as the *Dharma seals*, that is dukkha (suffering), anicca (impermanence), and anatta (non-Self).

According to tradition, after much meditation, the Buddha concluded that everything in the physical world (plus everything in the phenomenology of psychology) is marked by these three characteristics:

- Dukkha (Sanskrit *duhkha*) or unsatisfactoriness, 'disease' (also often translated "suffering," though this is somewhat misleading). Nothing found in the physical world or even the psychological realm can bring lasting deep satisfaction.
- Anicca (Sanskrit *anitya*) or impermanence. This refers not only to the fact that all conditioned things eventually cease to exist, but also that all conditioned things are in a constant state of flux. (Visualize a leaf growing on a tree. It dies and falls off the tree but is soon replaced by a new leaf.)
- Anatta (Sanskrit *anatman*) impersonality, or non-Self. The human personality, "soul", or Self, is a conventional appellation applied to the assembly of physical and psychological components, each individually subject to constant flux; there is no central core (or essence); this is somewhat similar to a bundle theory of mind or soul.

There is often a fourth Dharma Seal mentioned:

- Nirvana is peace. Nirvana is the 'other shore' from Samsara.

Together the three characteristics of existence are called ti-lakkhana, in Pali; or tri-laksana, in Sanskrit.

By bringing the three (or four) seals into moment-to-moment experience through concentrated awareness, we are said to achieve Wisdom—the third of the three higher trainings—the way out of Samsara. In this way we can identify that, according to Sutra, the recipe (or formula) for leaving Samsara is achieved by a deep-rooted change to our world view.

DUKKHA

> *Whatever is impermanent is subject to change. Whatever is subject to change is subject to suffering.*
>
> — The Buddha

Striving for what we desire, we may experience stress and suffering —*dukkha* (Pâli; Sanskrit: dukkha). Getting what we desired, we may find delight and happiness. Soon after, the novelty may wear out and we may get bored with it. Boredom is a form of dissatisfaction (or suffering) and to escape from it, we divert ourselves from such boredom by indulging in a pursuit of new forms of pleasure. Sometimes not willing to relinquish objects that we are already uninterested in, we start to collect and amass possessions instead of sharing with others who may have better use in it than we do. Boredom is a result of change: the change of our interest in that object of desire which so captivated us in the first place.

If we do not get bored already, then change may instead occur in the object of desire. Silverware may become tarnished, a new dress worn thin or a gadget gone obsolete. Or it may become broken, causing us to grieve. In some cases it may get lost or stolen. In some cases, we may worry about such losses even before they happen. Husbands and wives worry about losing their spouses even though their partners are faithful. Unfortunately, sometimes our very worry and fear drives us to act irrationally, resulting in distrust and breaking up of the very relationship that we cherished so much.

While we like changes such as becoming an adult when we are in our teens, we dislike the change called aging. While we strive for change to become rich, we fear the change of retrenchment. We are selective in our attitude towards the transient nature of our very

existence. Unfortunately, this transient nature is unselective. We can try to fight it, just as many have tried since beginningless time, only to have our efforts washed away through the passages of time. As a result, we continually experience dissatisfaction or suffering due to the very impermanence of compounded phenomena.

Only in the realm of Nirvana—so Mahayana Buddhism insists—can true and lasting happiness be found. Nirvana is the opposite of the conditional, the transitory and the painful (*dukkha*), so it does not result in disappointment or deterioration of the state of bliss. Nirvana is the refuge from the otherwise universal tyranny of change and suffering. In other schools of Buddhism, nirvana is not viewed as the goal, but merely as a projection from the state of samsara. According to these schools samsara (daily routine) and nirvana (perfection) are two sides of the same coin that must be transcended through diligent practice of meditation.

ANICCA

(Pâli; Sanskrit: anitya): All *compounded phenomena* (things and experiences) are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent. Everything we can experience through our senses is made up of parts, and is dependent on the right conditions for its existence. Everything is in constant flux, and so conditions and the *thing* itself is constantly changing. Things are constantly coming into being, and ceasing to be. Nothing lasts.

The important point here is that phenomena arise and cease according to (complex) conditions and not according to our whims and fancy. While we have limited ability to effect change to our possessions and surroundings, experience tells us that our feeble attempts are no guarantee that the results of our efforts will be to our likings. More often than not, the results fall short of our expectations.

In Mahayana Buddhism, a caveat is added: one should indeed always meditate on the impermanence and changefulness of compounded structures and phenomena, but one must guard against extending this to the realm of Nirvana, where impermanence holds no sway and eternity alone obtains. To see Nirvana or the Buddha (in his ultimate Dharmakaya nature) as impermanent would be to indulge in "perverted Dharma" and would be seriously to go astray, according to the Buddha's final Mahayana doctrines. Other schools of Buddhism, however, feel uneasy with such a teaching.

ANATTA

(Pâli; Sanskrit: anâtman): In Indian philosophy, the concept of a Self is called âtman (that is, "soul" or metaphysical Self), which refers to an unchanging, permanent essence conceived by virtue of existence. This concept and the related concept of Brahman, the Vedantic monistic ideal, which was regarded as an ultimate âtman for all beings, were indispensable for mainstream Indian metaphysics, logic, and science; for all apparent things there had to be an underlying and persistent reality, akin to a Platonic form. The Buddha rejected all concepts of âtman, emphasising not permanence, but changeability. He taught that all concepts of a substantial personal Self were incorrect, and formed in the realm of ignorance. However, in a number of major Mahayana sutras (e.g. the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Tathagatagarbha Sutra, the Srimala Sutra, among others), the Buddha is presented as clarifying this teaching by saying that, while the skandhas (constituents of the ordinary body and mind) are not the Self, there does truly exist an eternal, unchanging, blissful Buddha-essence in all sentient beings, which is the uncreated and deathless Buddha-nature ("Buddha-dhatu") or "True Self" of the Buddha himself. This immaculate Buddhic Self (atman) is in no way to be construed as a mundane, impermanent, suffering "ego", of which it is the diametrical opposite. On the other hand, this Buddha-essence or Buddha-nature is also often explained as the *potential* for achieving Buddhahood, rather than an existing phenomenon one can grasp onto as being *me* or *Self*. It is the opposite of a personalised, samsaric "I" or "mine". The paradox is that as soon as the Buddhist practitioner tries to grasp at this inner Buddha potency and cling to it as though it were his or her ego writ large, it proves elusive. It does not "exist" in the time-space conditioned and finite mode in which mundane things are bodied forth. It is presented by the Buddha in the relevant sutras as ultimately inexplicable, primordially present Reality itself—the living potency for Buddhahood inside all beings. It is finally revealed (in the last of the Buddha's Mahayana sutras, the Nirvana Sutra) not as the circumscribed "non-Self", the clinging ego (which is indeed anatta/anatman), but as the ever-enduring, egoless Great Self or Dharmakaya of the Buddha.

The scriptural evidence of the Nikâyas and Âgamas is ambivalent with regard to the Buddha's reported views on the existence or otherwise of a permanent Self (*âtman/atta*). Though he is clearly reported to have criticised many of the heterodox concepts concerning an eternal personal Self and to have denied the existence of an eternal Self with regards to any of the constituent elements (*skandha*) of a being, he is

nevertheless not reported to have explicitly denied the existence of a non-personal, permanent Self, contrary to the popular, orthodox view of the Buddha's teachings. Moreover, when the Buddha predicates "*anâtman*" (*anatta*) with regards to the constituents of a being, there is a grammatical ambivalence in the use of the term. The most natural interpretation is that he is simply stating that "the constituents are not the Self" rather than "the constituents are devoid of Self". This ambivalence was to prove troublesome to Buddhists after the Buddha's passing. Some of the major schools of Buddhism that developed subsequently maintained the former interpretation, but other influential schools adopted the latter interpretation and took measures to establish their view as the orthodox Buddhist position.

One such proponent of this hard-line "non-Self" position was the monk Nagasena, who appears in the *Questions of King Milinda*, composed during the period of the Hellenistic Indo-Greek kingdom of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. In this text, Nagasena demonstrates the concept of absolute 'non-Self' by likening human beings to a chariot and challenges the Greek king "Milinda" (Menander) to find the essence of the chariot. Nagasena states that just as a chariot is made up of a number of things, none of which are the essence of the chariot in isolation, without the other pieces, similarly no one part of a person is a permanent entity; we can be broken up into five constituents— body, sensations, ideation, mental formations and consciousness— the consciousness being closest to the permanent idea of 'Self', but is ever-changing with each new thought according to this viewpoint.

According to some thinkers both in the East and the West, the doctrine of "non-Self", may imply that Buddhism is a form of nihilism or something similar. However, as thinkers like Nagarjuna have clearly pointed out, Buddhism is not simply a rejection of the concept of existence (or of meaning, etc.) but of the hard and fast distinction between existence and non-existence, or rather between *being* and *no-thingness*. Phenomena are not independent from causes and conditions, and do not exist as isolated things as we perceive them to be. Philosophers such as Nâgârjuna stress that the lack of a permanent, unchanging, substantial Self in beings and things does not mean that they do not experience growth and decay on the relative level. But on the ultimate level of analysis, one cannot distinguish an object from its causes and conditions, or even object and subject. (This is an idea appearing relatively recently in Western science.) Buddhism thus has much more in common with Western empiricism, pragmatism, anti-foundationalism, and even post-structuralism than with nihilism.

In the Nikâyas, the Buddha and his disciples are commonly found to ask in question or declare "*Is that which is impermanent, subject to change, subject to suffering fit to be considered thus: 'This I am, this is mine, this is my self'?*" The question which the Buddha posts to his audience is whether compounded phenomena is fit to be considered as self, in which the audience agrees that it is unworthy to be considered so. And in relinquishing such an attachment to compounded phenomena, such a person gives up delight, desire and craving for compounded phenomena and is unbounded by its change. When completely free from attachments, craving or desire to the five aggregates, such a person experiences then transcends the very causes of suffering.

In this way, the insight wisdom or prajñâ of non-Self gives rise to cessation of suffering, and not an intellectual debate over whether a self exists or not. It is by realising (not merely understanding intellectually, but making real in one's experience) the three marks of conditioned existence that one develops prajñâ, which is the antidote to the ignorance that lies at the root of all suffering. From the "tathagatagarbha-Mahayana" perspective (which diverges from the Theravadin understanding of Buddhism), however, a further step is required if full Buddhahood is to be attained: not only seeing what is impermanent, suffering and non-Self in the samsaric sphere, but equally recognising that which is truly Eternal, Blissful, Self, and Pure in the transcendental realm— the realm of Mahaparinirvana.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE THREE MARKS BY VARIOUS SCHOOLS

Some Buddhist traditions assert that Anatta pervades everything, and is not limited to personality, or soul. These traditions assert that Nirvana also has the quality of Anatta, but that Nirvana (by definition) is the cessation of Dukkha and Anicca.

In Nagarjuna's MMK XXV:19, he says

There is not the slightest difference
Between Samsara and Nirvana

This verse points us to an interesting stress between dukkha and nirvana, through an argument based in anatta. This specific stress can be seen to be the key to (and possibly source for the development of) the deity yogas of vajrayana.

> The sutra path enjoins us to identify the entire world (internally and externally) as samsara—a continual churning of suffering that nobody wants to be part of. Our practice is that of *leaving* the shores of samsara.

On the other hand, we are told that unconditioned, enlightened activity is not actually different from samsara.

> Whereas the deity yoga of vajrayana enjoins us to identify the entire world as nirvana—a continual play of enlightening activity that everyone wishes to be a part of. Our practice here is that of *arriving* at the shores of nirvana.

At this level, the distinction between Sutra and Vajrayana remain that of view (*departing* vs. *arriving*), but basically the practitioner remains involved in undergoing a transformative development to his or her Weltanschauung, and in this context, these practices remain rooted in psychological change, grounded in the development of Samatha, or training in concentration.

However, there are certain practices in Tantra which are not solely concerned with psychological change; these revolve around the basic idea that it is possible to induce deep levels of concentration through psycho-physical methods as a result of special exercises. The purpose remains the same (to achieve liberating view), but the method involves a 'short cut' for the training in Samatha.

SKANDHA

The five skandhas are the five "aggregates" which categorize or constitute all individual experience according to Buddhist phenomenology. An important corollary in Buddhism is that a "person" is made up of these five aggregates, beyond which there is no "self".

In the Theravada tradition, suffering arises when one identifies with or otherwise clings to an aggregate; hence, suffering is extinguished by relinquishing attachments to aggregates. The Mahayana tradition further puts forth that ultimate freedom is realised by deeply penetrating the intrinsically empty nature of all aggregates.

Outside of Buddhist didactic contexts, "skandha" can mean mass, heap, bundle or tree trunk.

DEFINITION

Buddhist doctrine describes five aggregates:

1. "form" or "matter" (Skt., Pâli *rûpa*, Tib. *gzugs*):

   external and internal matter. Externally, *rupa* is the physical world. Internally, *rupa* includes the material body and the physical sense organs.

2. "sensation" or "feeling" (Skt., Pâli *vedanâ*, Tib. *tshor-ba*):

   sensing an object as either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral.

3. "perception" or "cognition" (Skt. *samjñâ*, Pâli *saññâ*, Tib. *'du-shes*):

   registers whether an object is recognised or not (for instance, the sound of a bell or the shape of a tree).

4. "mental formations" or "volition" (Skt. "vâsanâ" or *samskâra*, Pâli *sankhâra*, Tib. *'du-byed*) :

   all types of mental habits, thoughts, ideas, opinions, compulsions, and decisions triggered by an object.

5. "consciousness" (Skt. *vijñâna*, Pâli *viññâGa*, Tib. *rnam-par-shes-pa*):

   (a) *In the Nikayas:* cognizance.

   (b) *In the Abhidhamma:* a series of rapidly changing interconnected discrete acts of cognizance.

   (c) *In Mahayana sources:* the base that supports all experience.

See Table 1 for examples of definitional references to the aggregates in Buddhist primary sources.

In the Pali canon, the aggregates are causally related as follows (as illustrated in the figure to the right):

- Form (*rupa*) arises from experientially irreducible physical/ physiological phenomena.
- Form – in terms of an external object (such as a sound) and its associated sense organ (such as the ear) – gives rise to consciousness (*viññâGa*).
- From the contact of form and consciousness arise the three mental (*nâma*) aggregates of feeling (*vedanâ*), perception (*saññâ*) and mental formation (*sankhâra*).
- The mental aggregates can then in turn give rise to additional consciousness that leads to the arising of additional mental aggregates.

In this scheme, form, the mental aggregates, and consciousness are mutually dependent.

Other Buddhist literature has described the aggregates as arising in a linear or progressive fashion, from form to feeling to perception to mental formations to consciousness.

THERAVADA PERSPECTIVES

1. Understanding the Four Noble Truths: The five aggregates are the "ultimate referent" in the Buddha's elaboration on suffering (dukkha) in his First Noble Truth (see excerpted quote below) and "since all four truths revolve around suffering, understanding the aggregates is essential for understanding the Four Noble Truths as a whole."
2. Future Suffering's Cause: The five aggregates are the substrata for clinging and thus "contribute to the causal origination of future suffering."
3. Release: Clinging to the five aggregates must be removed in order to achieve release.

Below, excerpts from the Pâli literature will bear out Bhikkhu Bodhi's assessment.

Suffering's Ultimate Referent

In the Buddha's first discourse, the "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta" ("The Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth Discourse," SN 56:11), he provides a classic elaboration on the first of his Four Noble Truths, "The Truth of Suffering" (Dukkhasacca):

> "The Noble Truth of Suffering (dukkha), monks, is this: Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, dissociation from the pleasant is suffering, not to receive what one desires is suffering — in brief the five aggregates subject to grasping are suffering." [Boldface added.] (Trans. from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera, 1999.)

According to Thanissaro (2002):

> "Prior to the Buddha, the Pali word khandha had very ordinary meanings: A khandha could be a pile, a bundle, a heap, a mass. It could also be the trunk of a tree. In his first sermon, though, the Buddha gave it a new, psychological meaning, introducing the term 'clinging-khandhas' to summarize his analysis of the truth of stress and suffering. Throughout the remainder of his teaching career, he referred to these psychological khandhas time and again."

In what way are the aggregates suffering? For this we can turn to Khandhavagga suttas.

Future Suffering's Cause

The Samyutta Nikaya contains a book entitled the "Khandhavagga" ("The Book of Aggregates") compiling over a hundred suttas related

to the five aggregates. Typical of these suttas is the "Upadaparitassana Sutta" ("Agitation through Clinging Discourse," SN 22:7), which states in part:

> "...[T]he instructed noble disciple... does not regard form [or other aggregates] as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. That form of his changes and alters. Despite the change and alteration of form, his consciousness does not become preoccupied with the change of form.... [T]hrough non-clinging he does not become agitated." (Trans. by Bodhi, 2000b, pp. 865-866.)

Put another way, if we were to self-identify with an aggregate then we would cling (upadana) to such; and, given that all aggregates are impermanent (anicca), it would then be likely that at some level we would experience agitation (paritassati) or loss or grief or stress or suffering (see dukkha). Therefore, if we want to be free of suffering, it is wise to experience the aggregates clearly, without clinging or craving (tanha), as apart from any notion of self (anatta).

Many of the suttas in the Khandhavagga express the aggregates in the context of the following sequence:

1. An uninstructed worldling (assutavâ puthujjana)
    1. *regards*: form *as* self; self as *possessing* form; form as *in* self; self as *in* form.
    2. lives *obsessed* by the notions: I am form; and/or, form is mine
    3. this form *changes*
    4. with the changes of form, there *arises* dukkha
2. An instructed noble disciple (sutavâ ariyasâvaka) does *not* regard form as self, etc., and thus, when form changes, dukkha does not arise.

(Note that, in each of the suttas where the above formula is used, subsequent verses replace "form" with each of the other aggregates: sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness.)

But how does one become aware of and then let go of ones own identification with or clinging to the aggregates? Below is an excerpt from the classic Satipatthana Sutta that shows how traditional mindfulness practices can awaken understanding, release and wisdom.

Release Through Aggregate-Contemplation

In the classic Theravada meditation reference, the "Satipammhâna Sutta" ("The Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse," MN 10), the Buddha provides four bases for establishing mindfulness: body (kaya),

sensations (vedana), mind (citta) and mental objects (dhamma). When discussing mental objects as a basis for meditation, the Buddha identifies five objects, including the aggregates. Regarding meditation on the aggregates, the Buddha states:

> How, monks, does a monk live contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five aggregates of clinging?
>
> Herein, monks, a monk thinks, 'Thus is material form; thus is the arising of material form; and thus is the disappearance of material form. Thus is feeling; thus is the arising of feeling; and thus is the disappearance of feeling. Thus is perception; thus is the arising of perception; and thus is the disappearance of perception. Thus are formations; thus is the arising of formations; and thus is the disappearance of formations. Thus is consciousness; thus is the arising of consciousness; and thus is the disappearance of consciousness.
>
> "...Or his mindfulness is established with the thought, 'Mental objects exist,' to the extent necessary just for knowledge and mindfulness, and he lives detached, and clings to nothing in the world. Thus also, monks, a monk lives contemplating mental objects in the mental objects of the five aggregates of clinging." (Nyanasatta, trans., 1994.)

Thus, through mindfulness contemplation, one sees an "aggregate as an aggregate"—sees it arising and dissipating. Such clear seeing creates a space between the aggregate and clinging, a space that will prevent or enervate the arising and propagation of clinging, thereby diminishing future suffering.

As clinging disappears, so too notions of a separate "self." In the Mahasunnata Sutta ("The Greater Discourse on Emptiness," MN 122), after reiterating the aforementioned aggregate-contemplation instructions (for instance, "Thus is form; thus is the arising of form; and, thus is the disappearance of form"), the Buddha states:

> "When he [a monk] abides contemplating rise and fall in these five aggregates affected by clinging, the conceit 'I am' based on these five aggregates affected by clinging is abandoned in him...." (Nanamoli and Bodhi, 2001, p. 975.)

In a complementary fashion, in the Buddha's second discourse, the Anattalakkhana Sutta ("The Characteristic of Nonself," SN 22:59), the Buddha instructs:

> "Monks, form is nonself. For if, monks, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to [manipulate] form [in the following manner]: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus....' [Identical statements are made regarding feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness.]

> "...Seeing thus [for instance, through contemplation], monks, the instructed noble disciple becomes disenchanted with form [and the other aggregates].... Being disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated." (Bodhi, 2005a, pp. 341-2.)

As seen below, the Mahayana tradition continues this use of the aggregates to achieve self-liberation.

MAHAYANA PERSPECTIVES

In one of Mahayana Buddhism's most famous declarations, the aggregates are referenced:

> "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

What does this mean? To what degree is it a departure from the aforementioned Theravada perspective? Moreover, more generally, how are the aggregates used in the Mahayana literature? These questions are addressed below.

The Intrinsic Emptiness of all Things

The Sanskrit version of the classic "Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra" ("Heart Sutra") begins:

The noble Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, while practising the deep practice of Prajnaparamita looked upon the Five Skandhas, ...seeing they were empty of self-existence....	Arya avalokiteshvaro bodhisattvo gambhiran prajna-paramita caryan caramano vyaavalokayati sma panca skandhas tansh... svabhava shunyan pashyati sma....

From its very first lines, this version of the Heart Sutra introduces an alternative practice and worldview to the Theravada perspective of the aggregates:

- Prajnaparamita: Whereas Theravada meditation practices with the aggregates generally use change-penetrating vipassana meditation, here the non-dualistic prajnaparamita practice is invoked.
- Svabhava: In Theravada texts, when "emptiness of self" is mentioned, the English word "self" is a translation of the Pali word *"atta"* (Sanskrit, *"atman"*); in the Sanskrit-version of the Heart Sutra, the English word "self" is a translation of the Sanskrit word *"sva-bhava"*. According to Red Pine, "The 'self' (*sva*)... was more generalised in its application than 'ego' (*atman*) and referred not only to *beings* but to *any inherent substance* that could be identified as existing in time or space as a permanent or independent entity." (Italics added.)

In other words, whereas the Sutta Pitaka typically instructs one to apprehend the aggregates *without clinging or self-identification*, Prajnaparamita leads one to apprehend the aggregates as having *no intrinsic reality*.

In the Heart Sutra's second verse, after rising from his aggregate meditation, Avalokiteshvara declares:

> "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness."

Thich Nhat Hanh interprets this statement as:

> "Form is the wave and emptiness is the water.... [W]ave is water, water is wave.... [T]hese five [aggregates] contain each other. Because one exists, everything exists."

Red Pine comments:

> "That form is empty was one of the Buddha's earliest and most frequent pronouncements. But in the light of Prajnaparamita, form is not simply empty, it is so completely empty, it is emptiness itself, which turns out to be the same as form itself.... All separations are delusions. But if each of the skandhas is one with emptiness, and emptiness is one with each of the skandhas, then everything occupies the same indivisible space, which is emptiness.... Everything is empty, and empty is everything.

Tangibility and Transcendence

Commenting on the Heart Sutra, D.T. Suzuki notes:

> "When the sutra says that the five Skandhas have the character of emptiness..., the sense is: no limiting qualities are to be attributed to the Absolute; while it is immanent in all concrete and particular objects, it is not in itself definable."

That is, from the Mahayana perspective, the aggregates convey the relative (or conventional) experience of the world by an individual, although Absolute truth is realised through them.

The tathagatagarbha sutras, on occasion, speak of the ineffable skandhas of the Buddha (beyond the nature of worldly skandhas and beyond worldly understanding), and in the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra the Buddha tells of how the Buddha's skandhas are in fact eternal and unchanging. The Buddha's skandhas are said to be incomprehensible to unawakened vision.

VAJRAYANA PERSPECTIVES

The Vajrayana tradition further develops the aggregates in terms of mahamudra epistemology and tantric reifications.

The Truth of Our Insubstantiality

Referring to mahamudra teachings, Chogyam Trungpa (Trungpa, 2001, pp. 10-12; and, Trungpa, 2002, pp. 124, 133-4) identifies the form aggregate as the "solidification" of ignorance (Pali, *avijja*; Skt., *avidya*), allowing one to have the illusion of "possessing" ever dynamic and spacious wisdom (Pali, *vijja*; Skt. *vidya*), and thus being the basis for the creation of a dualistic relationship between "self" and "other."

According to Trungpa Rinpoche (1976, pp. 20-22), the five skandhas are "a set of Buddhist concepts which describe experience as a five-step process" and that "the whole development of the five skandhas...is an attempt on our part to shield ourselves from the truth of our insubstantiality," while "the practice of meditation is to see the transparency of this shield." (ibid, p.23)

Bardo Deity Manifestations

Trungpa Rinpoche writes (2001, p. 38):

> "[S]ome of the details of tantric iconography are developed from abhidharma [that is, in this context, detailed analysis of the aggregates]. Different colours and feelings of this particular consciousness, that particular emotion, are manifested in a particular deity wearing such-and-such a costume, of certain particular colours, holding certain particular sceptres in his hand. Those details are very closely connected with the individualities of particular psychological processes."

Perhaps it is in this sense that the Tibetan Book of the Dead (Fremantle & Trungpa, 2003) makes the following associations between the aggregates and tantric deities during the bardo after death:

- "The blue light of the skandha of consciousness in its basic purity, the wisdom of the dharmadhâtu, luminous, clear, sharp and brilliant, will come towards you from the heart of Vairocana and his consort, and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear it." (p. 63)
- "The white light of the skandha of form in its basic purity, the mirror-like wisdom, dazzling white, luminous and clear, will come towards you from the heart of Vajrasattva and his consort and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it." (p. 66)
- "The yellow light of the skandha of feeling in its basic purity, the wisdom of equality, brilliant yellow, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, unbearable to the eyes, will come towards you from the heart of Ratnasambhava and his consort

and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it." (p. 68)

- "The red light of the skandha of perception in its basic purity, the wisdom of discrimination, brilliant red, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, sharp and bright, will come from the heart of Amitâbha and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it." (p. 70)
- "The green light of the skandha of concept [samskara] in its basic purity, the action-accomplishing wisdom, brilliant green, luminous and clear, sharp and terrifying, adorned with discs of light, will come from the heart of Amoghasiddhi and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it. It is the spontaneous play of your own mind, so rest in the supreme state free from activity and care, in which there is no near or far, love or hate." (p. 73)

RELATION TO OTHER BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

Other fundamental Buddhist concepts associated with the five skandhas include:

Samsara

It is through the five skandhas that the world (samsara) is experienced, and nothing is experienced apart from the five skandhas.

Three Characteristics

It is through the five skandhas that impermanence (anicca) is experienced, that suffering (dukkha) arises, and that "non-self" (anatta or anatman) can be realised.

Four Paramatthas

The Abhidhamma and post-canonical Pali texts create a meta-scheme for the Sutta Pitaka's conceptions of aggregates, sense bases and elements. This meta-scheme is known as the four *paramatthas* or four ultimate realities:

- consciousness
- mental factors
- material phenomena
- Nibbâna

The mapping between the aggregates, the sense bases (*see next entry*) and the ultimate realities is represented in the chart to the right.

Twelve Sense Bases

- The first five *external* sense bases (that is, the sense objects of visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch) are part of the form aggregate and the mental sense object (that is, mental objects) overlap the first four aggregates (form, feeling, perception and formation).
- The first five *internal* sense bases (that is, the sense organs of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) are also part of the form aggregate and the mental sense organ (mind) is comparable to the aggregate of consciousness.

While the benefit of meditating on the aggregates is overcoming wrong views of the self (since the self is typically identified with one or more of the aggregates), the benefit of meditation on the six sense bases is to overcome craving (through restraint and insight into sense objects that lead to contact, feeling and subsequent craving).

Twelve Nidanas / Dependent Origination

The Twelve Nidanas describe twelve phenomenal links by which suffering is perpetuated between and within lives. Embedded within this model, four of the five aggregates are explicitly mentioned in the following sequence: mental formations (*sankhâra*) condition consciousness (*viññâGa*) which conditions name-and-form (*nâma-rûpa*) which conditions the precursors (*saâyatana*, *phassa*) to sensations (*vedanâ*) which in turn condition craving (*taGhâ*) and clinging (*upâdâna*) which ultimately lead to the "entire mass of suffering" (*kevalassa dukkhakkhandha*). Overlaying this chain of conditioning on top of "The Five Aggregates" diagram at the top of this article, the inter-play between the five-aggregates model of immediate causation and the twelve-nidana model of requisite conditioning becomes evident, for instance, underlining the seminal role that mental formations have in both the origination and cessation of suffering.

Eighteen Dhatus

The eighteen dhatus function through the five aggregates. The eighteen dhatus can be arranged into six triads, where each triad is composed of a sense organ, a sense object and sense consciousness. In regards to the aggregates:

- The first five sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) are derivatives of form. The sixth sense organ (mind) is part of consciousness.

- The first five sense objects (visible forms, sound, smell, taste, touch) are also derivatives of form. The sixth sense object (mental object) includes form, sensation, perception and mental formations.
- The six sense consciousness are the basis for consciousness.

REFERENCES IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The table below briefly cites Buddhist primary sources that characterize different aspects of the aggregates. This table is by no means exhaustive.

Table 1

Some References to the Aggregates in Buddhist Primary Sources

(Abbreviations: MN = Majjhima Nikaya; SN = Samyutta Nikaya; Vism = Visuddhimagga.)

Aggregate	*Description*	*Source*
rûpa	It is the four Great Elements (*mahâbhûta*) — earth, water, fire, wind — and their derivatives.	SN 22.56
	It is afflicted with cold, heat, hunger, thirst, flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, reptiles.	SN 22.79
	The cause, the condition and the delineation are the four Great Elements.	MN 109
	There are 24 kinds of "derived" forms (*upâdâya rûpam*).	Vism XIV.36ff
vedanâ	It is feeling born of contact (*phassa*) with eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.	SN 22.56
	It feels pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain.	SN 22.79
	The cause, the condition and the delineation are contact (*phassa*).	MN 109
	As individual experience, can be analysed as bodily pleasure, bodily pain, mental joy, mental grief, equanimity.	Vism XIV.127
saññâ	It is perception of form, sound, smell, taste, tactile sensation, mental phenomena.	SN 22.56
	It perceives blue, yellow, red, white.	SN 22.79
	The cause, the condition and the delineation are contact (*phassa*).	MN 109
	Functions to make a "sign" for perceiving in the future that "this is the same."	Vism XIV.130
sankhâra	It is volition regarding form, sound, smell, taste, tactile sensation, mental phenomena.	SN 22.56
	It constructs *constructed* forms, feelings, perceptions, volitional formation, consciousness.	SN 22.79
	The cause, the condition and the delineation are contact (*phassa*).	MN 109
	Characterised by "forming," functions to "accumulate," manifests as "intervening."	Vism XIV.132
viññâga	It is eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, mind-consciousness.	SN 22.56
	It cognises what is sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, sharp, mild, salty, bland.	SN 22.79
	The cause, the condition and the delineation are name-and-form (*nâmarûpa*).	MN 109
	There are 89 kinds of consciousness.	Vism XIV.82ff

SAMSARA (BUDDHISM)

Samsara, the Sanskrit and Pâli term for "continuous movement" or "continuous flowing" refers in Buddhism to the concept of a cycle of birth (jâti) and consequent decay and death (jarâmaraGa), in which all beings in the universe participate and which can only be escaped through enlightenment. Samsara is associated with suffering and is generally considered the anti-thesis of Nirvana or nibbâna.

Buddha's View of Samsara

According to the Buddha, the beginning point of Samsara is not evident. It is just like finding the beginning point of a circle. All beings have been suffering in Samsara for an unimaginable period, and they continue to do so until attaining of nirvana. The Assu Sutta of Pali Canon provides a great explanation of our existence in Samsara:

> *At Savatthi. There the Buddha said: "From an inconstruable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating and wandering on. What do you think, monks: Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—or the water in the four great oceans?"*
>
> *"As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans."*
>
> *"Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.*
>
> *"This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.*
>
> *"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.*
>
> *"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from*

being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing —are greater than the water in the four great oceans. "Why is that? From an inconstruable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating and wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."

Samsara in Nikâya Buddhism

Whereas in Hinduism some being (âtman, jîva, etc.) is regarded as being subject to Samsara, Buddhism was founded on a rejection (anatta) of such metaphysical substances, and originally accounts for the process of rebirth/reincarnation by appeal to phenomenological or psychological constituents. Later schools of Buddhism such as the Pudgalavâda, however, re-introduce the concept of a "person" which transmigrates. The basic idea that there is a cycle of birth and rebirth is, however, not questioned in early Buddhism and its successors, and neither is, generally, the concept that samsara is a negative condition to be abated through religious practice concluding in the achievement of final Nirvana.

Samsara in Mahâyâna Buddhism

According to several strands of the Mahâyâna Buddhist tradition, the division of samsara and Nirvana is attacked using an argument that extends some of the basic premises of anâtman and of Buddha's attack on orthodox accounts of existence. This is found poetically in the "Perfection of Wisdom" literature and more analytically in the philosophy of Nâgârjuna and later writers. It is not entirely clear which aspects of this theoretical move were developed first in the sutras and which in the philosophical tradition.

Samsara in Tibetan Buddhism

Samsara is uncontrollably recurring rebirth, filled with suffering and problems (according to Kâlacakra tantra as explained by Dr. A. Berzin). In this sense, Samsara may be translated "Wheel of Suffering."

The term Samsara has been translated many ways which include but are not limited to endless suffering, cyclic existence, perpetual wandering, and transmigration. There are six realms that one can go to through this cycle of Samsara. Many believe that when one goes through the process of rebirth that they are the exact same person when they are reborn. This however, is not true. They bear many similarities with their former selves but they are not the same person.

This is why many use the term reborn instead of reincarnation. The term reincarnation implies that there is a transfer of conscience or one's soul to the new life and this is not the case in Samsara. buddha101.com gives a good example that shows an easy way to better understand the transfer of consciousness "Like a billiard ball hitting another billiard ball. While nothing physical transfers, the speed and direction of the second ball relate directly to the first." This means the previous life has just as much impact on the new life.

There are also some who believe that Samsara is not the question but the answer to what we are doing here. They consider it to be a process to why we are here. They believe that one creates their own worlds on their way to enlightenment. Meaning when their world is starting to collapse due to their death they will create a new world and move into it. Some also believe that while they are continuing to go from world to world they encounter others who are on the same path that they are on. It is also believed that all of these different worlds impact the worlds of those who are in a similar place/path that you are on.

Buddha was the first person to grasp the belief of Samsara and figure out how to end it. He taught that the only way for one to end their journey through Samsara was enlightenment. The only person who could stop one's cycle of Samsara was the one who was traveling through their path. Some thought that Samsara is a place and thought that it was selfish for them to be able to stop it and leave the others behind. Most believe that Samsara is a process. In this process people are being born into new lives and since it happens to everyone and everyone has the ability to escape it, it is not selfish. Being said the process of Samsara may take a long time to complete and even with no time-limit there may be some who can never actually escape this endless suffering. For a visual representation of the path of Samsara please look at the Wheel of Life.

REBIRTH (BUDDHISM)

Rebirth in Buddhism is the doctrine that the consciousness of a person (as conventionally regarded), upon the death or dissolution of the aggregates (skandhas) which make up that person, becomes one of the contributing causes for the arising of a new group of skandhas which may again be conventionally considered a person or individual. The consciousness arising in the new person is neither identical to, nor different from the old consciousness, but forms part of a causal

continuum or stream with it. The basic cause for this persistent re-arising of personality is the abiding of consciousness in avidya (ignorance); when ignorance is uprooted, rebirth ceases.

Although the cessation of a life is not in itself a sufficient condition for the inception of a new life (since arhats, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas pass away without rebirth), the supporting conditions for a new birth are almost always present. From an external perspective, each life appears as a link in a beginningless sequence of lives, varying in length and in quality.

In traditional Buddhist cosmology, these lives can be in any of a large number of states of being, including those of humans, any kind of animal, and several types of supernatural being (see Six realms). The type of rebirth that arises at the end of one life is conditioned by the karmas (actions of body, speech and mind) of the previous life; good karmas will yield a happier rebirth, bad karmas will produce one which is more unhappy.

In the traditional Buddhist languages of Sanskrit and Pâli, there is no word corresponding exactly to the English "rebirth". A rebirth, that is, the state one is born into, is referred to as jâti, i.e. simply "birth", also referring to the process of being born or coming into the world in any way. The entire process of change from one life to the next is called punarbhava (Sanskrit) or punabbhava (Pâli), literally "becoming again"; it is also known simply as bhava, i.e. "becoming". The process seen from a universal perspective, encompassing all living beings, is called samsara.

From an interior perspective, a person who remembers or imagines a past life is likely to think of it as representing a continuity of existence between lifespans, i.e., that the same person (however defined) was formerly one person (with a certain name and body) and is now a different person (with another name and body). This perspective is objectionable from the point of view of Buddhist philosophy on two counts. First, because it seems to postulate an enduring, self-existing entity that exists separate from the elements of mind and body, contrary to the Buddhist philosophical position of anâtman. Second, because it overlooks the characterisation of this process as one of constant change, both within and between lives, in which the newly-arising life is conditioned by but in no respect identical to the predecedent life.

Nonetheless, the Buddha is represented using language reflecting the interior perspective in stories about his past lives in both jâtakas and sûtras. For instance, "At that time I was the Brahmin, the Great

Steward..." (Mahâgovinda-sutta, DN.19) or "Six times, Ânanda, I recall discarding the body in this place, and at the seventh time I discarded it as a wheel-turning monarch..." (Mahâsudassana-sutta, DN.17). This can be regarded as a concession to the needs of conventional speech.

REBIRTH AS CYCLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Another view of rebirth describes the cycle of death and rebirth in the context of consciousness rather than the birth and death of the body. In this view, remaining impure aggregates, skandhas, reform consciousness into a new form.

Buddhist meditation teachers, suggest that through careful observation of the mind, it is possible to see consciousness as being a sequence of conscious moments rather than a continuum of awareness. Each moment is an experience of an individual mind-state: a thought, a memory, a feeling, a perception. A mind-state arises, exists and, being impermanent, ceases following which the next mind-state arises. Thus, the consciousness of a sentient being can be seen as a continuous series of birth and death of these mind-states. In this context rebirth is simply the persistence of this process. Clearly this explanation of rebirth is wholly divorced from rebirth which may follow bodily death and it is possible for a Buddhist to believe in either, both or neither definition.

The explanation of rebirth as a cycle of consciousness is consistent with other core Buddhist beliefs, such as anicca (impermanence), dukkha (unsatisfactoriness) and anatta (non-self). Furthermore, it is possible to observe a karmic link between these mind-states.

In the practice of Vipassana meditation, the meditator uses "bare attention" to observe the endless round of mind-states. This observation derives insight and understanding from seeing this cycle of birth, death and rebirth without interfering, owning or judging the individual states of mind that arise and pass away. This understanding enables them to limit the power of desire, which according to the second noble truth of Buddhism is the cause of Dukkha (suffering, unsatisfactoriness) thus making possible the realisation of Nibbana. So it can be concluded that the understanding of rebirth in the context of the cycle of consciousness is an invaluable and practical component of the fundamental aim of Buddhism.

REBIRTH AS BUDDHIST REINCARNATION

Within Buddhism, the term rebirth or re-becoming (Sanskrit: *punarbhava*; Pali: *punabbhava*) is preferred to "reincarnation", as the

latter is taken to imply there is a fixed entity that is reborn. However, this still leaves the question as to what exactly the process of rebirth entails.

The lack of a fixed self does not mean lack of continuity. One of the metaphors used to illustrate this is that of fire. For example, a flame is transferred from one candle to another, or a fire spreads from one field to another. In the same way that it depends on the original fire, there is a conditioned relationship between one life and the next; they are not identical but neither are they completely distinct. The early Buddhist texts make it clear that there is no permanent consciousness that moves from life to life.

Early Buddhists had to deal with the problems of establishing the nature of the causal link between two lives, especially the crucial one of how one being could receive the fruits of the actions of a previous being, now dead, and how *saCskâras*, or volitional tendencies to act and think in particular ways can be transferred from one being to another.

The Puggalavâda school (now extinct) believed in a personal entity (puggala) separate from the five skandhas that provided a link of personal continuity that allows for karma to act on an individual over time. The medieval Pali scholar Buddhaghosa posited a 'rebirth-linking consciousness' (*patisandhi*), which connected the arising of a new life with the moment of death, but how one life came to be associated with another was still not made clear. Some schools were led to the conclusion that karma continued to exist in some sense and adhere to a particular person until it had worked out its consequences. Another school, the Sautrantika, made use of a more poetic model to account for the process of karmic continuity. For them, each act 'perfumed' the individual and led to the planting of a 'seed' that would later germinate as a good or bad karmic result.

While all Buddhist traditions seem to accept some notion of rebirth, there is no unified view about precisely how events unfold after the moment of death. Theravada Buddhism generally asserts that rebirth is immediate. The Tibetan schools, on the other hand, hold to the notion of a bardo (intermediate state) which can last up to forty-nine days, and this has led to the development of a unique 'science' of death and rebirth, a good deal of which is set down in what is popularly known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Also, Rick Strassman's book "The Spirit Molecule" touches on the association between the intermediate state and a possible scientific explanation.

While Theravada Buddhism generally denies there is an intermediate state, some early Buddhist texts seem to support it. One school that adopted this view was the Sarvâstivâda, who believed that between death and rebirth there is a sort of limbo in which beings do not yet reap the consequences of their previous actions but in which they may still influence their rebirth. The death process and this intermediate state were believed to offer a uniquely favourable opportunity for spiritual awakening.

There are many references to rebirth in the early Buddhist scriptures. These are some of the more important: Mahakammavibhanga Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 136); Upali Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 56); Kukkuravatika Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 57); Moliyasivaka Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 36.21); Sankha Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 42.8).

REBIRTH IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER RELIGIONS AND OTHER BUDDHIST BELIEFS

In the religions of Middle Eastern origin, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, life and death are believed to be linear: a being is born (usually understood as a new creation), lives, and then dies, at which point their soul or other part that survives death, passes to a domain that is inaccessible to living beings and remains there indefinitely, or until the end of the world. (Note that reincarnation, in the limited form of gilgul neshamot plays a role in some forms of Judaism. An even more restricted belief in reincarnation (tanasukh) is found in the Druze religion which is derived from Islam.)

The Buddha lived at a time of great philosophical creativity in India, and many different concepts of the nature of life and death that were proposed at that time. Some thinkers were materialists, believing that there was no existent consequent upon the end of a life, and that there was an âtman (self) which was annihilated upon death. Others believed in a form of cyclic existence, where a being is born, lives, dies and then is re-born, but in the context of a type of determinism or fatalism, in which karma played no role. Others were “eternalists”, postulating an eternally existent âtman, comparable to the Western concept of the soul: when a being (or his body) dies, the âtman survives death and is re-embodied (reincarnates) as another living being, based on its karmic inheritance. This last belief is the one that has come to be dominant (with certain modifications) in modern Hinduism.

The Buddha taught a concept of rebirth that was distinct from that of any Indian teacher contemporary with him. This concept was

consistent with the common notion of a sequence of related lives stretching over a very long time, but was constrained by two core Buddhist concepts: anattâ, that there is no irreducible âtman or "self" tying these lives together; and anicca, that all compounded things are subject to dissolution, including all the components of the human person and personality. The Buddha's detailed conception of the connections between action (karma), rebirth, and their ultimate causes is set out in the twelve links of dependent origination.

DHARMA (BUDDHISM)

Dharma in Buddhism has two primary meanings:

- the teachings of the Buddha which lead to enlightenment
- the constituent factors of the experienced world

In East Asia, the character for Dharma is Õl, pronounced fÎ in Mandarin and hô in Japanese. The Tibetan translation of this term is chos (Tibetan: F|f; Lhasa dialect IPA: [tUÿ"]). In Mongolian dharma is translated as nom, which is noteworthy since it ultimately derives from the Greek word ïïìïò (nomos) (law).

BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

What is called Buddhism in the west has been referred to in India (the teachings' place of origin) and the east generally for many centuries as Buddha-dharma. This term has no sectarian connotations but simply means "Path of Awakening" and thus conforms to a universal understanding of dharma.

- "Dharma" usually refers inclusively not just to the sayings of the Buddha but 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. The 84,000 different teachings (the Kangyur/bka.'gyur) that the Buddha gave to various types of people based on their needs. The teachings are expedient means of raising doubt in the hearer's own cherished beliefs and view of life; when doubt has opened the door to the truth, the teaching can be put aside.
- Alternately, "dharma" may be seen as an ultimate and transcendent truth which is utterly beyond worldly things, somewhat like the Christian logos, seeing the dharma as referring to the "truth" or ultimate reality or "the way things are".

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).

Buddha's Dharma Body

The qualities of the Dharma (Law, truth) is the same as the qualities of the Buddha and forms his "truth body" or "Dhamma Kaya": In the Samyutta Nikaya, Vakkali Sutta, Buddha said to his disciple Vakkali that,

"Yo kho Vakkali dhammaC passati so maC passati"

O Vakkali, whoever sees the Dhamma, sees me [the Buddha]

Another reference from the Agganna Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, says to his disciple Vasettha:

"Tathâgatassa h'etam Vasettha adivacanam Dhammakayo iti pi...":

O Vasettha! The Word of Dhammakaya is indeed the name of the Tathagata

Qualities of Buddha Dharma

The Teaching of the Buddha also has six supreme qualities:

1. Svâkkhâto (Sanskrit: Svâkhyâta "well proclaimed"). The Dhamma 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 – Sanskrit úîla – moral principles), excellent in the middle (samâdhi – concentration) and excellent in the end (paññâ—Sanskrit prajñâ... Wisdom).
2. Sanditthiko (Sanskrit: SâCd[cmika "able to be examined"). The Dhamma can be tested by practice and therefore he who follows it will see the result by himself through his own experience.
3. Akâliko (Sanskrit: Akâlika "immediate"). The Dhamma 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 (Sanskrit: Ehipaœyika "which you can come and see"—from the phrase ehi, paœya "come, see!"). The Dhamma welcomes all beings to put it to the test and come see for themselves.
5. Opanayiko (Sanskrit: AvapraGayika "leading one close to"). The Dhamma is capable of being entered upon and therefore it is worthy to be followed as a part of one's life.
6. Paccattac veditabbo viññûhi (Sanskrit: Pratyâtmac veditavyo vijñai). "To be personally known by the wise"). The Dhamma

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 Dhamma. 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 Dhamma 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 Dhamma is the only way to attain the final deliverance of Nibbâna.

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

Dharmas in Buddhist Phenomenology

Other uses include dharma, normally spelled in transliteration with a small "d" (this differentiation is impossible in the South Asian scripts used to write Sanskrit), 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 (Pali: Dukkha)—Suffering, 2. Anitya (Pali: Anicca)—Change/Impermanence, 3. Anâtman (Pali: Anatta)—Non-self. At the heart of Buddhism, is the denial of a "self" or "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):

> sûnyesu sarvadharmesu kim anantam kim antavat
> kim anantam antavac ca nânantam nântavac ca kim
> kim tad eva kim anyat kim úâúvatam kim asâsvatam
> aúâúvatam úâúvatam ca kim vâ nobhayam apyata
> sarvopalambhapacœamah prapañcopacœamah sivah
> na kva cit kasyacit kacœcid dharmo buddhena desitah
> 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. —Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ, Nirvanaparîkcâ, 25:22-24

Meanings of "Dharma"

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. In major sutras (for example, the Mahasatipatthana sutra), the *dharma/citta* 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).

According to S.N. Goenka, teacher of Vipassana Meditation, the original meaning of dhamma is *dhareti ti dhamma*, or "that which is contained".

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".

PRATITYA-SAMUTPADA

The doctrine of Pratîtyasamutpâda Dependent Arising is an important part of Buddhist metaphysics. Common to all schools of

Buddhism, it states that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. It is variously rendered into English as "dependent origination", "conditioned genesis", "dependent co-arising", "interdependent arising", etc.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

The enlightenment (Bodhi) of the Buddha Gautama was simultaneously his liberation from suffering (dukkha) and his insight into the nature of the universe – particularly the nature of the lives of 'sentient beings' (principally humans and animals). What the Buddha awakened *to* (Bodhi means "to awaken") was the truth of dependent origination.

This is the understanding that any phenomenon 'exists' only because of the 'existence' of other phenomena in an incredibly complex web of cause and effect covering time past, time present and time future. This concept of a web is symbolised by Indra's net, a multi-dimensional spider's web on which lies an infinite amount of dew drops or jewels, and in these are reflected the reflections of all the other drops of dew *ad infinitum*.

Stated in another way, everything depends on everything else. For example, a human being's existence in any given moment is dependent on the condition of everything else in the world (and indeed the universe) at that moment but, conversely, the condition of everything in the world in that moment depend in an equally significant way on the character and condition of that human being. Everything in the universe is interconnected through the web of cause and effect so that the whole and the parts are mutually interdependent. The character and condition of entities at any given time are intimately connected with the character and condition of all other entities that superficially may appear to be unconnected or unrelated.

Because all things are thus conditioned and transient (anicca), they have no real independent identity (anatta) so do not truly 'exist', though to ordinary minds this appears to be the case. All phenomena are therefore fundamentally insubstantial and 'empty' (sunya).

Wise human beings, who 'see things as they are' (yatha-bhuta-ñana-dassana), renounce attachment and clinging, transform the energy of desire into awareness and understanding, and eventually transcend the conditioned realm of form becoming Buddhas or Arhats.

GENERAL FORMULATION

A general formulation of this concept goes:
With this as condition,
That arises.
With this NOT as condition,
That does NOT arise.

An example to illustrate:

You go on summer holiday to a hot climate, such as Arizona, Spain or Australia. It's a hot clear day and you're sunbathing by the hotel pool with the sun beating down on you. You begin to feel hot, sweaty, uncomfortable, and soon feel thirsty. You get a drink to quench your thirst, and think "It's too hot to sit by the pool today, I'm going back to my hotel room where it's cooler, to read for a while".

With "hot summer sun" as condition,
Sweat, thirst and discomfort arise.
With "cool hotel room" (or "NOT hot summer sun") as condition,
Sweat, thirst and discomfort do NOT arise.

This draws attention to the constant flux of "Coming to be, and Ceasing to be" that is happening all the time. All phenomena are subject to this unending interaction. And since all phenomena are dependent on other phenomena, they are all transient and impermanent.

APPLICATIONS

The general formulation has two very well-known applications.

Four Noble Truths

The first application is to suffering, and is known as the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha*: There is suffering. Suffering is an intrinsic part of life also experienced as dissatisfaction, discontent, unhappiness, impermanence.
2. *Samudaya*: There is a cause of suffering, which is attachment or desire (*tanha*).
3. *Nirodha*: There is a way out of suffering, which is to eliminate attachment and desire.
4. *Magga*: The path that leads out of suffering is called the Noble Eightfold Path.

Twelve Nidanas

The other application is to the rebirth process and is known as the Twelve Nidanas or the Twelve Links of Conditioned Existence. In this application of pratitya-samutpada, each link is conditioned by the preceding one, and itself conditions the succeeding one. These cover three lives:

Former Life

- ignorance
- activities which produce karma

Current Life

- consciousness
- name and form (personality or identity)
- the twelve domains (5 physical senses + the mind + forms, sounds,..., thoughts)
- contact (between objects and the senses)
- sensation (registering the contact)
- desire (for continued contact)
- attachment

Future Life

- becoming (conception of a new life)
- birth
- old age and death.

With respect to the destinies of human beings and animals, dependent origination has a more specific meaning as it describes the process by which such sentient beings incarnate into any given realm and pursue their various worldly projects and activities with all the concomitant suffering involved. Among these sufferings are ageing and death. Ageing and death are experienced by us because birth and youth have been experienced. Without birth there is no death. One conditions the other in a mutually dependent relationship. Our becoming in the world, the process of what we call 'life', is conditioned by the attachment and clinging to certain ideas and projects such as having a family or making money. This attachment and clinging in turn cannot exist without craving as its condition. The Buddha understood that craving comes into being because there is sensation in the body which

we experience as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. When we crave certain things such as alcohol, sex or sweet foods it is the sensation induced by contact with the desired object that we crave rather than the object itself. Sensation is caused by contact with such objects of the senses. The contact or impression made upon the senses (manifesting as sensation) is itself dependent upon the six sense organs which themselves are dependent upon a psycho-physical entity such that a human being is. The whole process is summarised by the Buddha as follows:

English Terms	*Sanskrit Terms*
With Ignorance as condition, Mental Formations arise	With Avidyâ as condition, SaCskâra arises
With Mental Formations as condition, Consciousness arises	With SaCskâra as condition, Vijñâna arises
With Consciousness as condition, Name and Form arise	With Vijñâna as condition, Nâmarûpa arises
With Name and Form as condition, Sense Gates arise	With Nâmarûpa as condition, baâyatana arises
With Sense Gates as condition, Contact arises	With baâyatana as condition, Sparœa arises
With Contact as condition, Feeling arises	With Sparœa as condition, Vedanâ arises
With Feeling as condition, Craving arises	With Vedanâ as condition, T[cGâ arises
With Craving as condition, Clinging arises	With T[cGâ as condition, Upâdâna arises
With Clinging as condition, Becoming arises	With Upâdâna as condition, Bhava arises
With Becoming as a condition, Birth arises	With Bhava as condition, Jâti arises
With Birth as condition, Aging and Dying arise	With Jâti as condition, JarâmaraGa arises

The thrust of the formula is such that when certain conditions are present, they give rise to subsequent conditions, which in turn give rise to other conditions and the cyclical nature of life in Samsara can be seen. This is graphically illustrated in the Bhavacakra (Wheel of life).

There appears to be widespread misunderstanding of the formula in relation to time scales. Many references made to Pratîtyasamutpâda are expressed over lifetimes. While this is true in the wider sense, more practically, this is to be seen as a daily cycle occurring from moment-to-moment throughout each day.

It is necessary to refer to the above in order to fully understand and make use of the concept of pratitya-samutpada.

For example, in the case of avidyâ, the first condition, it is necessary to refer to the Three Signs of Being for a fuller explanation and a

better understanding of its fit and function within pratitya-samutpada. It is also necessary to understand the Three Fires and how they fit into the scheme. A quick glance at the Bhavacakra will show that the Three Fires sit at the very center of the schemata, and drive the whole edifice. To understand this, it is necessary to study different sorts of conditions, because only one of them is called "causal condition." For example, ignorance can determine activities as an "object condition" if one decides to reduce ignorance. Because in this life one has been ignorant and acted in such a way as to produce karma, the cycle continues.

Nibbana (Skt Nirvana) is often conceived of as stopping this cycle. By removing the causes for craving, craving ceases. So, with the ceasing of birth, death ceases. With the ceasing of becoming, birth ceases, and so on, until with the ceasing of ignorance no karma is produced, and the whole process of death and rebirth ceases. In fact the opportunity for change comes between the stages of sensation and desire, since as we saw above it is craving that drives the whole process. If one can simply experience sensations without desiring, then craving will not arise, and one can begin to be free from the cycle of birth and death.

INTERDEPENDENT ORIGINATION IN THE HEART SUTRA

The Heart Sutra (Prajñâpâramitâ Hridaya Sûtra) asserts that there is no karma, no law of cause and effect. The assertion was made by bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in a teaching for the great arhat Shariputra, given before a multitude of beings, on the request of Buddha Shakyamuni. After the teaching, Buddha Shakyamuni greatly praised the wisdom of Avalokiteshvara's words and the beings present rejoiced.

- This statement could be understood literally (as e.g. in Dzogchen), or
- It could be interpreted as seen from point of view of the philosophy of emptiness. For example, later teachers like Nagarjuna (see also below) and Tsongkhapa even explained that emptiness and dependent origination are like two sides of the same coin. The point is that all phenomena are dependent originations, which means that they do not exist in and out of themselves alone, are thus not self-defined, and empty (of self).

MADHYAMAKA AND PRATITYA-SAMUTPADA

Though the formulations above appear might seem to imply that pratitya-samutpada is a straightforward causal model, in the hands of

the Madhyamaka school, Pratitya-samutpada is used to demonstrate the very lack of inherent causality, in a manner that appears somewhat similar to the ideas of David Hume.

The conclusion of the Mâdhyamikas is that causation, like being, must be regarded as a merely conventional truth, and that to take it as *really* (or essentially) existing would be both a logical error and a perceptual one, arising from ignorance and a lack of spiritual insight.

According to the analysis of Nâgârjuna, the most prominent Mâdhyamika, true causality depends upon the intrinsic existence of the elements of the causal process (causes and effects), which would violate the principle of anatta, but pratîtya-samutpâda does not imply that the apparent participants in arising are essentially real.

Because of the interdependence of causes and effects (i.e. causes depend on their effects in order to be causes, and effects likewise depend on their causes in order to be effects), it is quite meaningless to talk about them as existing separately. However, the strict *identity* of cause and effect is also refuted, since if the effect *were* the cause, the process of origination could not have occurred. Thus, both monistic and a dualistic accounts of causation are rejected.

Therefore Nâgârjuna explains that the anatta (or emptiness) of causality is demonstrated by the interdependence of cause and effect, and likewise that the interdependence (pratîtya-samutpâda) of causality itself is demonstrated by its anatta.

In his *Entry to the middle way*, Candrakirti asserts, "If a cause produces its requisite effect, then, on that very account, it is a cause. If no effect is produced, then, in the absence of that, the cause does not exist."

PRATITYA-SAMUTPADA IN DZOGCHEN

In Dzogchen tradition the interdependent origination is considered illusory: '(One says), "all these (configurations of events and meanings) come about and disappear according to dependent origination." But, like a burnt seed, since a non-existent (result) does not come about from a non-existent (cause), cause and effect do not exist.

What appears as a world of apparently external phenomena, is the play of energy of sentient beings. There is nothing external or separate from the individual. Everything that manifests in the individual's field of experience is a continuum. This is the Great Perfection that is discovered in the Dzogchen practice.

Being obsessed with entities, one's experiencing itself [sems, citta], which discriminates each cause and effect, appears as if it were cause and condition.' (from byang chub sems bsgom pa by Mañjusrîmitra. Primordial experience. An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation, pp. 60, 61)

THE REVERSIBILITY OF DEPENDENT ARISING

Pratitya-samutpada is most commonly used to explain how suffering arises depending on certain conditions, the implication being that if one or more of the conditions are removed (if the "chain" is broken), suffering will cease.

There is also a text, the Upanisa Sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya, in which a discussion of the conditions not for suffering but for enlightenment are given. This is sometimes glossed as "transcendental" dependent arising. The chain in this case is:

1. suffering (*dukkha*)
2. faith (*saddhâ*)
3. joy (*pâmojja*, *pâmujja*)
4. rapture (*pîti*)
5. tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
6. happiness (*sukha*)
7. concentration (*samâdhi*)
8. knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathâbhûta-ñâna-dassana*)
9. disenchantment with worldly life (*nibbidâ*)
10. dispassion (*virâga*)
11. freedom, release, emancipation, deliverance (*vimutti*)
12. knowledge of destruction of the cankers (*âsava-khaye-ñâna*)

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION AND DEEP ECOLOGY

The awareness that all beings are connected through mutual interdependence is fundamental to ecology, especially deep ecology. The great challenge that now faces humankind to avert global catastrophe has arisen because of ignorance of the interconnectedness of all life – that harm caused abroad affects our own well-being at home. Deep ecology has been very influenced by Buddhist thought and the profound implications that the Buddha's teaching has for changing our relationship to the natural world.

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26

JAINISM, SHINTOISM: PHILOSOPHY, COSMOLOGY AND OTHER DIMENSIONS

JAINISM

Jainism, traditionally known as Jain Dharma, is one of the oldest religions in the world. It is a religion and philosophy originating in ancient India. The Jains follow the teachings of the 24 Jinas (conquerors) who are also known as Tirthankars. The 24th Tirthankar, Lord Mahavira lived in ca. 6th century BC. One of the main characteristics of Jain belief is the emphasis on the immediate consequences of one's behaviour.

Jains are a small but influential religious minority with at least 4.2 million practitioners in modern India and more in growing immigrant communities in the United States, Western Europe, the Far East and elsewhere. Jains continue to sustain the ancient Shraman or ascetic tradition.

Jains have significantly influenced the religious, ethical, political and economic spheres in India for over two millennia. Jainism stresses spiritual independence and equality of all life with particular emphasis on non-violence. Self-control is vital for attaining omniscience (kevala jnana) and eventually *moksha*, or realisation of the soul's true nature.

Jains have an ancient tradition of scholarship. The Jain community is the most literate religious community in India, and the Jain libraries are India's oldest.

HISTORY

Sources of History

Kalinga (Modern Orissa) was home to many Jains in the past. Rushabh, the first Tirthankar, was revered and worshipped in the ancient city Pithunda, which was destroyed by Mahapadma Nanda

when he conquered Kalinga and brought the statue of Rushabhnath to his capital in Magadh. Rushabhnath is revered as the 'Kalinga Jina'. Ashoka's invasion and his Buddhist policy also subjugated Jains greatly in Kalinga. However, in the 1st century BC Emperor Kharvela conquered Magadha and brought Rushabhnath's statue back and installed it in Udaygiri, near his capital, Shishupalgarh. The Khandagiri and Udaygiri caves near Bhubaneshwar are the only stone monuments dedicated to Jainism surviving in Orissa. Many of the earlier buildings were made of wood, and were destroyed.

Deciphering of the Brahmi script, India's oldest script, believed to have been created by the first Tirthankara Rushabhnath, by James Prinsep in 1788 enabled the reading of ancient inscriptions in India and established the antiquity of Jainism. Discovery of Jain manuscripts, a process that continues today, has added significantly to retracing the history of Jainism. Jain archaeological findings are often from Maurya, Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, Kalachuries, Rashtrakut, Chalukya, Chandel and Rajput and later periods. Several western and Indian scholars have contributed to the reconstruction of Jain history. They include western historians like Bühler, Jacobi, and Indian scholars like Iravatham Mahadevan, who has worked on Tamil Brahmi inscriptions.

Geographical Spread and Influence

Jainism has been a major cultural, philosophical, social and political force since the dawn of civilisation in Asia, and its ancient influence has been traced beyond the borders of modern India into the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions. At various times, Jainism was found all over South Asia including Sri Lanka and what are now Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

The pervasive influence of Jain culture and philosophy in ancient Bihar possibly gave rise to Buddhism. The Buddhists have always maintained that during the time of Buddha and Mahavira, Jainism was already an ancient and deeply entrenched faith and culture in the region. For a discussion about the connections between Buddhism and Jainism see Buddhism and Jainism. Over several thousand years, Jain influence on Hindu philosophy and religion has been considerable, while Hindu influence on Jain rituals may be observed in certain Jain sects.

For instance, the very concept of Puja is Jain. The Vedic Religion prescribed yajnas and havanas for pleasing god. Puja is a specifically Jain concept, arising from the Tamil words, "pu" (flower) and "ja"

(offering). Please refer to "Jaya Gommatesh" for more details on this topic. {Patil, Bal. "Jaya Gommatesha". Foreword by Prof. Dr. Colette Caillat. Mumbai: Hindi Granth Karyalay, 2006}

Jainism is rapidly expanding in the West as non-Indians follow this religion. With 10 to 12 million followers, Jainism is among the smallest of the major world religions, but in India its influence is much more than these numbers would suggest. Jains live throughout India; Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat have the largest Jain population among Indian states. Karnataka and Bundelkhand Madhya Pradesh have relatively large Jain populations. There is a large following in Punjab, especially in Ludhiana and Patiala, and there were many Jains in Lahore (Punjab's historic capital) and other cities before the Partition of 1947, after which many fled to India. There are many Jain communities in different parts of India and around the world. They may speak local languages or follow different rituals but essentially follow the same principles.

Outside India, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) have large Jain communities today. Jainism is presently a strong faith in the United States and several Jain temples have been built there. American Jainism accommodates all the sects. Smaller Jain communities exist in Nepal, South Africa, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Fiji, and Suriname. In Belgium the very successful Indian diamond community, almost all of which are Jain are also establishing a temple to strengthen Jain values in and across Western Europe.

DIGAMBARA AND SVETAMBARA TRADITIONS

It is generally believed that the Jain sangha divided into two major sects, Digambar and Svetambar, about 200 years after Mahâvîra's nirvana. Some historians believe there was no clear division until the 5th century. The best available information indicates that the chief Jain monk, Acharya Bhadrabahu, foresaw famine and led about 12,000 Digambar followers to southern India. Twelve years later, they returned to find the Shvetambar sect and in 453, the Valabhi council edited and compiled traditional Shvetambar scriptures. Differences between the two sects are minor and relatively obscure.

In Sanskrit, *ambar* refers to a covering like a garment. 'Dig', an older form of 'disha', refers to the cardinal directions. Digambar therefore means those whose garment is only the four directions, or "sky-clad". 'Svet' means white and Svetambaras are those who wear white coverings.

- Digambar Jain monks do not wear clothes because they believe clothes are like other possessions, increasing dependency and desire for material things, and desire for anything ultimately leads to sorrow.

Svetambar Jain monks wear white seamless clothes for practical reasons and believe there is nothing in Jain scripture that condemns wearing clothes. Sadhvis (nuns) of both sects wear white. These differing views arise from different interpretations of the same holy books. There are minor differences in the enumeration and validity of each sect's literature.

- Digambars believe that women cannot attain moksha in the same birth, while Svetambars believe that women may attain liberation and that Mallinath, a Tirthankar, was female.
- Digambars believe that Mahavir was not married, whereas Shvetambars believe the princely Mahavir was married and had a daughter.
- They also differ on the origin of Mata Trishala, Mahavira's mother.
- In the first Jain prayer, the Namokara Mantra. Sthanakavasis and Digambars believe that only the first five lines are formally part of the Namokara Mantra, whereas Svetambaras believe all nine form the mantra. Other differences are minor and not based on major points of doctrine.

Excavations at Mathura revealed many Jain statues from the Kushana period. Tirthankaras, represented without clothes and monks, with cloth wrapped around the left arm, are identified as 'ardhaphalaka' and mentioned in some texts. The Yapaniya sect, believed to have originated from the Ardhaphalaka, follows Digambara nudity, along with several Shvetambara beliefs.

Svetambaras are further divided into sub-sects, such as Sthanakavasi, Terapanthi and Deravasi. Some are *murtipujak* (revering statues) while non-murtipujak Jains refuse statues or images. Most simply call themselves Jains and follow general traditions rather than specific sectarian practices. In 1974, a committee with representatives from every sect compiled a new text called the Samana Suttam.

BELIEFS

Tirthankaras

Jainism doesn't have a single founder and the truth is said to have been revealed at different times by a *Tirthankara* (a teacher who 'makes

a ford' i.e., shows the way). A *tirthankar* is considered omniscient, a role model, not a god. There have been 24 tirthankars in what the Jains call the 'present age'. Historical records about only the last two Tirthankars remain: Parshvanath and Mahavir (the 23rd and 24th).

The 24 tirthankaras in chronological order are—Adinath (or Rishabhnath), Ajitanath, Sambhavanath, Abhinandananath, Sumatinath, Padmaprabh, Suparshvanath, Chandraprabhu, Pushpadantanath (or Suvidhinath), Sheetalanath, Shreyansanath, Vasupujya, Vimalanath, Anantanath, Dharmanath, Shantinath, Kunthunath, Aranath, Mallinath, Munisuvratanath, Naminath, Neminath, Parshvanath and Mahavir (or Vardhamana).

Beliefs

Jains believe that every human is responsible for his/her actions and all living beings have an eternal soul, jîva. Jains believe all souls are equal because they all possess the potential of being liberated and attaining Moksha. Tirthankaras are role models only because they have attained Moksha. Jains insist that we live, think and act respectfully and honor the spiritual nature of all life. Jains view God as the unchanging traits of the pure soul of each living being, chiefly described as Infinite Knowledge, Perception, Consciousness, and Happiness (Ananta Jnâna, Ananta Darshana, Ananta Câritra, and Ananta Sukha). Jains do not believe in an omnipotent supreme being, creator or manager (*kartâ*), but rather in an eternal universe governed by natural laws.

Jains hold that this temporal world is full of miseries and sorrow and hence in order to attain lasting bliss one must transcend the cycle of transmigration. Otherwise, one will remain eternally caught up in the never-ending cycle of transmigration. The only way to break out of this cycle is to practise detachment through rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct.

Jain scriptures were written over a long period of time, but the most cited is the *Tattvartha Sutra*, or Book of Reality written by the monk-scholar, Umasvati (aka Umâsvâmi) almost 1800 years ago. The primary figures are Tirthankaras. There are two main sects called Digambar and Svetambar, and both believe in ahimsa (or *ahinsâ*), asceticism, karma, sanskâr, and jiva.

Differences between the two main sects are mainly conduct related. Doctrinally, Jainism is uniform with great emphasis placed on rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct. {"samya-gdarœanajñânacâritrâGimokcamârga", Tattvârthasûtra, 1.1}

Compassion for all life, human and non-human, is central to Jainism. Human life is valued as a unique, rare opportunity to reach enlightenment. To kill any person, no matter what crime they committed, is considered unimaginably abhorrent. It is the only religion that requires monks and laity, from all its sects and traditions, to be vegetarian. Some Indian regions have been strongly influenced by Jains and often the majority of the local non-Jain population has also become vegetarian.

History suggests that various strains of Hinduism became vegetarian due to strong Jain influences. Jains run animal shelters all over India. For example, Delhi has a bird hospital run by Jains. Every city and town in Bundelkhand has animal shelters run by Jains where all manner of animals are sheltered, even though the shelter is generally known as a Goshala.

Jainism's stance on non-violence goes far beyond vegetarianism. Jains refuse food obtained with unnecessary cruelty. Many practice a lifestyle similar to Veganism due to the violence of modern dairy farms, and others exclude root vegetables from their diets in order to preserve the lives of the plants from which they eat. Potatoes, garlic and onions in particular are avoided by Jains. Devout Jains do not eat, drink, or travel after sunset and prefer to drink water that is first boiled and then cooled to room temperature. Many Jains do not eat green vegetables and root vegetables once a week. The particular day is determined by the lunar calendar and is Ashtami (eighth day of the lunar month) and New Moon and followed by the second Ashtami and Full Moon night.

Anekantavada, a foundation of Jain philosophy, literally means "The Multiplicity of Reality", or equivalently, "Non-one-endedness". Anekantavada consists of tools for overcoming inherent biases in any one perspective on any topic or in reality in general. Another tool is The Doctrine of Postulation, Syâdvâda. Anekantavada is defined as a multiplicity of viewpoints, for it stresses looking at things from others' perspectives.

Jains are usually very welcoming and friendly toward other faiths and often help with interfaith functions. Several non-Jain temples in India are administered by Jains. A palpable presence in Indian culture, Jains have contributed to Indian philosophy, art, architecture, science, and to Mohandas Gandhi's politics, which led to the mainly non-violent movement for Indian independence.

Creation and Cosmology

According to Jain beliefs, the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. Time is divided into Utsarpinis (Progressive Time Cycle) and Avsarpinis (Regressive Time Cycle). An Utsarpini and a Avsarpini constitute one Time Cycle (Kalchakra). Every Utsarpini and Avsarpini is divided into six unequal periods known as Aras. During the Utsarpini half cycle, humanity develops from its worst to its best: ethics, progress, happiness, strength, health, and religion each start the cycle at their worst, before eventually completing the cycle at their best and starting the process again. During the Avsarpini half-cycle, these notions deteriorate from the best to the worst. Jains believe we are currently in the fifth Ara of the Avsarpini phase, with approximately 19,000 years until the next Ara. After this Avsarpini phase, the Utsarpini phase will begin, continuing the infinite repetition of the Kalchakra.

Jains also believe that at the upswing of each time cycle, people will lose religion again. All things people want will be given by wish-granting trees (Kalpavrksa), and people will be born in sets of twins (Yugalika) with one boy and one girl who stay together all their lives. This can be seen as a symbol of an integrated human with male and female characteristics balanced.

Jain philosophy is based upon eternal, universal truths, according to its followers. During the first and last two Aras, these truths lapse among humanity and then reappear through the teachings of enlightened humans, those who have reached enlightenment or total knowledge (*Kevala Jnana*), during the third and fourth Aras. Traditionally, in our universe and in our time, Lord Rishabha is regarded as the first to realize the truth. Lord Vardhamana (Mahavira, was the last Tirthankara to attain enlightenment (599-527 BCE), who was himself preceded by twenty-three other Tirthankaras, thus making a total of twenty-four Tirthankaras.

It is important to note that the above description stands true "in our universe and in our time" for Jains believe there have been infinite sets of 24 Tirthankaras, one for each half of the time cycle, and this will continue in the future. Hence, Jainism does not trace its origins to Rishabh Deva, the first, or Mahavira, the twenty-fourth, Tirthankara.

According to Jainism, the Universe consists of Infinite amount of Jiva'(life force or souls), and the design is similar to a form of a man standing with his arms bent while resting his hands at his waist. The

narrow waist part comprises various 'Kshetras' which act as place of 'vicharan' (roaming) for humans, animals and plants. Currently we are in the 'Jambu Dweep' (dweep meaning Island) of Bharat Kshetra.

The Deva Loka (Heavens) are situated at the symbolic chest part of the Creation, where all the Devas (demi-gods) reside. Similarly beneath the waist part are the Narka Loka (Hell). There are such Seven Narka Lokas, each for a varying degree suffering a jiva has to go through to face the consequences of its papa karma (sins). From the first to the seventh Narka, the degree of suffering increases and the amount of Light reaching into it decreases (no light at all in the seventh Narka).

The sidhha kshetra or moksha is situated at the symbolic forehead of the creation, where all the jivas having attained nirvana reside in a state of complete peace and eternal happiness. Outside the symbolic figure of this creation nothing but aloka or akaasha (sky) exists.

JAIN PHILOSOPHY

Karma Theory

The Jain religion places great emphasis on Karma. Essentially, it means that all jivas reap what they sow. A happy or miserable existence is influenced by actions in previous births. These results may not occur in the same life, and what we sow is not limited to physical actions. Physical, verbal, and mental activities affect future situations. Karma has long been an essential component of Jainism, and other Indian religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. It is believed generally that an omniscient Tirthankar can foresee all things, long before science.

The backbone of the Jain philosophy, the nine Tattvas (because sometimes are added to the seven: merit (punya) and demerit (papa)) show how to attain moksha. Without knowing them, one cannot progress towards liberation. Jainism explains that Karma theory is intertwined with these nine principles. They are:

1. Jiva—Souls and living things
2. Ajiva—Non-living things
3. Asrava—Influx of karma
4. Bandha—The bondage of karma
5. Samvara—The stoppage of influx of karma
6. Nirjara—Shedding of karma
7. Moksha—Liberation or Salvation

A simple example: A man rides a wooden boat to reach the other side of the river. Now the man is Jiva, the boat is ajiva. Now the boat has a leak and water flows in. That incoming of water is Asrava and accumulating there is Bandh, Now the man tries to save the boat by blocking the hole. That blockage is Samvara and throwing the water outside is Nirjara. Now the man crosses the river and reaches his destination, Moksha.

CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

Jain monks and nuns practice strict asceticism and strive to make their current birth their last, thus ending their cycle of transmigration. The laity, who pursue less rigorous practices, strive to attain rational perception and to do as much good as possible in order to get closer to the goal of attaining freedom from the cycle of transmigration. Following strict ethics, the laity usually choose professions that revere and protect life and totally avoid violent livelihoods.

Jains practice Samayika, which is a Sanskrit word meaning *equanimity* and derived from *samaya* (the soul). The goal of Samayika is to attain equanimity. Samayika is begun by achieving a balance in time. If this current moment is defined as a moving line between the past and the future, Samayika happens by being fully aware, alert and conscious in that moving time line when one experiences Atma, one's true nature, common to all life forms. Samayika is especially significant during Paryushana, a special period during the monsoon, and is practised during the ritual known as Samvatsari Pratikramana.

Jains believe that Devas (demi-gods or celestial beings) cannot help jiva to obtain liberation, which must be achieved by individuals through their own efforts. In fact, Devas themselves cannot achieve liberation until they reincarnate as humans and undertake the difficult act of removing karma. Their efforts to attain the exalted state of Siddha, the permanent liberation of jiva from all involvement in worldly existence, must be their own.

The strict Jain ethical code for both laity and monks/nuns is:

1. Ahimsa (Non-violence)
2. Satya (truth)
3. Achaurya Or Asteya (non-stealing)
4. *Brahmacharya* (purity of mind and body)
5. Aparigraha (non-attachment to temporal possessions)

For laypersons, 'chastity' means confining sexual experiences to marriage. For monks/nuns, it means complete celibacy.

Non-violence includes the concepts of vegetarianism. Jains are expected to be non-violent in thought, word, and deed, both toward humans and toward all other living beings, including their own selves. Jain monks and nuns walk barefoot and sweep the ground in front of them to avoid killing any insects or other tiny beings. Even though all life is considered sacred by the Jains, human life is deemed the highest form of life. For this reason, it is considered vital never to harm or upset any person.

While performing holy deeds, Svetambara Jains wear cloths, muhapatti, over their mouths and noses to avoid saliva falling on texts or revered images. Some wear either the muhapatti to avoid accidentally inhaling germs. Many healthy concepts are entwined within the Jain religion. For example, Jains do not drink unboiled water because it contains billions of micro-organisms. In ancient times, a person might get ill by drinking unboiled water, which would prevent her from remaining in equanimity, as illness may precede or engender intolerance.

True spirituality, according to enlightened Jains, starts when a follower attains Samyak darshana, or rational perception. Samyak drshti souls are on the correct path to moksha, or 'striving to remain in the nature of the soul', characterised by detachment from worldly life, and being in a state of pure knowledge and bliss. Attachment to worldly life collects new karmas, and traps one in a cycle of birth, death, and suffering. The worldly life is recognised by its dualistic nature (for example, the dualities of love and hate, suffering and pleasure, etc.), for the perception of one state cannot exist without the contrasting perception of the other.

Jain Dharma shares some beliefs with Hinduism. Both revere the same Devas and Devis (heavenly beings), and the theory of Karma and reincarnation. However, the Jain version of the Ramayana and Mahabharata is different from Hindu beliefs, for example. Generally, Hindus believe that Rama was a reincarnation of God, whereas Jains believe he attained moksha (liberation) because they do not believe in God the creator. (Note: some Hindus, such as Yogis, accept many aspects of Jain Dharma.)

Along with the Five Vows, Jains avoid harboring ill will toward others and practice forgiveness. They believe that atma (soul) can

lead one to becoming Parmatma (liberated soul) and this must come from one's inner self. Jains refrain from all violence (Ahimsa) and recommend that sinful activities should be eradicated.

Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced (particularly through the guidance of Shrimad Rajchandra) by Jain tenets such as peaceful, protective living and honesty, and made them an integral part of his own philosophy. Jainism has a distinct idea underlying Tirthankar worship. The physical form is not worshipped, but the Gunas (virtues, qualities) which are praised. Tirthankars are only role-models, and sects such as the Sthanakavasi stringently reject the worship of statues.

Jain Fasting

Fasting is common among Jains and a part of Jain festivals. Most Jains fast at special times, during festivals, and on holy days. Paryushan is the most prominent festival, lasting eight days in Svetambara Jain tradition and ten days in Digambar Jain tradition during the monsoon. The monsoon is a time of fasting. However, a Jain may fast at any time, especially if he or she feels some error has been committed. Variations in fasts encourage Jains to do whatever they can to maintain self-control

Some Jains revere a special practice, where a person who is aware that he or she may die soon, and feels he has completed all his duties, ceases to eat or drink until death. This form of dying is called santhara. It is considered to be extremely spiritual and creditable. This has recently led to a controversy in India, where in Rajasthan, a lawyer petitioned the High Court of Rajasthan to declare Sallekhana illegal. Jains see Sallekhana as spiritual detachment. It is a declaration that a person has finished with living and this world and now chooses to leave.

Jain Worship and Rituals

Every day most Jains bow and say their universal prayer, the Namokara Mantra, aka the Navkar Mantra. Jains have built temples, or Basadi or Derasar, where images of Tirthankars are worshipped. Jain rituals may be elaborate because symbolic objects are offered and Tirthankaras praised in song. But some Jain sects refuse to enter temples or worship images. All Jains accept that images of Tirthankaras are merely symbolic reminders of the path that they have to take, in order to attain moksha. Jains are clear that the Jinas reside in moksha and are completely detached from the world.

Jain rituals include:

- Pancakalyanaka Pratishtha
- Pratikramana
- Samayika
- Guru-Vandana, Chaitya Vandana, and other sutras to honor ascetics.

JAIN SYMBOLISM

The holiest symbol is a simple swastika. Another important symbol incorporates a wheel on the palm of a hand, symbolising *ahimsa*.

Other major Jain symbols include:

- 24 Lanchhanas (symbols) of the Tirthankaras
- Triratna and Shrivatsa symbols
- A Tirthankar's or Chakravarti's mother dreams
- Dharmacakra and Siddha-chakra
- Eight auspicious symbols (The Asta Mangalas). Their names are (in series of pictures)
  1. Svastika—Signifies peace and well-being
  2. Shrivatsa—A mark manifested on the centre of the Jina's chest, signifying the Jina's pure soul.
  3. Nandyavartya—Large svastika with nine corners
  4. Vardha-manaka—A shallow earthen dish used for lamps. This symbol is suggestive of increase of wealth, fame and merit due to the grace of the Jina.
  5. Bhadrasana—Throne. It is considered auspicious because it is sanctified by the feet of the blessed Jina.
  6. Kalasha—Pot filled with pure water signifying wisdom and completeness.
  7. Minayugala—A fish couple. It signifies Cupid's banners coming to worship the Jina after defeating of the God of Love.
  8. Darpana—The mirror reflects one's true self because of its clarity.

JAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN CULTURE

While Jains represent less than 1 per cent of the Indian population, their contributions to culture and society in India are considerable.

Jains have wielded great influence on the culture and language of Karnataka and Southern India. Jainism has influenced Gujarat most significantly. The earliest known Gujarati text, Bharat-Bahubali Ras, was written by a Jain monk. Some of the most important people in Gujarat's Jain history were Acharya Hemacandra Suri and his pupil, the Calukya ruler Kumarapala.

Jains are both among the wealthiest of Indians and the most philanthropic. They run numerous schools, colleges and hospitals and are some of the most important patrons of the Somapuras, the traditional temple architects in Gujarat. Jains have greatly influenced Gujarati cuisine. Gujarat is predominantly vegetarian (as is Jainism; see Jain vegetarianism), and its food has a mild aroma as onions and garlic are omitted.

Jains encourage their monks to do research and obtain higher education. Jain monks and nuns, particularly in Rajasthan, have published numerous research monographs. This is unique among Indian religious groups and parallels Christian clergy. The 2001 census states that Jains are India's most literate community and that India's oldest libraries at Patan and Jaisalmer are preserved by Jain institutions.

JAIN LITERATURE

Jains have contributed to India's classical and popular literature. For example, almost all early Kannada literature and Tamil literature was authored by Jains.

- Some of the oldest known books in Hindi and Gujarati were written by Jain scholars. The first autobiography in Hindi, [Ardha-Kathanaka] was written by a Jain, Banarasidasa, an ardent follower of Acarya Kundakunda who lived in Agra.
- Several Tamil classics are written by Jains or with Jain beliefs and values as the core subject.
- Practically all the known texts in the Apabhramsha language are Jain works.

The oldest Jain literature is in Shauraseni and Ardha-Magadhi Prakrit (Agamas, Agama-Tulya, Siddhanta texts, etc). Many classical texts are in Sanskrit (Tatvartha Sutra, Puranas, Kosh, Sravakacara, mathematics, Nighantus etc). "Abhidhana Rajendra Kosha" written by Acharya Rajendrasuri, is only one available Jain encyclopedia or Jain dictionary to understand the Jain Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Ardha-Magadhi and other Jain languages, words, their use and references

with in oldest Jain literature. Later Jain literature was written in Apabhramsha (Kahas, rasas, and grammars), Hindi (Chhahadhala, Mokshamarga Prakashaka, and others), Tamil (Jivakacintamani, Kural, and others), and Kannada (Vaddaradhane and various other texts). Jain versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata are found in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha and Kannada.

JAIN MONKS (SADHU OR MUNI OR MAHARAJ)

In India there are thousands of Jain Monks, of which categories have been defined like Acharya, Upadhyaya and Muni. Trainee ascetics are known as Ailaka and Ksullaka in the Digambar tradition.

In Shwetamber Terapanth sect of Jainism there are categories: Terapanth Acharya is Acharya Shri Mahapragya Ji. Acharya disciplines the whole Sangha(sect) and he nominates the future Acharya also.

Saadhu (male monks) and Saadhvi (Female monks) Saman Ji and Samani Ji Saadu and Saadhvi: They practice. They wear white clothes. They always walk by foot or some old monks who are unable to walk can use a rickshaw which is to be again pulled by monks only. Saman (male) and Samani (female) also practice these five vows with some exceptions. They can travel by vehicles. They also do not keep money.

HOLY DAYS

- Paryushan Parva, 10/8 (Digambar/Svetambar) day fasts, and for observe, 10/8 important principles.
- Mahavir Jayanti, Lord Mahavir's birth.
- Kshamavaani, The day for asking everyone's forgiveness.

JAINISM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

South Asia has a rich history of diverse philosophies. Connections among these are discussed at:

- Relationship between Jainism and Hinduism—*To quote from the Encyclopædia Britannica Article on Hinduism, "...With Jainism which always remained an Indian religion, Hinduism has so much in common, especially in social institutions and ritual life, that nowadays Hindus tend to consider it a Hindu sect. Many Jains also are inclined to fraternisation..."* Like Hinduism, Jains have too claimed to be a part of the Sanatan Dharma ("Tollaram"), Atma Dharma and Arya Dharma.
  - Controversy—From the Encyclopædia Britannica Article on Jainism: "*...Along with Hinduism and Buddhism, it is one of the*

> *three most ancient Indian religious traditions still in existence....While often employing concepts shared with Hinduism and Buddhism, the result of a common cultural and linguistic background, the Jain tradition must be regarded as an independent phenomenon. It is an integral part of South Asian religious belief and practice, but it is not a Hindu sect or Buddhist heresy, as earlier scholars believed.*" The author Koenraad Elst in his book, *Who is a Hindu?*, summarises on the similaries between Jains and the mainstream Hindu society.

Jainism, while having no creator God, is not atheistic. The notion of god is replaced by the notion of "the own nature of things" (*vastu-svs-bhavah-dharmah*)

Jains are not a part of the Vedic Religion (Hinduism). Ancient India had two philosophical streams of thought: The Shramana philosophical schools, represented by Jainism and Buddhism; and the Brahmana/Vedic/Puranic schools represented by Vedanta, Vaishnava and other movements. Both streams are subset of the Dharmic family of faith and have existed side by side for many thousands of years, influencing each other.

The Hindu scholar, Lokmanya Tilak credited Jainism with influencing Hinduism and thus leading to the cessation of animal sacrifice in Vedic rituals. Bal Gangadhar Tilak has described Jainism as the originator of *Ahimsa* and wrote in a letter printed in *Bombay Samachar*, Mumbai:10 Dec, 1904: "In ancient times, innumerable animals were butchered in sacrifices. Evidence in support of this is found in various poetic compositions such as the *Meghaduta*. But the credit for the disappearance of this terrible massacre from the Brahminical religion goes to Jainism."

Even though Jainism is of Indian origin, it shared some principles with the Hellenic tradition, specially with Stoic and Pythagorean philosophies of Europe.

LANGUAGES USED IN JAIN LITERATURE

Jain literature exists in Prakrit, Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, Rajasthani, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Kutchi, Kannada, Tulu, Telugu, Tamil, Dhundhari (Old Marwari), English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Russian.

CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF JAINISM IN INDIA

In 2005, the Supreme Court of India declined to issue a writ of Mandamus towards granting Jains the status of a religious minority

throughout India. The Court noted that Jains have been declared a minority in 5 states already, and left it to the rest of the States to decide on the minority status of Jain religion.

In 2006, the Supreme Court opined that *"Jain Religion is indisputably not a part of the Hindu Religion"*. (para 25, Committee of Management Kanya Junior High School Bal Vidya Mandir, Etah, U.P. v. Sachiv, U.P. Basic Shiksha Parishad, Allahabad, U.P. and Ors., Per Dalveer Bhandari J., Civil Appeal No. 9595 of 2003, decided On: 21.08.2006, Supreme Court of India).

JAIN FESTIVALS

I. MAHAVIR JAYANTI

In *Jainism*, Mahavir Jayanti is the most important religious holiday. It celebrates of the birth of Mahavira, the last Tirthankara. He was born on the 13th day of the rising moon of Chaitra, in either 599 BC or 615 BC (depending on religious tradition). The holiday occurs in late March or early April on the Gregorian calendar. On Mahavir Jayanti, Jain temples are decorated with flags. In the morning the idol of Mahavira is given a ceremonial bath called the 'abhishek'. It is then placed in a cradle and carried in a procession around the neighbourhood. The devotees will make offerings of milk, rice, fruit, incense, lamps and water to the tirthankar. Some sections of the community even participate in a grand procession. Lectures are held to preach the path of virtue. People meditate and offer prayers. Donations are collected to save the cows from slaughter. Pilgrims from all parts of the country visit the ancient Jain Temples at Girnar and Palitana in Gujarat on this day.

II. KSHAMAVAANI

Kshamavaani or "Forgiveness Day" is a day of forgiving and seeking forgiveness for the followers of Jainism. It is celebrated on the 14th day of the holy month of *Bhadrapad*. "Micchami Dukadam" is the common phrase when asking for forgiveness.

On this sacred day, every member of the Jain community approaches everyone, irrespective of religion, and begs for forgiveness for all their faults or mistakes, committed either knowingly or unknowingly. Thus, relieved of the heavy burden hanging over their head of the sins of yesteryears, they start life afresh, living in peaceful co-existence with others. Indeed, this day is not merely a traditional ritual, but a first step on their path to liberation or salvation, the final goal of every man's life, according to the teachings of Jainism.

III. MAHAMASTAKABHISHEKA

The Mahamastakabhisheka (or Mahamastak Abhishek) is an important Jain festival held once every twelve years in the town of Shravanabelagola in Karnataka state, India. The festival is held in veneration of an immense 18 meter high statue of the Bhagwan (or Saint) Gomateshwara Bahubali. The anointing last took place in February 2006, and the next ceremony will occur in 2018.

As the Mahamastakabhisheka begins, consecrated water is sprinkled onto the participants by devotees carrying 1008 specially prepared vessels. The statue is then bathed and anointed with libations such as milk, sugarcane juice, and saffron paste, and sprinkled with powders of sandalwood, turmeric, and vermilion. Offerings are made of petals, gold and silver coins, and precious stones. Most recently, the ceremony's finale has included an enormous shower of flowers from a waiting helicopter.

IV. KALI CHOUDAS

Kali means Dark (evil) and Chaudas—Fourteenth. Thus, celebrated 14th day of Ashwin, Kali Chaudas is the day allotted to the worship of Maha Kali or Shakti and is believed that on this day Kali killed the wicked Raktavija. Also referred to as Narak-Chaturdashi, Kali Chaudas is day to abolish laziness and evil which create hell in our life and shine light on life. The strength to protect others is referred as Kali, and if it's used for God's work it is called Mahakali.

Kali Chaudaus is also attached to the legend of Lord Hanuman. Hanumanji as a baby was very hungry. Whilst lying down he saw the sun in the sky and thought it was a fruit and went to pick it. He flew into the sky and put the whole sun in his mouth causing darkness throughout the entire universe. Lord Indra requested that Hanumanji return the sun. When Hanumanji refused, Lord Indra unleashed his vajra and knocked Hanumanji down to earth releasing the Sun.

On this day we offer poojan to Hanumanji as our Kuldev to protect us from Evil. The poojan is performed with oil, flowers, chandan and sindur. Coconuts are also offered to Hanumanji and prashad of Sesame seed, ladoos and rice with ghee and sugar.

The rituals of Kali Choudas is strongly suggestive of the origin of Deepavali as an harvest festival is performed. On this day delicacies are prepared from pounded semi-cooked rice (called Poha or Pova). This rice is taken from the fresh harvest available at that time. This custom is prevalent both in rural and urban areas especially in Western India.

On this day, a head wash and application of kajal in the eyes is believed to keep away the kali nazar (evil eye). Some say that those who are into tantra, learn their 'mantras' on this day. Alternatively, people offer Nived (food) to the goddess that is local to where they are originally from. This goddess is called their 'Kul Devi', in order to cast off evil spirits. Some families also offer food to their forefathers on this day. The second day of Diwali is known as Kali Choudas in Gujarat, Rajasthan and few part of Maharashtra. This reverence is called "Kali Chaudas or Kal Chaturdasi".

IV. PARYUSHANA

Two of the most important festivals for the Jains are Paryushana and Diwali. Diwali is celebrated to commemorate the nirvana of Lord Mahavira on the amavasya of the Kartika month. What is the historical basis of Paryushana?

ORIGIN OF PARYUSHANA

Its origin is related to the staying of the monks in one place for the rainy season. "Paryushana" is staying of the monks in one place. In popular terminology this stay is termed "chaturmasa" because the rainy season is regarded to be about four months. However, the minimum duration of Paryushana is regarded to be 70 days. For this minimum duration, Paryushana must be initiated by panchami (fifth day) of the shukla phase of the Bhadrapada month. In the scriptures it is described that Lord Mahavira used to start Paryushana on Bhadrapada Shukla panchami. The date for the Paryushana festival is thus Bhadrapada Shukla panchami for both major sects. Because of computational and other differences there can be some minor differences among various subsects. Recently there has been an attempt to get everyone to agree to use the same date.

Because at this time the monks have settled in the town for a longer duration, it is time for the householders to have an annual renewal of the faith by listening to the statement of the Dharma and by meditation and vratas (self-control). In the Digambaras, it is done by starting a 10-day period from Paryushana (Bhadrapada Shukla panchami) during which the dashalakshana vrata is undertaken. In the Shvetambaras an 8-day festival is celebrated that ends with Bhadrapada Shukla panchami. The last day is called Samvatsari, short for Samvatsari Pratikramana, as described below.

During the 8-day festival, the Kalpa Sutra is recited in the Swetambara sect, that includes a recitation of the section on birth of

Lord Mahavira on the fifth day. In the Digambara sect the Tatvartha-sutra of Umaswati is recited. On the dashami, the Sugandha-dashami vrata occurs. The Digambaras celebrate Ananta-chaturdashi on the chaturdashi, special worship is done on this day. Many towns have a procession leading to the amin temple.

The original Prakrit (ardhamagadhi) term for Paryushana is "Pajjo-savana". Remember that in case of Jain terms, the Prakrit forms of the words are the original.

= Pratikramana (Samayika): Renewal meditation = [[Samayika]]

Pratikramana means turning back. It is a form of meditation, called Samayika where one reflects on his spiritual journey and renews his faith. For both Swetambaras and Digambaras, it takes the form of periodic meditation. The period can be twice daily (morning and evening), once every lunar phase, every four months, or every year. The annual Pratikramana in some form is the minimum for a Sravaka.

The annual Pratikramana is Samvatsari Pratikramana, in short Samvatsari. Since it coincides with Paryushana, the terms "Samvatsari" and "Paryushana" are sometimes used interchangeably.

Pratikramana includes:

- Samayika: to stay in equanimity by withdrawing to the self.
- Prayers to the Five Supremes, 24 Jinas and the 4 Mangalas, including the Dharma as presented by the ancient Masters.
- Prayer to the Master (Guru) or the Deity.
- Reflections on vratas and past transgressions.
- Kayotsarga: detachment from the body by controlling it.
- Pratyakhyan: making resolutions for the next period (next year for Samvatsari Pratikramana).

The detailed recommended procedure can be found in the handbooks. Detailed Pratikramana takes about 3 hours, however all essentials can be done in a much shorter time if needed. Pratikramana is also sometimes termed Samayika in the Digambara tradition. By tradition certain postures are recommended for Pratikramana. They can be found in the handbooks.

DASHA-LAKSHANA VRATA

This is a vrata that celebrates 10 components of the dharma: Noble kshama (forbearance), mardava (gentleness), arjava (uprightness), shaucha (purity), satya (truth), sanyam (restraint), tapa (austerity),

tyaga (renunciation), akinchanya (lack of possession) and brahmcharya (chastity), as described by Umaswati. In the full form, it is a 10-day vrata that spans 10 years. It may be undertaken during Shukla Panchami to Chaturdashi of Bhadrapada, Magh or Chaitra. However, it is common to do it during Bhadrapada, in which case it starts with Paryushana.

REQUESTING FORGIVENESS

At the conclusion of the festival, the Sravakas request each other for forgiveness for all offenses committed during the last year. This occurs on the Paryusha day for the Swetambara and on Pratipada (first) of Ashwin Krashna for the Digambara.

SHINTO

Shinto is the native religion of Japan and was once its state religion. It involves the worship of *kami* spirits. Some *kami* are local and can be regarded as the spiritual being/spirit or genius of a particular place, but other ones represent major natural objects and processes: for example, Amaterasu, the Sun goddess, or Mount Fuji. Shinto is an animistic belief system. The word Shinto, from the original Chinese Shêntao, combines two *kanji*: "*shin*" (loan words usually retain their Chinese pronunciation, hence shin not gami), meaning gods or spirits; and "*tô*", meaning a philosophical way or path (originally from the Chinese word *dao*). As such, Shinto is commonly translated as "The Way of the Gods". Some differences exist between Koshintô (the ancient Shintô) and the many types of Shintô taught and practised today, showing the influences of Buddhism when it was introduced into Japan in the sixth century.

After World War II, Shinto ceased to be Japan's state religion, although it continued to be considered the native religion of Japan. Some Shinto practices and teachings, once given a great deal of prominence during the war, are no longer taught or practised today, while others still exist as commonplace activities such as *omikuji* (a form of fortune-telling) and the Japanese New Year to which few people give religious connotations. Important national ceremonies such as coronations and royal marriages are conducted at the Three Palace Sanctuaries in Tokyo.

HISTORY

Early History

Scholars agree that there were at least seven migrations from East Asia and perhaps another from Central Asia to the ancient Japanese

Archipelago, though there is no consensus as to where Shinto first developed. Early Shinto can be traced back into the midsts of the Jômon period; the Ainu-jin (that is, the natives of Japan) practice of Ko-shinto is said to directly descend from the original Shinto. Some of the basic elements of modern Shinto have been traced also to the Yayoi period (c.300 BC–c.250 AD) as a cultural product of immigrants from China and Korean Peninsula, who brought agricultural rites and shamanic ceremonies from the continent, which took on Japanese forms in the new environment.

In the early centuries BC, diverse *kami* with no formal hierarchy or dependency between them were worshipped. Early ceremonies are thought to have included rocks forming a sacred space or altar (*himorogi*). There was no representation of the *kami*, for they were conceived as formless and pure.

Following the ascendancy of the Yamato Kingdom around the third to fifth centuries, the ancestral deities of the Emperor of Japan and the Imperial family were given prominence over others and a narrative written to explain it. The result was the *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*, dated 712 AD) in which it was claimed that the imperial line descended directly from the sun-goddess, Amaterasu. Another important kingdom, Izumo, was dealt with in a separate cycle within the mythology and its deities incorporated into the service of Amaterasu's descendants. A more objective and historical version of events appeared in the *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon Shoki*, dated 720 AD), where alternative versions of the same story are given.

After the arrival of Buddhism in the first year of the Asuka period (538-710 AD), the idea of building "houses" for the *kami* arose and shrines were built for the first time. The earliest examples are thought to have been built at Izumo in 659 and at Ise in 690.

An important development was the introduction of a legal system based upon Chinese legalism and Confucianism (*ritsuryô*), in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. This established in law the supremacy of the emperor and great nobles, as well as formalising their relationship to major shrines and festivals.

Even before the arrival of Buddhism, the rituals involved in *kami* worship had borrowed from Chinese Taoism and Confucianism. Though clan rivalry led to friction and fighting during the introduction of Buddhism, the worship of *kami* and the teachings of the Buddha soon settled into coexistence. In fact, syncretism between Buddhism and

Shinto was supposed to become the dominant feature of Japanese religion as a whole.

Shinto and Buddhism

The introductions of writing in the 5th century and Buddhism in the 6th century from the Korean Peninsula had a profound impact on the development of a unified system of Shinto beliefs. In the early Nara period the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* were written by compiling existing myths and legends into a unified account of Japanese mythology. These accounts were written with two purposes in mind: the introduction of Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist themes into Japanese religion; and garnering support for the legitimacy of the Imperial house, based on its lineage from the sun goddess, Amaterasu. Much of modern Japan was under only fragmentary control by the Imperial family, and rival ethnic groups (including, perhaps, the ancestors of the Ainu people) continued to war against the encroachment of the Japanese. The mythological anthologies, along with other poetry anthologies like the *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yôshû*) and others, were intended to impress others with the worthiness of the Imperial family and their divine mandate to rule.

With the introduction of Buddhism and its rapid adoption by the court, it was necessary to explain the apparent differences between native Japanese beliefs and Buddhist teachings. Indeed, Shinto did not have a name until it became necessary to distinguish it from Buddhism. One explanation saw the *kami* as supernatural beings still caught in the cycle of birth and rebirth (reincarnation). The *kami* are born, live, die, and are reborn like all other beings in the karmic cycle. However, the *kami* played a special role in protecting Buddhism and allowing its teachings of compassion to flourish. This explanation was later challenged by Kûkai (zzwm, 774–835), who saw the *kami* as different embodiments of the Buddhas themselves. For example, he famously linked Amaterasu (the sun goddess and ancestor of the Imperial family) with Dainichi Nyorai, a central manifestation of the Buddha, whose name is literally "Great Sun Buddha". In his view, the *kami* were just Buddhas by another name.

Buddhism and Shinto coexisted and were amalgamated in the *shinbutsu shûgô* and Kûkai's syncretic view held wide sway up until the end of the Edo period. At that time, there was a renewed interest in "Japanese studies" (*kokugaku*), perhaps as a result of the closed country policy. In the 18th century, various Japanese scholars, in

particular Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), tried to tease apart the "real" Shinto from various foreign influences. The attempt was largely unsuccessful, since as early as the *Nihon Shoki* parts of the mythology were explicitly borrowed from Chinese doctrines. For example, the co-creator deities Izanami and Izanagi are linked to yin and yang. However, the attempt did set the stage for the arrival of state Shinto, following the Meiji Restoration (c.1868), when Shinto and Buddhism were separated (*shinbutsu bunri*).

State Shinto

Following the Meiji Restoration, Shintô was made the state religion of the Empire of Japan, and in 1868 its combination with Buddhism was outlawed. During this period, numerous scholars of *kokugaku* believed that Shintô could be the unifying agent of the country around the Emperor while the process of modernisation was undertaken with all possible speed. The psychological shock of the Western "Black Ships" and the subsequent collapse of the shogunate convinced many that the nation needed to unify in order to resist being colonised by outside forces.

In 1871, a Ministry of Divinities was formed and Shintô shrines were divided into twelve levels with the Ise Shrine (dedicated to Amaterasu, and thus symbolic of the legitimacy of the Imperial family) at the peak and small sanctuaries of humble towns at the base. The following year, the ministry was replaced with a new Ministry of Religion, charged with leading instruction in "shushin" (moral courses). This was a major reverse from the Edo period, in which families were registered with Buddhist temples, rather than Shintô shrines. Priests were officially nominated and organised by the state, and they instructed the youth in a form of Shintô theology based on the official history of divinity of Japan's national origins and its Emperor.

As time went on, Shintô was increasingly used in the advertising of nationalist popular sentiments. In 1890, the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued, and students were required to ritually recite its oath to "offer yourselves courageously to the State" as well as protect the Imperial family. The practice of Emperor worship was further spread by distributing imperial portraits for esoteric veneration. All of these practices were used to fortify national solidarity through patriotic observance at shrines. This use of Shintô gave Japanese patriotism a special tint of mysticism and cultural introversion, which became more pronounced as time went on.

Such processes continued to deepen until the Shôwa period, finally coming to an abrupt halt in August 1945 when Japan lost the war. On 1 January, Emperor Shôwa issued the Ningen-sengen, in which he quoted the Five Charter Oath of Emperor Meiji and announced he was not an *akitsumikami*.

Types of Shinto

To distinguish between these different focuses of emphasis within Shinto, many feel it is important to separate Shinto into different types of Shinto expression.

- Shrine Shinto is the oldest and most prevalent of the Shinto types. It has always been a part of Japan's history and constitutes the main current of Shinto tradition.
- Sect Shinto is comprised 13 groups formed during the 19th century. They do not have shrines, but conduct religious activities in meeting halls. Shinto sects include the mountain-worship sects, who focus on worshipping mountains like Mt. Fuji, Faith-healing sects, Purification sects, Confucian sects, and Revival Shinto sects. Konkôkyô, Tenrikyô, and Kurozumikyô, although operating separately from modern Shinto, are considered to be forms of Sect Shinto.
- Folk Shinto includes the numerous but fragmented folk beliefs in deities and spirits. Practices include divination, spirit possession, and shamanic healing. Some of their practices come from Taoism, Buddhism, or Confucianism, but most come from ancient local traditions.
- State Shinto was the result of the Meiji Restoration and the downfall of the shogunate. The Meiji restoration attempted to purify Shinto by abolishing many Buddhist and Confucian ideals; also, the Emperor was once again considered divine. After Japan's defeat in World War II, State Shinto was abolished and the Emperor was forced to renounce his divine right.

All these main types of Shinto and some subtypes have given birth to many and diverse schools and sects since medieval times to the present days. A list of the most relevant can be found at the article Shintô Schools and sects.

Post-War

The era of State Shinto came to an abrupt close with the end of World War II, as a result of the subsequent American occupation and

the implementation of secularist ideas in the country's reconstruction. Soon after the war, the Emperor issued a statement renouncing his claims to the status of "living god" (*arahitogami*). In the aftermath of the war, most Japanese came to believe that the hubris of Empire had led to their downfall. Lust for foreign territory blinded their leaders to the importance of their homeland. In the post-war period, numerous "New Religions" cropped up, many of them ostensibly based on Shinto, but on the whole, Japanese religiosity may have decreased. However, the concept of religion in Japan is a complex one. A survey conducted in the mid-1970s indicated that of those participants who claimed not to believe in religion, one-third had a Buddhist or Shinto altar in their home, and about one quarter carried an *omamori* (an amulet to gain protection by *kami*) on their person. Following the war, Shinto has, for the most part, persisted with less importance placed on mythology or the divine mandate of the Imperial family. Instead, shrines tend to focus on helping ordinary people gain better fortunes for themselves through maintaining good relations with their ancestors and other *kami*. Shinto has largely reverted to its pre-imperial family state. Post-war, the number of Japanese citizens identifying their religious beliefs as Shinto has declined a great deal, yet the general practice of Shinto rituals has not decreased accordingly, and many practices have persisted as general cultural beliefs (such as ancestor worship, which is still very popular), superstitions, and community festivals (*matsuri*)—focusing more on religious practices and items than principles. The explanation generally given for this anomaly is that, following the demise of State Shinto, Shinto has reverted to its more traditional position as a folk religion which is culturally ingrained, rather than enforced. In any case, Shinto and its values continue to be an important component of the Japanese cultural mindset.

Shinto has also spread abroad to a limited extent, and a few non-Japanese Shinto priests have been ordained. The very active Jinja Shinto Shrine exists in the Pacific Northwest, the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America (the US branch of one of Japan's oldest and most prestigious shrines). Tsubaki America Shrine receives thousands of worshippers each year and has active shrine membership throughout North America and the world. All Seasonal Observances/Festivals are conducted in the traditional way and people can make an appointment to visit for the Go-kitoh (or special prayer ceremonies). A relatively small number of people practice Shinto in America. There are however several Shinto shrines in Hawaii, which has a large number of people of Japanese descent. Outside the US, there are also Shinto shrines in Brazil, Canada,

France, and the Netherlands. Shrines were also established in Taiwan and Korea during the Japanese occupation of those areas, but following the war, they were either repurposed or destroyed.

DEFINITION

Shinto can be seen as a form of animism and may be regarded as a variant of shamanist religion. Shinto beliefs and ways of thinking are deep in the subconscious fabric of modern Japanese society. The afterlife is not a primary concern in Shinto; much more emphasis is placed on fitting into this world, instead of preparing for the next.

Shinto has no binding set of dogma, no holiest place for worshippers, no person or *kami* deemed holiest, and no defined set of prayers. Instead, Shinto is a collection of rituals and methods meant to mediate the relations of living humans and *kami*. These practices have originated organically in Japan over many centuries and have been influenced by Japan's contact with the religions of other nations, especially China. Notice, for example, that the word Shinto is itself of Chinese origin and that much of the codification of Shinto mythology was done with the explicit aim of answering Chinese cultural influence. Conversely, Shinto had and continues to have an impact on the practice of other religions within Japan. In particular, one could even make a case for discussing it under the heading of Japanese Buddhism, since these two religions have exercised a profound influence on each other throughout Japanese history. Further, the Japanese "New Religions" that have emerged since the end of the Second World War have also shown a clear Shinto influence.

Some feel Shinto was used as an ideology during the militaristic beginning of the Shôwa period, following the Meiji Restoration. Because Shinto has no absolute authority, some feel what was a natural expression of the beliefs of the people was hijacked by radical nationalists, who desired to unify the Japanese people against the "inferior" people in other nations. Others wonder if the emphasis Shinto places on Japanese exceptionalism made such developments inevitable. Even today, some far right factions within Japanese society want to see a greater emphasis placed on Shinto and increased reverence shown to the Emperor as part of a project to restore Japan to its "rightful place" as the leading nation of the world.

Characteristics

The most immediately striking theme in the Shinto religion is a great love and reverence for Nature in all its forms and for natural

artifacts and processes. Thus, a waterfall, the moon, or just an oddly shaped rock might come to be regarded as a *kami*; so might charismatic persons or more abstract entities like growth and fertility. As time went by, the original nature-worshipping roots of the religion, while never lost entirely, became attenuated and the *kami* took on more reified and anthropomorphic forms, with a formidable body of myth attached to them. (See *Japanese mythology*) The *kami*, however, are not transcendent deities in the usual Western and Indian sense of the word. Although divine, they are close to humanity; they inhabit the same world as we do, make the same mistakes as we do, and feel and think the same way as we do. Those who died will usually become *kami*, with their power and main characteristics given by their doings in life. Those believing other religions may be also venerated as *kami* after death, if there are Shinto believers who wish them to be.

PRACTICES AND TEACHINGS

Afterlife

Unlike many religions, one does not need to publicly profess belief in Shinto to be a Shintoist. Whenever a child is born in Japan, a local Shinto shrine adds the child's name to a list kept at the shrine and declares him or her a "family child". After death an *ujiko* becomes a "family spirit", or "family *kami*". One may choose to have one's name added to another list when moving and then be listed at both places. Names can be added to the list without consent and regardless of the beliefs of the person added to the list. However, this is not considered an imposition of belief, but a sign of being welcomed by the local *kami*, with the promise of addition to the pantheon of *kami* after death. Those children who die before addition to the list are called "water children", and are believed to cause troubles and plagues. *Mizuko* are often worshipped in a Shinto shrine dedicated to stilling their anger and sadness.

Because Shinto has co-existed with Buddhism for well over a millennium, it is very difficult to untangle Shinto and Buddhist beliefs about the world. Though Buddhism and Shinto have very different perspectives on the world, most Japanese do not see any challenge in reconciling these two very different religions, and practice both. Thus, it is common for people to practice Shinto in life yet have a Buddhist funeral. Their different perspectives on the afterlife are seen as complementing each other, and frequently the ritual practice of one will have an origin in the other.

Four Affirmations

Though Shinto has no absolute commandments for its adherents outside of living "a simple and harmonious life with nature and people", there are said to be "Four Affirmations" of the Shinto spirit:

- Tradition and the family: The family is seen as the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved. Their main celebrations relate to birth and marriage.
- Love of nature: Nature is sacred; to be in contact with nature is to be close to the *kami*. Natural objects are worshipped as containing sacred spirits.
- Physical cleanliness: Followers of Shinto take baths, wash their hands, and rinse out their mouths often.
- "Matsuri": Any festival dedicated to the Kami, of which there are many each year.

Impurity

Shinto teaches that certain deeds create a kind of ritual impurity that one should want cleansed for one's own peace of mind and good fortune, not because impurity is wrong in and of itself. Wrong deeds are called "dirtiness", opposed to "purity". Normal days are called "day" (*ke*), and festive days are called "sunny", or simply, "good" (*hare*). Killing living beings should be done with reverence for taking a life to continue one's own, and should be kept to a minimum. Modern Japanese continue to place great emphasis on the importance of ritual phrases and greetings. Before eating, many (though not all) Japanese say, "I will humbly receive [this food]" in order to show proper thankfulness to the preparer of the meal in particular and more generally to all those living things that lost their lives to make the meal. Failure to show proper respect can be seen as a lack of concern for others, looked down on because it is believed to create problems for all. Those who fail to take into account the feelings of other people and *kami* will only bring ruin on themselves. The worst expression of such an attitude is the taking of another's life for personal advancement or enjoyment. Those killed without being shown gratitude for their sacrifice will hold a grudge and become a powerful and evil *kami* that seeks revenge (*aragami*). This same emphasis on the need for cooperation and collaboration can be seen throughout Japanese culture today. Additionally, if anyone is injured on the grounds of a shrine, the area affected must be ritually purified.

Purification

Purification rites are a vital part of Shinto. These may serve to placate any restive *kami*, for instance when their shrine had to be relocated. Such ceremonies have also been adapted to modern life. For example, a ceremony was held in 1969 to hallow the *Apollo 11* mission to the moon, new buildings made in Japan are frequently blessed by a Shinto priest during the groundbreaking ceremony, and many cars made in Japan have been blessed as part of the assembly process. A more personal purification rite is the purification by water. This may involve standing beneath a waterfall or performing ritual ablutions in a river-mouth or in the sea (misogi). These two forms of purification are often referred to as harae. A third form of purification is avoidance, that is, the taboo placed on certain persons or acts. To illustrate, women were not allowed to climb Mount Fuji until 1868, in the era of the Meiji Restoration. Although this aspect has decreased in recent years, religious Japanese will not use an inauspicious word like "cut" at a wedding, nor will they attend a wedding if they have recently been bereaved.

Shrines

The principal worship of *kami* is done at public shrines, although home worship at small private shrines (*kamidana*) (sometimes only a high shelf with a few ritual objects) is also common. It is also possible to worship objects or people while they are still living. While a few of the public shrines are elaborate structures, most are small buildings in the characteristic Japanese architectural style. Shrines are commonly fronted by a distinctive Japanese gate (*torii*) made of two uprights and two crossbars. These gates are there as a part of the barrier to separate our living world and the world the *kami* live in. There are often two guardian animals placed at each side of the gate and they serve to protect the entrance. There are well over 100,000 of these shrines in operation today, each with its retinue of Shinto priests. Shinto priests often wear a ceremonial robe called a jo-e. Kami are invoked at such important ceremonies as weddings and entry into university. The *kami* are commonly petitioned for earthly benefits: a child, a promotion, a happier life. While one may wish for ill fortune on others, this is believed to be possible only if the target has committed wrongs first, or if one is willing to offer one's life. Though Shinto is popular for these occasions, when it comes to funerals most Japanese turn to Buddhist ceremonies, since the emphasis in Shinto is on this life and not the next. Almost all festivals (*matsuri*) in Japan are hosted by local

Shinto shrines and these festivals are open to all those that wish to attend. While these could be said to be religious events, Japanese do not regard these events as religious since everyone can attend, regardless of personal beliefs.

Kami

Shinto teaches that everything contains a *kami* ("spiritual essence" which is sometimes translated into "god", though perhaps soul or spirit would be more accurate). Every rock, every squirrel, every living and non-living thing contains a *kami*. There is also a main *kami* for groups of things: for example, there is a *kami* within a rhino, and there is also a main *kami* residing over all the rhinos of the world.

Shinto's *kami* are collectively called *yaoyorozu no kami*, an expression literally meaning "eight million *kami*," but interpreted as meaning "myriad".

The most widely worshiped of all *kami* is the sun-goddess Amaterasu. However, Japanese do not specifically worship her or invoke her name to ask for help. Her main shrine is the Grand Shrine of Ise, but many lesser shrines are dedicated to her. Within the shrine, she is often symbolised by a mirror. Alternatively, the inner sanctum may be empty. This emptiness does not mean non-existence; rather, it symbolises that everything that one sees through the mirror is the embodiment of Amaterasu and every other *kami*.

Until the end of World War II, the Tenno (Emperor) was believed to have been descended from Amaterasu and father of all Japanese, and was therefore a *kami* on earth (an *ikigami* or "living *kami*"); this divine status was popularised during the Meiji Restoration. This did not prevent military governors (*Shogun*) from usurping power, but the emperor was always seen as the true ruler of Japan, even when his rule was only nominal. Although Emperor Hirohito renounced his divine status in 1946 under American pressure (*Ningen-sengen*), the imperial family remains deeply involved in the Shinto ritual that unifies the Japanese nation symbolically. Because Shinto does not require a declaration or an enforcement to be worshipped (considered "unharmonious,") this declaration, while serving political reasons, is religiously meaningless and merely means that the state enforcement has ended.

Ema

In medieval times, wealthy people would donate horses to shrines, especially when making a request of the god of the shrine (for example,

when praying for victory in battle). For smaller favors, giving a picture of a horse became a custom, and these are popular today. The visitor to a shrine purchases a wooden tablet with a likeness of a horse, or nowadays, something else (a snake, an arrow, even a portrait of Thomas Edison), writes a wish or prayer on the tablet, and hangs it at the shrine. In some cases, if the wish comes true, the person hangs another ema at the shrine in gratitude.

Kagura

Kagura is the ancient Shinto ritual dance of Shamanic origin. The word "Kagura" is thought to be a contracted form of *kami no kura* or *seat of the kami* or the *site where the kami is received*.(Kobayashi, Kazushige p.3) There is a mythological tale of how Kagura dance came into existence. The sun goddess Amaterasu became very upset at her brother so she hid in a cave. All of the other gods and goddesses were concerned and wanted her to come outside. Ame-no-uzeme began to dance and create a noisy commotion in order to entice Amaterasu to come out. The *kami* (gods) tricked Amaterasu by telling her there was a better sun goddess in the heavens. Amaterasu came out and light returned to the universe.

Music plays a very important role in the kagura performance. Everything from the setup of the instruments to the most subtle sounds and the arrangement of the music is crucial to encouraging the *kami* to come down and dance. The songs are used as magical devices to summon the gods and as prayers for blessings. Rhythm patterns of five and seven are common, possibly relating to the Shinto belief of the twelve generations of heavenly and earthly deities. There is also vocal accompaniment called *kami uta* in which the drummer sings sacred songs to the gods. Often the vocal accompaniment is overshadowed by the drumming and instruments, reinforcing that the vocal aspect of the music is more for incantation rather than aesthetics.(Averbuch, Irit pp. 83-87)

In both ancient Japanese collections, the Nihongi and Kojiki, Ame-no-uzeme's dance is described as *asobi*, which in old Japanese language means a ceremony that is designed to appease the spirits of the departed, and which was conducted at funeral ceremonies. Therefore, kagura is a rite of *tama shizume*, of pacifying the spirits of the departed. In the Heian period (8th-12th centuries) this was one of the important rites at the Imperial Court and had found its fixed place in the tama shizume festival on the eleventh month. At this festival people sing as

accompaniment to the dance: "Depart! Depart! Be cleansed and go! Be purified and leave!" (Kobayashi, Kazushige pp. 4-5)

This rite of purification is also known as *chinkon*. It was used for securing and strengthening the soul of a dying person. It was closely related to the ritual of *tama furi* (shaking the spirit), to call back the departed soul of the dead or to energize a weakened spirit. Spirit pacification and rejuvenation were usually achieved by songs and dances, also called *asobi*. The ritual of *chinkon* continued to be performed on the emperors of Japan, thought to be descendents of Amaterasu. It is possible that this ritual is connected with the ritual to revive the sun goddess during the low point of the winter solstice. (Averbuch, Irit p.12)

There is a division between the kagura that is performed at the Imperial palace and the shrines related to it, and the kagura that is performed in the countryside. Folk kagura, or kagura from the countryside is divided according to region. The following descriptions relate to sato kagura, kagura that is from the countryside. The main types are: *Miko kagura*, *Ise kagura*, *Izumo kagura*, and *Shishi kagura*.

Miko kagura is the oldest type of kagura and is danced by women in Shinto shrines and during folk festivals. The ancient miko were Shamanesses, but are now considered priestesses in the service of the Shinto Shrines. *Miko kagura* originally was a shamanic trance dance, but later, it became an art and was interpreted as a prayer dance. It is performed in many of the larger Shinto shrines and is characterised by slow, elegant, circular movements, by emphasis on the four directions and by the central use of torimono (objects dancers carry in their hands), especially the fan and bells. (Averbuch, Irit p.15)

Ise kagura is a collective name for rituals that are based upon the *yudate* (boiling water rites of Shugendo origin) ritual. It includes *miko* dances as well as dancing of the *torimono* type. The *kami* are believed to be present in the pot of boiling water, so the dancers dip their *torimono* in the water and sprinkle it in the four directions and on the observers for purification and blessing. (Averbuch, Irit, p. 16)

Izumo kagura is centered in the Sada shrine of Izumo, Shimane prefecture. It has two types: *torimono ma*, unmasked dances that include held objects, and *shinno* (sacred No), dramatic masked dances based on myths. *Izumo kagura* appears to be the most popular type of kagura. (Averbuch, Irit, p.16)

Shishi kagura also known as the Shugen-No tradition, uses the dance of a *shishi* (lion or mountain animal) mask as the image and

presence of the deity. It includes the *Ise daikagura* group and the *yamabushi kagura* and *bangaku* groups of the Tohoku area (Northeastern Japan). *Ise daikagura* employs a large red Chinese type of lion head which can move its ears. The lion head of the *Yamabushi kagura* schools is black and can click its teeth. Unlike other kagura types in which the *kami* appear only temporarily, during the *Shishi kagura* the *kami* is constantly present in the shishi head mask. During the Edo period, the lion dances became showy and acrobatic losing its touch with spirituality. However, the *Yamabushi kagura* tradtion has retained its ritualistic and religious nature. (Averbuch, p.16)

Originally, the practice of kagura involved authentic possession by the *kami* invoked. In modern-day Japan it appears to be difficult to find authentic ritual possession, called *kamigakari*, in kagura dance. However, it is common to see choreographed possession in the dances. Actual possession is not taking place but elements of possession such as losing control and high jumps are applied in the dance.

CULTURAL EFFECTS

Shinto has been called "the religion of Japan", and the customs and values of Shinto are inseparable from those of Japanese culture. Many famously Japanese practices have origins either directly or indirectly rooted in Shinto. For example, it is clear that the Shinto ideal of harmony with nature underlies such typically Japanese arts as flower-arranging, traditional Japanese architecture, and garden design. A more explicit link to Shinto is seen in sumo wrestling, where, even in the modern version of the sport, many Shinto-inspired ceremonies must be performed before a bout, such as purifying the wrestling arena by sprinkling it with salt. The Japanese emphasis on proper greetings and respectful phrasings can be seen as a continuation of the ancient Shinto belief in *kotodama* (words with a magical effect on the world). Many Japanese cultural customs, like using wooden chopsticks and removing shoes before entering a building, have their origin in Shinto beliefs and practices. Also, a number of other Japanese religions, including Tenrikyo, have originated from or been influenced by Shinto. Tenrikyo is a religion of Shinto origin with some Buddhist influence.

SHINTO TEXTS

The Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)

The Rikkokushi (Six National Histories)

The Shoku Nihongi and its Nihon Shoki (Continuing Chronicles of Japan).

The Jinno Shotoki (a study of Shinto and Japanese politics and history) written in the 14th century.

WELL-KNOWN SHRINES

Of the many and diverse Shinto shrines in existence, some are well-known:

- Atsuta Shrine, Nagoya, Aichi, shrine to the Imperial sword Kusanagi
- Heian Jingu (Kyoto), dedicated to Emperor Kammu and Emperor Kômei
- Hikawa Shrine, Omiya district
- The Grand Shrine of Ise (Ise), dedicated to Amaterasu
- Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima prefecture
- Iwashimizu Shrine, Yawata, Kyoto
- Izumo Shrine (Izumo)
- Kasuga Shrine, Nara
- Katori Shrine, Chiba Prefecture
- Kumano Shrines, Wakayama Prefecture
- Meiji Shrine (Tokyo), the shrine of Emperor Meiji
- Nikkô Tôshô-gû, Nikkô, Tochigi Prefecture
- Ôsaki Hachiman Shrine, Miyagi Prefecture
- Sendai Tôshô-gû, Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture
- Shiogama Shrine, Miyagi Prefecture
- Three Palace Sanctuaries, Kokyo Imperial Palace, Tokyo
- Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Suzuka, Mie Prefecture
- Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine, Kamakura, Kanagawa
- Usa Hachiman Shrine, Ôita Prefecture
- Yasukuni Shrine (Tokyo), shrine dedicated to the 'peace of the nation', with militaristic tones.

TIMELINE OF JAINISM

PRE-HISTORY

- ca. 9th century BC: Parshva, 23rd Tirthankar of Jain tradition, and at the same time the earliest figure of Jainism considered historically datable.

- ca. 6th century BC: Mahavira, 24th and last Tirthankar.
- 5th century BC: Siddhasen Diwakar
- d. 507 BC: Ganahar Sudharma Swami
- d. 357 BC: Acharya Bhadrabahu
- 2nd century BC: Navakar Mantra epigraphically attested in Maharashtra
- 5th century AD: first mention of the Mula Sangh order.

MIDDLE AGES

- 9th century: Nemichandra
- 10th century: Svetambara
- d. 1172: Acharya Hemachandra
- 12th century: Kashtha Sangh
- 1194: Tristutik
- 1229: Tapa Gachchha
- 1476: Lonka Shaha schism
- 1664: Digambar Terapanth
- 1658: Digambara Jain Lal Mandir temple in Delhi built.
- 1760: Swetembar Terapanth
- 1780: Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi orders

BRITISH INDIA

- 1868: Jain temple in Mumbai
- 1880s: reform movement of Acharya Rajendrasuri
- 1893: Virachand Gandhi participates in Chicago's World Parliament of Religions and Won Silver Medal.
- 1904: Jain temple at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition
- 1927: Madras High Court in Gateppa v. Eramma and others recognises "Jainism as a distinct religion"

POST-PARTITION

- 1970s: significant presence of Jainism in the United States
- 1976: In Arya Samaj Education Trust, Delhi and Others v. The Director of Education, Delhi Administration, Delhi and Others (AIR 1976 Delhi 207), the Court referred to Heinrich Zimmer's *Philosophies of India* describing Jainism as "a heterodox Indian religion" and J.N. Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India* describing Jainism as "a rival of Hinduism".

- 1981: First Jain convention in Los Angeles
- 1983: Formal organisation of JAINA (Jain Associations in North America)
- 1990: Temple Pratishtha, The Jain Sangh Cherry Hill, New Jersey
- 1990: Temple Pratishtha, Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington
- 1991: Founding of Siddhachalam, the Jain tirtha
- 1993: Temple Pratishtha, Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago
- 1995: Temple Pratishtha, Jain Center of Cincinnati and Dayton
- 1998: Temple Pratishtha, Jain Society of Greater Detroit
- 2000: Temple Pratishtha, Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC)
- 2000: Jain Vishwa Bharati Orlando
- 2005: The Supreme Court of India declined to grant Jains the status of a religious minority throughout India, leaving it to the respective states to decide on the minority status of Jainis.

AHIMSA IN JAINISM

Ahimsâ means "non-violence", "non-injury" or absence of desire to harm any life forms. Ahimsa is the fundamental principle of Jainism forming cornerstone of its ethics and doctrine. Vegetarianism and other non-violent practices and rituals of Jains flow from the principle of Ahimsâ. According to Adian Rankin, the concept of Ahimsa is so much intertwined with Jainism that it conjures up images of ascetics who cover their mouths and sweep the ground before them with small brushes to avoid injuring the most minuscule forms of life and Jain-owned animal sanctuaries where even the sickest, most deformed birds and beasts are protected and cherished. These overt manifestations of an ancient faith challenge the comfortable—and near-universal—assumption of human precedence over other creatures. The Jain concept of Ahimsa is quite different from the concept of non-violence found in other philosophies. In other religious traditions, violence is usually associated with causing harm to others. On the other hand, in Jainism, violence refers primarily to injuring one's own self-behaviour which inhibits the souls own ability to attain mokca or liberation. At the same time it also means violence to others because it is this tendency to harm others that ultimately harms ones own soul. Furthermore, the Jains have extended the concept of Ahimsa not only to humans but to all animals, plants, micro-organisms and all beings having life or life potential. All life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly

to its maximum potential. The living beings do not have any fear from those who have taken the vow of Ahimsa. According to Jainism, protection of life, also known as abhayadânam, is the supreme charity that a person can make. Ahimsa does not merely indicate absence of physical violence, but also indicates absence of desire to indulge in any sort of violence. This Jain ideal of Ahimsa profoundly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, through his friendship with the Jain scholar Shrimad Rajchandra that it formed a basis of his satyagraha (truth struggle) against colonial rule and caused him to rethink many aspects of contemporary Hindu practices. While Jainism is not a proselytizing religion and as such has no organised system of advocating its doctrine, Jains have been forefront in strongly advocating vegetarianism and non-violence through ages. Ahimsa being central to the Jain philosophy, Jain Âcâryas have produced, through ages, quite elaborate and detailed doctrinal materials concerning its various aspects.

THE VOW OF NON-VIOLENCE

AhiCsâ is formalised into Jain doctrine as the first major vow of the ascetics and first minor vow of the laity.

The Vow of Ascetics

The Jain monks and the nuns undertake five major vows known as Mahâvratas at the time of their ordination to monkhood, out of which Ahimsa is the first and foremost. Jain monks and nuns must rank among the most "non-violent" people in the world. A Jain ascetic is expected to uphold the vow of Ahimsa to the highest standard, even at the cost of his own life. The other four major vows—truthfulness, non-stealing, non-possession and celibacy—are in fact extension of the first vow of complete non-violence. According to Amrtacandra Sûri "All sins like falsehood, theft, attachment and immorality are forms of violence which destroy the purity of the soul. They have been separately enumerated only to facilitate their understanding"—Purucârthasiddhyupâya 4.42.

Ascetic Practices for Adherence of Ahimsa

The ascetic practices of total renunciation of worldly affairs and possessions, refusal to stay in a single place for a long time, continuous practice of austerities like fasting etc. are geared towards observance of Ahimsa. They generally brush the ground clear of insects before they tread; some wear a small mask to avoid taking in tiny insects; some monks do not wear even clothes and eat food only when it is

not prepared for themselves. The Jain mendicants abide by a rigorous set of rules of conduct, where they must eat, sleep and even walk with full diligence and with an awareness that even walking kills several hundreds of minuite beings. The observation of three guptis or the controls of mind, speech and body and five samiti or regulation of walking, speaking, begging of food, keeping items and disposal of items are designed to help the monks in observing the vow of Ahimsa faultlessly. In fact entire day of a Jain monk is spent in ensuring that he observes his vow of Ahimsa through mind, body and speech faultlessly. These seemingly extreme behaviour of the monks comes from a sense that every action, no matter however subtle, has a karmic effect which can bind soul and inhibit liberation, especially those that result in himsa.

The Vow of the Laity

A Jain layman, on account of his household and occupational compulsions, is unable to adhere to the five major vows of ascetic. Hence, he observes aGuvrata or minor vows which although are similar to the major vows of the ascetics are observed with a lesser severity. It is difficult to avoid some violence by a lay person to single-sensed immobile beings in the process of occupation, cooking, self-defense etc. That is why he vows not to kill without a necessary purpose and determined intention, a moving sentient being, when it is innocent. Tying up, injuring, mutilating, burdening with heavy load and depriving from food and drinks any animal or human being with a mind polluted by anger and other passions are the five aticâra or transgressions of the vow of Ahimsa. However, it is to be understood that ultimately, there is limited spiritual progress and no emancipation unless the major vows are adhered to.

Laity Practices for Adherence of Ahimsa

Jainism is perhaps the only religion in the world that requires all its adherents to follow a strict vegetarian diet. Vegetarian food that also involves more harm to the living beings such as roots, bulbs, multi-seeded vegetables etc are avoided by strict Jains. The importance of Ahimsa manifests in many other ways in the daily life of Jains. For a layperson it means participating in business that results in least amount of violence to living beings. No furs, plumes or silk are worn. Use of leather is kept to a minimum and must in any event be from naturally dead animals. Food is usually eaten during the day unless unavoidable, since there is too much danger of injuring insects in

cooking at night. The Jain will not use an open light nor leave a container of liquid uncovered lest a stray insect be destroyed; even with this precaution, liquids are always strained before use. Through ages Jains have sought to avoid occupations that unavoidably entail injury, and this accounts for the disproportionate number who have entered banking, commerce and other mercantile trades..

JAIN CONCEPT OF AHIMSA

While Jainism enjoins observance of total non-violence by the ascetics, it is often argued that the man is constantly obliged to engage in destructive activities of eating, drinking, breathing and surviving in order to support his body. According to Jainism, life is omnipresent with infinite beings including micro-organisms pervading each and every part of universe. Hence, it may still be possible to avoid killing of gross animals, but it is impossible to avoid killing of subtle micro-organisms in air and water, plant life and various types of insects that may be crushed by walking. It would thus appear that the continual likelihood of destroying living organisms would create an inexcusable burden on the ascetics trying to follow the Jain path of total renunciation and non-violence.

However, the Jain conception of Ahimsa is quite different than what is commonly understood by violence. The violence is defined more by the motives and the consequences to the self rather than by the act itself. Furthermore, according to Jain Scriptures, destruction of less developed organism brings about lesser karmas than destruction of developed animals and karmas generated in observance of religious duties faultlessly disappears almost immediately. Hence, it is possible to observe complete non-violence with right knowledge, even when some outward violence occurs to living beings in the course of performing religious duties by observing carefulness and pure mental disposition without any attachment.

Hierarchy of Living Beings on Basis of Senses

Jainism divides living beings on the basis of sensory organs (indriya) and vitalities or life force (praGa) existing in such beings. Accordingly, higher the number of senses and vitalities a being has, the more is its capacity to suffer and feel pain. Hence, according to Jainism, violence to higher sensed beings like man, cow, tiger and like who have five senses and capacity to think and feel pain attracts more karma than any violence to lesser sensed beings like insects, or single sensed beings like microbes and plants. Hence, Jainism enjoins its adherents to

completely avoid violence to higher sensed beings and as far as possible minimize violence to single sensed beings.

Carefulness

According to Jainism, a monk who is careless in his activities is guilty of violence irrespective of whether a living being remains alive or dies; on the other hand, the person who is ever vigilant and careful in observing the samitis experiences no karmic bondage simply because some violence may have taken place in connection with his activities. Carefulness came to be seen as a defense for the monks against violence in Jainism. One of the most famous passages in the Uttradhayana Sûtra describes Mahâvîra continually exhorting his chief disciple Gautama "to be careful all the while" lest the opportunity to destroy all the karmas and achieve perfection in this lifetime may be lost forever on account of carelessness. Tattvârthasûtra defines himsa or violence simply as "removal of life by careless activity of mind, body and speech." Thus, action in Jainism came to be regarded as truly violent only when accompanied by carlessness.

Mental States and Intention

Paul Dundas quotes Âcârya Jinabhadra (seventh century), who shows that the omnipresence of life-forms in the universe need not totally inhibit normal behaviour of the ascetics: "It is the intention that ultimately matters. From the real point of view, a man does not become a killer only because he has killed or because the world is crowded with souls, or remain innocent only because he has not killed physically. Even if a person does not actually kill, he becomes a killer if he has the intention to kill; while a doctor has to cause pain but is still non-violent and innocent because his intention is pure, for it is the intention which is the deciding factor, not the external act which is inconclusive."

Thus, pure intention along with carefulness was considered necessary to practice Ahimsa as Jains admitted that even if intention may be pure, careless activities often resulted in violence unknowingly.

Significance of True Knowledge

The Jains also considered right knowledge as a prerequisite for practicing Ahimsa. It is necessary to know what is living and what is non-living to practice Ahimsa faultlessly. A person who is confused between Living and non-living can never observe non-violence. Daúavaikâlika Sûtra declared "First knowledge, then compassion. Thus

does one remain in full control. How can an ignorant person be compassionate, when he cannot distinguish between the good and the evil?" – DS iv It further declares – " Knowledge of living and non-living alone will enable one to become compassionate towards all living creatures. Knowing this all aspirants, proceed from knowledge to eternal virtues. What can an ignorant do ? How does he know what is noble and what is evil?

The knowledge is also considered necessary to destroy Karmas. SamaG SuttaA declared—"The ignorant cannot destroy their Karmas by their actions while the wise can do it by their inaction i.e. by controlling their activities because they are free from greed and lustful passions and do not commit any sin as they remain contented." (165)

Anekantavada—The Non-Violence of Mind

Anekantavada is the principle of relativity of truth or the doctrine of multiple aspects. Jains hold that truth is multifaceted and has multiple sides that cannot be completely comprehended by anyone. Anekantavada describes the world as a multifaceted, ever-changing reality with an infinity of viewpoints relative to the time, place, nature and state of one who is the viewer and that which is viewed. What is true from one point of view is open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint alone, because absolute truth is the sum total of all different viewpoints that make up the universe. Because it is rooted in these doctrines, Jainism cannot exclusively uphold the views of any individual, community, nation, or species. It recognises inherently that other views are valid for other peoples, and for other life-forms. This perception leads to the doctrine of syadvada or sevenfold predication stating the truth from different viewpoints. Anekantavada is the doctrine and Syadavada is its expression. According to Jaina philosophers all important philosophical statements should be expressed in this sevenfold way in order to remove the danger of dogmatism (ekanta) in philosophy.

The concept of Syadavada allows the Jains to accept the truth in other philosophies from their perspective and thus inculcating a tolerance for other viewpoints. Anekantavada is non-absolutist and stands firmly against all dogmatisms, even including any assertion that only Jainism is the right religious path. It is thus an intellectual Ahimsa or Ahimsa of mind. In Anekantavada, there is no "battle of ideas", because this is considered to be a form of intellectual himsa or damage, leading quite logically to physical violence and war. In todays world, the limitations of the adversarial, "either with us or against us " form of

argument are increasingly apparent leading to political, religious and social conflicts. Even the mounting ecological crisis is linked to adversarialism, because it arises from a false division between humanity and "the rest" of nature.

VARIOUS ASPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE

Âcârya Amrtacandra has described as to how the consequences of violence (karmas attracted) differ from person to persons for similar and different types of acts.

- A small violence may bring serious consequences to one person, while to another person grievous violence may bring about lesser consequences. For e.g., a person hunting and killing only one small animal suffers severe consequences while a person who is building a temple or hospital, suffers milder the karmic consequences even though such a building results in killing of many animals.
- Even when violence is jointly committed by two persons, the same act may result in severe consequence for one person and mild consequence for another person. This may happen in case where one person is the leader and planner of violence who binds severe karmas, while another who is simply a follower binds much lesser karmas.
- One who actually does not commit violence may be responsible for himsa while one who actually commits violence is not responsible for himsa. For instance a burglar who fails in his robbery is still a felon but a diligent surgeon who is trying to save a patient is not responsible for violence even if a patient dies during the surgery.
- Persons who have not committed violence may become responsible for violence committed by others. This may happen when a violence which is carried out by someone is approved and instigated by someone else.
- Ahinsâ often gives result of himsa to one and himsa may sometimes give result of Ahimsa to another. For instance, one person saves another from oppression by use of violence and hence enjoys consequences of Ahimsa although resorting to violence, while another does not act to save someone wishing that the other person is not saved and thus suffers the consequences of violence although he may have not actually done anything.

Dravya Himsa and Bhâva Himsa: Jaina Conception of Himsa

Types of Violence, While the Jain ascetics observe absolute non-violence, so far as a Jain householder is concerned, the violence is divided as follows:

1. Sankalpinî himsa or intentional violence—Intentional violence knowingly done is the worst form of violence and is a transgression of the laypersons vow of violence. Examples of sankalpinî himsa are killing for hunting, amusement or decoration, or butchering for food or sacrifice or killing or hurting out of enimity, malice or mischief. sankalpinî himsa has to be totally renounced by a householder.
2. Virodhinî himsa or self-defence—Virodhini himsa is committed for self-defence of self, property, family or country against violent attackers, robbers, or dacoits. A householder tries to avoid himsa at all cost, but in such cases it may be unavoidable and hence should be non-vindictive and kept to barest minimum.
3. Âambhinî (Graharambhi) himsa or domestic or household violence—This violence is unavoidable committed in the course of preparing food, household cleanliness, washing, construction of houses, wells etc.
4. Udyoginî himsa or Occupational Violence—This violence is connected to occupational undertakings like agriculture, building and operating industries etc.

While sankalpinî himsa has to be avoided at all costs, the other three types of himsa although unavoidable in some cases, should not exceed the strict requirements of fulfilling the duties of a householder. Furthermore, they should not be influenced by passions like anger, greed, pride and deceit or they take the character of sanpalkinî himsa.

Ways of Committing Violence

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that ahimsa only prohibited physical violence. An early Jain text says: "With the three means of punishment – thoughts, words, deeds – ye shall not injure living beings." In fact, violence can be committed by combination of the following four factors:

1. The instrumentality of our actions. We can commit violence by either through
   (a) body i.e. physical action,
   (b) speech i.e. verbal action, or
   (c) mind i.e. mental actions

2. The process of committing violence. This includes whether we
   (a) only decide or plan to act,
   (b) make preparations for the act e.g. like collecting necessary materials or weapons, or
   (c) actually begin the action
3. The modality of our action, including if we
   (a) we ourselves commit violence,
   (b) we instigate others to carry out the violence, or
   (c) we give our silent approval for the violence
4. The motivation for action. This includes which of the following negative emotions that the violence is motivated by.
   (a) Anger
   (b) Greed
   (c) Pride
   (d) Manipulation or deceit

Thus, violence is committed by a combination of any one element of the above four factors. Due to this, there are 108 ways with which the violence can be committed.

THE RATIONALE OF NON-VIOLENCE

According to Jainism, the purpose of non-violence is not simply because it is a commandment of a God or any other supreme being. Its purpose is also not simply because its observance is conductive to general welfare of the state or the community. While it is true that in Jainism, the moral and religious injunctions were laid down as law by the Gods or Arhats who have achieved perfection through their supreme moral efforts, their adherence is just not to please the Gods, but the life of the Arhats has demonstrated that such commandments were conductive to Arhat's own welfare, helping him to reach Godhood and perfection. Just as Arhats achieved perfection and Godhood by observing non-violence, so can anyone who follows this path.

Another aspect that provides a rational to the avoidance of himsa is that, any acts of himsa results in himsa to self. Any act of violence though outwardly is seen to harm others, harms the soul of the person indulging in the act. Thus, by an act of violence, a soul may or may not injure the material vitalities known as dravya prana of someone else, but always causes injury to its own bhâva prana or the psychic vitalities by binding the soul with karmas. It would be entirely wrong

to see Ahimsa in Jainism in any sentimental light. The Jain doctrine of non-injury is based on rational consciousness, not emotional compassion; on responsibility to self, not on a social fellow feeling. The motive of Ahimsa is totally self-centered and for the benefit of the individual. And yet, though the emphasis is on personal liberation, the Jain ethics makes that goal attainable only through consideration for others.

Furthermore, according to the Jain karmic theory, each and every soul, including self, has reincarnated as an animal, plant or micro-organism innumerable number of times besides re-incarnated as humans. The concept of Ahimsa is more meaningful when understood in conjunction with the concept of karmas. As the doctrine of transmigration of souls includes rebirth in animal as well as human form, it creates a humanitarian sentiment of kinship amongst all life forms. The motto of Jainism "Parasparopagraho jîvânâm" (translated as "all life is inter-related and it is the duty of souls to assist each other") also provides a rational approach of Jains towards Ahimsa.

In conclusion, the insistence of Ahimsa is not so much about non-injury to others as it is about non-injury and spiritual welfare of the self. The ultimate rational of Ahimsa is fundamentally is about karmic results of the himsa on self rather than the concern about the well-being of other beings for its own sake.

FRUITS OF NON-VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE

According to the Jain scriptures, the result of the observance of Ahimsa is good health, a strong body, and a strong constitution in the future life. There would be happiness, comforts, long life, a good name, handsome features, and an enjoyable youth.

The results of killing would be the opposite of these things, such as lameness, incurable disease, separation from friends and relatives, sorrow, short life, and after that, an incarnation in a low state (animal or hell). According to Hemacandra, diseases like leprosy and loss of limbs are the consequences of inflicting violence.

MISCONCEPTIONS ON NON-VIOLENCE

The Jain Scriptures discuss the misconceptions that are harboured in case of Ahimsa. They often opposed the Vedic beliefs in sacrifices and other practices that justified violence in various ways. Âcârya Amrtacandra's Purucârthasiddhyupâya and Âcârya Hemacandra's Yogaúâstra discusses these wrong beliefs at length to alert the Jain laity on such wrong beliefs. Following are such misconceptions that a Jain layman was advised to avoid.

Animal Sacrifices

Vedics believed that animals were created for yajna (sacrifice) and hence it was not considered a slaughter, as it elevated not only the person making the sacrifice, but also the animals. This belief was denounced by Hemacandra that those who mercilessly kill the animals under the pretext of offering the oblations to gods or for the sake of sacrifices are condemned to most terrifying existence in hells. Amrtacandra also condemned this practice by stating that it is a misconception to hold that Gods are pleased at sacrifices of living beings and there is no wrong in committing himsa for the sake of religion. It is a delusion to think that religion flourishes due to Gods and hence killing animals as sacrifices to gods is a perverted thinking.

Worshipping Violent Gods

Jain Âcâryas like Hemacandra, Somadeva, Jinasena also decried the worship of violent vedic Gods who demanded sacrifices of animals and glorified the killing of enemies. Âcârya Hemacandra says – "It is a matter of great grief that the gods who wield weapons such as bow and arrows, mace, disc, trident etc. are worshipped as true gods."

Oblations to Forefathers

Hemacandra discusses the Vedic beliefs of offering oblations to dead anscestors to please and satisfy their souls by sacrificing various animals. This was decried by Hemacandra as thus –

The vedic practice of offering sacrifices of animals to dead ancestors was also condemned by Jain Âcâryas.

Glory of Death on the Battlefield

The Hindu belief that the death in battlefield resulted in rebirth in heavens has been recorded in *Mahabharata* where Krsna tells Arjuna : "Slain you will attain heavens, conquering you will enjoy earth; Therefore rise, O Arjuna, resolved to do battle" (*Bhagavat Gita* ii 37)

However, according to Jainas death accompanied by hatred and violence can never lead to heavens. According to a story in *Bhagavati Sûtra*, all the 840,000 soldiers who perished in a war between Konika, the Magadhan emperor and other kings, were either reborn in hell or as animals. Only one person who maintained equanimity in the midst of death in battlefield was reborn in heaven.

Other Wrong Beliefs

Additionally Amrtacandra discusses the following wrong beliefs :

1. Animals should not be killed for guests or persons deserving respect as often advocated in certain scriptures.
2. It is also a wrong belief that wild animals that kill many other animals should be killed. This is often justified in the name of hunting of ferocious animals like tigers for sport.
3. Another wrong belief forwarded to justify killing of ferocious animals is that, these kill many lives and accumulate grave sins and hence killing them is an act of mercy. According to Jainism, killing can never be an act of mercy.
4. It is also a misconception to believe that it is advisable to kill those who are suffering so that they may get relief from agony. #These sorts of arguments are forwarded to justify killing of those animals that may have become old or injured and hence have become commercially useless.
5. Other wrong beliefs are killing those who are in state of happiness or those who are in meditation under wrong belief that the mental state at the time of death will be perpetuated in future lives.
6. It is also a wrong belief that killing of self and others is justified as the soul that is imprisoned in the body will be permanent released and achieve salvation.

NON-VIOLENCE AND VEGETARIANISM: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF AHIMSA

Ahimsâ, an important tenet of all the religions originating in India, is now considered as an article of faith by the adherents of the Indian religions. However, not much is known about the historical origins of Ahimsa and as to how it became widespread and got deeply entrenched in the Indian philosophy. Scholars speculate that the doctrine of Ahimsa was probably first developed amongst the native non-Aryan people in around third millennium BCE and was adopted by the brahamanas during the later Upanishadic period under the influence of sramanas. *The Vedas, the Manusmriti, the Dharmasutra and Mahabharata* contain many references on killing and slaughter of animals for sacrifices, oblations to dead ancestors, and as well as for various other occasions. However, as the doctrine of karma gained acceptance in the Hindu belief, the tenet of Ahimsa also gained prominence. Later Hindu scriptures condemn the slaughter of animals, upholding ahimsa as one of the highest ideal. Bal Gangadhar Tilak has credited Jainism with cessation of slaughter of animals in the brahamanical religion.

Not surprisingly, some scholars have traced the origin of Ahimsa to Jainas and their precursor, the sramanas. According to Thomas McEvilley, a noted Indologist, certain seals of Indus Valley civilisation depict a meditative figure surrounded by a multitude of wild animals, providing evidence of proto yoga tradition in India akin to Jainism. This particular image might suggest that all the animals depicted are sacred to this particular practitioner. Consequently, these animals would be protected from harm. This might be the first historical evidence of the practice of Ahimsa.

MOKSHA

Moksha 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 demi-gods, 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 worshipped 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. There will be more ifomation on Bunduism in the near future.

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.) One Moksha

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).

Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya is a practice whereby a person's life is dedicated to the quest for a personal realisation of Brahman. Alternatively, it is recognised as a life that expresses Brahman through one's actions and deeds.

Traditionally, such a life involved going to live with a spiritual teacher under whom the *brahmacari* (celibate) or chela (student) practised strict celibacy, a life of moral restraint and devotion to meditation. In the Hindu scheme of life *brahmacharya* starts around the age of 5, when the chela starts his/her studies. In the sramanic traditions of Buddhism and Jainism (both of which stood outside normal social convention) *brahmacharya* was practised generally by those who had already reached adulthood.

DERIVATION

The word *brahmacharya* stems literally from two components:

1. *Brahma*, the word for the absolute, eternal, never-born god-head.
2. *Acarya* composed of 'car'—"to go" and 'a'—"toward". Together this makes the word 'carya', which is often translated as activity, mode of behaviour, a 'virtuous' way of life. Acarya has meant in practice a teacher, spiritual guide, master etc and

So the word *brahmacharya* indicates a life lived in conformance with the deeper principles of realisation of Brahma-nature.

USAGE

The term *brahmacharya* has a number of uses.

One common usage denotes within the Vedic ashram system the particular phase that occupies the first 20 or 25 years of life. Ancient Hindu culture divides the human lifespan into 100 years. *Brahmacharya* is the stage when the young child leads a student life (ideally in the Gurukula, the household of the Guru). This stage of life is preceded by the child's Upanayanam, a ceremony in which the child is considered to take a *second birth. Brahmacharya* is the first of the four phases of human life, namely, *Brahmacharya*, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and finally Sannyasa, prescribed by Manusmriti for the dvija castes in the Hindu system of life. The practice of *brahmacharya* requires, among other codes of conduct, that one be celibate.

The word *brahmacharya* is also used for the vow of celibacy a Hindu *sannyasi*, or renunciate, may take at any age after understanding that living for material or sensual pleasures will never bring the perfect happiness the soul desires. Thus one's life becomes centered on surrender to Guru and God, with the firm hope of God realisation and the perfect divine happiness.

YOGA

The word *brahmacharya* is also understood broadly in yoga as "sexual continence," which can be understood as being applicable as appropriate in different contexts (e.g. faith in marriage, celibacy for spiritual aspirants etc), in more extreme terms (complete celibacy full stop) or in more specific terms in relation to preserving and sublimating male sexual energy rather than losing it through ejaculation.

In yoga, the term *brahmacharya* tends to take on a connotation of disciplining the use of and preserving sexual energy. *Brahmacharya* is discussed in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras as one of the 5 Yamas, the foundational commitments for the practice of yoga. According to the Yoga Sutras, the end-result or fruit of *Brahmacharya* practised to perfection is unbounded energy or vitality.

Many yogic techniques, such as meditation and asanas (e.g. shirsasana) can help one to achieve *Brahmacharya* interpreted as celibacy or strict control of sexual desires.

DIET AND AHIMSA

Brahmacharya is also observed to contain one's sensual desires for food and taste, as well as materialism. Most brahmacharis prescribe to avoiding the consumption of meat, spices and cooked foods, said to cultivate the taste buds and pleasure senses of the mind.

To terminate egotism and possessiveness, as a part of curbing one's aggressiveness and tendency to commit violence, one must cease to covet all material possessions.

MODERN BRAHMACHARIS

Most Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monks take the vow for life, committing themselves to work of religious service and study. Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian political and spiritual leader had embraced the vow and lifestyle permanently at age 38.

Many brahmacharis have the final goal of nirvana, or moksha in mind when they pursue strictly disciplined lifestyles.

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF BRAHMACHARYA

Brahmacharya can also be interpreted more generally in a variety of ways, such as:

- generally striving for excellence in all domains of activity and relationship
- pursuing 'virtue' however defined. *Brahmacharya* understood in this sense is similar to the classical Greek concept of arete (excellence)
- clearing underlying personality conflicts and centering oneself and ones spiritual journey in clear, well conceived and sustainable values (that is, thinking of *Brahmacharya* as an ongoing practice of 'clearing' analogous to resolving personality complexes and conflicts in psychotherapy)
- refining one's 'energies' (prana/chi/aura etc) in relation to other people generally, to become aware of more subtle energies and to take one's energies or 'vibration' higher

NIRVANA

Nirvâna is a Sanskrit word that literally means "to cease blowing" (as when a candle flame ceases to flicker) and/or *extinguishing* (that is, of the passions). It is a sramana philosophical concept, used by the Jains and the Buddhists, to describe the enlightenment and liberation of their respective teachers.

Nibbâna is a word used by the Buddha to describe the perfect peace of the mind that is free from craving, anger and other afflictive states (*kilesa*). This peace, which is in reality the fundamental nature of the mind, is revealed when the root causes of the afflictive states are dissolved. The causes themselves (*see sankhara*) lie deep within the mind (that part of the mind that Western psychology calls the unconscious) but their undoing is gradually achieved by living a disciplined life (see eightfold path). In Nibbana the root causes of craving and aversion have been extinguished such that one is no longer subject to human suffering (*dukkha*) or further states of rebirths in samsara. The Buddha in the Dhammapada says of Nirvana that it is "the highest happiness". This is not the sense-based happiness of everyday life, nor the concept of happiness as interpreted by Western culture, but rather an enduring, transcendental happiness integral to the calmness attained through enlightenment or *bodhi*. The knowledge accompanying nirvana is expressed through the word *bodhi*. In Jainism,

it means final release from the karmic bondage. When an enlightened human, such as, an Arhat or a Tirthankara extinguishes his remaining aghatiya karmas and thus ends his worldly existence, it is called Nirvana. Technically, the death of an Arhat is called Nirvana of Arhat, as he has ended his wordly existence and attained liberation. Moksa, that is to say, liberation follows Nirvana. An Arhat becomes a siddha, the liberated one, after attaining nirvana.

NIRVANA IN BUDDHISM

The Buddha explains Nirvana as "the unconditioned" (asankhata) mind, a mind that has come to a point of perfect lucidity and clarity due to the absence of volitional formations. This being is described by the Buddha as "deathlessness" (Pali: amata or amaravati) and as the highest spiritual attainment, the natural result that accrues to one who lives a life of virtuous conduct and practise in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path. Such a life dissolves the causes for future becoming (Skt, karma; Pali, kamma) that otherwise keep beings forever wandering through the impermanent and suffering-generating realms of desire, form, and formlessness, termed samsara.

Overview

Nirvâna in sutra is bhavanirodha nibbânam ("The cessation of becoming means Nirvâna"). Nirvâna in sûtra is never conceived of as a place (such as one might conceive heaven), but rather the antinomy of samsâra which itself is synonymous with ignorance (avidyâ, Pâli avijjâ). This said:

> "'the liberated mind (citta) that no longer clings' means Nibbâna" (Majjhima Nikaya 2-Att. 4.68).

Nibbâna is meant specifically—as pertains gnosis—that which ends the identity of the mind (citta) with empirical phenomena. Doctrinally Nibbâna is said of the mind which "no longer is coming (bhava) and going (vibhava)", but which has attained a status in perpetuity, whereby "liberation (vimutta) can be said".

It carries further connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. The realising of Nirvana is compared to the ending of avidyâ (ignorance) which perpetuates the will (cetana) into effecting the incarnation of mind into biological or other form passing on forever through life after life (samsara). Samsara is caused principally by craving and ignorance (see dependent origination). Nirvâna, then, is not a place nor a state, it is an absolute truth to be realised, and a person can do

so without dying. When a person who has realised Nirvâna dies, his death is referred as his parinirvâna, his fully passing away, as his life was his last link to the cycle of death and rebirth (samsara), and he will not be reborn again. Buddhism holds that the ultimate goal and end of samsaric existence (of ever "becoming" and "dying" and never truly being) is realisation of Nirvâna; what happens to a person after his pariNirvana cannot be explained, as it is outside of all conceivable experience.

In Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta the Buddha likens nibbana to the cessation and extinguishing of a fire where the materials for sustenance has been removed:

> "Profound, Vaccha, is this phenomenon, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise."
>
> "There is that dimension where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor stasis; neither passing away nor arising: without stance, without foundation, without support [mental object]. This, just this, is the end of stress."

Nirvâna and Samsâra

In Mahâyâna Buddhism, calling nirvâna the "opposite" of samsâra or implying that it is apart from samsâra is doctrinally problematic. According to early Mahâyâna Buddhism, they can be considered to be two aspects of the same perceived reality. By the time of Nâgârjuna, there are teachings of the identity of nirvâna and samsâra. However, even here it is assumed that the natural man suffers from at the very least a confusion regarding the nature of samsâra.

The Theravâda school makes the antithesis of samsâra and Nibbâna the starting point of the entire quest for deliverance. Even more, it treats this antithesis as determinative of the final goal, which is precisely the transcendence of samsâra and the attainment of liberation in Nibbâna. Where Theravada differs significantly from the Mahâyâna schools, which also start with the duality of samsâra and Nirvâna, is in not regarding this polarity as a mere preparatory lesson tailored for those with blunt faculties, to be eventually superseded by some higher realisation of non-duality. From the standpoint of the Pâli Suttas, even for the Buddha and the Arahants suffering and its cessation, samsâra and Nibbâna, remain distinct.

In the experience of all, Nirvâna is a state which all six bases (Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body and Mind) cannot feel.

It is probably best to understand the relationship between Nirvâna and samsâra in terms of the Buddha while on earth. Buddha was both in samsâra while having attained to Nirvâna so that he was seen by all, and simultaneously free from samsâra.

Nirvâna in Buddhist Commentaries

Sarvastivâdin commentary, Abhidharma-mahavibhâsa-sâstra, gives the complete context of the possible meanings from its Sanskrit roots:

- Vâna, implying the path of rebirth, + nir, meaning leaving off' or "being away from the path of rebirth."
- Vâna, meaning 'stench', + nir, meaning "freedom": "freedom from the stench of distressing kamma."
- Vâna, meaning "dense forests", + nir, meaning "to get rid of" = "to be permanently rid of the dense forest of the five aggregates" (panca skandha), or the "three roots of greed, hate and delusion" (lobha, dosa, moha) or "three characteristics of existence" (impermanence, anitya; unsatisfactoriness, dukkha, soullessness, anàtma).
- Vâna, meaning "weaving", + nir, meaning "knot" = "freedom from the knot of the distressful thread of kamma."

Nirvâna in the Mahâparinirvâna Sûtra

The nature of Nirvâna assumes a differently aspected Mahâyâna focus in the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra or Nirvana Sutra, which alleges to be the final of all Mahâyâna sutras, delivered—the sutra indicates—by the Buddha on his last day of life on earth. Here, as well as in a number of related "tathagatagarbha" sutras, in which the Tathagatagarbha is equated with the Buddha's eternal Self or eternal nature, Nirvâna is spoken of by the Mahâyâna Buddha in very "cataphatic", positive terms. Nirvâna, or "Great Nirvâna", is indicated to be the sphere or domain (vishaya) of the True Self. It is seen as the state which constitutes the attainment of what is "Eternal, the Self, Bliss, and the Pure". Mahânirvâna ("Great Nirvâna") thus becomes equivalent to the ineffable, unshakeable, blissful, all-pervading and deathless Selfhood of the Buddha himself—a mystery which no words can adequately reach and which, according to the Nirvâna Sutra, can only be fully known by an Awakened Being—a perfect Buddha—directly.

The Buddha of the Mahaparinirvâna Sutra gives the following definition of the attributes of Nirvâna, which includes the ultimate reality of the Self (not to be confused with the "worldly ego" of the five skandhas):

> "The attributes of Nirvâna are eightfold. What are these eight? Cessation (nirodha), loveliness/wholesomeness (subha), Truth (satya), Reality (tattva), eternity (nitya), bliss (sukha), the Self (atman), and complete purity (parisuddhi): that is Nirvâna."

He further states: "Non-Self is samsâra (the cycle of rebirth); the Self (atman) is Great Nirvâna."

An important facet of Nirvana in general is that it is not something that comes about from a concatenation of causes, that springs into existence as a result of an act of creation or an agglomeration of causative factors: it was never created; it always was, is and will be. But due to the moral and mental darkness of ordinary, samsarically benighted sentient beings, it remains hidden from unawakened perception. The Buddha of the Mahâparinirvânasûtra insists on its eternal nature and affirms its identity with the enduring, blissful Self, saying:

> It is not the case that the inherent nature of Nirvâna did not primordially exist but now exists. If the inherent nature of Nirvâna did not primordially exist but does now exist, then it would not be free from taints (âsravas) nor would it be eternally (nitya) present in nature. Regardless of whether there are Buddhas or not, its intrinsic nature and attributes are eternally present... Because of the obscuring darkness of the mental afflictions (kileúas), beings do not see it. The Tathâgata, endowed with omniscient awareness (sarvajñâ-jñâna), lights the lamp of insight with his skill-in-means (upâya-kauúalya) and causes Bodhisattvas to perceive the Eternal, Bliss, the Self, and the Pure of Nirvâna.

Vitally, according to these Mahâyâna teachings, any being who has reached Nirvâna is not blotted out or extinguished: there is the extinction of the impermanent and suffering-prone "worldly self" or ego, comprised the five changeful skandhas, but not of the immortal "supramundane" Self of the indwelling Buddha Principle [Buddha-dhatu]. Spiritual death for such a Nirvâna-ed being becomes an utter impossibility. The Buddha states in the "Mahâyâna Mahâparinirvâna Sutra" (Tibetan version): "Nirvâna is deathless... Those who have passed into Nirvâna are deathless. I say that anybody who is endowed with careful assiduity is not compounded and, even though they involve themselves in compounded things, they do not age, they do not die, they do not perish."

Paths to Nirvâna in the Pali Canon

In the Visuddhimagga, Ch. I, v. 6 (Buddhaghosa and Nagamoli, 1999, pp. 6-7), Buddhaghosa identifies various options within the Pali canon for pursuing a path to Nirvana, including:

by insight (vipassana) alone (see Dh. 277)

by jhana and understanding (see Dh. 372)

by deeds, vision and righteousness (see MN iii.262)

by virtue, consciousness and understanding (7SN i.13)

by virtue, understanding, concentration and effort (see SN i.53)

by the four foundations of mindfulness (see Satipatthana Sutta, DN ii.290)

Depending on one's analysis, each of these options could be seen as a reframing of the Buddha's Threefold Training of virtue, mental development and wisdom.

Quotations

Gautama Buddha:

"Nirvana is the highest happiness." [Dp 204]

"Where there is nothing; where naught is grasped, there is the Isle of No-Beyond. Nirvana do I call it—the utter extinction of aging and dying."

"There is, monks, an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated. If there were not that unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, there would not be the case that emancipation from the born—become—made—fabricated would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, emancipation from the born—become—made—fabricated is discerned." [Udana VIII.3]

This said: 'the liberated mind/will (citta) which does not cling' means "Nibbâna" [MN2-Att. 4.68]

"'The subjugation of becoming means Nirvana'; this means the subjugation of the five aggregates means Nirvana." [SN-Att. 2.123]

"Parinibbuto thitatto"—"PariNirvana is to be fixed in the Soul" [Sn 372]

Said immediately after the physical death of Gautama Buddha wherein his mind (citta) is =pariNirvana=the essence of liberation:

[DN 2.157] "No longer with (subsists by) in-breath nor out-breath, so is him (Gotama) who is steadfast in mind (citta), inherently quelled

from all desires the mighty sage has passed beyond. With mind (citta) limitless (Brahman) he no longer bears sensations; illumined and unbound (nibbana), his mind (citta) is definitely (ahu) liberated."

[SN 3.45] "The mind (citta) being so liberated and arisen from defilements, one is fixed in the Soul as liberation, one is quelled in fixation upon the Soul. Quelled in the Soul one is unshakable. So being unshakable, the very Soul is thoroughly unbound (pariNirvana)."

Sutta Nipâta, tr. Rune Johansson:
accî yathâ vâtavegena khitto
atthaa paleti na upeti sankhaa
evaa muni nâmakâyâ kimutto
atthaa paleti na upeti sankhaa
atthan gatassa na pamâgam atthi
ynea naa vajju taa tassan atthi
sabbesu dhammesu samûhatesu
samûhatâ vâdapathâpi sabbe

Like a flame that has been blown out by a strong wind goes to rest and cannot be defined, just so the sage who is freed from name and body goes to rest and cannot be defined.

For him who has gone to rest there is no measure by means of which one could describe him; that is not for him. When all (dharmas) have gone, all signs of recognition have also gone.

Venerable Sariputta:

The destruction of greed, hatred and delusion is Nirvana.

NIRVANA IN JAINISM

Nirvana in Jainism means:-

1. Death of an Arhat, who becomes liberated thereafter, and
2. Moksa

Description of Nirvana of a Tirthankara in Jain Texts

Kalpasutra gives an elaborate account of Mahavira's Nirvana.

"The aghatiya Karma's of venerable Ascetic Mahavira got exhausted, when in this Avasarpini era the greater part of the Duhshamasushama period had elapsed and only three years and eight and a half months were left. Mahavira had recited the fifty-five lectures which detail the results of Karma, and the thirty-six unasked questions (the Uttaradhyana Sutra). The moon was in

conjunction with the asterism Svati, at the time of early morning, in the town of Papa, and in king Hastipala's office of the writers, (Mahivira) single and alone, sitting in the Samparyahka posture, left his body and attained nirvana, freed from all pains." (147)

In the fourth month of that rainy season, in the seventh fortnight, in the dark (fortnight) of Karttika, on its fifteenth day, in the last night, in the town of Papa, in king Hastipala's office of the writers, the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died, went off, cut asunder the ties of birth, old age, and death; became a Siddha, a Buddha, a Mukta, a maker of the end (to all misery), finally liberated, freed from all pains. (123)

That night in which the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira died, freed from all pains, was lighted up by many descending and ascending gods. (125)

In that night in which the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira, died, freed from all pains, the eighteen confederate kings of Kasi and Kosala, the nine Mallakis and nine Licchavis, on the day of new moon, instituted an illumination on the Poshadha, which was a fasting day; for they said: 'Since the light of intelligence is gone, let us make an illumination of material matter!'(128)

Nirvana as Moksa

Uttaradhyana Sutra provides an account of Gautama explaining the meaning of Nirvana to Kesi a disciple of Parsva.

"There is a safe place in view of all, but difficult of approach, where there is no old age nor death, no pain nor disease. It is what is called Nirvâna, or freedom from pain, or perfection, which is in view of all; it is the safe, happy, and quiet place which the great sages reach. That is the eternal place, in view of all, but difficult of approach. Those sages who reach it are free from sorrows, they have put an end to the stream of existence. (81-4)

APARIGRAHA

Aparigraha is the concept of non-possessiveness, being both a Jain concept and a part of the Raja Yoga or Ashtanga Yoga traditions. The term usually means to limit possessions to what is necessary or important, which changes with the time period, though sadhus would not have any possessions.

It is one of the five principles of Jainism, along with Ahimsa (non-violence), Asteya (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), and Anekantavada (multiplicity of viewpoints)[*citation needed*]. It is also one of the five limited vows.

In the Raja Yoga tradition, it is one of the Yamas or codes of self-restraint, along with Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (not stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy).

ANEKANTAVADA

Anekantavada is a basic principle of Jainism developed by Mahavira (599-527 BC) positing that reality is perceived differently from different points of view, and that no single point of view is completely true. Jain doctrine states that only Kevalis, those who have infinite knowledge, can know the true answer, and that all others would only know a part of the answer. Anekantavada is related to the Western philosophical doctrine of Subjectivism. 'Ekanta' is one-sidedness. Anekantavada is literally the doctrine of non-onesidedness; it is often translated as "non-absolutism".

Anekantavada encourages its adherents to consider others' views or beliefs. They should not reject a view simply because it uses a different perspective. They should consider the fact there may be truth in others' views too. Many proponents of Anekantavada apply the principle to religion and philosophy themselves, reminding adherents that any religion or philosophy, even Jainism, that clings too dogmatically to its own tenets is committing an error based on its limited point of view. In this application, Anekantavada resembles the Western principles of cultural and moral relativism.

JAIN PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

KEVALA JNANA

Kevala Jñâna in Jainism, also known as "absolute knowledge", "Enlightenment" and "Omniscience" is the highest form of knowledge that a soul can attain. It is derived from two words – Kevala, which means "absolute or perfect" and Jñâna, which means "knowledge". Kevala is the state of isolation of the jîva from the ajîva attained through ascetic practices which burn off one's karmic residues, releasing one from bondage to the cycle of death and rebirth. Kevala Jñâna, thus means infinite knowledge of self and non-self, attained by a soul after annihilation of the all ghâtiyâ karmas. A person who has attained Kevala Jñâna is called a Kevali. He is also known as Jina (the victor) or Arhat (the worthy one). A Tirthankara is also a kevali who preaches the Jain doctrine and establishes the Jaina order. The soul who has reached this stage achieves moksa or liberation at the end of his life span.

JÑÂNA – KNOWLEDGE

According to Jainism, pure and absolute knowledge is an intrinsic and indestructible quality of all souls. However, on account of

accumulation of different types JñânâvaraGîya karmas, this quality of soul loses potency and becomes obscured. Following are the types of knowledge:

Type of Knowledge	*Description*	*Obscured by*
Mati-Jñâna	The knowledge through the medium of the five senses	Mati Jñânâvaranîya karma
Sruta Jñâna	The knowledge which is based on the interpretation of signs, the understanding of speech, words, writings, gestures, etc.	Sruta Jñânâvaranîya karma
Avadhi Jñâna	Clairvoyance, the transcendental knowledge of corporeal things, occurring without the medium of organs.	Avadhi Jñânâvaranîya karma
Manahparyaya Jñâna	Extrasensory perception, the transcendental knowledge of the thoughts of others, occurring without the medium of organs.	Manahparyaya Jñânâvaranîya karma
Kevala Jñâna	Unlimited, absolute, direct Omni-science, perfect and highest form of knowledge and perception	Kevala Jñânâvaranîya karma

While other types of knowledge are prone to error on account of delusion, only Kevala Jñâna is perfect and free from all errors.

TWO ASPECTS OF KEVALA JÑÂNA

Kevala Jñâna means complete realisation of self and non-self i.e. omniscience. A person who attains Kevala Jñâna, realises the true nature of his soul. He remains engrossed in his true self. He is free from all desires and detached from all worldly activities, as he has achieved the highest objective that can be achieved by the soul.

Kevala Jñâna means complete knowledge of all the activities and objects in the universe.

Jain texts describe the omniscience of Mahavira in this way:-

"*When the Venerable Ascetic Mahavira had become a Jina and Arhat, he was a Kevali, omniscient and comprehending all objects; he knew and saw all conditions of the world, of gods, men, and demons: whence they come, whither they go, whether they are born as men or animals or become gods or hell-beings (upapada), the ideas, the thoughts of their minds, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all the living beings in the whole world; he the Arhat, for whom there is no secret, knew and saw all conditions of all living beings in the world, what they thought, spoke, or did at any moment. (121)*"

THE KEVALA JÑÂNA OF MAHAVIRA

Mahavira is said to have practised rigorous austerities for 12 years before he attained enlightenment:

> "*During the thirteenth year, in the second month of summer, in the fourth fortnight, the light (fortnight) of Vaisakha, on its tenth day, when the shadow had turned towards the east and the first wake was over, on the day called Suvrata, in the Muhurta called Vigaya, outside of the town Grimbhikagrama on the bank of the river Rjupalika, not far from an old temple, in the field of the householder Samaga, under a Sal tree, when the moon was in conjunction with the asterism Uttaraphalguni, (the Venerable One) in a squatting position with joined heels, exposing himself to the heat of the sun, after fasting two and a half days without drinking water, being engaged in deep meditation, reached the highest knowledge and intuition, called Kevala, which is infinite, supreme, unobstructed, unimpeded, complete, and full. (120)*"

Kevala Jñâna is one of the five major events in life of a Tirthankara and is known as Jñâna Kalyanaka and celebrated by all gods. Mahavira's Kaivalya was celebrated by the demi-gods, who constructed the Samosarana or a grand preaching assembly for him.

KEVALA JÑÂNA AND MOKSA

Kevala Jñâna and Moksa are intricately related. Moksa or liberation can only be attained by the enlightened beings who have attained Kevala Jñâna. After the death or nirvana of a Kevalin, he becomes a Siddha, or a liberated soul in a state of infinite bliss, knowledge, perception and power. It is a permanent and irreversible state, free from sufferings, births and death. It is a state of permanent untrammeled bliss.

OMNISCIENCE OR KEVALA JÑÂNA AND SUPREME NON-ATTACHMENT OR VÎTARÂGA

There is a direct relationship between Supreme Non-attachment and Omniscience. In the higher stages of meditation or dhyâna, one first attains the state of Vîtarâga wherein one is completely freed of all feelings of attachment to all else other than one's soul. Once a permanent state of Vîtarâga is achieved, omniscience follows. This is because omniscience is the basic nature of the soul and it is merely clogged by the presence of the 8 types of karmas in the soul. The attainment of Vîtarâga ensures that the 4 types of destructive karmas are dissociated from the soul permanently. Hence, since the destructive karmas are not present in the soul any more, the soul attains omniscience, its natural attribute.

JAIN COSMOLOGY

UNIVERSAL HISTORY AND JAIN COSMOLOGY

According to Jain beliefs, the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. Time is divided into Utsarpinis (Progressive Time Cycle) and Avsarpinis (Regressive Time Cycle). An Utsarpini and a Avsarpini constitute one Time Cycle (Kalchakra). Every Utsarpini and Avsarpini is divided into six unequal periods known as Aras. During the Utsarpini half cycle, ethics, progress, happiness, strength, age, body, religion, etc., go from the worst conditions to the best. During the Avsarpini half-cycle, these notions deteriorate from the best to the worst. Jains believe we are currently in the fifth Ara of the Avsarpini phase, with approximately 19,000 years until the next Ara. After this Avsarpini phase, the Utsarpini phase will begin, continuing the infinite repetition of the Kalchakra.

When this cycle reaches its lowest level (in the current half-cycle: the sixth Ara), Jainism, as well as all religions, will be lost entirely. During this time, all humans will be sinners with short life spans, ugly appearances, and no sense of ethics. Due to this, all individuals during this time will be born in Hell. The world will be a rotting wasteland with little food or water. Then, on the next upswing (start of the Utsarpini half-cycle), the Jain religion will be revived and reintroduced by new Tirthankars (literally "Crossing Makers" or "Ford Finders"), only to be lost again at the end of the next downswing.

Jains also believe that at the upswing of each time cycle, people will lose religion again. All things people want will be given by wish-granting trees, and all people will be born in sets of twins with one boy and one girl who live with each other for the rest of their lives.

The first Tirthankar of this era was Lord Rishabh Dev. In our ara, the twenty-third Tirthankar was an ascetic teacher named Parshva, whose traditional birth and death years are set at 877-777 B.C.E., i.e., 250 years before the liberation of the last Tirthankar, Lord Mahavir, in 527 B.C.E. Jains regard all Tirthankars as reformers who called for a return to beliefs and practices in accord with the eternal universal philosophy upon which the faith is based. The title Bhagavan ("Lord"), applied to Mahavir and all other Tirthankars, means Venerable.

The twenty-fourth and final Tirthankar of this Avsarpini was named Vardhaman but was called Mahâvîr, the Great Hero (599-527 B.C.E.). A wandering ascetic teacher, he recalled Jains to the rigorous practice of their ancient faith.

Jains believe that reality consists of two eternal principles, jiva and ajiva. Jiva consists of infinite identical spiritual units (life); while ajiva (non-jiva) is matter in any form or condition: time, space, rest, matter and energy, and movement. These five, together with Jiva, are known as the Six Substances. Matter and energy were known by Jains to have been interchangeable long before Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity.

Both jiva and ajiva are considered eternal; they are never born or created for the first time and will never cease to exist. Much of the world is made up of jiva trapped in ajiva; there are jivas in rocks, plants, insects, animals, human beings, spirits, etc.

Any contact between jiva and ajiva causes the former to suffer, and Jains believe that worldly existence inevitably entails some suffering. Neither social nor individual reform can totally stop suffering. Every organism, including humans, has jiva and suffers because of its contact with ajiva. To avoid suffering, jiva must leave the four gatis (stages) of Human Life, Heavenly Bodies, Plants/Animals/Insects/Fish Life, and Hell, while remembering the ultimate aim of liberation.

Karma and transmigration keep jiva in contact with ajiva. Liberation from the human condition is difficult. Jiva suffers during its infinite reincarnations. Jains believe that every action, good or evil, opens up sense channels (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell), through which karma adheres to the jiva within, affecting its body, obscuring the mind and senses, and determining the conditions of its next reincarnation.

The consequence of evil actions is negative karma (Pap), which weighs the jiva down, forcing it to continue reincarnating at low levels. Good deeds lead to positive karma (Punya), allowing jiva to rise higher in its next life with less suffering. However, good deeds alone can never lead to liberation, as liberation requires for there to be no karma, not even Punya, bonded to the soul. As the soul becomes more and more advanced, it progresses through fourteen steps to liberation called Gunasthanaks.

The way to moksha (release or liberation) is believed to be withdrawal from the world. Karma means cause-and-effect and hence every action has consequences which can only be escaped by penance, or Tapascharya. All Karmas, good or bad, must be shed to attain moksha, since all Karma, good or bad, has consequences and keeps jiva chained in endless reincarnations which lead to suffering to a

greater or lesser extent. Liberation warrants prevention and eradication of new karma.

At the end of his or her life, a liberated soul (in the Jain belief, a Siddha), with no karma to weigh it, will rise free of ajiva, free of the human condition and of all future embodiments. Jain doctrine states that it will rise to the highest place in the universe, Siddhashila, where jiva, identical with all other pure jivas, will experience its own true nature in eternal stillness, aloneness, liberation and eternal bliss. The way to discard karma is to withdraw from worldly involvement and close the senses and the mind to prevent karma. Such eternal liberation frees Jiva from Pudgala (matter) so that no new reincarnation occurs. Thus, one attains moksha or the final liberation. Ignorance (mithyâtva) causes attachment, while true knowledge (Kevalgnân) leads to liberation. Jains believe that moksha is possible for humans in the third and fourth Aras of every Utsurpini and Avsarpini.

SAMSARA

Samsara or 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 Samsara 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 Samsara 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, Samsara 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.

KARMA IN JAINISM

According to Jainism, Karma means that every action, every word, every thought produces, besides its visible, an invisible, transcendental effect. The word karma is commonly understood to mean "action," but implies both action and reaction. However, Karma in Jainism conveys a totally different meaning as commonly understood in the Hindu philosophy and western civilisation. It is not the so called inaccessible mystic force that controls the fate of living beings in some inexplicable way. It does not mean "deed", "work", nor invisible, mystical force (adrsta), but a complexes of very fine matter, imperceptible to the senses, which interacts with the soul and causes great changes in it. The karma, then, is something material (*karmapaudgalam*), which produces in the soul certain conditions, even as a medical pill which, when introduced into the body, produces therein manifold effects. Hermann Kuhn, quoting from Umasvati's *Tattvartha Sutra*, describes karma as "…a mechanism that makes us thoroughly experience the themes of our life until we gained optimal knowledge from them and until our emotional attachment to these themes falls off."

According to Robert J. Zydenbos, Jainism can be considered a kind of system of laws, but natural rather than moral laws. In Jainism, actions that carry moral significance are considered to cause certain consequences in just the same way as, for instance, physical actions that do not carry any special moral significance. When one holds an apple in one's hand and then lets go of the apple, the apple will fall:

this is only natural. There is no judge, and no moral judgment involved, since this is a mechanical consequence of the physical action.

According to Jainism, consequences occur when one does something that is harmful. Rather than assume that moral rewards and retribution are the work of a divine judge, the Jains believe that there is an innate moral order to the cosmos, self-regulating through the workings of karma. Morality and ethics are important not because of a god, but because a life that is led in agreement with moral and ethical principles is considered beneficial; it leads to a decrease and finally to the total loss of karma, which in turns leads to ever increasing happiness. In these ways it is similar to some other Dharmic religions, especially Buddhism.

As all actions have consequences, some immediate, some delayed, others in future incarnations, the doctrine of karma must be considered not in relation to one life only, but with an understanding of reincarnation. In fact, it forms a central and fundamental part of Jain faith and is intricately connected to other concepts like transmigration, reincarnation, liberation, *ahimsa*, and non-attachment to name a few. Hence it is not surprising that since ages Jains have produced abundant of doctrinal material dealing with the karmic mechanism, causes of karmas, types of karmas, nature and duration of karmas, liberation from karmas and like.

THE CONCEPT: MATERIAL KARMIC PARTICLES

In Jainism, karma is referred to as karmic dirt, as it consists of very subtle and microscopic particles that cannot be perceived by our senses i.e. pudgala that pervade the entire universe. They are so small that one space-point (smallest possible extent of space) contains infinite times infinite karmic particles. These material Karmas are called dravya karma and the resultant emotions of pleasure, pain, love, hatred etc are called bhaav karma i.e. psychic karmas. The relationship between the material karmas and psychic karmas is that of cause and effect. The material karmas give rise to the feelings and emotions in the worldly souls, which, in turn, cause the influx and bondage of fresh material karmas.

Karmic matter is actually the agent that enables us (our consciousness) to act within the material context of this universe. When attracted to our consciousness, they are stored in our interactive karmic field i.e. karmic sharira. They are attracted to the soul on account of vibrations created by activities of mind, speech and body and stick to the soul due to various mental dispositions. Thus, the karmas are the

subtle matter surrounding the consciousness of a soul. When these two components i.e. consciousness and karma interact, we experience the life as we know it at present.

MECHANISM OF KARMA

Karmas are often wrongly interpreted as a method for reward and punishment of a soul for its good and bad deeds. In Jainism, there is no question of there being any reward or punishment, as each soul is the master of its own destiny. The karmas can be said to represent a sum total of all unfulfilled desires of a soul. They enable the soul to experience the various themes of the lives that it desires to experience. They ultimately mature when the necessary supportive conditions required for maturity are fulfilled. Hence, a soul may transmigrate from one life form to another for countless of years, taking with it the karmas that it has earned, until it finds conditions that bring about the fruits. Similarly, heavens and hells are often viewed as places for eternal happiness or eternal damnation for good and bad deeds. But according to Jainism and some other Dharmic religions, they, including earth, are simply the places which allow the soul to temporarily experience its unfulfilled desires.

For example, a person who is good and virtuous all his life indicates a latent desire to experience good and virtuous themes of life. Therefore, he attracts karmas that will ensure that his future births allow him to experience and manifest his virtues and good feelings unhindered. In this case, he may take birth in heaven or in a prosperous and virtuous human family. A person who has always indulged in immoral deeds with a cruel disposition indicates a latent desire to experience cruel themes of life. As a natural consequence, he will attract karmas which will ensure that he is reincarnated in hell to enable him to experience the cruel themes of life unhindered, as the environment in hell is conducive of such life. There is no retribution, judgment or reward involved.

Hence whatever suffering or pleasure that a soul may be experiencing now is on account of choices that it has made in past. That is why Jainism stresses pure thinking and moral behaviour. Apart from Buddhism, Jainism may be the only religion that does not invoke the fear of God as a reason for moral behaviour.

KARMIC PROCESS

A soul is in bondage with karma since beginingless time. It is not thought that soul was originally pure and that at certain point of time

it lost purity by attracting karma. As such Jainism is not concerned with the fall of man. The soul is in association with the karmas by continuous attraction and disintegration of karmic particles. The entire karmic process can be understood by understanding as to what causes the karmic bondage, what is the nature and duration of karmic bonds, how the karmas bear fruit, how the karmas can be modified and how one can attain release from the karmas.

Causes of Karmic Bondage

Irrationality (*mithyatva*), non-restraint (*avirati*), carelessness (*pramada*), passions (*kashaya*) and activities of mind, speech and body (*yoga*) result in karmic bondage. The influx of karmas is called *asrava* and the resultant bondage is called *bandha*. According to Jainism, even the mental disposition of a person results in the karmic bondage. For example, an intense desire to kill also attracts the karmic particles and results in the karmic bondage even if no one is actually killed. Hence, Jains attach a lot of importance to purity of thought.

The *Tattvartha Sutra* identifies the following elements in the process of attachment of karmas:

- Activity (*yoga*) attracts the karmic matter to our consciousness
- Negative emotions like anger, pride, greed and deceit cause the bondage between the karma and our consciousness.
- The nature and intensity of our emotions determine the strength of these bonds i.e. nature, duration and quantity of the karmas so attracted.

The karmas are attracted to the consciousness of the soul by combination of the following four factors:

1. The instrumentality of our actions. We act by either through
   (a) body i.e. physical action,
   (b) speech i.e. verbal action, or
   (c) mind i.e. thoughts
2. The process of action. This includes whether we
   (a) only decide or plan to act,
   (b) make preparations for the act e.g. like collecting necessary materials, or
   (c) actually begin the action
3. The modality of our action, including if we

(a) we ourselves carry out the act,

(b) we instigate others to carry out the act, or

(c) we give our silent approval for the act

4. The motivation for action. This includes which of the following negative emotions that action is motivated by.

(a) Anger

(c) Greed

(c) Pride

(d) Manipulation or deceit

Thus a karma is attached to a soul in a combination of any one element of the above four factors. Due to this, there are 108 ways with which the karmas are attracted.

Experiencing the Effects of the Karmas

How one experiences the effects of the karma depends on:

- Prikriti—The nature or type of karma.
- Stithi—The duration of the karmic bond. Up to the time it does not activate, the karmic bond remains latent and bounded to our consciousness. Although latent karma does not affect the soul directly, its existence alone limits spiritual growth.
- Anubhava – Intensity of karmas. This determines the power of karmas and its effect on the soul.
- Pradesha – Quantity of karmic matter that gets activated.

Duration, intensity and quantity are determined by the intensity of our emotional engagement at the time of the binding of the karmas. The type or nature of the karmas bound depends on the nature of the activity that bound the karma in first place.

How the Karmas Bear Results

The consequences of karma are inevitable. The consequences may take some time to take effect but the karma is never fruitless. To explain this, a Jain monk, Ratnaprabhacharya once said, "The prosperity of a vicious man and misery of a virtuous man are respectively but the effects of good deeds and bad deeds done previously. The vice and virtue will have their effects in their next lives. In this way the law of causality is not infringed here."

The latent karma becomes active and bears fruit when the supportive conditions arise. A great part of attracted karma bears its consequences

with minor fleeting effects, as generally most of our activities are influenced by mild negative emotions. However, those actions that are influenced by intense negative emotions cause an equally strong karmic attachment which usually does not bear fruit immediately. It takes on an inactive state and waits for the supportive conditions as to time, place, and environment to arise for it to manifest and produce effects. If the supportive conditions do not arise, the respective karmas will manifest at the end of maximum period for which it can remain bound to the soul. There are certain laws of precedent among the karmas according to which the fruition of some of the karmas may be deferred but not absolutely barred.

Modifications of Karma

While Jainas hold the karmic concequences as inevitable, Jain texts also hold that it is possible to transform and modify the effects of the karmas. The following are the states and transformation of karmas as described in Pancha Sangrah by 9th Century Jain Acharya Chandrsi Mahattar:

1. *Udaya*—operation of karmas, or the state of fruition of karmas and the state where the karmic effects are felt.
2. *Udirana*—premature operation, such as when certain karmas become operative before their predetermined time. When a certain karma is already operative, similar type of karma can be made operative.
3. *Utkarshan*—augmentation, or subsequent increase in duration and intensity of the karmas due to additional negative emotions and feelings.
4. *Apkarshan*—diminution, or subsequent decrease in duration and intensity of the karmas due to positive emotions and feelings.
5. *Sankraman*—mutation, or conversion of one sub-type of karmas into another sub-type. Mutation does not occur between types. For example, paap (bad karma) can be converted into punya (good karma), both being of same sub-type.
6. *Upashaman*—state of subsidence. During this state the operation of karma does not occur. The karma becomes operative only when the duration of subsidence ceases.
7. *Nidhatti*—prevention, or state where premature operation and mutation is not possible but augmentation and diminution is possible.

8. *Nikaachana*—invariance. For some sub-types, no transformation or modifications are possible, the consequences are the same as were established at the time of bonding.

It is evident that according to Jain karma theory, our thoughts and feelings are quite important, not only at the time of binding the karmas, but also for its operation and modifications.

Release from Karmas

Once attached to the karmic field, the karmas drop off only after they bear the necessary fruits or results for the soul (Udaya). It is possible to stop the influx of karmas (*samvara*) as well as shed the karmas (*nirjara*) by maintaining equanimity and detachment and by practising penance and repentance for various deeds. This leads to liberation and this is the basis of Jain philosophy. According to Jainism, the influx, bondage, stoppage, and shedding of karmas and salvation are solely functions of the soul. Unlike in Hinduism, God has no role to play in Jainism as a dispenser of karmas.

According to Jainism, karmic consequences are unerringly certain and inescapable. No divine grace can save a person from experiencing its consequences. Only practice of complete equanimity and detachment and practice of austerities can modify or alleviate the consequences of the karmas. In some cases there is no option but to accept the karmas with equanimity. Some Jain stories show how even Mahavira had to bear the brunt of his previous karmas before attaining enlightenment.

TYPES OF KARMAS

There are eight types of karmas, categorised into four *Ghatiya* and four *Aghatiya* karmas.

Ghatiya Karmas

These directly affect the attributes of the soul. These are:

1. Knowledge-obscuring karma (*Jnanavarniya karma*)—These karmas obscure the knowledge attribute of the soul.
2. Perception-obscuring karma (*Darshanavarniya karma*)—These karmas diminish the powers of Perception of a soul.
3. Deluding karma (*Mohaniya karma*)—These karmas are an instrumental cause of destruction the soul's right belief and right conduct. Of all karmas, deluding karma is the most difficult to overcome. Once this is eradicated, liberation is ensured.

4. Obstructing karma (*Antaraya karma*)—The fruition of these karmas creates obstructions to giving donations, obtaining gains, and enjoying things.

When Ghatiya karmas are totally destroyed, the soul attains *kevaljnana* or omniscience. Liberation is guaranteed for such souls in the same lifetime as soon it burns off the Aghatiya karmas also.

Aghatiya Karmas

These do not affect the soul directly; rather, they have an effect on the body that houses the soul. These are:

1. Lifespan-determining karma (*Ayu karma*)—These karmas determine the subsequent states of existence and lifespan therein after death. The soul gets locked either into subhuman (Tiryanch), infernal (Naraki), human (Manushya), or celestial (Dev) bodies for its next birth.
2. Body-determining karma (*Nama karma*)—These karmas determine the type of body occupied by the soul.
3. Status-determining karma (*Gotra karma*)—The fruition of these karmas gives one high status or low status in society.
4. Feeling-producing karma (*Vedaniya karma*)—These karmas become an instrumental cause of the interruption of the soul's uninterrupted happiness (Avyabadh sukha). As a result of this, the soul remains agitated.

As soon as the soul releases Aghatiya karmas, it attains *moksha* or liberation.

Each of these types has various sub-types. The Tattvartha Sutra generally speaks of 148 types and sub-types of karmas.

Duration of Karmas

The maximum duration of attachment of karma is 70 *kotakoti sagaropama* and minimum time is less than one *muharta*. The maximum and minimum time for which the karmas remain bound to our consciousness depends on the type of karma which is as follows:

Type of Karma	*Maximum duration*	*Minimum duration*
Jnanvarniya Karma	30 Kotakoti Sagaropama (3000 trillion sagaropama years)	<1muhurta (less than 48 minutes)
Darsanavarniya Karma	30 Kotakoti Sagaropama (3000 trillion sagaropama years)	<1muhurta (less than 48 minutes)

Mohaniya Karma	70 Kotakoti Sagaropama (7000 trillion sagaropama years)	<1muhurta (less than 48 minutes)
Antraya Karma	30 Kotakoti Sagaropama (3000 trillion sagaropama years)	<1muhurta (less than 48 minutes)
Ayu Karma	33 Sagaropama (33 sagaropama years)	<1muhurta (less than 48 minutes)
Nama Karma	20 Kotakoti Sagaropama (2000 trillion sagaropama years)	8 Muhurta (6 hrs and 24 min)
Gotra Karma	20 Kotakoti Sagaropama (2000 trillion sagaropama years)	8 Muhurta (6 hrs and 24 min)
Vedniya Karma	30 Kotakoti Sagaropama (3000 trillion sagaropama years)	12 Muhurta (9 hrs and 36 min)

RATIONALE OF KARMIC THEORY

Jains cite inequalities, sufferings, and pain as evidence for the existence of Karma. The theory of karma is able to explain day-to-day observable phenomena such as inequality between the rich and the poor, luck, differences in lifespan, and the ability to enjoy life despite being immoral. These disparities and sufferings can be explained as being on account of previously accumulated karmas.

Jains believe that they never have to be apologetic about sufferings, pain and unhappiness as God's creations, nor do they need to believe in Satan as a creator of evil. Instead, they believe each individual is empowered by making himself responsible for his own happiness as well as salvation.

RELATIONSHIP OF KARMA WITH OTHER CONCEPTS

The Jain theory of karma is consistent with other concepts like soul, reincarnation, *Ahimsa*, God, and *moksha*. Reincarnation and transmigration of the soul ensures that the karmas are carried forward to the next lives to bear fruits when conditions are right. The concept of *ahimsa* or non-violence is also consistent with karmic theory. As the doctrine of transmigration of souls includes rebirth in animal as well as human form, it creates a humanitarian sentiment amongst all life forms. The law of karma also effectively precludes God as creator and operator of universe.

ORIGINS AND DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER PHILOSOPHIES

Origins

While the doctrine of karma is central to all religions originating in India, it is difficult to say when and where the concept of karma

originated in India. The doctrine of Karma does not appear in the Rigveda and became a part of Hinduism only during 500-200 B.C.E.

With regards to its origins, Dr. Padmanabh Jaini observes, "Perhaps the entire concept that a person's situation and experiences are in fact the results of deeds committed in various lives may not be Aryan origin at all, but rather may have developed as a part of the indigenous Gangetic traditions from which the various shramana movements arose. In any case we shall see, Jaina views on the process and possibilities of rebirth are distinctly non-Hindu; the social ramifications of these views, moreover, have been profound."

According to Dr. H. V. Glasenapp, of the conception of karmic theory, the most realistic of all that have had their origin in India is that of the Jains. The fundamental idea that the soul, pure in itself, is polluted through its actions and must be freed from its stain in order to regain its natural state is an idea which is also found in other religions, but which, while it has remained with them as an allegorical expression, has been adopted by the Jains in the real sense of the word. Others disagree with this opinion for various reasons.

Dr. T. G. Kalghatgi observes that karma doctrine must have been a pre-Aryan doctrine which was developed by the shramana culture and later assimilated and developed in the Brahminic thought by time of *Upanishads*. Ninian Smart also observes, "The Indian view of the karma is doubtless of pre-Aryan prominence and it was a kind of a natural law."

Differences with other Philosophies

With regards to differences with other philosophies, Dr. Padmanabh Jaini states that "this emphasis on reaping the fruits only of one's own karma was not restricted to the Jainas; both Hindus and Buddhist writers have produced doctrinal materials stressing the same point. Each of the latter traditions, however, developed practices in basic contradiction to such belief. In addition to sradhha (the ritual Hindu offerings by the son of deceased), we find among Hindus widespread adherence to the notion of divine intervention in one's fate, while Buddhists eventually came to propound such theories like boon-granting bodhisattvas, transfer of merit and like. Only Jainas have been absolutely unwilling to allow such ideas to penetrate their community, despite the fact that there must have been tremendous amount of social pressure on them to do so."

Remaining true to the karma philosophy, the attempts to dilute the theory of karma by Hindu and Buddhist philosophies by introducing the concepts of divine will, transfer of karmas through food, and inheritance of karmas were strongly resisted by Jains.

This had wide social consequences in the beliefs and practices of Jains. Besides rejecting various Vedic rituals and beliefs, it further fortified the Jaina belief in Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possession) and Anekantavada (multiplicity of view points)

To summarise, the following are the key points where the theory of Karma in Jainism differs from the other religions:

1. Karma in Jainism operates as a self-sustaining mechanism as natural universal law, without any need of an external entity to manage them. (absence of the exogenous "Divine Entity" in Jainism)
2. Jainism advocates that a soul's karma changes even with the thoughts, and not just the actions. Thus, to even think evilly would endure a "karm-bandh" or an increment in bad karma. It is for this reason that Jainism places a very strong emphasis on "samyak dhyan" (rationality in thought) and "samyak darshan" (rationality in perception), not just "samyak charitra" (rationality in conduct).
3. Under Jain theology, a soul is released of worldly affairs as soon as it is able to emanicipate from the "karm-bandh". A famous illustration is that of Mata Marudevi, the mother of Shri Rishabh Dev, the first Tirthankar of present time cycle, who reached such emanicipation by elevating sequentially her thought processes, while she was visiting her Tirthankar son. This illustration explains how "Nirvana" and "Moksha" are different in Jainism, from other religions. In the presence of a Tirthankar, another soul achieved kevalgnan and subsequently nirvana, without any need of intervention by the Tirthankar.
4. The karmic theory in Jainism operates endogenously. Tirthankaras are not attributed "godhood" under Jainism. Thus, even the Tirthankaras themselves have to go through the stages of emancipation, for attaining that state. While Buddhism does give a similar and to some extent a matching account for Shri Gautama Buddha. Hinduism maintains a totally different theory where "divine grace" is needed for emancipation.

5. Jainism treats all souls equally, inasmuch as that it advocates that all souls have the same potential of attaining nirvana. Only those who make an effort really attain it, but nonetheless, each soul is capable on its own to do so by gradually reducing its karma. Buddhism also holds similar beliefs.

CRITICISM OF KARMA THEORY

The Jain theory of Karma has been debated and criticised by various ancient philosophies like the Vedics, Buddhists, Samkhyas, and in recent times, Christian missionaries.

The adamant position of the Jains on the supremacy and potency of the karmas and non-intervention by any supreme being on the fate of souls led the Vedics to label Jainism as "nastika" or atheistic.

Similar reasons led Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, an Irish missionary, to declare that "the heart of Jainism is empty". While making a fervent appeal to accept Christianity, she says that Jains strongly believe in duty of forgiving others, and yet have no hope of forgiveness by a higher power for them.

A strong emphasis on the doctrine of karma and intense asceticism was also criticised by the Buddhists, even though they also believe in karma. The ancient Buddhist scripture of Samyutta Nikâya narrates the story of Asibandhakaputta, a headman who was originally a disciple of Mahavira. In the ensuing debate with the Buddha, Asibandhakaputta tells him that, according to Nigantha Nataputta (Mahavira), a man's fate or karma is decided by what he does habitually. The Buddha points out the absurdity of this view by stating that a sinner spends more time "not doing the sin" and only some time is spent in actually "doing the sin." In another Buddhist text Majjhima Nikaya, Buddha criticises the Jain emphasis on destruction of some unobservable and unverifiable karmas as a means to end suffering rather than eliminate evil mental states such as greed, hatred and delusion, which are observable and verifiable. The Buddha also rejected the Jain theory of the present events and experiences on account of previous karmas as unreasonable. According to him many things are the result of our own deeds done in this present life rather than previous lives and also of external causes other than karmas.

While admitting the complexity and sophistication of the Jain doctrine, Padmanabh Jaini compares it with that of Hindu doctrine of rebirth and points out that the Jain seers are silent on the exact moment and mode of rebirth, that is, the re-entry of soul in womb after the

death. The concept of *nitya-nigoda*, which states that there are certain categories of souls who have always been nigodas, is also criticised. According to Jainism, nigodas are lowest form of extremely microscopic beings having a momentary life spans, living in colonies and pervading the entire universe. According to Dr. Jaini, the entire concept of nitya-nigoda undermines the concept of karma, as these beings clearly would not have had prior opportunity to perform any karmically meaningful actions.

Karma is said to lead to the dampening of spirits with men suffering the ills of life with helpless equanimity of attitude because the course of one's life is determined by karma. Thus, the impression of karma as the accumulation of a mountain of bad deeds looming over our heads without any recourse leads to fatalism. However, as Paul Dundas puts it, the Jain theory of karma is undoubtedly much more elaborately thought out and systematic than its equivalent in Hinduism or Buddhism, but this does not imply lack of free will or operation of total deterministic control over destinies.

SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION OF KARMA

Jainism postulated the existence of karmic matter as extremely subtle and microscopic particles that cannot be perceived by senses or measurements some two millennia before modern science proved the existence of atoms and subatomic particles. However, these elementary particles, or at least those that have been discovered, certainly cannot be equated with karmic particles. Some authors have sought to explain the concept of karmic particles in the context of modern science and physics. Hermann Kuhn points out that while the idea that "karmic molecules" exists may not yet be proven, we only need to recall that science found proof of the existence of molecules in 1906 and atoms in 1920. Anyone who would have suggested that these "indivisible" particles were made up of even subtler units like quarks and leptons only a hundred years ago may have been dismissed, though such theories were in existence. With regards to interaction of consciousness and karmic matter, he states that it can be easily understood considering that ideas like the mind fundamentally affecting matter are now accepted in scientific circles. He further states, "…that science has not discovered karmic matter yet does not state anything against its existence." K. V. Mardia, in his book *The Scientific Foundations of Jainism*, has interpreted karma in terms of modern physics, suggesting that the particles are made of karmons, dynamic high energy particles which permeate the universe. However, most scientists do not consider karma theory to

be within the bounds of science, as many believe it is a non-testable idea and so cannot be considered science.

DHARMA (JAINISM)

Jain texts assign a wide range of meaning to the word Dharma or Prakrit. It is often translated as "religion" and as such, Jainism is called as Jain Dharma by its adherents.

The word Dharma encompasses the following meanings in Jainism:

1. The true nature of a thing
2. Rationality of perception, knowledge and conduct
3. Ten virtues like forgiveness, etc. also called ten forms of Dharma
4. Ahimsa – protection to all living beings
5. Two paths – of the monks and the laity
6. Dharma as a substance or a reality.

THE NATURE OF A SUBSTANCE

According to Jainism, Universe and its constituents are uncreated and everlasting. These constituents behave according to the natural laws and their nature without interference from external entities. Dharma or true religion according to Jainism is vatthu sahâvo dhammo translated as "the intrinsic nature of a substance is its true dharma." Kârtikeyânupreksâ (478) explains it as : "Dharma is nothing but the real nature of an object. Just as the nature of fire is to burn and the nature of water is to produce a cooling effect, in the same manner, the essential nature of the soul is to seek self-realisation and spiritual elevation."

SAMYAKTVA—RATIONALITY OF PERCEPTION, KNOWLEDGE AND CONDUCT

According to Jainism, Samyak Darsana (Rational Perception), Samyak Jnana (Rational Knowledge) and Samyak Caritra (Rational Conduct) collectively also known as Ratnatraya or the three Jewels of Jainism constitute true Dharma. According to Umasvati, Samyak Darsana, Jnana Caritra together constitutes moksamarga or the path to liberation. Samyak Darsana or rational perception is the rational faith in the true nature of every substances of the universe.

Samyak Jnana or rational knowledge is the right knowledge of true and relevant knowledge of the reality, the tattvas. It incorporates the two principles of Anekantavada or non-absolutism and Syadvada

or relativity of truth. Right knowledge must be free from three main defects: doubt, delusion, and indefiniteness

Samyak Caritra or rational conduct is the natural conduct of a (soul) living being. It consists in following austerities, engaging in right activities and observance of vows, carefulness and controls.

TEN VIRTUES AS DHARMA

The following ten virtues constitute true Dharma-

1. Supreme forgiveness
2. Supreme humility
3. Supreme straightforwardness
4. Supreme truthfulness
5. Supreme purity
6. Supreme self-restraint
7. Supreme penance
8. Supreme renunciation
9. Supreme non-possessiveness
10. Supreme celibacy

AHIMSA AS DHARMA

According to Jain texts, Ahimsa is the greatest Dharma and there is no religion equal to the religion of non-violence.

TWOFOLD PATH OF ASCETICS AND LAYPERSONS

Dharma is the twofold path of Sravakadharma i.e. the path for laypersons and Sramanadharma i.e the path of the ascetics or mendicants. Sravakadharma is the religious path for the virtuous householders, where charity and worship are the primary duties. The dharma of a householders consists of observance of twelve vows i.e. five minor vows and seven disciplinary vows. Sramanadharma is the religious path of the virtuous ascetics, where meditation and study of scriptures their primary duty. The religion of monks consists of five Mahavratas or great vows. They are endowed with right faith, right knowledge and right conduct and engaged in complete self-restraint and penances.

DHARMA-TATTVA AND DHARMASTIKAYA

Dharma is one of the six substances constituting the universe. These substances are – Dharma (medium of motion), Adharma (medium

of rest), Akasa (space), Kala (time), Pudgala (matter) and Jiva (soul). Since Dharma as a substance extends and pervades entire universe, it is also known as Dharmastikaya. It helps the matter and souls in movement. It itself is not motion, but is a medium of motion. Adharma is opposite of Dharma i.e. it assists the substances like soul and matter to rest.

REINCARNATION

Reincarnation, literally "to be made flesh again", is a doctrine or metaphysical belief that some essential part of a living being (in some variations only human beings) survives death to be reborn in a new body. This essential part is often referred to as the Spirit or Soul, the 'Higher or True Self', 'Divine Spark', 'I' or the 'Ego' (not to be confused with the ego as defined by psychology). According to such beliefs, a new personality is developed during each life in the physical world, but some part of the being remains constantly present throughout these successive lives as well.

Belief in reincarnation is an ancient phenomenon. This doctrine is a central tenet within the majority of Indian religious traditions, such as Hinduism (including Yoga, Vaishnavism, and Shaivism), Jainism, and Sikhism. The idea was also entertained by some Ancient Greek philosophers. Many modern Pagans also believe in reincarnation as do some New Age movements, along with followers of Spiritism, practitioners of certain African traditions, and students of esoteric philosophies such as Kabbalah, Sufism and Gnostic and Esoteric Christianity. The Buddhist concept of Rebirth although often referred to as *reincarnation* differs significantly from the Hindu-based traditions and New Age movements in that there is no "self" (or eternal soul) to reincarnate.

During recent decades, a significant minority of people in the West have developed a belief in reincarnation. Feature films, such as *Kundun* and *Birth*, contemporary books by authors such as Carol Bowman and Vicki Mackenzie, as well as popular songs, regularly mention reincarnation. Some researchers, such as Professor Ian Stevenson, have explored the issue of reincarnation and published suggestive evidence. Some skeptics are critical of this work and others say that more reincarnation research is needed.

EASTERN RELIGIONS AND TRADITIONS

Eastern philosophical and religious beliefs regarding the existence or non-existence of an enduring "self' have a direct bearing on how

reincarnation is viewed within a given tradition. There are large differences in philosophical beliefs regarding the nature of the soul (also known as the jiva or atman) amongst the Dharmic Religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Some schools deny the existence of a "self', while others claim the existence of an eternal, personal self, and still others say there is neither self or no-self, as both are false. Each of these beliefs has a direct bearing on the possible nature of reincarnation, including such concepts as samsara, moksha, nirvana, and bhakti.

Hinduism

In India the concept of reincarnation is first recorded in the *Upanishads* (c. 800 BCE), which are philosophical and religious texts composed in Sanskrit.

According to Hinduism, the soul (atman) is immortal, while the body is subject to birth and death. The *Bhagavad Gita* states that:

> Worn-out garments are shed by the body; Worn-out bodies are shed by the dweller within the body. New bodies are donned by the dweller, like garments.

The idea that the soul (of any living being—including animals, humans and plants) reincarnates is intricately linked to karma, another concept first introduced in the *Upanishads*. Karma (literally: action) is the sum of one's actions, and the force that determines one's next reincarnation. The cycle of death and rebirth, governed by karma, is referred to as samsara.

Hinduism teaches that the soul goes on repeatedly being born and dying. One is reborn on account of desire: a person *desires* to be born because he or she wants to enjoy worldly pleasures, which can be enjoyed only through a body. Hinduism does not teach that all worldly pleasures are sinful, but it teaches that they can never bring deep, lasting happiness or peace (*ânanda*). According to the Hindu sage Adi Shankaracharya—the world as we ordinarily understand it—is like a dream: fleeting and illusory. To be trapped in Samsara is a result of ignorance of the true nature of being.

After many births, every person eventually becomes dissatisfied with the limited happiness that worldly pleasures can bring. At this point, a person begins to seek higher forms of happiness, which can be attained only through spiritual experience. When, after much spiritual practice (sâdhanâ), a person finally realises his or her own divine nature—i.e., realises that the true "self" is the immortal soul rather

than the body or the ego—all desires for the pleasures of the world will vanish, since they will seem insipid compared to spiritual *ânanda*. When all desire has vanished, the person will not be reborn anymore.

When the cycle of rebirth thus comes to an end, a person is said to have attained moksha, or salvation. While all schools of thought agree that moksha implies the cessation of worldly desires and freedom from the cycle of birth and death, the exact definition of salvation depends on individual beliefs. For example, followers of the Advaita Vedanta school (often associated with jnana yoga) believe that they will spend eternity absorbed in the perfect peace and happiness that comes with the realisation that all existence is One (Brahman), and that the immortal soul is part of that existence. The followers of full or partial Dvaita schools ("dualistic" schools, such as bhakti yoga), on the other hand, perform their worship with the goal of spending eternity in a loka, (spiritual world or heaven), in the blessed company of the Supreme being (i.e. Krishna or Vishnu for the Vaishnavas, Shiva for the Shaivites).

Jainism

In Jainism, particular reference is given to how devas (gods) also reincarnate after they die. A Jainist who accumulates enough good karma may become a deva, but this is generally seen as undesirable since devas eventually die and one might then come back as a lesser being. This belief is also exists in a number of other schools of Hinduism.

Sikhism

In Sikhism reincarnation is a central tenet. The Sikhs believe that the Soul has to transmigrate from one body to another as part of an evolution process of the Soul. This evolution of the Soul will eventually result in a union with God upon the proper purification of the spirit. If one does not perform righteous deeds, one's soul will continue to cycle in reincarnation forever. A being who has performed good deeds and actions in his or her life is transmigrated to a better and higher life form in the next life until the soul of the being becomes Godlike. From a human life form, if one performs the proper functions of a Gurmukh, the person can achieve salvation with God. One must cleanse the soul by reciting Naam, by remembrance of Waheguru and by following the path of Gurmat.

Buddhism

The Buddha taught a concept of rebirth that was distinct from that of any Indian teacher contemporary with him. This concept was

consistent with the common notion of a sequence of related lives stretching over a very long time, but was constrained by two core Buddhist concepts: anattâ, that there is no irreducible âtman or "self" tying these lives together; and anicca, that all compounded things are subject to dissolution, including all the components of the human person and personality. At the death of one personality, a new one comes into being, much as the flame of a dying candle can serve to light the flame of another.

Since according to Buddhism there is no permanent and unchanging self (identify) there can be no transmigration in the strict sense. However, the Buddha himself referred to his past-lives. Buddhism teaches that what is reborn is not the person but that one moment gives rise to another and that that momentum continues, even after death. It is a more subtle concept than the usual notion of reincarnation, reflecting the Buddhist concept of personality existing (even within one's lifetime) without a "soul".

Buddhism never rejected samsara, the process of rebirth, but suggests that it occurs across six realms of beings. It is actually said to be very rare for a person to be reborn in the immediate next life as a human. However, Tibetan Buddhists do believe that a new-born child may be the rebirth of some important departed lama.

Taoism

Taoist documents from as early as Han Dynasty stated that Lao Zi appeared on earth in different persons in different times beginning from the time of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. An important scripture of Taoism, the Chuang Tzu (4th century BC), states: "Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end. There is existence without limitation; there is continuity without a starting point. Existence without limitation is space. Continuity without a starting point is time. There is birth, there is death, there is issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form, that is the Portal of the Divine." (Zhuang Zi, 23)

WESTERN RELIGIONS AND TRADITIONS

Classical Greek Philosophy

Among the ancient Greeks, Socrates, Pythagoras, and Plato may be numbered among those who made reincarnation an integral part of their teachings. At the end of his life, Socrates said, "I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living

spring from the dead." Pythagoras claimed he could remember his past lives, and Plato presented detailed accounts of reincarnation in his major works.

In the Hermetica, a Graeco-Egyptian series of writings on cosmology and spirituality attributed to Hermes Trismegistus/Thoth the doctrine of reincarnation is also central.

Judaism

Reincarnation has been a part of Judaism since at least the time of Flavius Josephus' *War of the Jews* (C.E. 66-73). Flavius Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, writes about the Pharisees, "they say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies,—but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment". While ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Socrates attempted to prove the existence of reincarnation through philosophical proofs, Jewish mystics who accepted this idea did not. Rather, they offered explanations of why reincarnation would solve otherwise intractable problems of theodicy (how to reconcile the existence of evil with the premise of a good God).

The idea of reincarnation, called *gilgul*, became popular in folk belief, and is found in much Yiddish literature among Ashkenazi Jews. Among a few kabbalists, it was posited that some human souls could end up being reincarnated into non-human bodies. These ideas were found in a number of Kabbalistic works from the 1200s, and also among many mystics in the late 1500s. Martin Buber's early collection of stories of the Baal Shem Tov's life includes several that refer to people reincarnating in successive lives.

Among well-known (generally non-kabbalist or anti-kabbalist) Rabbis who rejected the idea of reincarnation are the Saadia Gaon, Hasdai Crescas, Yedayah Bedershi (early 14th century), Joseph Albo, Abraham ibn Daud, the Rosh and Leon de Modena. The Saadia Gaon, in Emunoth ve-Deoth, concludes Section vi with a refutation of the doctrine of metempsychosis (reincarnation). While refuting reincarnation, the Saadia Gaon states that Jews who hold to reincarnation have adopted non-Jewish beliefs. Crescas writes that if reincarnation were real, people should remember details of their previous lives.

While many Jews today do not believe in reincarnation, the belief is common in Orthodox Judaism. Most Orthodox siddurim (prayerbooks) have a prayer asking for forgiveness for one's sins that one may have committed in this *gilgul* or a previous one.

Gnosticism

Many Gnostic groups believed in reincarnation. For them, reincarnation was a negative concept: Gnostics believed that the material body was evil, and that they would be better off if they could eventually avoid having their 'good' souls reincarnated in 'evil' bodies.

Christianity

The overwhelming majority of mainstream Christian denominations reject the notion of reincarnation and consider the theory to challenge basic tenets of their beliefs. Many churches do not directly address the issue, but indirectly, through teachings about death (see Particular judgment). A few consider the matter open to individual interpretation due to the few biblical references which survived the purging of texts considered to be heretical in the founding years of Christianity as a church. New Age Christians contend that reincarnation was taught by the early Christian church, but due to bias and mistranslations, these teachings were lost or obscured. Most of the philosophies associated with the theory of reincarnation focus on "working" or "learning" through various lifetimes to achieve some sort of higher understanding or state of "goodness" before salvation is granted or acquired. Basic to Roman Catholicism is the doctrine that humans can never achieve the perfection God requires and the only salvation is total and complete forgiveness accomplished through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross wherein he took the sins of mankind. There seems to be evidence however that some of the earliest Christian sects such as the Sethians and followers of the Gnostic Church of Valentinus believed in reincarnation, and they were persecuted by the Romans for this.

A number of Evangelical and (in the USA) Fundamentalist Christian groups have denounced any belief in reincarnation as heretical, and explained any phenomena suggestive of it as deceptions of the devil. Although the Bible never mentions the word *reincarnation*, there are several passages through New Testament that Orthodox Christians interpret as openly rejecting reincarnation or the possibility of any return or contact with this world for the souls in Heaven or Hell (see Hebrews 9:27 and Luke 16:20-31)

The Bible contains passages in the New Testament that could be interpreted to allude to reincarnation. In Matthew 11:10-14 and 17:10-13, Jesus says that John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah who had lived centuries before, and he does not appear to be speaking metaphorically. However, it should be noted that Elijah never actually "died," but

was "raptured" in a chariot of fire. Furthermore, the prophetic texts stated that God would send Elijah back to Earth, as a harbinger of Jesus Christ. As cousins they were born respectively to barren Elizabeth and Zacharias; Jesus, firstborn of Mary and Joseph, was the first to rise from the dead visibly demonstrating his power over death.

There are various contemporary attempts to entwine Christianity and reincarnation. Geddes Macgregor, wrote a book called *Reincarnation in Christianity : A New Vision of Rebirth in Christian Thought*, Rudolf Steiner wrote *Christianity as Mystical Fact* and Tommaso Palamidessi wrote *Memory of Past Lives and Its Technique* which contains several methods which are supposed to help in obtaining memories from previous lives.

Several Christian denominations which support reincarnation include the Christian Community, the Liberal Catholic Church, Unity Church, The Christian Spiritualist Movement, the Rosicrucian Fellowship and Lectorium Rosicrucianum. The Medieval heretical sect known variously as the Cathars or Albigensians who flourished in the Languedoc believed in Reincarnation, seeing each soul as a fallen angel born again and again into the world of Matter created by Lucibel (Lucifer). Only through a Gnostic 'Rebirth' in the Holy Spirit through Christ could the soul escape this process of successive existences and return to God.

Islam

Though mainstream Islam rejects the concept of reincarnation, a number of sufi groups believe in reincarnation, claiming that this concept is mentioned in the Qur'an (Koran), the central religious text of Islam:

"How can you deny God, when you were dead and God gave you life? Then God will cause you to die, and then revive you, and then you will be returned to God." (Qur'an 2:28)

Most Islamic authorities reject this interpretation of the verse, claiming that it refers to the worldly human life and the consequent resurrection in the hereafter.

It is claimed by some sufi groups that the mystics and poets in the Islam tradition have celebrated this belief:

"I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was man.

Why should I fear?
When was I less by dying?"

Modern Sufis who embrace the idea of reincarnation include Bawa Muhaiyadeen (see his *To Die Before Death: The Sufi Way of Life*) and Hazrat Inayat Khan.

Reincarnation has also been used to reconcile the Quran's apparent identification of Miriam, the mother of Isa as the sister of Aaron and daughter of Amran, all of whom lived well before the first century CE.

Another verse of the Qur'an that may support the theory of reincarnation is: "Thou [God] makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living, and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure." (Qur'an 3:27)

Some verses of Qur'an that seem to discount repeated lives:

- "From the (earth) did We Create you, and into it Shall We return you, And from it shall We Bring you out once again." (The Qur'an, 20:55).
- "And Allah has produced you from the earth, Growing (gradually), And in the End He will return you Into the (earth), And raise you forth (Again at the Resurrection)." (The Qur'an, 71:17-18).
- "Nor will they there Taste Death, except the first Death; and He will preserve Them from the Penalty Of the Blazing Fire." (The Qur'an, 44:56).
- "Is it (the case) that We shall not die, except our first death, And that we Shall not be punished?' Verily this is The supreme achievement! For the like of this Let all strive, Who wish to strive." (The Qur'an, 37:58-61).

Native American Nations

Reincarnation is an intrinsic part of many Native American and Inuit traditions. In the now heavily Christian Polar North (now mainly parts of Greenland and Nunavut), the concept of reincarnation is enshrined in the Inuit language. The survival of the concept of reincarnation applies across these nations in varying degrees of integrity, as these countries are now sandwiched between Native and European traditions

Norse Mythology

Reincarnation also appears in Norse mythology, in the *Poetic Edda*. The editor of the *Poetic Edda* says that Helgi Hjörvarðsson and his mistress, the valkyrie Sváfa, whose love story is told in the *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, were reborn as Helgi Hundingsbane and the valkyrie Sigrún. Helgi and Sigrún's love story is the matter of a part of the *Völsunga saga* and the lays *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I and II*. They were reborn a second time as Helgi Haddingjaskati and the valkyrie Kára, but unfortunately their story, *Káruljóð*, only survives in a probably modified form in the *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*.

The belief in reincarnation was probably commonplace among the Vikings since the annotator of the *Poetic Edda* wrote that people formerly used to believe in it, but that it was in his (Christian) time considered "old wife's folly":

Sigrun was early dead of sorrow and grief. It was believed in olden times that people were born again, but that is now called old wives' folly. Of Helgi and Sigrun it is said that they were born again; he became Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she Kara the daughter of Halfdan, as is told in the Lay of Kara, and she was a Valkyrie.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Modern Thinkers

During the Renaissance, a new flowering of public interest in reincarnation occurred. One of the prominent figures in the revival was Italy's leading philosopher and poet Giordano Bruno, who was ultimately sentenced to be burned at the stake by the Inquisition because of his teachings about reincarnation.

During the classical period of German literature metempsychosis attracted much attention: Goethe played with the idea, and it was taken up more seriously by Lessing, who borrowed it from Charles Bonnet, and by Herder. It has been mentioned with respect by Hume and by Schopenhauer.

Irish poet and Nobel Laureate William Butler Yeats proposed a novel theory of reincarnation in his occult treatise A Vision. According to Yeats' view reincarnation does not occur within a framework of linear time. Rather, all of a person's past and future lives are happening at once, in an eternal now moment; and the decisions made in any of these lifetimes influence all of the other lives (and are influenced by them).

Anthroposophy

Reincarnation plays an important role in the ideas of Anthroposophy, a spiritual movement founded by Rudolf Steiner. Steiner described the human soul as gaining new experiences in every epoch and in a variety of races or nations. The unique personality, with its weaknesses and abilities, is not simply a reflection of the body's genetic heritage. Though Steiner described the incarnating soul as searching for and even preparing a familial lineage supportive of its future life, a person's character is also determined by his or her past lives.

Anthroposophy describes the present as being formed by a tension between the past and the future. Both influence our present destiny; there are events that occur due to our past, but there are also events that occur to prepare us rightly for the future. Between these two, there is space for human free will; we create our destiny, not only live it out, just as we build a house in which we then choose to live.

Anthroposophy has developed various spiritual exercises that are intended to develop the capacity to discern past lives and the deeper nature of the human being. In addition, Steiner investigated the karmic relationships of many historical individuals, from Karl Marx to Julian the Apostate.

Theosophy

Modern theosophy, which draws its inspiration from India, has taken reincarnation as a cardinal tenet; it is, according to a recent theosophical writer, "the master-key to modern problems," including heredity.

Scientology

Past reincarnation, usually termed "past lives", is a key part of the principles and practices of the Church of Scientology. Scientologists believe that the human individual is actually an immortal thetan, or spiritual entity, that has fallen into a degraded state as a result of past-life experiences. Scientology auditing is intended to free the person of these past-life traumas and recover past-life memory, leading to a higher state of spiritual awareness. This idea is echoed in their highest fraternal religious order, the Sea Organisation, whose motto is "Revenimus" or "We Come Back", and whose members sign a "billion-year contract" as a sign of commitment to that ideal. L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, does not use the word "reincarnation" to describe its beliefs, noting that: "The common definition of reincarnation

has been altered from its original meaning. The word has come to mean 'to be born again in different life forms' whereas its actual definition is 'to be born again into the flesh of another body.' Scientology ascribes to this latter, original definition of reincarnation."

The first writings in Scientology regarding past lives date from around 1951 and slightly earlier. In 1960, Hubbard published a book on past lives entitled *Have You Lived Before This Life*. In 1968 he wrote *Mission Into Time*, a report on a five-week sailing expedition to Sardinia, Sicily and Carthage to see if specific evidence could be found to substantiate L. Ron Hubbard's recall of incidents in his own past, centuries ago.

Edgar Cayce

American mystic Edgar Cayce promoted the theory of both reincarnation and karma, but wherein they acted as instruments of a loving God as well as natural laws—the purpose being to teach us certain spiritual lessons. Animals are said to have undifferentiated, "group" souls rather than individuality and consciousness. Once the soul evolves through a succession of animal incarnations and achieves human status, it is not then reborn in animal form. Cayce's view arguably incorporates Theosophical teachings on spiritual evolution.

Seth and Jane Roberts

In a series of books purportedly dictated through the medium Jane Roberts, a discarnate entity called Seth said that both humans and animals reincarnate, after which they move on to other planes of existence. Seth said that time and space are "root assumptions" of the physical plane (i.e., they are essentially illusions) and that all lives are actually lived simultaneously in a "spacious present" which includes all past and future events. Man is a multi-dimensional being who has an inner self, an outer self, and a dreaming self (among others). With each new life, a new outer self is born, which then becomes part of the whole self once the life has ended.

Henry Ford

Henry Ford was convinced he had lived before, most recently as a soldier killed at the battle of Gettysburg. A quote from the San Francisco Examiner from August 26, 1928 described Ford's beliefs:

"I adopted the theory of Reincarnation when I was twenty-six. Religion offered nothing to the point. Even work could not give me complete satisfaction. Work is futile if we cannot utilise the experience

we collect in one life in the next. When I discovered Reincarnation it was as if I had found a universal plan I realised that there was a chance to work out my ideas. Time was no longer limited. I was no longer a slave to the hands of the clock. Genius is experience. Some seem to think that it is a gift or talent, but it is the fruit of long experience in many lives. Some are older souls than others, and so they know more. The discovery of Reincarnation put my mind at ease. If you preserve a record of this conversation, write it so that it puts men's minds at ease. I would like to communicate to others the calmness that the long view of life gives to us."

George S. Patton

General George S. Patton was a staunch believer in reincarnation and, along with many other members of his family, often claimed to have seen vivid, lifelike visions of his ancestors. In particular, Patton believed he was a reincarnation of Carthaginian General Hannibal.

The New Age Movement

There are people who say they remember their past lives and use that knowledge to help them with their current lives; the belief in this kind of occurrence is central to the New Age movement. Some of the people who remember, say they simply remember without any effort on their part. They simply "see" previous times and see themselves interacting with others, occasionally even different creatures besides people themselves.

Popular Western Culture

Reincarnation seems to have captured the imagination of many in the West, and the idea of reincarnation receives regular mention in feature films, popular books, and popular music. A great many feature films have made reference to reincarnation, and notable films include:

- *Audrey Rose* (1977)
- *Birth* (2004)
- *Dead Again* (1991)
- *Defending Your Life* (1991)
- *Fluke* (1995)
- *Karz* (1980)
- *Kudrat* (1980)
- *Kundun* (1997)

- *Little Buddha* (1993)
- *Mahal* (1949)
- *Reincarnation* (2005)
- *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (1984)
- *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975)
- *The Three Lives of Thomasina* (1964)
- *What Dreams May Come* (1998)
- *Om Shanti Om* (2007)

Many popular books have made reference to reincarnation. These include several books by Vicki Mackenzie and Carol Bowman, as well as others on the reference list below.

Notable popular songs or albums which refer to reincarnation include:

- "The Reincarnation of Benjamin Breeg" by Iron Maiden
- "The Reincarnation Song" by Roy Zimmerman
- *Eternal Caravan of Reincarnation* by Santana
- *The Reincarnation of Luna* by My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult
- *Highwayman* by The Highwaymen
- *Tommy* by The Who
- "Galileo" by The Indigo Girls

Reincarnation is subject of *Thursday's fictions*, a cross media work which has transmigrated across the delivery platforms of stage spectacle (1995), book (1999), film (2006), 3D online immersive story word in Second Life (2007), and machinima series (2007).

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Thomas Huxley, the famous English biologist, thought that reincarnation was a plausible idea and discussed it in his book *Evolution and Ethics and other Essays.* The most detailed collections of personal reports in favor of reincarnation have been published by Professor Ian Stevenson, from the University of Virginia, in books such as *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.

Stevenson spent over 40 years devoted to the study of children who have apparently spoken about a past life. In each case, Professor Stevenson methodically documented the child's statements. Then he identified the deceased person the child allegedly identified with, and verified the facts of the deceased person's life that matched the child's

memory. He also matched birthmarks and birth defects to wounds and scars on the deceased, verified by medical records such as autopsy photographs.

In a fairly typical case, a boy in Beirut spoke of being a 25-year-old mechanic, thrown to his death from a speeding car on a beach road. According to multiple witnesses, the boy provided the name of the driver, the exact location of the crash, the names of the mechanic's sisters and parents and cousins, and the people he went hunting with — all of which turned out to match the life of a man who had died several years before the boy was born, and who had no apparent connection to the boy's family.

Stevenson believed that his strict methods ruled out all possible "normal" explanations for the child's memories. However, it should be noted that a significant majority of Professor Stevenson's reported cases of reincarnation originate in Eastern societies, where dominant religions often permit the concept of reincarnation. Following this type of criticism, Stevenson published a book on European cases suggestive of reincarnation.

There are many people who have investigated reincarnation and come to the conclusion that it is a legitimate phenomenon, such as Peter Ramster, Dr. Brian Weiss, Dr. Walter Semkiw, and others, but their work is generally ignored by the scientific community. Professor Stevenson, in contrast, published dozens of papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Some skeptics, such as Paul Edwards, have analysed many of these accounts, and called them anecdotal. Philosophers like Robert Almeder, having analysed the criticisms of Edwards and others, suggest that the gist of these arguments can be summarised as "we all know it can't possibly be real, so therefore it isn't real"—an argument from lack of imagination.

The most obvious objection to reincarnation is that there is no evidence of a physical process by which a personality could survive death and travel to another body, and researchers such as Professor Stevenson recognize this limitation.

Another fundamental objection is that most people simply do not remember previous lives, although it could be argued that only some, but not all, people reincarnate. Certainly the vast majority of cases investigated at the University of Virginia involved people who had met some sort of violent or untimely death.

Some skeptics explain that claims of evidence for reincarnation originate from selective thinking and the psychological phenomena of false memories that often result from one's own belief system and basic fears, and thus cannot be counted as empirical evidence. But other skeptics, such as Dr Carl Sagan, see the need for more reincarnation research.

SVÂDHYÂYA

Svâdhyâya is a Sanskrit term in Hinduism having several meanings, including study of the Vedas and other sacred books, self-recitation, repetition of the Vedas aloud, and as a term for the Vedas themselves. Svâdhyâya is extolled in orthodox Brahmanism in its traditional sense as "study of the scriptures and *darœanas* which help the understanding of the nature of the Paramâtman." Some translators simply use the word "study" without qualifying the type of study.

ETYMOLOGY

Adhyâya means "a lesson, lecture, chapter; reading" (Monier-Williams). Svâdhyâya (a compound of sva + adhyâya), therefore, literally means *one's own* (Vedic) *lesson* (taught by guru), i.e.,of one's own shakha (úâkhâ or recension)'.

Sâyana defines the "*sva-*" in *svâdhyâya* as "âmnâtah", i.e., "handed down as a sacred tradition", and says that *svâdhyâya* is not a *kâmya* (depending on self will) but a *nitya karma* (a religious duty to be performed daily) Manusmriti defines svâdhyâya as a daily duty (2.105) and extols its virtues (Mn.2.107).

There are certain days on which *svâdhyâya* is prohibited, these are called *anadhyâya*, after which *svâdhyâya* must be resumed on the following day ; therefore the day of resumption is also called svâdhyâya. All anadhyâya days are mentioned in traditional panchangas (religious almanacs) of Hindus. Manusmriti says that there should be no anadhyâya in the study of six Vedangas (Mn.2.105), but clears this statement in next verse by asserting that the mantras of nityakarma give virtue even on an anadhyâya day (Mn.2.106),which implies that other mantras should not be studied on anadhyâya days.

LEARNING ONE'S VEDIC RECENSION

As a tool for memorisation, *svâdhyâya* had a unique meaning for Vedic scholars as the principal tool for the oral preservation of the Vedas in their original form for millennia. When used as a formal part

of scriptural study, *svâdhyâya* involves repeated recitations of scripture for purposes of mastering the mantras with their accurate pronunciation.

The Vedas had not been committed to writing in ancient times. Almost all printed editions depend on the late manuscripts that are hardly older than 500 years, not on the still-extant and superior oral tradition. Monier Monier-Williams defines *œruti* as "sacred knowledge orally transmitted by the Brâhmans from generation to generations, the Veda". Michael Witzel explains this oral tradion as follows:

> The Vedic texts were orally composed and transmitted, without the use of script, in an unbroken line of transmission from teacher to student that was formalised early on. This ensured an impeccable textual transmission superior to the classical texts of other cultures; it is, in fact, something like a *tape-recording*.... Not just the actual words, but even the long-lost musical (tonal) accent (as in old Greek or in Japanese) has been preserved up to the present. "

The commentator Sâyana discusses this term in the introduction of his commentary on the *Zgveda*, in which he says that *svâdhyâya* is the cause without which vedic rituals (yâjnika karmakânda) cannot take place. Sâyana also quotes *Yâjnvalkya* Smriti as saying that "All Vedas ought to be studied, and if all the Vedas cannot be studied then three or two or at least one Veda must be studied, because one Veda is handed down by one's own forefathers as a tradition (i.e., one's own shakha)".

Pattâbhiram Shâstri says that since one is only allowed to use the mantras of one's own *úâkhâ* in rituals, it follows that the vedic meaning of *svâdhyâya* is "a systematic recitation of one's own Vedic branch (*úâkhâ*) according to the Œastric commands". He also says that "this recitation and study is that of one's own recension and not of entire Veda for there is a commandment (from Taittiriya Aranyaka 2.15 : svâdhyayo-adhyetavyah) *study and recite one's own Vedic recension*." Úâstri quotes a traditionally practised rule which says : "one should recite a recension(*úâkhâ*) of another Veda only after one has recited one's own recension (in actual yajnic ritual)".

The strictly Vedic meaning is still being practised by all Vedic scholars. Pattâbhiram Shâstri says "in this twentieth century the traditional recitation of the Veda is practically disappearing", which means that fewer peoples are practising svâdhyâya now in its strictly traditional ritualistic sense. This vedic meaning of svâdhyâya can be understood only in the context of sampradaya, charana (cf. charanavyuha), shakha, etc.

ONGOING STUDY OF SCRIPTURES

The *Taittirîya Upanishad*, which belongs to the *Yajur Veda*, is still very popular among those who learn Vedic chanting in the traditional manner. The first chapter concludes with an exhortation by the Vedic teacher to his students, on the eve of their returning home after the completion of their studies, an event that S. Gambhîrânanda describes as "comparable to a Convocation Address of modern times, instructing them how to conduct themselves in the world." It is the order of a guru to his disciple at the occasion of his Samâvartanam, a Hindu SaCskâra that is comparable to a graduation ceremony.

It includes a section (1.9) in which the ongoing importance of *svâdhyâyâ* is stressed again and again in a list of virtues that are to be practised, with each virture being followed by the phrase "*svâdhyâyapravacane ca*", translated as "and learning and teaching" by S. Gambhîrânanda and as "the study and recitation [of the Veda]" by R. C. Zaehner. This litany of virtues concludes with a final statement that "learning and teaching alone" are to be practiced, for "that indeed is the austerity" (Sanskrit: *tapas*)

Maurice Winternitz cites another passage where the teacher sums up advice for the scholar who is departing on his life's journey, translating 1.11 as "Speak the truth, do thy duty, neglect not the study of the Veda." That section includes direct orders to "Do not neglect study" (*svâdhyâyât mâ pramada*) and "Do not be careless about learning and teaching" (*svâdhyâyapravacanâbhyâA na pramaditavyam*)

Other Scriptural Mentions

The earliest mention of Svâdhyâya is found in Taittiriya Aranyaka 2.15: "svâdhyayo-adhyetavyah" ("svâdhyâya must be done/studied"). Úatpath Brâhmana also repeats it.

Châ ndogya Upanicada (4.16.1-2) says that Brahmâ (a brâhmana silently overlooking the yajna) must remain silent (mauna) during a yajna and keep on meditating over the meanings of mantras, while other priests should recite those mantras aloud. Hence, silent (mânas) and vocal (vâchika) both types of svâdhyâya was necessary for adequate performance of yajnas. That is why Monier Williams gives both types of meaning for svâdhyâya : (1) recite/repeat/rehearse the Veda in a low voice to oneself, and (2) repeat the Vedas aloud.

Study of sacred texts and related literature (*adhyayana*) is one of six basic duties (camkarma) required of every Brahmin (Sanskrit:

brâhmana) in Manu Smriti X.75.. Svâdhyâya may be loosely held to be a part of *adhyayana* as far as learning the texts is concerned, but svâdhyâya is distinguised from *adhyayana* in two senses (1) svâdhyâya for preserving the *pronunciation* of sacred oral tradition in its primordial form, and (2) svâdhyâya as a variety of japa which later gave rise to non-ritualistic variety of svâdhyâya best exemplified by the svâdhyâya of Yoga-Sutra. Svâdhyâya is distinct from adhyayana ; the latter is defined by Monier Williams as 'reading, studying, especially the Vedas (one of the six duties of a brâhmana)'.

SVÂDHYÂYA IN YOGA AND GITA

Svâdhyâya is one of the three key elements in the practice of yoga as defined in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, appearing in the opening verse of Book two on spiritual practice and elaborated upon in two other verses. Patanjali mentions svâdhyâya a second time as one of the five recommended observances (*niyamas*), along with purity, contentment, austerity, and self-surrender. The five *niyamas*, together with the five abstentions (*yamas*), have been described as "'the ten commandments' of the SâAkhya-Yoga."

Madhva, the dualistic Vaishnava philosopher, defined philosophy as the three-stage process of understanding (*œravaGa*), reflection (*manana*), and application (*nididhyâsana*), expressing itself in two forms: study (*svâdhyâya*) and teaching (*pravacana*). Of these two, Madhva considered teaching to be the highest aspect of discipline leading to mokca. Mâdhavâchârya's views on svâdhyâya are to be found in chapter 15 of Sarva-Darúana-Sangraha (cf. references).

Svâdhyâya is mentioned as one of the virtues in *Bhagavad Gita* 16.1. It is mentioned a second time in BG 17.15 as one of the practices that comprise austerity of speech.

RELATIONSHIP TO JAPA

The term *svâdhyâya* also came to mean japa (repetitive prayer). The *Amarakoœa*, an early Sanskrit lexicon, distinguishes between two different types of *japa*:

- Japa for the purpose of memorisation of mantras is *svâdhyâya*.
- Japa for expiation of sin, is *aghamarœaga*.

Both types of japa, *svâdhyâya* and *aghamarœaga* are parts of *nityakarma* or daily religious rites for every brahmin.

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SIKHISM: RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, PRINCIPLE AND BELIEF SYSTEM

SIKHISM

Sikhism founded on the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev and nine successive gurus in fifteenth century Northern India, is the fifth-largest religion in the world. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat (literally *the counsel of the gurus*) or the Sikh Dharma. *Sikhism* originated from the word *Sikh*, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit root *œicya* meaning "disciple" or "learner", or *œikca* meaning "instruction."

The principal belief of Sikhism is faith in *Vâhigurû*—represented using the sacred symbol of *ek ôankâr*, the Universal God. Sikhism advocates the pursuit of salvation through disciplined, personal meditation on the name and message of God. A key distinctive feature of Sikhism is a non-anthropomorphic concept of God, to the extent that one can interpret God as the Universe itself. The followers of Sikhism are ordained to follow the teachings of the ten Sikh gurus, or enlightened leaders, as well as the holy scripture entitled the *Gurû Granth Sâhib*, which includes selected works of many philosophers from diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds. The text was decreed by Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, as the final guru of the Khalsa Panth. Sikhism's traditions and teachings are distinctively associated with the history, society and culture of the Punjab. Adherents of Sikhism are known as Sikhs (*students* or *disciples*) and number over 23 million across the world. Most Sikhs live in the state of Punjab in India and, prior to the country's partition, millions of Sikhs lived in what is now the Punjab province of Pakistan.

PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHINGS

Sikh religious philosophy has roots in the religious traditions of northern India. The *Sant Mat* traditions are fundamental to the teachings of Sikhism's founder, Nanak. Especially important to the connection with Sikhism were the teachings of some of the saints such as Ravidas and Kabir. Sikhism is also inspired by the emphasis on devotion to God in the traditions of Vaishnavism, especially through the *Bhakti* movement, as well as influences of Sufism. However, Nanak's teachings diverge significantly from Vaishnavism in their rejection of idol worship, the doctrine of divine incarnations and a strict emphasis on inward devotion; Sikhism is professed to be a more difficult personal pursuit than *Bhakti*. The evolution of Nanak's thoughts on the basis of his own experiences and study have also given Sikhism a distinctly unique feature.

God

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. In Sikhism, God—termed *Vâhigurû*—is formless, eternal, and unobserved: *nirankâr*, *akâl*, and *alakh*. The beginning of the first composition of Sikh scripture is the figure "1"—signifying the universality of God. It states that God is omnipresent and infinite, and is signified by the term *ek ôankâr*. Sikhs believe that prior to creation, all that existed was God and his *hukam* (will or order). When God willed, the entire cosmos was created. From these beginnings, God nurtured "enticement and attachment" to *mâyâ*, or the human perception of reality.

While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, Nanak described God as not wholly unknowable. God is omnipresent (*sarav viâpak*) in all creation and visible everywhere to the spiritually awakened. Nanak stressed that God must be seen from "the inward eye", or the "heart", of a human being: devotees must meditate to progress towards enlightenment. Nanak emphasised the revelation through meditation, as its rigorous application permits the existence of communication between God and human beings. God has no gender in Sikhism, though translations may incorrectly present a masculine God. In addition, Nanak wrote that there are many worlds on which God has created life.

Pursuing Salvation

Nanak's teachings are founded not on a final destination of heaven or hell, but on a spiritual union with God which results in salvation.

The chief obstacles to the attainment of salvation are social conflicts and an attachment to worldly pursuits, which commit men and women to an endless cycle of birth—a concept known as *reincarnation*.

Mâyâ—defined as illusion or "unreality"—is one of the core deviations from the pursuit of God and salvation: people are distracted from devotion by worldly attractions which give only illusive satisfaction. However, Nanak emphasised mâyâ as not a reference to the unreality of the world, but of its values. In Sikhism, the influences of ego, anger, greed, attachment and lust—known as the *Five Evils*—are believed to be particularly pernicious. The fate of people vulnerable to the Five Evils is separation from God, and the situation may be remedied only after intensive and relentless devotion.

Nanak described God's revelation—the path to salvation—with terms such as *nâm* (the divine *Name*) and *œabad* (the divine Word) to emphasise the totality of the revelation. Nanak designated the word *guru* (meaning *teacher*) as the voice of God and the source and guide for knowledge and salvation. Salvation can be reached only through rigorous and disciplined devotion to God. Nanak distinctly emphasised the irrelevance of outwardly observations such as rites, pilgrimages or asceticism. He stressed that devotion must take place through the heart, with the spirit and the soul.

A key practice to be pursued is *nâm simraG*: remembrance of the divine Name. The verbal repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable is an established practice in religious traditions in India, but Nanak's interpretation emphasised inward, personal observance. Nanak's ideal is the total exposure of one's being to the divine Name and a total conforming to Dharma or the "Divine Order". Nanak described the result of the disciplined application of *nâm simraG* as a "growing towards and into God" through a gradual process of five stages. The last of these is *sac khag*

(*The Realm of Truth*)—the final union of the spirit with God.

Nanak stressed *kirat karô*: that a Sikh should balance work, worship, and charity, and should defend the rights of all creatures, and in particular, fellow human beings. They are encouraged to have a *ca[dî kalâ*, or *optimistic*, view of life. Sikh teachings also stress the concept of sharing—*vag chakkô*—through the distribution of free food at Sikh gurdwaras (*langar*), giving charitable donations, and working for the betterment of the community and others (*sevâ*).

THE TEN GURUS AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

The term guru comes from the Sanskrit *gurû*, meaning teacher, guide or mentor. The traditions and philosophy of Sikhism were established by ten specific gurus from 1507 to 1708. Each guru added to and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak Dev was the first guru and appointed a disciple as successor. Guru Gobind Singh was the final guru in human form. Before his death, Gobind Singh decreed that the Gurû Granth Sâhib would be the final and perpetual guru of the Sikhs.

#	*Name*	*Date of Birth*	*Guruship on*	*Death*	*Age*
1.	Nanak Dev	15 April 1469	20 August 1507	22 September 1539	69
2.	Angad Dev	31 March 1504	7 September 1539	29 March 1552	48
3.	Amar Das	5 May 1479	26 March 1552	1 September 1574	95
4.	Ram Das	24 September 1534	1 September 1574	1 September 1581	46
5.	Arjan Dev	15 April 1563	1 September 1581	30 May 1606	43
6.	Har Gobind	19 June 1595	25 May 1606	28 February 1644	48
7.	Har Rai	16 January 1630	3 March 1644	6 October 1661	31
8.	Har Krishan	7 July 1656	6 October 1661	30 March 1664	7
9.	Teg Bahadur	1 April 1621	20 March 1665	11 November 1675	54
10.	Gobind Singh	22 December 1666	11 November 1675	7 October 1708	41

After Guru Nanak Dev's passing, the most important phase in the development of Sikhism came with the third successor, Guru Amar Das. Guru Nanak Dev's teachings emphasised the pursuit of salvation; Guru Amar Das began building a cohesive community of followers with initiatives such as sanctioning distinctive ceremonies for birth, marriage and death. Guru Amar Das also established the *manji* (comparable to a diocese) system of clerical supervision

Guru Amar Das's successor and son-in-law Ram Das founded the city of Amritsar, which is home of the Harimandir Sahib and regarded widely as the holiest city for all Sikhs. When Guru Ram Das's youngest son Guru Arjun Dev succeeded him, the line of male gurus from the *Sodhi Khatri* family was established: all succeeding gurus were direct descendants of this line. Guru Arjun Dev was responsible for compiling the Sikh scriptures. Guru Arjun Dev was captured by Mughal authorities who were suspicious and hostile to the religious order he was developing. His persecution and death inspired his successors to

promote a military and political organisation of Sikh communities to defend themselves against the attacks of Mughal forces.

The Sikh gurus established a mechanism which allowed the Sikh religion to react as a community to changing circumstances. The sixth guru, Guru Har Gobind Sahib, was responsible for the creation of the Akal Takht (*throne of the timeless one*) which serves as the supreme decision-making centre of Sikhdom and sits opposite the Harimandir Sahib. The *Sarbat 4–âlsâ* (a representative portion of the Khalsa Panth) historically gathers at the Akal Takht on special festivals such as Vaisakhi or Diwali and when there is a need to discuss matters that affect the entire Sikh nation. A *gurmatâ* (literally, *guru's intention*) is an order passed by the Sarbat 4–âlsâ in the presence of the Gurû Granth Sâhib. A gurmatâ may only be passed on a subject that affects the fundamental principles of Sikh religion; it is binding upon all Sikhs. The term *hukamnâmâ* (literally, *edict* or *royal order*) is often used interchangeably with the term gurmatâ. However, a hukamnâmâ formally refers to a hymn from the Gurû Granth Sâhib which is given as an order to Sikhs.

HISTORY

Guru Nanak Dev (1469–1538), the founder of Sikhism, was born in the village of *Râi Bhôi dî TalvaGî*, now called Nankana Sahib, near Lahore (in what is present-day Pakistan). His father, Mehta Kalu was a Patwari: an accountant of land revenue in the government. Nanak's mother was Tripta Devi and he had one older sister, Nanaki. His parents were Khatri Hindus of the Bedi clan. As a boy, Nanak was fascinated by religion, and his desire to explore the mysteries of life eventually led him to leave home. It was during this period that Nanak was said to have met Kabir (1440–1518), a saint revered by people of different faiths.

Sikh tradition states that at the age of thirty, Nanak went missing and was presumed to have drowned after going for one of his morning baths to a local stream called the *Kali Bein*. Three days later he reappeared and would give the same answer to any question posed to him: "There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim" (in Punjabi, "*nâ kôi hindû nâ kôi musalmân*"). It was from this moment that Nanak would begin to spread the teachings of what was then the beginning of Sikhism. Although the exact account of his itinerary is disputed, he is widely acknowledged to have made four major journeys, spanning thousands of kilometres. The first tour being east towards Bengal and Assam,

the second south towards Ceylon via Tamil Nadu, the third north towards Kashmir, Ladakh and Tibet, and the final tour west towards Baghdad and Mecca.

Nanak was married to Sulakhni, the daughter of Moolchand Chona, a rice trader from the town of Batala. They had two sons. The elder son, Sri Chand, was an ascetic, and he came to have a considerable following of his own, known as the Udasis. The younger son, Lakshmi Das, on the other hand, was totally immersed in worldly life. To Nanak, who believed in the ideal of *râj maiA jôg* (detachment in civic life), both his sons were unfit to carry on the Gurushipp.

Growth of the Sikh Community

In 1538, Nanak chose his disciple *LahiGâ*, a Khatri of the Trehan clan, as a successor to the gurushipp rather than either of his sons. LahiGâ was named Guru Angad Dev and became the second guru of the Sikhs. Nanak conferred his choice at the town of Kartarpur on the banks of the river Ravi, where Nanak had finally settled down after his travels. Though Sri Chand was not an ambitious man, the Udasis believed that the Gurushipp should have gone to him, since he was a man of pious habits in addition to being Nanak's son. They refused to accept Angad's succession. On Nanak's advice, Angad shifted from Kartarpur to Khadur, where his wife Khivi and children were living, until he was able to bridge the divide between his followers and the Udasis. Angad continued the work started by Nanak and is widely credited for standardising the Gurmukhî script as used in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

Guru Amar Das, a Khatri of the Bhalla clan, became the third Sikh guru in 1552 at the age of 73. Goindval became an important centre for Sikhism during the gurushipp of Amar Das. He preached the principle of equality for women by prohibiting purdah and sati. Amar Das also encouraged the practice of langar and made all those who visited him attend laEgar before they could speak to him. In 1567, Emperor Akbar sat with the ordinary and poor people of Punjab to have laEgar. Amar Das also trained 146 apostles of which 52 were women, to manage the rapid expansion of the religion. Before he died in 1574 aged 95, he appointed his son-in-law Jemhâ, a Khatri of the Sodhi clan, as the fourth Sikh guru.

Jemhâ became Guru Ram Das and vigorously undertook his duties as the new guru. He is responsible for the establishment of the city of Ramdaspur later to be named Amritsar. In 1581, Guru Arjun Dev—

youngest son of the fourth guru—became the fifth guru of the Sikhs. In addition to being responsible for building the Harimandir Sahib (often called the Golden Temple), he prepared the Sikh sacred text known as the Âdi Granth (literally *the first book*) and included the writings of the first five gurus. In 1606, for refusing to make changes to the Granth and for supporting an unsuccessful contender to the throne, he was tortured and killed by the Mughal ruler, Jahangir.

Political Advancement

Guru Har Gobind, became the sixth guru of the Sikhs. He carried two swords—one for spiritual and the other for temporal reasons (known as *mîrî* and *pîrî* in Sikhism). Sikhs grew as an organised community and always had a trained fighting force to defend their independence. In 1644, Guru Har Rai became guru followed by Guru Har Krishan, the boy guru, in 1661. No hymns composed by these three gurus are included in the Sikh holy book.

Guru Teg Bahadur became guru in 1665 and led the Sikhs until 1675. Teg Bahadur was executed by Aurangzeb for helping to protect Hindus, after a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits came to him for help when the Emperor condemned them to death for failing to convert to Islam. He was succeeded by his son, Gobind Rai who was just nine years old at the time of his father's death. Gobind Rai further militarised his followers, and was baptised by the *Pañj Piâre* when he formed the Khalsa in 1699. From here on in he was known as Guru Gobind Singh.

From the time of Nanak, when it was a loose collection of followers who focused entirely on the attainment of salvation and God, the Sikh community had significantly transformed. Even though the core Sikh religious philosophy was never affected, the followers now began to develop a political identity. Conflict with Mughal authorities escalated during the lifetime of Teg Bahadur and Gobind Singh. The latter founded the Khalsa in 1699. The Khalsa is a disciplined community that combines its religious purpose and goals with political and military duties. After Aurangzeb killed four of his sons, Gobind Singh sent Aurangzeb the Zafarnâmâ (*Notification/Epistle of Victory*).

Shortly before his death, Gobind Singh ordered that the Gurû Granth Sâhib (the Sikh Holy Scripture), would be the ultimate spiritual authority for the Sikhs and temporal authority would be vested in the Khalsa Panth – The Sikh Nation/Community. The first scripture was compiled and edited by the fifth guru, Arjun Dev, in 1604. a former

ascetic, was charged by Gobind Singh with the duty of punishing those who had persecuted the Sikhs. After the guru's death, Banda Bahadur became the leader of the Sikh army and was responsible for several attacks on the Mughal empire. He was executed by the emperor Jahandar Shah after refusing the offer of a pardon if he converted to Islam.

The Sikh community's embrace of military and political organisation made it a considerable regional force in medieval India and it continued to evolve after the demise of the gurus. After the death of Banda Bahadur, a loose confederation of Sikh warrior bands known as *misls* formed. With the decline of the Mughal empire, a Sikh empire arose in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with its capital in Lahore and limits reaching the Khyber Pass and the borders of China. The order, traditions and discipline developed over centuries culminated at the time of Ranjit Singh to give rise to the common religious and social identity that the term "Sikhism" describes.

After the death of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh kingdom fell into disorder and was eventually annexed by Britain after the hard fought Anglo-Sikh Wars. This brought the Punjab under British rule. Sikhs formed the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal to preserve Sikhs religious and political organisation. With the partition of India in 1947, thousands of Sikhs were killed in violence and millions were forced to leave their ancestral homes in West Punjab. Sikhs were facing opposition from the Government in forming a linguistic state that other states in India were afforded.The Akali Dal started a non-violent movement for Sikh and Punjabi rights, but was brutally suppressed by India. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale led a movement to restore Sikh rights but the movement was opposed by the Indira Government and eventually attacked by the army killing thousands of Sikhs in Operation Bluestar and the Khalistan movement, This was followed by the 1984 Anti-Sikh riots massacres all over India.

SCRIPTURE

There are two primary sources of scripture for the Sikhs: the *Gurû Granth Sâhib* and the Dasam Granth. The Gurû Granth Sâhib may be referred to as the Âdi Granth—literally, *The First Volume*—and the two terms are often used synonymously. Here, however, the Âdi Granth refers to the version of the scripture created by Arjun Dev in 1604. The *Gurû Granth Sâhib* refers to the final version of the scripture created by Gobind Singh.

Adi Granth

It is believed that the Âdi Granth was compiled primarily by Bhai Gurdas under the supervision of Arjun Dev between the years 1603 and 1604. It is written in the Gurmukhî script, which is a descendant of the Landâ script used in the Punjab at that time. The Gurmukhî script was standardised by Arjun Dev for use in the Sikh scriptures and is thought to have been influenced by the Úâradâ and Devanâgarî scripts. An authoritative scripture was created to protect the integrity of hymns and teachings of the Sikh gurus and selected bhagats. At the time, Arjun Dev tried to prevent undue influence from the followers of Prithi Chand, the guru's older brother and rival. The original version of the Âdi Granth is known as the *kartârpur bî* and is currently held by the Sodhi family of Kartarpur.

Guru Granth Sahib

The final version of the *Gurû Granth Sâhib* was compiled by Guru Gobind Singh. It consists of the original Âdi Granth with the addition of Guru Teg Bahadur's hymns. It is believed that it was decreed by Gobind Singh that the Granth was to be considered the eternal, living guru of all Sikhs, however, this belief finds no mention either in '*Guru Granth Sahib*' or in 'Dasham Granth' compiled by Guru Gobind Singh.

Transliteration: *Sabb sikkhaG kô hukam hai gurû mânyô granth.*

English: All Sikhs are commanded to take the Granth as Guru.

It contains compositions by the first five gurus, Guru Teg Bahadur and just one *úalôk* (*couplet*) from Guru Gobind Singh. It also contains the traditions and teachings of *sants* (*saints*) such as Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas and Sheikh Farid along with several others.

The bulk of the scripture is classified into *râgs*, with each râg subdivided according to length and author. There are 31 main râgs within the Gurû Granth Sâhib. In addition to the râgs, there are clear references to the folk music of Punjab. The main language used in the scripture is known as *Sant Bhâcâ*, a language related to both Punjabi and Hindi and used extensively across medieval northern India by proponents of popular devotional religion. The text further comprises over 5000 *œabads*, or hymns, which are poetically constructed and set to classical form of music rendition, can be set to predetermined musical *tâl*, or rhythmic beats.

The Granth begins with the *Mûl Mantra*, an iconic verse created by Nanak:

ISO 15919 transliteration: *Ika ôankâra sati nâmu karatâ purakhu nirabha'u niravairu akâla mûrati ajûnî saibhan gura prasâdi.*

Simplified transliteration: *Ik ôabkâr sat nâm kartâ purkh nirbha'u nirvair akâl mûrat ajûnî saibhab gur prasâd.*

English: One Universal Creator God, The Name Is Truth, Creative Being Personified, No Fear, No Hatred, Image Of The Undying, Beyond Birth, Self Existent, By Guru's Grace.

All text within the Granth is known as *gurbânî*. Gurbânî, according to Nanak, was revealed by God directly, and the authors wrote it down for the followers. The status accorded to the scripture is defined by the evolving interpretation of the concept of *gurû*. In the *Sant* tradition of Nanak, the guru was literally the word of God. The Sikh community soon transferred the role to a line of men who gave authoritative and practical expression to religious teachings and traditions, in addition to taking socio-political leadership of Sikh adherents. Gobind Singh declared an end of the line of human gurus, and now the *Gurû Granth Sâhib* serves as the eternal guru, with its interpretation vested with the community.

Dasam Granth

The Dasam Granth (formally *dasve A pâtúâh kî granth* or *The Book of the Tenth Master*) is an eighteenth-century collection of miscellaneous works generally attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. The teachings of Gobind Singh were not included in *Gurû Granth Sâhib*, the holy book of the Sikhs, and instead were collected in the Dasam Granth. Unlike the Gurû Granth Sâhib, the Dasam Granth was never declared to hold guruship. The authenticity of some portions of the Granth has been questioned and the appropriateness of the Granth's content still causes much debate.

The entire Granth is written in the Gurmukhî script, although most of the language is Braj and not Punjabi. Sikh tradition states that Mani Singh collected the writings of Gobind Singh after his death to create the Granth.

From 1892 to 1897, scholars assembled at the Akal Takht, Amritsar, to study the various printed Dasam Granths and prepare the authoritative version. They concluded that the Dasam Granth was entirely the work of Gobind Singh. Further re-examinations and reviews took place in 1931, under the Darbar Sahib Committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee they too vindicated the earlier conclusion.

Janamsakhis

The Janamsâkhîs (literally *birth stories*), are writings which profess to be biographies of Guru Nanak Dev. Although not scripture in the strictest sense, they provide an interesting look at Nanak's life and the early start of Sikhism. There are several—often contradictory and sometimes unreliable—Janamsâkhîs and they are not held in the same regard as other sources of scriptural knowledge.

OBSERVANCES AND CEREMONIES

Observant Sikhs adhere to long-standing practices and traditions to strengthen and express their faith. The daily recitation from memory of specific passages from the Gurû Granth Sâhib, especially the *Japu* (or *Japjî*, literally *chant*) hymns is recommended immediately after rising and bathing. Family customs include both reading passages from the scripture and attending the gurdwara (also *gurduârâ*, meaning *the doorway to God*). There are many gurdwaras prominently constructed and maintained across India, as well as in almost every nation where Sikhs reside. Gurdwaras are open to all, regardless of religion, background, caste or race.

Worship in a gurdwara consists chiefly of singing of passages from the scripture. Sikhs will commonly enter the temple, touch the ground before the holy scripture with their foreheads, and make an offering. The recitation of the eighteenth century *ardâs* is also customary for attending Sikhs. The ardâs recalls past sufferings and glories of the community, invoking divine grace for all humanity.

The most sacred shrine is the Harimandir Sahib in Amritsar, famously known as the *Golden Temple*. Groups of Sikhs regularly visit and congregate at the Harimandir Sahib. On specific occasions, groups of Sikhs are permitted to undertake a pilgrimage to Sikh shrines in the province of Punjab in Pakistan, especially at Nankana Sahib and the *samâdhî* (place of cremation) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore.

Festivals in Sikhism mostly centre around the lives of the Gurus and Sikh martyrs. The SGPC, the Sikh organisation in charge of upkeep of the gurdwaras, organises celebrations based on the new Nanakshahi calendar. This calendar is highly controversial among Sikhs and is not universally accepted. Several festivals (Hola Mohalla, Diwali and Guru Nanak's birthday) continue to be celebrated using the Hindu calendar. Sikh festivals include the following:

- Gurpurabs are celebrations or commemorations based on the lives of the Sikh gurus. They tend to be either birthdays or celebrations of Sikh martyrdom.

- Vaisakhi normally occurs on 13 April and marks the beginning of the new spring year and the end of the harvest. Sikhs celebrate it because on Vaisakhi in 1699, the tenth guru, Gobind Singh, began the Khalsa baptismal tradition.
- Diwali (also known as *bandî chôd divas*) celebrates Guru Hargobind's release from the Gwalior Jail on 26 October 1619.
- Hola Mohalla occurs the day after Holi and is when the Khalsa Panth gather at Anandpur and display their fighting skills.

Ceremonies and Customs

Nanak taught that rituals, religious ceremonies or empty worship is of little use and Sikhs are discouraged from fasting or going on pilgrimages. However, during the period of the later gurus, and due to increased institutionalisation of the religion, some ceremonies and rites did arise. Sikhism is not a proselytizing religion and most Sikhs do not make active attempts to gain converts. However, converts to Sikhism are welcomed, although there is no formal conversion ceremony.

Upon a child's birth, the *Gurû Granth Sâhib* is opened at a random point and the child is named using the first letter on the top left-hand corner of the left page. All boys are given the middle name or surname Singh, and all girls are given the middle name or surname Kaur. Sikhs are joined in wedlock through the *anand kâraj* ceremony. Sikhs marry when they are of a sufficient age (child marriage is taboo), and without regard for the future spouse's caste or descent. The marriage ceremony is performed in the company of the *Gurû Granth Sâhib*; around which the couple circles four times. After the ceremony is complete, the husband and wife are considered "a single soul in two bodies."

According to Sikh religious rites, neither husband nor wife are permitted to divorce. A Sikh couple that wishes to divorce may be able to do so in a civil court – but this is not condoned.Upon death, the body of a Sikh is usually cremated. If this is not possible, any means of disposing the body may be employed. The *kîrtan sôhilâ* and *ardâs* prayers are performed during the funeral ceremony (known as *antim sanskâr*).

Baptism and the Khalsa

Khalsa (meaning *pure*) is the name given by Gobind Singh to all Sikhs who have been baptised or initiated by taking *ammrit* in a ceremony called *ammrit sañcâr*. The first time that this ceremony took

place was on Vaisakhi, which fell on 30 March 1699 at Anandpur Sahib in India. It was on that occasion that Gobind Singh baptised the Pañj Piâre who in turn baptised Gobind Singh himself.

Baptised Sikhs are bound to wear the Five Ks or articles of faith, at all times. The tenth guru, Gobind Singh, ordered these Five Ks to be worn so that a Sikh could actively use them to make a difference to their own and to others' spirituality. The 5 items are: *kes* (uncut hair), *kanghâ* (small comb), *kadâ* (circular heavy metal bracelet), *kirpân* (ceremonial short sword), and *kacchâ* (special undergarment). The Five Ks have both practical and symbolic purposes.

SIKH PEOPLE

Worldwide, Sikhs number more than 23 million, but more than 90 per cent of Sikhs live in the Indian state of Punjab, where they are close to 65 per cent of the population. Large communities of Sikhs live in the neighbouring states, and large communities of Sikhs can be found across India. However, Sikhs are only about 2 per cent of the Indian population. Migration beginning from the 19th century led to the creation of significant communities in Canada (Brampton and Malton, Ontario; Surrey, British Columbia), the United Kingdom, the Middle East, East Africa, Southeast Asia and more recently, the United States, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Smaller populations of Sikhs are found in Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Fiji and other countries.

As with most world religions, there are groups of Sikhs (such as the Namdharis, Ravidasis and Udasis) who do not adhere to the mainstream principles followed by most Sikhs. Some of these groups may not consider themselves a part of Sikhism, although from an outsider's perspective similarities in beliefs and principles may firmly render them a part of the Sikh religious domain. Groups such as the Nirankaris have a history of bad relations with mainstream Sikhism, and are considered pariahs by some Sikhs. Others, such as the Nihangs, tend to have little difference in belief and practice, and are considered Sikhs proper by mainstream Sikhism.

SIKHISM PRIMARY BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES

EK ON KAR

Sikhs believe there is only one God, who has infinite qualities and names. He is the same for all religions. God is the Creator and Sustainer.

All that you see around you is God's creation. He is everywhere, in everything. He is fearless and has no enemies. Only God is without birth or death, and He has and will exist forever.

The following are quotations from the *Guru Granth Sahib:*

(a) There is but one God (from page 45):

- *There is only the one Supreme Lord God; there is no other.*
- *Soul and body are all Yours. Whatever pleases You shall happen.*
- *Through the Perfect Guru, one becomes perfect. O Nanak, meditate on the True One.*

The original verses are:

- *Paarbarahm parabh ayk hai doojaa naahee ko-ay.*
- *Jee-o pind sabh tis kaa jo tis bhaavai so ho-ay.*
- *Gur poorai pooraa bha-i-aa jap naanak sachaa so-ay.*

For the original text, see SriGranth.org and enter the page number.

(b) God the Creator (page 1036):

- *He formed the planets, solar systems and nether regions, and brought what was hidden to manifestation.*
- *When He so willed, He created the world.*
- *Without any supporting power, He sustained the universe.*

REINCARNATION, KARMA, AND SALVATION

According to Sikhism, every creature has a soul. In death, the soul passes from one body to another until final liberation. The journey of the soul is governed by the deeds and actions we perform during our lives. A pure existence of 'good deeds' (i.e., working honestly to earn our living, remembering the Creator, helping those who are less fortunate, being kind) is rewarded with happiness and joy in the next life, while wrongful actions and sinful deeds lead only to incarceration and fitting consequences in the next life. As the spirit of God is found in all life and matter, a soul can be passed onto other life forms, such as plants and insects—not just human bodies. A person who has evolved to achieve spiritual perfection in his lifetimes attains salvation – union with God and liberation from rebirth in the material world.

The following lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* explain how our deeds and actions (or Karma) impact on the soul and its reincarnation:

- On page 4 – text highlighted in red

- "Virtue and vice do not come by mere words; actions repeated, over and over again, are engraved on the soul. You shall harvest what you plant. O Nanak, by the Hukam of God's Command, we come and go in reincarnation."
- On page 31 – text highlighted in red
- "The soul-bride in love with duality goes around the wheel of reincarnation, through 8.4 million incarnations. Without the Guru, she finds no sleep, and she passes her life-night in pain. Without the Shabad, she does not find her Husband Lord, and her life wastes away in vain."
- On page 19 – text highlighted in red
- "The blind have forgotten the Naam, the name of the Lord. The self-willed manmukhs (ego centred person) are in utter darkness. Their comings and goings in reincarnation do not end; through death and rebirth, they are wasting away."
- On page 13 – text highlighted in red
- "Purchase only that for which you have come into the world, and through the Guru, the Lord shall dwell within your mind. Within the home of your own inner being, you shall obtain the Mansion of the Lord's Presence with intuitive ease. You shall not be consigned again to the wheel of reincarnation."

REMEMBER GOD

Only by keeping the Creator in your mind at all times, will you make progress in your spiritual evolution. The Sikh Guru ask the devotees to meditate with single mindedness, dispel doubt, remain focused, subdue their ego. Thus glory will be obtained.

The following lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* elaborate on the importance of remembering the Almighty Lord:

- On page 18 – see text in red from line 761
- Those contented souls who meditate on the Lord with single-minded love, meet the True Lord.
- On page 23 – see text in red at line 945
- Those who are imbued with the love of the name of the Lord are not loaded down by doubt.
- On page 128– see text in red at line 5239
- The pure swans, with love and affection, dwell in the ocean of the Lord, and subdue their ego.

- On page 130 – see text in red at line 5297
- The Gurmukh remains forever imbued with the Lord's love. Meeting the True Lord, glory is obtained.

HUMANITY (BROTHERHOOD)

Sikhs believe that all humans are equal. "We are sons and daughters of Waheguru, the Almighty." Sikhs are taught to treat all people of the world the same. No gender, racial, social or other discrimination is allowed. This is the message of Guru Nanak as taught by the 10 Sikh Masters during the period 1469 to 1708.

The following lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* explain the importance of treating every person as an equal:

- On page 446 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "They look upon all with equality, and recognize the Supreme Soul, the Lord, pervading among all. Those who sing the praises of the Lord, Har, Har, obtain the supreme status; they are the most exalted and acclaimed people."
- On page 599 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "He is within—see Him outside as well. There is no one other than Him. As Gurmukh, look upon all with the single eye of equality. In each and every heart, the Divine Light is contained."
- On page 96 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "There is only one breath. All are made of the same clay. The light within all is the same. The One Light pervades all the many and various beings. This light intermingles with them, but it is not diluted or obscured. By Guru's Grace, I have come to see the One. I am a sacrifice to the True Guru."

UPHOLD MORAL VALUES

Defend, safeguard and fight for the rights of all creatures and especially your fellow man.

PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Be prepared to give your life for all supreme principles. Follow the example of Guru Teg Bahadur.

MANY PATHS LEAD TO GOD

The Sikh Gurus tell us that salvation can be obtained by following various spiritual paths. Therefore, Sikhs do not have a monopoly on salvation: "Many spiritual paths lead to God." Sikhs do not consider

they have an "exclusive" right to salvation. They do not consider themselves the "chosen people of God". In fact, the Sikh scripture advances the message of "equality" of humanity (despite religious differences) and offers the advice that Muslims should be better Muslims and Hindus be better Hindus. Christian, Hindus, Muslim, Jews and others all have the same right to liberty as Sikhs. However, Sikhism does teach that unlike other faiths, it is a more direct and a simpler path to salvation (union with God). Sikhs believe that Pandits, Qazis, Mullahs, Priests, etc. do not hold the key to salvation, but rather that God has given every person the right to hear and obey God's word.

The following lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* explain the importance of treating every spiritual path as a valid path to God and salvation:

- "One who recognises that all spiritual paths lead to the One shall be emancipated. One who speaks lies shall fall into hell and burn. In all the world, the most blessed and sanctified are those who remain absorbed in truth. One who eliminates selfishness and conceit is redeemed in the court of the Lord."
- "Some read the Vedas, and some the Koran. Some wear blue robes, and some wear white. Some call themselves Muslim, and some call themselves Hindu. Some yearn for paradise, and others long for heaven. Says Nanak, one who realises the Hukam of God's will, knows the secrets of his Lord and Master."
- "Practice within your heart the teachings of the Koran and the Bible. Restrain the ten sensory organs from straying into evil. Tie up the five demons of desire with faith, charity and contentment, and you shall be acceptable."
- "Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran are false. Those who do not contemplate them are false. You say that the One Lord is in all, so why do you kill chickens?"
- "By His power the Vedas and the Puraanas exist, and the Holy Scriptures of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions. By His power all deliberations exist."

POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE

Chardi Kala. Always have a positive, optimistic and buoyant view of life.

DISCIPLINED LIFE

Upon baptism, a Sikh must wear the Sikhs Five Ks (5Ks), perform strict recital of the five prayers, Banis, etc. Sikh baptism is not generally performed at birth, but is a decision made by individuals who choose

to dedicate themselves completely to the mandates of the Sikh religion. The majority of Sikhs are not baptised, though many wear some of the Five K's. As a part of a disciplined life, Sikhs are expected to obey certain prohibitions.

SIKH FESTIVALS

Gurupurabs are anniversaries associated with the lives of the Sikh Gurus. Sikhs celebrate 10 Gurpurabs in a year, each one honoring the ten gurus of the Khalsa Pantha. Of these the important ones are the birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Govind Singh and the martyrdom days of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur.

Guru Nanak's jayanti falls in the month of Kartik (October / November). Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak brought enlightenment to the world. Thus, the festival is also called Prakash Utsav, the festival of light. The Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, was born on 2 December 1666 in Patna. The martyrdom day of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev falls in the months of May and June and that of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, in November.

The Prabhat Pheris, early morning religious processions that goes around localities singing shabads (hymns), start three weeks before the festival. Devotees offer sweets and tea when the procession passes their homes. Gurpurabs also mark the culmination of Prabhat Pheris. The *Guru Granth Sahib* (the holy book of the Sikhs) is read continuously from beginning to end without a break for three days. This is known as akhand path. It is concluded on the day of the festival. The *Granth Sahib* is also carried in procession on a float decorated with flowers. Five armed guards, who represent the Panj Pyares, head the procession carrying Nishan Sahibs (the Sikh flag). Local bands play religious music and marching schoolchildren form a special part of the procession.

Sweets and community lunches are offered to everyone irrespective of religious faith. They are given with a spirit of seva (service) and bhakti (devotion). Sikhs visit gurdwaras, where special programmes are arranged and (religious songs) sung. Houses and gurudwaras are lit up for the festivities. On the anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, sweetened milk is offered to the thirsty passers-by to commemorate the death of the Guru.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, was born in 1469 in a Punjabi village now located in Pakistan. Always secular in his outlook, he even organised a canteen where Muslims and Hindus of all castes could come and eat together. It is believed that in Sultanpur he had a vision from God, directing him to preach to mankind.

Guru Gobind Singh forged the distinctive identity of the Sikhs, called them Khalsa (the pure) and made it mandatory for them to have the five *K*s: *Kesh* (hair), *Kripan* (dagger), *Kara* (bracelet), *Kangha* (comb) and *Kachch*a (underwear). Guru Arjun Dev was burned at the stake in the hot months of May and June, and Guru Teg Bahadur was beheaded in Delhi.

Gurpurbs are part and parcel of Sikhism. Historically, Sikhs have had to sacrifice their lives just to celebrate the Gurpurbs. Whether it is DEWALI (Bandi Chhor Diwas), VAISAKHI (Khalsa Sajna Diwas), or Martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Sahib (Sahidi Diwas), Sikhs gather and remember their Gurus and pay homage to the great Martyrs. All the Gurpurbs are celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm by the Sikhs throughout the world. We are giving the account of the main and widely celebrated Gurpurbs.

The birthday celebrations and Gurpurbs of Guru Sahibs usually last for three days. Generally before the birthday-date Akhand Path is held in the Gurdwara. A large procession (Nagarkirtan) is organised one day before the birthday. This is led by the Panj Piyaras (Five beloved ones) and the Palki (Palanquin) of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and followed by groups of kirtani Jatha, Various School bands and students, eminent Citizens, Gatka Parties (displaying mock-battle with the traditional weapons), and devotees singing hymns from *Guru Granth Sahib* in chorus. The passage of the nagarkirtan is decorated with flags, flowers, religious posters decorated gates and banners depicting various aspects of Sikhism. On the Gurpurb day, the Divan begins in early morning about 4 or 5 a.m. with the singing of Asa-di-var and hymns from *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sometimes it is followed by katha (discourse), religious and Sikh Historical lectures and recitation of poems in praise of the Guru. Kirtan-Darbars and Amrit Sanchar ceremonies are also held in the Gurdwara hall. After Ardas and distribution of Karah Parshad (sweet pudding) the Langar (food) is served to one and all and there is kirtan till late in the night, the distribution of langar continues to the end of the programme.

Birthday of Guru Nanak Sahib

Guru Nanak Sahib (the First Nanak, the founder of Sikhism) was born on 15 April, 1469 at Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi in the present district of Shekhupura (Pakistan), now Nanakana Sahib. The birthday of Guru Nanak Sahib falls on Kartik Puranmashi i.e. full moon day of the month Kartik. On this day the birthday is celebrated every year. The Shrine (Gurdwara) representing the home of Baba Kalu (Father) and

Mata Tripta (Mother) is called Gurdwara Janam Asthan, situated at Rai-Bhoi-di-Talwandi in the present district of Shekhupura (now Nanakana Sahib in Pakistan). The Sikhs from all over the world gather here and celebrate the *Gurupurab* every year with great devotion and enthusiasm.

Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib

Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, the tenth Nanak was born at Patna Sahib on December 22, 1666, (Poh Sudi Saptmi). His birthday generally falls in December or January or sometimes twice within a year as it is calculated according to Hindu Bikrami Calendar based on moon-year. S. Pal Singh Purewal of Canada prepared a new calendar which is called the "Nanakshahi Calendar" based on the solar year. According to this calendar the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib falls only once in a year i.e. on 5th January. But the implementation of the Nanakshahi Calendar has been postponed.

Guru Arjan's Martyrdom Day

Guru Arjan's martyrdom day falls towards the close of May or beginning of June. In Lahore before partition almost every Hindu and Sikh was out to visit the Guru's samadhi or tomb. At short intervals there were sabils where sweetened and iced milk-water was served to every passer-by. The number of visitors was in lakhs, not in thousands. Arrangements were so perfect that the parents of a lost child could be traced in no time. At numerous places there were parties of singers singing hymns, lectures, sermons and kathas or narration of stories from sacred scriptures. Nowadays this day is celebrated everywhere in gurdwaras and by leading processions and serving cold drinks free.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom Day

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom day falls in November/December. The day is celebrated by organising processions, singing hymns in gurdwaras, and by organising lectures, sermons, kirtans, etc.

CONQUER THE FIVE THIEVES

It is every Sikh's duty to defeat these *five thieves*: Lust (Kaam), Anger (Kr'odh), Greed (Lob'H), Attachment (Mo'H), and Pride (a'Hankar). The five thieves live within every person and it is the duty of each Sikh to subdue and control the behaviour of these emotions.

The following lines from *Guru Granth Sahib* explain the dangers of these negative energies and how they lead to pain and suffering:

- On page 182 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "All of my companions are intoxicated with their sensory pleasures; they do not know how to guard their own home. The five thieves have plundered them; the thugs descend upon the unguarded village.||2||."
- On page 600 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "Within this body dwell the five thieves: sexual lust, anger, greed, emotional attachment and egotism. They plunder the Nectar, but the self-willed manmukh (ego-minded person) does not realize it; no one hears his complaint. The world is blind, and its dealings are blind as well. Without the Guru, there is only pitch darkness."
- On page 1201 – Look for text highlighted in red
- "All the sins of that humble being are taken away, all the pains are taken away, all diseases are taken away. Sexual lust, anger, greed, attachment and egotistical pride are taken away. The Lord drives the five thieves out of such a person of the Lord. Chant the name of the Lord, O Holy Saints of the Lord. Meditate on the Lord of the Universe, O Holy people of the Lord. Meditate in thought, word and deed on the Lord, Har, Har. Worship and adore the Lord, O Holy people of the Lord."

ATTACK WITH FIVE WEAPONS

These are Contentment (Santokh), Charity (Daan), Kindness (Daya), Positive Energy (Chardi Kala), Humility (Nimarta).

SIKHISM UNDERLYING VALUES

The Sikhs must believe in the following values:

1. Equality: All humans are equal before God – No discrimination is allowed on the basis of caste, race, sex, creed, origin, colour, education, status, wealth, etc. The principles of universal equality and brotherhood are important pillars of Sikhism.
2. God's spirit: Although all living beings including plants, minerals and animals have been created by God, only the human being contains God's Spirit which is capable of becoming a Gurmukh.
3. Personal right: Every person has a right to life but this right is restricted and has certain duties attached. Simple living is essential.

A Sikh is expected to rise early, meditate and pray, consume simple food and perform an honest day's work, carry out duties for your family, enjoy life and always be positive, be charitable and support the needy, etc.

4. Actions count: Salvation is obtained by one's actions – Good deeds, remembrance of God – Naam Simran, Kirtan, etc
5. Living a family life: Encouraged to live as a family unit to provide and nurture children.
6. Sharing: It is encouraged to share and give to charity 10 per cent of one's net earnings.
7. Accept God's will: Develop your personality so that you recognize happy event and miserable events as one – the will of God causes them.
8. The four fruits of life: Truth, contentment, contemplation and Naam, (in the name of God).

PROHIBITIONS IN SIKHISM

There are a number of religious prohibitions in Sikhism and by the SGPC:

1. Cutting Hair: Cutting hair is strictly forbidden in Sikhism... From your head down to your toes, no hair is to be plucked, cut, burnt or chemically/surgically removed. Kesh (hair) should not to be dyed by any method whatsoever.
2. Intoxication: Consumption of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and other intoxicants is not allowed. Intoxicants are strictly forbidden for a Sikh.
3. Adultery: In Sikhism, the husband and wife must be physically faithful to one another. People who allow lust to overcome them and violate this rule will not escape the circle of life and death.[*citation needed*]
4. Blind spirituality Superstitions and rituals not meaningful to Sikhs should not be observed or followed, including pilgrimages, fasting and ritual purification; circumcision; cult images/idolotry, image worship, grave worship; compulsory wearing of the veil for women; etc. *Compare to the Five Ks of Sikhism.*
5. Material obsession ("Maya"): Accumulation of materials has no meaning in Sikhism. Wealth, gold, portfolios, stocks, commodities, and properties will all be left here on Earth when you depart. Do not become attached to them.

6. Sacrifice of creatures: The practice of sati (widows throwing themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands), ritual animal sacrifice to celebrate holy occasions, etc. are strictly forbidden.
7. Non-family-oriented living: A Sikh is encouraged not to live as a recluse, beggar, yogi, monastic (monk/nun) or celibate. However, Shrichand, the son of Guru Nanak and the founder of the Udasi Sikh order, was a yogi and was recognised by the Gurus.
8. Worthless talk: Bragging, gossip, lying, slander, "back-biting", etc. are not permitted. The Sri *Guru Granth Sahib* tells the Sikh, "Your mouth has not stopped slandering and gossiping about others. Your service is useless and fruitless."
9. Priestly class: Sikhs do not have to depend on a priest for any functions that need to be performed.
10. Eating meat killed in a ritualistic manner: Sikhs are strictly prohibited from eating meat killed in a religious manner (such as halal or kosher meat), or any meat during the langar. In some Sikh groups, eating any meat is believed to be forbidden, but this is not a universally held belief.

SIKHISM TECHNIQUE AND METHODS

1. Naam:— Or Naam Japo. Free service (Sewa), meditation and prayer (Simran), sacred music (Kirtan). Meditate upon God's name (Waheguru in the Sikh religion) through verbal repetition. This is done so that the mind is stilled and cleansed in order to become one with God.
2. Kirat Karni:—Honest earnings, labour.
3. Wand kay Shako:—Share what you have.
4. Hukam:—Divine Will. The acceptance of God's Commandment for all Humans is Hukam. The Will of God is to be accepted in all moments of life by all Humans and a Sikh takes this to heart with full force. A Sikh obeys this Will whole-heartedly as the Absolute Law. The Hukam for a Sikh is the edicts of his/her Eternal Guru being the Gurbani text (*Guru Granth Sahib*, the Most Holy and Revered Scriptures for a Sikh). The Sri *Guru Granth Sahib* is the spiritual and lifelong teachings and essays of the 10 Sikh Gurus and specific Holy Saints. Each page is considered the Absolute Command of God for a Sikh. A Sikh observes this Command as a spiritual guidance accepted with a clear and open mind sans dogma and ritual observance. Divine

Will as revealed to the 10 Gurus is recorded in the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. The Scripture was captured by a scribe and follower of the each Guru as each Guru spoke. Each Guru's captured words were revealed through Divine revealment and then dictated to the scribe and thus each word for a Sikh is Divine since it is not based on the interpretation of man or time rather the Scripture was recorded as it was revealed. So for a Sikh this scripture is All-knowing, All-pervading as it is considered a Merciful Gift from God for Humanity. In this observance of Mercy and Love and Compassion a Sikh does not enforce the teachings of the scripture on another human and never seeks to convert another person. A Sikh's observance of Divine Will includes the acceptance of the diversity of all creatures and aspects of the Universe. For a Sikh each piece of the mosaic of life is extremely essential and necessary to maintain the balance of Life. It is not in a human's judgement to observe another human's faults and/or methods of faith as improper. All denominations, atheists, agnostics, believers and such are vital to the balance of life. Judgement of other men is not permitted. A Sikh is also taught about social studies through simple observances of human nature. A Sikh believes in a positive mindset and always seeks the company of those individuals who also wish to Praise God and serve Humanity. A Sikh observes his faults first and hopes that in this process of metamorphisis, his/her impact on the Universe will be far more reaching. A Sikh believes the acceptance of Hukam (Will of God) is the first step in many towards cleansing the mind and the total liberation of Humanity if done with unconditional love and humility.

5. Gurmat:— The full and complete adaptation of The Guru's teachings in a Sikh's personal life. A Sikh's True Guru are the 1430 pages of wonderfully loving teachings in the Gurbani and last commandments of the 10th Guru and Final Master, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The complete removal of using our perceptive mind and replacing that perception with Guru's teachings (Gurmat) is an adoption of Hukam. Hukam and Gurmat are closely intertwined. To adopt Gurmat teachings is to listen to Hukam (Divine Will). In essence to trade our small and worldy mind in for a much higher, richer and most True Perception from the True Guru himself. A True Sikh practices every second of his/her living and sleeping day in the apex of higher spiritual

living. Eats less, sleeps less, talks less, works more, helps more and provides for Humanity more via bodily and spiritual assistance. He wages an internal battle, fending off the vices that grip all humans by utilising Gurmat and his Sword is the wager of Truth, to be drawn during grave moments of injustice and tyranny. This is the indoctrination of the Ultimate Saint-Warrior. Spirituality, performed through simple meditation with an open mind are accepted by the Guru when our lives are simple and humble as well. Repetition of God's name attunes the tongue and mind to focus on the Highest Soul, Guru, Lord and Being. Repetition is the science of training the sub-conscious to think and hear and speak of only one Supreme Soul. This focus prepares the mind and body to accept the seed of the Divine. Through great practice and penance are we able to accept God's Grace and through his Divine Grace does that seed begin to sprout and grow. Enlightenment and Illumination of our soul and being are inevitable once Grace is present. A Sikh seeks no purpose in life except to cleanse the mind and for him or her Gurmat (True Guru's Teachings and Mindset) and the daily practice of it is the only way to perform this cleansing. With a Divine Mindset, his/her conduct in daily living becomes saintly and humble. He kills his Ego, slays his pride and devours anger, lust, desire and greed. Through this method a Sikh is entitled to acquire all wisdom, all spiritually and all treasures, yet he or she wishes for none. The complete Truth is revealed to this humble soul and this soul becomes of the Lord, a merger, a union with the Satguru (True Guru) himself. A Sikh adores his Guru because the Guru is the embodiment of the unseeable and unknowable Lord. A Human is lost without a teacher or master. In all arts and practices we need a master. The merciful Lord, with Grace and Mercy sent the World 10 True Masters to teach of the Lord's way. Thus, a Sikh sees the message of the Lord in his Guru, his Teacher, his Master. The Guru teaches a Sikh that he/she doesn't need to wish for any wordly or spiritual riches. To only wish to be able to worship the Lord with a healthy body and mind and through this simple wish All will be attainable. In this worship All riches and attainments are present. A Sikh's Guru has taught him that all will be his without asking or ever wanting. Thus, a Sikh adopts his Guru's, his Master's teaching, beautifully called Gurmat. The acceptance of it and true practice of it is considered a great blessing of Divine Will for the Sikh.

SIKHISM OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Other observations of Sikhism include:

1. Not Son of God: The Gurus were not in the Christian sense "Sons of God". Sikhism says we are all the children of God and by deduction, God is our mother/father.
2. All Welcome: Members of all religions can visit Sikh temples (Gurdwaras) but must observe certain rules – cover your head, remove shoes, no meat in the Gurdwara (Depends on the Gurdwara), no smoking or drinking intoxicants.
3. Multi-Level Approach: Sikhism recognises the concept of a multi-level approach to achieving your target as a disciple of the faith. For example, "Sahajdhari" (slow adopters) are Sikhs who have not donned the full 5Ks (become Khalsa) but are still Sikhs nevertheless.
4. Visits to holy shrines and pilgrimages not encouraged The Sikh Gurus encouraged visits to holy shrines, for the love of God, but discouraged the devotees from going on visits to holy sites just for pilgrimages as this does not always result in any improvement in the person. The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* informs the follower: "Pilgrimages, fasts, purification and self-discipline are of no use, nor are rituals, religious ceremonies or empty worship. O Nanak, emancipation comes only by loving devotional worship; through duality, people are engrossed in duality." (*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 75)
    - Note: The Punjabi language does not have a gender for God. Unfortunately, when translating, the proper meaning cannot be correctly conveyed without using Him/His/He/Brotherhood, S/He etc., but this distorts the meaning by giving the impression that God is masculine, which is not the message in the original script. The reader must correct for this every time these words are used.

BANI

Gurbani is the term used by Sikhs to refer to any compositions of the Gurus. Gurbani is composed of two words: 'Gur' meaning 'the Guru's' and 'bani' meaning 'word'.

Extracts from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* ji and *Sri Dasam Granth* ji are called Gutkas (small books) containing sections of Gurbani.

RESPECTING GURBANI

A Gutka is kept covered in a clean cloth. A person must wash their hands, feet and face, and cover his/her head before handling the

Gutka. Gurbani should never be put on the floor or in a place which is lower than any furniture upon which a person may sit or lie.

A Gutka should never be taken to any place where any of the four major sins ("bajjar kurehats) are/do take place: sexual relationships outside of marriage, consumption of tobacco products (or any other intoxicants including alcohol), cutting or removal of hair from the body or consumption of meat or eggs.

NITNEM BANIS

The Banis Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Tav-Parsad Savaiye, should be read daily according to the Sikh Rehat Maryada (SRM), many read Benti Chaupai and Anand Sahib in addition. These are recited by initiated Sikhs in the early morning (before 6 am). Rehras Sahib is read in the evening (at sunset) and Kirtan Sohila before going to sleep at night.

- Kirtan Sohila — English translation
- Tav-Prasad Savaiye
  - Tav-Prasad Savaiye — English translation
- Sukhmani Sahib
  - 1,2,4,6,8: part of *Guru Granth Sahib*.
  - 3,5a, 5b,7: all complied by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs called Guru Gobind Singh Ji and part of Dasam Granth.

SIKH FESTIVALS

I. GURU NANAK'S BIRTHDAY

The religion of Sikhism preaches that there is one God but that he is formless. That is why the Sikhs do not worship idols. The festivities in the Sikh religion revolve around the anniversaries of the 10 Sikh Gurus. These Gurus were responsible for shaping the beliefs of the Sikhs. Their birthdays, known as *Gurpurbs*, are occasions for celebration and prayer among the Sikhs.

Guru Nanak Sahib (the First Nanak, the founder of Sikhism) was born on 20th October, 1469 in Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi in the present Shekhupura District of Pakistan, now Nanakana Sahib. The birthday of Guru Nanak Sahib falls on Kartik Puranmashi i.e. full moon day of the month Kartik. In the Gregorian Calendar, the birthday of Guru Nanak usually comes in the month of November, but its date varies from year to year, based on the traditional dates of the Indian Calendar.

THE FESTIVAL

The celebration is generally similar for all Gurpurbs; only the hymns are different. The birthday celebration usually lasts three days. Generally two days before the birthday, *Akhand Path* (a forty-eight-hour non-stop reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of the Sikhs), is held in the *Gurdwaras*.

The day prior to the birthday, a procession is organised which is led by the *Panj Pyaras* (Five Beloved Ones). They head the procession carrying the Sikh flag, known as the *Nishan Sahib* and the *Palki* (Palanquin) of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. They are followed by teams of singers singing hymns, brass bands playing different tunes, 'Gatka' teams (Martial Arts) display their swordmanship, and devotees sing the chorus. The procession pours into the streets of the town which are covered with buntings and decorated gates for this special occasion. The leaders also spread the message of Guru Nanak. On the day of the Gurpurb, the day begins early in the morning with the singing of *Asa-di-Var* (morning hymns) and hymns from the Sikh scriptures followed by *Katha* (exposition of the scripture) together with lectures and recitation of poems in the praise of the Guru. Following that is the *Langar* or special community lunch, which is arranged at the *Gurdwaras* by volunteers. The idea behind the free communal lunch is that people should be offered food in the spirit of *seva* (service) and *bhakti* (devotion). Guru Nanak Jayanti is celebrated by the Sikh community all over the world and is one of the most important festivals in the Sikh calendar. The celebrations are especially colourful in Punjab and Haryana.

II. GURU GOBIND SINGH'S BIRTHDAY

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Nanak (Sikh Guru), was born at Patna Sahib on December 22, 1666, (Poh Sudi Saptmi). His birthday generally falls in December or January or sometimes twice within a year as it is calculated according to Hindu Bikrami Calendar, which is based on the lunar calendar. According to the Nanakshahi Calendar, the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib falls annually on January 5.

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 C.E.) lived during an extremely dangerous time. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, had sacrificed his life to protect the freedom of worship by Hindus, who were being threatened with conversion or death by zealous Muslim rulers. Abduction of women and pillage of goods were rampant, but the people were too timid and terrorised to resist. In the midst of this

political situation, Guru Gobind Singh gained great stature as both Saint and soldier: a leader of firm spiritual principles and intense devotion to God, and at the same time, fearless dedication to protecting all people from oppression and injustice through the practice of *Kshatradharma*.

In 1699, he dramatically initiated five men from the lower castes as His Five Beloveds, blessing them with great courage as well as nearness to God. They became models for the Khalsa, the Order of the Pure, which Guru Gobind Singh created to stand on the front line against injustice. The Khalsa were held to a very strict moral and spiritual discipline and under Guru Gobind Singh's courageous inspiration, helped to turn the tide against Mughal oppression in India.

In addition to his spiritual and military leadership, Guru Gobind Singh was a gifted intellectual and had many poets in his court. He was inspired to write many powerful spiritual compositions that infused a martial spirit in the people. This included the Jaap Sahib, but He did not include them in the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib.* His writings have instead been collected in a separate volume, called the Dasam Granth. Upon His passing away, He instructed his Sikhs to regard the *Guru Granth Sahib* as their teacher. 'Granth' literally means 'volume' (especially, a Holy volume). 'Sahib' is a term of reverance used for anything sacred. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the perpetual guru of the Sikhs today.

III. VAISAKHI

Vaisakhi, (*vaisâkhî*, 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 Vasakhi 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 put 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.

SIKH PRACTICES

Sikh practices are simple, precise and practical guidelines laid out by the Gurus for the practice of the "Sikh way of life". The Gurus emphasise that a Sikh should lead a disciplined life engaged in Naam Simran, meditation on God's name, Kirat Karni, living a honest life of a house-holder, and Wand Kay Shako, sharing what one has with the community. This translates into hard work, honest living, love of fellow humans and through them service of the God, the primal power. This way of life is said to have been stripped of complications, myths, jargon, rituals and exploitation of man by man in the name of religion. No benefits are gained by where and to which family the person is born to – All have to undertake the rigours of Simran (meditation) and Sewa (selfless service) to progress spiritually. The Sri Guru Adi Granth asks the Sikh to "Practice truth, contentment and kindness; this is the most excellent way of life. One who is so blessed by the Formless Lord God renounces selfishness, and becomes the dust of all.([SGGS] page 51)

The Sikh is required to undertake the following observances:

DISCIPLINED LIFE

1. Wake up early in the morning.
2. Bathing and cleansing of the body should be performed.
3. Cleanse the mind by spending some time meditating on God.
4. Engage in family life and address your responsibilities within the family.
5. Attend to a work or study routine and earn a living by earnest means.

6. Undertake to help the less well off with monetary and/or physical help.
7. Exercise your responsibilities to the community and take active part in the maintenance and safeguard of the community.

PERSONAL REGULATIONS

1. Wear the 5Ks
   (1) **Kesh –** long and uncut hair and a turban to protect the hair on the head.
   (2) **Kanga –** small comb to be used twice daily to keep the hair in clean and healthy condition.
   (3) **Kaccha –** underwear in the form of shorts to exercise self-control.
   (4) **Kara –** a steel slave bangle on the dominant arm to remind the Sikh to always remember the Guru before undertaking any action.
   (5) **Kirpan –** a short, often dagger-sized sword to remind the Sikh that he is to defend against repression of the weak.
2. Meditate by reciting his Gurbani and by singing his Kirtan (music-based hymns) and remember Him always.
3. Wash your mind clean with Sewa, selfless service to the community by doing manual work at the Gurdwara by cleaning the dishes, washing the floors, painting the walls; working in Community Centres; in old peoples homes, etc.
4. Practice Truth at all times: To live by the Gurus instruction to practice Truth thus: "Those who practice Truth reap the profits, abiding in the Will of God. With the Merchandise of Truth, they meet the Guru, who does not have a trace of greed. (6)" (SGGS page 59 and also "O Siblings of Destiny, follow the Guru's Teachings and dwell in truth. Practice truth, and only truth, and merge in the True Word of the Shabad.
5. Be kind and merciful to others: Kindness is a virtue that the Sikh have been asked to exercise at all times. The Gurus have shown on many occasions how to practise and live a life of kindness and mercy and have the following message for the keen devotee: "Become 'Jivan-Mukta', liberated while yet alive, by meditating on the Lord of the Universe, O mind, and maintaining faith in Him in your heart. Show kindness and mercy to all (sentient) beings, and realize that the Lord is

pervading everywhere; this is the way of life of the enlightened soul, the supreme swan." (SGGS page 508).

6. Become a Gurmukh by doing Good deeds: The Sikh Gurus repeatedly ask the dedicated Sikh to always do good deeds as shown by this verse from the *Guru Granth Sahib*—"The Gurmukh practices doing good deeds; thus he comes to understand this mind. The mind is like an elephant, drunk with wine. The Guru is the rod which controls it, and shows it the way." (SGGS p. 159).

COMMUNITY PRACTICES

1. Organise Gurdwaras: As a community the Sikh need to setup a local place of worship called a Gurdwara. Services need to held in the morning and evening including:
   (1) Asa-di-war kirtan
   (2) Sukhmani sahib paath
   (3) Akhandh Paath
   (4) Ardas and Hukamnama
   (5) Kirtan programmes
   (6) Naming Ceremony
   (7) Marriage Ceremony
   (8) Antim Sanskar
   (9) Amrit Ceremony, etc

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CONFUCIANISM: AN OVERVIEW

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese ethical and philosophical system originally developed from the teachings of the early Chinese sage and philosopher Confucius. Its focus is primarily on secular ethics and morality, as well as the cultivation of the civilised individual that in turn would contribute to the establishment of a civilised society and ultimately world peace. Confucianism is a complex system of moral, social, political, philosophical, and quasi-religious thought that has had tremendous influence on the culture and history of East Asia. Some consider it to be the state religion of East Asian countries because of governmental promotion of Confucian values.

The cultures most strongly influenced by Confucianism include those of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam, as well as various territories settled predominantly by Chinese people.

HISTORY

Debated during the Warring States Period and forbidden during the short-lived Qin Dynasty, Confucianism was chosen by Emperor Wu of Han for use as a political system to govern the Chinese state. Despite its loss of influence during the Tang Dynasty, Confucian doctrine remained a mainstream Chinese orthodoxy for two millennia until the 20th century, when it was attacked by radical Chinese thinkers as a vanguard of a pre-modern system and an obstacle to China's modernisation, eventually culminating in its repression during the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism has been revived in mainland China, and both interest in and debate about Confucianism have surged.

Confucianism as passed down to the 19th and 20th centuries derives primarily from the school of the Neo-Confucians, led by Zhu Xi, who gave Confucianism renewed vigor in the Song and later dynasties. Neo-Confucianism combined Taoist and Buddhist ideas with existing Confucian ideas to create a more complete metaphysics than had ever existed before. At the same time, many forms of Confucianism have historically declared themselves opposed to the Buddhist and Taoist belief systems.

Confucius (551–479 BCE) was a sage and social philosopher of China whose teachings have deeply influenced East Asia for two thousand five hundred years. The relationship between Confucianism and Confucius himself, however, is tenuous. Confucius' ideas were not accepted during his lifetime and he frequently bemoaned the fact that he remained unemployed by any of the feudal lords.

As with many other prominent figures such as Jesus, Socrates, and Buddha, humanity does not have direct access to Confucius' ideas. Instead, humans have recollections by his disciples and their students. This factor is further complicated by the "Burning of the Books and Burying of the Scholars", a massive suppression of dissenting thought during the Qin Dynasty, more than two centuries after Confucius' death.

However, we can sketch out Confucius' ideas from the fragments that remain. Confucius was a man of letters who worried about the troubled times in which he lived. He went from place to place trying to spread his political ideas and influence to the many kings contending for supremacy in China.

In the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (772–221 BCE), the reigning king of the Zhou gradually became a mere figurehead. In this power vacuum, the rulers of small states began to vie with one another for military and political dominance. Deeply persuaded of the need for his mission —"If right principles prevailed through the empire, there would be no need for me to change its state" *Analects* XVIII, 6—Confucius tirelessly promoted the virtues of ancient illustrious sages such as the Duke of Zhou. Confucius tried to amass sufficient political power to found a new dynasty, as when he planned to accept an invitation from a rebel to "make a Zhou dynasty in the East" (*Analects* XV, 5). As the common saying that Confucius was a "king without a crown" indicates, however, he never gained the opportunity to apply his ideas. He was expelled from states many times and eventually returned to his homeland to spend the last part of his life teaching. The *Analects of Confucius*, the

closest primary source we have for his thoughts, relates his sayings and discussions with rulers and disciples in short passages. There is considerable debate over how to interpret the Analects.

Unlike most European and American philosophers, Confucius did not rely on deductive reasoning to convince his listeners. Instead, he used figures of rhetoric such as analogy and aphorism to explain his ideas. Most of the time these techniques were highly contextualised. For these reasons, European and American readers might find his philosophy muddled or unclear. However, Confucius claimed that he sought "a unity all pervading" (*Analects* XV, 3) and that there was "one single thread binding my way together." ([*op. cit.* IV, 15]). The first occurrences of a real Confucian system may have been created by his disciples or by their disciples. During the philosophically fertile period of the Hundred Schools of Thought, great early figures of Confucianism such as Mencius and Xun Zi (not to be confused with Sun Zi) developed Confucianism into an ethical and political doctrine. Both had to fight contemporary ideas and gain the ruler's confidence through argumentation and reasoning. Mencius gave Confucianism a fuller explanation of human nature, of what is needed for good government, of what morality is, and founded his idealist doctrine on the claim that human nature is good. Xun Zi opposed many of Mencius' ideas, and built a structured system upon the idea that human nature is bad and had to be educated and exposed to the rites, before being able to express their goodness for the people. Some of Xun Zi's disciples, such as Han Feizi and Li Si, became Legalists (a kind of law-based early totalitarianism, quite distant from virtue-based Confucianism) and conceived the state system that allowed Qin Shi Huang to unify China under the strong state control of every human activity. The culmination of Confucius' dream of unification and peace in China can therefore be argued to have come from Legalism, a school of thought almost diametrically opposed to his reliance on rites and virtue.

THE SPREAD OF CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism survived its suppression during the Qin Dynasty partly thanks to the discovery of a trove of Confucian classics hidden in the walls of a scholar's house. After the Qin, the new Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) approved of Confucian doctrine and sponsored Confucian scholars, eventually making Confucianism the official state philosophy (see Emperor Wu of Han). Study of the Confucian classics became the basis of the government examination system and the core

of the educational curriculum. No serious attempt to replace Confucianism arose until it was ejected from schools by government after the Republic of China was founded in 1912 and afterwards there were debates on it for about 15 years until the Nationalist Government was established in Nanking.

After its reformulation as Neo-Confucianism by Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming and the other Neo-Confucians, Confucianism also became accepted as state philosophies in Korea and Japan. Korea of the Chosun Dynasty has been termed a "Confucian state."

Under the Chinese domination, Confucianism had yet to gain a position in the Vietnamese society. However, Confucianism permeated Vietnamese life after Vietnam gained independence from China in 939. As in China, an intellectual elite developed, and the principles of obedience and respect for education and authority were instilled throughout society. Confucianism profoundly influenced the family structure and created a tightly defined social hierarchy.

In Hanoi in 1070, the establishment of the Van Mieu, a temple of learning dedicated to Confucius, marked the emergence of Confucianism as a cult. Like China, Confucianism in Vietnam reached a peak during the 15th century. Due to the need of constructing a unified nation, a centralised administration and a social order, Confucianism took the place of Buddhism to become the leading philosophy under the Le Dynasty. Confucianism took root deep into the social and political structure, the system of education and examinations and the circle of Confucian scholars gradually dominated social and moral life.

RITES

"Lead the people with administrative injunctions and put them in their place with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and put them in their place through roles and ritual practices, and in addition to developing a sense of shame, they will order themselves harmoniously." (*Analects* II, 3)

The above explains an essential difference between legalism and ritualism and points to a key difference between European / American and East Asian societies. Confucius argues that under law, *external* authorities administer punishments *after* illegal actions, so people generally behave well without understanding reasons why they should; whereas with ritual, patterns of behaviour are *internalised* and exert their influence *before* actions are taken, so people behave properly

because they fear shame and want to avoid losing face. In this sense, "rite" is an ideal form of social norm.

"Rite" stands here for a complex set of ideas that is difficult to render in European languages. The Chinese character for "rites" previously had the religious meaning of "sacrifice". Its Confucian meaning ranges from politeness and propriety to the understanding of each person's correct place in society. Externally, ritual is used to distinguish between people; their usage allows people to know at all times who is the younger and who the elder, who is the guest and who the host and so forth. Internally, they indicate to people their duty amongst others and what to expect from them.

Internalisation is the main process in ritual. Formalised behaviour becomes progressively internalised, desires are channeled and personal cultivation becomes the mark of social correctness. Though this idea conflicts with the common saying that "the cowl does not make the monk", in Confucianism sincerity is what enables behaviour to be absorbed by individuals. Obeying ritual with sincerity makes ritual the most powerful way to cultivate oneself. Thus,

"Respectfulness, without the Rites, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the Rites, become timidity; boldness, without the Rites, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the Rites, becomes rudeness" (*Analects* VIII, 2).

Ritual can be seen as a means to find the balance between opposing qualities that might otherwise lead to conflict.

Ritual divides people into categories and builds hierarchical relationships through protocols and ceremonies, assigning everyone a place in society and a form of behaviour. Music that seems to have played a significant role in Confucius' life is given as an exception as it transcends such boundaries, 'unifying the hearts'.

Although the *Analects* promotes ritual heavily, Confucius himself often behaved otherwise; for example, when he cried at his preferred disciple's death, or when he met a fiendish princess (VI, 28). Later more rigid ritualisms who forgot that ritual is "more than presents of jade and silk" (XVII, 12) strayed from their master's position.

GOVERNANCE

"To govern by virtue, let us compare it to the North Star: it stays in its place, while the myriad stars wait upon it." (*Analects* II, 1)

Another key Confucian concept is that in order to govern others one must first govern oneself. When developed sufficiently, the king's personal virtue spreads beneficent influence throughout the kingdom. This idea is developed further in the Great Learning and is tightly linked with the Taoist concept of wu wei: the less the king does, the more that is done. By being the "calm centre" around which the kingdom turns, the king allows everything to function smoothly and avoids having to tamper with the individual parts of the whole.

This idea may be traced back to early shamanistic beliefs, such as that the king being the axle between the sky, human beings and the Earth. The character itself shows the three levels of the universe, united by a single line. Another complementary view is that this idea may have been used by ministers and counsellors to deter aristocratic whims that would otherwise be to the detriment of the population.

MERITOCRACY

"In teaching, there should be no distinction of classes." (*Analects* XV, 39)

Although Confucius claimed that he never invented anything but was only transmitting ancient knowledge (see *Analects* VII, 1), he did produce a number of new ideas. Many European and American admirers such as Voltaire and H. G. Creel point to the (then) revolutionary idea of replacing the nobility of blood with one of virtue, which had meant "noble man" before Confucius' work, slowly assumed a new connotation in the course of his writings, rather as "gentleman" did in English. A virtuous plebeian who cultivates his qualities can be a "gentleman", while a shameless son of the king is only a "small man". That he allowed students of different classes to be his disciples is a clear demonstration that he fought against the feudal structures in Chinese society.

Another new idea, that of meritocracy, led to the introduction of the Imperial examination system in China. This system allowed anyone who passed an examination to become a government officer, a position which would bring wealth and honor to the whole family. The Chinese examination system seems to have been started in 165 BCE, when certain candidates for public office were called to the Chinese capital for examination of their moral excellence by the emperor. Over the following centuries the system grew until finally almost anyone who wished to become an official had to prove his worth by passing written government examinations.

Confucius praised those kings who left their kingdoms to those apparently most qualified rather than to their elder sons. His achievement was the setting up of a school that produced statesmen with a strong sense of state and duty, known as. During the Warring States Period and the early Han dynasty, China grew greatly and the need for a solid and centralised corporation of government officers able to read and write administrative papers arose. As a result, Confucianism was promoted and the men it produced became an effective counter to the remaining landowner aristocrats otherwise threatening the unity of the state.

Since then Confucianism has been used as a kind of "state religion", with authoritarianism, legitimism, paternalism, and submission to authority used as political tools to rule China. Most emperors used a mix of legalism and Confucianism as their ruling doctrine, often with the latter embellishing the former.

THEMES IN CONFUCIAN THOUGHT

A simple way to appreciate Confucian thought is to consider it as being based on varying levels of honesty. In practice, the elements of Confucianism accumulated over time and matured into the following forms:

Ritual

In Confucianism the term "ritual" was soon extended to include secular ceremonial behaviour before being used to refer to the propriety or politeness which colours everyday life. Rituals were codified and treated as a comprehensive system of norms. Confucius himself tried to revive the etiquette of earlier dynasties. After his death, people regarded him as a great authority on ritual behaviours.

It is important to note that "ritual" has a different meaning in the context of Confucianism, especially today, from its context in many religions. In Confucianism, the acts that people tend to carry out in everyday life are considered ritual. Rituals are not necessarily regimented or arbitrary practices, but the routines that people often undergo knowingly or unknowingly throughout their lives. Shaping the rituals in a way that leads to a content and healthy society, and to content and healthy people, is one purpose of Confucian philosophy.

Relationships

One theme central to Confucianism is that of relationships, and the differing duties arising from the different status one held in relation

to others. Individuals are held to simultaneously stand in different degrees of relationship with different people, namely, as a junior in relation to their parents and elders, and as a senior in relation to their younger siblings, students, and others. While juniors are considered in Confucianism to owe strong duties of reverence and service to their seniors, seniors also have duties of benevolence and concern toward juniors. This theme consistently manifests itself in many aspects of East Asian cultures even to this day, with extensive filial duties on the part of children toward parents and elders, and great concern of parents toward their children.

Social harmony — the great goal of Confucianism — thus results partly from every individual knowing his or her place in the social order and playing his or her part well. When Duke Jing of Qi asked about government, by which he meant proper administration so as to bring social harmony, Confucius replied,

"There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son."

Filial Piety

"Filial piety" is considered among the greatest of virtues and must be shown towards both the living and the dead (ancestors). The term "filial", meaning "of a child", denotes the respect that a child, originally a son, should show to his parents. This relationship was extended by analogy to a series of *five relationships.*

1. Sovereign to subject
2. Parent to child
3. Elder to younger brother
4. Husband to wife
5. Friend to friend (Older friend is higher in rank/class than younger friend)

Specific duties were prescribed to each of the participants in these sets of relationships. Such duties were also extended to the dead, where the living stood as sons to their deceased family. This led to the veneration of ancestors.

In time, filial piety was also built into the Chinese legal system: a criminal would be punished more harshly if the culprit had committed the crime against a parent, while fathers often exercised enormous power over their children. Much the same was true of other unequal relationships.

The main source of our knowledge of the importance of filial piety is *The Book of Filial Piety*, a work attributed to Confucius but almost certainly written in the third century BCE. Filial piety has continued to play a central role in Confucian thinking to the present day.

Loyalty

Loyalty is the equivalent of filial piety on a different plane. It was particularly relevant for the social class, to which most of Confucius' students belonged, because the only way for an ambitious young scholar to make his way in the Confucian Chinese world was to enter a ruler's civil service. Like filial piety, however, loyalty was often subverted by the autocratic regimes of China. Confucius had advocated a sensitivity to the realpolitik of the class relations that existed in his time; he did not propose that "might makes right", but that a superior who had received the "Mandate of Heaven" should be obeyed because of his moral rectitude.

In later ages, however, emphasis was placed more on the obligations of the ruled to the ruler, and less on the ruler's obligations to the ruled.

Loyalty was also an extension of one's duities to friends, family, and spouse. Loyalty to one's leader came first, then to one's family, then to one's spouse, and lastly to one's friends. Loyalty was considered one of the greater human virtues.

Humanity

Confucius was concerned with people's individual development, which he maintained took place within the context of human relationships. Ritual and filial piety are the ways in which one should act towards others from an underlying attitude of humaneness. Confucius' concept of humaneness is probably best expressed in the Confucian version of the (Ethic of reciprocity) Golden Rule: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others;".

Rén also has a political dimension. If the ruler lacks *rén*, Confucianism holds, it will be difficult if not impossible for his subjects to behave humanely. *Rén* is the basis of Confucian political theory: it presupposes an autocratic ruler, exhorted to refrain from acting inhumanely towards his subjects. An inhumane ruler runs the risk of losing the "Mandate of Heaven", the right to rule. Such a mandateless ruler need not be obeyed. But a ruler who reigns humanely and takes care of the people

is to be obeyed strictly, for the benevolence of his dominion shows that he has been mandated by heaven. Confucius himself had little to say on the will of the people, but his leading follower Mencius did state on one occasion that the people's opinion on certain weighty matters should be polled.

The Gentleman

The term is crucial to classical Confucianism. The ideal of a "gentleman" or "perfect man" is that for which Confucianism exhorts all people to strive. A succinct description of the "perfect man" is one who "combines the qualities of saint, scholar, and gentleman" (CE). In modern times the masculine translation in English is also traditional and is still frequently used. A hereditary elitism was bound up with the concept, and gentlemen were expected to act as moral guides to the rest of society.

They were to:

- cultivate themselves morally;
- show filial piety and loyalty where these are due;
- cultivate humanity, or benevolence.

The great exemplar of the perfect gentleman is Confucius himself. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of his life was that he was never awarded the high official position which he desired, from which he wished to demonstrate the general well-being that would ensue if humane persons ruled and administered the state.

Rectification of Names

Confucius believed that social disorder often stemmed from failure to perceive, understand, and deal with reality. Fundamentally, then, social disorder can stem from the failure to call things by their proper names, and his solution to this was *Zhèngmíng*. He gave an explanation of *zhengming* to one of his disciples.

Tsze-lu said, "The ruler of Wei has been waiting for you, in order with you to administer the government. What will you consider the first thing to be done?"

The Master replied, "What is necessary is to rectify names."

"So! indeed!" said Tsze-lu. "You are wide of the mark! Why must there be such rectification?"

The Master said, "How uncultivated you are, Yu! A superior man, in regard to what he does not know, shows a cautious reserve.

- If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things.
- If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.
- When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties and music do not flourish.
- When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded.
- When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot.

Therefore a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect." (*Analects* XIII, 3, tr. Legge)

Xun Zi chapter (22) "On the Rectification of Names" claims the ancient sage kings chose names that directly corresponded with actualities , but later generations confused terminology, coined new nomenclature, and thus could no longer distinguish right from wrong.

DEBATES

Promotion of Corruption

Unlike some other political philosophies, Confucianism is reluctant to employ laws. In a society where relationships are considered more important than the laws themselves, if no other power forces government officers to take the common interest into consideration, corruption and nepotism may arise. As government officers' salary was often far lower than the minimum required to raise a family, Chinese society was frequently affected by those problems. Even if some means to control and reduce corruption and nepotism have been successfully used in China, Confucianism is criticised for not providing such a means itself. One major argument against this criticism is that Confucian East Asian societies such as the People's Republic of China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea have exhibited high economic growth. Critics point to continuing problems with nepotism and corruption in those countries as well.

Was There a Confucianism?

One of the many problems in discussing the history of Confucianism is the question of what Confucianism is. Confucianism can be understood

roughly as "the stream of individuals, claiming Master Kong to be the Greatest Master". It also represents "the social group following moral, political, and philosophical doctrine of what was considered, at a given time, as the orthodox understanding of Confucius". In this definition, this "group" can be identified during specific dynastic periods when self-declared Confucians debated with others supporting different doctrines, such as during the Han and Tang dynasties. During periods of Confucian hegemony, such as the Song, Ming and Qing dynasties, it can be identified roughly with the social class of government officials.

However, the reality of these groupings is questioned by some. In his book, *Manufacturing Confucianism*, Lionel Jensen claims that our modern image of Confucius and Confucianism, which is that of a wise symbol of learning and a state-sponsored quasi-religion, did not exist in China from time immemorial, but was manufactured by European Jesuits, as a "translation" of the ancient indigenous traditions, known as "Ru Jia", in order to portray Chinese society to Europeans. The notion of Confucianism was then borrowed back by the Chinese, who used it for their own purposes.

Therefore, we could define Confucianism as "any system of thinking that has, at its foundations, the works that are regarded as the 'Confucian classics', which was the corpus used in the Imperial examination system". Even this definition runs into problems because this corpus was subject to changes and additions. Neo-Confucianism, for instance, valorized the Great Learning and the Zhong Yong in this corpus, because their themes are close to those of Taoism and Buddhism.

Is Confucianism a "Religion?"

Most religions can be defined as having a set God or group of gods, an organised priesthood, a belief in a life after death, and organised traditions, thus it is debatable whether Confucianism should be called a true "religion". While it prescribes a great deal of ritual, little of it could be construed as worship or meditation in a formal sense. Confucius occasionally made statements about the existence of other-worldly beings that sound distinctly Athiestic, agnostic and humanistic to European and American ears. Thus, Confucianism is often considered a secular ethical tradition and not a "religion." It is best described as a philosophy with special rituals and beliefs.

Its effect on Chinese and other East Asian societies and cultures has been immense and parallels the effects of religious movements, seen in other cultures. Those who follow the teachings of Confucius

say that they are comforted by it. It includes a great deal of ritual and, in its Neo-Confucian formulation, gives a comprehensive explanation of the world, of human nature, etc. Moreover, religions in Chinese culture are not mutually exclusive entities — each tradition is free to find its specific niche, its field of specialisation. One can practice religions such as Taoism, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Jainism, Islam, Shinto, Buddhism, or Zoroastrianism and still profess Confucian beliefs. Of course, monotheistic religions would not tolerate such a two-pronged faith, as they see themselves as the only way to the truth.

Although Confucianism may include ancestor worship, sacrifice to ancestral spirits and an abstract celestial deity, and the deification of ancient kings and even Confucius himself, all these features can be traced back to non-Confucian Chinese beliefs established long before Confucius and, in this respect, make it difficult to claim that such rituals make Confucianism a religion.

Generally speaking, Confucianism is not considered a religion by Chinese or other East Asian people. Part of this attitude may be explained by the stigma placed on many "religions" as being superstitious, illogical, or unable to deal with modernity. Many Buddhists state that Buddhism is not a religion, but a philosophy, and this is partially a reaction to negative popular views of religion. Similarly, Confucians maintain that Confucianism is not a religion, but rather a moral code or philosophic world view.

The question of whether Confucianism is a religion, or otherwise, is ultimately a definitional problem. If the definition used is worship of supernatural entities, the answer may be that Confucianism is not a religion. If, on the other hand, a religion is defined as (for example) a belief system that includes moral stances, guides for daily life, systematic views of humanity and its place in the universe, etc., then Confucianism most definitely qualifies. As with many such important concepts, the definition of religion is quite contentious. Herbert Fingarette's *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* is a well-known treatment of this issue.

NAMES FOR CONFUCIANISM

Several names for Confucianism exist in Chinese.

- "School of the scholars"
- "Teaching of the scholars"
- "Study of the scholars"
- "Teaching of Confucius"

Three of these four use the Chinese character Rú, meaning "scholar". These names do not use the name "Confucius" at all, but instead center on the figure/ideal of the Confucian scholar. However, the suffixes of jiâ, jiào, and xué carry different implications as to the nature of Confucianism itself.

Rújiâ contains the character jiâ, which literally means "house" or "family". In this context, it is more readily construed as meaning "school of thought", since it is also used to construct the names of philosophical schools contemporary to Confucianism: for example, the Chinese names for Legalism and Mohism end in jiâ.

Rújiào and Kongjiào contain the Chinese character jiào, the noun "teach", used in such as terms as "education" or "educator". The term, however, is notably used to construct the names of religions in Chinese: the terms for Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Shintô and other religions in Chinese all end with jiào.

Rúxué contains xué, meaning literally "study". The term is parallel to "-ology" in English, being used to construct the names of academic fields: the Chinese names of fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, political science, economics, and sociology all end in xué.

QUOTES

General

- The Master said, "I have been the whole day without eating, and the whole night without sleeping — occupied with thinking. It was of no use. The better plan is to learn." (*Analects* XV. 30. tr. Legge)

On Spirits

- Zilu (an impetuous disciple of Confucius) asked how one should serve ghosts and spirits. The Master said, "Till you have learnt to serve men, how can you serve ghosts?" Zilu then ventured upon a question about the dead. The Master said, "Till you know about the living, how are you to know about the dead?" (*Analects* XI. 11. tr. Waley)
- "Show respect to the spirits and deities, then keep away from them." (Confucius is said to have refused to discuss the subject of magic, devils, hell, and Heaven).
- The Master said, "For a man to sacrifice to a spirit which does not belong to him is flattery." (*Analects* II. 24.)

Examples of Ritual—from Book 10 of Analects

- He [Confucius] hastened forward, with his arms like the wings of a bird.
- When he entered the palace gate, he seemed to bend his body, as if it were not sufficient to admit him.
- He ascended the reception hall, holding up his robe with both his hands, and his body bent; holding in his breath also, as if he dared not breathe.
- When he was carrying the scepter of his ruler, he seemed to bend his body, as if he were not able to bear its weight. He did not hold it higher than the position of the hands in making a bow, nor lower than their position in giving anything to another. His countenance seemed to change, and look apprehensive, and he dragged his feet along as if they were held by something to the ground.
- The superior man did not use a deep purple, or a puce colour, in the ornaments of his dress.
- He did not eat meat which was not cut properly, nor what was served without its proper sauce.
- He did not partake of wine and dried meat bought in the market.
- When eating, he did not converse. When in bed, he did not speak.

Taoist addition within the Analects

- The Master said, "The Fang bird does not come; the river sends forth no map: it is all over with me! (Analects IX. 8.)

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29

ZIONISM: EVOLUTION AND PHILOSOPHY

ZIONISM

Zionism is an international political movement that supports a homeland for the Jewish People in the Land of Israel. Although its origins are earlier, the movement was formally established by Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl in the late nineteenth century. The international movement was eventually successful in establishing the State of Israel in 1948, as the world's first and only modern Jewish State. It continues primarily as support for the state and government of Israel and its continuing status as a homeland for the Jewish people. Described as a "diaspora nationalism," its proponents regard it as a national liberation movement whose aim is the self-determination of the Jewish people.

While Zionism is based in part upon religious tradition linking the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, where the concept of Jewish nationhood is thought to have first evolved somewhere between 1200 BCE and the late Second Temple era (i.e. up to 70 CE), the modern movement was mainly secular, beginning largely as a response by European Jewry to anti-semitism across Europe. At first one of several Jewish political movements offering alternative responses to the position of Jews in Europe, Zionism gradually gained more support, and after the Holocaust became the dominant Jewish political movement.

TERMINOLOGY

The word "Zionism" itself derived from the word "Zion" one of the names of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, as mentioned in the Bible. It was coined as a term for Jewish nationalism by Austrian Jewish publisher Nathan Birnbaum, founder of the first nationalist Jewish students' movement *Kadimah*, in his journal *Selbstemanzipation* (*Self Emancipation*) in 1890. (Birnbaum eventually turned against political

Zionism and became the first secretary-general of the anti-Zionist Haredi movement Agudat Israel.)

Since the founding of the State of Israel, the term "Zionism" is generally considered to mean support for Israel as a Jewish nation state. However, a variety of different, and sometimes competing, ideologies that support Israel fit under the general category of Zionism, such as Religious Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, and Labour Zionism. Thus, the term is also sometimes used to refer specifically to the programmes of these ideologies, such as efforts to encourage Jewish immigration to Israel.

Certain individuals and groups have used the term "Zionism" as a pejorative to justify attacks on Jews. According to historians Walter Laqueur, Howard Sachar and Jack Fischel among others, in some cases, the label "Zionist" is also used as a euphemism for Jews in general by apologists for antisemitism.

Zionism should be distinguished from Territorialism which was a Jewish nationalist movement calling for a Jewish homeland, but not necessarily in Palestine. During the early history of Zionism, a number of proposals were made for settling Jews outside of Europe but these all ultimately were rejected or failed. The debate over these proposals helped define the nature and focus of the Zionist movement.

THE HISTORIC AND RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF ZIONISM

Biblical Precedents

The desire of Jews to return to their ancestral homeland is a Jewish theme that first makes its appearance in the Torah. Israel and his sons went down to Egypt to escape a drought, in Egypt they became a nation and were enslaved. Moses goes before Pharoh and demands "Let my people go!". Most of the Torah is devoted to the story of the Exodus from Egypt which is estimated to have taken place in 1400 BCE and is celebrated annually during Passover. The Passover meal traditionally ends with the words "Next Year in Jerusalem".

After the conquest of Judea by Babylon in 641 BCE, the Judeans were exiled to Babylon and the theme recurs. In the book of Psalms (see Psalm 137) Jews lamented their exile while Prophets like Ezekiel foresaw their return. The Bible recounts how, in 538 BCE Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon and issued a proclamation granting the people of Judah their freedom. 50,000 Judeans, led by Zerubabel returned. A second group of 5000 led by Ezra and Nehemiah returned to Judea in 456 BCE.

The Jewish Decline in Israel

During the Hellenistic Age many Jews left Judea to live in other parts of the Mediterranean basin.

The third great Jewish exile is considered to have begun after the destruction of Judea by the Roman Empire in the year 70 (after the Great Jewish Revolt). A second Jewish revolt against the Romans, Bar Kokhba's revolt of 135, led to further dispersal of Jews to other parts of the Empire.

A Jewish presence in the Land of Israel was maintained even after the Bar Kokhba revolt, and there is evidence of vibrant communities in the first millennium. For example, the Jerusalem Talmud was created in the centuries following the revolt. The inventors of Hebrew vowel-signs, the Masoretes (ba'alei hamasorah, Hebrew áòìé äîñåøä), groups of scribes in 7th and 11th centuries were based primarily in Tiberias and Jerusalem.

The Crusades were devastating for the Jewish presence in Israel. The Crusaders massacred Jews, both on their path across Europe and in the Holy Land. After the Arab reconquest in the thirteenth century, Sultan Baybars ravished the land to ensure it could not sustain a large population and would not be attractive to invaders. It remained poor under the Ottomans, who took over in the 16th century and ruled it until the 20th.

Over the centuries, the population of the Holy Land was slowly bolstered by Jews fleeing Christian persecution especially after the *Reconquista* of *Al-Andalus* (the Muslim name of the Iberian peninsula). Safed became an important center of Kabalah. Hebron and Tiberias also had significant Jewish populations.

Aliyah and the Ingathering of the Exiles

Return to the Land of Israel had remained a recurring theme among generations of diaspora Jews, particularly in Passover and Yom Kippur prayers which traditionally concluded with, "Next year in Jerusalem", and in the thrice-daily Amidah (Standing prayer).

Aliyah (immigration to Israel) has always been considered to be a praiseworthy act for Jews according to Jewish law, and is included as a commandment in most versions of the 613 commandments.

From the Middle Ages and onwards, a number of famous Jews (and often their followers) immigrated to the Land of Israel. These included Nahmanides, Yechiel of Paris with several hundred of his

students, Yosef Karo, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and 300 of his followers, and over 500 disciples (and their families) of the Vilna Gaon known as Perushim, among others.

PRE-ZIONIST INITIATIVES 1799-1897

The Enlightenment and the Jews

The age of enlightenment in Europe led to an 18th and 19th centuries Jewish enlightenment movement in Europe, called the Haskalah. The French Revolution and the spread of western liberal ideas among newly emancipated Jews, created for the first time a class of secular Jews who absorbed the prevailing ideas of rationalism, romanticism and, most importantly, nationalism.

Emancipated Jews who abandoned Judaism, often found themselves still rejected by their host societies and still regarded as 'Jews'. They also found that abandoning their Jewish identity meant loss of their heritage.

The formation of modern nations in Europe led to changes in the prejudice directed against Jews. What had previously been religious prejudice now became a new phenomena known as anti-semitism. Anti-Semites saw Jews as a racial group as well as a religious group and actively tried to prevent Jews from being given equal rights and citizenship.

Proto-Zionism

A precursor to the Zionist movement of the later 1800s occurred with the 1820 attempt by journalist, playwright and American-born diplomat Mordecai Manuel Noah to establish a Jewish homeland on Grand Island, New York, (north of Buffalo, New York, USA). In 1840s, Noah advocated the "Restoration of the Jews" in the Land of Israel.

Moses Hess's 1862 work *Rome and Jerusalem. The Last National Question* argued for the Jews to create a socialist state in Palestine as a means of settling the national question. In the same year 1862, German Orthodox Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer published his tractate *Derishat Zion*, positing that the salvation of the Jews, promised by the Prophets, can come about only by self-help. In 1882 Judah Leib Pinsker publish the pamphlet *Auto-Emancipation*, arguing that Jews would not require emancipation in their own country.

Pre-Zionist groups were active in the 1880s in Eastern Europe where emancipation had not occurred to the extent it had in Western Europe (if at all). The massive pogroms following the assassination of

Tsar Alexander II made emancipation seem more elusive than ever, and influenced the Hibbat Zion to actively promote Jewish settlement in Palestine. In 1890, the "Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and Eretz Israel" (better known as the Odessa Committee) was officially registered as a charitable organisation in the Russian Empire and by 1897 it counted over 4,000 members.

American Protestant Christian Zionists such as William Eugene Blackstone also pursued the Zionist ideal during late 19th century, especially in the American Blackstone Memorial (1891).

Agricultural Settlements

In the late 1870s, Jewish philanthropists such as the Montefiores and the Rothschilds, responded to the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe by sponsoring agricultural settlements for Russian Jews in Palestine. The Jews who migrated in this period have become known in Zionist history as the First Aliyah. *Aliyah* is a Hebrew word meaning "ascent," referring to the act of spiritually "ascending" to the Holy Land. Founded in 1878, Petah Tikva was the first Zionist settlement.

Rishon LeZion was founded on 31 July 1882 by a group of ten members of Hovevei Zion from Kharkov (today's Ukraine). The land was owned by Tzvi Leventine and was purchased by the "Pioneers of Jewish Settlement Committee" that was formed in Jaffa, the port of arrival for many of the immigrants to the area.

In 1890 Palestine, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, was inhabited by about 5,20,000 people, mostly Muslims and Christian Arabs—but including 20-25,000 Jews.

Non-Jewish Support

Napoleon suggested the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as early as 1799, during his invasion of the Levant. In 1873, Shah of Persia Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar met with British Jewish leaders, including Sir Moses Montefiore, during his journey to Europe. At that time, the Persian king suggested that the Jews buy land and establish a state for the Jewish people.

Ideas of the restoration of the Jews in the Land of Israel entered the British public discourse in the 19th century. Not all such attitudes were favorable towards the Jews; they were shaped in part by a variety of Protestant beliefs, or by a streak of philo-Semitism among the classically educated British elite, or by hopes to extend the Empire. At the urging of Lord Shaftesbury, Britain established a consulate in

Jerusalem in 1838, the first diplomatic appointment in the Land of Israel. In 1839, the Church of Scotland sent Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne to report on the condition of the Jews in their land. Their report was widely published and was followed by a "Memorandum to Protestant Monarchs of Europe for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine." In August 1840, *The Times* reported that the British government was considering Jewish restoration. Lord Lindsay wrote in 1847: "The soil of Palestine still enjoys her sabbaths, and only waits for the return of her banished children, and the application of industry, commensurate with her agricultural capabilities, to burst once more into universal luxuriance, and be all that she ever was in the days of Solomon." In her 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot advocated "the restoration of a Jewish state planted in the old ground as a center of a national feeling, a source of dignifying protection, a special channel for special energies and an added voice in the councils of the world." Benjamin Disraeli wrote in his article entitled "The Jewish Question is the Oriental Quest" (1877) that within fifty years a nation of one million Jews would reside in Palestine under the guidance of the British. Moses Montefiore visited the Land of Israel seven times and fostered its development.

The Treaty of Paris (1856) granted Jews and Christians the right to settle in Palestine and opened the doors for Jewish immigration.

Causes of the Emergence of Zionism

Zionism arose out of a combination of factors, it was a nationalist ideology, a response to anti-Semitism, an attempt to provide a means of escape from what many Jews saw as unceasing Christian persecution and also an alternative to assimilation, Bolshevism and conversion.

Jews in growing numbers began to perceive themselves as a "nation" in the new European sense and were inspired by various national struggles. If European nations were entitled to a homeland, and if they excluded Jews, why not create a Jewish homeland, where Jews would be free of persecution?

Jews in Eastern Europe faced constant pogroms and persecution in Tzarist Russia aimed at driving them out. In response to the Jewish drive for modern education (Haskalah) the Tzars imposed tight quotas on schools, universities and cities to prevent entry by Jews, the government deliberately organised pogroms with military authorities disarming any Jews who attempted to defend themselves. Consequently, between 1880 and 1928, two million Jews left Eastern Europe, mostly

for the USA. A minority went to Palestine. By 1928 nations were increasingly legislating to prevent Jews from entering, particularly in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution in which Jews were seen as playing a prominent role. Many countries feared that immigrating Jews would bring revolutionary ideas with them.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT 1897-1917

Formation

In 1883, Nathan Birnbaum, nineteen years old, founded *Kadimah*, the first Jewish Students Association in Vienna. In 1884 the first issue of *Selbstemanzipation* or *Self Emancipation* appeared, completely made by Nathan Birnbaum himself.

The Dreyfus Affair, which erupted in France in 1894, profoundly shocked emancipated Jews. The depth of anti-Semitism in a country thought of as the home of enlightenment and liberty led many to question their future security in Europe. Among those who witnessed the Affair was an Austro-Hungarian (born in Budapest, lived in Vienna) Jewish journalist, Theodor Herzl, who published his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State") in 1896 and [[*altneuland*]] (Old-New Land) in 1897. He described the Affair as a turning point—prior to the Affair, Herzl had been anti-Zionist, afterwards he became ardently pro-Zionist. Herzl believed in a Jewish state for the Jewish nation; in that way the Jews, he argued, could become a people like all other peoples and anti-semitism would cease to exist.

Herzl infused political Zionism with a new and practical urgency. He brought the World Zionist Organisation into being and, together with Nathan Birnbaum, planned its First Congress at Basel in 1897

The Objectives of Zionism

During the congress, the following agreement, commonly known as the Basel Programme, was reached:

Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz-Israel secured under public law [that is to seek legal permission from the Ottoman rulers for Jewish migration]. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Eretz-Israel of Jewish farmers, artisans, and manufacturers.
2. The organisation and uniting of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.

3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goals of Zionism.

The Organisational Structure of the Zionist Movement

For the first four years, the World Zionist Organisation met every year, up to the Second World War they gathered every second year. Since the war the Congress meets every four years.

Congress delegates were elected by the membership (members were required to pay a due known as a "Shekel"). At the congress delegates elected a 30 man executive council which in turn elected the movement's leader. The movement was democratic and women had the right to vote (in 1914 still absent in Great Britain).

The WZO's initial strategy was to obtain permission from the Ottoman Sultan Abd-ul-Hamid II to allow systematic Jewish settlement in Palestine. The good offices of the German Emperor, Wilhelm II, were sought, but nothing came of this. Instead, the WZO pursued a strategy of building a homeland through persistent small-scale immigration, and the founding of such bodies as the Jewish National Fund in 1901 and the Anglo-Palestine Bank in 1903.

Early Arguments

Cultural Zionism and Opposition to Herzl

Herzl's strategy relied on winning support from foreign rulers, in particular the Ottoman Sultan. He also made efforts to cultivate Orthodox, Rabbinical support. Rabbinical support depended on the Zionist movement making no challenges to existing Jewish tradition, however, an opposition movement arose which emphasised the need for a revolution in Jewish thought. While Herzl believed that the Jews needed to return to their historic homeland as a refuge from anti-Semitism, the opposition, led by Ahad HaAm, believed that the Jews must revive and foster a Jewish national culture and, in particular strove to revive the Hebrew language. The opposition became known as Cultural Zionists.

The Uganda Proposal

In 1903 the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain suggested the British Uganda Programme, land for a Jewish state in "Uganda"

(in today's Kenya). Herzl initially rejected the idea, preferring Palestine, but after the April 1903 Kishinev pogrom Herzl introduced a controversial proposal to the Sixth Zionist Congress to investigate the offer as a temporary measure for Russian Jews in danger. Despite its emergency and temporary nature, the proposal proved very divisive and widespread opposition to the plan was fueled by a walkout led by the Russian Jewish delegation to the Congress. Nevertheless, a committee was established to investigate the possibility which was eventually dismissed in the next (Seventh) Zionist Congress in 1905. After that Palestine became the sole focus of Zionist aspirations.

The Death of Herzl

In 1904, Herzl died unexpectedly at the age of 44 and the leadership was taken over by David Wolfsohn who led the movement until 1911. During this period the movement made little progress, failing to win support among the Young Turks after the collapse of the Ottoman Regime.

From 1911-1921 the movement was led by Dr Otto Warburg.

By 1904 Cultural Zionism was accepted by most Zionists and a schism was beginning to develop between the Zionist movement and Orthodox Judaism.

Anti-Zionism and Alternative Proposals

Orthodox Jewish Opposition

Under Herzl's leadership Zionism won orthodox Jewish support, however cultural and socialist Zionists increasingly broke with tradition and used language contrary to the outlook of most religious Jewish communities. As a result many religious organisations opposed Zionism, both on the grounds that it was a secular movement and on the grounds that any attempt to re-establish Jewish rule in Israel by human agency was blasphemous, since (in their view) only the Messiah could accomplish this.

Some Orthodox Jews thus retreated into the traditional Jewish belief that the Land of Israel was given to the ancient Israelites by God, and that while the right of the Jews to that land was permanent and inalienable, the Messiah must appear before Israel could return to Jewish control.

Other Orthodox Jews formed an orthodox Zionist movement, Mizrachi.

Prior to the Holocaust, Reform Judaism rejected Zionism as inconsistent with the requirements of Jewish citizenship in the diaspora.

It should be noted that while Zionism aroused Ashkenazi Orthodox antagonism in Europe (probably due to Modernist European antagonism to organised religion), in the Islamic world Orthodox Judaism eagerly embraced Zionism.

Support for Other Homelands

Before 1917 some Zionist leaders took seriously proposals for Jewish homelands in places other than Palestine. Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* argued for a Jewish state in either Palestine, "our ever-memorable historic home", or Argentina, "one of the most fertile countries in the world". when the Zionist Movement rejected the Uganda Proposal, the Jewish Territorialist Organisation (ITO) led by Israel Zangwill split off from the main Zionist movement. The territorialists attempted to establish a Jewish homeland wherever possible, but went into decline after 1917 and the ITO was dissolved in 1925.

Communism

Zionisms most serious rival in Eastern Europe was the General Jewish Labour Union, otherwise known as the Bund, which helped promote the Communist Revolution in Russia. The Bund called for Jewish Autonomy within Eastern Europe and promoted Yiddish as the Jewish language. Bund supporters regarded Zionism as a form of Bourgeois nationalism. However, as was the case with Orthodox Judaism, while the leadership opposed Zionism (and Orthodox Judaism), in practise the rank and file often had ties with other forms of Jewish life including Zionism. The Bund thus indirectly led to development of Socialist Zionism, which competed with it for Jewish allegiances.

Growth of the Zionist Community in Israel

In Palestine, the small Zionist community began to expand. Widespread pogroms accompanied the 1905 Russian Revolution, inspired by the Black Hundreds. This and the desire of many young Jews to avoid conscription for the Russo-Japanese war led to a wave of immigrants to Palestine. The new wave of immigrants resurrected the Hebrew Language.

Outside Jaffa a new town called, Tel-Aviv was established, the new town had a modern school, the Herzliya Hebrew High School, which was the first modern school to teach only in Hebrew. In Jerusalem

foundations were laid for a Jewish University (the Hebrew University), one which would teach only in Hebrew and which the Zionists hoped would help them prove their usefulness to the Turks (this did not come to fruition until 1918). In Haifa the cornerstone was laid for a Jewish Technical school (the Technion).

Zionism in non-European Jewish Communities

The 1911 edition of the Jewish Encyclopedia evidenced the movement's growing popularity: "there is hardly a nook or corner of the Jewish world in which Zionistic societies are not to be found."

Zionism was not a purely Ashkenazi phenomenon. The first Zionist branches in the Arab world opened in Morrocco only a few years after the first Zionist conference, and the movement was popular among Jews living in Arab states. A number of the founders of the city of Tel-Aviv were Moroccan Jewish immigrants and there was significant early migration from Yemen (10 per cent of Yemenite Jews moved to the Holy Land between 1880 and 1914) and Uzbekistan. Ottoman Salonika had a vigorous Zionist movement by 1908.

Socialist Zionism: a New Zionist Movement

The chief rival to Zionism among young Jews in Eastern Europe was the socialist movement. Many Jews were abandoning Judaism in favour of Communism or supported the Bund, a Jewish socialist movement which called for Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe and promoted Yiddish as the Jewish language.

Opposition to this led to the emergence of a new zionist movement, the socialist Zionists, who believed that the Jews' centuries of being oppressed in anti-Semitic societies had reduced Jews to a meek, vulnerable, despairing existence which invited further anti-Semitism. They argued that Jews should redeem themselves from their history by becoming farmers, workers, and soldiers in a country of their own. These socialist Zionists rejected religion as perpetuating a "Diaspora mentality" among the Jewish people and established rural communes in Israel called "Kibbutzim". Major theoreticians of Socialist Zionism included Moses Hess, Nahum Syrkin, Ber Borochov and Aaron David Gordon and leading figures in the movement included David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson. Socialist Zionists rejected Yiddish as a language of exile, embracing Hebrew as the common Jewish tongue.

Socialist Zionism became a dominant force in Israel, however, it caused the schism between some groups of Orthodox Jews such as Neturei Karta and Zionism to grow.

Early Zionism and the Non-Jewish Population of Palestine

Zionist leaders and advocates followed conditions in the land of Israel closely and travelled there regularly. Their concern, however, was entirely with the future of Jewish settlement. The future of the land's Arab inhabitants concerned them as little as the welfare of the Jews concerned Arab leaders. During the movement's formative stages, zionist negotiators with stronger political powers (such as the British) corresponded enthusiastically while remaining silent about the inhabitants of Palestine, who numbered just under half a million during the late nineteenth century.

According to Anita Shapira, among nineteenth and early twentieth century Zionists, 'The Arabs in Palestine were viewed as one more of the many misfortunes present in Palestine, like the Ottoman authorities, the climate, difficulties of adjustment, [...] [T]he Zionist organisation did not discuss this issue during that period and did not formulate a political line on it. Yet at that particular juncture in the movement such deliberations [...] had about the same importance as the learned disputations customarily held in the courtyards of Hassidic rebbes regarding what would happen after the coming of the messiah.'

What thought Zionists did give to Arab national rights was perhaps typified by this passage by Israel Zangwill, written just after the first World War: 'The Arabs should recognize that the road of renewed national glory lies through Baghdad, Damascus and Mecca, and all the vast territories freed for them from the Turks and be content. [...] The powers that freed them have surely the right to ask them not to grudge the petty strip (Israel) necessary for the renaissance of a still more downtrodden people.' Thus, from the beginning Zionists saw the Arab residents of Palestine as part of a larger Arab nation.

Under the Ottomans, Palestine's Arab population mostly saw themselves as Ottoman subjects or as Moslems and, when they concerned themselves with Zionists, they generally assumed the movement (whose objectives they feared) would fail. After the Young Turk revolution in 1908, Arab Nationalism grew rapidly in the area and most Arab Nationalists regarded Zionism as a threat, although a minority perceived Zionism as providing a path to modernity.

The Zionist Movement in World War I and the Balfour Declaration

In the search for support, Herzl made most progress with the Kaiser, meeting with him and joining the Kaiser on his 1898 trip to Palestine At the oubreak of war in 1914, the offices of the World

Zionist Organisation were located in Berlin and the Zionist leader was a German citizen, Otto Warburg. With different sections of the movement supporting different sides in the war, Zionist policy was to maintain strict neutrality and "to demonstrate complete loyalty to Turkey".

At this time England had a rapidly growing Jewish minority. Some 1,50,000 Jews migrated there from Russia in the period 1881-1914. There was pressure from British voters to halt the influx as well as a strong love for the Old Testament in British society which made Zionism an attractive solution.

In 1914, most Jews viewed Russia as the historic enemy of the Jewish people and there was termendous support for Germany within the Jewish world. Particularly in the United States where the many Russian and German Jews supported the Germans alongside the large Irish-American community. Britain was concerned to win US support for its war effort and winning over US Jews was considered vital. Most Russian Jewish emmigrants to Britain supported Germany in its war against Russia and avoided the draft.

Following Turkey's entry into the First World War, the Zionists were expelled from Tel-Aviv and its environs. A Polish Zionist, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, worked to create a Jewish division in the British army. The Jewish Legion provided a means of recruiting Russian immigrants to the British war effort and was dominated by Zionist volunteers. The Jewish Legion participated in the 1917 British invasion of Palestine and Jabotinsky was awarded for bravery.

In 1915 the British government fell as a result of its inability to manufacture sufficient artillery shells for the war effort. In the new Government Lloyd-George became the minister responible for armaments. Lloyd George was a Christian-Zionist and had represented the Zionist movement in its dealings with the British Government over the Uganda proposal.

The most prominent Russian-Zionist migrant to Britain was Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann developed a means for mass production of Acetone a critical ingredient of explosives that Britain was unable to manufacture. He did not ask for any payment for his efforts. According to Lloyd-George he said he expected no payment, just the rights over Palestine... Weizmann became a close associate of Lloyd George (Prime-Minister from 1916) and the First Lord of the Admiralty (foreign minister from 1916), Arthur Balfour.

In addition to the British desire to cement US Jewish support, there was concern to keep Russia in the war after the overthrow of the Tzar in February 1917. Jews were prominent in the new Russia and it was hoped British support for Zionism would help keep Russia fighting Germany.

In 1917, five days before the Bolsheviks took over Russia, the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, made the famous Declaration in favour of "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." The Declaration used the word "home" rather than "state," and specified that its establishment must not "prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

When the Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917, Edwin Montagu, the only Jew in the British Cabinet, "was passionately opposed to the declaration on the grounds that (a) it was a capitulation to anti-Semitic bigotry, with its suggestion that Palestine was the natural destination of the Jews, and that (b) it would be a grave cause of alarm to the Muslim world.", the reference to the rights of non-Jews in Palestine was thus demanded by the only Jew in the British cabinet.

THE BRITISH MANDATE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINE 1918-1939

Weizmann Becomes Leader

After the war, in 1921, Weizmann was elected president of the World Zionist Organisation in recognition of his role in creating the Balfour Declaration. He remained in this position until 1931. From 1931 to 1935 the WZO was presided by Nahum Sokolov (who had also spent the first world war in Britain). Weizmann resumed presidency of the WZO in 1935 and led it until 1946.

The League of Nations Endorses Zionism

After the defeat and dismantling of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the League of Nations endorsed the Balfour Declaration with the establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine (text:).

In addition to the promises made by Balfour, the League required Britain to create a representative body, the Jewish Agency, which would administer Jewish affairs in Palestine.

The Zionist movement entered a new phase of activity. Its priorities were the escalation of Jewish settlement in Palestine, the building of the institutional foundations of a Jewish state, raising funds for these

purposes, and persuading — or forcing — the British authorities not to take any steps which would lead to Palestine moving towards independence as an Arab-majority state. The 1920s did see a steady growth in the Jewish population and the construction of state-like Jewish institutions, but also saw the emergence of Palestinian Arab nationalism and growing resistance to Jewish immigration.

Expansion of the Movement

The success of Zionism in getting international recognition for its project, led to growth in the membership and developmenmt of new forms of Zionism.

Religious Zionism

In the 1920s and 1930s, a small but vocal group of religious Jews began to develop the concept of Religious Zionism under such leaders as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine) and his son Zevi Judah, and gained substantial following during the latter half of the 20th century. Kook was concerned that growing secularisation of Zionism and antagonism towards it from the Orthodox Jews would lead to a schism. He therefore sought to create a brand of Judaism which would serve as a bridge between Orthodoxy and secular Jews.

Revisionist Zionism

The Revisionist Zionists were a group led by Jabotinsky who advocated pressing Britain to allow mass Jewish emigration and the formation of a Jewish Army in Palestine. The army would force the Arab population to accept mass Jewish migration and promote British interests in the region.

Revisionist Zionism was detested by the Socialist Zionist movement which saw them as being influenced by Fascism and the movement caused a great deal of concern among Arab Palestinians. After the 1929 Arab riots, the British banned Jabotinsky from entering Palestine.

Revisionism was popular in Poland but lacked large support in Palestine. In 1935 the Revisionists left the Zionist movement, rejoining in 1946.

Jewish Opposition to Zionism between the wars

International Jewish opinion remained divided on the merits of the Zionist project. While many Jews in Europe and the United States argued that a Jewish homeland was not needed because Jews were

able to live in the democratic countries of the West as equal citizens, others supported Zionism.

Many Jews who embraced socialism and proletarian internationalism opposed Zionism as a form of bourgeois nationalism. The General Jewish Labour Union (Bund), which represented socialist Jews in Eastern Europe, was anti-Zionist. Some Jewish factions tried to blend Jewish Autonomism with Zionism, favoring Jewish self-rule in Eastern-Europe.

The Communist parties, which attracted substantial Jewish support during the 1920s and 1930s, were vigorously anti-Zionist. In 1928, the Soviet Union established a Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the Russian Far East but the effort failed to meet expectations and as of 2002 Jews constitute only about 1.2 per cent of its population.

Marcus Garvey and "Black Zionism"

Zionist success in winning British support for formation of a "Jewish National Home" in Palestine helped inspire the African-American Nationalist Marcus Garvey to form a movement dedicated to returning Americans of African origin to Africa. During a speech in Harlem in 1920 Garvey stated that other races were engaged in seeing their cause through—the Jews through their Zionist movement and the Irish through their Irish movement—and I decided that, cost what it might, I would make this a favorable time to see the Negro's interest through.

Garvey established a shipping company, the Black Star Line, to ship Black Americans to Africa, but for various reasons failed in his endeavour. His ideas helped inspire the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica, the Black Jews and the Black Hebrews who initially moved to Liberia before settling in Israel.

Arab Attitudes to Zionism

Though there had already been Arab protests to the Ottoman authorities in the 1880s against land sales to foreign Jews, the most serious opposition began in the 1890s after the full scope of the Zionist enterprise became known. There was a general sense of threat. This sense was heightened in the early years of the 20th century by Zionist attempts to develop an economy from which Arab people were largely excluded, such as the "Hebrew labour" movement which, in an effort to prevent Zionist settlements turning into a standard colonial enterprise and to secure the creation of a Jewish proletariat, campaigned against the employment of cheap Arab labour. The creation of Palestine in 1918 and the Balfour Declaration greatly increased Arab fears.

In 1919 King Faisal I of Iraq (who was then King of Syria, before the French expelled him), signed the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement. He wrote: "We Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our delegation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist organisation to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper."

Palestinian Arab nationalism was motivated by anti-Zionism more than any other factor and developed in opposition to Zionism. Faisal's agreement with Weizmann led the Palestinian-Arab population to reject the Syrian-Arab-Nationalist movement (in which many previously placed their hopes) and to agitate for Palestine to become a state governed by the Arab majority, in particular they demanded an elected assembly.

The Arabs in Palestine were led by two main camps. The Nashashibis, led by Raghib al-Nashashibi, who was Mayor of Jerusalem from 1920 to 1934, were moderates who sought dialogue with the British and the Jews. The Nashashibis were overshadowed by the al-Husaynis who came to dominate Palestinian-Arab politics in the years before 1948. The al-Husaynis, like most Arab Nationalists, denied that Jews had any national or religious rights in Palestine.

The Mufti and the Emergence of Palestinian Nationalism

After 1920 Haj Amin al-Husseini became the focus of Palestinian opposition to Zionism. Despite his involvment in the 1920 Palestine riots, Herbert Samuel made him Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921.

The Mufti was concerned that Jews were seeking to rebuild the Jewish Temple on the site of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque and responded by trying to gain control of the Kotel, also known as the Wailing Wall, saying it was sacred to the Muslims.

Religious tension (over the Kotel), an international economic crisis (affecting crop prices) and nationalist tension (over Zionist immigration) led to the 1929 Palestine riots. In these religious-nationalist riots Jews were massacred in Hebron and the survivors were expelled from the town. Devastation also took place in Safed and Jerusalem. This violence was directed against the non-Zionist orthodox communities; Zionist communities were able to defend themselves and had established defence organisations. As a result the orthodox community in Palestine was increasingly dependent on Zionist support.

A British commission investigated the riots, and throughout his interview the Mufti (who was a virulent anti-semite) held a copy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

In 1936 the Supreme Muslim Council in Palestine, led by the Mufti, instigated an Arab uprising which lasted for three years. During the revolt the Mufti was forced to flee to Iraq, where he was involved in a pro-Nazi coup during which the Jewish areas of Baghdad were subjected to a pogrom. In May 1941 he issued a fatwa for a holy war against Britain. After the British reoccupied Iraq the Mufti joined the Nazis, serving as a colonel with the Waffen SS in Bosnia. During the war he made requests to "the German government to bomb Tel Aviv" and was active in promoting the Nazi extermination programme.

In 1948 the Mufti returned to Egypt from where he made his way to Palestine and assumed command of the Palestinian-Arab forces.

Zionist Attitudes Toward the Arabs

Most Zionists were Europeans, and although Jews were generally less racist then the average European of the time (Jews were prominent in fighting racism around the world), European-Jewish public opinion generally reflected attitudes of the European societies in which they lived, which at this time was highly prejudiced.

One issue fatally divided Arab and Jew in Palestine: immigration. Jews could not compromise over immigration as for them Palestine was intended as a haven from persecution, particularly after the rise of the Nazis. The Arabs for their part could not compromise on immigration because to do so would effectively end their majority in Palestine. Each side distrusted and feared the other's long-term ambitions.

Although the establishment of a Jewish majority or a Jewish state in Palestine was fundamentally at odds with the aspirations of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, Zionists did not doubt their right to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine. Zionists justified this by referring to the 'unique' historical bond of the Jewish nation with Palestine, while the Arabs of Palestine were part of the Arab nation and therefore had no special bond with Palestine. Many Zionists claimed a 'preemptive right' to Palestine, the Jews had a right as a Nation, the Arabs only as individuals. Aaron David Gordon wrote in 1921: 'the creation of the Bible alone, give[s] us a perpetual right over the land in which we were so creative, especially since the people that came after us did not create such works in this country, or did not create anything at all.'

Socialist Zionists maintained a struggle for "100 per cent Jewish labour" in the Jewish sector of the economy, which greatly alienated the Arab population.

Weizmann

In Chaim Weizmann's view Palestine was a Jewish and not an Arab country, however Weizmann believed that the state had to be based on justice and on an accommodation with the Arabs.

In 1918, Weizmann toured Palestine as head of the Zionist Commission and met with Arab and Palestinian-Arab leaders, including the future mufti al-Husseini. He preferred to negotiate a political solution primarily with the British, and sometimes with non-Palestinian Arabs, but he opposed negotiating with the Palestinians themselves.. According to Reinharz, he focused his efforts on the Pan-Arab leadership of the Hussein family because they were (initially) willing to reach an accommodation in return for Zionist support while he failed to reach any understanding with Palestinian Arab leaders.

Jabotinsky

Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist Zionists, thought the Arabs were completely irrelevant to the question of Zionism except as enemies. In his view the conflict with the Arabs was natural and inevitable and could not be solved until the Zionists could face the Arabs with an 'iron wall' of Jewish power.

Ben-Gurion

In public, Ben-Gurion upheld the official position of his party that denied the necessity of force in achieving Zionist goals. Unlike Weizmann, Ben-Gurion did have a realistic view of the strong attachment of Arab Palestinians to the Palestinian soil. In 1938 he said: 'In our political argument abroad we minimize Arab opposition to us. But let us not ignore the truth among ourselves. [...] A people which fights against [what it conceives as] the usurpation of its land will not tire so easily.' According to Flapan Ben-Gurions assesment of Arab feelings led him to an even more militant line on the need to build up Jewish military strength: 'I believe in our power, in our power which will grow, and if it will grow agreement will come...'.

Bi-National Support

A minority of Zionists, including the Socialist Zionist movement Hashomer Hatzair, sought to create a bi-national state. However, this approach was unpopular with both Arabs and Jews.

Zionist Para-Military Organisations

In response to Arab attacks under the Turks, the Zionists in Palestine established Hashomer (the Guardian), a self-defence organisation. After the Jaffa Riots, an organisation of Jewish Legion veterans was created, Haganah (Defence) to defend Jewish communities against rioters. In 1931, following the Revisionist Zionist departure from the Zionist Movement, a group of revisionists left Haganah and founded the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (National Military Organisation), also known as Etzel.

British Immigration Restrictions

British support for Zionism was never unequivocal and the issue was periodically debated in Parliament. Following the Arab riots in 1922, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill decided to remove the Transjordan area of Palestine and use it to fulfill British promises to Sharif Hussein, making one of his sons King of Transjordan.

Churchill also imposed restrictions such as an annual quota on Jewish migration. Certificates allowing migration were distributed by the Jewish Agency. In addition, Jews with 1000 Pounds in cash or Jewish professionals with 500 Pounds in cash could emigrate freely. Churchill's reforms made it hard for Arab Jews, Orthodox Jews and Revisionist Zionists to migrate to Palestine as the Jewish Agency was dominated by European Zionists, and increasingly by Socialist Zionists. Immigration restrictions did, however mean that Jewish immigrants to Palestine had to prove their loyalty and dedication by spending years preparing for migration.

The Rise of Hitler and Illegal Migration

The rise to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933 produced a powerful new impetus for Zionism. The claim that Jews could live securely as minorities in Christian societies was deeply undermined. At the same time most countries closed their doors to Jewish immigration. A wave of migrants headed for Palestine. Those unable to pay the fees demanded by the British had to join waiting lists and spent years learning Hebrew and taking agricultural training.

Nazi efforts to push Jews out of Germany were undermined by the refusal to allow Jews to take their property with them. In response Arlozorov negotiated an agreement with the Nazis, the Haavara agreement, whereby Jews could export capital goods to Palestine. In Palestine the goods were sold and the income given to the migrants. As a result of this agreement Arlozorov was assassinated by the Irgun.

In 1934 the Revisionists started organising illegal emigration to Palestine as they felt that the allocation of certificates discriminated against their supporters. The Jewish population of Palestine now began to rise fast and the financial influx led to an economic boom, but the rapid rise of Jewish migration led to an Arab revolt. In 1938 the pressure in Europe led the left-wing Zionists to organize illegal immigration too.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST BRITAIN AND THE NAZIS 1939–1948

The 1939 White Paper and the British break with Zionism

In Britain as elsewhere in Europe, the 1930s saw an increase in antisemitism. The Labour leader, Oswald Mosley formed a party called the British Union of Fascists, which claimed that "the Jews" were leading Britain to war and campaigned for peace with Germany. British support for Zionism was also undermined by the Palestinian-Arab revolt and concern that millions of Jews would soon be seeking entry to Palestine.

In 1939 the British issued a White Paper, announcing that they were withdrawing from the Balfour Declaration. A Jewish National Home now existed and their obligations were fulfilled. Further migration would be harmful to the Arab population. A further 10,000 Jews a year would be admitted from 1939 to 1944 as well as a one-time allowance of 25,000 in view of the situation in Europe. After that Jewish migration would require agreement of the Arab majority (by this time Jews were about a third of the population). The British promised Palestine independence by 1949 and banned Jews from purchasing land in 95 per cent of Palestine.

The British were concerned about maintaining Arab support as Fascist propaganda was targeting the Arab world (and winning support). Jewish support in the fight against Fascism was guaranteed. In Palestine, Zionists increasingly viewed the British as an enemy, but they deemed the fight against the Nazis more important. In 1940 a group, later known as Lehi, left the Irgun and began fighting the British.

State of the Zionist Movement on the Eve of World War II

In 1938–39 the Zionist movement had 1,040,540 members in 61 countries. Zionism was banned in Turkey. Likewise though a significant proportion of the movement's supporters originally came from the USSR, under Stalin Zionism and Orthodox Judaism were banned and Jews were prominent among the victims of the Soviet genocide.

The following figures relate to the last pre-war Zionist congress in Geneva, 1939. Elections for the congress were held in 48 countries and 529 delegates attended. Members of the movement voted for the parties. Each party submitted a delegate list. Seats were distributed to the parties according to the number of votes they obtained and candidates elected in the order in which they were named on the list. This system today forms the basis for Israeli elections.

Political Party	*Number of Delegates*	*% of delegates*
Worker's Party	216	41 %
General Zionists (centre)	143	27 %
General Zionists (conservative)	28	5 %
Mizrahi (Orthodox religious)	65	12 %
Radical Workers [far left]	3	2.5 %
State Party [right-wing]	8	1.5 %
Others	66	11 %

National Origins of the Delegates

Country	*Number of members*	*Number of delegates at the 1939 congress in Geneva*
Poland	299,165	109
USA	263,741	114
Palestine	167,562	134
Rumania	60,013	28
United Kingdom	23,513	15
South Africa	22,343	14
Canada	15,220	8

Source: *A survey of Palestine*, prepared in 1946 for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Volume II page 907 HMSO 1946.

Zionism during the Holocaust

During the Holocaust Europe's Jews were cut off from the outside world and systematically impoverished, starved and eventually murdered. Where Jews did succeed in fighting the Nazis, Zionists were prominent in the resistance.

The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was commanded by a Zionist, Mordechaj Anielewicz, and Zionists played a leading role in the struggle. The uprising's survivors eventually made their way to Palestine and founded two Kibutzim: Lohamey ha-Geta'ot and Yad Mordechai.

In Palestine the Zionist leadership instructed all able-bodied Jews to volunteer for the British Army. In addition there was an effort to parachute fighters into Europe, though little came of this. Fearing a Nazi invasion, the Jewish community prepared for a final stand to be made against the Nazis.

Overall there was little they could do. In the words of Tom Segev:

> "The story of the yishuv leaders during the Holocuast was essentially one of helplessness. They rescued a few thousand Jews from Europe. They could, perhaps have saved more, but they could not save millions."

Efforts were made to offer the Nazis money for the release of Jews. However, these efforts were systematically (and, according to Segev, cynically) destroyed by the British.

The 1942 Zionist conference could not be held because of the war. Instead 600 Jewish leaders (not just Zionists) met in a hotel in the Biltmore Hotel in New York and adopted a statement known as the Biltmore Programme. They agreed that when the war ended all Jewish organisations would fight to ensure that Jewish migration into Palestine would be controlled by the Jewish Agency.

The Biltmore Programme called for "Palestine [to] be established as a Jewish Commonwealth". David Ben-Gurion, who dominated the conference, formulated the Zionists' demand 'not as a Jewish state in Palestine but as Palestine as a Jewish state'. It was significant in that all US Jewish organisations were now united in agreement on the need for a Jewish state in Palestine. From the beginning of the forties the Zionist movement stopped paying attention to the 'Arab question'. The reason is that it was expected that any solution, whether a Jewish state in all of Palestine, partition, or an international protectorate, would have to be imposed on the Palestinian Arabs by force, because of their refusal to compromise.

Impact of the Holocaust

The Nazi-inspired genocide in Europe had grave consequences for the Zionists.

1. A large section of the membership was wiped out. The damage was particularly great in Poland where about a third of the Zionist members had lived (the Russian membership had been lost to communism).
2. Those Jews who were not killed lost their possessions; the ability of the Zionist movement to raise money in Europe was severely reduced.

This calamity led to important changes in Jewish and Zionist politics:

1. Many Jews were now desperate to leave Europe and willing to take grave risks for that purpose
2. All Jews now agreed on the need for a Jewish state where Jews could live free of the fear of persecution and which would provide a haven in times of persecution.
3. The Jews of the USA were now the dominant force in Jewish politics.
4. More Jews were prepared to mobilize on behalf of their brethren.
5. Britain was now weakened and less able to resist international pressure.

The Rapid Growth of Illegal Immigration to Palestine

In 1945, President Truman sent a personal representative, Earl G. Harrison, to investigate the situation of the Jewish survivors in Europe. Harrison reported that

substantial unofficial and unauthorised movements of people must be expected, and these will require considerable force to prevent, for the patience of many of the persons involved is, and in my opinion with justification, nearing the breaking point. It cannot be overemphasised that many of these people are now desperate, that they have become accustomed under German rule to employ every possible means to reach their end, and that the fear of death does not restrain them.

Despite winning the 1946 British election with a manifesto promising to create a Jewish state in Palestine, the Labour Government succumbed to Foreign Office pressure and kept Palestine closed to Jewish migration.

In Europe former Jewish partisans led by Abba Kovner began to organize escape routes taking Jews from Eastern Europe down to the Mediterranean where the Jewish Agency organised ships to illegally carry them to Palestine.

The British government responded to this movement by trying to force Jews to return to their places of origin. Holocaust survivors entering the British Zone were denied assistance or forced to live in hostels with former Nazi collaborators (Britain gave asylum to a large number of Belorussian Nazi collaborators after the war). In American-controlled zones, political pressure from Washington allowed Jews to live in their own quarters and meant the US Army helped Jews trying to escape the centres of genocide.

The 1947 UN decision to create a Jewish state

In 1947 Britain announced its intention to withdraw from Palestine, and on 29 November the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state (with Jerusalem becoming an international enclave). The Jewish Agency accepted the plan, while the Palestinian Arab leadership and the Arab League rejected it. Civil conflict between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine ensued immediately.

ZIONISM AND ISRAEL SINCE 1948

On 14 May 1948 the leaders of the Jewish community in Palestine made a declaration of independence, and the state of Israel was established. This marked a major turning point in the Zionist movement, as its principal goal had now been accomplished. Many Zionist institutions were reshaped, and the three military movements combined to form the Israel Defence Forces.

The majority of the Arab population having been ethnically cleansed during the War of Independence, Jews were now a majority of the population within the 1949 ceasefire lines, which became Israel's *de facto* borders until 1967. In 1950 the Knesset passed the Law of Return which granted all Jews the right to immigrate to Israel. This, together with the influx of Jewish refugees from Europe and the later flood of Jews from Arab countries, had the effect of creating a large and apparently permanent Jewish majority in Israel.

Since 1948 the international Zionist movement has undertaken a variety of roles in support of Israel. These have included the encouragement of immigration, assisting the absorption and integration of immigrants, fundraising on behalf of settlement and development projects in Israel, the encouragement of private capital investment in Israel, and mobilisation of world public opinion in support of Israel.

The 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states (the "Six-Day War") marked a major turning point in the history of Israel and of Zionism. Israeli forces captured the eastern half of Jerusalem, including the holiest of Jewish religious sites, the Western Wall of the ancient Temple. They also took over the remaining territories of pre-1948 Palestine, the West Bank (from Jordan) and the Gaza Strip (from Egypt). Religious Jews regarded the West Bank (ancient Judaea and Samaria) as an integral part of Eretz Israel, and within Israel voices of the political Right soon began to argue that these territories should be

permanently retained. Zionist groups began to build Jewish settlements in the territories as a means of establishing "facts on the ground" that would make an Israeli withdrawal impossible.

The 28th Zionist Congress (Jerusalem, 1968) adopted the following five principles, known as the "Jerusalem Programme", as the aims of contemporary Zionism:

- The unity of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life
- The ingathering of the Jewish people in the historic homeland, Eretz Israel, through aliyah from all countries
- The strengthening of the State of Israel, based on the "prophetic vision of justice and peace"
- The preservation of the identity of the Jewish people through the fostering of Jewish, Hebrew and Zionist education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values
- The protection of Jewish rights everywhere.

Control of the West Bank and Gaza placed Israel in the position of control over a large population of Palestinian Arabs. Whether or not there had been a distinct Palestinian national identity in the 1920s may be debated, but there is no doubt that by the 1960s such an identity was firmly established—the founders of Zionism had thus, ironically, created two new nationalities, Israeli and Palestinian, instead of one.

From this point the history of Israel and the Palestinians can be followed in the article Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 1975 the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379 was passed. It stated that "zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination." The resolution 3379 was rescinded in 1991 by the Resolution 4686. This issue is discussed in length in the article on anti-Zionism.

Since 1948 most Jews have continued to identify as Zionists, in the sense that they support the State of Israel even if they do not choose to live there. This worldwide support has been of vital importance to Israel, both politically and financially. This has been particularly true since 1967, as the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the resulting political and military struggles have eroded sympathy for Israel among non-Jews, at least outside the United States.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO ZIONISM

Both the League of Nations' 1922 Palestine Mandate and the 1947 UN Partition Plan broadly endorsed the aim of Zionism. The latter was a rare instance of concurrence between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, although Harry Truman's State Department, led by George Marshall, vehemently opposed the formation of the state of Israel. Only Truman's personal insistence overcame Marshall's intense opposition, which was based on strategic concerns for the stability of the region. Marshall's opposition was recounted in detail by Truman's aide Clark Clifford, who led the internal campaign to recognize a new Jewish state.

ANTI-ZIONISM AND POST-ZIONISM

There are a number of critics of Zionism, ranging from Jewish anti-Zionists to pro-Palestinian activists. Some of the most vocal critics of Zionism have tended to be Palestinians and other Arabs, many of whom view Israel as wrongfully occupying what they view as the Arab land of Palestine. Such critics generally opposed Israel's creation in 1948, and continue to criticize the Zionist movement which underlies it. These critics view the changes in demographic balance which accompanied the creation of Israel, including the displacement of some 7,00,000 Arab refugees, the displacement of 6,00,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands, and the accompanying violence, as negative but inevitable consequences of Zionism and the concept of a Jewish State. Critics of Zionism, such as Joseph Massad of Columbia University have asserted that Zionism is a form of racism, both in its support of Israel as a Jewish State, and in its continuing policies such as the Law of Return.

While most Jewish groups are pro-Zionist, some liberal and Haredi Jewish communities (most vocally the Satmar Hasidim and the Neturei Karta group), oppose Zionism on religious grounds. Other non-Zionist Israeli movements, such as the Canaanite movement led by poet Yonatan Ratosh in the 1930s and 1940s, have argued that "Israeli" should be a new pan-ethnic nationality. A related modern movement is known as post-Zionism, which asserts that Israel should abandon the concept of a "state of the Jewish people" and instead strive to be a state of all its citizens. Another opinion favors a binational state in which Arabs and Jews live together while enjoying some type of autonomy, as in Belgium.

Critics of anti-Zionism reject the charges that Zionism is racist, insisting it is no different than any other national liberation movement

of oppressed peoples, and argue that since criticism of both the state of Israel and Zionism is often disproportionate in degree and unique in kind, much of it can be attributed to antisemitism.

NON-JEWISH ZIONISM

Christian Zionism

In addition to Jewish Zionism, there was always a small number of Christian Zionists that existed from the early days of the Zionist movement. According to Charles Merkley of Carleton University, Christian Zionism strengthened significantly after the 1967 Six-Day War, and many dispensationalist Christians, especially in the United States, now strongly support Zionism.

Throughout the entire 19th century and early 20th century, the return of the Jews to the Holy Land was widely supported by such eminent figures as Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, John Adams, the second President of the United States, General Smuts of South Africa, President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, British Prime Ministers Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour, President Woodrow Wilson, Benedetto Croce, Italian philosopher and historian, Henry Dunant, founder of the Red Cross and author of the Geneva Conventions, Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian scientist and humanitarian. The French government through Minister M. Cambon formally committed itself to "the renaissance of the Jewish nationality in that Land from which the people of Israel were exiled so many centuries ago". In China, Wang, Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that "the Nationalist government is in full sympathy with the Jewish people in their desire to establish a country for themselves."

Muslims Supporting Zionism

Most Muslim public figures oppose Zionism; there is no organised Zionist movement among Muslims. There are, however, a few Muslim thinkers who publicly express Zionist views. The best known is Sheikh Abdul Hadi Palazzi, the leader of Italian Muslim Assembly and a co-founder of the Islam-Israel Fellowship. In 2005, Palazzi told FrontPage Magazine *"I find in the Qur'an that God granted the Land of Israel to the Children of Israel and ordered them to settle therein (Qur'an 5:21) and that before the Last Day He will bring the Children of Israel to retake possession of their Land, gathering them from different countries and nations (Qur'an 17:104). Consequently, as a Muslim who abides by the Qur'an, I believe that opposing the existence of the State of Israel means opposing a Divine decree."*

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BAHA'I: RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH

BAHA'I RELIGION

ABOUT THE FAITH

The Bahá'í Faith is a world religion based on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He explained that there is only one God and one human family, and that all religions are spiritually united. Bahá'u'lláh's writings offer spiritual guidance as well as directives for personal and social conduct.

The more than five million Bahá'ís around the world are engaged in the process of learning how to translate that guidance into realities of individual and community life. Though they come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they are united by their belief in Bahá'u'lláh and by their desire for a united, prosperous, and peaceful future for all of humanity.

PRINCIPLES OF BAHÁ'Í BELIEF

"The Bahá'í Faith recognises the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society.

"It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace."

Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith

The Baha'i Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent monotheistic religion with a worldwide population of some five million people. They come from more than 2,000 different tribal, racial, and ethnic groups and live in 236 countries and dependent territories.

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in the line of Messengers of God that stretches back beyond recorded time and that includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muhammad.

FEATURES

Moral and Spiritual Education for the Next Generation

The Bahá'í writings attach great importance to the periods of childhood and youth, providing clear guidance to parents and communities to raise children in a nurturing and unambiguous environment.

About the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is a world religion based on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He explained that there is only one God and one human family, and that all religions are spiritually united. Bahá'u'lláh's writings offer spiritual guidance as well as directives for personal and social conduct.

Devotional Gatherings for Inspiration and Renewal

Inspiration, rejuvenation, motivation, purpose, meaning—all are essential ingredients to one's sense that his or her life is on track, is worth living.

Collaborative Study for Individual and Social Transformation

At the heart of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the force of transformation, both of the individual and of society. The transformation of the individual is not an isolated process, not ascetic nor centered wholly on one's self-fulfilment.

A New Framework for Social and Economic Development

Bahá'í development projects are a global enterprise where Bahá'ís act locally to learn to translate Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into action to resolve problems.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The Bahá'í writings attach great importance to the periods of childhood and youth, providing clear guidance to parents and communities to raise children in a nurturing and unambiguous environment.

Youth are encouraged to develop a strong sense of purpose, empowering their own transformation and leading them to contribute to the advancement of society. Young people's spiritual capacity, the basis for their own happiness and sense of well-being, is a powerful force for social change.

Bahá'ís believe that moral, spiritual, and values-based training for children and youth is essential in order to nurture these capacities.

Thus, Bahá'í communities sponsor moral education classes for children and youth of all backgrounds. The classes seek to develop essential virtues such as the knowledge of God, trustworthiness, honesty, and justice. They aim to build a strong moral framework that will assist children to achieve excellence in material, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life.

"Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value," wrote Bahá'u'lláh. "Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom."

In accordance with that inspiration, Bahá'ís are working to bring forth these "treasures"—the nobility and beauty that are part of every person's inborn nature. The training they offer is a compelling response to the flood of messages that promote materialism and neglect the ideals of a healthy and prosperous society.

The classes, offered in increasing numbers by Bahá'í communities around the world, can help to ensure that our children grow strong intellectually, morally, and spiritually.

If you would like more information on the classes Bahá'ís offer for children, or to attend childrens classes in your area.

DEVOTIONAL GATHERINGS FOR INSPIRATION AND RENEWAL

Inspiration, rejuvenation, motivation, purpose, meaning—all are essential ingredients to one's sense that his or her life is on track, is worth living.

Yet, day to day, one is hard-pressed to find or feel them and is challenged to maintain a positive, hopeful outlook.

The Word of God, say the Bahá'í writings, provides inspiration, rejuvenates souls, gladdens hearts, and renews one's sense of purpose.

Thus, Bahá'ís host devotional gatherings in homes and community centers to take advantage of such benefits through prayer and the reading together of the Bahá'í writings and other scriptures and to create an environment of unity and harmony. Prayer is a central element in all religious traditions and these meetings stress its universal nature.

Prayer offers us an opportunity to commune with our Creator, draw on the revitalising power of the Word of God, and to contemplate and more deeply appreciate our lives.

The meetings, often simple, have a variety of elements to accommodate participants regardless of their religious background. Music, food, and discussion are often present, though the primary purpose is to use prayer's power to transform, unify, and revitalize.

For many, these gatherings become a refreshing refuge from the discordant and grinding aspects of everyday life. Participants are able to meditate on spiritual principles and gain some perspective on how these principles can be applied to their day-to-day affairs.

If you would like more information on the devotional gatherings that Bahá'ís offer, or to attend one in your area.

COLLABORATIVE STUDY FOR INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

At the heart of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the force of transformation, both of the individual and of society.

The transformation of the individual is not an isolated process, not ascetic nor centered wholly on one's self-fulfilment.

In Bahá'í terms, the process of one's individual development and fulfilment is tied to the centering of one's energies on the betterment of humankind and serving the needs of the community and the larger society.

Prayer and meditation, fighting one's spiritual battles, living according to spiritual laws and teachings—all are essential elements in fulfilling life's purpose, but such efforts reach their fullest transformative effect when they are dedicated to service.

Thus, Bahá'ís are actively engaged in developing knowledge, skills, and spiritual insights that enable them to act as effective human resources and which are vital to the integrated process of personal and social transformation. Presently, such collective learning takes the form of study circles—a local, collaborative, self-directed learning process being undertaken by Bahá'í communities around the world. All are welcome in the classes, regardless of their ideas or beliefs.

By learning about our spiritual reality and our individual role in the progress of society, we can better understand our purpose in life and the way to improve our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Participants in the courses learn, for example, to teach values to children, to engage in community service activities, to assist and empower others to independently investigate spiritual truths, to learn how to competently express one's views, and to engage oneself in serving the broader needs of society for unity, justice, and equity.

Participants in study circles often experience a new sense of direction in life, better relationships with family and friends, and a fruitful re-evaluation of the contribution one can make to the wider community.

Around the world, one of the most common formats for Bahá'í study circles feature a workbook entitled "Reflection on the Life of the Spirit." Developed by the Ruhi Institute in Colombia, the workbook is part of a series of materials that are widely used around the world by Bahá'í communities in an effort to foster constructive personal and community transformation.

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bahá'í development projects are a global enterprise where Bahá'ís act locally to learn to translate Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into action to resolve problems.

They emphasize grassroots initiative and evolutionary growth, a counterpoint to traditional thinking about development, in which concerns with the financial and material aspects of assistance can overshadow the complexity of people's needs and their own capacity to produce positive change.

Activities undertaken by Bahá'í communities range in scale from national literacy programmes to village vegetable gardens. Each strives

to put in place an integrated model for social and economic development, working to create community-wide learning and capacity building in addition to addressing immediate needs.

A growing number of Bahá'í-inspired development organisations combine principles of action-learning, concern for appropriate technology, and environmental conservation; work to develop coordinated networks of both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í institutions; and urge an integrated and globally minded approach in understanding a problem and its origins.

Beyond the training of individuals and the cultivation of community life, development must pay attention to strengthening organisational structures and processes to create institutions that can channel the talents and energies of individuals in service to humanity.

Ultimately, the goal is a global society that provides true prosperity—spiritual and material—for all people. If you would like more information on development projects which Bahá'ís sponsor around the world, please contact us.

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH AND OTHER RELIGIONS

All divine Revelations come from the same Source; thus, the religions identified with them are in essence one. They differ in the measure of their teachings and particularly in their social laws and principles, appropriate to the times in which they appeared. The successive divine Revelations over the centuries have provided the spiritual force and laws for the advancement of civilisation. Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad were all divine Messengers; the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are the most recent. The coming of Bahá'u'lláh represents the fulfilment of this centuries' long process of progressive revelation and of the expectations inspired by previous divine Messengers for the ultimate unity of peoples and peace among nations.

The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. From its obscure beginnings in Iran during the mid-nineteenth century, it has now spread to virtually every part of the world, has established its administrative institutions in over 200 independent states and major territories, and has embraced believers from virtually every cultural, racial, social, and religious background.

To the World's Religious Leaders

A message from the Universal House of Justice to the world's religious leaders.

The Oneness of Religion

The principle of the unity of religion is at the center of Bahá'í teachings. Bahá'u'lláh states that humanity is engaged in a collective growth process quite similar to the growth process of an individual.

"The Changeless Faith of God"

When Bahá'ís say that the various religions are one, they do not mean that the various religious creeds and organisations are the same. Rather, they believe that there is only one religion and all of the Messengers of God have progressively revealed its nature. Together, the world's great religions are expressions of a single unfolding Divine plan.

FREEDOM TO BELIEVE: UPHOLDING THE STANDARD OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Bahá'í International Community's Statement on the Freedom of Religion or Belief October 2005.

INTRODUCTION

1. Over fifty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights boldly proclaimed the inherent dignity and the equal rights of all members of the human family. Guided by the vision of equality for all, the Declaration enshrined the fundamental right of every human being to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Despite the international community's unanimous adoption of this Declaration and its codification in subsequent instruments of international law, the world bears witness to persistent intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, the proliferation of violence in the name of religion, the manipulation of religion in the interest of political ideology, and increasing tensions between religion and State policies. The rising tide of religious extremism has fuelled these developments, threatening security, human development, and efforts towards peace. Widespread violations of this right—most often targeting women and minorities—have continued. Given the interdependence of human rights, such violations have compromised, among others, the right to education, employment, peaceful assembly, citizenship, political participation, health, and at times, life itself. Indeed, the promise of freedom of religion or belief for all remains one of the most contested and pressing human rights of our time.

2. The freedom to hold beliefs of one's choosing and to change them is central to human development as it makes possible the individual's search for meaning—a distinguishing impulse of the human conscience. As such, the Bahá'í International Community applauds recent efforts by the United Nations to include cultural and religious freedom in its conceptual framework and evaluation of human development. Equally significant has been the United Nations' affirmation of the interrelatedness of development, security and human rights and fundamental freedoms, setting the stage for an earnest re-examination of the role of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in the pursuit of a peaceful, prosperous, and just society.
3. As a worldwide religious community, which regards the human conscience as sacred and upholds the individual's independent search for truth, we urge the United Nations to give serious consideration to four critical yet neglected issues related to the right to freedom of religion or belief: (1) the right to change one's religion or beliefs; (2) the right to share one's beliefs with others; (3) the responsibilities of the international community and national governments vis-a-vis marginalised and peacefully organised religious communities; and (4) the responsibilities of religious leaders vis-a-vis the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief. We will address each issue in turn and conclude with recommendations for United Nations' work in this area. The right to change one's religion or beliefs.
4. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 18, explicitly affirms that,

   Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

   The right to change one's religion or belief is accorded the status of a non-derogable right—a right that is protected unconditionally and is, at no time, subject to government regulation. The special measure of protection accorded to this right reflects its place in safeguarding the dignity of the human being. Indeed, the individual's search for truth and meaning is an activity most intimately linked with the human conscience and with the desire to see the world through one's own eyes and to understand it

through one's own faculties of perception and intelligence. As such, it is inextricably linked with all facets of human development.

5. Due to pressure from dissenting States, however, subsequent United Nations treaties have used weaker language to define this right, failing to uphold the unambiguous standard set by the Declaration. Even the General Assembly's 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief issued by the General Assembly does not explicitly affirm the right to change one's religion or belief. In what is perhaps the most comprehensive articulation of the right to date, the Human Rights Committee has identified the freedom to change religion or belief, freedom to manifest beliefs, non-coercion in matters of religion, and non-discrimination on the basis of religion as core components of this right as provided for in the Declaration. Alongside United Nations jurisprudence, global conferences and gatherings over the last 15 years have generated near universal commitments to promote and respect freedom of religion or belief. As signatories to the Universal Declaration and subsequent treaties and global commitments, governments bear the primary responsibility to create, safeguard, and promote the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the freedom of conscience, religion or belief for all of their citizens.

THE RIGHT TO TEACH ONE'S RELIGION OR BELIEFS

6. Intimately connected with the freedom to hold and to change one's religion or belief is the freedom to share those beliefs with others. Within the broad range of activities potentially encompassed by the freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs —the right to teach one's religion or beliefs has been particularly contentious. While the Declaration calls for the unconditional protection of the 'internal' right to freedom of religion, the 'external' right to manifest one's beliefs is subject to limitations: Governments are permitted to place restrictions on this right for purposes of 'meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society'. This latitude extended to States, however, has too often been abused in efforts to quell minority populations and has raised questions about what constitutes legitimate governmental interference in manifestations of religion or belief.

7. States argue that limiting the teaching of religions and the sharing of beliefs is necessary to preserve particular traditions and to protect the rights of the targeted populations, yet the right to freedom of religion or belief is necessarily contingent on the exposure to new ideas and the ability to share and receive information. Limitations on the basis of 'maintaining public order' and 'morality' have also been applied with considerable latitude and in a matter inconsistent with the principle of non-discrimination. Non-democratic and theocratic States in particular have repeatedly issued such reservations without the burden of proof, calling into question not only their interpretation of this right but also their protection of related rights and freedoms such as the right to employment and education, and the freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, to name but a few. While the ability to place restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief can be meaningfully applied, States' abuse of these restrictions only exacerbates the marginalisation of oppressed minorities.
8. The protection of the freedom of religion or belief must also entail vigilance in safeguarding citizens from the forces of extreme orthodoxy. Incitement to violence, extremism, or hostility in the name of religion must be forcefully sanctioned and unreservedly condemned. Similarly, States must consistently uphold the equality of women and men as a moral principle and article of international law, condemning actions in the name of religion, which deny human dignity and freedom of conscience to women. Ultimately, a long-term preventive strategy must be rooted in efforts to educate children and adults alike, equipping them with literacy skills and opportunities to learn about other systems of belief. Within a culture of education, people who can read the writings of their own religion as well as those of others, who are free to question and discuss, and who are able to participate in the generation and application of knowledge will be better prepared to counter the forces of ignorance and fanaticism.

MARGINALISED RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

9. A further challenge before States today is the maintenance of social cohesion and national unity in the face of increasing cultural and religious pluralism. Often, the threat of social instability and violent protest becomes the primary motive for a State's decision to accommodate minority claims. Indeed, marginalised groups seeking redress can become violent, forcing States to

address their claims in order to prevent social unrest and potential threats to national security. Yet this reactive mode breeds a dangerous pattern and itself gives a preference to violence, particularly where peacefully organised groups find their pleas repeatedly ignored. It increases the level of discrimination as groups find themselves excluded on the basis of religion and ignored as a result of non-violent modes of seeking redress.

10. The actions of States therefore must go beyond purely material and practical considerations and be guided by the force of moral principles and the rule of law. Foremost among these principles is that of unity—at the local, national, and global level— grounded in the peaceful accommodation of cultural diversity. States must discard outmoded notions of cultural homogeneity and ideological uniformity as a guarantor of peace and security and come to embrace a plurality of identities and beliefs, gathered together under the canopy of just laws and universal human rights, as the foundation for a cohesive and prosperous society.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

11. The responsibility to uphold universal principles of freedom of religion or belief rests not only with States but with religious leaders as well. In a world harassed by violence and conflict in the name of religion, leaders of religious communities bear tremendous responsibility for guiding their followers towards a peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding with those who think and believe differently. Too often, those acting in the name of religion have fanned the flames of hatred and fanaticism, themselves serving as the greatest obstacles in the path of peace. Despite these painful truths, we bear witness to the fact that the religions and faiths of the world with which the majority of the earth's inhabitants stand identified, have imparted a vast spiritual, moral, and civilisational legacy, which continues to succor and guide in these troubled times. Indeed, religions have reached to the roots of human motivation to lift our vision beyond purely material conceptions of reality to embrace higher notions of justice, reconciliation, love, and selflessness in the service of the common good.
12. Given the weight of culture and religion in shaping motivation and behaviour, it is clear that legal mechanisms alone will not engender the commitment and mutual understanding required to sustain a culture of peaceful co-existence. The role of religious

leaders as partners—in word and deed—in the creation of a culture of respect for human dignity and freedom of conscience, religion, or belief cannot be overstated. The forces of history now challenge every person of faith to identify spiritual principles within his or her own scriptures and traditions that answer the difficult questions posed by an age hungering for unity and justice in human affairs. In this common undertaking, based on an understanding of the inherent dignity, reason and conscience of every human being, religious leaders must uphold the sacred nature of the human conscience and unreservedly accord each individual the freedom to search for truth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. We call on the United Nations to affirm unequivocally an individual's right to change his or her religion under international law. The General Assembly may request the International Court of Justice, under Article 96 of the United Nations Charter, to issue an advisory opinion on the issue of freedom of religion or belief. Specifically, the Court could be asked whether the principle of freedom of religion or belief has attained the status of *jus cogens*, customary international law, or is merely left to the interpretation of each state. Such a clarification would help to remove fallacious interpretations of this right and lend moral force to the condemnation of policies and practices that violate the principle of non-discrimination in matters of religion or belief.
14. Following this clarification, concrete actions—investigative, legal, and operational—must follow. First, research and analysis are needed to clarify minimum standards for compliance with international law and to develop indicators, marking the presence or absence of freedom of religion or belief. An annual world report, prepared by the United Nations, assessing the state of this freedom throughout the world would provide further substance and facilitate comparisons over time and across geographic regions.
15. The United Nations needs to comprehensively and definitively address religious extremism as a major obstacle in the processes of peace. While the United Nations has denounced religious intolerance and persecution, it has been hesitant to acknowledge and forcefully condemn religious extremism motivating violent and terrorist acts. As women often bear the greatest burden of religious extremism and ensuing violations of human freedoms,

the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women should consider formulating a comment on issues specific to women's freedom of religion or belief.

16. We support the creation of a Human Rights Council with a view to restoring the primacy of human rights as set forth in the Charter for of the United Nations. In addition, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should undertake steps to strengthen the role of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion, increasing funding for her mandate to allow for the closer monitoring of trends worldwide and at a country level. Given that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur represents one of the principal means of bringing issues of religious freedom to the attention of the United Nations, we recommend that more attention be given to the implementation of recommendations put forth by the Special Rapporteur. The High Commissioner may consider expanding the mandate of the Special Rapporteur beyond reporting strictly on violations to include reports of States' efforts to implement her recommendations. In general, the Rapporteur's reports would significantly benefit from a more substantial and interactive debate between the Rapporteur and States in question. For their part, beyond cooperating with United Nations human rights mechanisms, States should allow any visits requested by the Special Rapporteur and endeavor to meet her full investigative needs.
17. By recognising the interdependence of freedom, development and security in today's world, the United Nations has paved the way for a timely re-examination of the universal right to freedom of religion or belief, its role in human development and the means for its protection. In an effort to stimulate meaningful debate and necessary action, we have brought to the fore the standard of equality articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its implications for the construction of a culture respectful of the dignity and conscience of every human being. We believe that the protection of the right to freedom of conscience, religion or belief is not merely a legal exercise or a pragmatic necessity; it is part of a much larger and essentially spiritual undertaking of shaping attitudes and practices that allow human potential to emerge and flourish. The human mind, endowed with reason and conscience, must be free to search for truth and to believe.

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31

ZOROASTRIANISM: AN OVERVIEW

ZOROASTRIANISM

Zoroastrianism is a religion founded in ancient times by the Prophet Zarathushtra, known to the Greeks as Zoroaster. Zoroaster, an Iranian religious reformer living in about 600 BCE, having received a vision from Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, proclaimed a kingdom of justice that promised immortality and bliss. Containing both monotheistic and dualistic features, the religion influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The history of the world was seen as a drama in 3,000 year periods. The Ahura Vairya is the most sacred prayer of this religion and the Avesta is the sacred text. Zoroastrianism continues in Iran and in India where the Parsees carry on the traditions. The Fasali calendar is generally used. Arising out of the polytheistic traditions of ancient India and Iran, he was one of the first monotheists in human history. Zarathushtra preached that there was one God, whom he called Ahura Mazda. Ahura means "Lord," and Mazda means "Wise," so Zoroastrians call God the "Wise Lord." Zarathushtra has been known in the West as Zoroaster, from the Greek transliteration of his name; in Persia and India he is known as Zarthosht.

Noone knows exactly when Zarathushtra lived. Zoroastrian tradition places him at around 600 B.C.E., but this date is thought by modern scholars to be far too late. The modern estimate of Zarathushtra's date is anywhere from 1500 to 1000 B.C.E.

The basic scripture of Zoroastrianism is a set of 5 poetic songs called the *Gathas*, which were composed by Zarathushtra himself and have been preserved through the millennia by Zoroastrian priests. Over the years many other scriptures have accumulated around these *Gathas*. Much of these scriptures were destroyed by the Greek, Muslim, and Mongol invasions, but some remain. The *Gathas* are still the core

text of the faith.They are composed in a very ancient language known as Avestan, which is closely related to Sanskrit. The evidence scholars use to give a time reference to Zarathushtra is linguistic: the language of the hymns composed by the Prophet is similar to the Sanskrit of the *Rigveda*, an ancient Hindu text which has been dated to the period of 1500-1000 B.C.E.

Zoroastrianism combines elements of monotheism and dualism. Many modern scholars believe that Zoroastrianism had a large influence on Judaism, Mithraism, Manichaeism, Christianity. There is evidence that Cyrus the Great, himself a Zoroastrian, helped foster Judaism and other monotheistic religions as a way of spreading his ideas.

The holy book of Zoroastrianism is the Avesta. Of the Avesta, only the Gathas (the hymns) are attributed to Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) himself.

Central to Zoroastrianism is the world's constant struggle between Good and Evil. In the beginning of creation, the Supreme God ("Ahura Mazda") (meaning wise God and characterised by endless light, omniscience, and goodness) opposed Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) an evil spirit of darkness, violence and death. This cosmic dualism between good and evil stands in marked contrast to the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in which Satan is in no way the equal of God and is a creation of God.

Mardanfarrokh, a Zoroastrian theologian in the 9th century AD, posited, "If God is perfect in goodness and wisdom, then ignorance and evil cannot come from Him. If they could come from Him, He would not be perfect; and if He were not perfect, He should not be praised as God and perfectly good..." (117-123 from For students and novices Complete Pazand and Sanskrit texts published by H.J. Jamasp-Asana and E.W. West; pioneer English translation by E.W. West, SBE. XXIV; transcribed Pazand text with French translation by P.J. de Menasce. From Textual sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism by Mary Boyce. University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984.)

The resulting cosmic conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which is required to choose one of the two paths to follow. Evil, and the Spirit of Evil, will be completely destroyed at the end of time. Dualism will come to an end and Goodness will be all in all. Men are free to choose the path of either spirit. The path of good or righteousness ("Asha") will lead to happiness ("Ushta"), whereas the path of evil will lead to unhappiness, enmity, and war. Therefore, it's

strongly encouraged that one chooses Asha. This philosophy is symbolised in one of the religion's main mottos: "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds."

With the duality of good and evil comes the concepts of Heaven, Hell and the Final Day. After death, a person's soul crosses a bridge ("Chinvato Peretu") on which its good deeds are weighed against its bad deeds. The soul reaches heaven or falls to hell based on the outcome. When evil is finally defeated on the Final Day, the world will be purified by a bath of molten metal and the souls of sinners will be released from hell.

HISTORY

Ancient depiction of Ahura Mazda, seen here offering the Ring of Power. The relief is located at Bisotun Mountain, above the inscription of Darius I. Zoroastrianism was the favored religion of the two great dynasties of ancient Persia, the Achaemenids and Sassanids. However, because we have virtually no contemporary Persian written sources from these periods, it is difficult to describe the nature of ancient Zoroastrianism in much detail.

Herodotus's description of Persian religion includes some recognizably Zoroastrian features, including exposure of the dead. The Achaemenid kings acknowledge their devotion to Ahura Mazda in inscriptions; however, they also participated in local religious rituals in Babylon and Egypt, and helped the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple of Solomon, so apparently no attempt was made to enforce religious orthodoxy on their subjects. According to later traditions, many of the Zoroastrian sacred texts were lost when Alexander the Great destroyed Persepolis and overthrew the Achaemenids in the 320s BC. The status of Zoroastrianism under the Seleucids and Parthians is unclear; however, it is widely believed that the Three Wise Men said to have come from the Parthian empire bearing gifts for Jesus of Nazareth were Zoroastrian Magi.

When the Sassanid dynasty came into power in Iran in 228 AD, they aggressively promoted their Zoroastrian religion. Many Persian Christian sources during this period claim that the Sassanid kings persecuted Christians within Persia. Christianity never seems to have been banned outright during this period. Many historians believe that the Sassanids were primarily opposed to the Catholic (Orthodox) Christian church because of its ties to the Roman Empire, and thus during this time the Nestorian Christian church was tolerated and

even sometimes favored by the Sassanids. During periods when the Sassanids captured provinces held by the Romans, they often built fire temples there. Also during the Sassanid era, the belief that Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu were the two sons of the time-god Zurvan became popular.

A form of Zoroastrianism was apparently also the chief religion of pre-Christian Armenia, or at least was prominent there. During periods of Sassanid suzernity over Armenia, the Persians made attempts to promote the religion there as well. By the 6th century, Zoroastrianism had spread to northern China via the Silk Road, gaining official status in a number of Chinese states. Zoroastrian temples still remained in Kaifeng and Zhenjiang as late as the 1130s, but by the 13th century the religion had faded from prominence in China.

In the 7th century, the Sassanid dynasty was conquered by Muslim Arabs. Zoroastrianism, which was once dominant in a region stretching from Anatolia to Persian Gulf and Central Asia, did not have a powerful foreign champion as Christianity did in the Byzantine Empire, and so steadily lost influence and adherents in Iran under Muslim rule.

In the 8th century, a large number of Iranian Zoroastrians fled to India in large numbers, where they were given refuge by Jadav Rana, a Hindu king of Sanjan (the modern-day province of Gujarat) on condition that they abstain from missionary activities and marry only in their community. Although these strictures are centuries old, Parsis of the 21st century still do not accept converts and are endogamous (though see below for further discussion). The Parsis of India speak a dialect of Gujarati.

Zoroastrians in Iran are still persecuted by that nation's theocratic rulers. Even today, however, one can find Zoroastrian communities living and practising their faith there.

PRINCIPLES OF MODERN-DAY ZOROASTRIANISM

Some major Zoroastrian concepts

Equality of sex. Men and women are equal in all manners within society.

Cleanliness of the environment. Nature is central to the practice of Zoroastrianism and many important Zoroastrian annual festivals are in celebration of nature: new year on the first day of spring, the water festival in summer, the autumn festival at the end of the season, and the mid-winter fire festival.

Hard work and charity. Laziness and sloth are frowned on. Charity is regarded as a good deed, where Zoroastrians part with a little of what would otherwise be their own.

Condemnation of oppression toward human beings, cruelty against animals and sacrifice of animals. Equality of all humans regardless of race or religion and respect of everything on Earth and in the world is central to the religion.

The symbol of fire. The energy of the creator is represented in Zoroastrianism by fire and the sun which are both enduring, radiant, pure and life sustaining. Zoroastrians usually pray in front of some form of fire (or any source of light). It's important to note that fire is not worshipped by Zoroastrians, but is used simply as symbology and a point of focus, much like the wooden cross in Christianity.

Other Concepts

Inter-religious marriages and recruiting. Zoroastrians do not proselytize. It is thought that the only way to become a Zoroastrian is to be born within a Zoroastrian family. However, this tradition is also debated quite often. Like in many other faiths, Zoroastrians are strongly encouraged to marry others of the same faith. However, in India, as a result of historical needs not to proselytize, there have emerged "rules" that say that women (and their children) who marry followers of other religions are no longer considered Zoroastrians (although men and their children are). In Iran, because of still-existing discrimination, inter-faith marriage is officially not encouraged by the government. With the globalisation of modern society and the dwindling number of Zoroastrians, these rules are being enforced increasingly less often, especially in the diaspora.

Death and burial. Religious rituals related to death are all concerned with the person's soul and not the body. Upon death, a person's soul leaves the body after three days and the body becomes just an empty shell. Traditionally, Zoroastrians disposed of their dead by leaving them atop open-topped enclosures, called Towers of Silence. Vultures and the weather would clean the flesh of the bones, which were then placed into an ossuary at the center of the Tower. While this practice is continued in India by some Parsis, it had ended by the beginning of the twentieth century in Iran. Now, many Zoroastrians dispose of their dead through burial or cremation.

In the Gathas, Zarathushtra preached that the One God, Ahura Mazda, is transcendent, but he is in constant relationship with human

beings and the world God created through his Attributes. These Attributes are how God reaches the world, and how the world reaches God. Zarathushtra did not specify a fixed number of Attributes, but soon after the Prophet they were specified into seven. These attributes are called the *Amesha Spentas*, or "Bounteous Immortals." Each one of these embodies an attribute of God, as well as a human virtue.

They are also symbols for the various sectors of Creation over which God watches. They are:

- Vohu Manah—Good Thought—connected with Animals
- Asha Vahishta—Justice and Truth—Fire and Energy
- Kshathra—Dominion—Metals and minerals
- Spenta Armaiti—Devotion and Serenity—The earth and land
- Haurvatat—Wholeness—Waters
- Ameretat—Immortality—Plants
- Spenta Mainyu—Creative Energy—Human beings

In the Gathas these are sometimes personified, and sometimes just Ideas or concepts. In later traditions, they are personified, and become like archangels. They are never worshipped on their own.

The "dualism" of Zoroastrianism is known in the "West," but is mostly misunderstood. In the Gathas Spenta Mainyu, the "Holy Creative Spirit," is opposed to Angra Mainyu, the Hostile Spirit. This conflict takes place in the human heart and mind, not in the material Universe. It is the constant struggle between good and evil in human beings. This is *ethical* dualism, the dualism of Good and Evil. In later traditions this changed into a dualism that took in the material world, dividing the Universe into two camps, each ruled by the Good God or the Evil Spirit. This is called "cosmic" dualism.

Some Zoroastrians believe in "cosmic" dualism, others in ethical dualism. The teachings of the Gathas, the original work of the Prophet, tend toward ethical dualism.

Zoroastrian worship involves prayers and symbolic ceremonies said before a sacred fire. This fire, which was a God—symbol even before Zarathushtra, was used by the Prophet and by his followers ever after as the ideal sign of God, who is light, warmth, energy. Zoroastrians do NOT worship fire, as some people believe. They use Fire as a symbol, or an icon, the focus of their worship.

Zoroastrianism does not teach or believe in reincarnation or karma. Zoroastrians believe that after life on earth, the human soul is judged

by God as to whether it did more good or evil in its life. Those who chose good over evil go to what Zarathushtra referred to simply as the "best existence," or heaven, and those who chose evil go to the "worst existence," or hell. Zoroastrianism was one of the first religions to give the afterlife a moral dimension.

Zoroastrianism also believes in the progress of sacred time, and the eventual end of time. The belief is that the collective good acts of humanity will slowly transform the imperfect material world into its heavenly ideal. This is known as the "frasho-kereti," or "making-fresh," that is, renewal. At the end of time everything and everyone will be purified, even the souls in hell—so hell is not eternal.

Zoroastrian ideas of moral dualism, heaven and hell, sacred time, and angelic beings have influenced Judaism and Christianity, during long centuries of contact between these faiths in the Middle East.

The most important thing about Zoroastrianism is the dedication to ethical and moral excellence. The motto of the faith is:

This threefold path is the center of the faith. One knows what is good through the Divine help of Vohu Manah (Good Mind) and divinely inspired conscience (Daena).

If there is anything to remember about Zoroastrianism, it is this threefold path. By thinking good thoughts, one is moved to speak good words, and that leads to good deeds. This is a practical and world-affirming faith, that does not hate the world nor dwell on sin and guilt.

Zoroastrians are mostly of Persian origin, though the recent breakup of the Soviet Union has revealed isolated groups of Central Asian and Armenian Zoroastrians as well. In the 10th century A.D. groups of Persian Zoroastrians fled an oppressive Muslim regime and settled in Gujarat, in western India. These are the Parsis of India, who are a major influence today. From India and Iran Zoroastrians have spread all over the world, and there are communities in England, Australia, Canada, the United States, and other countries. These diaspora communites now face the problems of how to adapt their ancient religious traditions to a modern world.

Zoroastrianism was the dominant world religion during the Persian empires (559 BC to 651 AC), and was thus the most powerful world religion at the time of Jesus. It had a major influence on other religions. It is still practised worldwide, especially in Iran and India.

To quote Mary Boyce,

"The Prophet Zarathushtra, son of Pourushaspa, of the Spitaman family, is known to us primarily from the *Gathas*, seventeen great hymns which he composed and which have been faithfully preserved by his community. These are not works of instruction, but inspired, passionate utterances, many of them addressed directly to God; and their poetic form is a very ancient one, which has been traced back (through Norse parallels) to Indo-European times. It seems to have been linked with a mantic tradition, that is, to have been cultivated by priestly seers who sought to express in lofty words their personal apprehension of the divine; and it is marked by subtleties of allusion, and great richness and complexity of style. Such poetry can only have been fully understood by the learned; and since Zoroaster believed that he had been entrusted by God with a message for all mankind, he must also have preached again and again in plain words to ordinary people. His teachings were handed down orally in his community from generation to generation, and were at last committed to writing under the Sasanians, rulers of the third Iranian empire. The language then spoken was Middle Persian, also called Pahlavi; and the Pahlavi books provide invaluable keys for interpreting the magnificent obscurities of the Gathas themselves."—*Zoroastrians, Their religious beliefs and practices*, London, 1979, pg 17.

Some of the major tenets of Zoroastrianism include:

- *God: Ahura Mazda,* The supreme being is called Ahura Mazda (Phl. Ohrmazd), meaning "Wise Lord." Ahura Mazda is all good, and created the world and all good things, including people. He is opposed by Anghra Mainyu (Phl. Ahriman), meaning "Destructive Spirit," the embodiment of evil and creator of all evil things. The cosmic battle between good and evil will ultimately lead to the destruction of all evil.
- *Prophet: Zarathushtra,* The religion was founded by Zarathushtra. His date is uncertain, but is probably somewhere around 1200 BC. He lived and preached in the Inner Asian steppes. Zarathushtra received his revelations directly from Ahura Mazda, and from his Archangels (Amesha Spentas).
- *Scripture: Avesta,* The central scripture is the *Avesta*. The most sacred sections of the Avesta are the *Gathas* or Hymns of Zarathushtra; they are also the most enigmatic. Later sacred literature includes the *Pahlavi Texts*, which contain extensive quotations and paraphrases from lost Avesta texts.
- *Creed,* The creed is summarised in Yasna 12. It is likely to have been composed by Zarathushtra himself, and to have been used as an avowal of faith by early converts (Cf. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism, It's Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, p. 102-4).

- *Observances,* Two sacred garments, the *sudreh* (shirt) and *kusti* (cord) are the emblems of the religion. Zoroastrians perform a short cleansing ritual (Padyab), and retie the kusti several times a day with another short ritual (Nirang-i Kusti) as a sign of their faith. Other prayers are recited daily from the Khorda Avesta. Prayer is largely done in the Avestan language. The faithful should also participate in seasonal communal festivals ("Gahambars") during the year.
- *Fire and "Asha",* Fire, as a symbol of "Asha" and the "original light of God," holds a special place of esteem in the religion. Prayer is often done in front of a fire, and consecrated fires are kept perpetually burning in the major temples.

ZOROASTRIAN (PARSI) FESTIVALS

I. JAMSHED-E NAVROZ (NOROUZ)

Norouz, IPA2: Nowruz; also spelled Noe-Rooz, Nawroz, Norooz, Noruz, Novruz, Noh Ruz, Nauroz, Nav-roze, Navroz, Naw-Rúz, Nevruz or Nowrouz) is the traditional Iranian new year holiday in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, India, Turkey, Zanzibar, Albania, various countries of Central Asia, as well as among the Kurds (*Newroz* or *NûRoj* in Kurdish). As well as being a Zoroastrian holiday, it is also a holy day for adherents of Sufism as well as Bahá'í Faith. Norouz marks first day of spring and the beginning of the Iranian year as well as the beginning of the Bahá'í year. It is celebrated by some communities on March 21st and by others on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox (start of spring), which may occur on March 20th, 21st or 22nd.

The term Norouz first appeared in Persian records in the second century CE, but it was also an important day during the Achaemenid times (*c.* 648-330 BCE), where kings from different nations under Persian empire used to bring gifts to the emperor (Shahanshah) of Persia on Norouz. It has been suggested that the famous Persepolis complex, or at least the palace of Apadana and the "Hundred Columns Hall", were built for the specific purpose of celebrating Norouz. However, no mention of Norouz exists in Achaemenid inscriptions (See picture). The oldest records of Norouz go back to the King Yima of Eastern Iran Afghanistan back far as 5000 BCE. And later it became the national holiday of Arsacid/Parthian Empires Who ruled western Iran (247 BCE-224 CE). There are specific references to the celebration of Norouz during the reign Vologases I (51-78 CE), but these include no details. Extensive records on the celebration of Norouz appear following the accession of Ardashir I of Persia, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty

(224-650 CE). Under the Sassanid kings, Norouz was celebrated as the most important day of the year. Most royal traditions of Norouz such as royal audiences with the public, cash gifts, and the pardoning of prisoners, were established during the Sassanian era and they persisted unchanged until modern times.

Norouz, along with Sadeh (that is celebrated in mid-winter), survived in society following the introduction of Islam in 650 CE. Other celebrations such Gahanbar and Mehragan were eventually sidelined or were only followed by the Zoroastrians, who carried them as far as India. Norouz, however, was most honored even by the early founders of Islam. There are records of the Four Great Caliphs presiding over Nowruz celebrations, and it was adopted as the main royal holiday during the Abbasid period.

Following the demise of the Caliphate and the subsequent re-emergence of Persian dynasties such as the Samanids and Buyids, Norouz was elevated to an even more important event. The Buyids revived the ancient traditions of Sasanian times and restored many smaller celebrations that had been eliminated by the Caliphate. Even the Turkish and Mongol invaders did not attempt to abolish Norouz in favor of any other celebration. Thus, Norouz remained as the main celebration in the Persian lands by both the officials and the people.

VARIATIONS ACCORDING TO COUNTRIES

Nowruz has been celebrated for at least 3000 years and is deeply rooted in the rituals and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion. Today, the festival of Norouz is celebrated in many countries that were territories of, or influenced by, the Persian Empire: Persia (Iran), Iraq, Afghanistan, parts of the middle-east, as well as in the former Soviet Republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan,Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is also celebrated by the Zoroastrian Parsis and Iranis in India, and in Turkey, where it is called *Nevruz* in Turkish and *Newroz* in Kurdish. In most countries, the greeting that accompanies the festival is *Ayd-e Norouz Mobârak* (*mubarak*: felicitations) in Persian. In Turkey, the greeting is either *Bayramýnýz Mubarek/kutlu olsun* (in Turkish) or *Cejna te pîroz be* (in Kurdish).

Norouz in Modern Iran

In Iran (Persia), preparations for Noruz begin in *Esfand*, the last month of winter in the Persian solar calendar. Persians, Afghans and other groups start preparing for the Norouz with a major spring-cleaning of their houses, the purchase of new clothes to wear for the

new year and the purchase of flowers (in particular the hyacinth and the tulip are popular and conspicuous). In association with the "rebirth of nature", extensive spring-cleaning is a national tradition observed by almost every household in Persia. This is also extended to personal attire, and it is customary to buy at least one set of new clothes. On the New Year's day, families dress in their new clothes and start the twelve-day celebrations by visiting the elders of their family, then the rest of their family and finally their friends. On the thirteenth day families leave their homes and picnic outdoors.

During the Nowruz holidays people are expected to visit one another (mostly limited to families, friends and neighbours) in the form of short house visits, which are usually reciprocated. Typically, on the first day of Nowruz, family members gather around the table, with the *Haft Seen* on the table or set next to it, and await the exact moment of the arrival of the spring. At that time gifts are exchanged. Later in the day, the first house visits are paid to the most senior family members. Typically, the youth will visit the elders first, and the elders return their visit later. The visits naturally have to be relatively short, otherwise one will not be able to visit everybody on their list. A typical visit is around 30 minutes, where you often run into other visiting relatives and friends who happen to be paying a visit to the same house at that time. Because of the house visits, you make sure you have a sufficient supply of pastry, cookies, fresh and dried fruits and special nuts on hand, as you typically serve your visitors with these items with tea or sherbet. Many Iranians will throw large Nowruz parties in a central location as a way of dealing with the long distances between groups of friends and family. Some Norouz celebrants believe that whatever a person does on Norouz will affect the rest of the year. So, if a person is warm and kind to their relatives, friends and neighbours on Nowruz, then the new year will be a good one. On the other hand, if there are fights and disagreements, the year will be a bad one.

One tradition that may not be very widespread (that is, it may belong to only a few families) is to place something sweet, such as honey or candy, in a safe place outside overnight. On the first morning of the new year, the first person up brings the sweet stuff into the house as another means of attaining a good new year.

The last Wednesday of the year is celebrated by the Iranian people as *Chahârshanbe Sûrî* Persian: the Iranian festival of fire. This festival is the celebration of the light (the good) winning over the darkness (the bad), the symbolism behind the rituals are all rooted back to

Zoroastrianism. The tradition includes people going into the streets and alleys to make fires, and jump over them while singing the traditional song *Zardî-ye man az to, sorkhî-ye to az man* (literally: "My yellowness for you, your redness for me; ", but figuratively: My paleness (pain, sickness) to you, your strength (health) to me.

Serving different kinds of pastry and nuts known as Ajîleh Moshkel Goshâ (lit. *The problem-solving nuts*) is the *Chahârshanbe Sûrî* way of giving thanks for the previous year's health and happiness, while exchanging any remaining paleness and evil for the warmth and vibrancy of the fire. According to tradition, the living are visited by the spirit of their ancestors on the last days of the year, and many children wrap themselves in shrouds, symbolically re-enacting the visits. They also run through the streets banging on pots and pans with spoons and knocking on doors to ask for treats. The ritual is called qashogh-zany (spoon beating) and symbolises the beating out of the last unlucky Wednesday of the year. There are also several other traditions on this night, including the rituals of *Kûzeh Shekastân*, the breaking of earthen jars which symbolically hold ones bad fortune; the ritual of *Fal-Gûsh*, or inferring one's future from the conversations of those passing by; and the ritual of *Gereh-goshâ'î*, making a knot in the corner of a handkerchief or garment and asking the first passerby to unravel it in order to remove ones misfortune.

A major tradition of Norouz is the setting of the *Haft Sîn*—the seven 'S's, seven items starting with letter S or *sîn* (Ó) in Persian alphabet), which are seven specific items on a table symbolically corresponding to the seven creations and the seven holy immortals protecting them. Today they are changed and modified but some have kept their symbolism. Every family attempts to set as beautiful a *Haft Sîn* table as they can, as it is not only of special spiritual meaning to them, but also is noticed by visitors to their house during Norouzi visitations and is a reflection of their good taste. The following list is an example of some common *Haft Seen* items, though there isn't consensus as to which seven:

- *sabzeh*—wheat, barley or lentil sprouts growing in a dish (symbolising rebirth)
- *samanu*—a sweet pudding made from wheat germ (symbolising affluence)
- *senjed*—the dried fruit of the oleaster tree (love)
- *sîr*—garlic (medicine)
- *sîb*—apples, (beauty and health)

- *somaq*—sumac berries (the colour of the sunrise)
- *serkeh*—vinegar (age and patience)
- *sonbol*—the fragrant hyacinth flower (the coming of spring)
- *sekkeh*—coins (prosperity and wealth)

Other items on the table may include:

- traditional Iranian pastries such as baghlava, toot, naan-nokhodchi
- dried nuts, berries and raisins (Aajeel)
- lit candles (enlightenment and happiness)
- a mirror
- painted eggs, perhaps one for each member of the family (fertility)
- a bowl with two goldfish (life, and the sign of Pisces which the sun is leaving)
- a bowl of water with an orange in it (the earth floating in space)
- rose water for its magical cleansing powers
- the national colours, for a patriotic touch
- a holy book (e.g., the *Qur'an, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bible*, Torah or the Avesta) or a poetry book (almost always either the Shahnama or the Divan of Hafez).

The traditional herald of the Norouz season is called Hâjji Fîrûz (or Hadji Pîrûz). He symbolises the rebirth of the Sumerian god of sacrifice, Domuzi, who was killed at the end of each year and reborn at the beginning of the New Year. He usually uses face paint to make his skin black and wears a red costume. Then he sings and dances through the streets with tambourines and trumpets spreading good cheer and heralds the coming of the New Year.

New Year Dishes

- *Sabzi Polo Mahi*: The New Year's day traditional meal is called Sabzi Polo Mahi, which is rice with green herbs served with fish. The traditional seasonings for Sabzi Polo are parsley, coriander, chives, dill and fenugreek.
- *Reshteh Polo*: rice cooked with noodles which is said to symbolically help one succeed in life.
- *Dolme Barg* : A traditional dish of Azeri people, cooked just before the new year. It includes some vegetables, meat and cotyledon which have been cooked and embeded in vine leaf and cooked again. It is considered useful in reaching to wishes.

Seezdah Bedar

The thirteenth day of the New Year festival is *Seezdah Bedar* (meaning "thirteen outdoors"), is a day of festivity in the open, often accompanied by music and dancing. The day is usually spent at family picnics. The thirteenth day celebrations, *Seezdah Bedar*, stem from the belief of the ancient Persians that the twelve constellations in the Zodiac controlled the months of the year, and each ruled the earth for a thousand years. At the end of which, the sky and the earth collapsed in chaos. Hence, Nowruz lasts twelve days and the thirteenth day represents the time of chaos when families put order aside and avoid the bad luck associated with the number thirteen by going outdoors and having picnics and parties.

At the end of the celebrations on this day, the *sabzeh* grown for the *Haft Seen* (which has symbolically collected all the sickness and bad luck) is thrown into running water to exorcise the demons (*divs*) from the household. It is also customary for young single women to tie the leaves of the *sabzeh* before discarding it, so expressing a wish to be married before the next year's *Seezdah Bedar*.

Celebration of the Iranian Feast, Norouz, by the Kurds

The Kurds celebrate this Iranian feast between 18th till 21th March. The Persian word Norouz is pronounced as 'Newruz' by the Kurds. It is one of the few 'peoples celebrations' that has survived and predates all the major religious festivals. With this festival Kurds gather into the fairgrounds mostly outside the cities to welcome spring. Women wear gaily coloured dresses and spangled head scarves and young men wave flags of green, yellow and red, the colours of the Kurdish people. By lighting fire and dancing around it they hold this festival., also see:. The Kurdish greetings that accompany the festival are *Newroz píroz be!* meaning *Happy Newroz!* or *Bijí Newroz!* meaning *Long live Newroz!* The festival was illegal until 2000 in Turkey, where most of the Kurds live, and Turkish forces arrested Kurds celebrating Newroz. In Newroz 1992 at least 70 people celebrating the festival were killed by Turkish security forces. The official Turkey now celebrates *Nevruz* as a *Turkish* spring holiday. Newroz is however still considered as a potent symbol of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Newroz celebrations are usually organised by Kurdish cultural associations and pro-Kurdish political parties. Thus, the Democratic Society Party was a leading force in the organisation of the 2006 Newroz events throughout Turkey. In recent years the Newroz celebration gathers around 1 million

participants in Diyarbakir, the biggest city of the Kurdish dominated Southeastern Turkey. As the Kurdish Newroz celebrations in Turkey often are theater for political messages, the events are frequently criticised for rather being political rallies than cultural celebrations.

Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith, a religion with its origin in Iran, celebrates this day (spelling it "Naw Rúz") as a religious holiday marking not only the new year according to the Bahá'í calendar, but the end of their Nineteen Day Fast. Persian Bahá'ís still observe many Iranian customs associated with it, but Bahá'ís all over the world celebrate it as a festive day, according to local custom. American Bahá'í communities, for example, may have a potluck dinner, along with prayers and readings from Bahá'í scripture. While Naw Rúz, according to scripture, begins on the vernal equinox, Bahá'ís outside Iran currently celebrate it on March 21, regardless of what day the equinox falls. Bahá'ís are required to suspend work and school in observance. Although the Persian calendar is very precise about the very moment that the astronomical new year begins, in Iran, the 24-hour period (as per "wall clock" time) in which the astronomical new year begins is treated as Norouz.

Fasli

Adherents of the *Fasli* variant of the Zoroastrian calendar also celebrate Norouz as the first day of the New Year. Other variants of the Zoroastrian calendar celebrate the Norouz twice: once as *Jamshedi Norouz* on March 21st as the start of spring, and a second Norouz, in July/August (see Variations of the Zoroastrian calendar), as either new year's eve or new year's day. That the second Nowruz is celebrated by some as the last day of the year (contrary to what might be expected from a term that means "new day"), may be due to the fact that in ancient Persia the day began at sunset, while in later Persian belief the day began at sunrise.

Norouz in Caucasus Region and Central Asia

Norouz is celebrated by Iranians publicly worldwide. It is publicly celebrated in the Caucasus region and central Asia. It is a colourful holiday in: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Norouz is also celebrated by Kurds in Iraq and Turkey.

Other notable celebrations take place by Iranians in America, Los Angeles and in United Kingdom, mainly in London.

TRIVIA

On June 1, 2006, the word for Norouz was used in the final session of the 2006 Scripps National Spelling Bee in the United States. 11-year-old contestent Allion Salvador of Fort Lauderdale Florida was eliminated from the top 13 contestants in the final rounds for offering the spelling "naoruse" rather than the spelling "nauruz" that was considered correct for the competition. The official pronouncer prompted Salvador with a pronunciation in which the first syllable was pronounced like the English word "now" rather than "no", and indicated that no alternative pronunciations were available. The origin of the word was described as Persian and the definition given was, approximately, the Persian New Year holiday. It is noteworthy that there appears to be little agreement over how to spell this word in English and that neither the spelling considered official by Scripps nor the offered pronunciation would appear to be considered correct by most people familiar with the word. In fact, the spelling "nauruz" considered officially correct for the competition does not appear in the above list of spelling variations (as of 15 June 2006).

II. MEHREGAN

Mehregân or Jashn-e-Mehregân is an ancient Iranian autumn festival, observed on the 1st or 2nd of October (10th of MEHR), and dedicated in honor of Mehr, also known as Mithra, the Persian god of Light and Love. It is a celebration of thanksgiving between family and friends, and charity to the poor. The festival symbolically ends with bonfires and fireworks.

ROOTS

There are many accounts as to the beginning of Mehregân. A few, different versions are listed below: Mehregân is a day of victory when Angels helped Fereydun and Kâveh become victorious over Zahhâk. They imprisoned and chained him to the mountain of Damâvand. Mehregân is the day God gave light to the world, that had previously been dark. On this day Mashya and Mashyana (a concept of Semitic Adam and Eve) were created. On this day the sun was created. Among all Iranian festivities, the two most important feasts were considered to be Norouz and Mehregân. During the time when the Avestan calendar was used, the year began at the cold season. The Christian year also starting in the cold season, follows the same concept as the Avestan calendar.

Some scholars believe that the month of Mehr was the beginning month of the calendar year during the Achaemenian era. The Mehregan feast celebrated the beginning of a new year. Later, Mehregân was especially important for the people of southern Iran who considered it still to be their Norouz. In some form or another, the feast day of Mehregân has always been honored for many hundreds of years in Iran. Mehr is also the time of harvest. Mehr in Avestan is *Mièra* and in Middle Persian *Mihr*. In modern Persian, it has become Mehr. Although it can be slightly confusing, it should be remembered the word *Mehr* has been used for a God, an angel, a symbol of the sun, as well as the seventh month of the Iranian calendar.

During the Achaemenian period, the name of the God Mehr was mentioned many times on the stone carvings. The Achaemenian army always came behind a flag, depicting Mehr as the sun shining. Mehregân was celebrated in an extravagant style at Persepolis. Not only was it the time for harvest, but it was also the time when the taxes were collected. Visitors from different parts of the empire brought gifts for the king all contributing to a lively festival.

MEHR'S INFLUENCE

The ancient Iranians thought Mehr (Mithra) was responsible for love and friendship, contracts and covenants, and a representation for light. Later, Mehr was also considered as a symbol of the sun. There again, Mehr was considered to be a God of heroism and warfare. The Iranian soldiers were strong believers and had songs for Mehr. With expansion of Achaemenian Empire, the worship of Mehr was taken to other countries. By the first century A.D., Mithraism was a familiar religion in Rome and gradually spread throughout Western Europe as far as the northern England. Many people converted to this Iranian-originated belief, since it was religion of ethics, hope, courage and generosity. Archeological excavations throughout Europe and Iran's neighbouring countries have uncovered the buried remains of many Mehr temples. The style of these temples was main inspiration for a number of the ancient churches of Europe.

Some of Roman Emperors converted to Mithraism. One emperor, Julian the Apostate, became a devoted follower of Mitra, and decided to go to Persia (Iran) to visit the country from which his God was originated. En route he was murdered. As he lay dying, he threw his blood towards the sun and said *this is my gift to you.* There are still many rituals, traditions, beliefs and prayers of Mithra that have survived

the popularity of Christianity. Some of these can be found in the Christian religion, such as the holy day, Sunday. This is a day that was named after the sun i.e. Mehr. Some other Christmas traditions are described in the section on the celebration of Yalda.

In ancient Iran, after Zoroaster introduced his new religion, the high standing of Mehr diminished. Zoroaster made great changes to old Iranian beliefs. Among other changes, he banned animal sacrifices and abolished the worship of many Gods. Although Mehr was reduced in stature from a God to an angel, some of the rituals and traditions remained and were incorporated into services for Ahura Mazda.

ANCIENT RITUALS

During Pre-Islamic and early Islamic Iran, Mehregan was celebrated with the same magnificence and pageantry as Norouz. It was customary for people to send or give their king, and each other gifts. It was common for people to give presents that they personally liked themselves! Rich people usually gave gold and silver coins, heroes and warriors gave horses while others gave gifts according to their ability, even an apple. Those fortunate enough, will help the poor with gifts. Gifts over ten thousand gold coins given to the royal court were registered. At a later time, if the gift-giver needed money, the court would then return twice the gift amount. Kings gave two audiences a year; one audience at Norouz and other at Mehregân. During the Mehregân celebrations, the king wore a fur robe and gave away all his summer clothes. Many times, even today when a child is born on Mehregân, the parents will name the child with a name starting with *Mehr* such as *Mehr-dokht* or *Mehr-dâd* or *Mehr-bânu* or *Mehr-Nâz*.

After the Mongol invasion of Iran, the feast celebration of Mehregân lost its popularity. Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kermân continued to celebrate Mehregân in an extravagant way.

MODERN CELEBRATING

For this celebration, the participants wear new clothes and set a decorative, colourful table. The sides of the tablecloth are decorated with dry wild marjoram. The holy book Avesta, a mirror and Sormeh Dan (antimony cellar) are placed on the table together with rose water, sweets, flowers, vegetables and fruits, especially pomegranates and apples. A few silver coins and senjed seeds (fruit of the lotus tree) are placed in a dish of pleasant smelling wild marjoram water. Almonds and pistachio are also used.

A burner is also part of the table setting for kondor (frankincense) and espand (rue seeds) to be thrown on the flames. At lunch time when the ceremony begins, everyone in the family stands in front of the mirror to pray. Sherbet is drunk and then as a good omen, antimony is rubbed around their eyes. Handfuls of wild marjoram, senjed seeds and noghl (sugar plum) are thrown over each others heads while they embrace one another. In some of the villages in Yazd, Zoroastrians still sacrifice sheep for Mehr. These sacrifices are done on the day of Mehregân and for three days afterwards. The sacrifice should be done during the hours of sunlight. The sheep is placed on three stones in the furnace, representing the good words, good deeds and good thoughts, and barbecued. After this special ritual, the sheep, including the skin and fat is taken to the fire temple. The fat is thrown on the fire to make the flames burn fiercely and then the participants pray. This celebration continues for the next five days.

III. JASHN-E TIREGAN (TIREGAN)

Jashn-e Tiregan or Tiregan is an ancient Iranian rain festival, observed on the first of July.

This event is celebrated in July (the Tir Month of the Persian calendar) and refers to the archangel Tir (arrow) or Tishtar (lightning bolt) who appeared in the sky to generate thunder and lightning for much needed rain. Legend says that Arash-e Kamangir was a man chosen to settle a land dispute between two leaders, Iran and Turan. Arash was to shoot his arrow on the 13th day of Tir and where the arrow landed, there would lie the border between the two kingdoms. Turan, who had suffered from the lack of rain, and Iran rejoiced the settlement of the borders, the peace and rain poured onto the two countries. Today, some Iranians celebrate this occasion with dancing, singing, reciting poetry and serving spinach soup and sholeh zarid. It hasalso been observed that during this celebration children rejoice by swimming in streams and splashing water around. The custom of tying rainbow-coloured bands on their wrists, which are worn for ten days and then thrown into a stream, is also a great way to rejoice for kids.

IV. JASHN-E SADEH (SADEH)

Sadeh or Jashn-e Sadeh (in Persian: 4F 3/G) is an ancient Iranian tradition celebrated 50 days before Nowrouz. Sadeh in Persian language means 'hundred' which refers to one hundred days and nights left to the beginning of the new Persian year celebrated at the first day of spring on March 21st each year. Sadeh is a mid-winter festival that

was celebrated with grandeur and magnificence in ancient Iran. It was a festivity to honor fire and to defeat the forces of darkness, frost, and cold.

HISTORY

The ancestors of ancient Persians divided the year into two sections, summer and winter. Summer started from the first day of spring, 21st of March, and lasted 7 months to the 22nd of October. Then, the winter started and lasted for five months to the end of Iranian calendar. Therefore, Jashn-e Sadeh or Sadeh Festival was one hundred days after the first day of winter or 100 days and nights to the beginning of summer.

Persian legends have it that King Hushang, grandson of Keyumars the first king of Persia, established the Sadeh tradition long ago. It is said that once Hushang was climbing a mountain when all of a sudden he saw a snake and wanted to hit it with a stone. When he threw the stone, it fell on another stone and since they were both flint stones, fire broke out and the snake escaped. This way he discovered fire. Hushang cheered up and praised God who revealed to him the secret of fire. Then he announced: "This is a light from God. So we must admire it." According to religious beliefs, Jashn-e Sadeh recalls the importance of light, fire and energy; light which comes from God is found in the hearts of his creatures. In the Zoroastrian Pahlavi inscription, paradise is the Anagr Roshnih or the eternal light. During ancient times, Jashn-e Sadeh was celebrated by lighting fire. For Zoroastrians the chief preparation for Sadeh was and still in some parts is the gathering of wood the day before the festival. Teenage boys accompanied by a few adult males would go to local mountains in order to gather camel thorns, a common desert shrub in Iran. For most, this is the first time they are away from their families. The occasion resembles a ritual of passage to adulthood, a notable step for the boys on the way to manhood. The boys would take the camel thorns to the temples in their cities; and if it was their first time doing this, on their return, a celebration was held at home with the presence of friends and families.

During ancient times, the fires were always set near water and the temples (see Fire temple). The fire originally meant to assist the revival of sun and bring back the warmth and light of summer. It was also meant to drive off the demons of frost and cold, which turned water to ice, and thus could kill the roots of plants. For these reasons the fire was lit near and even over water and by the Shrine of Mehr.

The fire was kept burning all night. The day after, women would go to the fire in the morning, each taking a small portion of the fire back to their homes to make new glowing fire from the "blessed fire" of the temple. This is to spread the blessing of the Sadeh fire to every household in the neighbourhood. Whatever is left from the fire would be taken back to the shrine to be placed in one container and kept at the temple until the next year. This way the fire is kept burning all year round. The "eternal fire" also symbolises the love of homeland which is always alive like a fervent fire in the people's hearts.

The festivities would normally go on for three days. The evenings are spent eating and giving out foods as donations, food that is prepared from slaughtered lambs and is distributed among the poor people. The most elaborate report of the celebration of Sadeh after the dominations of Muslims over Iran comes from the 10th century AD during the reign of Mardavij of Ziyarid dynasty, the ruler of Isfahan. Ziyarid dynasty did their best to keep the Persian traditions alive. Bonfires were set up on both sides of the Zayandeh Rud River to remember the Sadeh custom. The fires were kept in specially built metal holders. Hundreds of birds were released while the fireworks were lighting the sky. There were fireworks, dancing and music with lavish feasts of roasted lamb, beef, chicken and other delicacies.

Today the ceremony is celebrated somehow like the ancient times in some Iranian cities such as Kerman and Yazd. Jashn-e Sadeh is also celebrated every year in the Kushke Varjavand gardens in Karaj (a township of Tehran province) splendidly with the presence of Iranian Zoroastrians and others interested in traditional Persian ceremonies. Sometimes the fires are not lit outside and all activities take place inside the Zorostrian temples. The activities of camel thorn gathering have almost been stopped though there are efforts to preserve the tradition. However, the bulk of the Iranians are becoming more familiar with the occasion and there are gatherings and celebrations even outside the country on 30th of January each year. People will gather and pray, and then they will hold each other's hands, form a circle, and dance around the fire.

Every year, on 30th of January, thousands of Zoroastrians in Iran and other countries celebrates the religious feast of Jashn-e Sadeh by burning firewood in an open space to signify the coming of spring and as a symbolic token of the eternal fight with mischief. There is a cave in a mountain near Yazd, called Chak-Chak Fire Temple. Every year some special ceremonies are held in this place during the Sadeh Feast. It is believed that the last Zoroastrian princess took shelter

there in 640 AD when the Muslims expanded their power to the east. Although for the majority of Iranians Sadeh has no religious significance and no specific rituals are involved other than lighting fires at sunset and having a cheerful time, Iranians of all faiths make a collective effort at this day to keep up with their ancient traditions and to celebrate the precious things God granted humanity.

IV. ZOROASTER

Zoroaster or Zarathustra, also referred to as Zartosht, was an ancient Iranian prophet and the founder of Zoroastrianism, a religion that was the national religion of the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian dynastic empires of anciant Iran; it is predominantly practised today by the Iranian Zoroastrian community and Parsi community of India.

Prophet Zoroaster is generally accepted as an authentic historical figure, but the period in which he lived remains unclear. Many scholarly estimates place him circa 1200 BC, making him a candidate to be the founder of the earliest religion based on revealed scripture, while others place him anywhere between the 18th and the 6th centuries BCE.

POSSIBLE DATES OF EXISTENCE

Estimates for the lifetime of Zoroaster vary widely, depending upon the sources used.

- 1400 BC to 1000 BC, which represents the current scholarly consensus, is cited by Mary Boyce in her *A History of Zoroastrianism* (1989).
- "Before 458 BC" is cited by H.S. Nyberg in *Die Religionen des Alten Iran* (1938).
- The *Bundahišn* or *Creation,* an important Zoroastrian religious text, cites the time of Zoroaster as 258 years before Alexander the Great's invasion of Persia (i.e., 588 BC). This "Traditional Date of Zoroaster" was accepted by many 19th century scholars, among them Taghizadeh and W. B. Henning.

Though other scholars such as Darmesteter, who placed Zoroaster around 100 BC, have argued for later dates, these theories are now widely rejected.

LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

From an early time, scholars such as Bartholomea and Christensen noted problems with the "Traditional Date;" namely in the linguistic

difficulties that it presents. Tradition holds that Zoroaster composed the eighteen poems that make up the oldest parts of the *Avesta*, the *Gâthâs*. The language of the *Gâthâs* and the text known as *Yasna Haptanghaiti* (the *"Seven Chapter Sermon"*) is called Old Avestan, and is significantly more archaic than the language of the later parts of the Avesta, Young Avestan. Gathic Avestan was still etymologically similar to the Vedic Sanskrit of the *Rigveda.* Sound changes separating the two branches, which both descended independently from Proto-Indo-Iranian, include the loss of *z*, the development of a retroflex series in Indo-Aryan, and loss of aspiration and of prevocalic *s* in Iranian. Since *Rigvedic* Sanskrit is slightly more conservative than Gathic Avestan, the *Avesta* is usually dated to a few centuries after the *Rigveda*. Based on the date of the *Rigveda*'s composition, commonly stated as between the 15th and 12th centuries BC, and a date of Proto-Indo-Iranian of roughly 2000 BC, the *Gâthâs* are commonly dated within two hundred years of 1000 BC.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Any material not supported by sources may be challenged and removed at any time. This article has been tagged since October 2006. The historical approach compares social customs described in the *Gâthâs* to what is known of the time and region from other historical studies. Since the *Gâthâs* are cryptic and open to interpretation, this method also yields only rough estimates. The *Gâthâs* seem to indicate a society of nomadic pastoralists, which contrasts sharply with the view of Zoroaster living in the court of an Achaemenid satrap such as Vištaspa. The absence in the *Gâthâs* of any mention of Achaemenids or any West Iranian tribes such as Medes, Persians, or even Parthians, makes it unlikely that the historical Zoroaster ever lived in the court of a 6th century satrap. Though it is possible Zoroaster lived sometime between the 13th and 11th centuries BC, before Iranian tribes settled in the central and western areas of the Iranian Plateau, it is just as likely for him to have lived in a rural society during the centuries immediately after the Iranian migration. Therefore, though the historical estimate is consistent with the linguistic one, it is just as vague; Gherardo Gnoli gives a date near 1000 BC.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Archaeological evidence is usually inconclusive regarding questions of religion. However, a Russian archaeologist, Viktor Sarianidi, links Zoroaster to circa 2000 BC based upon excavations of the BMAC

(Asgarov, 1984). Indo-Iranian religion is generally accepted to have begun in the late 3rd millennium BC (e.g., the Soma cult), but Zoroaster himself already looked back on a long religious tradition. The Yaz culture (circa 1500-1100 BC) in the Afghan-Turkmen-Iranian border area is considered a likely staging ground for the development of East Iranian and early Zoroastrian practices.

MYTHOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Zoroaster was famous in classical antiquity as the founder of the religion of the Magi. His name is mentioned by Xanthus, Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, Diogenes Laertius, and by Plato in the *Alcibiades*. Ancient Rome estimates are dependent upon Greek mythology, and give dates as early as the 7th millennium BC, which are the dates to which Parsis subscribe. Greek mythology, Persian literature, such as the *Shahnama* of Ferdowsi, and oral tradition place Zoroaster quite early. Manly Palmer Hall, in his book *Twelve World Teachers*, arrives at a rough estimate ranging from 10000 BC to 1000 BC.

LIFE

Information about the life of Zoroaster primarily derives from the following sources: the *Avesta*, the *Gâthâs*, Greek texts, oral history, and archaeological evidence. The *Spena Nask*, the 13th section of the *Avesta*, describes Zoroaster's life. However, this text has disappeared over the centuries, and the biographies in the seventh book of the *Denkard* (9th century) and the *Shâhnâma* are based on earlier texts, no longer exist.

Important differences exist between the two texts. In the later *Avesta*, Zoroaster is depicted wrestling with the Daevas, or "evil immortals," and is tempted by Ahriman to renounce his faith (*Yasht*, 17,19). This account is comparable to the story of the Temptation of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels. The historical Zoroaster, however, eludes categorisation as a legendary character. The *Gâthâs* within the *Avesta* make claim to be the the literal word of the prophet. The *Vendidad* also gives accounts of the dialogues between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster. They are the last-surviving account of his doctrinal discourses, presented at the court of King Viðtâspa.

From Greek accounts, it can be assumed that Zoroaster lived in the northeastern area of ancient Persian territory. The Greeks refer to him as Bactrian, because the area where Afghanistan now lies is where he preached his religion. These texts include many rote details of his life, such as a record of his family members: His father was Pourushaspa

Spitâma, son of Haecadaspa Spitâma, and his mother was Dughdova. He and his wife Hvôvi had three daughters, Freni, Pourucista, and Triti; and three sons, Isat Vastar, Uruvat-Nara, and Hvare Cièra. Zoroaster's great-grandfather Haecataspa was the ancestor of the whole family Spitâma, for which reason Zoroaster usually bears the surname Spitâma. His wife and children, and a cousin named Maidhyoimangha, were his first converts after his illumination from Ahura Mazdâ at age 30.

Greek accounts additionally record some details regarding the childhood of Zoroaster and his hermitic lifestyle. According to tradition and *Pliny's Natural History*, Zoroaster laughed on the day of his birth. He lived in the wilderness and enjoyed exploring it from a young age. Plutarch compares him with Lycurgus and Numa Pompilius (*Numa,* 4). Dio Chrysostom relates Zoroaster's Ahura Mazdâ to Zeus. Plutarch, drawing partly on Theopompus, speaks of Zoroastrianism in *Isis and Osiris*: In this work, he is a mortal, empowered by trust in his God and the protection of his allies. He faces outward opposition and unbelief, and inward doubt.

Textual evidence conflicts in regard to the birthplace of Zoroaster. This same text identifies Çrân Wej with the district of Aran on the river Aras (Araxes), close by the north-western frontier of the Medes. According to *Yasna* 59, 18, the *zaraèuštrotema*, or supreme head of the Zoroastrian priesthood, resided in Ragha at a later time during the Sassanid dynasty. The Persian Muslim writer Shahrastani has endeavored to solve the conflict by arguing that Zoroaster's father was from Atropatene, while his mother was from Rai.

According to *Yasnas* 5 and 105, Zoroaster prayed for the conversion of King Vištaspa, and afterwards left his native district. *Yasnas* 53 and 9 suggest that he ventured to Rai, where he was unwelcome. Eventually, he met Vištaspa, king of Bactria, who appears in the Gâthâs as a historical personage.

The court of Vištaspa included two brothers, Fraðaôštra and Jamaspa, both of whom were viziers of Vištaspa according to legend. Zoroaster was closely related to both: his wife, Hvôvi, was the daughter of Frashaôðtra, while Jamaspa was the husband of his daughter Pourucista. The actual role of intermediary was played by the pious queen Hutaôsa. Apart from this connection, the new prophet relied especially upon his own kindred. Placing the date of King Vištaspa is difficult. Antiquated sources suggest Vištaspa was Hystaspes, father of Darius I. Hutaôsa could be Atossa, queen consort to Cambyses II, Smerdis,

and Darius I. The matriarchal name is the only link to the Achaemenidian lineage.

According to the *Book of Arda Viraf*, Zoroaster taught an estimated 300 years before the invasion of Alexander the Great. Assyrian inscriptions relegate him to a more ancient period. Eduard Meyer maintains that the Zoroastrian religion must have been predominant among the Medes; therefore, he estimates the date of Zoroaster at 1000 BC, in agreement with Duncker (*Geschichte des Altertums*, 44, 78). Zoroaster may have emanated from the old school of Median Magi and appeared first among the Medes as the prophet of a new faith, but met with sacerdotal opposition and turned eastward. Zoroastrianism then seems to have acquired a solid footing in eastern Iran, where it continues to survive in dwindling numbers. Zoroaster's death is not mentioned in the *Avesta*; in the *Shahnama*, he is said to have been murdered at the altar by the Turanians in the storming of Balkh.

ZOROASTRIAN TEACHINGS

The teachings of Zoroaster are presented in the *yasna*, seventeen liturgical texts or "hymns," which is divided into groups called *Gâthâs*. The basic precept of Zoroastrianism is the maxim "*Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta*" (Sanskrit *sumata*, *sukta*, *suvartana*)—"Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds." The foundation of human existence is the cosmic struggle between *Aša* (Pahlavi *Ahlâyîh*), "The Truth," and *Druj* (Pahlavi *Druz*), "The Lie." This may also be conceptualised as a battle between Darkness and Light, a structure parallel to the struggle between *good* and *evil* in Western paradigm. The two opposing forces in this battle are Ahura Mazdâ (God) and Ahriman (The Devil). In the *yasnas*, Zoroaster refers to these as "the Better and the Bad." Zoroaster describes Ahura Mazdâ in a series of rhetorical questions: "Who established the course of the Sun and stars?...Who feeds and waters the plants?...What builder created light and darkness?...Through whom does exist dawn, noon and night?" (Yasna 44, 4-6).

ZOROASTER IN THE WEST

Zoroaster was known as a sage, magician, and miracle-worker in post-Classical Western culture. Though almost nothing was known of his ideas until the late 18th century, by that time his name was already associated with lost ancient wisdom. Zoroaster appears as "Sarastro" in Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte*, which has been noted for its Masonic elements, where he represents moral order in opposition to the "Queen of the Night." Enlightenment writers such as Voltaire promoted research into Zoroastrianism in the belief that it was a form of rational Deism,

preferable to Christianity. With the translation of the Avesta by Abraham Anquetil-Duperron, Western scholarship of Zoroastrianism began.

The 2005 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* places Zoroaster as first in the chronology of philosophers because he was the founder of Mazda-Yasna, which can be translated to "worship of wisdom." German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche used the name Zarathustra in his seminal work *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1885), in which he fictionalised the historical figure to meet his own literary and philosophical aims. Nietzsche presents Zoroaster as a returning visionary who repudiates the designation of good and evil and thus marks the observation of the death of God. Nietzsche asserted that he chose Zoroaster as a vehicle for his ideas because the historical prophet had been the first to proclaim the manicheic opposition between "good" and "evil" by rejecting the Daeva, who represent natural forces, in favor of a moral order represented by the Ahuras.

Richard Strauss's Opus 30, inspired by Nietzsche's book, is also called *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Its opening theme, which corresponds to the book's prologue, was used to score the opening sequence of Stanley Kubrick's movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Zarathustra is also mentioned in the Roxy Music song 'Mother of Pearl'.

ZOROASTER IN THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

Bahá'ís believe Zoroaster was a "Manifestation of God," one of a line of prophets who have progressively revealed the Word of God to a gradually maturing humanity. Zoroaster therefore shares an exalted station with Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh.

However, the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith caution believers that, as with many Manifestations, few if any teachings of Zoroaster that have survived to the modern age can be authenticated, and any contradictions between the teachings of the Manifestations are ascribed to later corruptions or the differing needs of the age and culture. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, wrote that Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled the Zoroastrian prophecy of the return of the Sháh-Bahrám: "To Him Zoroaster must have alluded when, according to tradition, He foretold that a period of three thousand years of conflict and contention must needs precede the advent of the World-Savior Sháh-Bahrám, Who would triumph over Ahriman and usher in an era of blessedness and peace." `Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the Bahá'í Faith's Central Figures, has stated that Zoroaster lived roughly 1,000 years before Jesus.

In his book, *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History*, President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan claims that Zoroaster was a Tajik from Bactria/ Balkh (currently in Afghanistan). Rahmonov, a Muslim, states in his work:

"Many principles of the Zarathustrian religion have left a deep imprint on the Tajik people's mind. The habit has been preserved prohibiting the killing of animals when they are pregnant and the cutting of trees in blossom. Water, earth and fire have to be protected from any impurity. The fumes of some fragrant herbs are still used to keep away sickness and the force of evil. These and many other examples give evidence that in every Tajik house we may find trace of Zarathushtra's teachings.

Let us hope in the new millennium, the Tajik people will continue to live under the spiritual guidance of Zarathushtra, the prophet of truth and light."

Rakhmon subsequently convinced UNESCO to declare 2002-2003 the third millennium since Zoroaster's birth. UNESCO's nod to Tajikistan, an overwhelmingly Muslim nation, gave rise to an extraordinary show of support by Zoroastrian organisations worldwide, resulting in hundreds of large and small commemorative events to celebrate the declared anniversary from diverse locations such as Tajikistan, Teheran (Iran) Mumbai (India), New York (USA), and Vancouver (Canada). UNESCO's secretary-general later declared UNESCO's support for this worldwide collaboration in several speeches and texts.

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