Introduction to Islam

The literal meaning of Islam is peace; surrender of one’s will i.e. losing oneself for the sake of God and surrendering one’s own pleasure for the pleasure of God. Islam is one of the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions and one of the most widely followed religions in the world. The message of Islam was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings on him) 1, 400 years ago. It was revealed through angel Gabriel (on whom be peace) and was thus preserved in the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran carries a Divine guarantee of safeguard from interpolation and it claims that it combines the best features of the earlier scriptures.

The prime message of Islam is the Unity of God, that the Creator of the world is One and He alone is worthy of worship and that Muhammad (peace and blessings on him) is His Messenger and Servant. The follower of this belief is thus a Muslim - a Muslim’s other beliefs are: God’s angels, previously revealed Books of God, all the prophets, from Adam to Jesus (peace be on them both), the Day of Judgment and indeed the Decree of God. A Muslim has five main duties to perform, namely; bearing witness to the Unity of God and Muhammad (peace and blessings on him) as His Messenger, observing the prescribed prayer, payment of Zakat, keeping the fasts of Ramadhan and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islam believes that each person is born pure. The Holy Quran tells us that God has given human beings a choice between good and evil and to seek God’s pleasure through faith, prayer and charity. Islam believes that God created mankind in His image and by imbuing the attributes of God on a human level mankind can attain His nearness. Islam’s main message is to worship God and to treat all God’s creation with kindness and compassion. Rights of parents in old age, orphans and the needy are clearly stated. Women’s rights were safeguarded 1,400 years ago when the rest of the world was in total darkness about emancipation. Islamic teachings encompass every imaginable situation and its rules and principles are truly universal and have stood the test of time.

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| n Islam virtue does not connote forsaking the bounties of nature that are lawful. On the contrary one is encouraged to lead a healthy, active life with the qualities of kindness, chastity, honesty, mercy, courage patience and politeness. In short, Islam has a perfect and complete code for the guidance of individuals and communities alike. As the entire message of Islam is derived from the Holy Quran and indeed the Sunnah and Hadith (the traditions and practices of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings on him) it is immutable in the face of change in time and place. It may appear rigid to the casual eye, in actual fact it is most certainly an adaptable way of life regardless of human changes. |
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| Islam teaches that the path to spiritual development is open to all. Any individual who searches the One Creator can seek nearness to God through sincere and earnest worship; it is central to establishing a relationship with the Almighty. This positive message for humanity fills hearts with hope and courage. |

Today Islam is the fastest growing faith in the world - its beautiful message is reaching millions in the far corner of the earth.

**Judaism**

Judaism has no official creed or universal doctrinal requirements for membership. In general, a person can be considered "Jewish" whether he adheres to a complete system of beliefs about God and the afterlife, holds only a few simple beliefs that give meaning to ritual, or even (at least in liberal Judaism) does not believe in God at all.

This diversity in Jewish belief arises in part because actions (good deeds and the mitzvot), not beliefs, are the most important aspect of Jewish religious life. In addition, the term "Jewish" can be used to describe a race and a culture rather than a religion, so some who identify themselves as Jewish may have little interest in the beliefs and practices associated with the religion of Judaism.

Nevertheless, the [Torah](http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism/texts/torah.htm) and [Talmud](http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism/texts/talmud.htm) have a great deal to say about God, humanity, and the meaning of life, and Jewish history has seen significant theological and mystical inquiry into   
religious concepts.

  
**What Holly Quran say’s**

O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I have bestowed upon you and fulfill My covenant [upon you] that I will fulfill your covenant [from Me], and be afraid of [only] Me. (2:40)

O Children of Israel, remember My favor that I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds. (2:47)

And [recall] when We saved your forefathers from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, slaughtering your [newborn] sons and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord. (2:49)  
  
And [recall] when We parted the sea for you and saved you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you were looking on. (2:50)

And [recall] when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights. Then you took [for worship] the calf after him, while you were wrongdoers. (2:51)  
  
And [recall] when We gave Moses the Scripture and criterion that perhaps you would be guided. (2:53)

**Christianity**

Islam and Christianity are the two largest religions dominating the world, yet following the same baseline which reflects **“Belief in One God.”** It’s surprising to know how much similarity and connection both these monotheistic religions carry. Let’s throw some light on these similarities:

**The Fateha & The Lord’s Prayer:** “The Lord’s Prayer” in the bible and the “Sura Al-Fateha” in the [**Quran**](http://www.quranreading.com/) are universal prayers. After careful observation, we can see that both the prayers carry the similar meaning with only the difference of language.

**Belief on Jesus**: Both Muslims and Christians recognize the Jesus. Both believe that Jesus was sinless and born of the Virgin Mary. Both religions accept that Jesus preformed miracles and was crucified and raised up to God. The difference is only in the belief where Muslims see Jesus as a highly regarded prophet, while Christians take Him as God Himself.

**Belief in the World Hereafter**: Islam and Christianity are united on the concept of the doomsday. Both believe that existence of this World is finite, but man does not know when the World will come to an end. Jesus Christ will return when the World ends and at that time Satan and his servants will be defeated. Believers who die will go to heaven and live forever, while Disbelievers will go to hell to be punished.

**Similarity in Prayer**: Prayer is an integral part of both the religions. Both religions facilitate the communication of man with God through prayer. Prayer can be conducted at any time and special times also exist to make sure man develops the habit to pray. Praying aids like “tasbeeh” in Islam and “rosary” in Christianity are also used which resemble a string of beads.

**Creation of This World and Creation of Man**: In both the Bible and The Quran, creation of the world and the man has been described alike. Here are a couple of verses, one from Quran and other from Bible, enforcing the same meanings:



* **Quran and world’s creation: “**We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.”
* **Bible and world’s creation: “**Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”
* **Quran and man’s creation: “**Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: “I am about to create man from sounding clay from mud molded into shape; when I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit fall ye down in obeisance unto him.”
* **Bible and man’s creation: “**The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

**Reason for the Existence of Religion**

Islam's fundamental theological concept is belief in one God. Muslims are not expected to visualize God but to worship and adore him as a protector. Any kind of idolatry is condemned in Islam.([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [112:2](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/112-qmt.php#112.002)) As a result, Muslims hold that for someone to worship any other deities other than Allah ([*Shirk*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirk_(polytheism)) ([polytheism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polytheism))) is a sin that will lead to separation from [Allah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allah). [Muslims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslims) believe that [Allah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allah) sent the [Qur'an](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qur%27an) to bring peace and harmony to humanity through [Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) (submission to Allah). [Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad)'s (SAW) worldwide mission was to establish universal peace under the *[Khilafat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khilafat" \o "Khilafat)*.

[Surah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sura) Al-Ma'idah verse 48 states:

If Allah so willed, he would have made you a single People, but his plan is to test each of you separately, in what He has given to each of you: so strive in all virtues as in you are in a race. The goal of all of you is to Allah. It is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute. ([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [5:48](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/005-qmt.php#005.048))

[Surah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sura) Al-Ankabut verse 46 states:

And dispute not with the [People of the Book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_the_Book), except with means better than mere disputation, unless I be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury, but say to them: "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him that we bow." ([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [29:46](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/029-qmt.php#029.046))

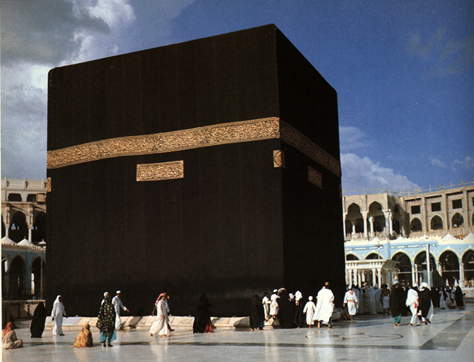
The Quran criticizes Christians and Jews who believed that their own religions the only source of Truth.

They say, if you want to be guided to salvation, you should either become a Jew or Christian. Say: What about the religion of Abraham, he also worshiped no one but Allah. We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, to Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes of Israel, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah. So, if they believe, they are indeed on the right path, but if they turn back, Allah will suffice them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. This is the Baptism of Allah. And who can baptize better than Allah. And it is He Whom we worship. Say: Will you dispute with us about Allah, He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and you for yours; and that We are sincere in Him? Or do ye say that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know better than Allah? Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah. But Allah is not unmindful of what ye do! That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case.( ([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [2:135-141](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/002-qmt.php#002.135-141))

Surah Al-Baqara verse 113 states:

The Jews say: "The Christians have nothing to stand upon"; and the Christians say: "The Jews have nothing to stand upon." Yet they both have something to stand upon, they both recite the Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment. ([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [2:113](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/002-qmt.php#002.113))

Say: “O People of the Book! Come to what is common between us and you: That we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him, that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords other than Allah. If then they turn back, say: 'Bear witness that we are bowing to Allah’s will.'" ([Quran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) [3:64](http://www.cmje.org/religious-texts/quran/verses/003-qmt.php#003.064))



The *Khilafat* ensured security of the lives and property of non-Muslims under the *[dhimmi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhimmi" \o "Dhimmi)* system.

This status was originally only made available to non-Muslims who were "[People of the Book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_the_Book)" (Christians, Jews, and Sabians), but was later extended to include Zoroastrians, Sikhs,Hindus, Mandeans(Sabians), and Buddhists.

A ***dhimmī*** is a non-[Muslim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) subject of a state governed in accordance with [sharia law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia). Linguistically, the word means "one whose responsibility has been taken".  The dhimma is a theoretical contract based on a widely held Islamic doctrine granting limited responsibilities and rights to adherents of [Judaism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), [Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), ("[People of the Book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_the_Book)") and certain other non-Muslim religions. Dhimma allows rights of residence in return for taxes. Dhimmi enjoyed some freedoms under the state founded by [Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) and could practice their religious rituals according to their faith and beliefs.

However, the [non-Muslim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Muslim) dhimmis were subject to taxation [jizyah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jizyah" \o "Jizyah) at a different rate of the [Muslim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) [zakat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zakat). [Dhimmis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhimmi" \o "Dhimmi) also faced economic impediments, restrictions on political participation and/or social advancement based on their non-Muslim status.

**Hinduism**

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| http://www.islamandhinduism.com/ih/image/blt.gif | The word ‘Hindu’ has geographical significance and was used originally to refer to those people who lived beyond the river Sindhu or the region watered by the river Indus. |
| http://www.islamandhinduism.com/ih/image/blt.gif | Historians say that it was first used by the Persians who came to India through the North Western passes of the Himalayas. The word ‘Hindu’ was also used by the Arabs. |
| http://www.islamandhinduism.com/ih/image/blt.gif | This word ‘Hindu’ is nowhere mentioned in Indian Literature or Hindu Scriptures before the advent of Muslims to India, according to the Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics (6:690) |
| http://www.islamandhinduism.com/ih/image/blt.gif | In short the word ‘Hindu’ is a geographical definition or term which is used to refer to people who live beyond the river Indus or in other words to those who live in India.   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |
| http://www.islamandhinduism.com/ih/image/blt.gif | According to the Hindu Scholars, Hinduism is a misnomer and the religion ‘Hinduism’ should be either referred to as ‘Sanatana Dharma’, which means eternal religion, or as Vedic Dharma, meaning religion of the Vedas. The followers of this religion are referred to as Vendantists. |



Hinduism's belief in God can be variously categorized as monotheism, monism, [henotheism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henotheism" \o "Henotheism)or [polytheism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polytheism). To understand the concept of God in Hinduism, it is necessary to know that Orthodox Hinduism has six systems of [philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_philosophy), all of which hold the four Vedas as authentic sources of knowledge, viz.: *[Sānkhya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samkhya" \o "Samkhya),*[*Yoga*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga)*, [Nyāya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyaya" \o "Nyaya), [Vaisheshika](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaisheshika" \o "Vaisheshika), [Pūrva Mīmānsā](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mim%C4%81%E1%B9%83s%C4%81" \o "Mimāṃsā) & [Vedānta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedanta" \o "Vedanta)*.

The last one, *Vedānta* is further split into sub-branches, of which the most popular is [Advaita Vedānta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advaita_Vedanta" \o "Advaita Vedanta) propounded by Sage [Adi Shankara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adi_Shankara" \o "Adi Shankara) in the Early-Medieval India. Each philosophical system and sub-system has its own distinct concept of God. This leads to a variety of concepts of God in Hinduism.

According to *Advaita Vedānta*, the school of [monism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monism), God is One, and only One. However, due to the effect of *[Māyā](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_(illusion)" \o "Maya (illusion))* (lit., illusion), God is manifested upon the minds of human beings as anthropomorphic *[devī-devatās](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deva_(Hinduism)" \o "Deva (Hinduism))* (often translated into English as "gods & goddesses" or as "deities"). These *devī-devatās* are not fully real, but are *permissible* within the Hindu tradition as convenient paths for worship of God, who is referred to in Hindu philosophy by the Sanskrit term *[Īshwara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishvara" \o "Ishvara)* (lit., the Lord, similar to Arabic term *al-Rabb*). *Īshwara* is regarded as One, spiritual, formless, omnipotent, omniscient, [omnipresent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omnipresent) and perfect. *Advaita Vedānta* believes that God is present inside every human, animal, plant and matter, because God is considered both [immanent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanent) ("like the whiteness in milk") and [transcendent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendence_(religion)) ("like the watchmaker who exists independent of his watch"),. Hence the Hindus worship the same one God under different forms and even through icons. Apart from the idea of God, it is also important to note that *Advaita Vedānta* considers this material world to be [illusionary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illusion) (i.e. caused by *Māyā*). They believe that there is one level of Reality higher than this *pragmatic* level, which is the *Transcendental* level of Reality. In this Transcendental level, there is no *Māyā*, with one and only one entity existing: the Supreme Cosmic Spirit (Sanskrit: [*Brahman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahman)). This *Brahman*is devoid of all attributes except Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, and this is the true nature of God (*Īshwara*). This *Brahman* is exactly equal to the individual [soul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul), after the soul has attained final salvation ([*Moksha*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moksha), which is all about finding this level of Reality).

The other sub-branches of Vedanta philosophy, like [Achintya Bhedābheda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achintya_Bheda_Abheda" \o "Achintya Bheda Abheda) followed by [ISKCON](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISKCON), a school of [Gaudiya Vaishnavism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaudiya_Vaishnavism" \o "Gaudiya Vaishnavism), have a different view of *Īshwara*/*Brahman*. ISKCON believes that this material world is also real and that God has positive attributes even in the true form. They do not believe in the *Advaita* concept of illusion, and note that the individual soul is not equal to *Brahman*. This [Achintya Bhedābheda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achintya_Bheda_Abheda" \o "Achintya Bheda Abheda) school believes in an intermediate view regarding the distinction between the soul and God, when contrasting this school between Advaita and the other major school of Vedanta, [Dvaita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvaita" \o "Dvaita). Furthermore, ISKCON believes that [*Krishna*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krishna) is the One and Only God and in order to attain salvation, one *must* worship *Krishna*. They consider the other *devī-devatās* to be servants of *Krishna*, similar to angels. The existence of devas are due to the karma the devas have acquired. The devas rejected serving Krishna so they entered the material world. They are fallen Jivas but through austerities have gained posts as angels.

*Nyāya*, *Vaisheshika* and *Yoga* philosophies have more similarity with Islam. Like Islam, they believe in the existence of One Supreme God (*Ishwara*), who is formless, spiritual, omniscient and omnipotent. They also believe in the several *devī-devātas* as celestial beings who are subordinate to God; this concept is similar to that of the [angels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel) in Islam (*al-Malā'ikah*) and other Abrahamic religions. Like the angels, the*devī-devātas* are considered as intermediaries between God and the human world, and are assigned specific powers by God, who is the Creator of all; [*Agni*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agni)*Deva* presides over fire, *[Indra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indra" \o "Indra) Deva* presides over all the *devī-devatās* and is assigned with rain and thunder, etc. However, these three philosophies concern themselves more with actual [logic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic) (and in case of Yoga, with physical exercises and [meditation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation)) than with religious beliefs.

The philosophy of *Sānkhya* is [atheistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism). It does not believe in God and in its logical system, there is no place for God. It believes that evolution is continuously occurring due to the liaison between the individual spirits (*[Purusha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purusha" \o "Purusha)*) and the Nature (*[Prakriti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prakriti" \o "Prakriti)*). All things are made up of varying levels of three essences: Truth, Passion and Darkness (*[Sattva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sattva" \o "Sattva),*[*Rajas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajas)*& [Tamas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamas_(philosophy)" \o "Tamas (philosophy))*) which keep changing in proportion, thus creating new things.

### Scriptures

Historians consider the [*Vedas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veda) (also known as *[Shruti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shruti" \o "Shruti)*) to have been compiled between 1500 BC and 1000 BC. There are four Vedas: *[Rigveda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigveda" \o "Rigveda)*, *[Sāmaveda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaveda" \o "Samaveda)*, *[Yajurveda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yajurveda" \o "Yajurveda)* and *[Atharvaveda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atharvaveda" \o "Atharvaveda)*. They are in[Vedic Sanskrit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_Sanskrit), an early and archaic form of [Sanskrit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskrit) language. The language and the deities of the *Rigveda* bear strong similarities with the Holy *[Avesta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avesta" \o "Avesta)* of [Zoroastrianism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism). These Vedas are primarily manuals for fire-sacrifices (*[yajñas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yajna" \o "Yajna)*) performed by the ancient [Indo-Aryan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Aryans) people. However, Orthodox Hindus believe that the Vedic hymns also contain eternal truths about the soul (*ātman*), God and their inter-relationship. They believe that these concepts are not obvious in the literal meaning of the Vedic hymns, but are in the *hidden* form, and become clear when one *interprets* the Vedas by [meditation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation) or through the help of the three tiers of Vedic commentaries: the *[Brāhmanas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahmana" \o "Brahmana)*, the *[Ārankayas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aranyaka" \o "Aranyaka)*and the [*Upanishads*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upanishad). These texts were composed slightly later than the hymn part (the *Samhitā*), and are easier to understand. The*Upanishads* are especially lauded by Hindus and even non-Hindu scholars like [Max Müller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_M%C3%BCller) as the pinnacle of spiritual and metaphysical thought, and they form the primary basis of *Advaita Vedānta*. The entire Vedic literature was learned by heart by the ancient scholars and it was centuries later when they were written down.

As time passed by, there emerged another class of Sanskrit texts called the *[Smritis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smriti" \o "Smriti)*. They are considered to be of human creation and of secondary authority to the [Shrutis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrutis" \o "Shrutis), but nevertheless, quite popular among the masses because of their content, which is interesting legends, stories and moral precepts. They are also in Sanskrit but translations are available. Chief among them are the *[Rāmāyana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana" \o "Ramayana)*: the legend of Prince *[Rāmachandra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rama" \o "Rama)* of *[Ayodhyā](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayodhya" \o "Ayodhya)* who battles the demon *[Rāvana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravana" \o "Ravana)* to rescue his wife *[Sitā](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sita" \o "Sita)*, and the *[Mahābhārata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabharata" \o "Mahabharata)*: the legend of the royal families of *[Kauravas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kauravas" \o "Kauravas)* and *[Pāndavas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandava" \o "Pandava)* and the battle that they fought for upholding [*dharma*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma). Within the *Mahābhārata* is the [*Bhagavad Gītā*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavad_Gita), which contains the precepts of *Krishna* to Pāndava prince *[Arjuna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arjuna" \o "Arjuna)* about the concepts of human duty, soul, God, divine incarnation and different pathways for salvation. The *Gītā* is often considered the essence of the Vedas and is highly revered by the Hindu people irrespective of denomination. The other Smriti texts include the several *[Purānas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purana" \o "Purana)* which contains legends and mythologies of Creation, divine incarnation and tales of the *devī-devatās*. There are also highly controversial *Smriti* texts like the *[Manusmriti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manusmriti" \o "Manusmriti)* which focuses on the [caste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste) system within the Hindu society

**Concept of prophethood**

Hinduism has the concept of [*Rishis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rishi). The Sanskrit word *Rishi* is loosely translated into English as "sage" (a respected wise man) or "seer" (a prophet, a man who can *see* the future). Hinduism recognizes and reveres thousands of *Rishis*, who can be thought of as the collective founders of the Hindu religion over many millennia (but unlike Islam, Hinduism has no single founder). Of these, special importance is given to the *[Saptarshi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saptarshi" \o "Saptarshi)* (the Seven Sages), widely regarded as [Patriarchs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarch) of the Hindu religion, whose listing is different according to different texts. One of the texts, the *[Brihadāranyaka Upanishad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brihadaranyaka_Upanishad" \o "Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)* (2.2.4) lists their identities as: [*Atri*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atri)*,*[*Bharadvāja*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharadwaja)*,*[*Gotama*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotama)*,*[*Jamadagni*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamadagni)*,*[*Kashyapa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashyapa)*,*[*Vasishtha*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasishtha)*&*[*Vishwāmitra*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishvamitra). The *Saptarshi* and their clans are believed to have composed the hymns of the four Vedas by entering into communion with the Supreme Cosmic Spirit through meditation. For instance, *Rigveda* 1.1 is attributed to *Rishi Madhucchandā Vaishwāmitra* (i.e. Madhucchandā of the clan of Vishwāmitra). Most *Rishis* were male, but there were some female *Rishikās*too. *[Lopāmudrā](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lopamudra" \o "Lopamudra)* is the authoress of one hymn in the *Rigveda*, and *[Gārgī Vāchaknavī](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gargi_Vachaknavi" \o "Gargi Vachaknavi)* is described in the *[Brihadāranyaka Upanishad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brihadaranyaka_Upanishad" \o "Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)* as a highly respected woman in the field of *Brahmajñāna*. Apart from the Vedas, various *Rishis* are also credited with composing the several *Smriti*texts, like *[Vedavyāsa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedavyasa" \o "Vedavyasa)* who composed the *Mahābhārata*.

**Buddhism**

Buddhism currently has about 376 million followers and is generally listed as the world's fourth largest religion after [Christianity](http://www.religioustolerance.org/christ.htm), [Islam](http://www.religioustolerance.org/islam.htm) and [Hinduism](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hinduism.htm). It was founded in Northern India by Siddhartha Gautama (circa 563 to 460 [BCE](http://www.religioustolerance.org/bce.htm)) and has spread into much of the far East. It is making major inroads into North America

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism (Pali/Sanskrit: बौद्ध धर्म Bauddha Dharma) is a religion and philosophy encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha (Pāli/Sanskrit "the awakened one"). The Buddha lived and taught in the northeastern Indian subcontinent some time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE.[1] He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end ignorance (avidyā) of dependent origination, thus escaping what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth.

Two major branches of Buddhism are recognized: Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle"). Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, Tiantai (Tendai) and Shinnyo-en. In some classifications Vajrayana—as practiced mainly in Tibet and Mongolia —is recognized as a third branch, while others classify it as a part of Mahayana. The are other categorisations of these 3 Vehicles or Yanas.



**Faizail-e-Quran**

The Holy Quran is verbal revelations given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) over a period of twenty three years. The Holy Quran is the Holy Book or the Scriptures of the Muslims. It lays down the law and commandments, codes for  their social and moral behaviour for them , and contains a comprehensive religious philosophy.

The Qur'an comprehends the complete code for the Muslims to live a good, chaste, abundant and rewarding life in obedience to the commandments of Allah, in this life and to gain salvation in the next. It is the "chart of life" for every Muslim, and it is the "constitution" of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

The Qur'an is the eternal contemporary of the Muslims. Each generation of Muslims has found new sources of strength, courage and inspiration in it. It is also, for them, a "compass" in the turbulent voyage of life, as it has explained itself in the following verses:

. . . Indeed, there has come to you light and a clear book from Allah; With it Allah guides him who fill follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by his will and guides them to the right path. (V: 15-16)

It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character. It deserves the highest praise for its conceptions of Divine nature in reference to the attributes of Power, Knowledge, and Universal Providence and Unity--that its belief and trust is one God, creator of Heaven and Earth is deep and fervent, and that it embodies much of a noble and moral earnestness. It is Qur'an which transformed the simple shepherds and wandering Bedouins of Arabia into the founders of empires, the builders of cities, the collectors of libraries. If a system of religious teachings is evaluated by the changes which it introduces into the way of life, the customs and beliefs of its follower, then Qur'an as a code of life is second to none. It is not strange then, that more translations and more commentaries of the Holy Qur'an have been published than that of any other book claimed to be the Divine Revelation.