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## UNIT 3 ZOROASTRIANISM AND TAOISM

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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Zoroastrianism is believed to have originated in the proto-Indo-Iranian culture of southern Russia, and was to become the state religion of the Iranian people until the arrival of Islam. The real significance of Zoroastrianism is in the major influence it has had on other religions of the Middle East and Mediterranean area. It is arguably the oldest monotheistic religion in the world. During the Persian era, Judaism adopted many new concepts that had existed in Zoroastrianism for many centuries. The objective of this article is to instill in the students a basic idea of this religion, its origin, growth, and its different aspects. These include God, angels, Satan, and heaven and hell. Their basic teaching, (practice of righteousness and doing good to fellow human beings), is useful for students as well as for all humanity.

Taoism, one of the major religious traditions of China had tremendous influence on the people of China as well as the world. The thought and practise of Taoism is described in this article. Taoists teach that Tao (the Way) is the force that existed before all other things. Taoists teach that a person should leave things alone and let nature take its course through *wu wei* or not doing. In addition, a person should not try and manipulate others' thoughts but instead they should be allowed to find their own way based on their faith in the Tao. Taoists are also encouraged to take care of their physical health and longevity so that they can be in harmony with Tao. Such a teaching should be of great help for anyone even today. Therefore the objective of this paper is clear; that students have an understanding of this religion and it can be of some help to them in their life.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Zoroastrianism is a prophetic religion and philosophy based on the teachings of Prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra). It has a history of some three thousand years. It might be one of the ancient living religions of pre-Islamic Iran. Although this religion is considered to be old, it enters recorded history only in the mid-5th century BCE. Zoroastrians believe that there is one universal and transcendental God, Ahura Mazda. But it is in a way equated with other major religions of the world, such as, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some concepts, such as, sacrificial rituals, conflict between good and evil, creator God, judgment day, resurrection of the dead, archangels, heaven and hell, five daily prayers, etc., have similarity with those religions. The term Zoroastrianism is, in general usage, essentially synonymous with *Mazdaism* (the worship of Ahura Mazda, exalted by Zoroaster as the supreme divine authority). Zoroastrians most commonly refer to themselves as Zartoshti (Zoroastrians), *Mazdayasni* (Wisdom-Worshippers), and *Behdini* (Followers of the Good Religion). In India, they are known as *Parsis* (People from Pars, which refers to the Persian heritage of the group).

Taoism is one of the great and indigenous religions of China and of the world. It has had a profound influence on Chinese traditional culture for thousands of years. Although what has prevailed in traditional China is Confucianism, Taoism nonetheless has its unique value that cannot be underestimated, and as the whole society is concerned, Taoism and Confucianism complement each other. As China enters the 21st century, it is an era calling to build a harmonious society. It is said that the ethical thought of Taoism may play an important role in the building up of a harmonious society in contemporary China.

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### 3.2 ZOROASTRIANISM: ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

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According to Mircea Eliade (Encyclopaedia of Religion) Zoroastrianism originated in the eastern and south regions of the Iranian world, between the great mountain ranges of the Hindu Kush and Seistan, an area that today is divided between Iran and Afghanistan. According to tradition, Zarathushtra the founder, left home at the age of twenty, and at thirty he was subject to a revelation which was an intense and powerful inspiration and a vision. Later Zoroaster was a prophet who was speaking to God and hearkening to his reply. He is called the friend of truth as he honours God and he becomes an enemy to the followers of the Lie (*Druj*). As a prophet he is chosen by God and he consents to the choice. Zarathushtra chooses for himself the Spirit which is the most holy. Therefore the relationship between God and his Prophet is one of freedom. In this free interchange between God and the Prophet, the general relationship of the deity to the human race is reflected. Zarathushtra's first attempt at reaching the masses was not successful, and his teachings were highly ridiculed. Even his family and servants distanced themselves from him, and it is said that evil powers plotted to silence him. By the order of King Vishtaspa, he was eventually placed in a prison, although through his faith he was able to miraculously escape. Only after ten years did he succeed in converting a cousin of his. He was even persecuted and then he had to take refuge in the court of King Vishtaspa, who was converted to Zoroastrianism along with his wife and caused many in the

kingdom to follow suit. The circumstances of Zoroaster's death are unknown, for the original biographical texts have been lost. Due to its great antiquity, Zoroastrianism was tremendously influential on the history, culture, and art of Persia. According to scholars, Zoroastrianism was the first religion to believe in angels, a day of judgment, a Satan figure, and an ongoing battle between forces of light and darkness in the cosmos. These ideas later influenced the theological development of Judaism and, by extension, Christianity and Islam.

### 3.3 CONCEPT OF GOD

The Prophet Zarathushtra sets his teachings by advocating strict monotheism, insisting that worship be dedicated solely to Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord), in the *Gathas* (they are 17 hymns believed to have been composed by Zarathushtra himself. They are the most sacred texts of the Zoroastrian faith). *Ahura Mazda* is described as the creator of everything that can and cannot be seen, representing all that is eternal and pure. *Ahura Mazda* serves as the keeper of *asha* (truth, order, righteousness, or holiness). He is the creator of heaven and earth, day and night, and light and darkness (*Yasna*) as well as the ethical context in which Zarathushtra conceived his answer to the problem of evil. Thus we see that the prophet was an original thinker and a powerful religious figure.

According to the Avesta (the sacred text of Zoroastrians), the *Gathas*, and the *Yasna*, there are various characteristics to *Ahura Mazda*. Zarathushtra addresses Ahura Mazda with the following terms: Truth, Good (or Best) Thought, Devotion, and Power. Other qualities associated with God are: Wholeness and Immortality, as well as the Wise Lord, or beneficent spirit. Although the supremacy of *Ahura Mazda* suggests a monotheistic worldview, later Zoroastrianism, seen in the *Yashts* (a collection of twenty-one hymns; each of these hymns invokes a specific divinity or concept) also includes some polytheistic elements. Their cosmology is extended to include several other personalized deities, including two *Mainyus* and demonic creatures called *daevas*, all of which are thought to exist beneath *Ahura Mazda*. *Spenta Mainyu* (Holy Spirit) and *Angra Mainyu* (Evil Spirit) are described as the progeny of the supreme *Ahura Mazda*, which accounts for the existence of good and evil in the physical world. *Spenta Mainyu* is thought to be hypostatically indistinguishable from *Ahura Mazda* and is conceived of as an augmenting force for the latter's power, one which aids in the continual cosmic creative process and leads toward the eventual purification of the world. Conversely, *Angra Mainyu* is the antithesis of *Spenta Mainyu*, and continually attempts to undermine humanity's understanding of truth. The *Mainyus* are engaged in a constant battle, although the power of *Ahura Mazda* will ultimately allow the Holy Spirit to triumph. The *daevas*, meanwhile, are demonic beings whose sole purpose is to corrupt the moral law: as they were created, the Evil Spirit compelled them and they "rushed together to violence, that they might enfeeble the human world."

Later Zoroastrian thought also postulates the existence of angelic beings called *Amesha Spentas*, who are seen as emanations of *Ahura Mazda*. While the Wise Lord is seen to dwell within each of these beings, they all retain their own individual natures and lives. Each of them is believed to be a personified attribute of *Ahura Mazda*, although modern scholars of religion theorize that they may be re-conceptualizations of pre-Zoroastrian deities. These *Amesha Spentas* are

known as *Vohu Manah* (Good Mind), *Asha Vahistah* (Truth), *Khshatra Vairya* (Good Dominion), *Spenta Armaiti* (Devotion), *Haurvatat* (Wholeness and Health), and *Ameretat* (Immortality). These beings, through their characterizations, suggest the qualities one must cultivate if they wish to enjoy the fruits of salvation.

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### 3.4 COSMOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

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Zoroastrian cosmology is dualistic. Everything has a dual nature, namely, the spiritual aspect called *menog*, and the material aspect called *getig*, where the spiritual state is the ontological precedent of material existence. As the balance between good and evil evolves on an individual scale within human beings, it also progresses on a cosmic scale. The choice of good urges creation towards its renewal, where humanity and the physical world will be fully perfected by *menog*. The eschaton itself will be marked by fire (*atash*), which is considered to be the offspring of Ahura Mazda and the paramount instrument of *asha* (The energy of the creator is represented in Zoroastrianism by fire and also by the sun, since both are enduring, radiant, pure, and life-sustaining). A river of molten lava will separate good people from the evil. In the *Gathas*, Zarathustra claims that the order of creation will be refurbished at the end of time when the *Saoshyant* (a messianic saviour or bringer of benefit) returns to the physical world. All those who are on the 'good' side of the lava river will benefit from the *Saoshyant*'s return. Zoroastrian cosmology is also highly original in its speculations concerning the afterlife. It is written in the *Avesta* that the soul can ascend to heaven by proceeding through a three-step succession of celestial bodies that are linked to certain actions. Through good thoughts they can attain the stars, through good words they can attain the moon, and through good deed they can attain the sun. In order to undergo this journey, the soul must first cross the *Chinvat* Bridge, or 'the Bridge of Separation.' Souls judged to be just by *Mithra* or *Sraosha* are allowed to cross and meet their *daena*, an image of their own self, who is disguised as a nubile teenage girl. Evil souls, meanwhile, meet with their *daena* in the form of a haggardly old woman and are then plunged into hell. An intermediate, limbo-like area (*Hamistagan*) also exists for those whose benevolent and malevolent acts in life are equally weighted.

Zoroastrian eschatology is the necessary and consistent conclusion to the story of creation. The end of individual life is the reflection and conclusion of the course of human existence; the eschatological period marks the resolution of the cosmic struggle, and brings to fruition the effort of Ahura Mazda, assisted by the other deities and humanities, to bring about the victory of the powers of good. It serves both as a mirror-image of the religious and moral life on earth, and as a court of justice where rewards and punishments are allotted and carried out. The most prominent aspect of the eschatological descriptions is the allotting of reward or punishment in two ways, through a verdict reached by divine judges and through automatic determination of a person's merit by an ordeal type of judgment. In every case, the eschatological situation constitutes a reflection of the person's worth, and is final in the sense that what was entirely the person's responsibility while he was alive is no longer in his hands after death. Beyond the satisfaction of seeing justice done, the righteous rewarded and the wicked punished for their actions, stands the more general view that the end of the world is the stage where the cause of Ahura Mazda is vindicated. The human being thus is but a tool in the hands of the supreme powers.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is Zoroastrianism?

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2) Who is the founder of Zoroastrianism? Briefly sketch his life.

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3) What is the understanding of God in Zoroastrianism?

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4) Explain briefly the eschatology of Zoroastrianism.

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### 3.4 FATE AND FREEWILL

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Human is Ahura Mazda's own creature and belongs by birthright to the kingdom of good. But God has created him free and endowed with the power to choose between right and wrong. His own salvation and his share in the ultimate victory of good will depend on his choice. Every good deed that human being does increases the power of good; every evil he commits augments the kingdom of evil. Hence human ought to choose the good and support the hosts of heaven in the struggle to conquer the legions of hell, then the Saviour will appear, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment will take place, the good kingdom will be established, and the world will be renovated. Zarathustra was firm in his stand on the absolute freedom of the freewill, but this did not prevent fatalism from creeping into his religion in the Sassanian (The Sasanian period marks the end of the ancient and the beginning of the medieval era in the history of the Middle East, 224-637 AD) and post-Sassanian period. As an example the quotation substantiates, "When fate helps a slothful, wrong-minded, and evil man, his sloth becomes like energy, and his wrong-mindedness like wisdom, and his evil like good: and when fate opposes likewise, a decent and good man, his wisdom is turned to unwisdom and foolishness, his decency to wrong-mindedness; and his knowledge, manliness and decency appear of no account." This is not what was meant by the prophet, but crept in eventually.



## 3.6 RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

### Prayer and Worship

Despite its original antiritualistic character, Zoroastrianism soon became a religion in which ceremony played a leading role. The importance of prayer was always fundamental. The main prayers are Ahuna Vairya (the most sacred of the Gathic hymns of the Avesta), Airyema Ishyo (It is for the brotherhood of man), Ashem Vohu (during the initiation ceremony), and Yenhe Hatams (repeated several times at the end of many *haitis*). A pious Zoroastrian has five prayer periods a day. Zoroastrians believe in the sacrificial rituals called *Yasnas* as an important part of their life, as this is a means of communicating with God and His entities. The rituals purify the world and the human beings who participate in them. Zoroastrians pray at Agiary or fire temples. They respect fire because it is the symbol of Ahura Mazda. But Zoroastrians never worship fire. Fire (*Atash*) is the purest of all elements on earth; indeed, it transcends all other elements. It is the seventh and final creation of Ahura Mazda, after the creation of the human being. Fire dispels darkness, which is the realm of Ahriman, the evil spirit. When the sun has set, and the cold, dark night begins its reign, then the fire/light is lit.

### Navjote (Initiation)

Navjote is the initiation ceremony of the Parsi child into the fold of Zoroastrianism. The ceremony of the initiation consists of the investiture of the child with a sacred shirt called *sudre* and a sacred thread called *kusti*. A Zoroastrian may put on any dress he likes, but he must put on the sacred shirt and the thread as the symbol and badge of his religion. Seven is the age at which it is enjoined to initiate a child. The child is made to go through a sacred bath or a kind of purification, known as *Nahan*.

### Priesthood and Ritual

In religious matters the priesthood was supreme in authority, and the sacerdotal order was hereditary. The name for priest, *athaurvan*, in the Avesta corresponds to *atharvan* in India; the Magi were a sacerdotal tribe of Median origin. The high priest is called *dastur*. In acts of worship (Avesta, Yasna) animal sacrifices were sometimes offered, especially in ancient times, but these immolations were subordinate and gave place to offerings of praise and thanks-giving accompanied by oblations of consecrated milk, bread, and water. The performance of these rites was attended by the recitation of long litanies, especially in connection with the preparation of the sacred drink, *haoma*, made from a plant resembling the Indian *soma*, from which an exhilarating juice was extracted. The *haoma* twigs can be paired with different *baresman* (sacred bundle of twigs) twigs to produce blends with specific healing and health giving properties.

### Funeral ceremony

Zoroastrians strongly connect physical purity with spiritual purity. Therefore washing is such a central part of purification rituals. Conversely, physical corruption invites spiritual corruption. Decomposition is traditionally viewed as the work of a demon known as *Druj-I-Nasush*, and the corrupting influence of this process is viewed as contagious and spiritually dangerous. As such, Zoroastrian funeral customs are primarily focused on keeping contagion away from the community. Because of this reason there is an elaborate process for funeral rites. The body is traditionally moved within one day to the *dakhma* or

Tower of Silence. A pair of priests conducts prayers, and then all present bow to the body out of respect. They wash with *gomez* (cow's urine) and water before leaving the site and then take a regular bath when they return home. At the *dakhma*, the shroud and clothes are removed with the help of tools rather than bare hands and are then destroyed. Corpses are left on the platform to be picked clean by vultures, a process which takes only a few hours. This allows a body to be consumed before dangerous corruption sets in. Prayers are regularly said for the dead for the first three days after death, for this is the time that the soul is understood to remain on earth. On the fourth day, the soul and its guardian (*fravashi*) ascend to *Chinvat*, the bridge of judgment.

## Festivals

Zoroastrianism has according to their calendar, numerous festivals and holy days. The seasonal festivals, called *gahambars* (proper season), occur six times a year. They are related to reflect the six primordial creations of Ahura Mazda, otherwise known as the *Amesha Spentas*. The six festivals are: *Maidyozarem Gahambar* (mid-spring feast), *Maidyoshahem Gahambar* (mid-summer feast), *Maitishahem Gahambar* (feast of bringing in the harvest), *Ayathrem Gahambar* (bringing home the herds), *Maidyarem Gahambar* (mid-year/winter feast), *Hamaspahmaidyem Gahambar* (feast of 'all souls', literally 'coming of the whole group'). Each of these festivals is celebrated over five days. Eleven divinities of the Zoroastrian pantheon have both a day-of-the-month and a month-of-the-year dedicated to them. A special *Yasna* or *Jashan* (worship or oblation) service is then held in their honour on those day/month intersections.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is the significance of free-will Zoroastrianism?

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2) Briefly explain some of the rituals and festivals of Zoroastrianism?

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3) Briefly explain *Navjote*.

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4) Explain briefly the funeral ceremony of Zoroastrians.

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### 3.7 TAOISM: ORIGIN AND BELIEFS OF TAOISM

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Taoism (or Daoism) refers to a variety of related philosophical and religious traditions that have influenced Eastern Asia for more than two millennia, and have had a notable influence on the western world, particularly since the 19th century. Tao means 'the Way' or 'Way of Life.' Lao - Tse is the supposed author of the Tao Te Ching, a small book containing the main tenets of Taoism. He was a contemporary of Confucius, who visited him several times and who was deeply impressed by the spirituality and humility of Lao - Tse. Taoists believe that 'all things originate from Tao, conform to Tao, and to Tao they at last return.'

Taoists emphasize various themes found in the *Daodejing* (Book of Dao) and *Zhuangzi* (one of the first and foremost texts on philosophical Daoism) such as naturalness, vitality, peace, non-action (*wu wei*, or effortless effort), emptiness (refinement), detachment, flexibility, receptiveness, spontaneity, the relativism of human ways of life, ways of speaking, and guiding behaviour. Tao can be roughly stated to be the *flow of the universe*, or the force behind the natural order, equating it with the influence that keeps the universe balanced and ordered. It is often considered to be the source of both existence and non-existence. Tao is also associated with the complex concept of *De*, 'power; virtue; integrity', that is, the active expression of Tao. *De* is the active living, or cultivation, of that way. The goal of *wu wei* is alignment with Tao, revealing the soft and invisible power within all things. It is believed by Taoists that the masters of *wu wei* can observe and follow this invisible potential, the innate in-action of the Way. It asserts that one must place his will in harmony with the natural universe. Thus we need to see things as they are. *Pu* is about this, that everything is seen as it is, without preconceptions or illusion.

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### 3.8 TAOIST CONCEPTS AND SYMBOLS

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*Tao* is the first-cause of the universe. It is a force that flows through all life. The Tao surrounds everyone and therefore everyone must listen to find enlightenment. A believers' goal is to harmonize themselves with the *Tao*. The priesthood views the many gods as manifestations of the one *Dao*. There is no god (as in other religions) to hear the prayers or to act upon them. They seek answers to life's problems through inner meditation and outer observation. Time is cyclical. Taoists strongly promote health and vitality. Five main organs and orifices of the body correspond to the five parts of the sky: water, fire, wood, metal and earth. Each person must nurture the *Ch'i* (air, breath) that has been given to them. The Three Jewels to be sought are compassion, moderation, and humility. One should plan in advance and carefully consider each action before making it. Taoists believe that people are compassionate by nature and left to their own devices they will show this compassion without expecting a reward.

The main symbol in Taoism is *Yin Yang* representing the balance of opposites in the universe. When they are equally present, all is calm. When one is outweighed by the other, there is confusion and disarray. One source explains that it was derived from astronomical observations which recorded the shadow of the sun throughout a full year. The two swirling shapes inside the symbol give the impression of change, the only constant factor in the universe. One tradition states that *Yin* (the dark side) represents the breath that formed the



earth. *Yang* (the light side) symbolizes the breath that formed the heavens. The most traditional view is that ‘*yin*’ represents aspects of the feminine: being soft, cool, calm, introspective, and healing, and ‘*yang*’ the masculine: being hard, hot, energetic, moving, and sometimes aggressive. Another view has the ‘*yin*’ representing night and ‘*yang*’ day. Ultimately, the ‘*yin*’ and ‘*yang*’ can symbolize any two polarized forces in nature. Taoists believe that humans often intervene in nature and upset the balance of *Yin* and *Yang*.

### Check Your Progress III

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is Taoism?

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2) What do the Taoists believe in?

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3) What are the main concepts and symbols of Taoism?

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## 3.9 TAO RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

There are Taoist temples, monasteries and priests, rituals and ceremonies, and a host of gods and goddesses for believers to worship. These are as vital to the survival of Taoism as individual understanding and practice. The temple is the centre of worship for Taoism. Another ritual among Taoist devotees, which is done on Wednesdays and Sundays, is the climbing of its 81 steps (representing the 81 chapters of Taoist scriptures) to light joss sticks and have their fortune read by the monks. Taoism’s rich palette of liturgy and ritual makes the Tao more real to human beings and provides a way in which humanity can align itself more closely to the *Tao* to produce better lives for all. Most Taoist temple practices are designed to regulate the relationship between humanity and the world of gods and spirits, and to organise that relationship and the relationships in the spirit world, in harmony with the *Tao*.

In Taoism rituals are meant to bring harmony to the universe, the world, society, and individuals. They pray to deities and there are ceremonies of purification, meditation on talismans, and making offerings to deities as well. Usually priests and their assistants perform Taoist rituals as they are complicated. They chant, dance, and play percussion and wind instruments. The *chiao (jiao)* is an important Taoist ritual for cosmic revival and consists of various rituals. In this case each family brings offerings to the deities and they are dedicated to them through a ceremony by a Taoist priest. The ceremony also involves rituals asking for order, for the universe and for the village. Through temple rituals, Taoists seek to stabilize the *yin* and *yang* for individuals and the community as a whole. *Feng shui*, which is an ancient Chinese system of aesthetics believed to use the laws of both Heaven (astronomy) and Earth (geography) to help one improve life, and fortune telling are also part of Taoism.

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### 3.10 ALCHEMY AND LONGEVITY

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The practice of alchemy in Taoism has two forms. There is external alchemy, which involves creating and ingesting herbal or mineral elixirs, in support of improved physical health and longevity. The practices of the inner alchemy (such as visualization, breathing control, different types of contemplation, etc.) are much older than the techniques of the laboratory alchemy. This involves the cultivation and circulation of the Three Treasures of *jing* (reproductive energy), *qi* (life-force energy) and *shen* (spiritual energy). In internal alchemy practice, it is the body of the Taoist practitioner that is the laboratory, and the refined energy produced there, the elixir. They compose the very core of the mainstream of the Daoist practical methods and techniques. This inner form (*neidan*) framed its practices in part by drawing from meditation methods and from some techniques for nourishing life (*yangsheng*). The latter term refers to a large variety of methods that share a physiological foundation, including *daoyin* (a form of gymnastics), breathing, and sexual practices. In alchemy and several other traditions, the purpose of the practice is to acquire transcendence or immortality.

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### 3.11 UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AND HUMAN

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In Taoism there is no supreme God. *Dao* (the Way) is the core of Taoism (Daoism). It is said that *Dao* is the origin of the universe, the basis of all existing things, the law governing their development and change, and the ultimate force of Daoism. The concept of Virtue (*De*) is closely related to *Dao*. Everyone respects *Dao* yet values Virtue. Virtue has different connotations, meaning that Virtue is the specific manifestation of *Dao* in specific things. Taoists understand that the universe flows with purpose, and human beings should go with the flow of destiny or fate in order to have a fulfilled life. To maintain or recover a natural alignment between humanity and the world, many performed self-cultivation techniques. Such techniques could improve one's health, and potentially even lead to immortality. They also promoted order and harmony within the community. If humans deviate from the natural order, they bring destruction upon themselves and those around them. Concepts of human nature in Taoism are thus intimately connected with the body. Therefore an individual's body is also the body of the world. Thus the purpose of existence, for everyone, is to improve oneself — physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for the benefit of all.

**Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the important rituals and ceremonies of Taoism?

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2) Briefly explain the practice of alchemy in Taoism.

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3) What are the main ideas about God and the human being?

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### 3.12 LET US SUM UP

Zoroastrianism has to a great extent vanished from the world today. But the teachings of the Prophet live on to some extent. It is said that India has the largest population of Zoroastrians in the world. We see how there is a massive socio-cultural interchange between various religions in India. This interchange has given us our national culture which is a complex pattern into which have gone many diverse elements, foreign as well as indigenous. Zoroastrianism has thus become part of Indian religion. The modern Zoroastrian community is characterized by its lack of a proselytizing impulse. This attitude is probably due to the reason that there might be the fear of an influx of lower caste communities. Historically they have never shown an interest in conversion, except in the earlier times. They show great interest in the study and interpretation of their millenarian religious traditions. What the world today needs is the Message of *Asha* (truth, order, justice) once again; and it is the hope of every follower of Zarathushtra, and of every person of the land of the Prophet, that a revived Zoroastrianism be privileged to give this Message of God's Love, of the brotherhood/sisterhood of humans and of the Path of *Asha* once again to the world. Such is the hope. 'Let the Lord interpret as He will'.

Taoism may be understood as more than just a philosophy or a religion. It should be understood as being: it is a system of belief, attitudes, and practices set towards the service and life of a person's own nature. The aim of Taoism is to build a perfect world of peace and tranquility. It advocates loving others as well as loving oneself, and encourages everyone to accumulate merits and become a virtuous man. The Taoists attach great importance to beneficence, which is regarded as critical to the realization of the perfect world. Taoism was banned by the Communists in 1949. The Communist regime destroyed Taoist

temples and viciously ransacked them, and persecuted and killed many believers. Temples were used as government offices, schools, and dormitories. Today it is hard to gauge the number of practising Taoists because Taoism is a personalized religion and philosophy that does not require attendance at formalized meetings or temples.

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### 3.13 KEY WORDS

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<b><i>Agiary</i></b>	:	Parsi term for a Zoroastrian place of worship, a fire temple
<b><i>Ahuna Vairya</i></b>	:	The holiest Zoroastrian prayer, equivalent to the Lord's prayer in Christianity
<b><i>Amesha Spenta</i></b>	:	Holy Immortals, a term for one of the divine beings of Zoroastrianism evoked by God
<b><i>Ashem Vohu</i></b>	:	Prayer during the initiation ceremony
<b><i>Atash Bahram</i></b>	:	A sacred fire of the highest grade
<b><i>Mazdaism</i></b>	:	The worship of Ahura Mazda
<b><i>Urvan</i></b>	:	Soul
<b><i>Chi</i></b>	:	Air, breath
<b><i>De</i></b>	:	Power, Virtue
<b><i>Jing</i></b>	:	Reproductive energy
<b><i>Tao Te Ching</i></b>	:	A small book containing the main tenets of Taoism
<b><i>Tao</i></b>	:	Way

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