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MIT WORLD PEACE

UNIVERSITY OF PUNE

TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH, SOCIAL INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Four Decades of Educational Excellence

FACULTY OF PEACE STUDIES

Study Material

Foundation of Peace

Course Code: PCE10010

1. Why Peace: Meaning
2. Why Peace: Relevance
3. Indian Lineage of Peace: Traditional and Contemporary Visions
4. Negative Peace: Absence of Direct Violence
5. Positive peace
6. Various Types of Violence
7. Structural Violence
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12. Peace in Religions: Hinduism
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Transform Your Life, Transform the World Around

Why MIT World Peace University

Vision:

**“Union of Science and
Spirituality alone will
bring peace to mankind”**

- **Holistic way of living**



- Hon. Prof.(Dr.) Vishwanath D. Karad, Founder President, UNESCO CHAIR for Human Rights, Democracy and Peace

Why Peace Education

- To create globally responsible, mindful and peaceful leaders



- Hon. Shri. Rahul V. Karad. Managing Trustee and Executive President, MIT-WPU, MAEERS Group of Institutions.

Why Peace

What is Peace Education:

- Betty Reardon (Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for global Responsibility, 1988) reminds that peace education has an important social purpose: it seeks to transform the present human condition by “changing social structures and patterns of thought that have created it.”
- Learning to Abolish War; Teaching toward a Culture of Peace (Reardon and Cabezudo, 2002), the main purpose of peace education are the elimination of social injustice, the rejection of violence and the abolition of war.

Why Peace Education?

1. Contribution of Peace Education in Social Transformation:

Fostering Understanding: Peace education promotes a deep understanding of the root causes of conflicts and violence. It helps individuals comprehend the complexities of social issues, promoting empathy and tolerance among diverse groups.

Conflict Resolution Skills: Peace education equips individuals with nonviolent conflict resolution skills. This is crucial in fostering positive social changes, as it enables people to address disagreements without resorting to violence, thus contributing to a more harmonious society.

Promoting Social Justice: By educating individuals about structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality, peace education encourages critical analysis. This critical perspective empowers individuals to identify and challenge systems that perpetuate social disparities, contributing to the quest for social justice.

2. Nonviolent Alternatives for Managing Conflict:

Communication Skills: Peace education emphasizes effective communication and active listening, essential for resolving conflicts without resorting to violence.

Negotiation and Mediation: Teaching negotiation and mediation skills provides individuals with tools to peacefully navigate disputes, fostering collaboration and understanding.

Conflict Transformation: Rather than just resolving conflicts, peace education focuses on transforming the underlying causes. It encourages individuals to address root issues to create lasting positive changes.

Skills for Critical Analysis of Structural Arrangements:

Understanding Power Dynamics: Peace education helps individuals critically analyze power structures and hierarchies, enabling them to recognize and challenge systems that perpetuate injustice.

Advocacy Skills: Equipping individuals with skills to advocate for social change, peace education empowers them to work towards dismantling structures that contribute to inequality.

Promoting Human Rights: By fostering an understanding of human rights principles, peace education encourages individuals to identify and challenge structural arrangements that violate these rights.

People as the Greatest Resource for a Culture of Peace:

Community Engagement: Peace education recognizes that individuals within communities are the driving force for positive change. It emphasizes community involvement and collective efforts to build a culture of peace.

Civic Responsibility: Encouraging a sense of civic responsibility, peace education motivates individuals to actively participate in shaping their societies, fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation.

Educating Peace Agents:

Empowering Individuals: Peace education is centered around empowering individuals to become proactive agents of peace. It provides them with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute to building a peaceful society.

Promoting Global Citizenship: Peace education encourages a sense of global citizenship, emphasizing that individuals have a role in promoting peace not only in their immediate communities but also on a broader, global scale.

Empowering Young People for Positive Change:

New Perspectives: Peace education provides young people with alternative perspectives on conflict resolution, encouraging them to explore nonviolent solutions and challenging traditional approaches.

Skill Development: Young people are equipped with essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and empathy, enabling them to contribute positively to society and address challenges constructively.

Values and Ethics: Peace education instills values of cooperation, respect, and social responsibility, shaping the ethical foundation necessary for young people to contribute to positive change and human well-being.

Concept and meaning of Peace:

The concept of 'peace' is commonly associated with the cessation or nonexistence of war. Nevertheless, within the Western tradition, the term encompasses various other interpretations. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, peace can also be understood as:

A condition of calm or quietness within a community

Liberation from troubling or burdensome thoughts or emotions (such as inner peace or peace of mind)

Agreement and harmony in personal relationships

A state or duration of mutual agreement between governments

A formal pact or arrangement to cease hostilities.

Concepts of peace depend on the historical and cultural context, and the term has many connotations in other languages (Lewer 1992).

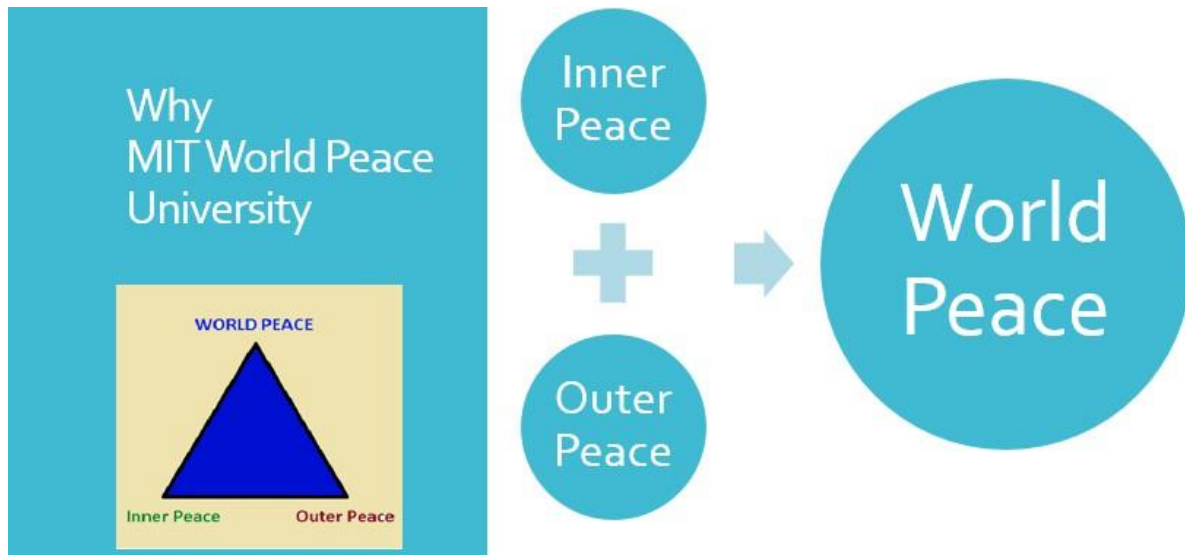
For example:

‘satyagrahavarada’ (Sanskrit) – the study of physical, mental and spiritual forces which produce individual and social harmony

‘shalom’ (Hebrew) or ‘salaam’ (Arabic) – individual wellbeing and spiritual wholeness

‘eirene’ (Greek) – an ethical social relationship

‘pax’ (Latin) – contains the notions of law, order and mutual duty in a society



Why Peace?

Why inner peace?

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

- ☐ World Peace will never be stable until enough of us find inner peace to stabilize it.
- ☐ Eternal Inner Peace has to be cultivated daily.
- ☐ Without peace of mind, life is just a shadow of its possibilities

Learn to be peaceful in the midst of chaos.

Meaning of inner peace:

- ☐ Internal peace is peace within oneself; it is derived from practicing or training of mind of an individual
- ☐ It helps address the emotions like worry, anxiety, greed, desire, hatred, ill-will, delusion and/or other defilements arising due to complexities of modern world
- ☐ Can be reached by means of prayer, meditation, wisdom and other ways.
- ☐ Internal peace is essential; it is generally regarded as true peace and as a real foundation of peace in society.

Why outer Peace:

Inner peace begins with outer peace:

- The phrase "inner peace begins with outer peace" means that achieving a peaceful state of mind and emotions **starts with creating peace and calm in the external environment**.
- In other words, it suggests that the **conditions of one's physical surroundings can have a significant impact** on their mental and emotional well-being.
- For example, if a person's external environment is cluttered, chaotic, and stressful, it can be difficult for them to find inner peace and contentment. On the other hand, if a person creates an environment that is calm, organized, and relaxing, it can help them feel more at peace and centered within themselves.
- Therefore, the phrase "inner peace begins with outer peace" **encourages individuals to focus on creating a peaceful physical environment** as a starting point for achieving overall well-being and inner peace

Take responsibility for outer peace too.

Why Peace is Relevant to us?



Do we need to also concern about:

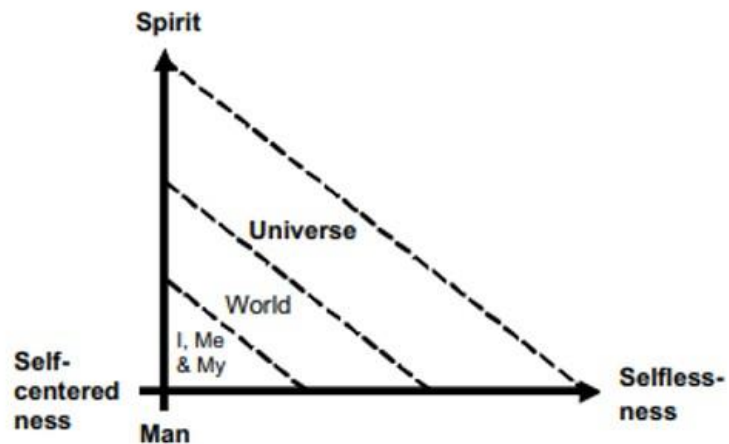
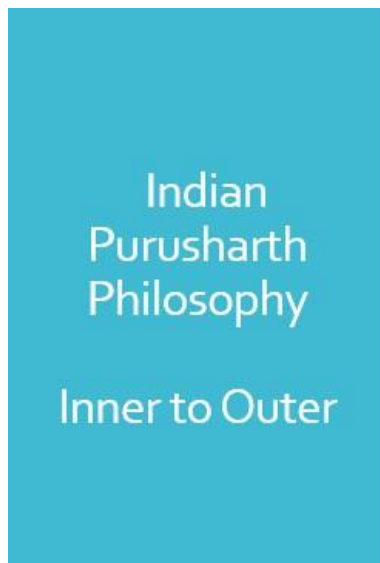
- Assault: Physical attacks on individuals with the intent to cause harm.
- Homicide: The intentional killing of another person.
- Armed Robbery: Using weapons to forcefully steal from individuals or businesses.
- Domestic Violence: Physical abuse within intimate relationships, including spousal or partner violence.
- Street Violence: Physical altercations or fights in public spaces.
- Gang Violence: Acts of violence committed by members of criminal gangs.
- Terrorist Attacks: Deliberate acts of violence to instill fear for political, ideological, or religious purposes

- ❑ War Crimes: Acts of violence committed during armed conflicts that violate international humanitarian law.
- ❑ Assassinations: Targeted killing of specific individuals, often for political reasons.
- ❑ School Shootings: Instances where individuals use firearms to harm others within educational institutions.
- ❑ Bombings: The use of explosive devices to cause destruction and harm.
- ❑ Stabbings: Use of knives or sharp objects to injure or kill.
- ❑ Physical Bullying: Repeated physical aggression or intimidation, often in a school setting.
- ❑ Riots: Large-scale public disturbances involving violence, vandalism, and physical confrontations.
- ❑ Sexual Assault: Non-consensual sexual acts involving physical force or coercion.
- ❑ Kidnapping: Forcibly taking and holding individuals against their will.
- ❑ Human Trafficking: Physical coercion and violence used to control and exploit individuals.

Types of Peace:

- ❑ **Cultural Peace:** Harmony and understanding among different cultures and ethnic groups. Examples: Promoting cultural diversity, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue.
- ❑ **Environmental Peace:** Harmony between human activities and the natural environment. Examples: Sustainable practices, conservation, and addressing environmental degradation.
- ❑ **Political Peace:** Stability and harmony in political structures. Examples: Good governance, democratic principles, and political stability.
- ❑ **Interpersonal Peace:** Harmony in personal relationships and interactions. Effective communication, conflict resolution, and empathy.
- ❑ **Social Peace:** A state of societal well-being with minimal social tensions. Examples: Addressing social inequalities, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring basic human needs are met.
- ❑ **Economic Peace:** Stability and equity in economic systems. Examples: Reducing poverty, promoting economic development, and addressing disparities.
- ❑ **Intrastate Peace:** Peace within a particular state or country. Examples: Addressing internal conflicts, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring political stability.
- ❑ **Interstate Peace:** Peace between different states or nations. Examples: Diplomacy, international cooperation, and the prevention of interstate conflicts.
- ❑ **Psychological Peace:** Inner calm and emotional well-being. Examples: Personal resilience, mental health, and stress reduction.
- ❑ **Justice and Legal Peace:** A state where legal systems ensure justice and fairness. Examples: Rule of law, human rights, and legal mechanisms for dispute resolution.
- ❑ **Gender Peace:** Equality and harmony between gender(s). Examples: Addressing gender-based violence, promoting gender equity, and ensuring equal opportunities.

Indian Lineage of Peace



Indian Purusharth Philosophy

Purusharth is a significant philosophical concept deeply rooted in Hinduism, representing the four fundamental goals or pursuits of human life. Derived from Sanskrit, "Purusharth" is a compound term, combining "Purusha," meaning individual soul or self, and "Artha," meaning purpose or goal. These four life objectives provide a comprehensive framework for individuals seeking a balanced and purposeful existence.

The Purusharth philosophy consists of four key pursuits:

Dharma (Righteousness and Duty):

Dharma refers to righteous living and fulfilling one's moral and social responsibilities. It emphasizes ethical conduct, duty towards oneself, society, and the cosmos. Practicing Dharma ensures harmony and balance in individual and collective life. For example, fulfilling familial obligations, maintaining integrity, and contributing to the welfare of society are considered expressions of Dharma.

Artha (Wealth and Prosperity):

Artha focuses on the pursuit of material well-being and economic prosperity. It encourages individuals to work hard, accumulate wealth, and ensure economic stability. However, it emphasizes the ethical acquisition of wealth, promoting a balanced approach to material success. Pursuing Artha involves engaging in meaningful occupations, entrepreneurship, and responsible management of resources.

Kama (Desire and Pleasure):

Kama encompasses the pursuit of sensory and aesthetic pleasures, including emotional, intellectual, and sensual experiences. It recognizes the importance of pleasure in human life but within the boundaries of morality and righteousness. Balancing desires with ethical considerations is essential for a harmonious life. For instance, enjoying art, music, literature, and healthy relationships align with the pursuit of Kama.

Moksha (Liberation and Spiritual Enlightenment):

Moksha represents the ultimate goal of life – liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara) and union with the divine. It involves seeking spiritual enlightenment, self-realization, and transcending worldly attachments. Practices such as meditation, self-discipline, and devotion lead towards Moksha, allowing the individual to attain a state of eternal bliss and unity with the divine.

The Purusharth philosophy underscores the importance of pursuing these goals simultaneously, recognizing that a holistic life involves a harmonious integration of duty, wealth, pleasure, and spiritual growth. It encourages individuals to strike a balance among these pursuits, ensuring that one aspect does not overshadow the others.

This ancient philosophy continues to be relevant in contemporary times, offering individuals a timeless guide for leading a purposeful and fulfilling life. The Purusharth framework acknowledges the multidimensionality of human existence, providing a roadmap for individuals to navigate the complexities of life with wisdom, virtue, and a sense of higher purpose.

Indian Lineage of Peace

The concept of peace and the pursuit of harmonious living have deep roots in Indian philosophy and cultural traditions. The Indian lineage of peace is enriched by diverse spiritual, philosophical, and ethical teachings that span thousands of years. Here are some key aspects of the Indian lineage of peace:

Vedic Wisdom:

The Vedas, ancient Indian scriptures, contain hymns and verses promoting peace, unity, and cosmic order. The emphasis on dharma (righteousness) and ahimsa (non-violence) can be traced back to these foundational texts.

Upanishadic Philosophy:

The Upanishads, philosophical texts that explore the nature of reality and the self, emphasize inner peace through self-realization. They advocate for the understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Buddhism:

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, emphasized the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as a means to attain inner peace and enlightenment. Buddhism's core principles include compassion, mindfulness, and non-attachment.

Jainism:

Jain teachings, attributed to Mahavira, emphasize non-violence (ahimsa), truthfulness, and compassion. Jains follow a path of non-violence not only in actions but also in thoughts and words.

Bhagavad Gita:

A part of the Indian epic Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield. It addresses duty, righteousness, and the pursuit of inner peace amid life's challenges.

Yoga Philosophy:

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali outline the path of yoga, which extends beyond physical postures. Yoga philosophy emphasizes ethical principles (yamas and niyamas) that contribute to personal and societal well-being.

Sufism:

Influential in India, Sufism within Islam emphasizes love, tolerance, and the mystical experience of unity with the divine. Sufi saints like Rumi and Kabir have left a profound impact on Indian spirituality.

Modern Peace Movements:

India has been home to influential peace leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, who championed non-violent resistance (satyagraha) during the Indian independence movement. His philosophy of ahimsa and peace remains a powerful legacy.

Interfaith Harmony:

India's rich tapestry of religions and spiritual traditions promotes interfaith harmony. The coexistence of various faiths has contributed to a culture of tolerance, respect, and understanding.

Contemporary Spiritual Leaders:

Modern spiritual leaders, such as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and the Dalai Lama, continue to propagate messages of peace, compassion, and mindfulness, contributing to the Indian lineage of peace.

The Indian lineage of peace is characterized by a holistic approach that encompasses individual well-being, societal harmony, and a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life. It continues to inspire individuals and movements globally, fostering a vision of peace that transcends borders and cultural boundaries.

Negative Peace

Negative Peace

Absence of direct violence

What is negative peace?

Negative peace refers to a situation where there is no ongoing violence or open conflict, resulting in a temporary calm, often observed in a cease-fire. However, this state doesn't address the underlying issues that initially led to the conflict.

For instance, consider a region that experiences a cease-fire between two warring factions. While there may be no active fighting, the root causes of the conflict, such as territorial disputes or historical grievances, remain unaddressed.

Despite the surface calm in negative peace, the acknowledgment is that the main problems causing the conflict persist. This implies that even though things may seem stable, there is a lingering risk of future conflict due to unresolved structural or systemic issues.

As an example, think of a community that experiences a temporary lull in inter-group tensions without addressing the economic disparities or cultural misunderstandings that fueled previous conflicts. The potential for renewed tensions remains.

Negative peace also falls short in addressing broader societal goals such as social justice, equality, or sustainable solutions. It essentially signifies a state of no active war without actively working towards resolving deeper societal problems.

An example could be a society where a government enforces strict laws to prevent public demonstrations and protests, resulting in a superficial appearance of peace. However, this does not address the underlying issues of political repression or lack of representation, hindering progress towards social justice and equality.

Why negative peace is better than war:

Negative peace is viewed as a better option than violence primarily because it represents the lack of direct physical harm, such as war or active conflict. Several reasons support the preference for negative peace:

Avoidance of Direct Harm: Negative peace indicates a condition where individuals are not directly exposed to physical harm or the destructive consequences associated with war. This absence of direct violence serves to protect lives, minimize casualties, and prevent the physical and emotional trauma linked to armed conflicts.

Potential for Stability: In a state of negative peace, there is typically a temporary calm or ceasefire, creating an opportunity for stability. While it may not tackle the underlying causes of conflict, negative peace provides a period for communities and nations to regroup, recover, and engage in diplomatic efforts to address fundamental issues.

However, it is essential to recognize that negative peace falls short of being fully peaceful because it solely deals with the lack of direct physical violence. The reference to cultural and structural violence underscores that societal issues, inequalities, and injustices may persist even during periods of negative peace.

Galtung's perspective introduces the idea that although negative peace is a preferable alternative to the violence of war, it lacks the capacity to achieve genuine peace. The absence of positive peace, which involves addressing root causes, fostering reconciliation, and promoting societal well-being, implies that negative peace may not lead to a comprehensive and enduring resolution of conflicts.

Negative Peace (Inner world)

Cultivating inner negative peace, which involves addressing internal conflicts and attaining a state of inner calm, is crucial in the contexts of individual conflict resolution, inner personal harmony, and family conflict avoidance for various reasons:

Facilitating Effective Communication and Resolution: In individual conflict resolution, possessing inner negative peace empowers individuals to approach disagreements with a clear and composed mindset. This mental state facilitates effective communication, active listening, and the ability to find compromises without resorting to aggression. Inner peace is instrumental in fostering a constructive conflict resolution process.

Enhancing Emotional Well-being and Personal Harmony: In the pursuit of inner personal harmony, the development of inner negative peace through practices like meditation and mindfulness aids individuals in managing their emotions. This emotional stability contributes to reduced stress, improved self-regulation, and an overall sense of well-being. Inner peace forms the basis for personal harmony and a well-balanced emotional state.

Contributing to Healthy Family Dynamics: In the context of family conflict avoidance, inner negative peace assumes a pivotal role. Family members who nurture inner peace are more likely to handle disagreements calmly, steering clear of unnecessary confrontations. By practicing open communication and seeking compromise, individuals within the family actively work towards maintaining a peaceful and harmonious domestic environment. Achieving inner negative peace is imperative as it serves as a catalyst for effective communication, emotional well-being, and the promotion of positive interpersonal dynamics. It provides the internal strength necessary to navigate conflicts, contribute to personal harmony, and foster a tranquil atmosphere within the family.

Negative Peace (Inner world)

Negative peace, viewed externally, encompasses various situations where measures are taken to halt hostilities without necessarily addressing the fundamental causes of conflicts. Here are different examples:

Ceasefires in Interstate Conflict:

Definition: Temporary halting of hostilities between nations without resolving the underlying causes of the conflict.

Example: Two warring nations agree to a ceasefire, putting a temporary end to military operations but without a comprehensive resolution of political or territorial disputes.

Border Conflict Management:

Definition: Implementing measures to prevent violence or escalation of disputes over borders or territories.

Example: Neighboring countries establish protocols and engage in diplomatic efforts to manage border issues, aiming to prevent violent confrontations.

Community Mediation:

Definition: Resolving disputes within a community through dialogue and mediation to prevent them from escalating into violence.

Example: Community leaders or mediators facilitate discussions to address local conflicts and tensions, aiming to avoid physical confrontations.

Ceasefire Negotiators:

Role: Diplomats and negotiators involved in brokering ceasefires between conflicting parties.

Focus: Primarily aimed at stopping immediate violence and creating a period of calm, reflecting a state of negative peace.

Peacekeepers:

Role: United Nations peacekeeping missions and international peacekeeping forces.

Focus: Aimed at maintaining or restoring peace by separating conflicting parties, with a primary goal of preventing direct violence rather than addressing deeper societal issues.

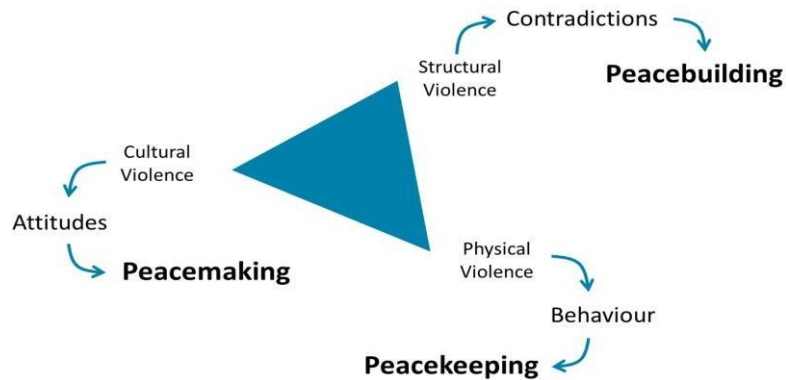
Security and Military Officials:

Role: Military and security officials in certain contexts.

Focus: Advocating for negative peace as a means of restoring order and preventing active conflict. Their primary concern is often to establish stability and security without necessarily delving into the root causes of the conflict.

Negative peace, when viewed externally, involves various strategies and interventions to halt violence temporarily, with a primary emphasis on immediate stability rather than addressing the deeper issues that fuel conflicts.

Approaches to Peace



The three approaches to peace are often distinguished by their objectives and methods

Peacekeeping:

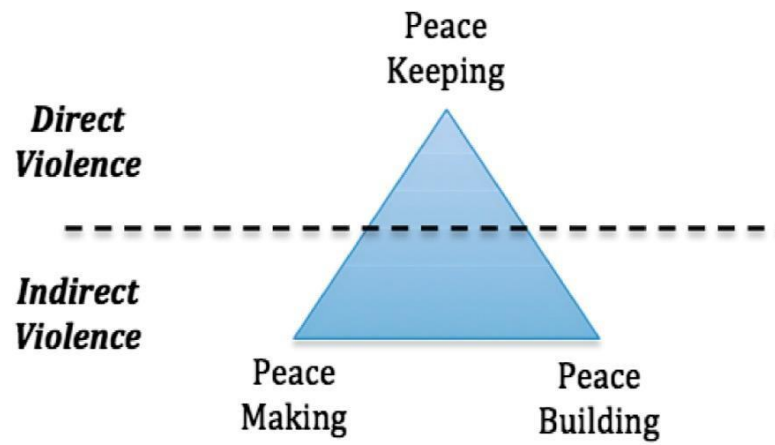
Peacekeeping is a method employed to maintain or restore peace in areas affected by conflict or potential conflict. It involves the deployment of a neutral third-party military or civilian force to monitor and separate conflicting parties, supervise ceasefires, and support the implementation of peace agreements. The primary objective of peacekeeping is to create a stable and secure environment by preventing the resumption of hostilities and facilitating the transition to a sustainable peace.

Peacemaking:

Peacemaking involves diplomatic efforts and negotiations aimed at bringing conflicting parties to the negotiation table and facilitating the resolution of the underlying issues that caused the conflict. The objective of peacemaking is to address the root causes of the conflict, find common ground among opposing parties, and broker agreements or treaties that lead to a cessation of hostilities.

Peacebuilding:

Peacebuilding is a comprehensive, long-term process that focuses on addressing the underlying structural and societal issues that contribute to conflict. It involves initiatives to strengthen governance, promote economic development, foster social cohesion, and establish institutions that support a sustainable peace. The goal of peacebuilding is to create the conditions for lasting peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and building a resilient and inclusive society.



Peacekeeping involves the immediate intervention to prevent violence, peacemaking focuses on diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts, and peacebuilding is a long-term process that addresses the root causes of conflict to establish a foundation for enduring peace.

Positive Peace

Positive peace
means

- Absence of the **actual violence** and absence of the **potential violence**
- +
- Absence of **Indirect Violence**
- Absence of **Structural Violence**
- +
- **Presence** of Justice
- Creating opportunities of wellness
- Creating the condition of Development

Positive peace signifies a state marked by the nonexistence of both actual and potential violence, along with the absence of indirect and structural violence. It surpasses simply lacking conflict and violence, embracing the inclusion of numerous positive elements:

Absence of Indirect Violence: Positive peace involves not just the absence of direct physical violence but also the elimination of indirect forms of harm or aggression. This encompasses addressing issues like discrimination, social inequalities, and other non- physical forms of harm.

Absence of Structural Violence: The objective of positive peace is to eliminate structural violence, encompassing systemic injustices and inequalities ingrained in social, economic, and political structures. Achieving positive peace necessitates addressing and dismantling these foundational structural issues.

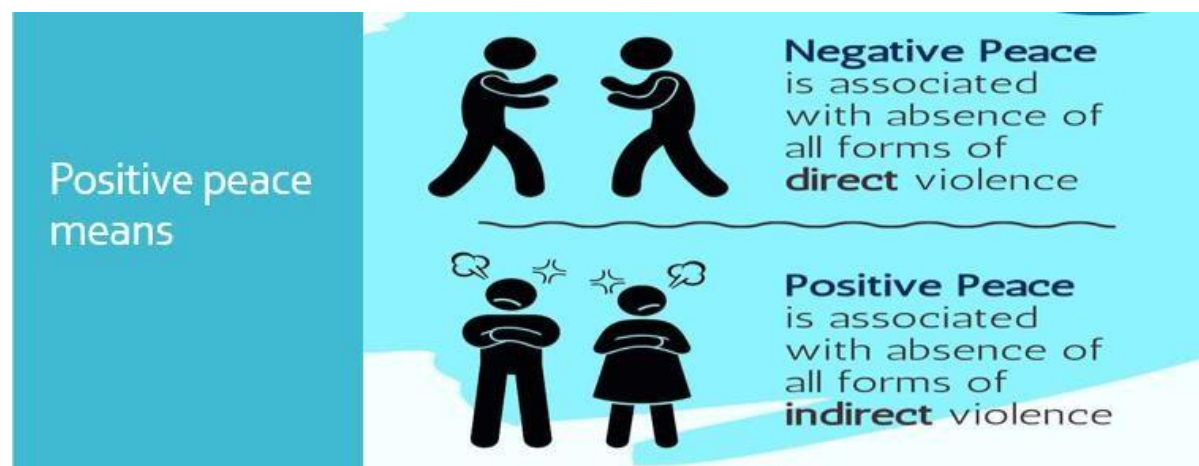
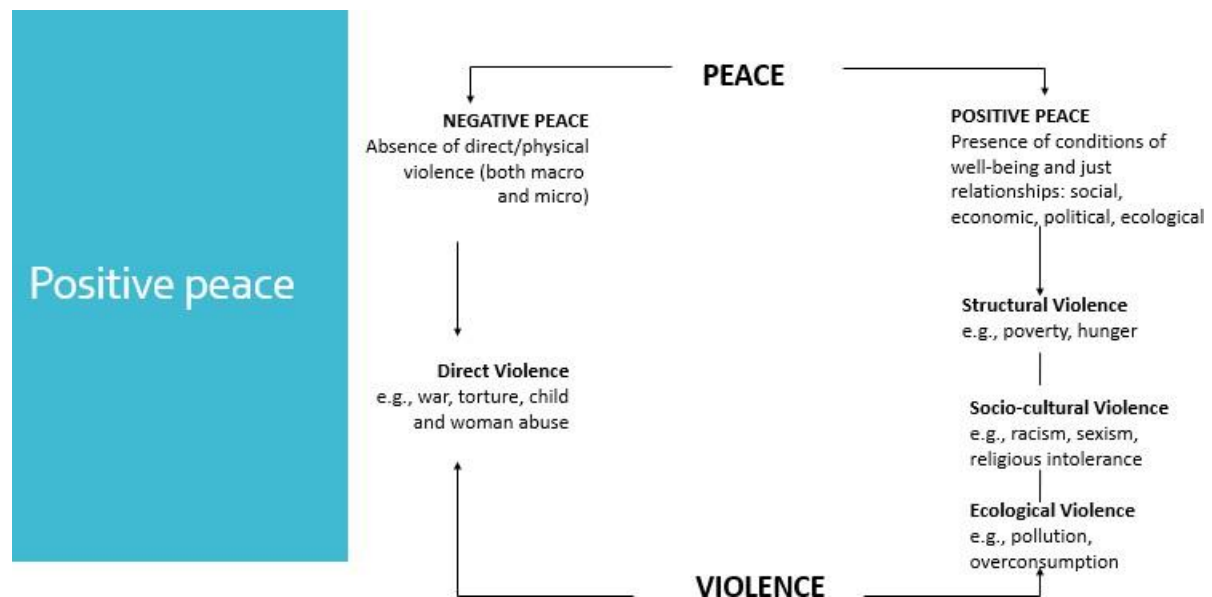
Presence of Justice: Positive peace entails establishing and promoting justice within societal structures. This includes fair and equitable legal systems, social justice, and safeguarding human rights for all individuals.

Creating Opportunities for Wellness: Beyond merely lacking violence, positive peace concentrates on establishing conditions that enhance the overall well-being of individuals and communities. This involves fostering mental and physical health, ensuring access to healthcare, and promoting a sense of security.

Creating the Conditions for Development: Positive peace underscores the importance of conditions supporting sustainable development. This encompasses addressing economic disparities, fostering education, and creating opportunities for social and economic progress.

In essence, positive peace is a comprehensive concept extending beyond the absence of conflict. It involves a society's proactive efforts to tackle underlying issues, advocate for justice, and establish conditions contributing to the overall well-being and development of its members.

Why Positive Peace



Positive peace actively works to eliminate direct, structural, and cultural violence using a thorough and forward-thinking approach. Here's a simplified version:

Ending Direct Violence:

Preventing Conflicts: Positive peace targets the root causes of disputes to prevent direct violence. It emphasizes talking things out, diplomatic efforts, and mediation to resolve issues before they turn into violence.

Social Justice Promotion: By championing social justice, positive peace tackles inequalities that often trigger direct violence. Its goal is to create a society where everyone has equal rights and opportunities.

Building Communities: Positive peace encourages building supportive and connected communities. This sense of togetherness helps prevent interpersonal violence.

Ending Structural Violence:

Promoting Economic Development: Positive peace focuses on sustainable economic development to reduce structural inequalities. Addressing problems like poverty and unequal resource distribution helps dismantle the conditions leading to violence.

Reforming Institutions: Positive peace calls for the overhaul of institutions to ensure fairness and equal representation. This includes legal systems, education, and governance, eradicating discriminatory practices.

Empowering through Education: By empowering marginalized groups and providing education, positive peace aims to break down barriers contributing to structural violence. Education fosters understanding and tolerance, creating a fairer society.

Ending Cultural Violence:

Celebrating Diversity: Positive peace supports celebrating diversity and including different cultures. By fostering understanding and respect, it fights against cultural violence rooted in discrimination.

Encouraging Cultural Exchange: Positive peace promotes programs facilitating dialogue and appreciation of diverse perspectives. These initiatives break down stereotypes and prejudices contributing to cultural violence.

Promoting Tolerance: Through education and awareness, positive peace encourages tolerance and acceptance of various cultural backgrounds. This helps counter cultural violence by creating an atmosphere of respect and understanding.

Types of Violence



Peace science explores these three key conceptualizations: the absence of violence, a state of harmony, and the capacity to handle conflicts non-violently. Each perspective offers valuable insights into understanding and promoting peace in various contexts.

"Peace as the negation of violence" embodies a perspective that defines peace through the absence or reduction of diverse forms of violence in social interactions. The concept recognizes the relative nature of peace, understanding that violence manifests in various forms and social contexts. For instance, a ceasefire in armed conflict signifies one type of peace, while the reduction of animosity between individuals or within society represents another. This conceptualization underscores a dynamic relationship between peace and violence, positing that peace naturally grows as instances of violence diminish, whether in armed conflicts or interpersonal relationships. Moreover, it advocates for an inclusive understanding of violence, encompassing physical, emotional, and societal dimensions. Recognizing this complexity, the concept emphasizes the importance of addressing diverse manifestations of violence to achieve genuine and comprehensive peace.

What is Violence:

Violence, as defined by peace researcher Johan Galtung, who is recognized as the father of peace science, is considered the opposite of peace. Drawing inspiration from the field of medicine for conceptualization, Galtung likens violence to disease in comparison to health. In his framework, he asserts that war is not the antithesis of peace; rather, violence, akin to disease opposing health, serves as its opposite. Galtung's definition emphasizes the diverse nature of violence, drawing a parallel to the multitude of diseases that exist. This perspective suggests that, just as various illnesses manifest in distinct ways, different forms of violence can emerge across various contexts, underlining the need for a nuanced understanding when addressing and preventing violence in the pursuit of peace.

Why to learn Violence?

Learning about violence is crucial in today's context, especially for children who are often surrounded by it. The reasons to understand and address violence include:

Awareness and Prevention:

Learning about violence raises awareness of its presence in various forms. Awareness is the first step toward prevention, helping children recognize and avoid potentially harmful situations.

Empowerment:

Education about violence empowers children to make informed choices. Understanding the consequences of aggressive behavior, both as victims and potential aggressors, equips them with the tools to navigate conflicts more effectively.

Media Literacy:

Given the influence of media, particularly television and the internet, on children, learning about violence enhances media literacy. It enables them to critically analyze and discern between fictional portrayals and real-life implications.

Critical Thinking:

Exposure to violent content in computer games or witnessing family fights can shape children's thinking. Learning about violence encourages critical thinking, allowing them to question, analyze, and form independent perspectives on aggression.

Bullying Prevention:

Many children experience bullying, whether physically or mentally. Learning about violence provides strategies to recognize, report, and prevent bullying, fostering a safer and more inclusive school environment.

Social and Emotional Development:

Addressing violence contributes to the social and emotional development of children. They learn empathy, conflict resolution, and effective communication, promoting healthier interpersonal relationships.

Crisis Management:

Unfortunately, some children witness violence within their families. Education on violence equips them with coping mechanisms and resources to seek help in such situations.

By learning about violence, children can develop the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complex landscape they may encounter, promoting a safer and more understanding society.

Three Types of Violence

Johan Galtung's conceptualization: violence is about preventing human beings from achieving their physical and mental potential.

- Three types of violence
 - direct or personal violence
 - structural violence
 - cultural violence



What is direct violence and Why intention is important:

Direct violence is commonly understood as actions that violate basic needs through the intentional use of physical or psychological power. This type of violence encompasses a range of behaviors, from individual acts such as crime, murder, and assault to large-scale violence like wars. It is crucial to differentiate between two aspects related to intentionality in direct violence:

Unintended Consequences:

In some cases, negative consequences may result from actions that were not intended by the perpetrator. For example, a parent shaking a baby forcefully to stop it from crying might not have intended the resulting brain damage. In these situations, harm occurs, but it was not the intended outcome.

Intention without Recognition of Violence:

In other instances, the consequences were indeed intended, but the perpetrators may not recognize their behavior as violent. For instance, the disciplinary use of physical punishment may be intended to cause harm, but in certain educational traditions, it may not be considered as violence.

Understanding the intention behind direct violence is essential for several reasons:

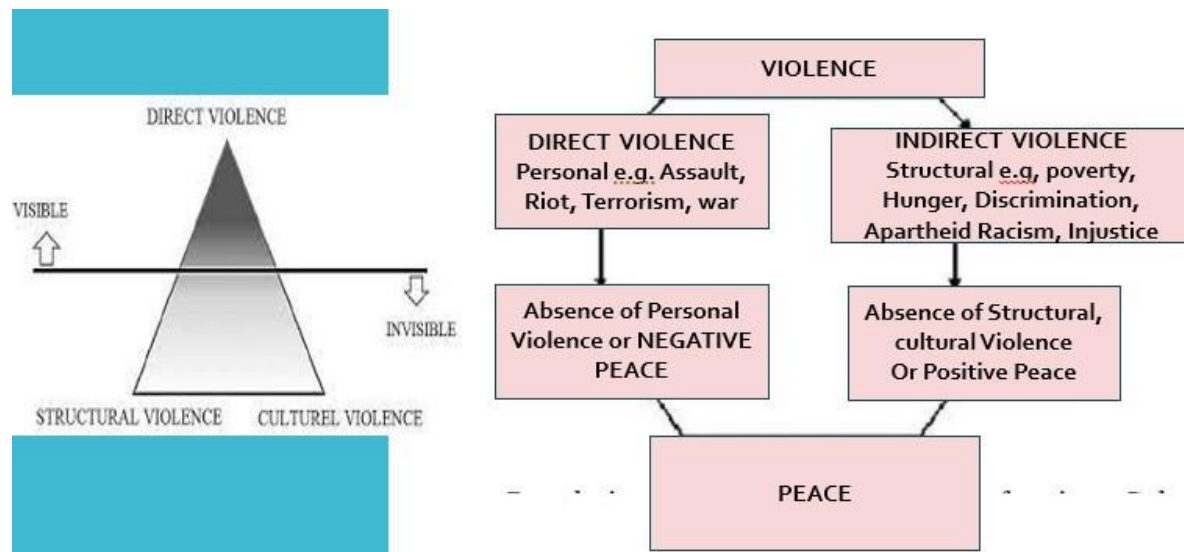
Legal and Ethical Implications: Intent can have significant legal and ethical implications in determining culpability and appropriate consequences for the perpetrator.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Recognizing the intentionality behind violent actions helps in developing targeted prevention and intervention strategies to address the root causes of such behavior.

Educational and Awareness Efforts: By understanding the complexities of intention in violence, educational and awareness programs can be designed to promote alternatives and reshape societal norms.

In essence, intentionality adds layers of complexity to the understanding of direct violence, influencing both its perception and the strategies employed to prevent and address it.

Direct and Indirect Violence



Direct Violence:

Definition: Direct violence is the intentional use of physical or psychological force to harm individuals. It's the most immediate and recognizable form of violence.

Characteristics:

Immediacy: The harm is immediate and visible, often resulting from intentional actions.

Visibility: It can be observed directly, and the consequences are apparent.

Scope: Direct violence can occur at individual levels, such as interpersonal conflicts, or on a larger scale, including armed conflicts and wars.

Examples: Physical assault, homicide, verbal abuse, bullying, and acts of war are instances of direct violence.

Indirect Violence:

Definition: Indirect violence refers to harm resulting from systemic, societal, or structural factors. It's not necessarily the outcome of direct, intentional actions but is embedded in broader circumstances.

Characteristics:

Indirectness: The harm often doesn't result immediately from intentional actions but arises from underlying structures or conditions.

Systemic: Indirect violence is systemic and can be perpetuated by societal norms, policies, or economic structures.

Consequences: It can manifest as unequal access to resources, discrimination, or limited opportunities, impacting individuals or communities.

Examples: Discriminatory policies, economic disparities, unequal access to education or healthcare, and systemic inequalities are instances of indirect violence.

Direct and Indirect Violence Differences:

Causation:

Direct violence: Results from intentional actions.

Indirect violence: Arises from systemic or structural factors, not necessarily intentional actions.

Immediacy:

Direct violence: Immediate and visible consequences.

Indirect violence: Indirect and often delayed consequences.

Observability:

Direct violence: Observable and apparent.

Indirect violence: Indirect and may not be immediately noticeable.

Scale:

Direct violence: Can occur at individual or collective levels.

Indirect violence: Systemic and can affect larger societal structures.

Understanding these differences is vital for developing effective strategies to prevent and address both forms of violence.

Structural Violence

What is Structure?

Status:

A socially defined position within a group or society, encompassing one or more roles.

Components: Involves the position an individual holds in a social system based on factors like age, sex, qualifications, economic power, and education.

Rights and Duties:

The entitlements and responsibilities associated with a particular status.

Explanation: Individuals occupying a specific status have inherent rights and corresponding duties within a social structure.

Role:

The expected behavior associated with someone occupying a particular status.

Explanation: Each status comes with a set of roles, outlining the behaviors and expectations linked to that social position.

In essence, the term "structure" in this context refers to the organized framework of social positions (statuses), their associated rights and duties, and the expected behaviors (roles) that individuals fulfill within a group or society.

What is Social Structure?

Social structure refers to the organized patterns of social relationships, institutions, statuses, and roles that collectively form the framework of a society or a group. It establishes the arrangement of individuals within a community, outlining their positions, interactions, and the expectations associated with those positions.

What is Structural Violence?

The concept of 'structural violence,' introduced by Johan Galtung in his 1969 essay "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," refers to a form of societal harm or injustice that is embedded in the structures and institutions of a society. Unlike direct violence, which involves explicit acts of harm or aggression, structural violence operates more subtly through systemic and institutional mechanisms, resulting in unequal access to resources, opportunities, and basic needs.

Structural violence is injustice and exploitation built into a social system that generates wealth for the few and poverty for the many, stunting everyone's ability to develop their full humanity.

By privileging some classes, ethnicities, genders, and nationalities over others, it institutionalizes unequal opportunities for education, resources, and respect.

Structural violence forms the very basis of capitalism, patriarchy, and any dominator system (Hathaway,2013)

Why Study Structural Violence?

Studying structural violence is a crucial component in the pursuit of sustainable peace and conflict resolution. This is underscored by several key factors. Firstly, understanding structural violence unveils the root causes of conflicts, revealing deep-seated inequalities ingrained in social, economic, and political structures. This knowledge is instrumental in formulating effective and enduring solutions.

Secondly, awareness of structural violence enables targeted interventions, steering efforts away from merely addressing conflict symptoms toward resolving underlying systemic issues. This approach promotes the development of more sustainable peacebuilding strategies.

Thirdly, the identification of structural violence empowers individuals and groups to advocate for social justice. By challenging discriminatory structures, communities actively contribute to creating fair and inclusive societies, fostering long-term peace. Moreover, the ability to recognize structural violence aids in conflict prevention. Early mitigation of systemic issues helps societies create stable environments, reducing the conditions that give rise to violence. Furthermore, policymakers armed with insights into structural violence can formulate equitable policies that address disparities and promote equality, aligning governance structures with the goal of peace. The study of structural violence also facilitates community empowerment, as affected communities gain awareness and actively engage in advocating for their rights, fostering positive change.

Lastly, understanding the humanitarian impact of structural violence allows organizations to tailor interventions, providing more effective assistance to those in need. Overall, addressing structural violence is indispensable for achieving long-term stability and building the foundation for enduring peace.

Characteristic of Structural violence

Structural violence exhibits distinct features that differentiate it from direct forms of violence, contributing to its unique nature and impact on individuals and communities:

1. Indirect Nature:

Structural violence represents a form of indirect harm, where the inflicted damage does not result from immediate, intentional actions but is instead deeply rooted in broader systemic conditions.

2. Depersonalized Perpetrator:

Unlike direct violence, structural violence lacks a clearly identifiable perpetrator. Pinpointing specific individuals responsible for the harm becomes challenging as it is woven into the fabric of systemic structures.

3. Inherent in Power Structures:

Structural violence is ingrained within the structures of power in a society. It permeates social, economic, and political systems, making it pervasive and resistant to easy eradication.

4. Unequal Access to Opportunities:

A crucial characteristic of structural violence is the uneven distribution of opportunities. This disparity extends across various aspects of life, such as education, healthcare, and employment, creating systemic disadvantages for specific groups.

5. Invisibility and Normalization:

Operating covertly, structural violence becomes normalized and routinized within societal structures. It seamlessly integrates into everyday life, posing challenges for individuals to recognize and confront the deeply embedded injustices.

Understanding these features is vital for the identification and mitigation of structural violence, necessitating focused efforts to dismantle systemic inequalities and foster a society that is more just and equitable.

Structural violence takes on various manifestations deeply ingrained in societal frameworks. Below is a concise overview of structural violence in specific categories:

Forms of Structural Violence

Caste:

Structural violence rooted in caste involves the systemic discrimination and oppression of individuals based on their social caste. This inequality is deeply embedded in social, economic, and political structures, perpetuating disparities and constraining opportunities for specific caste groups.

Class:

Class-based structural violence pertains to inequities in opportunities, resources, and privileges linked to socioeconomic class. Systemic disadvantages for individuals in lower socioeconomic classes arise from the unequal distribution of wealth, education, and employment opportunities.

Gender:

Structural violence tied to gender encompasses systemic inequalities and discrimination faced by individuals based on their gender identity. Unequal access to education, employment, healthcare, and the perpetuation of gender norms marginalize specific genders.

Racism:

Racism as structural violence entails systemic discrimination and prejudice rooted in race or ethnicity. Deeply ingrained in social institutions, racism leads to disparities in education, employment, healthcare, and overall opportunities for marginalized racial or ethnic groups.

Hunger:

Structural violence related to hunger is discernible in the uneven distribution of resources, including access to food. Factors such as socioeconomic conditions, political policies, and systemic inequalities contribute to food insecurity and hunger in certain populations.

Poverty:

Poverty as structural violence refers to the systematic disadvantages faced by individuals and communities due to economic inequalities. Limited access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities are common expressions of poverty as a form of structural violence.

Recognizing these forms of structural violence is imperative for crafting precise interventions that disassemble systemic injustices and foster a more just and inclusive society.

Cultural Violence



Cultural
Violence
means

- Social psychologists focus on **social rules and roles**, how groups affects attitudes and behaviour, why people obey authority, and how each of us is affected by other people
- Cultural psychologists examine how **cultural rules and values** – both explicit and implicit – **affect people's development, behaviour and feelings**

Impact of Cultural Violence:

The influence of cultural violence, as suggested by Galtung, is profound and diverse. Primarily, it plays a crucial role in reshaping the ethical foundations of societies, shaping their interpretation of structural or direct violent acts. Galtung argues that cultural violence serves as a catalyst in altering the ethical character of a society, essentially normalizing or justifying actions that might be considered morally objectionable in a different context.

Much like structural violence, cultural violence operates covertly, integrating deeply into societal norms and values. This hidden nature arises from its seamless assimilation into the cultural framework, making it difficult for individuals to identify and question these ingrained biases and justifications. In particular, cultural violence perpetuates biased ideologies such as racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice. These ideologies function as tools to rationalize violent acts, providing a distorted moral structure that legitimizes or justifies harmful actions against specific groups or individuals.

Essentially, the impact of cultural violence surpasses explicit acts of harm, influencing the collective conscience of a society and molding its acceptance or endorsement of violence as a normalized or justified occurrence.

Why study cultural violence

- When violence and human suffering are excluded from education it serves to legitimize it and **“makes it difficult to develop an understanding of the causes of violence...”**
- **Preventing the study of violence** and its causes is also considered **a form of cultural violence**.
- When people are not able to question without fear or think freely it makes it **extremely difficult for them to be objective and stand against injustices**

Studying cultural violence is crucial based on the provided text for several significant reasons:

Legitimization of Violence: Excluding violence and its human consequences from education contributes to legitimizing it. Understanding the causes of violence is essential for addressing and preventing it. Therefore, studying cultural violence helps counter its normalization and raises awareness about its detrimental impacts.

Understanding Root Causes: The text suggests that preventing the study of violence and its causes is a form of cultural violence. By studying cultural violence, individuals gain insights into the root causes and underlying factors that contribute to violence. This understanding is fundamental to developing effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

Promoting Free Thought: The text highlights that when people cannot question or think freely without fear, it becomes challenging for them to be objective and stand against injustices. Studying cultural violence facilitates an environment where individuals can critically analyze societal norms, values, and biases, fostering free thought and empowering them to challenge cultural elements that perpetuate violence.

Studying cultural violence is essential for dismantling its influence, understanding its root causes, and promoting an environment where individuals can think freely and objectively stand against injustices.

Cultural violence is perpetuated through various tools ingrained in societal structures, each playing a distinct role:

Tools of cultural violence

1. Cultural Norms:

Cultural norms, representing prevalent societal beliefs, shape acceptable behavior. When these norms endorse discrimination, they normalize prejudiced attitudes and actions, contributing to a culture of inequality.

2. Stereotypes and Prejudices:

Fixed and oversimplified ideas about certain groups, stereotypes and prejudices foster biased perceptions and discriminatory behavior. They act as mental shortcuts, dehumanizing individuals based on characteristics and perpetuating cultural violence.

3. Racist or Sexist Language:

Language, a powerful tool, can reinforce or challenge cultural norms. The use of racist or sexist language reflects and reinforces biased beliefs, contributing to the persistence of discriminatory attitudes within a culture.

4. Language-Based Discrimination:

Targeting individuals based on language, this form of discrimination reinforces social hierarchies and power imbalances. It leads to exclusionary practices, perpetuating cultural violence.

Recognizing and addressing these tools is crucial in challenging and dismantling cultural violence, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Relationship between Cultural Violence & Structural Violence

The connection between cultural violence and structural violence is complex and intertwined, with several key aspects:

1. Reinforcement Mechanism:

Cultural violence can strengthen and legitimize structural violence. Biased cultural beliefs may be used to justify unfair policies and practices in societal institutions, creating a loop that supports discrimination.

Example: When cultural narratives perpetuate stereotypes about a particular group, institutions may use these stereotypes to justify discriminatory practices against that group.

2. Normalization of Inequality:

Cultural violence contributes to making discriminatory beliefs and practices seem normal. This normalization supports and justifies structural violence by embedding biased attitudes into societal norms.

Example: If cultural norms accept gender-based discrimination, it may normalize unequal treatment of women in various social and institutional settings.

3. Resistance and Change:

Changes in cultural norms and attitudes can challenge structural violence. Conversely, changes in structural policies can influence cultural perceptions over time, showing how they interact and influence each other.

Example: Increased awareness about racial equality in society may lead to changes in laws and policies, challenging structural racism.

4. Complex Interaction:

Cultural and structural violence interact dynamically. Biased cultural beliefs may shape structures that perpetuate harm, while structural violence reinforces cultural norms, creating a complex interplay.

Example: Discriminatory cultural beliefs about ethnic groups may influence housing policies that contribute to residential segregation.

5. Intersectionality:

Cultural and structural violence intersect with other forms of violence, such as direct violence. This intersectionality creates intricate webs of oppression, where different types of violence reinforce each other.

Example: Discrimination based on both race and socioeconomic status may lead to disparities in access to education, health, and job opportunities, illustrating the interconnectedness of cultural and structural violence

VEDAS

PART A: History of Vedas

Introduction

The classical Indian tradition and Hinduism are rooted in the ancient scriptures called the Vedas. The Sāṅskrit root of the Veda is 'vid' which means knowledge. They are the earliest scriptural texts handed down to the generations of humankind containing the divine truths. The Vedas are said to be apocryphal (apauruṣeya) अपौरुषेय for no human agency is involved in their creation. The Vedas are also known as Shruti (literally meaning hearing) for they belong to oral tradition. The great sages and seers preserved them in their memory and transmitted the Vedic knowledge only to those who deserved to receive them. Thus there were no written compilations in the beginning. But there arose a need to compile them in a written form. This task was undertaken by the sage named Krishna dwaipayana Vyasa. He codified the single Vedic compendium into four Vedas: - Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. This is the reason why he is also called Veda Vyasa. In memory of this great sage the Hindus celebrate Guru Purnima On his birth day, however, it is stated in the Vishnu Purana that Vyāsa was assisted by four of his disciples in the process of the compilation of the Vedas. Paila assisted him to compile Rigveda, Vaisampayana, the Yajurveda, Jaimini, the Samaveda, and Sumantu, the Atharvaveda.



The Structure of the Vedas

Each Veda is divided into two parts: karma kanda and jnyan kanda. The former deals with the Samhitas (collections of Mantras) and the Brahmanas as and the latter with the Āranyakas and the Upanishdas. In other words, this classification is needed to show the distinction between action and knowledge. Those who are interested in material gains follow the former portion and those who are interested in acquiring knowledge follow the latter. Mantras are hymns addressed to eulogize gods or goddesses for some material favor. The collection of such Mantras is called Samhita. There are four **Samhitas**: Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva. These Samhitas are compiled for the smooth and unhindered performance of the Vedic rituals or sacrifices (yajnya). But yajnya always means a sacrificial celebration. A Vedic sacrifice requires four chief priests. They are: Hota, one who recites hymns in praise of gods and

goddesses to invoke their presence and participation in the yajnya, Udgātā, one who sings the hymns in sweet and appealing musical tones to please the gods and goddesses,

Adhvaryu, one who performs the yajnya in accordance with the strict ritualistic code and gives offerings to the gods, and Brahma, one who supervises the entire proceedings of the yajnya as he is well-versed in all the four Vedas. These Vedic sacrifices are intended to satisfy the needs of the above mentioned four priests who represent the four Samhitas respectively. Sometimes, we also come across the view that originally the Vedas were only three in number (Veda - trayi). But it is believed that the Atharvaveda was added to the list of three later on and it mainly deals with the secular aspects of human life. It is also held in traditional Hindu texts that Rig means verse, Sama means songs, and Yajuh means prose passage. Thus Samhita or Mantra portion of the Veda consists of hymnology addressed to the various gods and goddesses. Rishis Samhita is the oldest and the most important of all the Samhitas. The Vedic Rishis are not the authors of the Vedas, but only the seers of the Mantras. The Brahman, unlike Mantras, is in prose. They elaborate the complicated ritualism of the Vedas by emphasizing on the rules and regulations laid down for the performance of yajnya. The expression 'Brahman' is originally derived from the word 'Brahman' which means a prayer. There is very little philosophy in these portions. The appendages to these Brahmanas are called Aranyakas. They are called so because they are composed in the forests amidst calmness. These texts are mark of transition from ritualistic portion of the Vedas to their knowledge (philosophical) portion. Here in this portion we find mystic interpretation of the Vedic sacrifices. The concluding portion of the Vedas is called Upanishads. They are highly philosophical in their purport and regarded as the cream of the Vedic philosophy. This is the reason why Upanishad is called 'Vedanta'.

Philosophy in the Vedas

Hardly one finds any philosophical thought in the preUpanishadic thought. But one cannot ignore the seeds of the important philosophical truths found there. There is a gradual development of philosophical thought from the Mantras to the Brahman as to the Aranyakas to the Upanishad.

There is a natural transition from naturalistic and anthropomorphic polytheism through transcendent monotheism to immanent monism in the preUpanishadic thought. The personified natural forces changed into real gods and later on became mere forms of mere forms of one personal and transcendental God, who is the custodian of 'Cosmic and Moral order'. This personal and transcendental God Himself passed into immanent Purusha. Later on the Upanishads developed this immanent and transcendent Purusha into all-pervading Brahman/Atman. The Mantra portion represents the religion of 'Nature' of the poets, the Brahman a portion ritualism and the religion of 'Law' of the priests, the Upanishdic portion the religion of 'Spirit' of the philosophers. The western interpretation of the Vedas does not go well with the spirit of the Vedas. According to such interpretations, the Vedic seers were inspired by the primitive natural forces. But it is the other way round. The Vedas are authorless and eternal. The Vedic seers with their intellect and spiritual powers came face to face with the Reality and this mystic experience or direct intuitive spiritual insight overflow in the literature as the Vedic hymns. The important feature of the Vedic hymns is the same spiritual monism, the same immanent conception of the identity-in-difference that which ultimately transcends

itself. Such a view is poetically explained in the Upanishad. All the gods are the manifestation of the same supreme God or principle. When gods are praised, in fact, it is the supreme God who is praised through His manifestations. However, one can only see monism throughout the Vedas.

Some of the descriptions reveal the true nature of the Real. For example, in the Rig-Veda it is mentioned “The One Real, the wise declare as many (ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti).” Further it is also said “Purusha is all this, all that was, and all that shall be (Purusha evedam sarvam yad bhutam yachcha bhavyam).” In fact, “The same ‘Real’ is worshipped as Uktha in the Rigveda, as Agni in the Yajuh and as Mahavrata in the Sama.” From the above references it is evident that the Vedas always referred to one single monistic principle as the supreme Reality. Although one cannot really distinguish between religion and philosophy in the Rigveda, the kind of questions that one confronts give an impression that both religious and philosophical concerns are embedded in the structuring of the Vedas. The following questions substantiate our view. What makes the wind blow? Why does the monsoon come? Who put the sun, giver of warmth and light, in the heavens? How it is that broad-bosomed earth brings forth these myriad life forms? These questions are highly philosophical although modern science may take credit to answer these questions. But, roughly 6000 years ago, these questions were the concern of philosophers. Further, there are also questions such as: What is beyond the gods? What, if any, is the relationship between actions and their consequences? What knowledge, if any, does man have of himself? Of course the questions How? Why? And with what? It may be appropriate with when applied to human creativity. But, when these questions are addressed to natural activity the natural forces (gods) in their personified form are brought into the picture.

3. Religion in the Vedas. Does one find religion in the Vedas? If at all there is one, it is none other than the Vedic dharma.

The personification of natural forces (gods) to a great extent answers the questions without entering into the world of mystery. The god of fire (Agni) has certain natural powers. Similar is the case with the god of wind (Vayu). Thus gods as natural forces are responsible for any natural activity. Thus vital questions of how and why are answered in terms of who. Then the people sought to control nature by offering prayers, sacrifices, and rituals for their benefit. Therefore, it is not a wonder why one finds so many hymns in the Vedas to propitiate gods and goddesses. Sometimes, it is viewed that not all the seers of the Rigveda intended religion as the way of understanding and controlling nature and humans. This is evident from the following passage from the Rigveda.

Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it? Whence was it born? And whence came this creation? The gods were born after this world’s creation: Then who can know from whence it has arisen? None know when his creation has arisen; and whether He has or has not produced it: He who surveys it in the highest heaven, He only knows, or perhaps even he may know not. The great seers were the seekers of wisdom not just knowledge. They went beyond the gods to the ultimate

Principle that rules even the gods. They came to know through their extraordinary powers that there is an immutable and eternal moral order that regulates the natural phenomena. It is popularly known as R̥ta. This is the moral principle that provides order and purpose to the

cosmic reality. Nothing takes place in the reality unless otherwise directed by the eternal moral order Rita. Perhaps religion came into the picture only when rituals and sacrifices are performed by humans in order to eulogize the gods for their mundane favors. But the questions how the gods controlled nature and how the humans could influence the gods resulted in a serious theological interpretation. But majority of these explanations are from the Brahmana portion of the Veda which highlight the details of religious worship, although occasionally they crossed the limits of the given answers in order to seek the efficacy of a ritual or sacrifice in terms of the primordial principles.

The following passage from the Satapatha Brahmana reveals it: verily, in the beginning this (universe) was the Brahman. It created the gods; and, having created the gods, it made them ascend these worlds: Agni (this terrestrial world), Vayu the air, and Surya the sky. Then the Brahman itself went up to the sphere beyond. Having gone up to the sphere beyond, it considered, "How can I descend again into these worlds?" It then descended again by means of these two, Form and Name, these (Name and Form) indeed are the two great forces of Brahman; and verily, he who knows these two great forces of Brahman becomes himself a great force. The above passage indicates that there is an attempt to explain the religions in terms of the philosophical. However, both these aspects are promiscuously mixed up with each other. Later on in the Aranyakas one finds a shift from ritualism to free intellectual inquiry into the nature of reality. Although the Aranyakas do not oppose the religious way they brought in meditation in the place of sacrifice. The meditation gradually led to free speculation and contemplation that permeated the Upanishads. One should remember that it is not all that easy to distinguish religion and philosophy in the Vedas. Coming to the hymns of the Rigveda, they are all in praise of the gods.

As stated earlier all these gods are personalities presiding over the diverse forces of nature or their very essence. Therefore, one cannot attribute any special characteristics to them like the Greek gods or the gods found in the Puranic literature. These Vedic gods may be different from those listed in the Purana as for they are the expressions of the powers of nature. Take for instance, the god of fire (Agni). He "lies concealed in the softer wood, as in a chamber, until, called forth by the rubbing in the early morning, he suddenly springs forth in gleaming brightness. The sacrifice takes and puts him on the wood. When the priests pour melted butter upon him, he leaps up crackling and neighing like a horse, he whom men love to see increasing like their own prosperity. Since these natural forces are treated as gods, the view that the Vedic people were polytheistic gained popularity. There is, in fact, neither polytheism nor monotheism rather it is a simple stage of belief. Unlike in the polytheistic faith, the Vedic gods do not preserve their proper places. They do shrink into insignificance or shine as supreme. On a definite occasion a particular god is eulogized as supreme in order to satisfy one's need. However, it is not to be interpreted that all other gods are less important or insignificant for the Vedic gods are not independent of all the rest. In other words, each god is standing out as highest when he comes to the mind of the suppliant. Of the Vedic gods six of them are most important. They are: Varuna, Indra, Agni, Soma, Rudra and Vishnu. The latter two are important because they are developed into full-fledged Gods by their respective sects as supreme Beings.

Varuna was regarded as the highest ethical creation as well as the great celestial Brahmana by the Vedic Hindus. Indra was worshipped as the god of victory being a warrior-king and was invoked very frequently as a god of storm. Agni and Soma were also given importance as terrestrial gods representing fire and plant respectively. Invariably both these gods were invoked during the rituals.

Agni as the fire consumes the sacrifice and as the priest he presents it to the gods above. In a way he is the mediator between the gods and humans. He is not only a priest who brings gods and humans together, but also the element who binds the three worlds. He is the sun in the heaven, lightening in the storm cloud, and used as fire by humans on the earth. His threefold birth corresponds to the threefold structure of the Universe. Soma is an indispensable plant used in the sacrifice. This plant is yellowish in color and is found in the mountains. The juice of this plant is filtered through a fine cloth. Since the juice is in liquid form it is likened to waters and streams. Soma is the Lord of streams and son of waters. Since the plant is yellow in colour it is likened to the lightening. Indra being the warrior god, he is depicted as manly of men. As a Vedic precursor Indra remained close to humans as their friend, brother, and their father and mother. He is both generous and quick to wrath. His favorites are not the priestly families as often mentioned in the Rigveda but the fighting men. His might is immeasurable and his generosity knows no bounds. If Varuna is the king by divine right, Indra is the king by right of conquest. One can also notice the signs of rivalry between these two gods in the Rigveda. Varuna is the Universal monarch whereas Indra is the monarch of his own making. Varuna abides by the law and truth as their guardian. In other words,

Varuna is the guardian of *Ruta* (ऋत), the 'cosmic order'. He possesses uncanny power (*maya*).

This is the reason why people must approach him with utmost fear and extreme circumspection. Rudra is another Vedic god who inspires terror. He kills and makes people alive, he wounds and he heals them. In the Vedas it is held that Rudra was not associated with other Vedic gods excepting with Maruts, also called Rudras, who are his sons. But there is another side of Rudra. He is not only the destroyer, but also a great physician with thousand remedies at his disposal. In the Rigveda it is mentioned that his hand is soothing and, healing and cool. His hand takes away all the ailments sent by other gods. Further the Rudra is developed as Rudra-Shiva in Atharvaveda he is given the title 'Pashupati' or the Lord of the cattle. It is in this form the devotees started worshipping him for they saw themselves as Rudra's cattle and the god is the lord of the cattle. Coming to Vishnu, like Shiva, he is a great God of classical Hinduism. Shiva appeared in the form of the Vedic Rudra. But, out of 1,017 hymns found in the Rigveda only six hymns are addressed to Lord Vishnu and three of them he shares with god Indra. From these hymns we come to know that he measures the earth, the sky and the beyond. Mortals can only traverse the first two and Vishnu alone knows the third and the highest. Thus he sets limits to the finite world.

To sum up, the Vedas are the revealed scriptures of the Hindus and they are of not human origin. Philosophy and religion are promiscuously mixed up in the Vedas. They contain eternal truths. They are also known as *Shruti* for the Vedic wisdom was orally transmitted to the deserving disciples by the great seers and sages. The Vedic gods were the personification of natural forces. The entire universe was controlled by the moral order called *Ruta* (ऋत). The

Vedic gods Indra, Varuna, Agni, Rudra and Vishnu were worshipped by the ancient Hindus. Thus one finds both religious and philosophical ideas in the Vedas. They may not be conspicuous but one has to look for them in the vast Vedic literature.

In Indian tradition there are fourteen or eighteen Vidyashtanas (abodes of knowledge/cognition).

Svara or accent:

Sanskrit language can be put under two headings - Vaidika and Laukika. There is Svara or accent in Sanskrit language. But during the course of time Svara lost its significance in Laukika (secular or non-Vedic) literature. But Svara plays an important role in Vedic literature. Any change of Svara would lead to change of meaning. There are mainly three Svaras, viz. Udātta, Anudātta and Svarita.

दुष्टः शब्दः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तिर्णिह स वाग्वज्रो यजानं महनस्ति
यर्ेन्द्रशतुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् ।।

Classification of Vedas:

Veda can be put under four headings - Mantra, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. The Mantra portion is called Samhita. Mantras are commending texts of different deities and literally mean - those, which protect if recited with concentration. Brahmanas comment on Mantras and explain the procedure of a rite. Both the above portions are useful for a person during Brahmacharya (celibacy) and Gārhāsthya (married life) - the first two Ashramas (stages of life) and also in the performance of different rites. The Aranyaka portion, which should be recited in a forest, as the name suggests, is useful for a person during the third Ashrama called Vanaprastha (living in a forest). Upanishads are useful during the fourth Ashrama called Samnyasya (giving up all Karmas such as Yaga etc. but still performing the Nityakarmas like Sandhyavandanam and Naimittikakarmas such as death ceremony of parents). One may directly go to Samnyasa from Brahmacharya.

Branches (shakhas) of Vedas:

Rigveda has got 21 branches but only two are available. Yajurveda has 9 branches. It is divided into two - Krishna Yajurveda and Shuklayajurveda. Four branches of Krishna Yajurveda and two branches of Shuklayajurveda are available. Sāmaveda has got 1000 branches of which only three are available. Atharvaveda has got nine branches of which only two are available.

1. Rigveda : 21 Branches
2. Yajurveda: 9 Branches
3. Samveda: 1000 Branches
4. Atharvaveda- 9 Branches (2 Available)



A Brief account of Vedas:

Rigveda:

‘Rik’ literally means a text of praise of a deity. Some Riks make a Sukta, some Suktas make a Maṇḍala. There are ten Maṇḍalas in Rigveda consisting of 1017 Sūktas and the total number of Riks is 10,472. Ayurveda is the Upaveda of Rigveda.

KrishnaYajurveda:

Yajus means ‘vakyam’ (sentence). Since the Yajus are found to be clustered for most of the part, it is called Samhita. The sentences are to be divided with the help of Purvamimamsa. In KṛṣṇayajusSamhita all the three kinds of texts, viz. Mantra (which praises the deity), Arthavāda (sentences of commendation and condemnation) and Brahmana (which explains the procedure) are seen in an amalgamated form and therefore the word ‘Krishn’ (literally ‘black’) is prefixed. Some Riks are supplied by Rigveda; the procedural details of Yāga (sacrifice) are stated in Krishayajurveda, which is also called Taittiriyaśamhita. There are seven Kandas, forty-four Prapāṭhakas (or Adhyayas) and 635 Anuvakas (or Prashnas) in Taittiriyaśamhita. Dhanurveda is the Upaveda of Krishayajurveda.

Shuklayajurveda:

Also called Shuklayajus samhita and it is useful in the performance of Yaga (sacrifice). In this Samhita there are Mantras and Arthavadas. Since the concepts are clear the term ‘Shukla’ (white) is prefixed. Yājnyavalkya was the disciple of Vaiśampāyana and learnt Yajurveda. There was some clash between them and Yajnyavalkya returned the Veda to his Guru, worshipped Aditya (Sun), got the Vidyā and the same is called Shuklayajurveda. Other sages, following the order of Guru, in the form of Tittiri birds took the Vidya, returned by Yajnyavalkya and therefore it is called Taittiriyaśmahita or Krishnayajurveda. Shuklayajurveda has got two

versions called Mādhyandinapāṭha and Kāṇvapāṭha but without much difference. Dhanurveda is an Upaveda of Shuklayajurveda.

Samaveda:

Most of the Mantras are borrowed from 8th and 9th Maṇḍalas of Rigveda; ‘Sama’ literally means ‘to sing’. If the Riks are assigned some music they would become Samas. SamaSamhita is divided into two parts - Purvarchikam and Uttararchikam. A group of Riks is called Arcikam. There are six Prapāṭhakas in Pūrvārcika whereas Uttarārcika has got nine Prapaṭhakas. Gandharvaveda is an Upaveda of SāmaSamhita.

Atharvaveda:

Atharvasamhita is divided into twenty Kandas. There are 736 Suktas and 5918 Mantras in this Samhita (Shaunakashakha). 1200 Mantras of this Samhita are borrowed from Rigveda. In this Samhita we come across a blend of prose and poetry. Atharva is the name of a Ṛṣi. Arthaveda / Arthashastra (polity) is an Upaveda of Atharvaveda.

General Points

‘Trayi’ is a term that is often used to refer to the combine of Rigveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda. In a Yāga, Rigveda is represented by Hota. Sāmaveda by Udgātā, Yajurveda by Adhvaryu and Atharvaveda by Brahma. In fact, Brahma, being the supervisor of Yaga, should know all the four Vedas. The first three Vedas produce only half of the Yaga that is in the form of speech whereas the rest in the form of mind is by Atharvaveda. Puruṣasūktam that is there in all five Vedas (Rigveda, KrishnaYajurveda, Shuklayajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda) clearly states that all the four Vedas were available at a single point of time - ṛcassāmāni jajnire chandamasi jajnire tasmāt yajustasmādajāyata. There are certain branches of Vedas named after Rishis - Kathaka, Kalapaka, Vashishtha etc. by which some scholars got confused and said that those Śākhās were authored by the respective sages. But the fact is that they are propagators / specialists of those Mantras and are called Mantradraṣṭāraḥ / Mantrakṛtaḥ etc. As has already been stated in the Introduction, Vedas are Apaurusheya (not written by human beings). They have emanated from Brahman.

At the end of every Pralaya (the great destruction) the Vedas also disappear. Then, after the new creation has started, the Rishis (sages) perform Tapas (an ascetic life) and perceive the Mantras and therefore the same are named after them - Vasishtham Sama etc. We come across dozens of such Rishis across all the Vedasamhitas. The Mantras in Samhitas are assigned to different deities such as Agni, Indra, Vishnu, Rudra, Varuṇa, Surya, Vayu, Soma, Brihaspati, Pṛthvī, Gāyatrī etc. Vedas are the origin of different Vedangas, Darshanas and Upavedas etc. Shruti, Anusarava, Trayi, Ammaya, Samamnaya, Chandas, Svādhyāya, Agama and Nigama are synonyms of Veda. Caranām is a name of Vedic text before it was divided into branches. Pratishakhyas is the name of Vedic grammar and there are five Pratishakhyas for five Vedas. Brihad devata is a treatise that explains the details of each Mantra and presently it is available for Rigveda only.

Summary

Among the 14/18 Vidhyashtanas, Vedas occupy the first place and out of 1130 branches only 12/13 are available. Vedas are Apauruseya and are the original source of all other Vidyas. At the end of each Pralaya all the Vedas disappear and the Rishis, with their Tapas, perceive / hear the Vedic Mantras and propagate them and therefore are called Mantrakrutah. The Mantras / Vedic texts perceived by Rishis are named after them - Kathaka, Kalapaka, Paippalada etc. Samaveda is a musical form of Rigveda. Mantrabrahman part deals with Karma (rite) whereas Upanishad deals with Dnyana.

PART B: Doctrines of Veda

Veda means a mass of knowledge and is considered as the most ancient literature known to humans. Unlike any other literature, the Vedic one is Apaurusheya (non-human), i.e. not authored by human beings. Uninterrupted tradition tells us that Veda had emanated from Brahma at the beginning of Creation. Since Creation repeats, Veda is considered as "anadi" (beginningless) and "ananta" (endless) and as such it is indestructible.

Veda can be divided into two major parts – the first one deals with Karma (rituals) and the second one with Jnana (cognition). A careful survey of Veda leads us to believe that apart from the above two goals, Veda also offers - guidelines to protect the Elements, purification of mind, harmony in the society, personality development etc.

The roots of Dharma can be traced to Veda

Until Vedavyasa, a sage, ventured to divide, there was a single mass of Veda. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda have emerged after the division. Originally Rigveda had had 21 branches; Yajurveda, 100 branches; Samaveda, 1000 branches; and Atharvaveda, 9 branches. Presently only 12 branches of all Vedas are available. Rigveda contains Riks (hymns) that praise the deity. Yajurveda consists of Yajus (sentences) that explain the performance of rituals. Samaveda is nothing but Rigveda associated with music (Samagana). Atharvaveda consists of a blend of prose and poetry. Apart from spiritual matters, Atharvaveda deals with matters of mundane importance such as health, polity etc. also.



Creation sprout from
desire.
~ Rig veda

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Dichotomy of Veda

Broadly Veda can be put under two headings – Mantrabhaga and Brahmanabhaga. The term "mantra" literally means, "the one that protects if recited with meditation". Mantras are used in Yajñas (sacrifices and rituals) and other Karmas (rites). Samhita is a synonym of Mantrabhāga. Brāhmaṇas explain the Mantras. Aranyakas and Upanishads are also included in Brahmanas. The Vedic tradition firmly stands on a base called Dharma, i.e. one can attain Mokṣa (by which the cycle of birth and death is arrested once and for all) only by following Dharma and one should see that both Artha and Kama are associated with Dharma. Dharma leads one to Svarga (heaven) and Moksha, whereas Adharma (non-dharma) would cause Naraka (hell).

Why are these scriptures important?

To learn about any cultural scriptures of that country is important. There is no Author of Vedas but Rishis are seer of Vedas that's why Rishis are not Author but Seers of Vedas. Experience of Rishis is very dynamic. Vedas are books of knowledge of the nature of reality. Veda is a device that provides non-mundane solutions for getting the desired things and averting the undesired ones. It must here be emphasised that on the doctrinal level the Vedas deal both with worldly life and the inner life of the Self. They teach how to conduct ourselves in such a manner as to create Atmic well-being. And their concern is not with the liberation of the individual alone; they speak about the ideals of social life and about the duties of the public. How the Brahmin ought to lead his life and how the king must rule his subjects and what ideals women are to follow: an answer to these-stated in the form of laws-is to be found in these scriptures. The Vedas indeed constitute the apex of our law-books.

Yaga and Yajnya (sacrifice / ritual)

Yaga and Yajnya both the terms are synonyms. They are formed through the verbal root "yaj" (to worship). There are a number of Yagas described in Veda, such as Darśapūrṇamāsa (performed during new moon day and full moon day). One desirous of Svarga (heaven) should perform this Yāga –darśapūrṇamāsābhyāṃ svargakāmo yajeta.

Yajnya means give and take, we can see in Yajnya, Yajman (host of Yajnya) offers his precious belongings for it, because Yajman or vedic people are expressing gratitude through this act, as we have seen in vedic period all deities belong to nature, they are nature god, and nature gives

everyone everything for free and Yajnya is medium by which we can give back to nature and express gratitude and also pray for the continuation of its offerings.

With this Yajnya system we can see that economy, social systems and also science had been developed that time, because to perform Yajnya one needs equipment of Yajnya, priest and other services too, for this Yajman (host) is depend upon all Varnas of society (i.e, for Yajnya equipment Yajman needs Carpenter, for Mantra chating Yajman needs Priest) and through this vedic economy got developed.

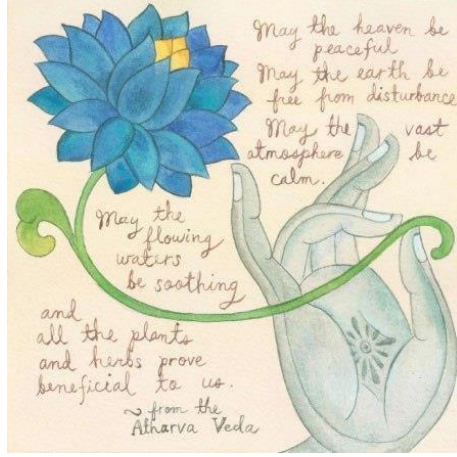
While performing Yajnya one was supposed to follow Muhurt (particular time), for that Vedic people were observing Timings of sun and moon, through this Astronomy got developed.

We can find Pythagoras theorem in Vedic Text. To perform Yajnya rituals, construction of YajnyaKunda (Vedi) is very important and it has particular measurements and trough this Geometry had been developed. Like this only other branches of science like biology, botany, and metallurgy had been developed. So Yajnya was crucial and important part of Vedic people.

Vedas are multifaceted and Universal

If we conduct a careful survey of even the available Vedic literature we come across a number of issues concerning Creation, non-pollution of Elements, non-polluted mind, personality development, social unity, treatment of elders, conjugal relationship, polity, economic prosperity etc., which are not directly confined to spiritual life but are essential in maintaining universal peace, health, hygiene, prosperity and unity. Here are some Suktas (chapters of good-sayings):





Rigveda 10-191-4

The last Mantra of Rigveda (10-191-4) deals with equality among human beings:

Let the desires of all of us be the same.

Let the hearts of all of us be the same.

Let the thoughts of all of us run on the same rope.

Let all of us unite and become good friends.

समानी व आकूततः समाना हृदयातन वः। समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासतत॥

samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vaḥ ।

samānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati ॥10-191-4

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः

Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah
[Sanskrit]

Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions
- Rig Veda

Outcome of vedas

According to Vedic philosophy human life has a definite purpose. Whilst the final Goal of life is "Moksha", there are three other (intermediary) goals of life. These together are called four objectives or pursuits of life, which are as follows: -

1. DHARMA - Righteousness
2. ARTHA - Acquisition of wealth by proper means and its right use
3. KAMA - Fulfillment of noble desires
4. MOKSHA - Liberation or the final Goal

It is essential to have the proper understanding of these objectives (as also because these terms are highly used in our daily language to mean different things). We shall describe these briefly in the following:-

DHARMA

This is the first and foremost objective or pursuit of life. Dharma is a Sanskrit word and it has no exact equivalent in English language. It has much wider significance than the word 'religion', in its ordinary sense, as currently in vogue in the existing conventional forms. The word DHARMA has been derived from its root Dhri which means 'to uphold', 'to adopt', 'to safeguard', etc. In essence, therefore DHARMA means that which is worthy of being upheld or being practiced. Thus, DHARMA is a comprehensive term which covers an entire range of values.

DHARMA has two factors: (a) Genuine faith and devotion to God, as all noble qualities emanate from God; and (b) Practice of righteousness in ones' life, also called as 10 basic principles of Dharma. The above two factors can be the unifying basis for all conventional religions. Hence, it has also been called as Sanatan (forever) or Manav (human) Dharma.

The ten basic principles of Dharma are the following: -

1. Forbearance:- It is the quality to remain calm and composed in all circumstances.
2. Control of mind: - One should exercise full control over the mind which is always restless and changing.
3. Kshama (Forgiveness):- It is virtue of those who are physically and morally strong. However, it is not desirable to forgive a habitual wrong doer.
4. Non Stealing:- One should not steal or take away or acquire anything which belongs to others, without paying its proper price and without permission of the rightful owner
5. Shauch (Cleanliness):- One should keep the body, mind and physical environment clean and pure.
6. Wisdom:- One should always try to gain wisdom through study, self experience and wise company.
7. Control of Senses:- One should keep one's sense (of action and knowledge) under control and become their master. There are five senses of Knowledge and five sense of action.
8. Knowledge:- One should acquire knowledge both of physical and spiritual domain from all possible sources
9. Truth:- One should practice truth in thought, words and deed
10. Non Anger: - One should try to remain calm and balanced even in the face of provocation.

ARTHA (Wealth)

ARTHA or the acquisition of wealth is the second most important pursuit or objective of human life. DHARMA comes first and ARTHA has to be based on Dharma. The observance of DHARMA takes priority. The following are the forms of ARTHA:-

1. Knowledge is the greatest wealth; both material and spiritual. Material Knowledge relates to our worldly life, requirements and activities, while spiritual knowledge relates to spirit, God and inner life. Material knowledge is necessary to live worldly life and it can be gained thru proper education, intellectual pursuits and everyday experience, etc. However, the spiritual knowledge is much difficult to acquire. Spiritual knowledge leads to self realisation. It can be attained through the hard practice of yogic discipline

2. Health is another form of Wealth. One has to acquire and practice the knowledge of attaining good health, which includes the well being at physical, emotional and mental levels. Good food, proper regular exercise and good thoughts are some of the fundamentals of good health.

3. Contentment is another wealth. It means abstinence of desire to possess more and more of life requirements and material possessions. It also implies that one should work honestly, try his best and be satisfied with the results of his efforts. Contentment give mental peace and moral strength t remain calm in al circumstances

4. Material Wealth is another wealth. It should be acquired keeping the DHARMA. Some portion of money should be used for charitable purposes. It should be expended only for the necessities and not for one's greed (luxuries). One should not become slave of the material wealth but should master it.

KAMA (Controlled fulfillment of desires)

The third pursuit of Life is KAMA - the desire for the satisfaction of sensual urges in which sexual gratification occupies the prime position. On a wider scale, it includes fulfillment of other material desires also.

KAMA is two faceted.

- One (controlled and beneficial desire) acts as a catalytic agent for actions in life. Much of the personal and worldly progress is the result of desire to achieve something, to discover something new.

- Another (uncontrolled or not beneficial desire) can lead to destruction.

It is therefore utmost important to gain knowledge on differentiating between the facets and then to entertain the desires in a controlled way. Let us now examine how desires are produced.

- Desires are produced in the mind through thought process when mind dwells on the objects of senses. When this happens, attachment to external objects is produced. From attachment springs desire.

- The desire goes on increasing and one desire leads to another and so on. Like fire to which fuel is added, KAMA grows more and more with indulgence are overwhelmed by KAMA, the soul also gets deluded and the result is deterioration and destruction.

- Therefore, we should keep KAMA under proper check and at its desirable level in order to make life useful and purposeful.

- We should limit our desires to as low as necessary for the daily living and fulfilling our duties. Desires which arise out of lust, greed and anger should be curbed absolutely.

- Such control should be enforced from the beginning through wisdom and discrimination. In other words, control of desires should be observed through proper understanding about the consequences of the desires; and should not be by suppression as suppressed desires will bounce back. Repeated reminders, checks and strong determination are useful tools to avoid harmful desires. The observance of principles of DHARMA plays a vital role in the curbing and control of unwanted and harmful desires.

MOKSHA (SALVATION)

This is the fourth and final objective of human life. It is the state of liberation from misery and pain which are so abundant in human life. It is the state of Ananda (perfect bliss) after attaining which nothing more remains to be attained.

Human life is unique. He (/she) is at the top of all creation. Only human beings, unlike other living beings, are endowed with higher intelligence, an ability to think, analyse and discriminate between right and wrong. Unless these endowments are used to full advantage, there is not much difference between human and animal life. Only human beings can go beyond the animal level and reach higher spiritual goals.

The attainment of MOKSHA is extremely difficult to achieve. This usually takes efforts on many births (and rebirths) and may or may not be achieved in one's current span of life except in a few rare cases. It requires arduous spiritual practice, constant and unselfish devotion to GOD, an attitude of non-attachment, etc. Our knowledge, selfless action, pure and constant devotion are some of the means which are helpful in attaining MOKSHA.

The attainment of Moksha is the highest goal of life. This is the final objective of human life. But there is no instant Moksha. One has to first go through and attain the first three objectives of DHARMA, ARTHA and KAMA. Taking sanyasa (renunciation) from the very beginning from world life, except in certain rare cases, is not recommended. Life has to be first lived at the material level, when ARTHA (wealth) has to be acquired and subsequently all noble desires have to be fulfilled, but all these are required to be attained within the constraints of DHARMA. Thus KAMA and ARTHA have to be accommodated within the overall control of DHARMA.

UPANISHADS

Introduction

Upanishad is considered to be the end portions of the Veda (Vedanta). They represent the philosophical wisdom of the classical Indian tradition. Some hold that there are more than two hundred of them and for some only hundred eight. However some of the Upanishads are considered to be very important for any philosophical discussion as the great acharyas wrote commentaries on them. They are: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittirīya, Chandogya, Brihad arnyaka. These Upanishad represent all the four Vedas as they do not belong to any single Veda. Many are omitted for the contents of those lesser known Upanishads are already found in the above mentioned major Upanishad. Let us discuss in detail the philosophical significance of each of them.

ईश-केन-कठ-प्रश्न-मुण्ड-माण्डूक्य-तत्तिरि। ऐति यं
च छान्दोग्यं बृहदाणि्यकं तथा ॥



What is Upanishad?

The term Upanishad means to sit nearby or close by. The deserving disciples used to sit close to the teacher (guru) in order to have knowledge of them. It is difficult to state anything about the great Upanishadic teachers and inquirers of truth. Sometimes their names are mixed up with the gods or mythological or historical persons. The philosophy of Upanishad is not a system of philosophy but several philosophical doctrines are brought together in these texts. Upanishads do not belong to the same time or place. They are also not composed by the same authors. Hence one finds different views and interpretations on the same texts. There is no uniform method followed in explaining the contents of the Upanishad and sometimes the methods do not adhere to any logic. Myths, etymologies, analogies, dialogues are used to explain philosophical purport of the Upanishad. They are the only logical proof.

The Upanishadic Personages

There is a tendency to mix up mythological persons, deities and historical persons in the Upanishad. We come across these names in the form of dialogues and narratives. For instance we often come across the names such as Yajnyavalkya, the spiritual guru of Janaka, It is believed that both lived around 9th century B.C. It appears that the former appeared in many controversies with many philosophers. The names of Maitreyi and Gargi, the two wives of Yajnyavalkya, also found in the Upanishadic literature. The other prominent names that one comes across in this literature include Śanatkumāra, Nārada, Sāṇḍilya, Ajātaśatru, Gārgya, Bhrugu, Aupamānyava, Aśvapati, Buḍila, Gautama, Kausitaki, Raikva, Naciketa. The discussions, dialogues, and analogies are interrelated, overlapping and repetitious. It is very difficult to say very definitely who is earlier and who is later. Those names appeared in the earlier Upanishads are likely to be earlier than those appeared in the later Upanishad.

The Vedas find their final expression in the Upanishads. Indeed, the Upanishads are called "Vedānta". They form the final part of the Vedas in two ways. In each recension we have first the Samhita, then the Brahmana which is followed by the Aranyaka, the Upanishad coming at the close of the last-mentioned. The Upanishads throw light on the meaning and the purpose

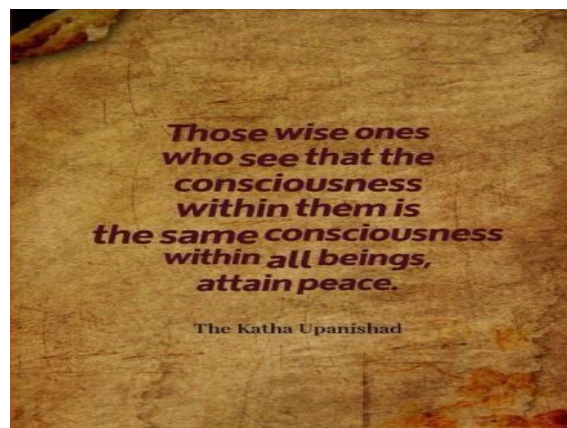
of the Vedas and represent the end of the scripture in more than one sense: while their text forms the concluding part of the Vedas, their meaning represents the Ultimate Truth of the same. A village or town has a temple; the temple has its gopuram; and the gopuram has a sikhara over it. The Upanisads are the sikhara, the summit, of our philosophical [and metaphysical] system.

"Upa-ni-sad" means to "sit near by". The Upanishads are the teachings imparted by a guru to his student sitting by his side [sitting at his feet]. You could also take the term to mean "that which takes one to the Brahman". "Upanayana" may be interpreted in two ways: leading a child to his guru; or leading him to the Brahman. Similarly, the term Upanishad could also be understood in the above two senses.

If a student sits close to the teacher when he is receiving instruction it means that a "rahasya" (a secret or a mystery) is being conveyed to him. Such teachings are not meant to be imparted to those who are not sufficiently mature and who are not capable of cherishing their value. That is why in the Upanisads themselves these words occur where subtle and esoteric truths are expounded: "This is Upanisat. This is Upanishad". What is held to be a secret in the Vedas is called a "rahasya". In the Upanisads the term "Upanishat" is itself used to mean the same.

Central Teachings of the Upanishad:

By and large, the central doctrines of the Upanishad focus mainly on the ultimate Reality Brahman/Atman. Several illustrations are found in different Upanishad about the nature of Brahman/Atman and how it can be realized. Let us see how the following Upanishad discuss the ultimate truth.



Isha Upanishad:

This Upanishad is the part of Sukla-Yajurveda. It starts with a prayer which states that this and the other world are full. Even if something is taken out or something is added to the full, the full remains as it is. This is the doctrine of the infinite to which the addition or subtraction make no difference. Regarding Brahman this Upanishad says that it is One and does not move, yet it is faster than mind. It is far yet it is nearer. It is outwards, yet inwards to us. Those who take to the life of action (karma) are ignorant and go to the darker worlds. Through action we can only

purify our minds. It is only through meditation we attain immortality. Everything in this world is pervaded by the Lord.

ईशावास्यतमदंसंवयं किञ्च जगत् ॥ जगत् ॥

तेन त्वत्तेन भुञ्जीथामागृधः कस्य किञ्चनम् ॥

All this should be covered by the Lord, whatsoever moves on the earth. By such a renunciation protect (thyself). Covet not the wealth of others.

Kena Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Samaveda. It raises the question: What is it that impels the senses and mind to perceive and understand? What is it that sustains all, but which nothing sustains? He who says that he knows it does not really know it, and he who says that does not know it indeed knows it. That is the Atman, the Brahman. Without it the sense, mind, and even the gods can do nothing. In this Upanishad we come across the idea that Vidya (Logos or the Higher Reason) is the same as Uma, the wife of Lord Shiva by knowing which alone one can know the Brahman. Of the gods, Indra (the deity of our intelligence, buddhi, according to some commentators) also was able to see Vidya and recognise her as such.

Yakshopakhyan-

God verily obtained victory for the Devas or good forces (against evil forces). The Devas felt proud in this victory of God. They thought ‘this victory is our own, this is our own greatness’. God verily knew about their pride and appeared to them. They did not know who this adorable one (Yaksha) was.

‘The word Deva in Vedic literature does not necessarily mean ‘God’, it is used in a very wide sense and literally means ‘shining’ from the root div – ‘to shine’. They said to Agni ‘O, all-knower! Find him out, who this adorable one is,’ Agni answered ‘Let it be so. He approached (Yaksha) who said to him, ‘Who are thou?’ Agni replied, ‘I am Agni or I am Jataveda (All knower)’. (Yaksha said) ‘What power is in thee so styled?’ (Agni answered) ‘I can burn all that is on this earth’. The Yaksha put a straw before him (Agni) and said: ‘Burn this’, Agni approached it with all its might, but was not able to burn it. He at once desisted from it, and (said to the Devas) ‘I was unable to find out who this adorable one is.’ Then they said to Vāyu. ‘O, Vayu find this out, who this adorable one is.’ He (Vayu) approached (Yaksha who said): ‘Who are you?’ VAYU answered, ‘I am Vāyu indeed. I am Matarishva (mover in space). (The Yaksha said): ‘What power is there in thee so styled?’ (Vayu answered) ‘I can blow or carry away all that exists on this earth’. (The Yaksha) put a straw to him (and said) ‘Blow this away. ‘He approached it with all his strength, but was not able to carry it away, He desisted from it, (and said to Devas): ‘I am unable to find out who this adorable one is.’ Then they said to Indra, ‘O, Mighty one! Find this out who this adorable one is.’ ‘Be it so,’ (said Indra) He approached Yaksha who disappeared from there. In that very space he came near a fair woman, Umā, well adored and decked in gold. He asked her, ‘Who is this adorable one?’

The story of the Yaksha’s appearance is to illustrate the quelling of pride. The quelling of pride is necessary before the realisation of Divinity.

The total cessation of individuality through a dissolution of the ego in knowledge is required before the achievement of Self realization.

Katha Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Sāmaved. This is one of the philosophically important Upanishad. It teaches about the knowledge of what happens to man after death. Such knowledge is more valuable than any other knowledge in the world for it is none other than the knowledge of the Atman, which is the smaller than the smallest, and the greater than the greatest. The objects are the higher than the senses, and the mind higher than the objects, the individual's reason (buddhi) higher than mind, the Cosmic reason (Mahat) higher than the individual reason, the Unmanifest (Avyakta), the same as the goddess Aditi of the Vedas, higher than the Cosmic Reason, and the Purusha (Atman) is the higher than the Unmanifest. There is nothing higher than the Purusha. The Atman cannot be understood by reason. It has to be grasped only as 'Is'. It can be realized by withdrawing speech (senses) into mind, mind into reason (jnana Atman), the reason into the Cosmic Reason (Maha Atman), and that into Atman of Peace (Shanta Atman).

आत्मानं तितथ नंतवत्कद्दशीं िंथिमेव

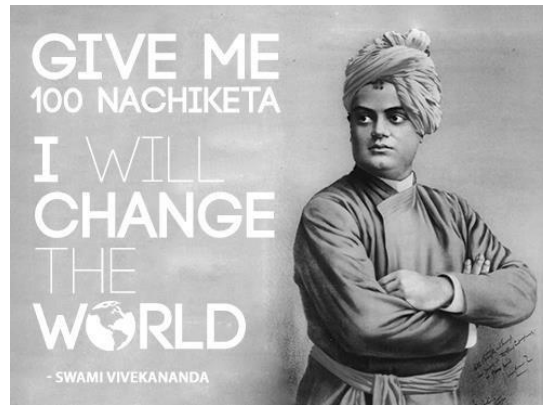
तु। बुक्कं दुत्तुसां तितथं तवत्कद्दमनः प्रग्रहमेव च

The body is the chariot, Soul is riding on it, the intellect is the charioteer or the driver, the mind is the rein, the senses are the horses, the objects of the senses are the roads.

Story of Nachiketa:

There is an inspiring story in the Kath Upanishad about a little boy named Nachiketa. He was the son of Udalak rishi. Once Udalak organized a yagna to please the deities. It was customary in those days to donate cows to Brahmins at the end of the yagna. Udalak was a miser and he donated old and weak cows to the Brahmins. None of the cows yielded any milk. This disturbed Nachiketa. He asked his father about it, "Father, to whom would you give me in charity?" This made his father very angry, but he decided not to say anything. When Nachiketa repeated the question, Udalak lost his temper and said, "I give you to Yama." Yama is the king of Yamapuri-hell. Hearing this Nachiketa went to Yama's kingdom. It was his father's command. It would not be proper for him to disobey his father. 'I should fulfil his wish,' thought Nachiketa, even if it means leaving home. However his father realized his mistake and tried to stop him but Nachiketa did not stop. He reached Yama's kingdom and was told by Yama's guards that he had gone out for three days. Nachiketa decided to wait at his doorstep till he returned. He waited for three days. No food, no water. Three fasts! Yama returned on the fourth day and saw little Nachiketa at his doorstep. He felt pained for keeping a Brahmin waiting without welcoming him, without food and water. It was a sin not to welcome an atithi -guest at the doorstep. He scolded his wife Yami for not welcoming him. Both rushed around the house to serve Nachiketa. One went to fetch water. The other brought a mat for him to sit on. Yama still did not feel completely satisfied in serving him. So he told Nachiketa, "Dear child, I have offended you by keeping you waiting for three days. To wash my sin I request you to ask for three boons." Nachiketa declared, "My first wish is, when I return home may my father welcome me lovingly. My second wish is to grant me the knowledge by which I can be worthy of living in the heavens. My third and last wish is to grant me Atmajnyanm -knowledge of the

atma." Yama granted the first two boons immediately and tried to convince Nachiketa to give up his third wish. He offered him gold, pearls, coins, horses' elephants and even the happiness of Swarg -heaven instead. "No, I do not wish for anything else," replied Nachiketa firmly. Finally, Yama granted him the third boon too, and Nachiketa was enlightened with the knowledge of the atma. Nachiketa inspires us to be kind to all creatures, to respect one's parents, to be strong willed to do something one has decided, even in the face of difficulties and obstacles and to seek for eternal happiness.



Two path from Kathopanishads-

The two leading paths, the good (Shreyas) and the pleasant (Preyas), have different aims, and they drag a person from different directions.

Of these two, he who chooses the good obtains blessings, but he who chooses the pleasant, deviates from his aim.

All pleasant things shall vanish, and only the good shall remain.

One cannot pursue the good and the pleasant at the same time, even as light and darkness cannot be perceived in the same place.

Prashna Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Atharvaveda. In this Upanishad the sage Pippalāda answers six very important questions asked by six different enquirers. The questions and their answers are mixed up with some mythological stuff. The first question is: How were creatures created? Prajāpati, the creator God did penance and through it created couples (polar opposites), which in turn created the world of beings. The couples were Rayi (material stuff) and Prāṇa (the life principle). The life principle is the Cosmic Person (Vaishvanara). This life principle is one's Atman. The second question is: Who are gods? And who among them is the greatest? The gods are Ether (akash), Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Speech, Mind, Eye and Ear. Greater than all of them is Prshna, the life principle. All other gods for their function are dependent on it. The third question is: What is the origin of Prana? How does it divide itself into senses, etc., of man? It is the reflection of Atman and employs its divisions for performing different functions in the

body. The fourth question is: What happens to the gods in sleep and who is it that sleeps? In sleep all the senses become one with the god of mind.



Only Prana, the life principle, and its involuntary activities continue to work. They do not sleep at all. In dream the agent experiences whatever is experienced during the waking state again and even what is not then experienced. In dreamless sleep the agent is overpowered by a psyche force (tejas) the fire of his conscious being or its intense light and does not see dreams. Like birds resting on a tree everything rests in Atman. The fifth question is: What does the word 'Aum' represents? It is same as the Brahman, both manifest and unmanifest together. The sixth question is about Purusha (Atman). There are sixteen phases of it. They are: Prana, Faith, the five elements, all the senses taken together, mind, food, semen, penance, sacred word, ethical action, the worlds, and name. All of them are fixed to the Atman like spokes in the axle. Atman is the center and circumference of the Universe.

Mundaka Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Atharvaveda. It distinguishes higher knowledge from lower one. The former is the knowledge of Brahman/Atman and the latter is the knowledge of empirical sciences, Vedas and their subsidiaries. Just as spider throws out its web and withdraws it into itself again, Atman throws the world out of itself and withdraws itself into itself. The life of action and sacrifices are simply unstable, they belong to the world of ignorance. The lower spirit in man looks for worldly benefits and the higher simply remains as a witness. It is often compared with two birds, one as a witness and the other as the bhokta. The former is the higher spirit and the latter is the lower one. It is the lower spirit which is subject to the rewards and punishments depending upon its merits and demerits. But it can overcome its bondage by realizing the higher spirit. Atman cannot be known through intellect or by study. One can know it only when one is chosen by it

Mandukya Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Atharvaveda. it is said that- 'māndūkyam ekam eva alam mumukshūnām vimuktaye' for the liberation of the mumukshū or seeker the Māndūkya alone is enough; and if you are able to understand the true meaning of this single Upanishad, there may not be a necessity to study any other Upanishad.

Mandukya upnishad contains only 12 mantras. It is the smallest Upnishad having the explanation of 'Om' - Ōmityetadakṣharamidam sarvam, tasyopavyākhyanam, bhūtam bhavatbhaviṣyaditi sarvamomkāra eva; yaccānyat trikālātītam tadapyomkāra eva. The Imperishable is OM, and it is 'all this'. Everything else, whatever be of the past, present or

future, is like an exposition, explanation or commentary on the meaning of this great Truth – the Imperishable Om. Sarvam Omkāra eva: Everything is Om, indeed. This is how the Upanishad begins. Ōm ityetaḍakṣharam idaṁ sarvaṁ: All this, whatever is visible, whatever is cognizable, whatever can come within the purview of sense-perception, inference or verbal testimony, whatever can be comprehended under the single term, creation – **all this is Om.**

This Upanishad contains the gist of the rest. It teaches us that Atman has four states. They are: waking (jagrt), dream (svapna), deep-sleep (sushupti) and its original pure state (turiya). In the first state the consciousness of the Atman is directed towards external material objects. In this state it has seven parts and nineteen gateways. The seven parts are: forehead, eyes, the life principle (prana), bodily center, abdomen, feet, and face. The nineteen gateways are: the five senses (ear, eye, taste, touch, and smell), the five organs of action (hands, feet, the generative organ, the excretory organ), the five vital principles (pran, apan, udan, vyan, and saman), the four inner and internal instruments (manas, ahamkar, buddhi and citta). The Atman in this state is worldly or mundane person (Vaishvanara). In dream state it has all the seven parts and nineteen gates, but its consciousness is turned towards the dream objects. These objects are not made up of gross matter. In this state the Atman is called psyche (Taijasa) for its experience is constituted by psychic force. In the state of deep-sleep the Atman sees no dreams and desires nothing. Its consciousness is its only gate and all plurality becomes one with it. This state of Atman is called Prana, for it is pure and undifferentiated.

The fourth state is the pure state of Atman. In this state it is beyond thought and speech. It knows itself without any medium. It is free from the Unconscious.

Taittirīya Upanishad:

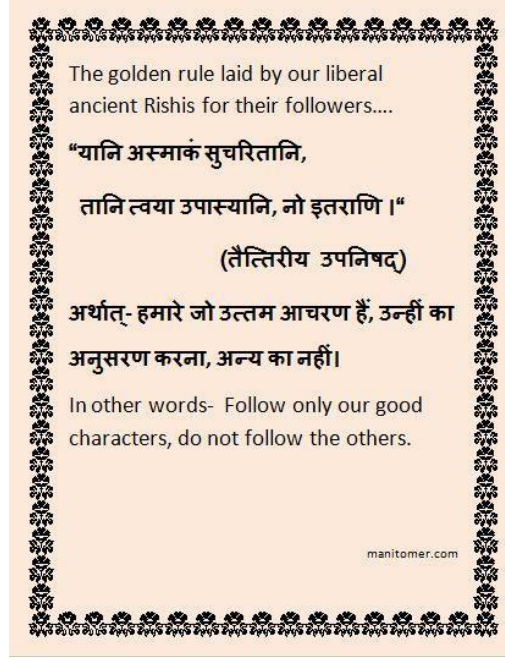
This Upanishad belongs to Sāmaveda. It talks about five types of union. They are: the union of physical elements like earth, water, air etc., the union of shining objects such as sun, fire, lightening; the union of knowledge like that in the teacher, student, and lectures; the union of creative beings like father, mother, and creation; and the union of physiological parts like upper jaw, lower jaw, and speech. The Brahman is the Truth, the Consciousness and the Infinite. From it born is ether, from ether air, from air fire, from fire water, and from water earth. And from earth are born plants, from plants food, from food Purusha (Atman) or man as 'I'. Since he eats, swallows, absorbs the different elements he is called Atman. It is enveloped by annamayakosha, pranomayakosha, manomayakosha, vijnyanmayakosha and anandamayakosha. The first two kosha belong to gross body (sthulasharira) and the rest to belong to subtle body (sukshmatharira) and the last kosha belong to causal body (karansharira). Each latter stage is the atman of the former. According to this Upanishad everything originated from Non-being in the sense that the Reality in the beginning is indeterminate, and it was the Unmanifest (avyakta). The bliss of the Atman is greater than everything else.



We observed that our individuality is constituted of different layers, and these layers are called *koshas* in Sanskrit.

There are primarily five such *koshas*, or sheaths, in which our consciousness is enveloped:

- Annamaya Kosha- *Anna*’ means food; *Maya* means ‘filled with’.The first ‘*kosha*’ speaks about importance of food which forms the basic necessity for human survival
- Pranamaya Kosha- *Prana*’ means breath; *Maya* means ‘filled with’.The second ‘*kosha*’ discusses the impact of science of breathing on human emotions
- Manomaya Kosha- ‘*Man*’ means mind; *Maya* means ‘filled with’.The state of mind and journey of thoughts forms the basis of this ‘*kosha*’
- Vidnyanmaya Kosha- *Vidnyan*’ means knowledge; *Maya* means ‘filled with’.The conversion of thoughts during the phase of Manomaya Kosha, into worldly knowledge of real and unreal entities forms Vidnyanmaya Kosha
- Anandmaya Kosha- Taittiriya Upanishad discusses the nature of the innermost sheath in us, called the Anandamaya Kosha. The causal innermost sheath, which is the most subtle and pervasive in our personality, is called the Anandamaya Kosha. It is called Anandamaya because it is characterized by blissfulness or happiness. ‘*Ananda*’ means happiness; *Maya* means ‘filled with’. It is filled with and constituted of happiness only, warp and woof.



Aitareya Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Rigveda. It gives a semi-mythological account of creation. Atman correlates the microcosm and macrocosm and the gods become the psycho-physical principles. This Upanishda ends with a saying that all the mental functions are only names of our rational consciousness (prajnyanmay) and that our rational consciousness is the Brahman.

Chandogya Upanishad:

This Upanishad belongs to Rigveda. It is second largest of the Upanishads. After liberation man's spirit rests with the gods and the Brahman in the highest world, according to this Upanishad. This conception is theistic. However, the Upanishad says that 'everything is verily the Brahman'. It is the innermost to us. Brahman is the smallest yet the largest. Uddālaka Aruṇi teaches his son Shvetaketu that in deep sleep speech enters mind; mind the life principle (prana), the life principle the psychic force (tejas), the psychic force the supreme Deity. All these belong to Atman and "That art thou (tattvamasi)". Just as different rivers merge into the same ocean and lose their self-identity, so everything ultimately enters the Atman and becomes one with it. The idea of the person in the eye is elaborated in this Upanishad. Vairocana, the king of the Demons, and Indra, the king of the gods, approached Prajāpati, the creator god, to be taught about the Atman which is without disease and death. As the story goes, Prajāpati told them that the person seen in the eye was Atman. He asked both of them to adorn themselves and look at their reflections in a pot of water, and what they would see was the Atman. Following the advice of Prajāpati, Vairocana saw the reflection of his own body in the water-pot, and began to worship himself as the Atman, indulging himself in all the pleasures of his body. Similarly, Indra also followed the advice of Prajāpati and saw his perishable body in the water-pot, and doubted how his perishable body could be the Atman which is imperishable. So he came back to Prajāpati for further instruction. Prajāpati told him that the person in the deep-sleep and dreamless sleep is Atman. It is the seer and is beyond deep-sleep and bodiless. It is unfettered and suffers no pain and pleasure. Therefore, "I am all this (ahameva idam sarvam)".

PART B: Doctrines of Upanishads

UPANISHADS - THE SCIENCE OF SELF

The famous physicist Neil Bohr says “we are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence”. According to Upanishads, human existence is a mystery and it holds the key to other mysteries of the universe. The ‘science of human possibilities’ is what India found in the Upanishads and developing this science is an attempts to unfold the very existence of human beings. The sole purpose of Vedas is the welfare of all beings which can only be achieved by delving deeper into your true self and exploring those depths. Upanishads offered a great insight into ‘the science of thyself’ or self discovery. The more you delve deeper, the more you are closer to the ultimate truth of life. According to Upanishads, a human’s soul is equal to soul of the universe. If you unravel the mystery of your own self, you will unravel the mystery of the universe.

- **Atman**

Atman could not be described as a positive entity. It has been sought to be defined by characteristics which are contradictory to one another. For instance, it has been held that atman is stationary, yet faster than mind; it is near yet far, it exists inside everything and also outside. The Bhagavad Gita (II. 22-5), true to the spirit of the Upanishads, declares that weapons cannot cut atman, fire cannot burn it, water cannot damp it and wind cannot make it dry. It is further stated (11.20) that atman remains unaffected even when the body is killed.

The same atman has different experiences in the three states of jagrat (waking), svapna (sleep) and susupti (deep slumber). Beyond these stages is the condition called turiya, the fourth state in which the soul becomes one with Brahman (Supreme Spirit). The individual soul is covered by five koshas (vestures), viz., pranamaya (made of vital air), annamaya (made of food), manomaya (made of mind), vijhanamaya (made of intelligence) and anandamaya (made of bliss) which make the body enshrining the soul. Our ultimate goal is to realize the soul lying hidden by the above koshas like a sword covered by the scabbard.

- **Brahman**

Brahman and mahavakyas

The Great Utterances: The Mahavakyas are the Great Sentences of Advaita Vedanta and Jnana Yoga, and are contained in the Upanishads. Maha is Great, and Vakyas are sentences, or utterances for contemplation. They provide perspective and insights that tie the texts together in a cohesive whole. The contemplations on the Mahavakyas also blend well with the practices of yoga meditation, prayer, and mantra, which are companion practices in Yoga. The pinnacle of the wisdom and practices of the ancient sages is contained in the terse twelve verses of the Mandukya Upanishad, which outlines the philosophy and practices of the OM mantra.

These make the wisdom more accessible: Seven Mahavakyas are described below. By focusing on these seven Mahavakyas, the rest of the principles of self-exploration described in Vedanta and the Upanishads are more easily accessible. Included with the descriptions below are suggestions on what to do with these seven Mahavakyas.

Validation in the inner laboratory: To truly understand the meaning of the Mahavakyas, it is necessary to practice contemplation and meditation in your own inner laboratory of stillness and silence. It means doing a lot of self-observation, including the four functions of mind. You may find it useful to learn both the Sanskrit and the English of the Mahavakyas. They are not practiced as blind faith beliefs, but rather are reflected on, so that their meaning is validated in direct experience.

Start by hearing the insights described: Some methods of contemplation give you a principle, a word, on which to reflect, but give no clues of the insights that will come. For example, if you contemplate on the word Truth, that is very broad, and may have many meanings. It might take a long time to even come to a core principle. Sometimes, in school or elsewhere, you have probably seen a study guide that has a list of questions that also includes the answers, in a Q&A format. With the Mahavakyas, it is somewhat like that, in that the Mahavakyas provide the answers, already written down. You still have to do the contemplations, but the journey is much more direct.

Direct experience, not mere belief: In contemplating the Mahavakyas, it is not a matter of merely accepting that the statements are true. In the oral teachings of the sages, it is said that you should never merely believe what you are told or what you read in a book. Rather, it is suggested that you should check it out for yourself in the inner laboratory of direct experience. It also seems true that, while ultimate oneness is the same for all, there is also a coloring of cultural and religious influences that determine the way in which different people will experience the early, or unfolding stages of insight. Dig deep into the well of only a few such Mahavakyas.

Dig deep in only a few wells: It can appear that exploring only a few sentences, like these seven, is a mere beginning point, and that one must subsequently learn hundreds or thousands of other sentences. This is definitely not the case. Although in academic circles one may do complex intellectual analysis of many scholarly commentaries, comparing and contrasting viewpoints, the seeker of direct experience digs deep into the well of only a few such contemplations. In the monastic traditions of the swami order, a monk may contemplate exclusively on a single Mahavakya or maybe several of them. The practice bears fruit by deeply going into one, or a few, rather than memorizing many, or doing only intellectual analysis of the many.

Mahavakyas are at the heart of Vedanta: These seven principles below are practices at the heart of the Vedanta part of the triad. Actually, all of these emerged out of the one source of teachings, and now appear to be three separate practices. The higher understanding and direct experience comes from person-to-person listening (written and oral), followed by deep reflection, contemplation, and deep contemplative meditation.

Advaita or Non-Dual Reality: Advaita is exactly what it says, Advaita, which means non-duality, not-two. If this little planet were to fall into the sun and burn up, there would no longer be any religionists or philosophers, but that which truly "is" still "is." Advaita is exactly what

it says it is, Advaita, not-two, which stands alone. Any suggestion that there are things such as Hindu Advaita or Buddhist Advaita or Anything-Else Advaita are games of the mind. To transcend all of the levels of false identity so as to "Be" that Reality of Advaita is the Knowledge or Jnana that is sought. It is only the most sincere and longing of aspirants who seek and know this in direct experience. For others, it is merely an arena of philosophical and religious debate. For those who Know, Advaita stands alone.

Who am I? It has become very popular in recent years to criticize the practice of Mahavakyas, suggesting instead that one simply ask "Who am I?" and then reject any response which arises from within (other than "I am that!"). It is commonly suggested that one NOT contemplate any of the phrases such as "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am Brahman, the Absolute Reality"). Such suggestions to NOT practice Mahavakyas presuppose the incorrect opinion that contemplation on Mahavakyas is only a mere mental process, missing the fact that the Mahavakya leads one to deep silence wherein the reality is experienced directly. Contemplation on the Mahavakyas is not mere chanting of mantras or reprogramming the mind with affirmations as if one were trying to inculcate an alternative belief system. It moves in stages, culminating in the highest of direct experience of the meaning of the Mahavakyas. Contemplation on the Mahavakyas and the question "Who am I?" are not in conflict with one another. Rather, they go hand in hand, in a systematic, unified practice.

Meaning of word Brahman

Root of the word: The word Brahman comes from the root brha or brhi, which means knowledge, expansion, and all-pervasiveness. It is that existence which alone exists, and in which there is the appearance of the entire universe.

Not subject to change: Brahman means the absolute reality, that which is eternal, and not subject to death, decay, or decomposition. In English, we speak of omnipresence or oneness. This is the principle of the word Brahman.

Not a proper name: Brahman is not a proper name, but a Sanskrit word that denotes that oneness, the non-dual reality, the substratum underneath all of the many names and forms of the universe. Brahman is somewhat like the difference between the word ocean, and the specific ocean called Pacific Ocean. The word Brahman is like ocean, not Pacific Ocean. Brahman is not a name of God. These contemplations neither promote nor oppose any particular religious concept of God.

It's really indescribable, as it is beyond form: However one chooses to hold the word Brahman, it is very useful to remember that Brahman is often described as indescribable. For convenience sake, it is said that Brahman is the nature of existence, consciousness, and bliss, though admitting that these words, too, are inadequate.

Seek direct experience: The real meaning comes only in direct experience resulting from contemplation and yoga meditation.

Brahman is real: The way in which Brahman is real is like saying that the clay in a pot is real, or the gold in a bracelet is real (metaphorically speaking). The idea is that first there was clay and gold, and when those changed form, there now appears to be a pot and a bracelet.

Something is more real than the temporary: In saying that the world is unreal, it means to say that literally everything we experience in the external world is, like the pot and the bracelet, in a process of coming, being, and going (so too with all of the objects of the subtle realm). If the Mahavakya stopped there, this might appear to be a negative, or depressing comment. But it does not stop there. It makes the added comment that this absolute reality is, in a sense, more real than the temporary appearances.

- **Reminder of the temporary:** First, it serves as a reminder of the temporary nature of the worldly objects.
- **Reminder of the eternal:** Second, it serves as a reminder that there is an eternal nature that is not subject to change.

Don't stop living in the world: When practicing contemplation with this, and the other Mahavakyas, it is important to not allow the reflection that the world is unreal to stop you from doing your actions in the external world. To think that the world is unreal, and therefore we need not do anything is a grave mistake. The realization of the unreality of the world and the reality of the essence behind the world brings freedom, not bondage or lethargy. .

- What to do:** The purpose of contemplation and yoga meditation exercises is to attain Self-realization, or enlightenment, which has to do with knowing or experiencing the deepest, eternal aspect of our own being. By working with this Mahavakya, one increasingly sees the difference between what is temporary and what is eternal.

- **Be mindful of the passing objects:** One way to work with this Mahavakya, is to simply be mindful of the world around you. Gradually, gently, and lovingly observe the countless objects that are ever in a process of coming and going.
- **Remember the eternal:** Allow yourself to also remember the eternal nature that is always there, enjoying the beauty of how this process ebbs and flows through that unchanging, eternal essence.

Be mindful of your own temporary and eternal: As you witness the external world in this way, allow your attention to shift to your own physical, energetic, and mental makeup. Gradually comes the insight that these more surface aspects are also temporary, and in a sense, are also unreal, or only relatively real. It increasingly allows the mind to see that there is an eternal aspect of our being, and that this is actually the source of the mind itself. The mind comes to see that it must, itself, let go, so as to experience the eternal that is within.

Practice this at daily meditation time: By observing the world in this way, it is then easier to do the same kind of silent observation and contemplation while sitting in the stillness of your meditation time. Over time, the depth of the insights increase, as an inner expansion comes.

The different Mahavakyas work together: In practice, the Mahavakyas work together. This becomes evident by exploring the others, such as the ones that follow below.

2. **Ekam evadvitiam brahma - Brahman is one, without a second - (There is one absolute reality, without any secondary parts)**

No object is truly independent: As our attention goes from object to object, image to image, we keep finding that those objects and images are only relatively real (as discussed above). Gradually, we come to see that no object exists independently from Brahman, the whole. Hence, it is said there is one, without a second. Wherever we look, whatever we think or feel, try as we will, we can find no second object or part. Everything is seen as a manifestation of something else.

The objects are made of the same stuff: To speak of one, without a second, is like thinking of thousands of pots or bracelets made from clay or gold. As you look at each of the pots and bracelets, one at a time, you conclude that this pot, and this bracelet is not separate from the whole field of clay and gold. Suddenly you come to the insight that there is not a single pot that is separate from clay, and there is not a single bracelet separate from gold. In other words, you see that there is one field, without a second object, or simply stated, there is one, without a second.

Once again, this can also be viewed in a theological way, wherein immanence (versus transcendence) means the divinity existing in, and extending into all parts all parts of the created world. Thus, there is no object that does not contain, or is not part of that creation.

- **Ekam evadvitiam brahma Brahman is one, without a second (There is one absolute reality, without any secondary parts)**

What to do: Keep exploring the latter part of the sentence, the part of being without a second. Consciously look at the objects of the world, and the thoughts that arise in the mind. Observe whether it has independent existence and permanence. It is like asking, "Does this object or thought exist on its own? Does it stay in this form, or does it go away? Is it, therefore a second object in comparison to the whole?"

- **Try to find a second object:** One practice is to repeatedly look for some second object, which has independent existence from the whole, from Brahman.
- **You'll find there is none:** The aspirant will repeatedly find that there is no second object, which has independent existence, but that all objects derive from some other, like the pots from clay, or bracelets from gold. This brings the increasing awareness of underlying wholeness.

See the beauty of oneness in diversity: If this is approached as a mere philosophical opinion, if we merely believe the principle, then the deep insight that comes from exploration will be missed. Each time that some new object or thought is seen to not be a second in relation to the whole, the personal realization of the truth of the principle will become deeper and more profound. We come to see the beauty in this, to see the joy of wholeness, of the unity within the diversity. The interrelationship between the Mahavakyas will also become clearer.

3. Prajnanam brahman - Brahman is the supreme knowledge (Knowing the absolute reality is the supreme knowledge) (from Aitareya Upanishad of Rig Veda)

Knowledge out of which other knowledge arises: There are many types of knowledge one can attain. However, they all stem from, or are a part of, a higher knowledge. There is one exception, and that is the absolute knowledge, which is the highest. It is called absolute because it is not stemming from something else. Supreme knowledge is the ground out of which the diversity of knowledge and experience grows. The plant, though appearing separate, is made of the stuff of the ground.

Many metaphors for higher knowledge: It is just about impossible to write words describing this notion of supreme knowledge, which is part of the reason that there are so many different descriptions given by many people. Thus, we use metaphor after metaphor trying to capture and communicate the essence of the meaning. This Mahavakya is saying that as you climb the ladder of knowledge, this higher knowledge is to be found at the level of Brahman, the oneness of universal consciousness.

Reflect on lower knowledge to find the higher: Reflecting on lower knowledge might give some idea. The knowledge of how to ride a bicycle is a form of knowledge, but it is based on the higher knowledge of how to move your body. The knowledge of complex mathematics is based on the higher, more foundational, prerequisite knowledge that allows the thinking process itself. When you see a person that you recognize as your friend, there was first an ability to see and conceptualize, which is a higher knowledge.

Find the foundation: Intuitively, you come to see that there is consciousness, or whatever term you would like to use, that is higher, more foundational, or prerequisite to the lower knowledge in all of its other forms. The highest rung of the ladder is called supreme knowledge, prajna, and this is said to be one and the same with Brahman, the oneness.

Knowing is not mere intellectualizing: It is extremely important to note here, that this is not a process of intellectualizing. Knowledge refers to knowing or awareness, not just a linear, cognitive thinking process. The knowledge here, is more like the knowledge of recognizing an object as a tree, than the process of adding up a list of numbers. There is simply no more straightforward way of saying it, than to say it is a matter of knowing the tree.

Knowing applies to both head and heart people: Also, it is not that some people are intellectual, or head people, while others are emotional, or heart people. While these differences between people might be real, this Mahavakya is talking about a universal principle that applies to all people. The practices themselves are applicable to all people, whether inclined towards the head or the heart, though different people will quite naturally have different experiences leading to the same ultimate realization.

- **Prajnanam brahman -Brahman is the supreme knowledge (Knowing the absolute reality is the supreme knowledge)**

What to do: In trying to reflect on the nature of supreme knowledge, the eternal substratum of all other knowledge, the mind will present many memories, images, impressions, thoughts, sensations, and emotions. All of these are some form of knowledge, that's for sure. However, they are not the highest knowledge.

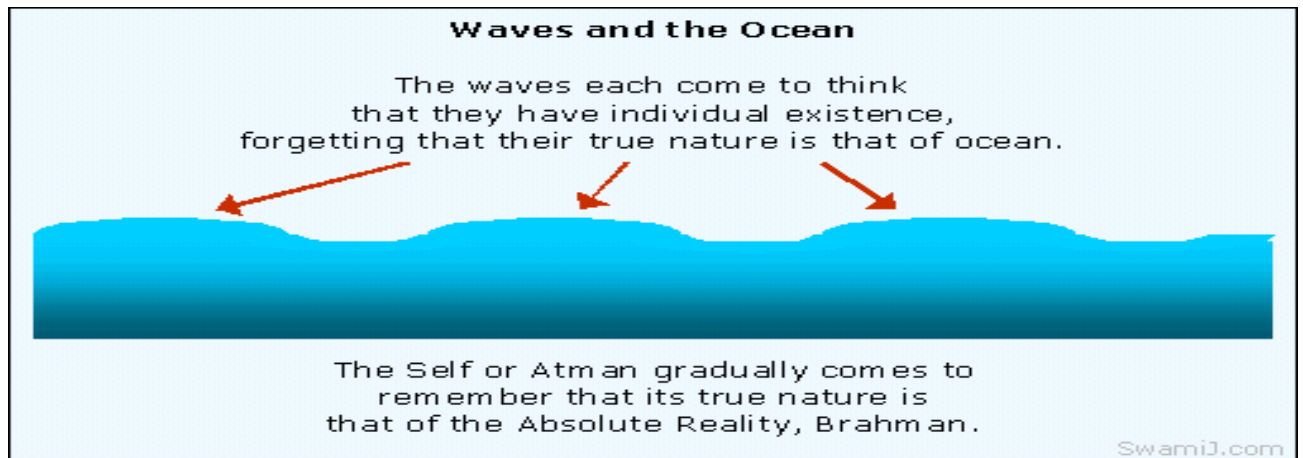
Ask yourself if a knowledge is lower or higher: Simply allow these thought patterns to arise. Then ask yourself, "Is this the higher knowledge?" Repeatedly you will find that the answer is no that it is not the higher, but is a lower form of knowledge. Remember there is higher knowledge: This kind of reflection leaves a quietness in which the intuition of the existence of the higher knowledge starts to come. The intuition deepens with practice. This quietness is not one of lethargy or laziness, but rather of clarity and openness. It brings a smile to the face and to the heart, as the field of knowing gradually expands towards the wisdom of the Mahavakya.

4. **Tat tvam asi -That is what you are (That absolute reality is the essence of what you really are) (from Chandogya Upanishad of Sama Veda)**

That is what YOU are: This Mahavakya is stated as if one person is speaking to the other, saying, "That is what you are!" when referring to Brahman. The person speaking is the teacher, and person being spoken to is the student.

It is YOU at the deepest level: Imagine that the teacher has explained to you all of the above Mahavakyas, that you had reflected on these, and that you started to have some sense of the meaning of the oneness called brahman. Imagine that the teacher then pointed a finger at

you and explained, "That brahman, that oneness, is who you really are, at the deepest level of your being!" It is like telling a wave in the ocean that it IS the ocean.



You are the person underneath the personality: Often, we hold on to our personal identities, such as being from this or that family, organization, or country. We take on the identity of our roles in our jobs or in our families, such as father or mother, sister or brother, son or daughter. Or, we come to believe that who we are, is our personality traits that have developed through living. We forget our true nature that is underneath all of these only relative identities.

We continue our duties, holding identities loosely: The realization of this Mahavakya, Tat tvam asi, leads us to see that the relative identities are not who we really are. It does not mean that we drop our duties in the world, or stop acting in service of other people because of this realization. Rather, we become ever freer to hold those identities loosely, while increasingly being able to act in the loving service of others, independent of attachment to our false identities.

- **Tat tvam asi -That is what you are (That absolute reality is the essence of what you really are)**

What to do: As if talking to yourself, direct your attention inward, possibly towards the heart center. Say to yourself, "That is who you are!" Point a finger at yourself: You might want to even point your index finger at your own chest, the place from where you experience, "I am." As you hold in awareness the essence of the truth that this Brahman, this oneness, is who you really are, also observe how you can gently let go of the false identities, seeing that they are only temporary and relative.

Say to yourself, "That is who you are": When reflecting on the other Mahavakyas, such as brahman is the supreme knowledge, then shift the observation from that truth, directing attention to your own inner being and say, "Tat tvam asi; That you are!" **Remember the inner feeling:** Notice the inner feeling that comes from the statement and the realization of your spiritual nature, rather than your more surface level of mental or physical identity.

5. **Ayam atma brahma Atman and Brahman are the same (The individual Self is one and the same with the absolute) (from Mandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda)**

The wave and the ocean are one: Is the wave separate from the ocean? Not really, but sometimes we lose sight of that. Imagine that you are standing by the ocean, watching the vastness of the ocean. Imagine that a really big wave starts to come ashore, and that your attention comes to this one wave. You intently notice it, becoming absorbed in the crashing of the surf, and the feel of the salt spray. In that moment, you are only aware of the immensity of this one wave. The ocean itself is forgotten during that time. Then, an instant later, you recall with an inner "Aha!", that the wave and the ocean are one and the same.

- **Atman** refers to that pure, perfect, eternal spark of consciousness that is the deepest, central core of our being.
- **Brahman** refers to the oneness of the manifest and unmanifest universe.

It is like saying that atman is a wave, and Brahman is the ocean. The insight of Ayam atma brahma is that the wave and the ocean are one and the same.

Atman seems to be here, and Brahman there: Notice how the statement Ayam atma brahma (Atman and Brahman are the same) is framed as if you are a separate observer of both Atman and Brahman. It is like standing at the beach, looking out at both the wave and the ocean, and declaring that the wave and the ocean are one. You are observing from a witnessing stance, outside of both of them. Notice how this perspective contrasts with Aham brahmasmi (I am Brahman), which declares that "I am!" an inner experience, rather than from an observing standpoint (like being on the beach).

Different perspectives for the underlying reality: In this way, each of the Mahavakyas gives a different perspective of the same underlying Reality. Gradually, they are seen as mirror reflections of the same Absolute Reality. That integrated flash of insight touches on the true meaning of the word Brahman. It is like gaining different points of view from different viewing points. Together, they converge in a complete understanding.

- **Ayam atma brahma -Atman and Brahman are the same (The individual Self is one and the same with the absolute)**

What to do: Sit quietly and reflect on the inner core of your being, such as by placing your attention in the space between the breasts, the heart center.

Be aware of your center: Don't visualize anything, but allow your awareness to touch the feeling aspect of the center of your being. Or, if you like to visualize internally, imagine a tiny spark of light that represents the eternal essence your own self, the atman. Hold this attention for a few seconds or minutes.

Shift to awareness of the universe: Then, shift your attention in such a way that you are imagining the breadth of the entire manifest and unmanifest universe, the gross, subtle, and causal realms. Imagine the oneness that permeates all, and is all. Do this in a way that you are

aware of the essence in which all exists, like being aware of the gold or the clay described above.

Then be aware of both as separate: Then, allow your attention to hold both the awareness of the spark that is atman and the universal essence that is Brahman. Be aware of atman also being within that oneness of Brahman. Allow this to bring insight and peace. You might want to internally think the words of the Mahavakya, "Ayam atma brahma; atman and brahman are the same."

Be aware of both as one: It is a beautiful practice to do the same thing in relation to other people. Think of the people who are closest to you, including family, friends, and coworkers. Allow yourself to notice the surface levels of their actions and speech, their physical features, and their personalities. Be aware of the subtle aspects of their makeup, and of the spark of the eternal that is the center of their consciousness. Be aware of how that spark, atman, is one with the oneness, Brahman.

Different insights from different Mahavakyas: Notice the different insights and feelings between the Mahavakyas. The insight from Tat tvam asi (That is who you are) is experienced differently from Ayam atma brahma (This individual Self is one with the absolute). The two simply feel different internally, yet they work together, describing the same fundamental truth about who we are. By experiencing the separate vantage points, the whole is more completely experienced.

6. Aham brahmasmi - I am Brahman (Who I really am, is that absolute reality.) (from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of Yajur Veda)

If a gold bracelet could speak: Imagine two possibilities of what a gold bracelet might say, if it could speak. It might say one of these two things:

1. "I am a bracelet!"
2. "I am gold!"

Bracelet is temporary: Which is truer, more everlasting? We might be tempted to say that #1 is more accurate, in that bracelet seems more encompassing, being both bracelet and gold at the same time. However, the bracelet aspect is not eternal. It is temporary. It is only a matter of the particular shape in which the gold was molded. Is bracelet what it really is?

Gold is everlasting: What is always true, is #2, that "I am gold," everlasting, ever pure, and not subject to death, decay, and decomposition. (One might argue that gold is not everlasting either, but in the metaphor, gold is being only used as an example.)

Bracelet is gold; I am gold: Note that this metaphor may sound similar to the ones above, regarding the impermanence of a bracelet and the permanence of the gold (metaphorically speaking). This is not the case. The realization that, "I am gold!" or "I am brahman!" is

an internal experience compared to the statement, "The bracelet is gold!" (Which sounds like the bracelet over there). The two insights are separate, though they also come to be the same.

Similarly, it is very different to realize, in direct experience, "I am brahman!" than one of the statements such as, "Brahman alone is real!"

- **Out there:** "Brahman alone is real!" seems to be about the world out there. It is a valid perspective.
- **In here:** "I am brahman!" is an inner declaration of who I am, in here. This is also a valid perspective.

Truth comes in the stillness of intuitive flash: The truth of a Mahavakyacomes through intuitive flash that is progressively deeper as one practices. It is not merely an intellectual process, as it might appear to be by explaining the gold metaphor. The metaphors are used as a means of explaining the principle, but this is not the end of the process. In a sense, such explanations are only the beginning of the process. The key is in the still, silent reflection in the inner workshop of contemplation and yoga meditation.

After thinking, let go into contemplative insight: The initial insights come somewhat like the creative process when you are trying to solve some problem in daily life. You think and think, and then finally let go into silence. Then, suddenly, the creative idea just pops out, giving you the solution to your problem. The contemplation on the Mahavakyas is somewhat like that at first. Later, it goes into deeper meditation.

Insight comes within your own context: One may experience himself or herself as being like the gold or the clay, or like a wave in an ocean of bliss, that realizes the wave is also the ocean. With all these metaphors used only as tools of explanation, the insight of each person will come in the context of their own culture and religion, and will not seem foreign or unnatural. One's religious values are not violated, but rather, are affirmed.

- **Aham brahmasmi -I am Brahman (Who I really am, is that absolute reality.)
(From Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of Yajur Veda)**

What to do: Reflect on the oneness, or Brahman, and the meaning, as suggested in the practices above. Allow your attention to focus on the insights from those Mahavakyas, such as Brahman is one, without a second.

Literally ask questions of yourself: Ask yourself, internally, "Who am I? Am I this body, or do I have a body? Am I this breath, or is this breath just flowing? Am I this mind, or is this mind a manifestation of some deeper truth? Who am I, really? Who am I?"

Make your own declarations: Inside the chamber of your own being, declare to yourself, "I am brahman. I am not only a wave, I am made of ocean. I am ocean!" Allow the truth of the statements to expand. Be sure to practice such affirmations only if you have reflected on them, and find truth in them. This is not about selling yourself, but on affirming what you know.

In daily life, when sitting, or resting: As you do these contemplations, you might be right in the middle of your daily life. Or, you might be sitting straight in a formal yoga meditation posture. Or, you might be resting comfortably in a chair, on a sofa, or lying down in a relaxed position. There is a great diversity of settings in which you can do this type of contemplation.

7. Sarvam khalvidam brahma- All of this is Brahman (All of this, including me, is that absolute reality)

The various insights are revealed: Gradually, one comes to understand and increasingly experience the deeper aspects of the other Mahavakyas (the six described above):

- Brahman is real; the world is unreal.
 - Brahman is one, without a second.
 - Brahman is the supreme knowledge.
 - That is what you are.
 - Atman and Brahman are the same.
 - I am Brahman.
-
- **Sarvam khalvidam brahma- All of this is Brahman (All of this, including me, is that absolute reality)**

What to do: Allow your awareness to try to encompass, at one time, the entire manifest and unmanifest universe, the objects and people in the world around you, as well as your own body and mind. Hold these together, as one whole, and reflect on the words, "All of this is brahman! All of this is one!" This builds on the other practices, and expands in its experience.

Mind is set aside in an explosion of awareness: Eventually, in the depth of meditation and contemplation, the entire mind is set aside in an explosion of awareness, in which the truth of the Mahavakyas comes forward, and is seen to have been there all along, ever still, waiting to be discovered in direct experience

They sing a song together: As one comes to experience the truth of the individual Mahavakyas, it seems they come together in a song that cries out in joy, "All of this is brahman!" As was said in the beginning, it is a process that comes from person-to-person listening (written and oral), followed by deep reflection, contemplation, and meditation.



Realization comes in stages:

- First, there is cognitive understanding of the meaning.
- Second, intuition rolls down, revealing deeper meanings.

- Finally, it is as if the one doing the practice travels upwards to merge in the direct experience, even though there was never any division in the first place.

Four traditional Mahavakyas

Four of the Mahavakyas above are most traditional to Vedanta. Some 1200 years ago Adi Shankaracharya assigned one Mahavakya to one of four monastic teaching centers or mutts in India.

Mahavakya	Source	Mutt/Center
पज्ञानं ब्रह्म । Prajnanambrahman Brahman is supreme knowledge	Aitareya 3.3, of Rig Veda	Upanishad Puri/Govardhana East
तत् त्व असि । Tattvamasi That is what you are	Chandogya Upanishad	Upanishad Dwaraka/Sarada/Gujrat West
अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म । Ayamatmabrahm Atman and brahman are the same	Mandukya Atharva Veda	Upanishad Jyoti/Badrinath North
अहं ब्रह्मास्मि । Aham I am	brahmasmi Brihadaranyaka brahman I	Upanishad Sringeri/Mysore Veda, South

- **Maya**
Maya means illusion, and accordingly to Vedic philosophies the world is an illusion. The world is real but is not what appears to us. It looks temporary but it has always been there and will always be there. It appears to be materialistic but actually it is spiritual. It appears to be unconscious, but in reality it is conscious. It appears that you are born and you will die, but you have always lived.
- **Karma**
It is most fundamental and moral law in Hinduism. Your karma defines your past and future incarnations.
- **Samsara**
The cycle of birth, death and rebirth is called Samsara. Your reincarnation mean you are coming back to the material world again and again. We ultimately long to get rid of the cycle.

- **Moksha**

The stop to the cycle of reincarnation is called Moksha. Upanishads say is the ultimate goal of human life. It's the only goal worth pursuing. But maya or illusion does not let us see the worth of Moksha, and thus, does not less us come out of the reincarnation cycle. Moksha is the ultimate liberation soul. Of Moksha, and thus, does not less us come out of the reincarnation cycle. Moksha is the ultimate liberation soul.

RELIGIONS



Buddhism

The Core Teachings of Gautam Buddha:

Buddha's teachings are said to be three-fold

The Four Noble Truths,

The Noble Eight-fold Path,

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination

The Four Noble Truths:

1 The Truth of Suffering:

The notion of suffering is not intended to convey a negative world view, but rather, a pragmatic perspective that deals with human existence as it exists. Life is full of misery and pain. Even the so-called pleasures are really fraught with pain. There is always fear that we may lose the so-called pleasures and their loss involves pain. Indulgence also results in pain. That there is suffering in this world is a fact of common experience. Poverty, disease, old age, death, selfishness, meanness, greed, anger, hatred, quarrels, conflict, exploitation, etc., are rampant in this world. And that life is full of suffering, no one can deny.

2 The Truth of the Cause of Suffering:

Everything has a cause; nothing comes out of nothing. The existence of every event depends upon its causes and conditions. Everything in this world is conditional, relative, limited. Suffering being a fact, it must have a cause. It must depend on some conditions. It is desire (craving) and ignorance, which lies as the root cause of suffering. Cravings for pleasure, material goods, and even immortality, all of them are desires which can never be satisfied. Hence, craving for these desires only brings in suffering. Ignorance, on the other hand, blinds us from seeing reality; the world as actually is. Mind remains underdeveloped, and unable to grasp the nature of things, and leads to various offshoots of this ignorance in the form of hatred, envy, greed, jealousy and anger.

3 The Truth of the End of Suffering:

Because everything arises depending on some causes and conditions, therefore, if these causes and conditions are removed, the effects must also cease. The cause being removed, the effect ceases to exist. Everything being conditional and relative is necessarily momentary and what is momentary must perish. That which is born must die. End of suffering is possible on attaining 'Nirvana', which is a transcendent state free from

suffering and worldly cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

4 The Truth of the Method for attaining the End of Suffering:

There is an ethical and spiritual path by following which misery may be removed and liberation attained. This is the Noble Eight-fold Path.

The Noble Eight-fold Path consists of eight steps.

- 1 Right View – Samyak Dristi
- 2 Right Resolve – Samyak Sankalpa
- 3 Right Speech – Samyak Vacha
- 4 Right Conduct – Samyak Karmantha
- 5 Right Livelihood – Samyak Ajivika
- 6 Right Effort – Samyak Vyayama
- 7 Right Mindfulness – Samyak Dhyana
- 8 Right Concentration – Samyak Samadhi

Buddha delivered his first sermon after enlightenment at Sarnath. The Eight-fold Path or The Middle Path or The Madhyam Marg, Majjim-nikay, or Madhyamika etc. is the main context of this first speech. It is so referred (middle-way) as Buddha emphasizes between the extremes of asceticism and indulgence.

Practically the whole teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself for 45 years, deals in some way or other with this path. He explained it in different ways and in different words to different people, according to the stage of their development and their capacity to understand and follow him. But the essence of those many thousand discourses scattered in the Buddhist scriptures is found in the Noble Eight-fold Path.

It should not be thought that the eight categories or divisions of the path should be followed and practiced one after the other in the numerical order as given in the usual list above. But they are to be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together, and each helps the cultivation of the others.

These eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline: namely: (a) ethical conduct (sila), (b) mental discipline (samadhi) and (c) wisdom (panna).

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination: (Pratityasamutpada)

Pratityasamutpada, the chain or law of dependent origination, or the chain of causation - a fundamental concept of Buddhism describing the causes of suffering and the course of events that lead a being through rebirth, old age, and death.

Dependent Origination (Pratityasamutpada) is also known as conditioned co-arising. Buddhism teaches that everything that exists is conditioned - dependent on something else. This applies to thoughts as well as objects, to the individual as well as the entire universe. Nothing exists independently. Everything is conditioned.

This concept is illustrated in the Buddhist teachings of the chain of dependent origination,

which describes the factors that perpetuate the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The twelve links in the chain are sequential, each factor causing the following one: Because of this, that arises. When this ceases, that also ceases.

The links form a never-ending cycle that binds us to suffering, and the goal of Buddhist practice is to escape from this vicious cycle. The sequence of links commonly run as given below:

1. Ignorance
2. Mental formations
3. Consciousness
4. Name and form
5. The senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, and mind
6. Contact
7. Feeling
8. Craving
9. Clinging
10. Becoming
11. Birth
12. Aging and death.

The above-mentioned chain of causation is repeated frequently in early Buddhist texts. Gautama Buddha is said to have reflected on the series just prior to his enlightenment, and a right understanding of the causes of pain and the cycle of rebirth leads to emancipation from the chain's bondage.

Buddhist literature is divided into canonical and non-canonical texts. This is the most widely accepted and popular categorization of Buddhist texts.

Canonical texts

Canonical literature deals with Buddha teachings or the word of the Buddha and its main divisions are called Pitakas – Sutras, Vinaya and Abhidharma. In Pali language, together they are called Tripitakas, or “The Three Baskets”. Canonical texts are called Sutras in Sanskrit and Suttas in Pali.

Non canonical texts

Non-canonical texts are observations and commentaries on canonical texts in Pali, Tibetan, Chinese and other East Asian languages, to explain the canonical texts to monks in Sri Lanka. Pali, a Middle Indo-Aryan language of north Indian origin, is the classical and liturgical language of the Theravada Buddhism. Theravada translates to ‘the doctrines of the elders’ and these elders are referred to as senior Buddhist monks. A major chunk of the non-canonical texts were composed by the Sri Lankan monks. Non canonical Buddhist texts also include some of the most important non-canonical works of Sri Lankan monks including The Dipavamsa (the Island Chronicle), The Mahavamsa (The Great Chronicle), and Culavamsa (the Lesser Chronicle). Non canonical texts feature important historical information, quotes, definitions, biographical stories, rituals and jatakas (birth stories).

Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism

In the modern times, Buddhism is divided into two main branches – Theravada in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and Mahayana in Himalayas and East Asia. Theravada uses Buddha teachings preserved in Pali canon or Tripitaka as a core scripture. Mahayana is the largest major tradition of Buddhism with total 53% practitioners. It spreads from India to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, China and countries in Southeast Asia. It teaches that enlightenment can be attained in one's life time, even by a lay man. Mahayana considers Tripitaka as sacred text, while including other holy texts as well.

Tripitaka

Tripitaka, known as Pali canon, is the earliest collection of Buddhist writings and the word literally translates to three baskets (tri-three and pitaka = basket). Tripitaka is considered as the core scripture in all branches of Buddhism.

1. Vinaya Pitaka

The first basket Vinaya Pitaka or Discipline basket teaches about the rules and guidelines of monastic life. From basic moral principles to guidelines on interaction between monks, nuns and ordinary people to robe-making, Vinaya Pitaka gives a deep insight into 227 regulations made for monastic discipline. The origin of these rules and further development are also explained in Vinaya Pitaka.

2. Sutta Pitaka

Sutta Pitaka, the Discourse Basket, is the largest basket consisting of the discourses ascribed to Buddha and his close disciples. Sutta Pitaka is also given the name of Buddhavacana, which simply translates to 'the word of the Buddha'. It contains the records of Buddha teachings, presents theology (study of the nature of god and religious beliefs) and a detailed account on the matters of moral behaviour for all monks. Dhammapada is the most widely known Buddhist text and an important part of Sutta Pitaka.

3. Abhidharma Pitaka

Abhidharma Pitaka or the Basket of Special Doctrines mainly consists of poetries, songs and stories that revolve around the life of Buddha and his previous lives. It comprises 7 works which mainly deal with the philosophy and doctrine of Buddhism appearing in the suttas. Many Buddhist schools do not consider Abhidharma as canonical text.

Dhammapada – The Buddha's path to wisdom

Found in Pali canon and forming the core testament of ancient Buddhism, Dhammapada or Dhammapada is a succinct expression of Buddha's teachings. It offers instructions about the true nature of your existence and help you walk the path of liberation. The teachings in Dhammapada are solely based on Buddha's understanding of reality and his clarity of thought. The one who practices these teachings attain the same level of understanding and knowledge which help extricate the root cause of suffering.

The twenty six chapters with four hundred and twenty three verses in Dhammapada throw light on the multiple aspects of Buddha teachings. Through these teachings Buddha wanted people to free themselves from the evils of hatred, passion and ignorance, in order to achieve the greatest of conquests: the conquest of self. Max Muller translated the verses of Dhammapada in 1870 and then it was later translated into many languages in many coun-

tries in the world.

Some important verses of Dhammapada

Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment. Psychological Science Study defines it as “the non-judgemental awareness of experiences in the present moment”. It is one of the most important verses that helps achieve tranquility and insight meditation.

Buddha's last verses before he died also emphasised on mindfulness, which should be endeavoured diligently to free yourself from the round of rebirths. It is believed that this verse on mindfulness had such a profound impact on Emperor Asoka of India and King Anawrahta of Burma, that they adopted Buddhism and propagated its teachings in their respective countries. One needs to practice mindfulness meditation to attain this blissful state of tranquillity.

Buddhist Quotes:

1. “All that we are, is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts. It is made up of our thoughts. If one speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows one, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon”.

Explanation:

Every experience begins with a thought. No matter where you go, your evil acts and thoughts will follow. And it will eventually result in unpleasant circumstances and bad experiences. This is similar to the cartwheel that follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon. However, if you act with good thoughts and good deeds, happiness will follow like a shadow that never leaves.

2. Who bears within them enmity:

"He has abused and beaten me,
defeated me and plundered me",
hate is not allayed for them.

Explanation:

Dwelling on the thought that you were insulted, robbed, assaulted and defeated will continue to increase your anger. It becomes difficult for a person to subside his anger when he keeps thinking over his imaginary trouble. This also leads to the desire to avenge. The only way to overcome your anger is forgive and forget the wrongs done to you.

3. “Better than a thousand hollow words is one useful word, hearing which one attains peace”

Explanation:

This is similar to saying the man who conquers himself is always better than a man who conquered thousands of battles. Or you can put this as conquest of self is always better than conquest of others. A single stanza that makes you feel peaceful is better than a thousand verse poem of empty sounds. With this you can relate to the common adage ‘simple living and high thinking’. It highlights the beauty of minimalism in life. For example, it is always better to have single faithful friend than a bunch of fake friends.

Buddhist Philosophical Solutions

How to bring the science of happiness to life

The material and physical world keep people shackled to it and do not let them see the reality. This is the reason Buddha believed in a minimalist life, which helps illuminate the higher consciousness.

Buddha focuses people on Vimutti: Spiritual freedom which is the liberation of mind from bonds and fetters, physical and mental sufferings, wandering in samsara, and the cycle of rebirths.

Meditation is certainly one of the important techniques to control your mind.

It brings about

- I. A sense of detachment from the world
- II. Trains the mind to learn the art of living in the present, without worrying about the past or the future.
- III. Helps get rid of your delusions, misunderstandings and cravings.

Everyday Philosophy Guidelines

- The minimum humans can do to live a peaceful life is make peace with ourselves and live in harmony with our family and fulfill our social responsibilities.
- It is important to eliminate conflicts that poison relationships and bring immense sufferings.
- These guidelines are basic and similar to what most of the world religions teach. Along with keeping your personal integrity intact, you must consider the welfare of the ones who may get affected by your actions.
- One must try to exercise self control over his mind, body and speech.
- One should abstain from destroying life, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxicants.
- The person on the path to enlightenment should treat all beings with kindness and compassion and live a sober upright life.
- Fulfilling duties to parents, family and friends is important.
- Manifesto of peace
- Responding hatred with hatred will only breed more hatred and more violence leading to the vicious circle of vengeance and retaliation. Hatred should only be answered with love. You should learn to be patient and forgiving when someone wrongs you. In such circumstances, control your anger like a driver controls a chariot.
- The quality of generosity, truthfulness, patience and compassion distinguishes a superior human being from the ordinary ones.
- The scent of virtue, the Buddha declares, is sweeter than the scent of flowers and perfume.
- A good person will always outshine and like water his generosity will always find its way. Like a lotus always rises above the muck, the disciple of Buddha will rise above the mass of ignorant fools to attain wisdom.

Mindfulness:

Mindfulness meditation is good for your mental and physical health

- I. It decreases the stress hormone cortisol and thus helps lower stress.
- II. It helps you conquer the common blind spot and analyse yourself in order to get to know your true self.

- III. According to the researchers from the University of California, college students who practiced mindfulness meditation performed better in the verbal reasoning section of the GRE. The study says that it is an efficient way to improve your working memory with wide reaching consequences.
- IV. It helps your brain have better control over processing pain and emotions, thus makes you feel more focused and Zen.
- V. It helps you indulge in music in a way that you truly enjoy what you are listening to.
- VI. There are four major elements of mindfulness – body-awareness, self-awareness, regulation of attention and regulation of emotion. The meditation practice helps you get consciousness to regulate all four elements.
- VII. It lowers depression risk among teens and pregnant women. Researchers at the University of Michigan say that mindfulness yoga lead to an empowered and positive feeling about pregnancy. The teens that practice this technique through school programs experience less anxiety and stress.
- VIII. According to a survey conducted by American Psychological Mindfulness Yoga and meditation is an excellent way to lose weight.
- IX. One of the greatest benefits of mindfulness is that it helps you sleep better at night. According to experts, higher mindfulness is directly proportional to lower activation at bedtime. People who practice this technique enjoy quality sleep and develop ability to manage stress well.

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Mahavir & Jainism

Introduction to Mahavira

Mahavira was a wealthy prince named Vardhamana born in 599 BC in Bihar. He was 24th and last Tirthankara of the Jain religion. Jain philosophy believes that all Tirthankaras were born as normal or average human beings, but through meditation and self-actualization they attained the state of perfection and enlightenment, and became the gods of Jains.

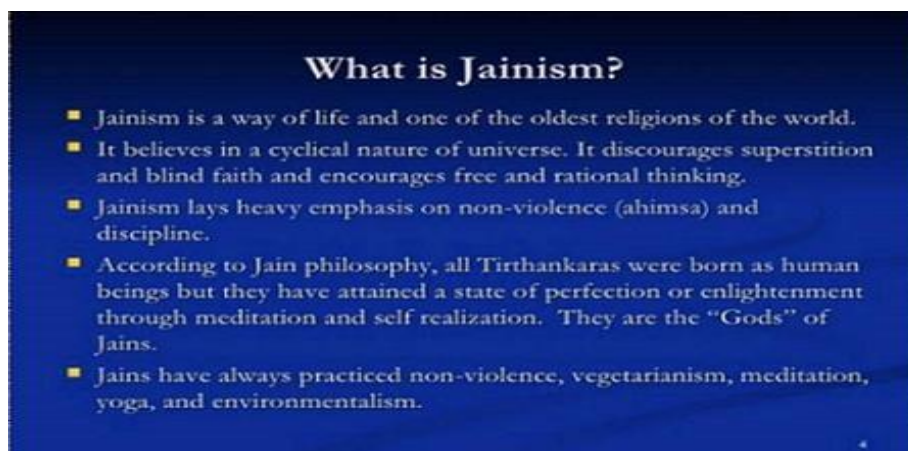
Similar to the origin of Buddha, Lord Mahavira was the son of a king and blessed with many worldly pleasures. He chose to give up on material possessions at the age of thirty and left his home in search of the ultimate truth and for the meaning of life.

Ahimsa or nonviolence was one of his core teachings and practices, as he believed that every living being has a soul and it shouldn't be harmed. After leaving his home, Lord Mahavira spent 12 intense years in deep silence and meditation. During this time, he carefully avoided harming any living creature and sustained without food for long periods, enabling him a deeper spiritual connect, leading him to develop super powers. Due to unbearable hardships he had gone through, he was given the name Mahavira, meaning brave and courageous.

He then travelled all across the length and breadth of India, in order to preach to the people the eternal truth he had realised. His objective was to minimise the sufferings of people and show them the path of liberation and total freedom from pain, misery, and the cycle of life and death.

Lord Mahavira is widely regarded as the founder of Jainism as he persuaded the valuable teachings of his predecessors, the 23 Tirthankaras or prophets. Lord Mahavira's immediate disciples were known as Gandharas and Srut-kevalis. These invaluable teachings of Lord Mahavira were later compiled by his disciples into the significant texts that now form the basis of Jain Literature.

The teachings of Mahavira were initially transferred orally from gurus to their disciples, as religious scriptures were considered as precious as materialistic possessions. And non-possession or non-attachment is one of the five important vows of Jainism.



What is Jainism?

- Jainism is a way of life and one of the oldest religions of the world.
- It believes in a cyclical nature of universe. It discourages superstition and blind faith and encourages free and rational thinking.
- Jainism lays heavy emphasis on non-violence (ahimsa) and discipline.
- According to Jain philosophy, all Tirthankaras were born as human beings but they have attained a state of perfection or enlightenment through meditation and self realization. They are the "Gods" of Jains.
- Jains have always practiced non-violence, vegetarianism, meditation, yoga, and environmentalism.

However, after one thousand years of Mahavira's death (niravana), it became difficult for Jain Acharyas to memorise everything taught by the scholars in the past. Unfortunately, significant amounts of knowledge were lost, others were modified and polluted, with no means to verify. The Archarayas then felt the need to document these texts.

At the same time, two major sects named Digambar and Shwetambar were formed. These two aspects have opposing views on the validity and acceptance of the now documented Jain Scriptures.

Jain literature is majorly divided into two categories

- B. Agam Literature (canonical texts):** Comprised of written Prakrit language, Agam literature constitutes original scriptures compiled by the Gandharas and elder monks, known as Srut-kevalis.
- C. Non- agam Literature (non-canonical texts):** Written in prakrit, Sanskrit, old Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, German and English, non-agam literature constitutes commentaries and explanations of Agam Literature and independent works of scholars.

A. Agam Literature

Also known as Agam Sutras or Jain Agams, these scriptures are considered as sacred books of Jain literature. While other religions have the Gita, the Bible or the Quran, Jainism does not have any sacred book. Instead, the scriptures of Jainism have multiple sacred sutras.

Each teaching is a great reverence for all forms of life, Agam sutras constitute strict codes of nonviolence, vege-tarianism, non-possession, and compassion. Agam Lit-erature is further divided into two groups - Ang Agams and Angbahya Agams. Ang sutras are direct teachings of Lord Mahavira and Angbahya are the commentaries and explanations of Agam sutras.

B. Digambar Literature

According to Digambar Literture, there were total 26 Agam sutras and all of them were lost over the years. Because of this belief, the followers of Digambar sect do not consider agam sutras as authentic scriptures. The religious scriptures that the followers of this sect believe in are the ones written by Great Acharayas from 100 to 1000 AD. The basis of their work is the original agam sutras.

Five main principles propagated by Lord Mahavira

A. Belief in soul and Karma: Mahavira believed that every living creature or anything that breathes has a soul. The soul is held in a constant state of bondage due to Karma- the natural consequence of our thoughts, words and actions. The soul, how-ever, can be liberated from this bondage by disintegrating Karmic force and freedom from worldly attachments and possessions.

When the soul crumbles the cycle of Karma, one can feel the innate power and intrinsic value of soul. The soul (atma) becomes parmatama when it attains infinite greatness and shines to its

full radiance. Hence, Jains do not believe in worshipping one particular god. In fact, they admire the liberated souls of Tirthankaras who attained nirvana.

B. Niravana:

Mahavira, the enlightened, believed that the ultimate objective of life is to achieve salvation. He insists that one should avoid the evil karmas done in the past and prevent indulging in new evil karmas. This can be achieved by following the five important vows:

- Non-violence (Ahimsa)
- Speaking truth (Satya)
- Non-stealing (Asteya),
- Non-adultery (Brahmacharya)
- Non-possession (Aparigraha)

In addition to these vows, Mahavira also throws light on the principles of right conduct, right knowledge, and right faith. While these vows and principles are for householders, there are strict codes for monks in Jain scriptures.

C. Non-belief in God:

Mahavira believed that universe has no starting and end and hence there is no creator or destroyer of the universe. The universe and its elements simply change their form. This means the liberation of man does not depend on any outside authority; man is the maker and destroyer of his own destiny. He can get rid of his miseries and sorrows by subduing the bodily desires and leading the path of austerity. According to him, renunciation is the best way to achieve salvation.

D. Ahimsa:

Ahimsa is one of the most significant principles persuaded by Mahavira. Mahavira believed that every creature including animals, plants, stones and rocks etc has life and it shouldn't be harmed come what may. Jains took greatly to the concept of Ahimsa, popularised it and put an end to sacrifices.

E. Freedom to women:

Mahavira believed in the freedom and liberation of women. According to him, the right to attain nirvana is equally important for women. At a time when sages and wise men did not pay attention to the condition of women, Mahavira wanted them to be on the same level as men. Mahavira was not a believer in the caste system and distinction of classes on the basis of that.

Modern Outlook of Jainism: Inception of modern concepts for the upliftment of society.

Besides discovering "brahmi and other lipis", the first Tirthankara of Jainism Lord Rsabhadeva started sowing the seeds for future generations by introducing the concepts of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Also, the Bhagwad Purana of the Hindus has some reference to Jainism. The three great religions of India, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, have played a significant role in shaping the culture and civilization of India. The

ultimate aim of these three religions is the attainment of “moksha” or absolution “niravana”. The subjects of cooking, building, construction, reading writings have been taught to Jain monks, laymen and women by Rsab-hadeva. These teachings enabled them to lead fulfilling social lives, while preserving and sustaining Indian Culture.

The Indian King Siddharaja offered great respect to Jainism and educated people about literature, art, sculpture, painting and music under its influence. The great King Akbar is said to pay heed to Jain pontiffs and persuaded Jainism to shape the culture of India. There have been several Jain monks well-known for their contributions to literary accomplishments. These monks have explained the brilliant concepts of astronomy, astrology, prosody and didactic literature through dramas, kathas and scientific literature.

Video

<https://youtu.be/KAc33hNc7ak>

Jainism in the current scenario

Looking at the current day scenario where wars are constantly happening between countries for possession of land and its resources, Jain practices like Ahimsa and Aparigraha (non-possession) are of great importance when used astutely and wisely. These practices can go a long way when it comes reshaping the life of people socially and economically.

Jain scripture as well as, other ancient scriptures say the first 25 years is the Brahmacharya life, in other words, it is the time you spend on acquiring knowledge and not on pleasure or pleasurable activities. Unfortunately we flout all that is laid down in our scriptures because of ignorance of our own scriptures. Our youth craves for guidance but it is not forthcoming from adults which is their irresponsibility.

Jainism opened its door for anyone and everyone, irrespective of one's caste colour and creed. There is no concept of untouchability and class system, as the religion believes in humanism or the equality of human beings. The five Mahavratas of Jainism can help set up a new value system that can help tackle modern day problems like bad eating, drinking and overall lifestyle of current generation. These problems are corroding the life of individuals.

Jainism can be reformed to form a new value system

Like Mahavira reformed the existing religion to fit in the value system of current generation, Jainism can be reformed, rationalized and re-oriented to adapt with the change in time. Religions cannot be static; instead they should be dynamic to ensure that the past glory perfectly translates into permanent reality. The Jain philosophy of understanding and respecting others views is quite progressive and has the potential to bring about a synthesis between its ancient doctrines and social, economic and cultural needs of the current century.

Conclusion: Change is the only constant

Jainism is more of moral code than a religion that believes in a supreme being. However, it reveres the individuals who understood their higher consciousness and became spiritually great. The most progressive thing about Jainism is that it did not dogmatise, according to its fundamental logic there is no absolute affirmation and denial. If necessity arose, Jainism will

not be unwilling to accept the existence of Supreme Being. The power of accommodation and dynamism is that the religion survived in India till date.

What is the similarity between Buddhism and Jainism?

Similarities Between Hinduism and Buddhism	
□ Both religions believe in the concept of karma and reincarnation.	□ Both believe in renunciation of worldly life to enter spiritual life. Both consider desire as the chief cause of suffering.
□ Both emphasize compassion and non-violence towards all living beings.	□ Both believe that liberation, not rebirth or heavenly life, is the best solution to the problem of suffering and bondage.
□ Both believe in spiritual practices like meditation and concentration to help reach a certain state of mind.	

Three jewels in Jain philosophy

Right belief

The first step to self-actualization is adopting a rational attitude in life and renouncing superstitious beliefs. Right perception means one should be able to see and understand the true nature of every substance in the universe. One should not only try to understand the nature of reality, but also understand one's own self, religious goals and the path that needs to be followed to achieve them. To invest in one's full faith in preaching of Tirthankas, one should know, analyze, verify, test and be satisfied of its nature of reality and efficacy.

Right knowledge

Right knowledge means the true and relevant knowledge of reality. To understand reality, it is important to understand the elements of the universe and their relationship. Essentially, it means the proper knowledge of six universal substances and 9 tattvas. While the six substances include soul, matter, motion, rest, space and time, nine tattvas include soul, matter, asrava, bandh, punya, papa, samvara, nirjara, and Moksha.

Right Conduct

Proper, appropriate, correct and honest conduct of human soul is called known as Right Conduct. The aim of human soul is to attain the state of perfect equanimity. This can only be achieved by liberating yourself from attachment, aversion and impure thoughts, words and deeds. To practice the principles of self-realization, one needs to have right conduct, which comprises ethical codes, roles and disciplines.

The Jain theory of Non absolutism and Syadvada

The theory of Non-absolutism (Anekantavada) is one of the important principles of Jainism. The theory teaches the art of maintaining open-mindedness. It talks about the recognition of different perspectives and preaches respect for differences in belief. This theory of Jainism encourages its followers and believers to be considerate about the point of views and beliefs of opposing parties. Also, the theory had a great influence on Mahatma Gandhi who adopted the principle of Ahimsa and religious tolerance.

The theory is based on a practical observation that all objects in the universe exist in a variety of modes and possess infinite qualities. Therefore, it's not possible for the finite human perception to grasp all the possible manifestations and aspects of objects. However, Kevalins (omnipresent beings) have the potential to absorb objects in their all or full manifestations; others are only partially capable. And thus, a particular point of view can't claim to represent the absolute truth.

Other important teachings by Lord Mahavira

Five rules of conduct (Samitis)

The First rule is about the Regulation of walking, which says one should look ahead up to 6 feet distance while walking in order to avoid causing injury to any living being. The second rule talks about Regulation of Speaking, which encourages to avoid eight faults of speech including pride, deceit, fear, gossip, anger, slander, greed, and laughter. And, one should always use sinless and concise speech.

The third samiti encourages begging monks to search for pure food and other articles and use them in a faultless manner. Fourth Samiti is about the regulation of taking and keeping which preaches one take up or lay down an article in a careful manner to ensure even the tiniest creature is not harmed or killed in the process.

The last is the Regulation of Disposal which says while disposing of mucus, urine and stool; it is important to ensure that it does not spread germs around and cause any kind of illness or disease to anybody.

The impermanence of world - Like Buddha, Mahavira also emphasized on the concept of impermanence which says nothing in the universe is permanent. However, the whole universe is permanent. Thus, spiritual values are important to achieve freedom from the worldly pleasures. It is important to break all worldly attachments to achieve ultimate stability.

No one provides protection – According to this principle, people think they can't fight death, old age and disease. But one can conquer all these by destroying his karma. This means a person is responsible and accountable for his own actions and karma. He is his own saviour and responsible for achieving total freedom and enlightenment.

The solitude of the soul – The soul comes to the world alone and departs alone. It is solitary and lonely in existence. Since the soul is accountable for its actions, it deems to suffer the bad consequences and enjoy good circumstances

Separateness - This principle says that the body is matter and soul is consciousness. The soul leaves the body after death, so one shouldn't be controlled by the desires and greed of his body.

Developing attachment to worldly objects will make your soul lingering in the never-ending cycle of birth and death.

The influx of Karma – Every time you suffer or enjoy through your five senses, you accumulate more karma. Such a thought will make you more conscious and prevent the influx of karma. To stop the influx of karma, one should stop the evil thoughts and indulge in meditation and achieve spiritual knowledge. To destroy your previously acquired karma, it is important to tread the path of austerity and meditation.

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Jesus & Christainity

Jesus - The Son of God

Jesus was a Galilean Jew who was baptized by John the Baptist and subsequently began his own ministry, preaching his message orally and often being referred to as "rabbi". Jesus debated with fellow Jews on how to best follow God, engaged in healings, taught in parables and gathered followers. He was arrested and tried by the Jewish authorities, and turned over to the Roman government, and was subsequently crucified on the order of Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect. After his death, his followers believed he rose from the dead, and the community they formed eventually became the Christian Church.

His birth is celebrated annually on December 25 (or various dates in January for some east-ern churches) as a holiday known as Christmas, his crucifixion is honored on Good Friday, and his resurrection is celebrated on Easter. The widely used calendar era "AD", from the Latin Anno Domini ("in the year of the Lord"), and the alternative "CE", are based on the approximate birth date of Jesus.

Christian doctrines include the beliefs that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin named Mary, performed miracles, founded the Church, died by crucifixion as a sacrifice to achieve atonement, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, from where he will return.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another – Jesus Christ

Introduction to Christianity

The three great monotheist religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) maintain that every one of us can enter into a personal relationship with a God who: listens to each of us, tries to speak to each of us and offer guidance/ support to each of us.

All three religions believe that God wants each of us to enter into that relationship with him. Actually, he attempts through whatever means that become available to him to draw us into it – encouraging us to respond to him.

With 2.1 billion followers all across the world, Christianity is hands down the world's largest religion. The sacred texts of Christianity are based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, who is known to have lived in the Holy Land over 2000 years ago.

Christianity is all about one life, the life of Jesus the Son of God. The Bible teaches that Je-sus was God Himself, come to live in His world as a human. The name "Jesus Christ" itself explains Christ's divine and human nature. "Jesus" is an expression of his humanity while "Christ" (from Greek Christos, anointed) describes how he is indeed the Son of God. Thus, his name is a unification of his divine and human natures.

In Christianity, the single most important event is the Resurrection. Particularly for the time period, Jesus' death was unique among other religions.

Please take note of this because as the other ancient belief systems were sacrificing animals to the gods Jesus was the first human sacrifice.

According to the texts he is born again. In the Apostles' Creed, Jesus goes down into hell or, more precisely, Sheol, and rises up into heaven. This allows for the deceased to enter heaven. Before Jesus' death, hell and death were closely connected. Since the death of Christ the fear that was linked with death has been removed, as the philosophy now clearly pointed to being united with the father (if you did good things, ie).

The Entry of Afterlife

The basic ideas of heaven and hell became extremely relevant and people struggled to ensure that they would do good, serve and live in peace in order to attain 'salvation'. But the idea that there is life beyond the grave is an important thought. However, that place is in heaven. This negates the notion of reincarnation and karma. It brings the belief of judgment by the Lord who will decide whether you are worthy of heaven or hell. In popular culture heaven and hell are essentially deserved compensations for the kind of earthly lives we live. Good people go to heaven as a deserved reward for a virtuous life, and bad people go to hell as a just punishment for an immoral life; in that way, the scales of justice are sometimes thought to balance.

Christianity 101

1. God's love towards man is a major theme in Christianity

God is always ready to give us humans far more than we rightfully deserve. Grace, more than anything else, demonstrates that God really wants a loving personal relationship with each one of us.

2. Holy Trinity

The Trinity consists of God the Father, God the Son (or Jesus the Son of God) and God the Holy Spirit.

3. Jesus and the "Cross"

Jesus as God's incarnate was still a God. According to Christianity God's so loved us that he provided his 'own son' as a sacrifice to save all of mankind. The Lamb of God (lambs were sacrificed for God) in order to pay for humankind's wrongdoings. Wrongdoings in the christian sense are known as 'SINS'.

It is also believed that the 'resurrection' to new life and 'ascension' into heaven by Jesus, after his death 'on the cross', demonstrates most positively the victory over death that is offered to us.

4. Jesus as "Our Lord and Saviour"

The savior who dearly loves us all and deals with each and every one of us (and humanity as a whole) in an all knowing pragmatic manner.

The 10 Commandments

Jesus' special Two Commandments

But when Jesus was asked, in an attempted act of entrapment, which of the Ten Commandments did he consider the most important, he provided much more by offering his own two commandments of love, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Then continuing, Jesus added, "Love your neighbour as yourself" [Matthew 22:24-37].

The Three G's

The three most important words for the Christian life begin with a "G." They are guilt, grace, and gratitude, and they're words you should know.

1. Guilt

According to Romans 3.20, the Law of God exposes our guilt, and it shows us where exactly we have broken God's commandments. Without hearing the Law, we will continue to go on in our lives thinking that we're doing just fine. We will inevitably create standards (a.k.a. "laws") by which we can live and others will never really measure up to—avoiding the real-ity that all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. We need to hear a message of guilt, so that we will wake up to the message of grace.

2. Grace

The Gospel of God is all about God's grace to lawbreakers. In his Son, God has taken upon himself the judgment and punishment we deserved for breaking the law, and he has also perfectly obeyed all of the law for us. Jesus Christ measured up so we wouldn't have to. The message of grace is what God has done for us—not what we can do for God.

3. Gratitude

Our only response to hearing this message of grace is heartfelt gratitude to God and loving service to our neighbors. When someone gives us a gift that we weren't expecting, our usual response is gratitude. The gospel does this to us a hundredfold and causes us to rejoice and praise God! We are filled with faith, hope, and love; and even good works spill over onto others because of this great work that God has done for us—and is doing in us.

The Philosophy of Christianity

The Philosophy of Christianity is a way of life. It involves the reason for human life, why human life was created and sustained by God and nourished by His Spirit, and lastly, to where our human life is destined to lead us in the future.

The word "life" by which Christianity is denominated is interpreted by its profound and expansive usage as promoted and detailed by the apostle John in his Gospel.

He writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.... [Christ Jesus is] the true light, which enlightens everyone" (John 1:1-9 NRSV).

This is the true "life" that mankind must adopt. Its acceptance by humanity makes Christianity to be a Philosophy of Life. It is our emulating and living that particular "Life" that en-

lightens us with unlimited truth and in an inseparable way it unites us with the personality and the bodily presence of Christ Jesus.

The Philosophy of Christianity shows that our lives are centered "in Christ." It is not a matter of what we do or what we do not do in a religious sense that makes the difference. The key to the whole thing is: Who is it who lives in us? Who are we a part of? Who is co-bodied with us? If Christ does indeed live in us (as we are assured by the Holy Scriptures that he does), then we are even now reckoned by God the Father to be as holy, altogether righteous and absolutely worthy in His eyes as is Christ Jesus himself. We are gracefully endowed with such righteousness in God's eyes (not that we are actually righteous of ourselves), that when the Father looks on Christ at the present in heaven, He sees US IN HIM. And even more wonderful in one way of viewing it, when the Father sees us now on earth, He sees CHRIST IN ALL OF US! In a word, we have already been saved "in Christ" and we will always be saved. Christ saves all humans in particular time periods known to Him (II Timothy 2:4-6).

Christian philosophy represents an entire worldview, a view that is consistent with the Bible throughout.

The Christian philosophy embraces the meaningful, purposeful life, a life in which you shape your beliefs according to a coherent, reasonable, truthful worldview. Philosophy after all is a way of life, and the Christian believes that he has the true way—the true pattern for living. It is the task of the Christian leader to understand the ideologies of his day so that he may be able to meet their challenges. The task is a never-ending one, for, although the Christian's worldview does not change, the world about him does. Thus the task of showing the relevance of the Christian realistic philosophy to a world in process is one which requires eternal vigilance.

The Bible

The book that the Christians follow is called The Bible. It is an entire library, with stories, songs, poetry, letters and history, as well as literature that might more obviously qualify as 'religious'.

The Christian Bible has two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the original Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith, written at different times between about 1200 and 165 BC. The New Testament books were written by Christians in the first century AD.

The sheer diversity of literature in the Bible is one of the secrets of its continuing popularity through the centuries. There is something for all moods and many different cultures. Its message is not buried in religious jargon only accessible to either believers or scholars, but reflects the issues that people struggle with in daily life. Despite their different emphases, all its authors shared the conviction that this world and its affairs are not just a haphazard sequence of random coincidences, but are the forum of God's activity - a God who (unlike the God of the philosophers) is not remote or unknowable, but a personal being who can be known by ordinary people.

Many pastors interpret the bible according to their understanding, however, the true meaning could be quite different from what is being sermonised at the pulpit. One thing that is certain, in today's scenario the Bible cannot be taken literally. Because if you do, then you end up acting like a crazy person, and stoning adulterers. It's been passed down through centuries which were relevant then but the essence of Christianity remains true even today for those who follow the religion.

There is a lot of debate between Christians on the relevance of the Bible and the Church. Many believe that even though times have changed the bible is still relevant as there are truths and wisdom that does not change.

However, modern believers and thinkers in recent evolution believe that the Bible is irrelevant in today's culture. Especially on the topic of embracing gay marriages. However, the point of debate is that everyone has a relationship with God which is based on love. And that is what many pastors try to maintain and talk to people about that as the Gospel is timeless.

The Old Testament-Word of God:

The Bible (from biblos, Greek for 'book') is the basis of two great religions, Judaism in the Old Testament and Christianity in the New Testament. In each case it brings together a group of documents to tell the story of the founders and early followers of the religion. In doing so it also explains their beliefs.

The books of the Jewish Bible are believed to have been written over several centuries, beginning in the 10th century BC - by which time the Hebrews are settled in Canaan, or Palestine.

The holiest part of the Bible for Jews is the first five books, known as the Torah ('instruction' or 'law' in Hebrew)

In Exodus, the second book of the Torah, the religious identity of the Hebrew tribes is firmly established through the leadership and inspiration of Moses.

It is to Moses that God reveals his name (from the burning bush), saying 'I Am Who I Am'.

This gives him a name written with four Hebrew letters, YHWH, meaning 'He Who Is'.

God's name is later considered too holy to be spoken, but with its vowels added it is Yahweh.

In Christian versions of the Old Testament it becomes written as Jehovah.

God also reveals to Moses the ten commandments. If the Hebrews obey these laws, God will favour them as his chosen people and will bring them into the promised land of Canaan.

The Ten commandments are followed by Catholics today but many of the Commandments have become obsolete. Viewing the Law of Moses as a whole, there are hundreds of laws that today are no longer in force. The New Testament has quoted some of the old Testament commands as being inadequate or in need of replacement and some are quoted with approval. The New testament does not quote the Ten commandments as a moral authority of Christians.

Perfect Symmetry of the 39 Books of the Old Testament				
17 Books of History		5 Books of Wisdom, Poetry, and Praise	17 Books of Prophecy	
5 Books Law (Torah)	12 Books OT History		5 Books Major Prophets	12 Books Minor Prophets
1 Genesis	6 Joshua	18 Job	23 Isaiah	28 Hosea
2 Exodus	7 Judges	19 Psalms	24 Jeremiah	29 Joel
3 Leviticus	8 Ruth	20 Proverbs	25 Lament.	30 Amos
4 Numbers	9 1 Samuel	21 Ecclesiastes	26 Ezekiel	31 Obadiah
5 Deuteronomy	10 2 Samuel	22 Song of Songs	27 Daniel	32 Jonah
	11 1 Kings			33 Micah
	12 2 Kings			34 Nahum
	13 1 Chron			35 Habakkuk
	14 2 Chron			36 Zephaniah
	15 Ezra			37 Haggai
	16 Nehemiah			38 Zechariah
	17 Esther			39 Malachi

What is the importance of the Old Testament?

The teachings of the New Testament, which is widely adopted by most churches and Christians, are based on the teachings and events of the Old Testament.

The Old and the New Testament have a shared heritage. For Christians, the Old Testament sets the cosmic and temporal contexts for the New Testament. It is "Part One" of a unique two-part epic. Jesus, Peter and Paul, Matthew and John, and numerous others in the New Testament, frequently quote from the Old Testament. On the temporal plane, that is life here and now, the Old Testament is essential for anyone seeking to understand the human condition and humankind, for anyone seeking the answers to the most fundamental questions of life and death.

During the rapid growth of Christian community, Old Testament was considered as the main source of literature. One can easily understand the teachings of the New Testament if they know the events, characters, laws, and promises of the Old Testament. One can find guidance for his/her own life while learning about the characters of Old Testament. It teaches to stand firm in your conviction, to await the fruits of faithfulness, and to sincerely confess sin early. It explains that your sins can have an adverse consequence on our loved ones and similarly your good behavior can have a positive reward for those around you. The book teaches us to love and serve God. It unveils God's character interestingly. The famous stories of Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, and Abraham and Sarah are a part of the Old Testament.

The New Testament:

Written between 50 and 100 AD, the New Testament consists of 27 books, divided into two sections – The Gospels and the Letters. While gospels tell the story of Jesus, the Letters (written by Christian's leaders) is the source of guidance for the earliest church communities.

Church leaders used to communicate with their converts through these Letters. These letters offered advice to people on how to express their commitment to Jesus. These letters are answers to questions, as reading them is like listening to the one half of a conversation. The gospels tell the story of teachings of Jesus, his death, and resurrection. They don't demonstrate the biographies of Jesus but emphasise on his significance for different cultures. It reflects the story of how Christianity spread and became a world-wide faith.

The New Testament builds on the Old Testament's foundation with further revelation from God. The New Testament offers a fresh perspective on the Old Testament and interprets the true meaning of human life and history. It adheres to the core Jewish faith that there is only one God and he makes a moral claim on human life. God's revelation in Scripture is progressive; the New Testament brings into sharper focus principles that were introduced in the Old Testament. Jesus was not trying to teach a new standard of conduct and new rules of living. In fact, he was shedding light on the old ethic and giving a fresh perspective to it. He was the God of Old Testament revelation, as his teachings were directly from the writings of Moses.

Church History:

The history of the Christian faith, began about 30 A.D. in Palestine with a small number of Jews and Jewish Proselytes, following the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By the third century A.D., Christianity had grown to become the dominant religion of the northern Mediterranean world. It also gained important extensions to the east and south of the Mediterranean.

The Christian Church is a term generally used by Protestants to refer to the whole group of people belonging to Christianity throughout history. The Church is the place of worship for all believers of Christianity. The leadership of the Church began with the apostles. The Church spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. At the same time it became a highly persecuted religion. The Roman authorities persecuted it because like Judaism, its monotheistic teachings were foreign to the polytheistic traditions of the ancient world and a challenge to the imperial cult. However, the Church grew rapidly until it was legalised and promoted by the Emperors in the 4th century as the state Church of the Roman Empire.

The Roman State took on Christianity as a religion in 380 AD. Religion then on became political as the followers of Trinitarian Christianity were entitled to be referred to Catholic Christians, while others were considered to be heretics, considered illegal. This new legal situation resulted in capital punishment of the heretic. In centuries of state sponsored Christianity, non believers and pagans were routinely persecuted.

There had been long frictions between the Bishop of Rome and the eastern patriarchs within the Byzantine empire. Rome's changing allegiance set the Church on a course toward separation. As a result the redevelopment of Western Europe and the gradual fall of the Eastern Roman Empire to the Arabs and Turks resulted in Eastern scholars fleeing the Moslem hordes bringing in ancient manuscripts to the West. This was a factor of the period of the Western Renaissance there.

During the 16th century the changes brought by Renaissance eventually led to Protestant Reformation. At this time, a series of non-theological disputes also led to the independence of the the Church of England. Western Europe spread the Catholic Church and the Protestant and reformed churches around the world, especially in America. These developments led to Christianity being the largest religion in the world today.

Differences between Protestants and Catholics

They worship the same God, but the principles of their faith are different. Five hundred years after the Reformation, there are still painful divisions between Protestants and Catholics.

In Germany, the country of the Reformation, a deep animosity divided Catholic and Protestant Christians up until a few decades ago. This division had deepened over the centuries through religious conflicts and wars.

It all started when Reformation took place, 500 years ago, as Martin Luther (1483-1546) tried to reform the Catholic Church. His attempt to do so instead led to a schism in the church.

Christianity as we see it today

We live in a time of change. We have seen at-tacks terrorize the West, revolutions topple long standing regimes and technologies change the way we communicate. And we are also witnessing changes in the world's largest religion—Christianity. Nominal Christianity is in a very fluid state of change.

For Example

The Globalization of Christianity

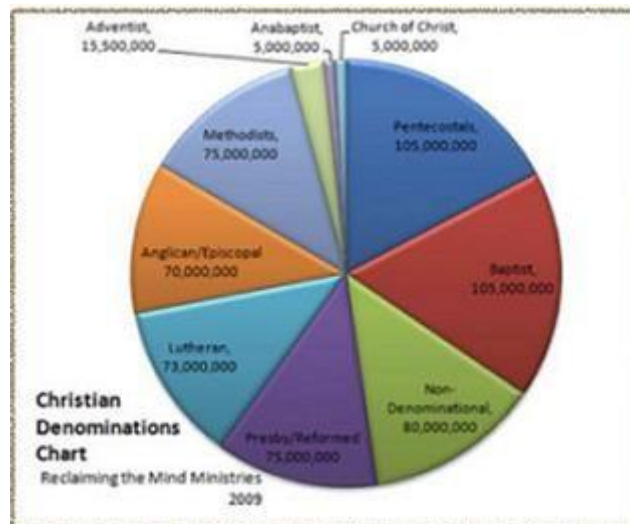
A. In the early modern world, the West spread Christianity to Asians, Africans, and Native Americans. At the same time, the West developed a modern scientific outlook that sharply challenged Western Christianity.

1. Christianity achieved a global presence for the first time
2. the Scientific Revolution fostered a different approach to the world
3. there is continuing tension between religion and science in the Western world

B. The early modern period was a time of cultural transformation.

1. both Christianity and scientific thought connected distant peoples
2. Scientific Revolution also caused new cultural encounter, between science and religion
3. science became part of the definition of global modernity

C. Europeans were central players, but they did not act alone.



- I. The pope is reaching out to different groups in a way, it seems, no pope has done before. The conciliatory positions of Pope Francis I have led people to describe him as “the people’s pope” and “a pope for everyone.”
- II. More and more denominations are endorsing and/or performing same-sex marriages or civil unions.
- III. Megachurches that have no firm doctrines, but mainly serve as social and community service hubs for attendees, have become popular.
- IV. Many churches are changing their teaching of hell, transforming it into an ethereal “state of mind” of eternal separation from God’s love.

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ISLAM

The Beginning of Islam

Life of Muhammad the Prophet

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are three of the world's great monotheistic faiths. They share many of the same holy sites, such as Jerusalem, and prophets, such as Abraham. Collectively, scholars refer to these three religions as the Abrahamic faiths, since it is believed that Abraham and his family played vital roles in the formation of these religions.

Islam began with the Prophet Muhammad. Islam means "surrender" and its central idea is a surrendering to the will of God. Its central article of faith is that "There is no god but God and Muhammad is his messenger". Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims believe that they are following in the same tradition as the Judeo-Christian figures Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus who they believe were significant prophets before Muhammad.

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, provides very little detail about Muhammad's life; however, the hadiths, or sayings of the Prophet, which were largely compiled in the centuries following Muhammad's death, provide a larger narrative for the events in his life (although there is significant debate in the Muslim world as to which Hadiths are accurate). Muhammad was born in 570 C.E. in Mecca, and his early life was unremarkable. He married a wealthy widow named Khadija who was 15 years older and his employer. Around 610 C.E., Muhammad had his first religious experience, where he was instructed to recite by the Angel Gabriel. After a period of introspection and self-doubt, Muhammad accepted his role as God's prophet and began to preach word of the one God, or Allah in Arabic. His first convert was his wife. Muhammad's divine recitations form the Qur'an and are organized into books (surahs) and verses (ayat). Because these revelations focused on a form of monotheism considered threat-ening to Mecca's ruling tribe (the Quraysh), which Muhammad was a part of, the early Mus-lims faced significant persecution. Eventually in 622, Muhammad and his followers fled Mecca for the city of Yathrib, which is known as Medina today, where his community was welcomed. This event is known as the Hijra, or emigration. 622, the year of the Hijra (A.H.), marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar, which is still in use today.

Between 625-630 C.E., there were a series of battles fought between the Meccans and Muhammad and the new Muslim community. Eventually, Muhammad was victorious and reentered Mecca in 630. One of Muhammad's first actions was to purge the Kaaba of all of its idols (before this, the Kaaba was a major site of pilgrimage for the polytheistic religious traditions of the Arabian Peninsula and contained numerous idols of pagan gods). The Kaaba is believed to have been built by Abraham (or Ibrahim as he is known in Arabic) and his son, Ishmael. The Arabs claim descent from Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar. The Kaaba then became the most important center for pilgrimage in Islam. In 632, Muhammad died in Medina. Muslims believe that he was the final in a line of prophets, which included Moses, Abraham, and Jesus.

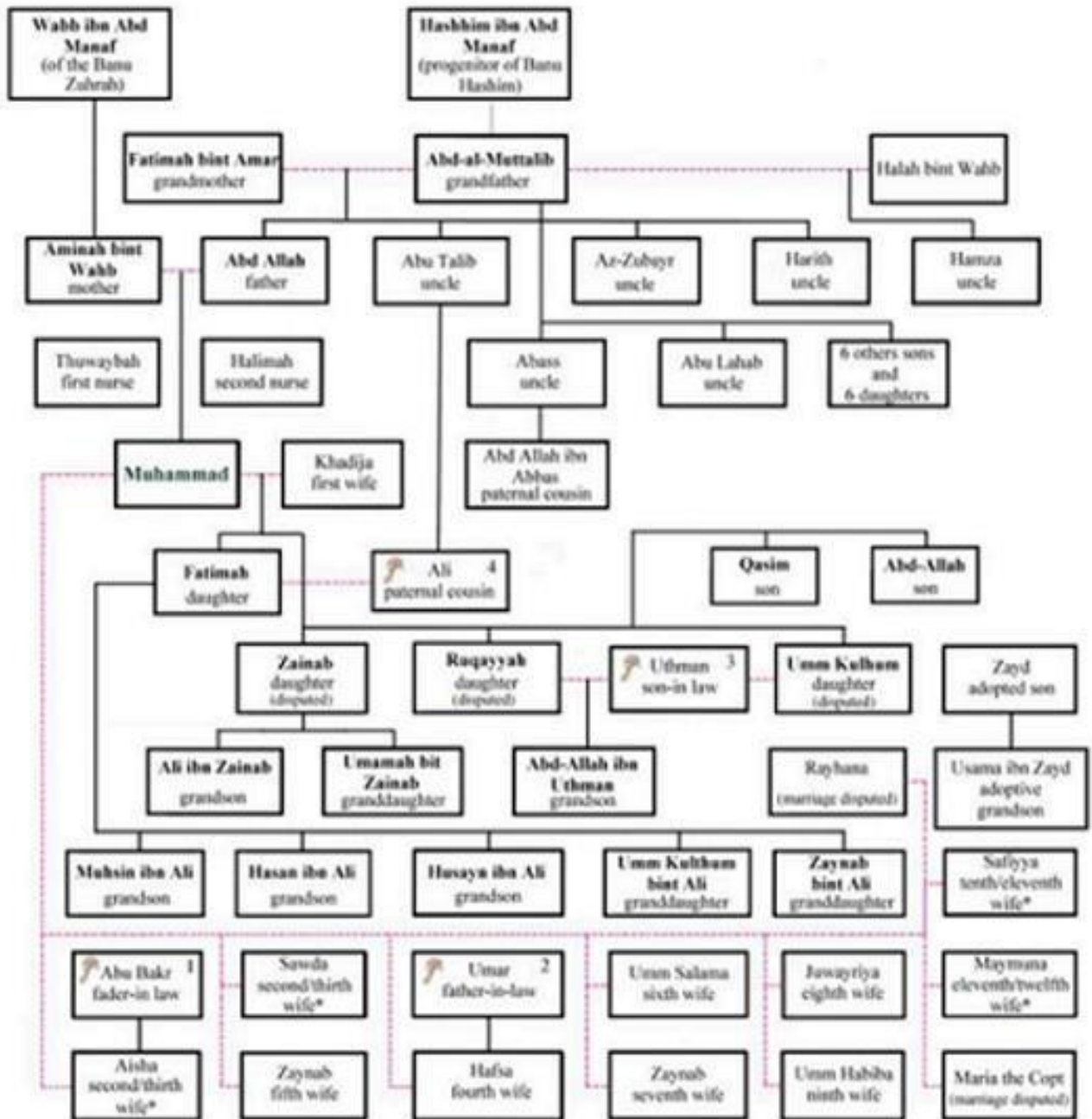
After Muhammad's Death

The century following Muhammad's death was dominated by military conquest and expansion. Muhammad was succeeded by the four "rightly-guided" Caliphs (khalifa or successor in Arabic): Abu Bakr (632-34 C.E.), Umar (634-44 C.E.), Uthman (644-56 C.E.), and Ali (656-

661 C.E.). The Qur'an is believed to have been codified during Uthman's reign. The final caliph, Ali, was married to Fatima, Muhammad's daughter and was murdered in 661. The death of Ali is a very important event; his followers, who believed that he should have succeeded Muhammad directly, became known as the Shi'a ("party" or "followers"), referring to the followers of Ali. Today, the Shi'ite community is composed of several different branches, and there are large Shia populations in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain. The Sunnis, who do not hold that Ali should have directly succeeded Muhammad, compose the largest branch of Islam; their adherents can be found across North Africa, the Middle East, as well as in Asia and Europe.

During the seventh and early eighth centuries, the Arab armies conquered large swaths of territory in the Middle East, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and Central Asia, despite ongoing civil wars in Arabia and the Middle East. Eventually, the Umayyad Dynasty emerged as the rulers, with Abd al-Malik completing the Dome of the Rock, one of the earliest surviving Islamic monuments, in 691/2 C.E. The Umayyads reigned until 749/50 C.E., when they were overthrown. The Abbasid Dynasty assumed the Caliphate and ruled large sections of the Islamic world. However, with the Abbasid Revolution, no one ruler would ever again control all of the Islamic lands.

Family tree of Muhammad



The direct lineage is marked in **bold**

*Indicates that the marriage order is disputed

👤 The Rightly Guided Caliphs or The Righteous Caliphs

Islam: 7th century

In the 7th century Arabia becomes the cradle of the world's third great monotheistic religion. All three have begun within a small area of southwest Asia. First Judaism, somewhere in

the region stretching up from the Red Sea to Palestine; then Christianity at the northern end of this area; and finally Islam to the south, in Mecca, close to the Red Sea.

Each of the later arrivals in this close family of religions claims to build upon the message of its predecessors, bringing a better and more up-to-date version of the truth about the one God - in this case as revealed to the Messenger of God, Muhammad. Islam means 'surrender' (to God), and from the same root anyone who follows Islam is a Muslim.

It is on Mount Hira, according to tradition that the archangel Gabriel appears to Muhammad. He describes later how he seemed to be grasped by the throat by a luminous being, who commanded him to repeat the words of God. On other occasions Muhammad often has similar experiences (though there are barren times, and periods of self doubt, when he is sustained only by his wife Khadija's unswerving faith in him). From about 613 Muhammad preaches in Mecca the message which he has received.

Muhammad's message is essentially the existence of one God, all-powerful but also merciful, and he freely acknowledges that other prophets - in particular Abraham, Moses and Jesus - have preached the same truth in the past. But monotheism is not a popular creed with those whose livelihood depends on idols. Muhammad, once he begins to win converts to the new creed, makes enemies among the traders of Mecca. In 622 there is a plot to assassinate him. He escapes to the town of Yathrib, about 300 kilometres to the north.

Muhammad and the Muslim era: from 622

The people of Yathrib, a prosperous oasis, welcome Muhammad and his followers. As a result, the move from Mecca in 622 comes to seem the beginning of Islam. The Muslim era dates from the Hegira - Arabic for 'emigration', meaning Muhammad's departure from Mecca. In the Muslim calendar this event marks the beginning of year 1. Yathrib is renamed Madinat al Nabi, the 'city of the prophet', and thus becomes known as Medina. Here Muhammad steadily acquires a stronger following. He is now essentially a religious, political and even military leader rather than a merchant (Khadija has died in 619).

He continues to preach and recite the words which God reveals to him. It is these passages, together with the earlier revelations at Mecca, which are written down in the Arabic script by his followers and are collected to become the Qur'an - a word (often transliterated as Ko-ran) with its roots in the idea of 'recital', reflecting the oral origin of the text. The final and definitive text of the Qur'an is established under the third caliph, Othman, in about 650.

The Muslims and Mecca: 624-630

Relations with Mecca deteriorate to the point of pitched battles between the two sides, with Muhammad leading his troops in the field. But in the end it is his diplomacy which wins the day.

He persuades the Meccans to allow his followers back into the city, in 629, to make a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and the Black Stone. On this first Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Muhammad's followers impress the local citizens both by their show of strength and by their self-control, departing peacefully after the agreed three days. But the following year the Meccans break a truce, provoking the Muslims to march on the city.

They take Mecca almost without resistance. The inhabitants accept Islam. And Muhammad sweeps the idols out of the Ka'ba, leaving only the sacred Black Stone. An important element in Mecca's peaceful acceptance of the change has been Muhammad's promise that pilgrimage to the Ka'ba will remain a central feature of the new religion. So Mecca becomes, as it has remained ever since, the holy city of Islam. But Medina is by now where Muhammad and his most trusted followers live. And for the next few decades Medina will be the political centre of the developing Muslim state.

Muhammad lives only two years after the peaceful reconciliation with Mecca. He has no son. His only surviving children are daughters by Khadija, though since her death he has married several younger women, among whom his favourite is A'isha.

Muhammad and the caliphate: from 632-656

There is no clear successor to Muhammad among his followers. The likely candidates include Abu Bakr (the father of Muhammad's wife A'isha) and Ali (a cousin of Muhammad and the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima). Abu Bakr is elected, and takes the title 'khalifat rasul-Allah'. The Arabic phrase means 'successor of the Messenger of God'. It will introduce a new word, caliph, to the other languages of the world.

Abu Bakr, the first caliph, lives no more than two years after the death of Muhammad. Even so, within this brief time Muslim armies have begun their astonishing expansion, subduing the whole of Arabia and striking as far north as Palestine.

Abu Bakr is succeeded in 634 by Omar (another father-in-law of Muhammad), who in 638 captures Jerusalem. Six years later Omar is stabbed and killed in the mosque at Medina - for personal reasons, it seems, by a Persian craftsman living in Kufa.

Othman, chosen as the third caliph, is a son-in-law of Muhammad. By the end of his reign, in 656, Arabs have conquered as far afield as north Africa, Turkey and Afghanistan.

Othman, like his predecessor, is assassinated - but this time by rebellious Muslims. They choose Ali, another son-in-law of Muhammad, as the fourth caliph. For the first time within the Muslim community the selected caliph is the choice of just one faction. Ali's caliphate eventually provokes the only major sectarian split in the history of Islam, between Sunni and Shi'a.

Sunni and Shias

Video: Differences and Similarities

<https://youtu.be/p0Prs99ANvY>

Sunni and Shia Muslims share the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith and are the two main sub-groups within Islam. They do differ, however, and the separation between them stemmed initially not from spiritual distinctions, but political ones. Over the

centuries, these political differences have spawned a number of varying practices and positions which have come to carry a spiritual significance.

A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

The division between Shia and Sunni dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. This event raised the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation. The word "Sunni" in Arabic comes from a word meaning "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet." It is considered to be the orthodox branch of Islam.

Sunni Muslims agree with the position taken by many of the Prophet's companions at the time of his death. This is that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job. It is what was done when the Prophet Muhammad's close friend and adviser, Abu Bakr, became the first Caliph (successor or deputy of the Prophet) of the Islamic nation. On the other hand, some Muslims believe that leadership should have stayed within the Prophet's own family, among those specifically appointed by him, or among Imams appointed by God Himself.

Shia Muslims believe that following the Prophet Muhammad's death, leadership should have passed directly to his cousin and son-in-law, Ali bin Abu Talib. Throughout history, Shia Muslims have not recognized the authority of elected Muslim leaders, choosing instead to follow a line of Imams which they believe have been appointed by the Prophet Muhammad or God Himself. The word "Shia" in Arabic means a group or supportive party of people. The commonly-known term is shortened from the historical "Shia-t-Ali," or "the Party of Ali." This group is also known as Shiites or followers of "Ahl-al-Bayt" or "People of the Household" (of the Prophet).

Within the Sunni and Shia branches, you can also find a number of sects. For example, in Saudi Arabia, Sunni Wahhabism is a prevalent and puritanical faction. Similarly, in Shiitism, the Druze are a somewhat mysterious sect residing in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel.

WHERE DO SUNNI AND SHIA MUSLIMS LIVE?

Sunni Muslims make up an 85 percent majority of Muslims all over the world. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia are predominantly Sunni. Significant populations of Shia Muslims can be found in Iran and Iraq. Large Shiite minority communities are also in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon. It is in areas of the world where Sunni and Shiite populations are in close proximity to one another where conflict can arise. Coexistence in Iraq and Lebanon, for example, is often difficult. The religious differences are so embedded in the culture that intolerance often leads to violence.

DIFFERENCES IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

From this initial question of political leadership, some aspects of spiritual life have been affected and now differ between the two groups of Muslims. This includes rituals of prayer and marriage. In this sense, many people compare the two groups with Catholics and Protestants. Fundamentally, they share some common beliefs, they simply practice in a different manner. It is important to remember that despite these differences in opinion and practice, Shia and Sunni Muslims share the main articles of Islamic belief and are considered by most to be brethren in faith. In fact, most Muslims do not distinguish themselves by claiming membership in any particular group, but prefer to call themselves simply "Muslims."

RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

Shia Muslims believe that the Imam is sinless by nature and that his authority is infallible because it comes directly from God. Therefore, Shia Muslims often venerate the Imams as saints. They perform pilgrimages to their tombs and shrines in the hopes of divine intercession. This well-defined clerical hierarchy can play a role in governmental matters as well. Iran is a good example in which the Imam, and not the state, is the ultimate authority. Sunni Muslims counter that there is no basis in Islam for a hereditary privileged class of spiritual leaders, and certainly no basis for the veneration or intercession of saints. Sunni Muslims contend that leadership of the community is not a birthright, but a trust that is earned. It may be given or taken away by the people themselves.

RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND PRACTICES

Sunni and Shia Muslims follow the Quran as well as the Prophet's hadith (sayings) and sunna (customs). These are fundamental practices in the Islamic faith. They also adhere to the five pillars of Islam: shahada, salat, zakat, sawm, and hajj. Shia Muslims tend to feel animosity towards some of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. This is based on their positions and actions during the early years of discord about leadership in the community. Many of these companions (Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Aisha, etc.) have narrated traditions about the Prophet's life and spiritual practice. Shia Muslims reject these traditions and do not base any of their religious practices on the testimony of these individuals. This naturally gives rise to some differences in religious practice between the two groups. These differences touch all detailed aspects of religious life: prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and more.

Spread of Islam

After Prophet Muhammad's death, the Muslim community found itself without a leader. While as the 'seal of the prophets' he could have no successor, as a political guide Muhammad was succeeded by the so-called al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun, the four 'rightly-guided caliphs' who were chosen from his most loyal companions. It was during the leadership of these caliphs (632 – 661), and particularly under the second caliph and great statesman Umar ibn al-Khattab (634–644), that the conquest of territories outside Arabia began. Influenced by the political systems of these conquered areas, the leadership became hereditary, and the Umayyad dynasty (661 – 750) emerged out of the aristocracy of the Quraysh. While the Rashidun caliphs were based at Mecca and Medina, the Umayyads moved the seat of power to Damascus. Their successors, the Abbasids (750 – 1258), who were less Arab-centered, built a new capital, Baghdad, in a fertile area on the main routes between Iraq, Iran and Syria.

The History of the Conquests

The Arab conquests started as sporadic tribal raids. A proper army was probably not organized before 634, but once formed, it made expeditions eastwards towards the Sasanian empire and northwards to Palestine and Syria against the Byzantine empire.

1. Islamic Expansion to 750

Under the leadership of commanders such as Amr ibn al-As and Khalid ibn al-Walid, the army defeated the Byzantines at Yarmuk (636), and the newly organized Muslim navy de-

stroyed the Christian fleet at the Battle of the Masts (655). Constantinople was sporadically besieged during this period, though never captured. On the oriental front, the Sasanian army suffered a crushing defeat at the battle of al Qadisiyah (637), and Ctesiphon was taken soon afterwards; this caused the disintegration of the Sasanian empire. ‘Amr ibn al ‘As then moved westwards towards Egypt in 639 , and by 646 Heliopolis and Alexandria had fallen. The city of Fustat was founded in 643 , and northeast Africa was occupied. From Al-exandria, naval expeditions were launched against Cyprus and Sicily and under the Umayyad dynasty the Muslims emerged as a major sea power. The eighth century saw further expansions eastwards as far as the river Indus and the Sind region and westwards through northern Africa to Spain and France where the over-stretched army was stopped at the battle of Poitiers by Charles Martel.

The surprising speed at which the conquests took place can be attributed to the weakness of countries debilitated by long external conflicts (the Sasanian empire) or by the fragility of internal structure (Spain). There was also discontent with despotic leadership and heavy taxation among the local population, especially in Syria and Spain.

Army and Society

The expanding Muslim army was at first only composed of Arab tribal groups, mostly infantry and some cavalry forces. Gradually it transformed itself by recruiting locally during its campaigns. The role played by the mawali (‘con-verted non-Arab clients’), such as Berber warriors in the western campaign to Spain and, eastwards, Persians and Turks, is well-known. The Umayyad armies relied on elite Syrian corps and increased the role of the cavalry and especially of units in armour, though the infantry was predominant. The first Abbasid armies, on the other hand, relied mostly on Khurasani elite forces and, by the early ninth century, the cavalry became clearly dominant. From the eleventh century onwards the horse-back archery techniques of Central Asian and Turkish origin began to play a major role in Muslim warfare.

Muslim commanders left the social structure of the conquered territories almost intact by appointing local Muslim governors and relying on local administrative and financial systems.

The populations were not converted en masse but in time the frequency of conversions increased. The reasons for embracing Islam ranged from a desire to come closer to the new masters and share their privileges, to an acknowledgment of, or belief in, the tolerant and syncretistic nature of the new faith. Tolerance, however, could only be granted to the Ahl al Kitab (‘the people of the Book’) that is, those people whom the Qur'an cites as having received revealed scripture: Jews, Christians and the ‘Sabians’. These could not, in principle, be forcibly converted (as could polytheists and disbelievers), and were guaranteed protection and religious autonomy against the payment of a special tax.

Islam in Spain

By the end of the first Muslim campaign into Spain (711 - 13) all but the northwest corner of the Iberian peninsula came under Arab rule.

2. Islamic Spain to the 13th Century

When the Umayyad dynasty collapsed in Damascus at the hand of the ‘Abbasids, one of its few surviving princes, ‘Abd al Rahman I, moved to the far west and seized Cordova in 755 ,

founding the Umayyad dynasty of Spain which was to last for over 300 years. The achievements of this period are embodied in the building in 788 of the Great Mosque of Cordova, which became a vibrant center of learning. In time, however, the central authority of the state declined and, by the early eleventh century, Spain had broken up into a multiplicity of small kingdoms. The Christian states of the north captured Toledo in 1085 and this marks, to some extent, the first step towards the Crusades of the Middle Ages.

Islamic Spain then came under the rule of Berber dynasties such as the Almoravids (1056 – 1147) and the Almohads (1130 – 1269), who held the entire political power of the western lands of Islam. The coalition of Christian states eventually reduced the presence of Islam to a strip of country in the southeast around Granada where, for a further 250 years, the Nasrid dynasty ruled. The Alhambra (‘the red’ castle) at Granada, the architectural masterpiece of Western Islam, belongs to this last period of Muslim rule. In 1492 , Granada surrendered to the Christians and, within a few years, all Muslims (and Jews) were expelled from Spain.

Islamic Spain had played an important role as the intellectual Muslim centre in the West, through which Far and Near Eastern as well as Greek and Arabic technical, scientific and philosophical knowledge reached medieval Europe.

Islam in India

Islam is the second largest religion in India, with 14.2% of the country's population or roughly over 172 million people who are Muslim. Islam first came to the western coast of India when Arab traders as early as the 7th century CE came to coastal Malabar and Konkan-Gujarat. Cheraman Juma Mosque in Kerala is thought to be the first mosque in India, built in 629 CE by Malik Deenar.

Following an expedition by the governor of Bahrain to Bharuch in the 7th century CE, immigrant Arab and Persian trading communities from South Arabia and the Persian Gulf began settling in coastal Gujarat. Ismaili Shia Islam was introduced to Gujarat in the second half of the 11th century, when Fatimid Imam Al-Mustansir Billah sent missionaries to Gujarat in 467 AH/1073 CE. Islam arrived in North India in the 12th century via the Turkic invasions and has since become a part of India's religious and cultural heritage. Over the centuries, there has been significant integration of Hindu and Muslim cultures across India and Muslims have played a notable role in economics, politics and culture of India.

1) “Islam” means “surrender” or “submission”. “Salam” (which means “peace”) is the root word of “Islam”. In a religious context the word “Islam” means “the surrendering of one’s will (without compulsion) to the true will of God in an effort to achieve peace”.

2) “Muslim” means “anyone or anything that surrenders itself to the true will of God”. By this definition, everything in nature (trees, animals, planets, etc.) are “muslims” because they are in a state of surrender to God’s will. In other words, they are fulfilling the purpose for which God created them.

3) Islam is not a new religion or cult. It is a universal way of life and civilization. Studies show that between 1.5 and 1.8 billion people in the world identify their religion as Islam. Along

with Judaism and Christianity it traces its roots through Prophet Abraham and back to the first humans Adam and Eve.

4) There are five pillars of practice in Islam. These practices must be undertaken with the best of effort in order to be considered a true Muslim:

A) Declaration of faith: A statement proclaiming the belief in One God and that Muhammad is a prophet of God. To become Muslim a person simply recites this statement publicly, and in Arabic.

B) Formal prayer five times a day.

C) Poor-due tax: 2.5% of one's excess wealth given to the needy once a year.

D) Fasting during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.

E) Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once, if physically and financially able.

5) There are six articles of faith in Islam. These are the basic beliefs that one must have in order to be considered a true Muslim. They are belief in:

A) the One God.

B) all of the true prophets of God.

C) the original scriptures revealed to Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad.

D) the angels.

E) the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter.

F) destiny.

6) Muslims believe in the one Creator of the Universe, referring to Him as "Allah" which is the Arabic word for "God". Muslims worldwide, even English-speaking Muslims, frequently use the Arabic word "Allah" because Arabic is the language of the Qur'an. But Allah is no different than the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The Creator is the Creator regardless of what people call Him. In the English language He is most commonly referred to as "God". Yet Jesus spoke a different language, referring to God as "Eloi" in Mark 15:34 of the New Testament. Are "God" and "Eloi" different gods? Many Hispanics call God "Dios" and many French say "Dieu". It would logically follow then that people who refer to God as "Allah" in the Arabic language are referring to the very same God. In fact, many Arab Jews and Arab Christians call God "Allah". And the word "Allah" is written in Arabic script on the walls of many Arab churches and on the pages of Arabic Bibles. So while the understanding of God may differ between faith groups, the various names used to describe Him does not change the fact that the one Creator of the Universe is the God of all people.

7) The Islamic concept of God is that He is loving, merciful and compassionate. Islam also teaches that He is all-knowing and the perfect judge of affairs, and will punish (or forgive) accordingly. However, Allah once said to Muhammad, "My mercy prevails over my wrath". So Islam teaches a balance between fear and hope, protecting one from both complacency and despair.

Muslims believe that God has revealed 99 of His names, or attributes, in the Qur'an. It is through these names that one can come to know the Creator. A few of these names are the All-

Merciful, the All-Knower, the Protector, the Provider, the Near, the First, the Last, the Hidden and the Source of All Peace.

8) The Christian concept of “vicarious atonement” (the idea that Jesus died for the sins of humanity) is alien to the Islamic concept of personal responsibility. Islam teaches that on the Day of Judgment every person will be resurrected and will be accountable to God for their every word and deed. Consequently, a practicing Muslim is always striving to be righteous while hoping and praying for God’s acceptance and grace.

9) Muslims believe in all of the true prophets that preceded Muhammad, from Adam to Jesus. Muslims believe they brought the same message of voluntarily surrendering to God’s will (Islam, in a generic sense) to different peoples at different times. Muslims also believe they were “Muslims” (again, in a generic sense) since they followed God’s true guidance and surrendered their will to Him.

10) Muslims neither worship Muhammad nor pray through him. Muslims worship the Unseen, Omniscient Creator, Allah.

11) Muslims accept the original unaltered Torah (as revealed to Moses) and the original unaltered Bible (as revealed to Jesus) since they were revealed by God. But none of these scriptures exist today in their original form or in their entirety. Therefore, Muslims follow the subsequent, final and preserved revelation of God, the Qur’an.

12) The Qur’an was not authored by Muhammad. It was authored by God, revealed to Muhammad (through angel Gabriel) and written into physical form by his companions.

13) The original Arabic text of the Qur’an contains no flaws or contradictions and has not been altered since its revelation.

14) Actual 7th century Qur’ans, complete and intact, are on display in museums in Turkey and other places around the world.

15) If all Qur’ans in the world today were destroyed, the original Arabic would still remain. This is because millions of Muslims, called “hafiz” (or “guardians”) have memorized the text letter for letter from beginning to end, every word and every syllable. Also, chapters from the Qur’an are precisely recited from memory in each of the five formal prayers performed daily by hundreds of millions of Muslims throughout the world.

Sharia is the law that regulates the daily life of a Muslim and serves as a guide for living by Islamic principles. As Islam is not only a belief system but a complete way of life, the law covers all aspects of living including moral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, economical, political, etc. Sharia law is derived by scholars through interpretations of Islam’s canonical texts, the Qur’an and Hadith (sayings and actions of Muhammad). As with any legal system the interpretations can range across the liberal-conservative spectrum, and opinions on the meanings and applications will often differ. Therefore Sharia law is essentially an effort to

comprehend God's instructions and apply them in daily life. Since the interpretations are made by humans, they are subject to error and even perversion. This occurs when unqualified, ignorant and/or corrupted individuals make the interpretation. For instance the KKK perverts Christian texts to conjure up false rulings. The same can be said for certain Muslim groups and so-called "Islamic states" regarding Islamic texts. While there is no Pope in Islam to serve as the authoritative interpreter, there are recognized institutions and scholars whom analyze, discuss, deliberate and arrive at reasonable rulings through a process known as "fiqh" (Islamic jurisprudence). This nuanced and sophisticated science operates on the premise that the Islamic texts are fluid and dynamic; that anything outside of the very basic tenets can, and should, be interpreted according to the particular time, place and culture. So if any version of sharia advocates brutality, injustice, extremism, terrorism, etc., the question must be asked: are such rulings endorsed by mainstream Islamic scholars, or are they being posited by those devoid of a true understanding of the religion, or the wisdom to apply it?

16) Some attribute the early and rapid spread of Islam to forced conversions by the sword. While it is accurate that the Muslim empire initially spread, for the most part, through battles and conquests (a common phenomenon for that time) the religion of Islam it-self was never forced on anyone who found themselves living under Muslim rule. In fact, non-Muslims were afforded the right to worship as they pleased as long as a tax, called "jizyah", was paid. During the Dark Ages, Jews, Christians and others were given protection by the Muslims from religious persecutions happening in Europe. Islam teaches no compulsion in religion (Qur'an 2:256 and 10:99). For more, read "The Spread of Islam in the World" by Thomas Arnold.

Terrorism, unjustified violence and the killing of non-combatant civilians (and even intimidating, threatening or injuring them) are all absolutely forbidden in Islam. Islam is a way of life that is meant to bring peace to a society whether its people are Muslim or not. The extreme actions of those who claim to be Muslim may be a result of their ignorance, frustration, uncontrolled anger or political (not religious) ambitions. Any-one who condones or commits an act of terrorism in the name of Islam is simply not following Islam and is, in fact, violating its very tenets. These people are individuals with their own personal views and agendas. Fanatical Muslims are no more representative of the true teachings of Islam than fanatical Christians are of the true teachings of Christianity, or fanatical Jews are of the true teachings of Judaism. The most prominent examples of such "religious" fanatics are Anders Behring Breivik, the 2011 Norwegian terrorist who claimed in his manifesto to be "100 percent Christian" and Baruch Goldstein, perpetrator of the 1994 Hebron massacre who is considered by some Jews to be a "hero" and a "saint". Extremism and fanaticism are problems not exclusive to Muslims. Anyone who thinks that all Muslims are terrorists should note that terror groups like ISIS (or ISIL), Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram kill Muslims as well. Also, the former boxer Muhammad Ali, perhaps the most celebrated person of our era, was a practicing Muslim.

17) Some Muslims may say they are going for "jihad" when fighting in a war to defend themselves or others, but they say this because they are conceding that it will be a tremendous struggle. But there are many other forms of jihad which are much more relevant to the everyday life of a Muslim such as the struggles against laziness, arrogance, stinginess, one's own ego, or the struggle against a tyrant ruler or against the temptations of Satan, etc. Regarding the so-

called verses of “holy war” in the Qur’an, two points: A) The term “holy war” neither appears in the Arabic text of the Qur’an nor in any classical teachings of Islam. B) The vast majority of verses in the Qur’an pertaining to violence refer to wartime situations in which Muslims were permitted to defend themselves against violent aggression. Any rational, intellectual analysis of the context and historical circumstances surrounding such verses, often ignored by pundits or violent extremists, proves this to be true. Other verses of violence deal with stopping oppression, capital punishment and the like.

18) Women are not oppressed in Islam. Any Muslim man that oppresses a woman is not following Islam. Among the many teachings of Muhammad that protected the rights and dignity of women is his saying, “...the best among you are those who treat their wives well.”

19) Islam grants women many rights in the home and in society. Among them are the right to earn money, to financial support, to own property, to an education, to an inheritance, to being treated kindly, to vote, to a bridal gift, to keep their maiden name, to worship in a mosque, to a divorce, and so on.

20) Muslim women wear the head-covering (hijab) in fulfillment of God’s decree to dress modestly. This type of modest dress has been worn by religious women throughout time such as traditional Catholic nuns, Mother Teresa and the Virgin Mary.

21) Forced marriages, honor killings, female genital mutilation and the confinement of women to their homes are all forbidden in Islam. These practices stem from deeply entrenched cultural traditions and/or ignorance of the true Islamic teachings or how to apply them in society. Arranged marriages are allowed in Islam but are not required. In fact, one of the conditions for a valid Islamic marriage contract is the mutual consent of both parties to the marriage. And divorce is permissible provided the Islamic guidelines are followed which protect the rights of all affected parties, especially women and unborn children.

25) Islam and the Nation “of Islam” are two different religions. Islam is a religion for all races and enjoins the worship of the One Unseen God who never took human form. On the other hand “the Nation” is a movement geared towards non-whites that teaches God appeared as a man named Fard Muhammad and that Elijah Muhammad was a prophet. According to orthodox Islam these are blasphemous beliefs that contradict the basic theology defined throughout the Qur’an and other authentic texts. The followers of “the Nation” adhere to some Islamic principles that are mixed with other practices and beliefs completely alien to authentic Islamic teachings. To better understand the differences read about Malcolm X, his pilgrimage to Mecca and his later comments to the media. Islam teaches equality amongst the races (Qur’an 49:13).

26) All Muslims are not Arab, Middle-Eastern or of African descent. Islam is a universal religion and way of life that includes followers from all races. There are Muslims in and from virtually every country in the world. Arabs only constitute about 20% of Muslims worldwide. The countries with the largest Muslim populations are not located in the Middle East. They are

Indonesia (over 200 million Muslims) and Pakistan and India (over 350 million Muslims combined).

27) In the five daily prayers Muslims face the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is a cube-shaped stone structure that was built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael on the same foundations where Prophet Adam is believed to have built a sanctuary for the worship of the One God. Muslims do not worship the Kaaba. It serves as a focal point for Muslims around the world, unifying them in worship and symbolizing their common belief, spiritual focus and direction. Interestingly the inside of the Kaaba is empty.

28) The hajj is an annual pilgrimage to the Kaaba made by about 3 million Muslims from all corners of the Earth. It is performed to fulfill one of the pillars of Islam. The rituals of hajj commemorate the struggles of Abraham, his wife Hagar and their son Ishmael in surrendering their wills to God.

29) Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today. Conversions are a major factor but natural growth is the main reason. Statistically Muslim women have the highest fertility rates in the world. According to the Pew Research Center by the year 2050 Muslims will equal the number of Christians for the first time in history. Currently, the most popular name in the world is Muhammad. And perhaps most interesting is the fact that Muhammad (alternate spellings included) is the most popular name for new-born boys in England and Wales.

30) Over the past 1400 years Muslim intellects have made substantial contributions in the areas of physics, medicine, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, philosophy and geography. At no time was this more evident than in the Middle Ages, a period commonly referred to as the "Golden Age of Islam". It produced such luminaries as Jabir ibn Hayyan (considered the father of early chemistry), al-Khwarizmi (one of the fathers of algebra), al-Zahrawi (a father of surgery), al-Razi (father of pediatrics), Ibn Sina (one of the greatest medical scholars in history), Jabir ibn Aflah (promoter of trigonometry in Europe), Ibn Rushd (reviver of Aristotle) and Ibn Khaldun (a father of modern sociology, historiography, demography and economics) to name only a few. Their contributions ultimately helped to usher in the European Renaissance. This influence on Western civilization is recognized in a mural painted in the 1890s on the ceiling of the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. Islam is included along with England, France, America, Greece, Rome and others in a depiction of the "Evolution of Civilization".

Philosophy

By philosophy we mean here the rational study of the nature of Existence. The foundation of Islamic philosophy - like the foundation of Islamic Science- is Allah, the Supreme Being. That is, Islamic philosophy starts from an acceptance of the premise that Existence, or reality, actually and already exists, external to and independent from ourselves as human beings, and it names the very Being of Existence itself as Allah. This may be said to be the first fundamental principle of Islamic philosophy.

The fundamental quest of Islamic philosophy is therefore to understand the nature of Al-lah, our own relation to Allah, and in general how the nature of all beings relate to the Being which is named Allah.

At the same time it would not be incorrect to mention that there is no generally accepted definition of what Islamic philosophy is, and the term will be used here to mean the sort of philosophy which arose within the culture of Islam. There are several main strands to Islamic philosophy. Peripatetic philosophy follows broadly the Greek tradition, while Sufism uses the principle of mystical knowledge as its leading idea. Some would argue that Islamic philosophy has never lost its concentration on the Qur'an and other significant Muslim texts, and that throughout its history it has sought to understand the essence of the realities both of the Sacred Book and of the created world.

It is critical to mention this history here, as one is aware how certain scriptures can be interpreted according to the understanding and knowing of the people at the time and in that particular region.

Islamic Philosophy – Introduction

Islamic Philosophy and Christian philosophy agree in some ways because both are theistic and share some biblical roots. Both affirm the supernatural and miracles. Both also use faith and reason to support their religious beliefs. Islamic Philosophy is summed-up by Hammuda Abdalati as follows: “Belief in angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone.”

Traditions of Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophers were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy and sought to use it to understand, defend, and further their faith. However, their theorizing often led them astray from orthodox Islamic teachings. For example, some of them believed, following Aristotle, that the material world was eternal, though they also affirmed that it existed only because God made it to exist. Others denied physical resurrection, substituting the continued existence of the soul. Still others proposed a replacement body that looked like the original, but actually was not. Most philosophers advocated the idea that God was a Necessary Being (a being who could not not exist) and that the world was dependent upon God for its existence.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument for the existence of God was developed by Islamic philosophers and is both commended and employed by Christian philosophers today. The cosmological argument, for example, is the argument from creation to a Creator. “It argues a posteriori, from effect to cause, and is based on the principle of causality. This states that every event has a cause, or that everything that begins has a cause. The Kalam (Arabic: ‘eternal’) argument is a horizontal (linear) form of the cosmological argument. The universe is not eternal, so it must have had a Cause. That Cause must be considered God. This argument has a long and venerable history among such Islamic philosophers as Alfarabi, Al Ghazali, and Avicenna. Some scholastic philosophers also used it, especially Bonaventure.” Some Islamic philosophers ventured into mysticism. Rahman asserts that much of the Islamic philosophic tradition fell away from orthodox Islam, but was retained and furthered in Sufism, a semi-mystic sect of Islam. Though some traditionalist Muslims believe such ventures into

philosophy inherently conflict with the Qur'an and the Hadith, many others believe such attempts to explain and de-fend Islam with philosophical tools are entirely appropriate (though they would not be able to affirm all that Islamic philosophers have concluded).

Islamic Philosophy – Affirming Supernaturalism

Islamic philosophy argues for the existence of entities beyond the natural world; affirmation of the existence of God, for example, illustrates that Islam denies naturalism in favor of Supernaturalism. Islam also affirms the existence of the human spirit beyond death, as well as the existence of angels and jinn. Abdalati writes, "The true Muslim also believes in the angels of God. They are purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires of any kind nor needs material. They spend their days and nights in the service of God. There are many of them, and each is charged with a certain duty. If we cannot see the angels with our naked eyes, it does not necessarily deny their actual existence. Belief in angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone." In admitting the existence of angels, Abdalati also alludes to the Islamic view of epistemology: not all things may be known through human senses, nor may we limit the field of existence to what our senses perceive.

Islamic Philosophy – Life after Death and Resurrection

Fundamental to Islam is the belief in final judgment, necessitating an implied belief in life after death. Muslims further affirm the bodily resurrection of the dead (though they deny that Jesus died and was resurrected). "See thee not that God, Who created the heavens and the earth... is able to give life to the dead? Yea, verily He has power over all things (Qur'an 46:33). And he [unbelieving man] makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, 'Who can give Life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say, 'He will give them Life Who created them for the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation'" (36:78–79).

Islamic Philosophy – Miracles

The story of Islam begins with Muhammad receiving divine visions and communicating with the angel Gabriel, indicating an acceptance of the supernatural. Indeed, the Qur'an affirms that prophets of old performed many miracles. Consider some passages regarding Moses:

1. (Pharaoh) said: 'If indeed thou hast come with a Sign, show it forth, if thou tellest the truth.' Then (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)! And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders! (7:106–107)
2. Said Moses [to the sorcerers of Pharaoh's court]: 'Throw ye (first).' So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (feat of) magic. We put it into Moses' mind by inspiration: 'Throw (now) thy rod': and behold, it swallows up straightaway all the falsehoods which they fake! Thus truth was confirmed and all that they did was made of no effect. (7:116–118)
3. Then we sent Moses and his brother Aaron, and with Our Signs and Authority manifest.' (23:45; see, 7:106–108)

4. The miracles Jesus performed are also acknowledged.
5. Then will God say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favor to thee and to thy mother . . . and thou hast those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold, thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold, I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs. (5:113)

These stories presuppose a view of supernaturalism wherein God intervenes in the world (miracles) and seeks to convey His will to human beings (revelation). Orthodox Islamic philosophy affirms the occurrence of miracles and the existence of supernatural beings.

Culture of Islam

It is true that Muslims share certain fundamental beliefs, such as those expressed in the shahadah, the profession of faith: there is only one God and that Muhammad is His Prophet to whom was revealed the Qur'an. But as the religion spread in different regions and cultures ranging from Bosnia to Yemen and Zanzibar, it came to be interpreted in diverse ways. This diversity was the result of the core set of religious beliefs interacting in complex ways with the many different contexts in which Muslims lived. Each of these contexts is defined by multiple factors, including its history, cultural traditions, its social, economic, political structures, and its geography and physical location in the world. Recognizing this reality, Abdol Karim Soroush, a contemporary Iranian intellectual, states, "There is no such thing as a "pure" Islam or an a-historical Islam that is outside the process of historical development. The actual lived experience of Islam has always been culturally and historically specific, and bound by the immediate circumstances of its location in time and space. If we were to take a snapshot of Islam as it is lived today, it would reveal a diversity of lived experiences which are all different, yet existing simultaneously."

In view of this diversity, the late Edward Said, University Professor of English at Columbia University and a cultural and literary critic, wrote, "The problems facing anyone attempting to say anything intelligible, useful, or accurate about Islam are legion. One should therefore begin by speaking of Islams rather than Islam (as the scholar Aziz al-Azmeh does in his excellent book *Islams and Maternities*), and then go on to specify which kind, during which particular time, one is speaking about." He goes on to say that keeping in mind the complexity and variety of concrete human experience, "it is much more sensible to try to talk about different kinds of Islam, at different moments, for different peoples, in different fields... once one gets a tiny step beyond core beliefs (since even those are very hard to reduce to a simple set of doctrinal rules) and the centrality of the Koran [Qur'an], one has entered an astoundingly complicated world whose enormous – one might even say unthinkable – collective history alone has yet to be written." ("Impossible Histories: Why the many Islams cannot be simplified," *Harper's Magazine*, July 2002, 69-74



The Five Pillars are

1. The Shahadah (Declaration of faith) - Trusting and understanding the words of the Shahadah. "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad (SAW) is the final messenger."
2. Prayer (Salah) - Praying five times a day, kneeling towards Mecca. There are specific ritualistic movements and prayers that are said.
3. Charity or alms-giving (Zakat) - Each year a Muslim should give money to charity (Usually 2.5% of their savings). If a person does not have much money, they can do other things instead.
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm)
5. A pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) - Muslims should go to Mecca on a pilgrimage. They should do this at least once in their lives. A person does not have to make this pilgrim-age if they cannot afford to, or they are physically unable to (Though they can get someone else to go on their behalf).

Prayer

Daily prayer is central to the lives of millions of Muslims and is one of the five pillars of Islam. Islam requires its followers to pray five times daily: once in the morning, at noon, early afternoon, at dusk and at night. The prayer is preceded by a ritual washing (called "wudhu") of the hands, arms, feet, legs and head. Muslims may pray anywhere provided they are facing the direction of Mecca, Islam's holiest site. In many Muslim communities, mosque officials use a public address system to call followers to prayer; this is both a re-minder and a suggestion to pray with others, which is preferable to praying alone.

Clothing

Islam urges its adherents to dress modestly at all times, both to discourage showing off one's body and to minimize sexual temptation. Though it is not explicitly required by Islam, Muslim women often wear a head covering called a hijab or a scarf to keep their hair--an often attractive and very feminine trait--from the view of men. Some even wear covering that hides all of the face except the eyes. Muslim men are also encouraged to dress modestly in loose-fitting clothes and to wear a head covering called a kufi.

Prohibitions

Islam provides guidance on what daily activities are haram (forbidden) and halal (encouraged and beneficial). For example, consuming alcohol using mind-altering drugs and engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage are all haram. Alcohol and drugs cloud judgment and remove inhibitions, while infidelity shows disrespect to the sanctity of marriage. Muslims are also prohibited from consuming pork, as pigs are considered dirty animals.

Other prohibitions include theft, cheating, greed, showing disrespect to parents (especially mothers) and other family members and being uncharitable to widows, orphans and neighbors.

Interacting with Others

Muslims are required to treat everyone, even enemies, with courtesy and respect. With other Muslims, they offer a traditional Islamic greeting: "As-salamu alaykum," which translates to "Peace be with you." Islam also strongly encourages Muslims to adopt an attitude of forgiveness and forbearance in everyday life, even with strangers. The Quran states that the ideal mindset would enable a Muslim to forgive others instantly, be blind to faults and do good deeds even to those who wrong them. Sharing the Islamic faith is also an important part of living a good Muslim life, provided it is done gently, without pushiness or aggression.

Hindu Muslim Unity

Peace and Harmony

The Indus is one of the oldest and longest rivers in Asia. Though it originated in the Tibetan Plateau in China, much of it flows across Pakistan. Various religions and cultures have thrived here: Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam. Each of these religions were indigenized. Historically, the strand of Sufism which emerged on the banks of Indus (especially in Punjab and all the way across Sindh), consciously eschewed religious orthodoxy and, at times, even rebelled against it. They also celebrated with devotion in other states of southern India like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Hindu The poetry and music that emerged from Sufi circles along the river is therefore largely a result of the theological, political and social tensions between Sufis and the orthodox ulema and clerics.

Proud to be an Indian

Hindu Muslim Unity: Ganesh celebrations that take place in mosques

KOLHAPUR: Setting a unique example of communal amity, Hindus and Muslims gathered at mosques in Kolhapur region on the occasion of Ganesha festival on Friday. Ganesha statues are placed inside mosques and devotees from both the communities participate in the festivity with great fervor. On Friday, Muslim devotees said the Ganesh deity was installed in at least half-a-dozen mosques in the region during the 10-day-long festival. Later, members of the both the communities take part in the immersion of the idol. ”

In Siro Taluka village in Kolhapur we have the idol of lord Ganesha placed inside the mosque. For the past 50-60 years we have been performing this ritual here. We have such idols in six to seven mosques. Hindu and Muslims take part in the immersion of the idol together. This way we are trying to spread this message of amity among the people of the whole country to live together in peace,” said Mansoor Sheikh, a Muslim devotee.

“See, for the past 40-50 years we have been celebrating the festivals of Hindu and Muslims like Muharram (a Muslim festival), Ganpati, Navratri (Hindu festivals) together with religious amity. We celebrate all these festivals together with brotherhood and love. No violence occurs here and we celebrate every festival with great fervor and zeal,” said Mahesh Janvekar, a Hindu devotee. At the end of the 10-day-long festival, the idols of Lord Ganesha are taken in grand processions and immersed in water bodies such as wells, ponds, rivers and the sea. Ganesha Chaturthi is the most important festival in Maharashtra, and it is Muslim Unity: Hindus distribute sweets on Eid.

VARANASI: This Eid will bring extra sweetness with love and compassion for Razia, Najma, Khushboo and many others, as the swain they will prepare to celebrate the festival has come from their Hindu sisters and brothers.

About 300 poor Muslim families of the locality were given food items for Eid celebration. The Anaj Bank, run by women’s NGO Vishal Bharat Sansthan, collected food grains and other edibles from its account holders for free distribution among poor families

Sikhism

Gurunanak Dev Ji

Guru Nanak has been called “one of the greatest religious innovators of all time”. He travelled far and wide teaching people the message of one God who dwells in every one of His creations and constitutes the eternal truth. He set up a unique spiritual, social, and political platform based on equality, fraternal love, goodness, and virtue. Sikhism is one of the most recent religions founded by Guru Nanak Dev towards the end of the fifteenth century. A study of history of the period reveals that Bhakti Movement was in full swing in India then and religious leaders of various traditions were engaged in disseminating their message throughout the country.

The teachings of the cult of Bhakti were very simple and direct:

God is one and is omnipresent.

Though people address Him by different names yet His commandments remain the same for all.

Every Scripture, Vedas or Qur'an, points to this direction. It is, therefore, the duty of every human to revere them.

Before Him there is no distinction of caste. Whether one is a Brahman or a Shudra, a Hindu or a Muslim, every person can have access to God.

The protagonists of Bhakti did not believe in bodily exercises and ostentatious modes of worship, nor did they view approvingly the renunciation of the world. It is noteworthy that all the Bhaktas preached their ideas in the languages of their respective regions which the common people could understand.

Guru Nanak Dev's teachings had proximity with those of the Bhaktas. He died in 1539 A.D. He was succeeded by Guru Angad who energetically developed the work of Nanak. After the third Guru Amar Das, he was succeeded by his son-in-law Guru Ram Das, who before his death assigned his youngest son Guru Arjan Singh as the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. Hence onwards the seat of the Sikh Gurus remained in the same family.

Guru Nanak's words are registered in the form of 974 poetic hymns in the holy text of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib, with some of the major prayers being the Japji Sahib, the Asa di Var and the Sidh-Ghost. It is part of Sikh religious belief that the spirit of Guru Nanak's sanctity, divinity and religious authority descended upon each of the nine subsequent Gurus when the Guruship was devolved on to them.

Guru Sahib's inherent nature of not accepting what was told and taught at its face value led him to evolve as an original spiritual thinker. He believed in listening, understanding and having first hand knowledge before expressing or forming his own opinion. He listened to people of all faith and cultures. He read extensively about the religion he was born in – Hinduism, and the dominant religion of the region Islam. He also studied Buddhism in depth. He traveled widely to famed and acclaimed seats of learning of those times. Traveling towards the east he stayed at Haridwar, Varanasi, and Kamrup in Assam and Jagananth Puri in Orissa and visited/ camped at many other important towns and schools of thought. His journey towards south of Punjab took him to temples and places of worship spread across the four states in the southern part of India and Sri Lanka. In his travels to north, north east and west

of Punjab he covered the holy lands of Tibet, mainland China, Mecca (Saudi Arabia) and Baghdad (Iraq).

The beliefs & philosophies of Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru of Sikhs, were not very popular in the beginning. But, today, it is the teachings of Guru Nanak that are guiding principles of Sikhs. The three teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji are known as Nam Simran, Kirt Karo and Wand Chako. The term 'Nam Simran' means think about God. 'Kirt Kaara' preaches people to lead a normal life by earning their living through hard work and honesty. 'Wand Chhako' means to share whatever spare things you have with poor and needy people.

Guru Sahib desired a Sikh to- (Sikh – origin the Sanskrit word Shishya – Student)

Believe in one God

Do selfless worship at all times (not only in the time of need)

Do service to humanity without any self interest

Share and care, especially with those who are in need

Earn an honest living by ensuring that no action leads to cheating or exploitation

Shed all inequalities, rich – poor, men – women, higher caste – lower caste

Be compassionate

Be open to the view of others on all matters

Practice brotherhood and not be self-centered

Be not scared of death

The Sikh Principles can be summed up in the Mool Mantar:

1. One Universal Creator God
2. The Supreme Unchangeable Truth
3. The Creative Being
4. Without Fear
5. Without Hate
6. Timeless whose spirit is throughout the universe
7. Beyond the cycle of death and rebirth
8. Self-existent
9. By the grace of the guru
10. God is made known to humanity
11. Chant and meditate on His name
12. True in the beginning, true now, says Nanak, will be true forever.

Religion and Philosophy

The Sikh religion is strictly monotheistic, believing in One Supreme God. Absolute yet All-pervading, the Eternal, the Creator, the Cause of Causes, without enmity, without hate, both Immanent in His creation and beyond it. He is no longer the God of one nation, but the God of Grace. That being so, He creates man not to punish him for his sins, but for the realization of his true purpose in the cosmos and to merge in from where he issues forth.

The basic belief in Sikhism is that life is not sinful in its origin, but has emanated from a pure source, the True One abides in all. Not only does all Sikh philosophy, but the whole of Sikh history and character flows from this principle.

The word Sikh means a disciple. A Sikh is a person who believes in One God.

The Sikhs do not recognize the caste system, nor do they believe in Idol-worship, rituals, or superstitions. The religion consists of practical living, in rendering service to humanity and engendering tolerance and brotherly love towards all.

The Sikh Gurus did not advocate isolation from the world in order to attain salvation or enlightenment. It can be achieved by any one who earns an honest living and leads a normal life.

Sikhism does not accept the ideology of pessimism. It advocates optimism and hope. Sikhs have an honour bound duty, at the risk of their own lives, to save others from danger and oppression and to stand up for their own, as well as others', beliefs. Seva (Selfless Service) and Simran (Contemplative Meditation) are two main pillars of Sikh way of life. While Seva instills humbleness, patience, a sense of self-sacrifice for the betterment of humanity and steadfastness on the path of God in the disciple, Simran serves as the medium for the disciple to become a God-oriented person. Simran not only brings one closer to God, but also transforms the individual into a perfect and God-oriented human being. Engaging in Simran leads to the creation of an ideal human by rising above worldly desires and attaining God-like attributes resulting in the union of human soul with the Al-mighty God.

Sikhs believe in living in this world as a householder carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities to the fullest. Vand Chakna – to share their wealth within the community and outside by giving Dasvand and practising charity (Daan), to “share and consume together.” The Sikh Gurus mention that our mind and spirit are constantly being attacked by the five evils; Kam (Lust), Krodh (Rage), Lobh (Greed), Moh (Attachment) and Ahankar (Ego). A Sikh needs to constantly attack and overcome these five vices.

The Sikh Gurus taught the Sikhs to develop and harness the five virtues which lead the soul closer to God and away from evil. These are Sat (Truth), Daya (Compassion), Santokh (Contentment), Nimrata (Humility) and Pyare (Love).

Nanak stimulated the people to get rid of priesthood, polytheism and caste system. He offered consolation by preaching that their misfortunes were due to their misdeeds in the past life, and assured them that a good life would bring them salvation hereafter.

Thus he preached the principle of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. The Gurus addressed their followers as Bhai, Bhai Mardana, Bhai-Bala, Bhai Budha, Bhai Lahna. Guru Tegh Bahadur, while writing to a sangat, mentioned every member by name even when the number was 50, 60 or 70, calling every male member Bhai and every woman as Bebe.

The Gurus asserted it did not matter if God was called Allah or Khuda and Ram or Parmeshwar. The real test lay not in belief but in action. All formalities and rituals were completely discarded. He roamed all over the country preaching to the people at village well, under a shady tree where people rested in the afternoon, at fairs and festivals, at places of pilgrimage, and on occasions of marriages and mourning's.

Woman's Empowerment

At the time of Guru Nanak, Indian women were severely de-graded and oppressed by their society. Given no education or freedom to make decisions, their presence in religious, political, social, cultural, and economic affairs was virtually non-existent. Her function was only to perpetuate the race, do household work, and serve the male members of society. Female infanticide was common, and the practice of sati, the immolation of the wife on her husband's funeral pyre, was encouraged, some-times even forced.

Guru Nanak condemned this man-made notion of the inferiority of women, and protested against their long subjugation. The Ultimate Truth was revealed to Guru Nanak through a mystic experience, in direct communion with God. Guru Nanak conveys this Truth through the bani, Sikh Scripture: "In a woman man is conceived, from a woman he is born, with a woman he is betrothed and married, with a woman he contracts friendship. Why denounce her, the one from whom even kings are born? From a woman a woman is born, none may exist without a woman."

The fundamental analogy used in the bani depicts the relationship between God and man, and proves that the physical body does not matter. The bani parallels all human beings (men and women) to the woman / wife, and God to the man/husband. This means that every person is a sohagan - a woman who is the beloved of the Lord - whether they have the body of a man or woman. Because the human body is transitory, the difference between man and woman is only transitory, and as such superficial. Thus, according to Sikh ideology, all men and women possess equal status. All human beings, regardless of gender, caste, race, or birth, are judged only by their deeds.

Sikh Language and Holy Book

By this time seventy year had passed since the founding of the Sikh religion, and it had well taken root during this period.

Besides spiritual attainments Guru Angad possessed, linguistic proficiency as well. He invented the Gurmukhi alphabet — script currently in use for Punjabi language.

Guru Nanak's biography (Janam sakhi) was written in this script.

Guru Ram Das founded the city of Amritsar which later became a place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs and their principal center.

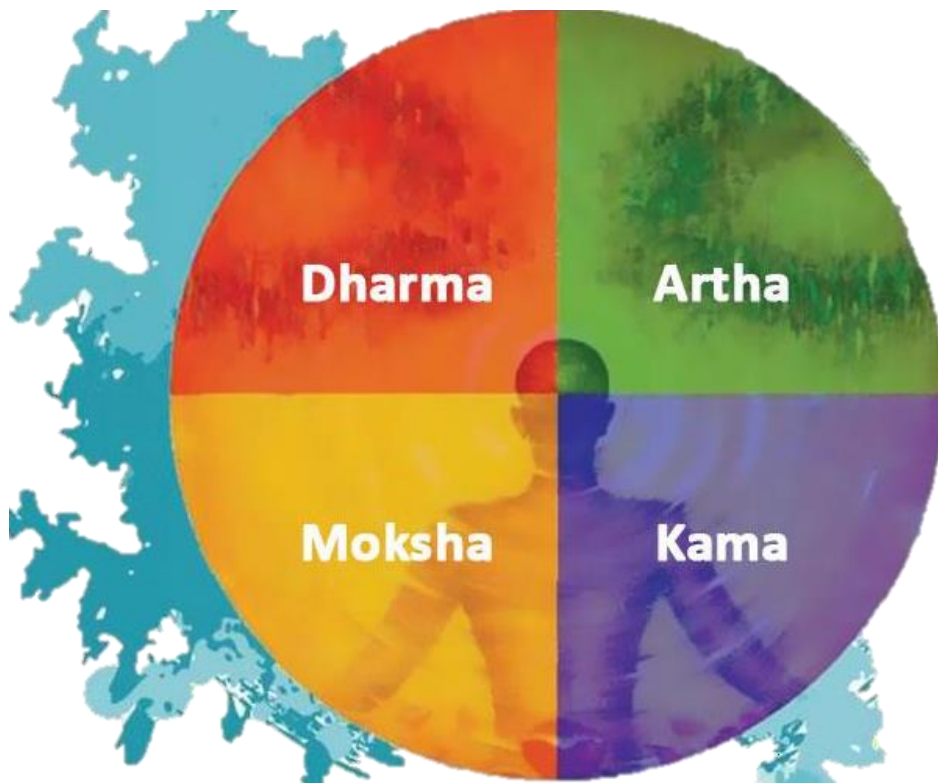
Guru Arjan Dev compiled the Granth Sahib. Thus a 'new' language, a central holy shrine and a holy book had been provided for the Sikhs, which means that all the ingredients to lend contiguity to this community had been made available.

The number of Gurus' disciple began to swell steadily, and with their gifts and offerings the Guru's annual income became substantial. Consequently, they attained a high position in society, spiritual as well as temporal.

Each Guru added to this and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of Sikhism. However, it was not until the tenth Guru Gobind Singh that religious practices were formalized on 13 April 1699. Guru Gobind Singh was revolutionary during his time and baptized five persons from different social backgrounds to form Khalsa. The first five, Pure Ones, then baptized Gobind Singh into the Khalsa fold. This gives the order of Khalsa, a history of around 300 years.

Sanatana Dharma/Hinduism

Sanatan Dharma is eternal law or truth on which the world including man is sustained. This has neither beginning nor end. The seers who realized this were identified first as the Aryans and later on as Hindus. And Sanatan Dharma was equated with the name of the Hindus. Newton's law of gravitation is not Newton's alone. He only discovered what was already there as eternal truth. Similarly, Sanatan Dharma is Arya dharma. Arya stands for all that is good desirable. Sanatan Dharma or eternal law has no founder. It is the law of nature or God as manifested in nature. This idea stands on a different footing than religions formulated or given by some person like Jesus or Mohammad. The Hindus as well as the others call that group of people following the Vedas and Upanishads as Hindus. This is being done for the last two thousand years and more. Why now give up that time - recognized appellation for Vedic Sanatana Dharma? What other name do they suggest? They have a vague notion that the term Hindu sounds communal and in order not to give offence to the sentiments of the Muslims and the Christians and others, this communal term should not be used and it should be substituted by 'Bharatiya' or 'Indian'.



Four Purusharth Supporting this mission are four objectives (purusharthas): Dharma Righteous conduct, Artha Acquisition and enjoyment of material wealth by ethical means, Kama Satisfaction of desires within limits as set out by Dharma, Moksha Emancipation through knowing one's true nature.

Four Ashram Hinduism also has formulated a fourfold Ashrama strategy to achieve the above objectives:

1. Brahmacharya - 1st stage in life that of studenthood characterised by the study of arts and sciences both spiritual and temporal.
2. Grahastha - 2nd stage in life that of running a household where one acquires wealth by fair means, enjoys it and distributes it among the needy. Selfless service through application of arts and sciences learnt earlier is the characteristics of this stage.
3. Vanaprastha - 3rd stage in life that of retirement characterised by (1) Allowing the youth to take over, (2) Engaging oneself in an useful social service and (3) Introspection and analysis of ways and means to rid ills afflicting the society.
4. Sannyasa - 4th and final stage in life that of renunciation is a preparation to end this worldly sojourn in a happy, peaceful mood and continue the journey towards Moksha.

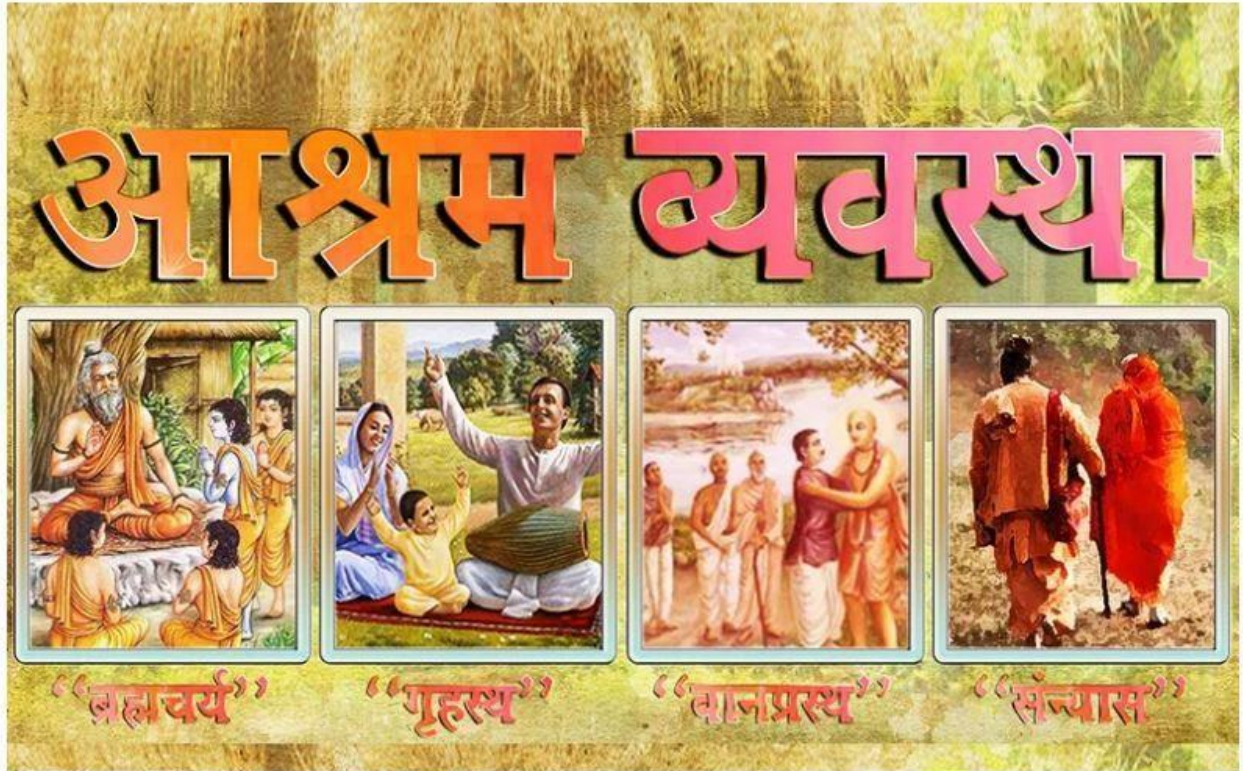
Chaturvarnya



Hinduism has effectively developed the four-fold Ashrama strategy of the individual by classifying the society into four groups:

- (1) Brahmins - By its very nature, this group is the smallest but at the same time the most important. Their responsibility is to acquire knowledge and impart it to others. They have also to follow all the rituals and perform them for the benefit of the other three groups. They are not supposed to acquire property. The duty of supporting them has been cast on the other three groups. Their behaviour also has to be flawless and exemplary. If one born to Brahmin parents followed a profession other than that prescribed for the Brahmins, such a person was not considered a Brahmin. Such type of Brahmins is not to be found now. However, a small group not avaricious but engaged in intellectual pursuits and having some effective say in the policy of a nation, requires to be fostered and cultivated.
- (2) Kshatriya - This is another such small group equally important as the Brahmins if not a shade more. For on it the duty of protecting the citizens of the State from the internal as well as the external enemies is cast. He has the right to collect taxes from the citizens of the state.

for running his administration. The kings and their nobles and senior officers of the army were alone called the Kshatriyas. The Ministers and other advisors were also drawn from amongst the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas according to the requirements of the State. The sons of these, if they did not follow these professions and engaged themselves in some other profession or trade, were designated as the Vaishyas or the Shudras. This small group is also required to be cultivated. On them depends the integrity of the State. They are required to be non-corrupt and above even a suspicion of corruption. Eight ministers from this group were chosen by the king.



(3) Vaishyas - This group was responsible for the production of wealth and its management. They were allowed to acquire as much wealth as they could by fair means and hold it in trust for the welfare of the State. The highest number (21) ministers of state were drawn from this class.

(4) Shudras - This group was on par with the Vaishyas, except that it did not want to undergo the rigorous discipline of acquiring theoretical knowledge and apply it to the daily needs of life. They were skilled artisans and craftsmen. They were allowed to acquire property. The number of ministers of State, from this class was four - the same as from the Brahmanas.

Sanskaras

Samskaras or the sacraments are sixteen in number:

(1) गभाधान - union of sperm with the ova. It shall be noted that these samskaras are meant to ennoble the life of an individual. This sacrament is devised so as to elevate the character of the married man's union with his spouse.

(2) पुंसवन - Creating a male embryo. The desire to have a male child is very strong in every parent in most societies. To have a male child the parents have to observe certain restrictions in coming together for union.

(3) जातकमा - Purificatory rites after the birth of a child.

(4) तसमन्तोन्नयन - Offering ablutions to different deities after the birth of a child, so as to ward off an evil that may accrue and the growth of talent in the child.

(5) नामकिण - Naming ceremony. This is observed even today.

(6) तनष्क्रम - Getting out for a visit to the local temple with the new-born babe. This is usually done after three weeks after confinement

(7) अन्नप्राशन - Start of feeding the new-born child with solid food. This is done after the child has completed its first six months.

(8) चूडाकमा - Removing the hair of a child for the first time. It is usually done in the sixth month.

(9) कणावेध - Pricking the ear of a child. It is done on twelfth day from the day of birth.

(10) उपनयन - Initiation of a child in schooling. It is done in the eighth year of a child.

(11) वेदांभ - initiation into the study of the Vedas.

(12) केशान्त - Removing the hair.

(13) समावतान - Bath signaling the end of student hood.

(14) तववाह - Marriage is a very important sacrament. Being sacred, the marriage tie is indissoluble except under compelling circumstances.

(15) अतिहोत्र - start of worshipping fire.

(16) अन्त्येष्टी - Last rites immediately after the death of a person.

Sources of Sanatana\Hindu Dharma

Vedas (Apauruṣeya): These are the sources of knowledge not created by humans but discovered by Ṛṣis through “Śabdbrahma”, the pious words of Brahmā, the creator. Vedas were memorised by Ṛṣis and transferred to their disciple.

□ Aspects of Vedas (Vedatrayī) - Gyāna (Knowledge), Upāsanā (Worship), Karma (Action) □

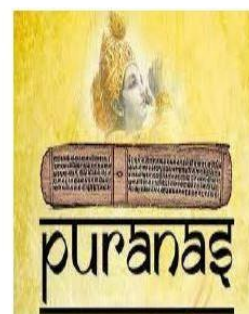
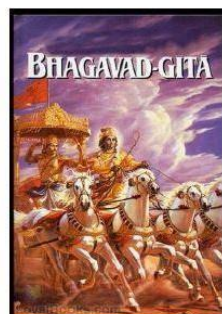
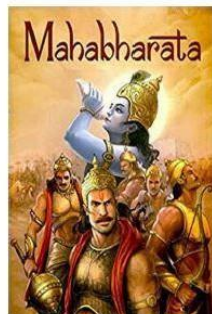
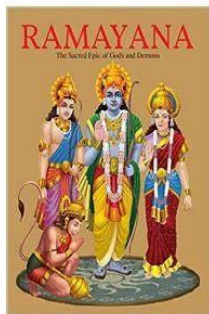
Vedic Literature can be divided into - □ Samhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, Upaniṣad

Collection of mantras (Ṛgveda, Sāmamedā, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda) Interpretation of “Grantha” and application aspects of Vedas have been clarified in brahmana.

Initial Philosophical ideas are represented, such as the concept of four Āśramas 11 Upanisad Ultimate philosophical principles and ideas regarding the Ishwara soul and world.

The Dharmic thoughts and practices of this land have been presented in various forms to guide people to navigate the ocean of Hindu scriptures and understand the relevance of their fundamental tenets and pursuits.

Sage Vālimiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vedavyāsa's *Mahābhārata*, ŚrīmadBhagvatGītā and many others present the thoughts concerning the philosophical and spiritual relevance of life under Sanātana Dharma. 18 Puraṇās present the history of the origin of Indian people and civilization.



Judaism

Founding: Judaism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It dates back to ancient Israel and the covenant between God and the Jewish people as described in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).

- **Beliefs:**

- **Monotheism:** Jews believe in one God, Yahweh, who is all-powerful and the creator of the universe.
- **Torah:** The central religious text of Judaism, which includes the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. It contains religious laws, ethical guidelines, and historical narratives.
- **Covenant:** The relationship between God and the Jewish people is based on a covenant, a sacred agreement.

- **Worship:** Synagogues are places of worship, and the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) is observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening.

- **Leadership:** Rabbis are spiritual leaders and scholars who provide religious guidance.

- **Holidays:** Some important Jewish holidays include Passover, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Hanukkah.

- ♦ **Zoroastrianism:**

- **Founding:** Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, was founded by the prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) in ancient Persia (modern-day Iran) around 6th century BCE.

- **Beliefs:**

- **Monotheism:** Zoroastrians believe in one supreme deity, Ahura Mazda, who represents truth and goodness.
- **Dualism:** The religion posits a dualistic cosmology with the struggle between Ahura Mazda (good) and Angra Mainyu (evil).
- **Good Deeds:** Zoroastrians are encouraged to lead a life of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

- **Fire Worship:** Fire is a symbol of purity and is central to Zoroastrian worship.

- **Texts:** The primary religious texts are the Avesta, which contains hymns, prayers, and teachings.

- **Temples:** Zoroastrians gather in fire temples for communal worship.

- **Shinto:**

- **Origins:** Shinto is an ancient, indigenous religion of Japan that predates recorded history.

- **Beliefs:**

- **Kami:** Shinto is polytheistic and focuses on the worship of kami, which can be spirits in nature, ancestors, or even gods.
- **Rituals and Shrines:** Worship often involves rituals and ceremonies at Shinto shrines, where kami are believed to reside.

- **Cultural and National Identity:** Shinto is closely tied to Japanese culture and serves as a source of national identity.

- **Lack of Doctrine:** Unlike many other religions, Shinto lacks a specific religious doctrine or centralized religious authority.
- **Festivals:** Shinto festivals and rituals play a significant role in Japanese life, such as the annual New Year celebrations and festivals celebrating the changing of seasons.

These are brief overviews of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Shinto. Each of these religions has rich traditions, beliefs, and practices that have evolved over centuries. If you have more specific questions about any of them, feel free to ask.

Sufi Tradition

Understanding of Sufism and its practices

Sufism, as a mystical tradition within Islam, is underpinned by a set of core principles that inform its spiritual philosophy and practice. Central to Sufi thought is the principle of Tawhid, which asserts the absolute oneness of God, serving as the foundational belief from which all Sufi teachings emanate. This principle emphasizes the indivisible unity of the Divine and underscores the centrality of God in all aspects of Sufi spirituality. Love and devotion constitute another fundamental principle of Sufism, wherein practitioners cultivate an intense longing for God and express their devotion through acts of worship, remembrance, and service. Surrender and submission (Islam) are also integral to Sufi practice, as adherents strive to align their will with the divine will, acknowledging God's sovereignty and divine guidance. Additionally, Sufism emphasizes inner purification (Tazkiyah) as a means of cleansing the soul from ego-driven desires and attachments, thereby facilitating spiritual growth and union with the Divine. The principle of the Unity of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) posits the metaphysical concept that all existence emanates from and returns to the divine essence, transcending apparent diversity and multiplicity. Seeking divine knowledge (*Marifah*), compassion and service (*Ihsan*), as well as humility and detachment (*Tawadu' and Zuhd*), further characterize Sufi principles, guiding practitioners on the path of spiritual realization, inner transformation, and the attainment of spiritual enlightenment. These principles collectively underscore the profound depth and richness of Sufi spirituality, offering seekers a framework for navigating the journey towards union with the Divine.

Sufi practices encompass a wide range of spiritual disciplines aimed at cultivating inner purification, devotion, and closeness to the Divine. Central to these practices is the ritual of dhikr, or remembrance of God, which involves the repetitive invocation of sacred phrases or names of God to focus the mind and heart on the divine presence. Meditation, known as muraqaba, encourages seekers to cultivate mindfulness and spiritual awareness, leading to inner tranquillity and enlightenment. Sufi music and chanting, such as qawwali and *Sama*, serve as vehicles for expressing devotion and experiencing spiritual ecstasy through soul-stirring melodies and lyrics. Additionally, acts of charity, selfless service, and compassion towards others are integral to Sufi practice, reflecting the principle of love and service as pathways to divine union. Through these practices, Sufis seek to purify the soul, deepen their spiritual connection, and attain the goal of union with the Divine.

Sufi Orders

Sufism is divided into several Sufi orders across the world. Sufi orders, or tariqas, encompass a diverse array of spiritual lineages within the broader Sufi tradition, each distinguished by unique teachings, practices, and historical legacies. Among the most prominent Sufi orders are the *Naqshbandiya*, known for its emphasis on silent meditation and the transmission of spiritual insights from teacher to

disciple; the *Qadiriyya*, founded by the renowned Sufi saint Abdul-Qadir Gilani, which emphasizes the importance of strict adherence to Islamic law alongside spiritual practices; the *Chishtiya*, renowned for its emphasis on love, devotion, and service to humanity, particularly through acts of charity and social welfare; and the *Mevlevi Order*, founded by the Persian poet Rumi, which is famous for its ritual of Sufi whirling as a means of attaining spiritual ecstasy and union with the Divine. Each Sufi order represents a distinct spiritual path within Islam, offering seekers diverse avenues for pursuing inner transformation, spiritual enlightenment, and the realization of divine love and unity.

Sufism has played a significant role in shaping the cultural and artistic landscape of the Islamic world. Sufi poetry, music, and dance have served as vehicles for expressing the ineffable experiences of divine love and longing that are central to the Sufi path. Figures such as Rumi, Hafiz, and Ibn Arabi are revered not only for their theological insights but also for their literary contributions, which continue to inspire millions around the world. Moreover, Sufi orders, or tariqas, have historically served as centres of learning, spiritual guidance, and social welfare, exerting considerable influence over both religious and political spheres. Despite facing periods of persecution and marginalization, Sufism has remained a resilient and enduring force within the Muslim world, attracting seekers from diverse backgrounds who are drawn to its message of universal love, compassion, and inner transformation.

Sufism in India

In India, Sufism has had a profound impact on both the religious and cultural landscape, contributing to the syncretic traditions that have characterized the country for centuries. Sufi saints and mystics, known as "Sufi masters" or "Sufi pirs," established numerous Khanqahs (Sufi centers) and Dargahs (shrines) across the subcontinent, where they preached their message of love, tolerance, and spiritual unity. One of the most prominent Sufi orders in India is the Chishti Order, which was introduced by the revered saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, popularly known as Khwaja Gharib Nawaz, who settled in Ajmer in the 12th century. The Chishti Order emphasized the principles of piety, humility, and service to humanity, attracting a large following among people of all faiths.

Sufism's influence on Indian culture extends beyond the realm of religion. Sufi music, particularly qawwali, has become an integral part of the country's musical heritage, captivating audiences with its soul-stirring melodies and devotional lyrics. Renowned qawwals such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Sabri Brothers have achieved international acclaim, spreading the message of Sufi mysticism to audiences around the world. Additionally, Sufi poetry has flourished in India, with poets like *Amir Khusrao* and *Bulleh Shah* leaving a legacy of spiritual wisdom and lyrical beauty.

Sufism in India has also played a crucial role in fostering interfaith harmony and dialogue. Sufi saints were known for their inclusive approach, welcoming individuals from diverse religious backgrounds into their fold. This inclusivity is exemplified by the annual *Urs* (the death anniversary) celebrations held at Sufi shrines, where devotees of different faiths come together to pay their respects to the saint and seek blessings. The Sufi tradition in India has thus served as a unifying force, transcending religious divides, and promoting a message of peace and mutual understanding.

Celebration at Different dargahs

Festivals held at Sufi dargahs serve as vibrant expressions of spiritual devotion, cultural celebration, and communal unity within the context of Sufi mysticism. These festivals, often known as Urs celebrations, commemorate the death anniversary of Sufi saints and attract devotees from diverse backgrounds who come to pay their respects and seek blessings. The atmosphere during Urs is characterized by an amalgamation of rituals, music, dance, and feasting, creating an immersive experience that resonates with the teachings of love, compassion, and inclusivity espoused by Sufism.

Qawwali performances, featuring soulful renditions of Sufi poetry, form a central part of the festivities, captivating audiences with their transcendent melodies and profound spiritual

messages. Additionally, devotees participate in rituals such as the offering of prayers, the lighting of oil lamps, and the distribution of food to the needy, embodying the principles of service and generosity upheld by Sufi tradition. Urs celebrations at Sufi dargahs thus serve as significant cultural events that foster a sense of community, transcendence, and spiritual renewal among followers of Sufism and beyond.

The celebration of Diwali and Basant at the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah, and Holi at the Dewa Sharif Dargah, illustrates a remarkable display of interfaith harmony and communal unity, where Hindus and Muslims come together to rejoice in shared cultural festivities. At the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah in Delhi, Diwali is marked with reverence and joy, as both Hindu and Muslim devotees gather to illuminate the dargah with earthen lamps and candles, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. The atmosphere is infused with the spirit of camaraderie and mutual respect, as people from different religious backgrounds exchange greetings, share sweets, and offer prayers together, embodying the essence of Diwali as a festival of unity and renewal.

Similarly, the celebration of Basant at the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah signifies the arrival of spring and is characterized by colourful festivities that transcend religious boundaries. Devotees of all faiths come together to fly kites, sing traditional songs, and partake in communal feasts, rejoicing in the beauty of nature and the promise of new beginnings. This inclusive celebration reflects the Sufi ethos of love, tolerance, and acceptance, which embraces diversity and promotes harmony among people of different beliefs.

At the Dewa Sharif Dargah, the dargah of Sufi saint Haji Waris Ali Shah (R.A) in Uttar Pradesh, Holi is celebrated with equal fervour and enthusiasm by both Hindus and Muslims. The dargah becomes a vibrant hub of activity, as devotees gather to play with coloured powders, dance to the beat of drums, and immerse themselves in the joyous spirit of the festival. The boundaries between religious identities dissolve as people of all backgrounds come together in a spirit of camaraderie and shared celebration, reinforcing the message of unity and inclusivity that lies at the heart of Sufism.

In essence, the joint celebration of Diwali and Basant at the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah, and Holi at the Dewa Sharif Dargah, serves as a powerful testament to the enduring bonds of friendship, understanding, and mutual respect that exist between Hindus and Muslims in India. Despite facing challenges from conservative religious forces, Sufism continues to thrive in India, inspiring millions with its message of love, tolerance, and spiritual enlightenment. The festivals celebrated at Dargahs in India not only strengthen communal harmony but also embody the timeless values of peace, love, and coexistence that lie at the core of both Sufi and Hindu spiritual traditions. In an increasingly polarized world, the teachings of Sufism serve as a timeless reminder of the universal values that unite humanity and transcend cultural and religious differences.

Warkari Tradition

Warkari is “The one who performs the Wari”. It is a sampradaya (religious movement) that is mainly connected to the Indian state of Maharashtra and falls under the Bhakti Spiritual tradition of Hinduism. The ruling god of Pandharpur, Vitthal (also called Vithoba), is worshipped by Warkaris as a manifestation of Vishnu. Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Namdev, Saint Chokhamela, Saint Eknath, and Jagadguru Saint Tukaram are among the gurus and saints of the Bhakti Movement connected to the Warkari Tradition. According to recent studies, the Warkaris were traditionally Krishna's devotees. Krishna is also known as Vitthala. The majority of Purandara Dasa's and other Bhakti Saints' Bhakthi songs mention Krishna as Vitthala.



Influence

Since its formation as a panth (community of people with shared spiritual beliefs and practices) during the Bhakti movement in the thirteenth century CE, the Warkari tradition has been a part of Hindu culture in Maharashtra. Around fifty poet-saints (sants) are recognized by Warkaris, whose works span 500 years and were chronicled in an eighteenth-century hagiography by Mahipati. According to the Warkari tradition, these sants share a spiritual ancestry.



Practices

The worship of Vithoba, a duty-based way of living that emphasizes moral behavior and rigorous abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, the adoption of the sattvic diet, a modified lacto-vegetarian diet that excludes onions and garlic, and fasting twice a month on Ekadashi day, self-control (celibacy) during student life, rejection of discrimination based on wealth or caste system, reading Hindu texts, reciting the Haripath daily, and engaging in regular bhajan and kirtan are all part of the Warkari movement. The tulashi-mala, a rosary fashioned from the wood of the revered Tulsi plant, is worn by the Warkaris. Three straight brow lines, a black line

between two white gopichandans, or white clay and sandal paste lines—which are also well-liked by other Vaishnavite devotees—are characteristics of Warkari men. Warkaris accept the principle of ultimate equality while viewing God as the Absolute Truth and determining social values. Warkaris bow before one another because "everybody is Brahma" and emphasize selflessness, forgiveness, simplicity, harmony, compassion, non-violence, love, and humility in social interactions. The Warkari poet-saints are renowned for their Marathi-language devotional songs, known as the abhang, which are devoted to Vithoba. The Haridasa's Kannada hymns and Marathi renditions of the common aarti songs connected to the customs of lighting the gods are examples of additional devotional literature.

Pilgrimages

The Warkari people gather in Pandharpur on Ekadashi, the eleventh day of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Ashadha, which falls sometime between late June and July in the Gregorian calendar, as part of their yearly pilgrimage known as Wari. The saints' Palkhi is carried by pilgrims from their locations of Samadhi (enlightenment or "spiritual birth"). The youngest son of Tukaram, Narayan Maharaj, initiated the custom of carrying the paduka (sandals) of the saints in a Palkhi in 1685. Haibatravbaba, a Scindian courtier and Dnyaneshwar devotee, and Tukaram's descendants made additional modifications to the pilgrimage in the 1820s.

Before the fourteenth century, pilgrimages were being organized by Vitthal devotees. Approximately forty palkhis and their followers from all over Maharashtra still do this today. On the Ekadashi of the month of Kartika, which occurs in November according to the Gregorian Calendar, another pilgrimage is observed. During the pilgrimage, celebrations like Ringan and Dhava take place. During the Ringan, pilgrims attempt to catch the dust particles that are kicked off and smear their heads with them as an unmounted sacred horse known as Maulincha Ashva, who is thought to be the soul of the saint whose idol is being carried in the litter, runs through the rows of pilgrims.

Another race in which everyone wins is called Dhava, and it's held to remember how Tukaram ran in ecstasy when he first saw the temple in Pandharpur.



Important features of the Warkari tradition include:

1. **Devotion to Vitthal:** Vitthal is the main character and stands for the compassionate and approachable aspect of the divine.

2. **Pilgrimage (Wari):** Carrying the footprints of revered saints and singing devotional songs, thousands of devotees walk from different parts of Maharashtra to Pandharpur.
3. **Bhakti and Social Justice:** This movement challenges established hierarchies, stresses social equality, and encourages a direct relationship with the divine.
4. **Saints and Devotees:** The movement was greatly influenced by individuals such as Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, and Tukaram, whose teachings are at the heart of the tradition.
5. **Community and Inclusivity:** Regardless of caste, gender, or social status, individuals from all walks of life are welcomed in the Warkari tradition.
6. **Simplified Lifestyle:** People who follow Warkari tend to lead simple lives that emphasize moral behavior, a lacto-vegetarian diet, and abstain from alcohol.
7. **Devotional Activities:** Common activities include reciting the names of Vitthal, singing devotional songs (abhangs, bhajans), and participating in kirtans (group singing and chanting).
8. **Women's Role:** Throughout the Warkari tradition, women have been integral, inspiring and contributing to the movement through numerous saints and devotees.



Gandhian Principles

Early life

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town in present-day Gujarat, India. His father, Karamchand Gandhi (1822–1885), who belonged to the Hindu Modh community, was the *diwan* (Prime Minister) of Porbandar state, a small princely state in the Kathiawar Agency of British India.
- He had his schooling in nearby Rajkot, where his father served as the adviser or prime minister to the local ruler. In May 1883, the 13-year-old Mohandas was married to 14-year-old Kasturbai Makhanji in an arranged child marriage, as was the custom in the region. In 1885, when Gandhi was 15, the couple's first child was born, but survived only a few days.
- Gandhi traveled to London, England, to study law at University College. His attempts at establishing law practice in Mumbai failed. Later, after failing to secure a part-time job as a high school teacher, he ended up returning to Rajkot to make a modest living drafting petitions for litigants, a business he was forced to close when he conflicted with a British officer. In his autobiography, he refers to this incident as an unsuccessful attempt to lobby on behalf of his older brother. It was in this climate that, in April 1893, he accepted a yearlong contract from Dada Abdulla & Co., an Indian firm, to a post in the Colony of Natal, South Africa, then part of the British Empire.

- **Maturing in South Africa**

In South Africa, Gandhi faced discrimination directed at Indians and colored skin. He was thrown off a train at Pietermaritzburg after refusing to move from the first class to a third-class coach while holding a valid first class ticket. Traveling farther on by stagecoach he was beaten by a driver for refusing to travel on the footboard to make room for a European passenger. These events were a turning point in his life, awakening him to social injustice and influencing his subsequent social activism.

In 1893, Gandhi found himself in another world. He was insulted and thrown out of a railway compartment for travelling in a compartment held for the Whites. He was beaten for walking on streets prohibited to Asians. In spite of these difficult circumstances, Gandhi decided to stay in South Africa and help people regain their self-esteem and battle for their rights. Because of the mistreatment of Indian immigrants, he set up the Indian Congress in Natal to battle racism and to build up the thought of self-purification and peaceful civil protest “satyagraha”

Struggle for Indian independence 1915-1947:

In 1915, Gandhi made a triumphant come back to India. Right after his arrival, Gandhi was stunned by the congestion and misery he faced and decided to work for these oppressed people. He required a day of dissent against the Rowlatt Act (1919) which empowered the British to detain anybody. Thousands of demonstrators gathered in different towns, yet the protests turned brutal. In Amritsar, around 400 individuals were killed and 1,300 were injured. This massacre persuaded Gandhi to begin crusading for Indian independence. He spoke at the conventions of the Indian National Congress, but was primarily introduced to Indian issues, politics and the Indian people by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a respected leader of the Congress Party at the time.



Gandhi in 1918, when he led the Champaran Satyagraha

Gandhi's Tactics

Gandhi employed non-cooperation, non-violence and peaceful resistance as his "weapons" in the struggle against British. In Punjab, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of civilians by British troops (also known as the Amritsar Massacre) caused deep trauma to the nation, leading to increased public anger and acts of violence. Gandhi criticized both the actions of the British Raj and the retaliatory violence of Indians. When arrested, he continued his non-violent protest through hunger strikes.



Dandi march

Gandhi is invited to London for “talks.”

Gandhi became internationally known, so the British government could not afford to have him harmed or have him die while under arrest (this included dying from a self-imposed hunger strike too). He became a respected world figure without ever doing anything violent. The British could not ignore him; they had to talk with him.



At the Prime Minister's Home on Downing Street , London , UK

Champaran and Kheda Agitations

One of his major achievements in 1918 was the Champaran and Kheda agitations – a movement against British landlords. The farmers and peasantry were forced to grow and cultivate Indigo and were even forced to sell them at fixed prices. Finally, these farmers pledged to Mahatma Gandhi and non-violent protest took place. Gandhiji won the battle. In the year 1918, Kheda was hit by floods and farmers wanted relief from tax. Using non-cooperation as his main weapon, Gandhiji.



Gandhi in 1918, when he led the Kheda Satyagraha

used it in pledging the farmers for nonpayment of taxes. Gandhiji got much public support and finally in May 1918, the Government gave the provisions related to tax payment.

Khilafat Movement

Gandhiji in the year 1919 approached Muslims, as he found the position of Congress was quite weak and unstable. Khilafat Movement is all about the worldwide protest against the status of Caliph by Muslims. Finally, Mahatma Gandhi had an All India Muslim Conference, and became the main person for the event. This movement supported Muslims to a great extent and the success of this movement made him the national leader and facilitated his strong position in Congress party. Khilafat movement collapsed badly in 1922 and throughout their journey Gandhiji fought against communalism, but the gap between Hindus and Muslims widened.

Non-cooperation movement

One of the first series of non-violent protests nationwide was the non-cooperation movement started by Mahatma Gandhi. This movement officially started the Gandhian era in India. In this freedom struggle, the non-cooperation movement was aimed at making the Indians aware of the fact that the British government can be opposed and if done actively, it will keep a check on them. Thus, educational institutions were boycotted, foreign goods were boycotted, and people let go off their nominated seats in government institutions. Though the movement failed, Indians awakened to the concept of going against the British.



Salt March (Dandi March)

Salt March was an active movement carried out in the year 1930. Gandhiji started focusing on expanding initiatives against untouchability, alcoholism and removal of all bad habits. Salt march, mainly known as Salt Satyagraha which began with Dandi march in the year 1930. This movement was an essential part of Indian Independence movement and non-violent resistance against tax. Gandhiji led this Dandi march with lot of followers behind him. On the 24th day, he vowed to produce more salt without paying any tax and soon he broke the law for salt, which sparked outrage among Britishers. After

this, Gandhiji was arrested, and this news gained a lot of attention in the Press.

Quit India Movement

In August 1942, Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement (“Bharat Chhodo Andolan”). A resolution was passed on 8 August 1942 in Bombay by the All-India Congress Committee, declaring its demand for an immediate end of British rule. The Congress decided to organize a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale. Gandhiji’s slogan of ‘Do or Die’ (Karo ya Maro) inspired the nation. Every man, woman and child began dreaming of a free India.

Imprisonment

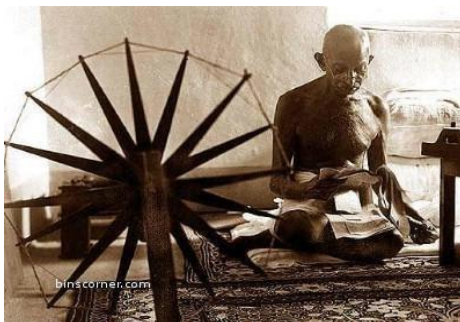
Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922, tried for sedition, and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. He began his sentence on 18 March 1922. He was released in February 1924 for an appendicitis operation, having served only 2 years. Without Gandhi's uniting personality, the Indian National Congress began to splinter during his years in prison, splitting into two factions. Furthermore, cooperation among Hindus and Muslims, which had been strong at the height of the non-violence campaign, was breaking down. Gandhi attempted to bridge these differences through many means, including a three-week fast in the autumn of 1924, but with limited success.



Gandhi led a very simple life



Gandhi spinning thread



Mahatma Gandhi's room at



Sabarmati Ashram

'Father of the nation'

When the moment of freedom came, on 15 August 1947, Gandhi was nowhere to be seen in the capital, though Nehru and the entire Constituent Assembly were to salute him as the architect of Indian independence, as the 'father of the nation'.

Gandhiji made social reforms as part of the program of the nationalist movement. His greatest achievement in the field of social reform was the campaign against inhuman institution of untouchability which had degraded millions of Indians. His other achievement was in the field of cottage industries. He saw in the charkha or spinning wheel, the salvation of the village people and its promotion became part of the congress program. In addition to infusing people with the spirit of nationalism it provided employment to millions and created a large group of people who were ready to throw themselves into the struggle and court imprisonment. The charkha became so important that it eventually became a part of the flag of the Indian National Congress.

Conclusion

The history of the world involves just cases of men and women who have lived such devoted lives that they have had an effect, which has gone on long after their passing. One of these most great men is called Mahatma Gandhi. The way he gave shape and character to India's freedom battle deserves a big applause. He sacrificed his own life for the sake of the nation. The estimate that he obtained for himself in spite of leading a modest way of life is much considerable. Though he was not the only reason behind the independence of India, but it is unfair to say that his non-violent protest did not help in the Indian freedom struggle. His peaceful ways and non-violent strategies played a major role in the establishment for gaining freedom from the British.

Take away

- Philosophy of Non-Violence as a public practice
- Concept of Satyagraha
- A Leadership with difference
- Infusing people with the spirit of nationalism
- Social reform through mass deliberations
- Struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale
- Contribution and cooperation of all religious streams for one cause
- Sacrifice for nation bearing individual losses

Thoughts on self-sufficient economy through Swadeshi Movement