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## UNIT 3 SHINTOISM

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we explain about the Shintoism. After a brief explanation on its origin and the historical developments, we see the sacred scriptures of this religion. We will deal with the main aspects of this religion in its teachings on Kami, creation myth and other forms of worship. We also will deal with their cult and feasts in brief.

By the end of this unit you will be able to know:

- the overall picture of Shintoism;
- its historical origin and development;
- the Sacred Scriptures of Shintoism and its important teachings;
- the doctrines on Kami and the importance of the worship of *Amaterasu*, the worship of sun God; and
- the importance of cult of purification in shintoism and the importance of shrines etc..

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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There were three religions in Japan namely Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Among these Buddhism had a greater influence. These religions came via China. There

is a special reason for this invasion. It indicates the very nature of Japanese people. To understand the true nature of Shintoism it is important to note how the three racial strains have contributed to the formation of the Japanese people. The original indigenous people are *Ainu*. Therefore, Shintoism is primarily an indigenous religion. The other two races are from Asiatic main land. These racial strands have left their mark on the culture, language and mythology. These foreign elements have also contributed a lasting form of dualism to Shinto religion. This dualism appears throughout the history of Shintoism. The dualism is between the formal, official and national cult and the illuminating body of popular folk practices and the ordinary every day faith. This dualism we see in every aspect of Shinto beliefs, rituals and moral practices.

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### 3.2 ORIGIN

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The exact origin of Shintoism is unknown. According to the traditional chronology of Japan the origin of Shintoism goes back to 660 B.C. This is the date of the first Japanese Emperor (*Mikado*) Jimmu Tenno. Shintoism is the third oldest religion. It is also very unique among the world religions because of its contribution to the political theory and national stability. The special characteristic of Shintoism is that it held absolute supremacy over Japan. This undisputed sway of Shintoism over Japan lasted till 552 A.D. when Buddhism came to Japan.

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### 3.3 NAME

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The name “Shinto” is the common designation which is derived from a Chinese word “*shin-tao*”. The word “shin” means “*Kami*” (God) and “Tao” is the distinctive element of Taoism which means “The Divine Way”. It was so named in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when Buddhism was accepted as one of the official religions of Japan. According to its own record *Nihoni-gi*, 2:195 (References: Confer *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society*), one of the emperors of Japan “despised the Way of the Gods” and formally adopted the Buddhist religion. The actual Japanese name for Shinto is *Kami-no Michi*. The literal meaning is “The Way of the Gods” or “The Way of the *Kami*”. The name was used to distinguish it from the name *Batsudo* - “The way of the Buddha”. At first Shintoism began as purely prehistoric agricultural ceremonies. At that time it was not endowed with a supporting body of doctrines, morals or otherwise. It was in the form of folklore handed down from generation to generation. The earliest known priests were called *Shamans (Miko)* who performed the ceremonies on the behalf of people. Eventually a particular tribe called *Yamato* officiated the ceremonies on behalf of other tribes. Their chieftain assumed the duties that led to the leadership of the Shinto state. Shinto became clearly political by 8<sup>th</sup> century when *Yamato* writers ascribed divine origins to the imperial family and thus they claimed legitimacy for the rule what is known as “*Kokutai Shinto*”. According to its Sacred Scriptures, the islands of Japan were the first divine creation and the first *Mikado* (emperor), Jimmu Tenno was a direct descendant from the Sun-goddess *Amaterasu*. This belief in the divine origin of the land and government was steadfastly fostered till 1946 A.D., when the emperor Hirohito abandoned the imperial line of *Amaterasu*. This was a rude shock, and the belief that Japan is a land of *Kami* was shattered.

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### 3.4 FOUNDER

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Unlike other well known world religions which have a definite founder or a prophet or a charismatic leader who personally initiated a particular religion with a definite set of

doctrines, Shinto does not have a definite founder. It was not personally founded and therefore does not possess the sharply defined characteristics of other world religions. With regard to the founder what we can say is that Shinto can be traced back to some definite *Yamato* writers who handed down some definite set of doctrines and beliefs. Most of the time, the divine emperor was the official head.

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### 3.5 SACRED SCRIPTURES

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There are two primary sets of literature which are known as the Sacred Scriptures of the Shintoism. They are the most venerable, valuable and influential documents in the indigenous literature of Japan. They set forth the story of the deeds and conversations in “The Age of the Gods” before there were any men. They begin with the story of the creation of the Islands of Sunrise. They also narrate in a fascinating way how the imperial line was directly handed down from heaven by the gods to the islands of Japan.

*Ko-ji-ki - Records of Ancient Matters* and *Nihon-gi (Nihon Shoki) - Chronicles of Japan*

*Ko-ji-ki* was compiled in 712 and *Nihon-gi* was written in 720 A.D. Before this period for a thousand years the Shinto had only the oral tradition. Hence many eminent scholars doubt with regard to the actual authenticity of these two Sacred Books. However, we know what is more or less as authentic is only from the preface of the *Ko-ji-ki* and the commentary on the *Nihongi*. The above dates of compilation bring the Sacred Scriptures of Shinto very late in the history of the world religions, more than a century after the birth of the Prophet Mohammed, who founded the latest of the world’s great religions, and more than 1300 years after the earliest event in human history which is recorded in the documents themselves, the accession of the first *Mikado* Jimmu Tenno in 660 B.C. In spite of this late compilation of the Sacred Scriptures, the *Ko-ji-ki* and the *Nihon-gi* are the earliest written documents in 1200 years.

The author of the *Ko-ji-ki* presents himself in the preface as a court noble of the fifth rank. He was specifically appointed and commanded by the divine emperor himself to collect and arrange the genealogies of the emperors and likewise the words of former ages. These were specifically repeated word by word to the compiler by a very remarkable “reciter” who was able to repeat the contents of anything he had ever read and who could remember all that he had ever heard.

The commentary on the *Nihon-gi* also mentions about the above author who was asked to collaborate with a prince under the same royal authority only eight years later to produce the second document, which is a more extensive collection of various source materials. They are also arranged with the same royalist purpose. The absolute reliability of these two historical documents was first rejected, on critical grounds, in 1893 by a Japanese scholar, Professor Kume of the Imperial University at Tokyo.

Besides these two, there are two more important Scriptural documents. The first one is *Yengi-shiki - Institutes of the period of Yengi*. This was compiled around 901 to 923 A.D. It contains 50 books. The first ten books are probably the earliest known records. The actual texts record twenty five *Nori-to*, prayers for various ceremonial occasions. The second Scriptural document is *Manyo-shiu* - a “Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves”. This is an anthology of 4,496 poems. Perhaps it was written between 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. The Shinto Scriptures are made up of various

collections of legends, prayers, chronicles and poems. They focus on the divine origin and the early history of the island empire. They specifically glorify the joyous delight in the powers of nature. They also record and recognize some of the gruesome aspects of the powers of nature. However, they do not contain any of the most common and general tragic and glorious themes of religious literature. There is a total absence of a conflict of duties, the intricate problems of the moral ideal, the critical struggles of human beings with good and evil, a pre-eminent historic founder, a saving or redemptive assistance coming to the individual in an effort for acquiring virtue, a progressive accomplishment of a definite plan for the whole world and the fascinating and attractive mysteries for a future life.

**Check Your Progress I**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What are the primary Scriptures of Shintoism?

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**3.6 KAMI**

Shinto is fundamentally a religion of nature worship. This form of worship is crystal clear in the Shinto cult, festivals and rituals. As a result Shinto displays a powerful belief in the spirits of nature. These are designated with a most common and popular word in Japanese language as *Kami*. The literal meaning of *Kami* is “upper”. This term is interpreted in various ways. It means pure or bright, superior, mysterious, hidden and supernatural. The usual common meaning is “superior beings”. They are both gods and goddesses. They are also both personal and impersonal. Some are benevolent, some are evil, some are feared and some are revered. There are as many as sixteen different theories with regard to the origin and significance of the word *Kami* in the latest elaborate treatise on Shinto published in Japan. They are classified under three main ideas: Pure and bright, Superior, and Strange: Mysterious, Fearful, Hidden and Supernatural. There is no other word in the original Japanese with such a rich and multiform content. The most famous theologian in the whole history of Shinto is Motoori (1730 – 1801 A.D.) who has diligently tried to bring out the true meaning of this crucial term *Kami*.

Due to this, Shinto was originally a nature-worship. The majority of *Kami* are either natural objects or forces in nature. The peculiarity of these *Kami* is that they are born, they marry, they beget children, they become sick, they bathe, they kill, they destroy, they are jealous, they weep, they curse, they die and they are buried and subsequently they may be raised in rank by the emperor of Japan. Therefore, these *Kami* more or less act and behave just like humans.

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### 3.7 CREATION MYTH

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The creation myth is one of the most interesting features of Shinto. Both *Ko-ji-ki* and *Nohon-gi* describe the creation myth. Probably it is derived from Chinese mythology. At the beginning there was only an ocean of chaos. Then the sky and earth were separated. Out of the mire in the form of a reed grew *Kunitokotachi* – “the eternal land ruler” or “mid-sky master”. Together with him two subordinate deities arose. They symbolize the male and female principles like the interacting *Yin-Yang* forces of Chinese mythology.

*Izanagi* - the male who invites

*Izanami* – the female who invites

Together they created the terrestrial world, the eight islands as well as the divine rulers, the sun Goddess: *Amaterasu*, the moon God: *Tsuki-yomi* and the storm God: *Susanowo*. But when *Izanami* gave birth to fire she died and went to the land of gloom *Yomotsu-kuni*. Since the work of creation was incomplete *Izanagi* went after her in the hope of bringing her back. *Izanami* met him at the entrance and requested him to wait while she arranged for her release with the deities of death. She warned him not to look at her closely because she was full of decay. When she had been gone for a long time, he broke off one of the end teeth of the comb that was stuck in his hair, and lighting it as a torch, he entered *Yomotsu-kuni* and looked. What he saw was shattering: maggots swarmed everywhere and *Izanami* was rotting.

Overwhelmed at the vision of dissolution, *Izanagi* fled. *Izanami* sent after her brother spouse eight thunder gods with an army of ghastly warriors. But *Izanagi* reached the frontier pass and finally, *Izanami* came in person to find that *Izanagi* had shut the pass. So the divine couple exchanged leave-takings. She threatened to kill a 1000 people in his kingdom every day, while he retorted that he would cause every day 1500 women to give birth.

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### 3.8 AMATERASU

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The Sun-goddess, *Ama-terasu* (the Heaven-Shining-One) takes the primary place in Shinto worship. Her myths are the most important in the indigenous faith of Shinto because it is the way of the gods. This folk tradition is fundamentally not so much a religion as a set of ancient beliefs and observances which have remained comparatively unchanged over the past millennium, despite the importation of Confucianism and Buddhism. *Amaterasu* is the East Asian sister of *Inanna*, the Sumerian goddess of fertility and love. The belief in her as the foremost deity was associated with the tradition that the ruling family is descended from the Sun-goddess. She is the highest manifestation of *Kunitokotachi*, the unseen, transcendent and yet immanent Spirit of the universe. This idea of the sun as a goddess, instead of as a god, is rare and it may be a survival from the most archaic stage of mythology. *Amaterasu* is the most beautiful goddess, benign, compassionate and meek. She is the most favourite deity of Japan because she is represented as one who delights to pour down on her favourite islands the life giving rays of the sun.

The Japanese people believe that they are the descendents of *Kami* while the divine emperors - *Mikados* are the direct descendents of *Amaterasu*. She sent one of her offspring *Ni-ni-gi* down to earth to rule the land of Japan.

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### 3.9 SHINTO WORSHIP

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There are numerous shrines and priests all over Japan. But the fact is that the number of deities is too large and indefinite to permit a systematic worship of all. The scriptures report only the actual worship of only a few deities.

The Sun- goddess *Amaterasu* is the most obvious and eminent object of worship. There are two kinds of worships of the Sun-goddess. On one hand she is easily worshipped, individually and locally. On other hand this great Shinto deity is also officially and formally worshipped. *Amaterasu* is worshipped in the famous temple or shrine at Ise situated on the seacoast southeast of the ancient capital, Kyoto. It is a centralized shrine for the whole Japanese nation, somewhat similar to the Jerusalem temple of the Jews. This is the most symbolic and sacred place in all Japan. It is most frequently visited on religious pilgrimages. *Amaterasu* represents the symbol of purity. She is represented by the mirror, which stands for honesty and sincerity. There is an “inner temple” called *Naiku* which is believed by the Japanese to date back to the year 4 B.C. In this inner sanctuary the round mirror is preserved which was given by *Amaterasu* to the first *Mikado* as a sacred token. It is very precious to *Amaterasu* and it symbolizes the great orb of light in heaven.

Both the worship in the sacred temple and the method of worship are recorded in both the Scriptures. This goes back even to a time before the Christian era. The princess of the royal house has been the high priestess of the Sun-goddess at Ise and this custom has been maintained throughout a period longer than the entire history of Christianity (*Ko-ji-ki*. 174, 186). Almost all Japanese people consider it a privilege and a duty, at least once in a life time to make a religious pilgrimage to Ise. The outer temple of Ise is known as “*Gaku*” which is dedicated to *Uke-mochi* - the Food-goddess.

The second form of worship is known as *Mikado* Worship. This is also a national worship. The *Mikado* is believed to be divine and a direct descendent of *Amaterasu*. It is from her and not from any male deity the ancestry of the emperor is received because *Amaterasu* was appointed to rule by the primeval progenitor, *Izanagi*. The *Mikado* himself asserts this claim of divine origin and authority in several royal edicts.

But the fact is that the actual sovereignty of the *Mikado* was built up only gradually and by a process of fighting over un-submissive people. The Sun-goddess in her original instructions pointed out the need of physical force over the inhabitants. There is also a record which says about the emperor *Mimaki* who was short lived because of his lack of thoroughness. Indeed, condemnation of more than one *Mikado* stands written in the sacred writings. Thus we see that the Emperor worship was such that no one was allowed to look down upon the Imperial Majesty. This practice was in force from the beginning till the end of World War II. The sacred character of the Emperor was assiduously taught and carried out. He was a man set apart from all others and he was accessible only to a relatively small group of officials. Every year prior to 1946, there were certain solemn ceremonies on *Mikado*’s birthday in every educational institution. The obeisance to the picture of the Emperor was a must. Thus the authority and command of the Emperor was undisputed. His political and religious authority was unquestionable. Even the armed forces had a fanatical loyalty to the extent of laying down life at the command of the Emperor. The national flag of Japan consists of the radiant red sun. This is a concrete instance of how the religious faith of Shinto has been directed powerfully to promote patriotic zeal. The full significance of this emblem

gave to the people of “The Land of the Rising Sun” the glowing suggestion that for their national and religious rule they should reverently look up on high to the source of all light. The subjects of the divinely descended heavenly *Mikado* can regard for themselves a divine progeny dwelling in the holy land through him.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the concept of *Kami*

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2) Explain the important elements of Shinto worship

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### 3.10 CULT AND FESTIVALS

#### CULT

##### Purification

One of the essential conditions for cult is personal purification. The Shinto prescribes the obligation to wash assiduously with water. Both the Sacred Scriptures refer to the purification even in the case of gods like *Izanagi* who washed himself for the purpose of personal cleanliness.

The most important ceremony is “*Oho harahi*” – the great purification. This includes expiatory offerings and the recitation of a *Nori-to*. The Emperor absolves people’s sins and impurities. The offerings made are thrown into a river as a scapegoat. The offences are the mischievous interferences with agriculture. Shinto teaches emphatically the obligation of purity and sense of communal guilt which needs continual purification. But this is mostly physical and ceremonial rather than a purity of heart and thought.

##### Shrines and Offerings

The sacrifices are offered by the royal princess with 73 mandarins. In Shinto tradition, the priests are women - *Shamans*. There are numerous shrines, *ginjas* in every hamlet, along the wayside and in almost every picturesque spot like lofty trees, hillside waterfalls or watercourses throughout Japan. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century there were 3,132 officially recognized shrines. In 1880 the village and ungraded shrines numbered 183047. In

Other Religions

1920 the number was 111181 and there were 110,000 shrines under the government during the Second World War. The number does not include the sectarian shrines which were not supported by the government. The estimate is that the number of shrines during pre-war time was 7 to 10 million.

The Shinto shrines even in their settings are designed to promote a religious appreciation of beauty in nature. There is a characteristic *tori-i* - gateway, the ends of this upper crosspiece curving heavenward. The worship in these shrines is almost exclusively individual and not congregational. It consists of obeisance and bowing reverently. Kneeling was not so common but clapping of hands even silently is an act of reverence. The offering of the material things is one of the most common forms of worship. The daily offerings made to the Sun and Food goddesses at *Ise* consist of *sa-ke* (liquor), rice, salt, fish, birds, fruits, seaweeds and vegetables. The annual offerings at the tomb of the first Mikado are the products of mountain, river and sea, including fish, cakes, birds and liquor.

The worship is completed in the shrines by offering a prayer. The earliest records contain numerous conversations with the deities but there are no words of prayer addressed to them. There are only two passing references to prayer. These consist chiefly of announcements to the various deities, ascriptions of praise, and lists of material offerings. In the first *Nori-to* the phrase “fulfil the praises” occurs nineteen times. In this entire collection, no moral or spiritual blessings are sought. Prayers are mostly for material blessings. They contain petitions for rain, harvests, preservation from earthquakes and conflagrations, health and long life to the sovereign, peace, prosperity, the safety of ambassadors and the suppression of rebellion.

Feasts

Popular festivals are important parts of Shinto. Most of the ritual prayers in *Nori-to* are connected with specific ceremonies and feasts. These feasts are basically agricultural. *Toshigohi-no-matsuri*: It is a harvest prayer service during the sowing of rice seeds in the second month of the year. *Hirose-Oho-imi-no-matsuri*: A prescribed ceremonial service of the food-goddess as rice- plants grow up in the fourth day of the fourth moon of each year. On this day numerous offerings are made and the emperor promises still further. *Nihi-name*: This is the harvest festival of first fruits. It consists primarily in tasting the new rice in the eleventh month. It is an elaborate ancient ceremony, accompanied by songs, dances, feasting, holiday dress and presents. Until the ceremony is over no strict Shinto devotee will eat the new rice. *Oho-nihe*: The Great Tasting. The Emperor in person conducts the festival of first fruits in his Coronation year. This is the most solemn festival which is described in *Nihon-gi*.

There are other harvest festivals like Joint-tasting, Divine Tasting and New moon ceremonies with prayers and offerings. The monthly festivals are known as *Tsukinami no matsuri* with three prescribed *Norito* prayers.

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3.11 ETHICAL TEACHINGS

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One of the most outstanding features of Shinto is the absence of a definite set of theological beliefs and a code of morality. There are a few passages in *Nihon-gi* referring to the sage advice for government officials. Hence there are no specific ethical teachings or moral code for the people at large. The only command is to obey the Emperor. He is the son of the Goddess. His mind is in perfect harmony of thought and



feeling with her. He is inspired by her in case of any doubt. There is only one way, the way of the gods. If one obeys this there is no need of any other command. By nature people were truly moral in their practice and they required no special moral code. Hence we find no *Michi* or Ethics. Some of the important offences are mentioned in *Nori-to* 10 which are purified by the emperor on the day of Great Purification. They are transgressions against the rice- fields and they are celestial offenses. The earthly offenses are cutting of living or dead bodies, killing of birds and animals. Leprosy and incest cause impurity.

“Flaying alive and flaying backwards, breaking down the divisions of rice-fields, filling up ditches, marriages between superiors and inferiors, marriages with horses, marriages with cattle, marriages with fowls and marriages with dogs” (*Ko-ji-ki*. 230). However a code of ethics (*Bushido* ) was developed in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> A.D. This was due to the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism which fostered loyalty, courage, self-sacrifice, benevolence, honour and self-control. But this code was not written down.

3.12 SECTS

The sects arose due to the influence of Buddhism:

- 1) Buddhism strongly influenced the sect called ‘*Honji-Suijaku*’  
*Honji* - Buddhism is real and basic religion.  
*Suijaku* - Shinto is a partial and local manifestation.  
Therefore *Kami* are equated to *Bodhisattvas*.
- 2) *Ryobu Shinto* - dual Shinto: Buddhism and Shinto as two aspects of the same reality.
- 3) *Yuiitsu Shinto* - one and only Shinto.

**Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the role of shrines in Shintoism?

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2) Discuss the importance of Ethics in Shintoism?

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### 3.13 LET US SUM UP

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Shinto is primarily a religion of nature worship. It displays a powerful sense of devotion to the beauty of nature. Shinto advocates twofold worship: the Sun-goddess and the Emperor. Everything else is regarded as *Kami*. There are numerous shrines all over Japan. The form of worship is simple. The offerings are for material benefits. Its emphasis on cleanliness and purity is awe-inspiring. The Sacred Scriptures are filled with myths but give no guidance and inspiration for a noble living. There is no glorious hope of a future life.

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### 3.14 KEY WORDS

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- Cult** : Cult refers to a cohesive social group and their devotional beliefs or practices, which the surrounding population considers to be outside of mainstream cultures.
- Genealogy** : Genealogy (from Greek: *genea*, “descent”; and *logos*, “knowledge”) is the study of families and the tracing of their lineages and history.

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### 3.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Check Your Progress I**

- 1) There are two primary sets of literature which are known as the Sacred Scriptures of the Shintoism. They are the most venerable, valuable and influential documents in the indigenous literature of Japan. They are : *Ko-ji-ki - Records of Ancient Matters* and *Nihon-gi (Nihon Shoki) - Chronicles of Japan*. *Ko-ji-ki* was compiled in 712 and *Nihon-gi* was written in 720 A.D. Before this period for a thousand years the Shinto had only the oral tradition. Hence many eminent scholars doubt with regard to the actual authenticity of these two Sacred Books. However, we know what is more or less as authentic is only from the preface of the *Ko-ji-ki* and the commentary on the *Nihongi*.

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**Check Your Progress II**

- 1) Shinto is fundamentally a religion of nature worship. This form of worship is crystal clear in the Shinto cult, festivals and rituals. As a result Shinto displays a powerful belief in the spirits of nature. These are designated with a most common and popular word in Japanese language as *Kami*. The literal meaning of *Kami* is “upper”. This term is interpreted in various ways. It means pure or bright, superior, mysterious, hidden and supernatural. The usual common meaning is “superior beings”. They are both gods and goddesses. They are also both personal and

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impersonal. Some are benevolent, some are evil, some are feared and some are revered. There is no other word in the original Japanese with such a rich and multiform content. The most famous theologian in the whole history of Shinto is Motoori (1730–1801 A.D.). He has diligently tried to bring out the true meaning of this crucial term *Kami*. The majority of *Kami* are either natural objects or forces in nature. The peculiarity of these *Kami* is that they are born, they marry, they beget children, they become sick, they bathe, they kill, they destroy, they are jealous, they weep, they curse, they die and they are buried and subsequently they may be raised in rank by the emperor of Japan. Therefore these *Kami* are more or less act and behave just like humans.

- 2) There are numerous shrines and deities all over Japan. But the two main objects of worship are the Sun- goddess *Amaterasu*, and the emperor who is known as *Mikado*. The Sun- goddess *Amaterasu* is the most obvious and eminent object of worship. There are two kinds of worships of the Sun-goddess. On one hand she is easily worshipped, individually and locally. On other hand this great Shinto deity is also officially and formally worshipped. *Amaterasu* is worshipped in the famous temple or shrine at Ise situated on the seacoast southeast of the ancient capital, Kyoto. It is a centralized shrine for the whole Japanese nation, somewhat similar to the Jerusalem temple of the Jews. This is the most symbolic and sacred place in all Japan. It is most frequently visited on religious pilgrimages. *Amaterasu* represents the symbol of purity. She is represented by the mirror, which stands for honesty and sincerity.

The second form of worship is known as *Mikado* Worship. This is also a national worship. The *Mikado* is believed to be divine and a direct descendent of *Amaterasu*. It is from her and not from any male deity the ancestry of the emperor is received because *Amaterasu* was appointed to rule by the primeval progenitor, *Izanagi*.

Thus we see that the Emperor worship was such that no one was allowed to look down upon the Imperial Majesty. This practice was in force from the beginning till the end of World War II.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) The sacrifices are offered by the royal princess with 73 mandarins. In Shinto tradition, the priests are women - *Shamans*. There are numerous shrines, *ginjas* in every hamlet, along the wayside and in almost every picturesque spot like lofty trees, hillside waterfalls or watercourses throughout Japan. The Shinto shrines even in their settings are designed to promote a religious appreciation of beauty in nature. There is a characteristic *tori-i* - gateway, the ends of this upper crosspiece curving heavenward. The worship in these shrines is almost exclusively individual and not congregational. It consists of obeisance and bowing reverently. Kneeling was not so common but clapping of hands even silently is an act of reverence.
- 2) One of the most outstanding features of Shinto is the absence of a definite set of theological beliefs and a code of morality. There are a few passages in *Nihon-gi* referring to the sage advice for government officials.

Hence there are no specific ethical teachings or moral code for the people at large. The only command is to obey the Emperor. He is the son of the Goddess.

His mind is in perfect harmony of thought and feeling with her. He is inspired by her in case of any doubt. There is only one way, the way of the gods. If one obeys this there is no need of any other command. By nature people were truly moral in their practice and they required no special moral code. Hence we find no *Michi* or Ethics.

**Shintoism**