

# HISTORY

## CHAPTER - 1

### WESTERN RELIGIONS



#### We learn about the following in this chapter:-

- The growth of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam.
- The life of Jesus Christ and Mohammed, the Prophet
- The teachings of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam.

Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are important religions of the world. These religions took birth in West Asia. They are also known as Semitic religions. These religions are spread in many countries of the world.

#### **Do you know this?**

*Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are known as religions. 'Religion' means 'the Path of Truth' revealed to the Prophets by the Creator of this earth. Hence, Prophets, Holy Scriptures and the tenets which guide the practice of these religions act as the pillars of these religions. This assumption is limited only to the above-mentioned religions.*

#### **JUDAISM**

A religion is a set of rules. A religious community is one which has 1. Belief in one God. 2. Belief in the messenger of God. 3. A holy book written by the messenger 4. The community should follow the specific do's and don'ts of the messenger. 5. Mass prayer to be conducted in a specific place. Judaism is a religion. Their followers are called Jews. Their language is Hebrew. Abraham was the forefather of this religion and Moses was their Messenger.



**Prophet Moses**

## **History of Jews**

About 3000 years ago in Israel about ten to twelve tribal groups engaged in the continuous fight. Some times they had to fight against the external enemies. It was thought that the religion could bring peace in the community. David defeated Goliath and became the ruler. His son was famous Solomon, the king, who reigned for along period, built a huge temple in his kingdom. The kingdom was split into two after the death of King Solomon in 931 BCE. The one was Israel and the other Juda. Egyptians and later Assyrians invaded Israel. Jews fled to Juda. They built tents in Jerusalem. Babylonians invaded Israel and won Assyrians. Babylonians completely destroyed the temple. In 538 BCE Achaemenid of Persia invaded Israel. Cyrus, the famous for his benevolent attitude gave back their kingdom, and allowed jews live in peace. Jews were back in their motherland and rebuilt their temple. Torah, their religious texts were also written. Religious teachers made their prominence in this period.

## **Invasion over Jews**

Alexander, the rular of Macedonia made another attack on Babylonia and defeated them in 334 BCE. Jews were again in troubles. Thus, Israel and Juda were in one or the other trouble. So, they had to flee from place to place and later spread to Europe, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Christianity was the later development. Jesus Christ who taught Christianity was a Jew.

## **The Rise of Isreal**

The Jewish had fought for their survival throughout. During II world war, Adolf Hitler, the German Dictator, got killed 60 Lakh Jews. After the close of the war, UNO formed Israel as a seperate nation for the jews. Thus, the jews got their motherland after 3000 years.

Hebrew Bible also called Old Testament has 3 divisions. Law, writings, and Moses' writings. Christianity and Islam adopted many of them.

## **Ten rules in Judaism**

1. Do not have any other gods.
2. Do not make or worship idols.
3. Do not disrespect or misuse God's name.

4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Honour your mother and father.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not tell lies
10. Do not be envious of others.

## ZOROASTRIANISM

Although Zoroastrianism was founded in Persia, it has influenced India. Parsis as they are called, settled in India during Muslim invasion in different periods. Parsis are more in number in India compared to the other parts of the world. Their contribution to the economy, army and freedom movement is worth remembering.

Zoroastrianism (Parsi religion) was founded by Zarthustra in 6 B.C. Zarathustra was an Iranian prophet and a religious reformer. They worshipped Sun and more similar to the Vedic rituals and practices. The holy book 'Zend Avestha' contains Shlokas called "Gatha". The rituals related to worship is named Yashna(Yajna). They were followed to praise gods. This seems all these concepts came from Sanskrit. The religions Judaism, Islam and Christianity were influenced by Zoroastrianism. With the invasion of Alexander of Macedonia, the religion suffered. They destroyed Zend Avestha. Later it was re-written.

**Beliefs:** Goodness will be victorious over the evil in their competition. Man should choose goodness. Their God was Ahur-Meza. Fasting, celibacy and cleanliness are some of their practices.

## CHRISTIANITY

The birthplace of Jesus is Bethlehem, 5 kilometers away from Jerusalem in Judea province. He was the only son of the poor couple, Joseph and Mary.



**Zarathustra**

Not much is known about his early life. Jesus knew Aramic and Semetic languages. At this time, the Jews were awaiting the arrival of a Messiah, who would save them from their problems. A person named John had predicted this arrival. John was basically a religious preacher. He used to baptise the people who came to him. Even Jesus was baptised by John. John declared Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus was 30 years at that time.

Jesus started travelling through Isreal preaching religious philosophy. Over a period of time, Jews chose Jesus as their religious leader. Jesus had 12 disciples. They are called 'Apostles'. Peter was the first apostle.

Jesus sympathised with the downtrodden and those who suffered from diseases. He always came forward to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

### **Crucifixion of Christ**

The Jews considered Jesus as their Messiah and he became very popular. Since Jesus began rejecting the religious dogmas, Jewish fundamentalists started opposing him.

Due to all these reasons, when Jesus visited Jerusalem, the Jewish soliders arrested him and handed him over to the Governor of Rome and he ordered crucifixion of Jesus. He was crucified on the hillock of Golgotha by the Roman soldiers.

### **The teachings of Jesus Christ**

The preachings of Jesus Christ are very simple to follow. They are told in the form of stories or parables.

1. He told people to imagine God as their Father. He also told that all human beings were Children of the God. The concept of God is different from "Brahma" in Sanathana Dharma.



**Jesus Christ**

2. He advocated universal brotherhood.
3. He told people to shun hypocritical religious practices.
4. He advised people to repent for their sins and seek forgiveness from the God.
5. He asked people to do unto others what they wanted others to do to them.
6. He equated Service to Man with Service to God.

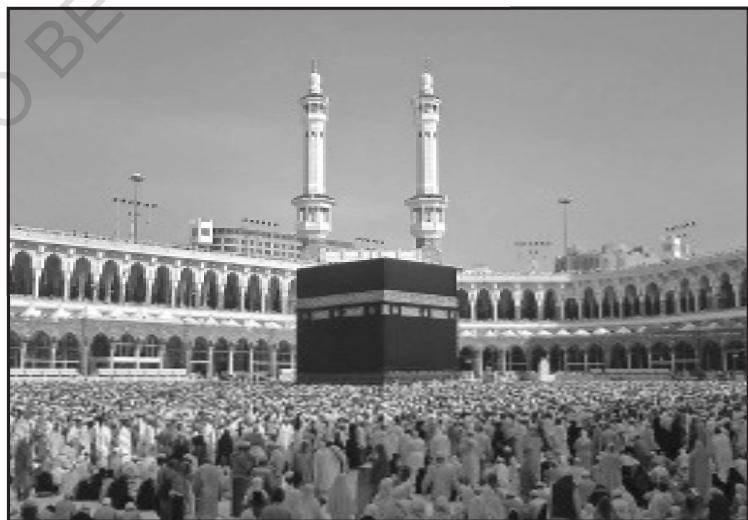
In this manner, his preachings were based on Love, Service and Brotherhood.

### **The Spread of Christianity**

After the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples were tortured. Some of them were crucified. During the time of Emperor Constantine, Christianity was adopted as the State Religion. Subsequently, Christianity spread throughout Europe. Today, Christian Churches are found throughout the world and have a large number of followers. The Bible is their Scripture.

### **ISLAM RELIGION**

Muhammad, The Prophet is the founder of Islam Religion. He was born at Mecca in C.E.570 Abdulla and Ameena were his parents. His father died a few months before Mohammad's birth. He lost his mother when he was six years old. Thereafter, he grew up under the care of his uncle, who



**Mecca**

was basically a trader. He had to travel long distances for his trade. Mohammad used to accompany him during these travels. After some time, Mohammad was employed to service in a rich widow's house. Later, he married that widow. They had two sons and four daughters.

Mohammad had the habit of introspecting and meditating all alone. He used to meditate in a cave in Mecca. Once, while he was meditating, he heard the voice of an angel. The angel said that Mohammad was the Prophet of God (Allah). Later, Mohammad convinced his family members, relatives and friends that he was truly the Prophet. However, he never referred himself as God, but Prophet of Allah.

The rest of his life Mohammad spent preaching the Divine Gospel. These preachings were compiled by his followers and published in the form of a book. Quran is the Scripture of Islam.

The orthodox community of Mecca began to oppose the Prophet. Due to this, Muhammad, the Prophet could not preach in Mecca any more. In the year C.E. 622 he travelled from Mecca to Medina. This journey became popular in history as 'Hijira'. He settled down for some time in Medina. He brought many small tribes of Arabia together. As a result, his strength doubled. He moved to Mecca again with his followers and after some years, breathed his last there.

### **Philosophy and tenets of Islam (the teachings of Muhammad, the Prophet) :**

1. Islam believes in monotheism (worship of one God). Allah is their God and Mohammed, His Prophet.
2. Muhammad, The Prophet taught that there is no death for the soul and that sinners would attract punishment by fire.
3. He laid emphasis on good behaviour. He said that human beings should try to learn forgiveness.

### **The rules and regulations to be followed by every Muslim :**

1. Firm belief in one God and Mohammed as his Prophet - Kalima
2. Praying five times daily facing the direction of Kaba - Namaz
3. Fasting during the Ramzan month from sunrise to sunset - Roja
4. Donating one-fourths of their earnings to the poor - Zakat
5. Visiting Mecca at least once in their lifetimes - Haj

These five practices are said to be the 'pillars of Islam'.

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**Please Note :** (BCE - refer to before common era)  
Wherever BCE is not mentioned it is CE-Common era

The successors of Muhammad, The Prophet are called 'Caliphs'. The Caliphs became the religious and political leaders of Islam. Abubakar was the first Caliph.

### **EXERCISES**

#### **I. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.**

1. The founder of Judaism \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The founder of Zoroastrianism \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The birthplace of Jesus Christ is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Christ was crucified on the hillock \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Christianity became the state religion of Rome during the period of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Muhammad, the Prophet was born at \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The scripture of Islam is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The successors of Muhammad, the Prophet are known as \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **II. Answer the following questions by discussing with your friends.**

1. List down the teachings of Judaism.
2. Write about the teachings of Zoroastrianism.
3. Write about life of Jesus Christ.
4. List the teachings of Jesus Christ.
5. How was christianity spread ?
6. Write a note on the life of Muhammad, the Prophet.
7. What is 'Hijra'?
8. What are the rules of Islam?

#### **III. Activities :**

1. Visit a church and a mosque in your town/village and collect information about their religious celebrations.
2. Visit a Parsi temple.
3. Learn about the cultural activities of Muslims.

#### **IV. Project :**

1. Write an essay about the spread of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam with the help of your teachers.