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Appendix A – A Brief Introduction to the Religious Faiths and Spiritual Beliefs Included in the Primary Religious Education Program

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Appendix A – A Brief Introduction to the Religious Faiths and Spiritual Beliefs Included in the Primary Religious Education Program

Note to Teachers

The material contained in Appendix A is taken directly from the teacher's guide for the Intermediate Religious Education Program as published by Nelson. This material provides valuable information on the selected living belief systems included at the various grade levels. Primary teachers who do not have extensive knowledge in world religions should find this information useful.

Page references, including the Table of Contents, refer to pagination in the original Nelson resource.

The Department of Education acknowledges and thanks Nelson, a division of Thomson Canada Limited for permission to use *A Brief Introduction to the Religious Faiths and Spiritual Beliefs* as found in Appendix A. The department also acknowledges Ken Badley, Dana Antayá-Moore, and Amy Kostelyk as the authors of this material and Norma Pettit as Program Manager.

Part 2

A Brief Introduction to the Religious Faiths and Spiritual Beliefs Included in My Place in the World

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Pronunciation Guide from the Student Resource

We have included below the Pronunciation Key and Pronunciation Guide as they appear in the student resource. Although not all the unfamiliar words that appear in this section of their guide are included, all the words the students will encounter are.

You may find the following two books helpful for finding pronunciations of difficult words found in this Teacher's Resource Guide that are not found

in the student resource Pronunciation Guide. Both books include detailed notes about pronunciation in the appendices.

Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, 2nd Edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., *World Religions: Western Traditions*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Pronunciation Key

ay as in day

a as in cat

ah as in far

e as in met

ee as in feet

g as in golf

i or **ih** as in fit

(e)ye or **_i_e** or **igh** as in bite

o as in hot

oh as in slow

ow as in cow

u or **uh** as in shut

oo as in boot

Note: The syllable to be emphasized is given in capitals (e.g., *TOHR-ah*).

Adi Granth *AH-dee GRUNTH*

Allah *a-LAH*

Assisi *a-SEE-zee*

avatar *AV-ab-tor*

Ayatollah Khamenei

eye-a-TOH-la kah-MAY-nee

Ba'al Shem Tov

BAHL SHEM TOHV

Baha'i *ba-high*

Baha'u'llah *ba-hah-oo-LAH*

bar mitzvah *bar MITS-vah*

bat mitzvah *but MITS-vah*

Bathsheba *bath-SHEE-ba*

Bhagavad-Gita

bug-a-VAHD GEE-ta

Buddha *BU-dah*

Buddhism *BU-diz-em*

caliphs *kah-LEEFS*

Dalai Lama

DAH-ligh LAH-ma

Dhul Hijjah *dool HIJ-ah*

ecumenism *ek-YOO-men-iz-em*

Galatians *ga-LAY-shunz*

Ganges *GAN-jeez*

Guru Granth Sahib

GOO-roo GRUNTH sa-HIB

gurus *GOO-rooz*

Guayaquil *gweye-uh-KEEL*

Hadith *hab-DEETH*

Haida *HIGH-da*

Hammurabi *ham-oo-RAH-bee*

Hanukah *HAH-noo-kah*

Hasib *ha-SEEB*

Hillel *hill-EL*

Hutu *HOO-too*

Ibralic *ee-BRAH-lik*

Imam *i-MOM*

Inuit *IN-oo-it*

Isaiah *eye-ZAY-a*

Izudin *ee-ZOO-din*

João *zho-ow*

Job *JOHB*

Judaism *JOO-dee-iz-em*

Ka'ba *KAH-ba*

kara *KAR-a*

kosher *KOH-sher*

Krishna *KREESH-na*

Kumbha Mela *KUM-ba MAY-la*

Kyoto *kee-OH-toh*

langar *lun-GAHR*

Levite *LEE-vite*

Leviticus *le-VIT-i-kus*

Machakos *mah-CHACK-ohs*

Mahabharata

ma-HAH-ba-rah-TAH

Mahatma Gandhi

ma-HAHT-ma GAHN-dee

Mahmoud Haddara

mah-MOOD ha-DAR-a

Makkah *ME-ka*

menorah *me-NOR-ah*

Metis *MAY-tee*

Milosevic *mil-OH-sa-vich*

Mirzeta *mer-ZE-ta*

mosque *MOSK*

Muhammad *mu-HAH-med*

Nanak <i>na-NUK</i>	sangha <i>SUNG-a</i>	Talmud <i>TAL-mood</i>
Nirvana <i>ner-VAH-na</i>	Savitar <i>sah-VIH-tehr</i>	Taoism <i>DOW-iz-em</i>
	schism <i>SKI-zem</i>	Theravada <i>TERA-vah-da</i>
pharaohs <i>FAR-ohs</i>	Schlesinger <i>SLE-sin-jer</i>	Thich Nhat Hanh <i>tic not hahn</i>
Pinochet <i>PEEN-ob-shay</i>	Seoul <i>SOHL</i>	Torah <i>TOHR-ah</i>
Polanyi <i>po-LON-yee</i>	Shabbat <i>sha-BUT</i>	Tutsi <i>TOOT-see</i>
Psalms <i>SAHMS</i>	Shakti <i>SHAK-tee</i>	
pseudo <i>SOO-doh</i>	Shaman <i>SHAH-man</i>	ugali <i>oo-GALL-ee</i>
	Shiite <i>SHEE-ite</i>	Uriah <i>yoo-RYE-a</i>
Qur'an <i>kor-AN</i>	Shiva <i>SHI-va</i>	
	Siddhartha Gautama	Vajrayana <i>vuj-RAH-nah</i>
Rama <i>RAH-ma</i>	<i>sid-AR-ta GAH-tu-ma</i>	Vedas <i>VAY-das</i>
Ramadan <i>rah-ma-DAH-N</i>	Sikhism <i>SEEK-iz-em</i>	Vishnu <i>VISH-noo</i>
Rig Veda <i>rig VAY-da</i>	Sikhs <i>SEEKS</i>	
Rwanda <i>ru-WAHN-da</i>	Suharto <i>su-HAR-to</i>	Zaire <i>zye-EER</i>
	Sunni <i>SU-nee</i>	
sajjadah <i>se-JAH-dah</i>		

Introduction

Religions and spiritual beliefs answer the profound questions we ask ourselves: What is the meaning and purpose of my life? Who am I? What is right and wrong behaviour? Of course, in a resource like *My Place in the World* and in this Teacher's Resource Guide, we can barely scratch the surface of the beliefs, traditions, and practices of the faiths and spiritual beliefs discussed. Nevertheless, in this part of the Teacher's Resource Guide, we provide information about each of the faiths included in the student resource. We present the information in chronological order of the appearance of each major spiritual belief or religious faith. Our hope is that we have provided enough background information to allow you to teach informatively about the faiths and spiritual beliefs included in *My Place in the World*.

A Note about the Intermediate Religious Education Program and This Resource

The Intermediate Religious Education program and the resources supporting it are intended to help students gain an understanding and appreciation for

various faith communities. For students who belong to a particular religion, the resources provide an opportunity for them to better understand and appreciate some of the beliefs and practices of that religion. There is, however, no intent to proselytize or to use one religion as a benchmark for others. It is important for educators to keep in mind that many of our students may not remain in the communities where they now live and that their gaining an understanding of other people's beliefs can make for a better world.

The *Religious Education Framework Document* (Dept. of Ed. 2002) says the following:

Through the study of sacred texts, events and personalities, through discussion of current issues and through other approaches, students will acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that will better enable them to understand and appreciate their own faith journey and faith community. They will also be enabled to appreciate and respect the faith journeys and faith communities of others.

We hope that *My Place in the World* will help in achieving the above.

Some Elements Common to Most Religious Faiths and Spiritual Beliefs

The Golden Rule

Great Mystery, if Humans are to live in harmony with the Earth, we need the peace which comes from realizing that we share life with all Creation. We must know that the power to keep things beautiful is Your power in all people.

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL BELIEF,
WHITE DEER OF AUTUMN

He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself.

BAHA'I FAITH, WRITINGS OF BAHAU'LAH, C. 1870 C.E.

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary.

JUDAISM, THE TALMUD, C. 500 C.E., 5AB.31A,
QUOTING RABBI HILLEL

As thou deemest thyself, so deem others. Cause suffering to no one: Thereby return to your True Home with honour.

SIKHISM, GURU GRANTH SAHIB, 1604 C.E.

I will act toward others exactly as I would act toward myself.

BUDDHISM, UDANA-VARGA, C. 500 B.C.E.

In everything do unto others as you would have them do to you.

CHRISTIANITY, CHRISTIAN BIBLE,
MATTHEW 7:12, C. 90 C.E.

This is the sum of duty: Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.

HINDUISM, THE MAHABHARATA, C. 150 B.C.E.

None of you "truly" believe, until he wishes for his brothers what he wishes for himself.

ISLAM, A SAYING OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD
RECORDED BY ACCEPTED NARRATOR AL-BUKHARI,
SEVENTH CENTURY C.E.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY,
HEBREW AND CHRISTIAN BIBLES, LEVITICUS 19:18

Attitudes Towards Social Justice

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; ... Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness.

BAHA'I FAITH, BAHAU'LLAH, PERSIAN HIDDEN WORDS #2

One should give, even from a scanty store, to whoever asks.

BUDDHISM, DHAMMAPADA 224

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

CHRISTIANITY, CHRISTIAN BIBLE, JESUS IN MATTHEW 5:9

Grant other people something also. The Yamana do not like a person who acts selfishly.

YAMANA INUIT INITIATION

What sort of religion can it be without compassion? You need to show compassion to all living beings.

HINDUISM, BASAVANNA, VACANA 247

He is not a believer whose neighbour cannot feel safe from his harm.

ISLAM, HADITH

Thus says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY,
HEBREW AND CHRISTIAN BIBLES, JEREMIAH 22:3

A man once asked the Prophet Muhammad what was the best thing in Islam, and the latter replied, "It is to feed the hungry and to give the greeting of peace both to those one knows and to those one does not know."

ISLAM, HADITH OF BUHARI

Without selfless love are no objectives fulfilled; in service lies the purest action.

SIKHISM, GURU GRANTH SAHIB, MARU M.1

See to it that whoever enters your house obtains something to eat, however little you may have.

ABORIGINAL TEACHING, A WINNEBAGO FATHER'S PRECEPTS

Traditional Aboriginal Spirituality

Introduction

For about four centuries, Canada's Aboriginal peoples have had contact with Europeans and Christian missionaries. In the Arctic, the majority of Inuit are Christian, and the most often celebrated religious ritual among all Aboriginal Canadians today is Christian Communion. Although many Canadian Aboriginal peoples are Christian, many others are secular or non-religious in outlook. Still others practise or are attempting to recover traditional Aboriginal spirituality.

The Inuit and Innu of Newfoundland and Labrador had lived in Canada for thousands of years before Europeans and Christian missionaries arrived. Mi'kmaq, whose homeland included what are now Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, part of New Brunswick, and the Gaspé peninsula, also lived in parts of Newfoundland. They each had a rich and complex belief system with their own gods and spiritual beliefs. As well, they had their own rituals to mark special events such as marriage and honouring the dead. They also had rituals to show respect to the spirits.

In Newfoundland and Labrador today, the majority of Inuit live in five communities—Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Rigolet, and Postville. A large number of Inuit also live in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Unlike the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic, many of whom were converted to Christianity by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, many Inuit in Labrador were converted to Christianity by the Moravian Church in the late 1700s. Moravian missionaries established the communities of Makkovik, Nain, and Hopedale. They taught the Inuit in their own language. As a result, the Inuit became literate long before the fishermen who spent their summers along the Labrador coast.

The majority of Innu, formerly known as the Montagnais and Naskapi, live in two communities Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. Like the Cree, they are Algonquian-speaking people. Until the 1950s, they were traditionally nomadic, following the caribou

in interior Labrador. Most Innu were converted to Christianity by Roman Catholic missionaries, but they retained strong beliefs in their own spiritualism and interwove Roman Catholic beliefs with some of their own beliefs.

The majority of Mi'kmaq, like the Innu an Algonquian-speaking people, live on the Miawpukek Reserve at Conne River in Bay d'Espoir on the island's south coast. Other people of Mi'kmaq descent live in central Newfoundland and on the west coast of the island. Many Mi'kmaq were converted to Christianity by the Roman Catholic Church.

Impact of the Moravian and Roman Catholic Churches

The Moravian and Roman Catholic Churches profoundly affected the lives of the Inuit and Innu—their belief systems, rituals, and the manner in which they viewed themselves. While both Churches in many ways worked to help the Inuit and Innu peoples, they also did much to destroy the traditional Aboriginal way of life.

The Moravian missionaries controlled leadership in the Inuit communities by combining teachings of the Moravian Church and Inuit community rules. Over the last 200 years, many Moravian traditions have been absorbed into existing Inuit traditions. The Moravian system of elders, lovefeasts, young men's and women's day, brass bands, and clothing, for example, have become part of the Inuit identity. The Moravian lovefeast is a simple meal among friends to celebrate special occasions. The word "lovefeast" comes from the Greek word for love, agape, and the intent is to remove social barriers and strengthen the ties of goodwill and unity among the people. Most of the Inuit's belief system prior to the arrival of the Moravians has been lost.

Roman Catholic priests declared that the Innu shaking tent was evil and banned the Innu drum dance. The shaking tent was a ceremonial tent where the meteo—the Innu's spiritual leader and healer—

communicated with the spirits who were the masters of all the animals to discuss where to find food. The drum was believed to have an intrinsic power that helped the people to have spiritual revelations that would bring success to the hunt. The sinew and bone across the drum gave the drum a rattle quality as well. According to Innu belief, each hunter received his own “dream song” given by the Master of the Caribou. The hunter then sang his dream song so that he would have success on the hunt.

Often after they killed the caribou, all the members of the community would hold a mukushan, a community feast. First, the people in the band thanked the masters of the animals for allowing them to kill the caribou and honoured the animals killed. Then the community shared the food. One of the most ceremonial aspects of the feast was the eating of the marrow by the elders, which they ate very carefully to avoid any spillage, in order to show proper respect to the animal killed. Some hunters also wore beautifully painted caribou skin coats to venerate the caribou.

Like all living cultures, Aboriginal cultures in Canada today are cultures in transition. Despite Moravian and Roman Catholic bans on many of their beliefs, some Inuit and Innu retained strong beliefs in their own spiritualism and traditions and adapted Moravian and Roman Catholic beliefs to their own. However, although many Innu still speak Innu-aimun as their first language and their elders still have a strong Aboriginal belief system, many young Aboriginal peoples do not know this spirituality. In today’s rapidly changing world, many youths are trying to find their own identity, trying to find a balance between two worlds—between Christian beliefs and traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Many youth in both groups have severe social problems, in part because they do not know their own culture and they feel helpless in someone else’s culture.

We have many different feelings about the church today. We have different opinions about which religion is good, our religion or the R.C. religion. Many of our elders still respect the church, but they don’t like to see it change. Some people think the church is good to

have, but we cannot let it run our lives. Many young people are angry with the church for having damaged our culture. Some of us have no complaints about the church. Some of us just don’t care about it. Some people feel the church is still controlling our lives.

THE PEOPLE’S INQUIRY, MAMUNITAU STAIANIMUANU: NTUAPATETAU TSHETSHI UITSHIAKUTS STUASSIMINUTS: GATHERING VOICES: FINDING STRENGTH TO HELP OUR CHILDREN (THE INNU NATION AND THE MUSHUAU INNU BAND COUNCIL, UTSHIMASITS, NTESINAN)

In many communities, efforts are being made to teach young people more about their Aboriginal heritage.

- Nain drum-dance revival: one of the most popular Inuit arts, drum-dancing was part of virtually all social gatherings. Drum-dancing is thought to provide the special conditions needed to promote a direct experience of Spirit.
- Hopedale Language Nests: Following a program begun by the Maoris, the Aboriginal peoples of New Zealand, infants from birth are being immersed in Inuktitut, the Inuit language, to try to preserve the language.
- Archaeological digs in Makkovik and Sheshatshiu are helping young people to appreciate and understand former spirituality.
- Hebron Reunion: By meeting together, four decades after being forced to leave their homes, Inuit were able to share experiences in an effort to understand why they were forced to relocate in 1958 by the government and the Church.

In all Aboriginal schools in Labrador, students have created plays such as *The Boneman* that show some of the problems created by the relationship between the Church and Aboriginal peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador. One of the strong scenes in *The Boneman* shows an Aboriginal family gathering around the shaman after he has been crucified by the black robes (priests).

Traditional Aboriginal Spirituality

Unlike many religions or spiritual beliefs, traditional Aboriginal spirituality in Canada does not have written scriptures. Nor is there one central founder. Rather, the teachings and traditions have developed

gradually over thousands of years. Most followers of traditional Aboriginal spirituality view all of creation as sacred. All things are seen as interrelated, interdependent members of the same family, and must be approached with a spirit of respect, co-operation, and thanksgiving. Traditional Aboriginal peoples believe each created thing in the natural world has its own presence and purpose, reflecting the spirit of the Creator. This belief means that humans enter into relationships with all things with an attitude of stewardship rather than one of domination. The most basic relationship is with Mother Earth who gives people everything they need to live and, in turn, must be cared for.

Some traditional Aboriginal peoples describe life as the “great giveaway.” Each thing gives itself according to its purpose. They recognize that animals must eat other living things in order to sustain themselves. Traditional Aboriginal peoples do not think it is wrong to kill animals to provide necessities like food and clothing. However, the animal must be thanked, and in some cases, its permission must be sought in advance. To kill unnecessarily or for fun is a great wrong that disturbs the natural order.

Most traditional Aboriginal peoples believe that the responsibility is on us to offer thanksgiving to the Creator, to share with one another, and to maintain harmony—within ourselves, within our family and community, and with the earth and all its creatures. For Aboriginal peoples who follow traditional spirituality, the primary purpose of life is to pursue spiritual growth, share their personal talents as part of the community, and enjoy the gifts of the Creator. To do this, they must strive to live in harmony with the natural world.

Diversity of Beliefs

Like most major world religions, traditional Aboriginal spirituality in Canada is quite diverse. As one moves from one community to the next, one may encounter small variations in beliefs. Variations may also be found among the members of the same community, particularly in the case of a community like Sheshatshiu where many people are immigrants from

different bands. Aboriginal accounts of Creation vary widely. Some begin with the world populated by many people who were subsequently transformed into animals. Others begin with an animal or spirit creating people. Aboriginal peoples do not have a precise belief about life after death. Some believe in reincarnation, with a person being reborn either as a human or animal after death. Others believe that humans return as ghosts, or that people go to another world. Others believe that nothing definitely can be known about one’s fate after this life. Combinations of beliefs are common.

Traditional Aboriginal spirituality does not have a single god. Various spirits represent different aspects of the Creator or Great Spirit or Supreme Being. The Inuit of Labrador had two main gods: Torngak and his wife Suporguksoak. These gods were believed to live in the Torngat Mountains in northern Labrador. Suporguksoak had authority over the land and its animals, while Torngak ruled over the sea and sea animals.

The people also believed in the power of inua, or spirits. All things, living and non-living, were thought to have inua. For example, . . . on a long journey, a miniature pair of boots would be carried in the belief that as long as the miniature was in good condition, the real boots would not wear out.

Torngak’s representatives on earth were angekut (plural angekok). These people trained for a long time, communicating alone with the spirits. Angekut could be either men or women. Their chief duties were to cure the sick, increase success in hunting and control the weather. They could also call upon guardian spirits to settle disputes. When one angekuk failed, another could try. At festivals, there was a sense of pride on the part of the different groups attending, as “their” angekok “competed” with others. An angekok always received a gift when curing the sick. Often, amulets were used to keep evil spirits away.

FROM *THE LABRADOR INUIT* BY TIM BORLASE

The Innu believed that each animal has its master. The masters of the animals were considered chiefs by the Innu. Papakashshishk, the master of the caribou,

governed the entire life of the Innu. For centuries, the life of the Innu was linked to that of the caribou; they depended on the caribou for their survival—for food, clothing, and even entertainment. Because of this dependence and because the master of the caribou gave the caribou to them, the Innu handled everything that belonged to the caribou with great respect. For example, in the summer they would take good care of the caribou’s antlers, hanging them facing the rising sun because that was the season the animal needed them most. The hunter first asked the caribou for permission to kill it. Nothing was wasted. Rituals that honoured the caribou and the master of the caribou were performed. For example, caribou bones were put on platforms out of reach of dogs.

Symbols and Rituals

Traditional Aboriginal peoples have a variety of symbols and rituals that they use to reflect their beliefs. A basic symbol of many traditional Aboriginal peoples is the circle. It represents the equality of all beings and the constantly renewing rhythms of life. Birth and death are part of the circle of life, like day and night, summer and winter. The hardships

of nature—cold, hunger, injury, bereavement, fear, and struggle—are seen as part of the rich tapestry of human experience that make the soul grow strong and wise.

Many traditional Aboriginal peoples use sweat lodges for rituals of purification, for spiritual renewal, for healing, and for education of young people. Usually, participating in a sweat lodge is a form of meditation. Sweat lodges generate hot moist air, similar to a sauna. They are often made of a frame of saplings, covered with skins, canvas, or blanket, and can be large or small. A depression is dug in the centre into which hot rocks are positioned. Water is thrown on the rocks to create steam. A small flap opening is used to regulate the temperature.

Some Aboriginal peoples use sacred pipes for private and group prayers, with prayers being transmitted through the smoke from the pipe’s bowl. The pipe ceremony is preceded by burning a braid of sweetgrass to purify the worshippers and symbolize unity—uniting many hearts and minds as one person and uniting them with the spirits, and with the universe.

Judaism

Introduction

One of the oldest living faiths in the world, Judaism is a monotheistic religion—teaching that there is only one God. Jewish tradition teaches that Abraham made a covenant with God. He promised to worship God and live according to God’s commands. This covenant between God and the Jewish people was renewed by Moses at Mount Sinai during the Jews’ exodus from Egypt centuries later. Many Jews believe that they, as a people, chose to become God’s partners in this covenant and that they have a responsibility to live out the covenant in their daily lives.

Today an estimated 14.1 million Jews live around the world, with the largest groups in the United States (5.9 million), Israel (4.6 million), Russia and France (700 000 in each). Smaller numbers of Jews live in the Ukraine, Argentina, Great Britain, and South Africa. According to the 2001 Canadian Cen-

sus, about 330 000 Jews live in Canada; 140 live in Newfoundland and Labrador. The figure for Canada represents a 3.7 percent increase over the 1991 Census.

Along with Christians and Muslims, Jews are known as “People of the Book” because they believe that God has revealed Himself in scripture. The term also applies to Jews because they place great emphasis on studying their sacred writings in order to understand and apply their teachings to their lives.

Out of reverence for God, when Jews write the name of God, they write G-D.

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar was derived from the ancient Hebrew calendar, and has remained unchanged since 900 C.E. It is the official calendar of the state of Is-

rael, has 13 months, and counts years from the presumed year of the creation of the world. For example, the year may be commonly known as 2003, but for Jewish religious purposes it is the year 5763 AM; AM stands for *anno mundi*, or year of the world. While Jews believe that God created the world in six days, they do not all believe that the six days were 24 hours in length. Many Jews do not see a conflict between their calendar and scientific dating of earth and the theory of evolution, which states that all life as we know it evolved from earlier, primitive forms and has been modified over a very long time.

Sacred Writings

The Hebrew Bible consists of three written parts:

1. **The Torah**, which means “teaching” or “law.” The Torah has five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and because it has five books, the Torah is also referred to as the Pentateuch (from the Greek words *penta*—five, and *teuchos*—an implement, book).
2. **Nevi'im** includes the prophetic literature. This section is divided into early prophets and late prophets.
3. **Ketuvim**, which means “other writings.” The complete Hebrew Bible is sometimes referred to as the **Tanakh**, an acronym derived from its three main parts.

The Torah

The scroll of Torah is the most holy object in Judaism. It is written very carefully by hand, in Hebrew, using sheets of parchment, special ink, and a goose quill. A skilled inscriber usually takes about a year to complete inscribing a single scroll of Torah. Jews believe that God is the author of the books of the Torah, and that Moses recorded God’s teachings. Because the Torah is considered to contain the words of God, if the inscribers make a mistake, they must begin again. Once the Torah is written, the parchment sheets are sewn together and wound around two wooden cylinders.

The Torah is central to the Jewish faith. It reveals

how God works, both in the creation and in history, and how Jews should live in relationship with God and with one another. The Torah also tells the history of the Jewish people. Many Jews return to it when they want to strengthen their sense of identity, or when they want to reaffirm the ethical and moral principles on which they base their lives.

Torah Law traditionally consists of 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitions. Rabbis (meaning “teacher”; the Jewish title for those distinguished for learning, authoritative teachers of the law, and for the appointed spiritual head of a community) and scribes (persons specialized in knowing and copying sacred writings) were responsible for interpreting and teaching Torah Law. In ancient times, one group, the Pharisees, were especially known for their interpretation of the law. They started to interpret and explain the law, and later generations followed in their footsteps. These explanations became known as **Oral Law** (later forming the Talmud) as opposed to the Written Law—the Torah.

The reading of the Torah in the synagogue is of central importance to the Jewish community. Before it is read as part of a worship service, the Torah is carried around the synagogue to remind everyone of their duty to study and apply its teachings. As the congregation watches the procession, the members turn around so that they never have their backs to the Torah. A reading from the Torah is recited on the Sabbath (from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday), and on Monday and Thursday mornings during worship services. By the end of the year, the entire Torah has been read.

Nevi'im—Early Prophets

The Early Prophets contain an account of the history of the Jews from the time of Joshua until the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and the two books of Kings are the books included.

Nevi'im—Late Prophets

The Later Prophets include the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well as the writings of the Twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Oba-

diah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Ketuvim: Other Writings

These books contain hymns, poetry, wise sayings, some prophecies, some history, and some stories about specific individuals. The books include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs (Solomon), Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles.

Oral Law and the Talmud

Rabbinic Judaism maintains that at Sinai, God transmitted to Moses a twofold Torah: a written one and an oral one. The oral Torah was passed on from rabbi to rabbi, down to the present day. For the rabbis, the oral Torah is encapsulated in the Mishnah, “that which is learned or memorized.” The **Mishnah** was written in Palestine in about the third century C.E. Commentary on the Mishnah is called **Gemara**. This commentary on the teachings and meanings of the written Torah by rabbis throughout the ages includes the **Halakah**, or decisions on disputed legal questions, and the **Haggadah**, or legends, anecdotes, and sayings used by rabbis to illustrate the traditional laws. The Mishnah and the Gemara together make up the **Talmud**, a gigantic work of many volumes containing about five million words. Talmud is another word for “teaching. Two versions of the Talmud exist. One was compiled in Palestine between the third and fifth century C.E. and is known as the Palestine, or Jerusalem Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud was compiled between the third and sixth century C.E. Both contain the same Mishnah, but differ in the content of the Gemara. The Babylonian Talmud is considered more authoritative, because the rabbinical schools there survived centuries longer than did the Palestinian rabbinical schools.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

God is the source of the revelations on which the Jewish faith, ways of worship, and lifestyles are based.

Two fundamental beliefs unite Jews around the world: (1) a single, transcendent God created the world and continues to provide for it, and (2) the God of creation entered into a special relationship—

a covenant—with the Jewish people. Several thousand years of ethical monotheism, ancient rituals, a common history, and a strong sense of group identity form the connections among Jews around the world.

Jews are to pray at least three times a day. Prayer is a part of everything, and there is a blessing for everything from eating, to getting up, to going to bed, to travelling, to coming through an operation. The most important prayer to all Jews is the **Shema**. It begins, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Values Promoted

Judaism promotes these values:

- Wisdom/learning is important—gaining it and being around it.
- Idolatry is forbidden; nothing compares to God.
- Follow the Ten Commandments.
- All life is spiritual.
- Every human being is composed of a soul as well as a body; when death occurs, the soul returns to God in heaven and the body returns to the dust of the earth.
- The golden rule is honoured: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18)
- Respect is accorded self and others: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Therefore, be just and moral in actions toward oneself as well as toward others.

Diversity of Beliefs

Not all followers of Judaism interpret their sacred writings the same way.

Orthodox Judaism: Orthodox Jews are conservative and traditional. They believe that the Torah was written by God and transcribed for God by Moses. They therefore are obliged to follow all of its laws.

Conservative Judaism: Conservative Jews are open to minor reforms of the traditional Jewish teachings and practice.

Reform or Liberal Judaism: Reform Jews believe that the Bible was written by people who were inspired by God. They believe that the obligation is upon the individual to study and decide which laws and practices to observe.

Worship and Practices

Worship Services

To honour the commandment “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy,” no labour is done on the Sabbath; for Orthodox Jews, meals must be prepared in advance of sundown. The Sabbath—**Shabat**—begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. The dinner held in the home on Friday evening is a worship service. Candles are lit, a specific blessing called **kiddush**, is said over the wine, and another called the **motzi** is said over the braided **challah** bread. Many Jewish families have two loaves of challah on the Sabbath to remind them that during the 40 years of wandering in the desert, they received a double portion of Manna on Fridays so that they would not have to work to get their food on the Sabbath. Challah is a “rich” bread, made with eggs and white flour. Eating challah on the Sabbath made it a special occasion. On Rosh Hashanah or the Jewish New Year, the challah is not braided, but is baked as a round, sweet loaf, often with raisins. The round shape represents a crown, as the holiday is the “head or the top of the year” (an exact translation of “Rosh Hashanah”). The raisins form part of the sweet cuisine generally served at this holiday as part of the wish for a “sweet year.” In fact, the most popular greeting expressed at this holiday is “Shanah Tovah u-Metukah,” literally “a good and sweet year.” A lengthy grace or benediction is said *after* meals rather than before to thank God for his blessings and for the gathering of family, friends, and guests. Synagogue services are held on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

Tefillah and the Shema are the cornerstones of Jewish worship services. Tefillah means prayer. The prayers that are the cornerstones of the service are the **Amidah** (which means standing), the Shema, and the Torah reading. The Amidah is a series of benedictions or blessings recited silently, while standing. The

reader, or **chazan**, then repeats the Amidah when a **minyan** (ten adult men) is present. The Shema consists of verses from three sections of the Torah: Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41, which affirm Jewish belief in God and their obligation to love Him and follow His commandments.

Symbols of Worship in the Home

A **mezuzah** is a small box that Jews attach to the upper third of the right doorposts, inside and outside their home. It contains a tiny scroll on which the Shema is written. Many Jews touch the mezuzah and kiss their fingers as they go in and out of their home.

A **tallit** is a prayer shawl. Made of wool or silk, it has fringes on each end and reminds the person wearing it of the presence of God and to obey God (see Numbers 14:38–41). It is customary to bury male Jews in their tallit from which the fringes have been cut or torn.

A **kippah** (Hebrew) or **yarmulke** (Yiddish) is a skull cap. Jewish tradition requires men to cover the head as a sign of humility before God, although it is not a specific biblical commandment. Certainly covered heads are the accepted rule in Conservative and Orthodox synagogues. In Reform congregations, it is optional.

Dietary Laws

Kashrut is the name for the set of food laws followed by Jews. These laws are contained in the Torah, which forbids Jews to eat pork, shellfish, or animals that have not been slaughtered according to the methods outlined in the Torah. Meat and dairy foods are to be kept separate. Food that is prepared in accordance with the laws of the Torah is called **kosher**.

The preparation of food and the consumption of specific foods at certain times are important in Judaism. For example, during the week of Passover, unleavened bread (**matzah**) is eaten to the exclusion of all other bread and grain products, including oats, rye, etc., because the book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible records that when the Jews fled Egypt, they had no time to let their bread rise (leavened bread) before baking it.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Birth: Eight days after birth, male babies undergo the rite of circumcision. Circumcision in the Jewish faith symbolizes openness to God and reminds Jews of the covenant between Abraham and God. A **mohel** (circumciser) performs the rite of removing the foreskin from the penis. This ritual can take place in the home, the hospital, or the synagogue. At that time the boy receives a Hebrew name and is formally welcomed into the Jewish faith. Girls may formally receive their Hebrew names during a synagogue service.

Teenage Years: When Jewish boys turn 13 years of age, one of their rites of passage is to read from the Torah when they celebrate becoming bar mitzvah—sons of the commandments. At 13 years of age, Jewish males are considered responsible for their own Jewish practice and are obliged to follow the laws of Judaism. In Reform and Conservative synagogues, girls at age 12 may celebrate becoming bat mitzvah—daughters of the commandments. Like the boys, part of the ceremony includes reading from the Torah. In some Orthodox synagogues, girls of 12 may celebrate becoming bat hayill—daughter of worth, or bat Torah. This ceremony usually takes place on a Sunday afternoon, and the girls read from the Hebrew Bible or prayer book, but they do not read from the Torah portion of the Tanakh.

Marriage: Jewish marriages generally take place under a **chuppah** (bridal canopy) either at the home or in a synagogue. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the bridegroom breaks a glass by stepping on it. This reminds Jews of the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. and that life has its sorrows along with its joys.

Death: Jews believe in the immortality of the soul, but focus on life in the present world. Orthodox and Conservative Jews require burial in a simple wooden casket, usually within 24 hours of death. Reform Jews sometimes allow cremation. Flowers are not customary. Mourning traditionally has five stages: (1) Between death and the funeral; (2) The first three

days following burial, which are considered the most intense. The immediate family members make a symbolic cut in the shirt or sweater they are wearing. Men do not shave or cut their hair for thirty days. (3) **Shiva**, a seven-day period, including the three days in (2). “Shiva” means seven, and this period of mourning is sometimes referred to as “sitting shiva.” During this period, mourners sit on low stools, indicating their bereaved state, and mirrors in the house are covered, as encouragement to the mourners to reflect upon the meaning of life and death. “Sitting shiva” is usually done for parents, a spouse, a child older than 30 days at the time of death, and brothers or sisters. It is customary to bring food during the shiva so that those mourning will be freed of those concerns. During shiva, regular prayers are held and the **kaddish**, or the prayer for the dead, is recited. The kaddish is not a sad prayer, but exalts and praises God. It is written in Aramaic, a colloquial form of Hebrew spoken by Jesus and still found in a couple of out-of-the-way communities in the Middle East. (4) **Shloshim** is the 30-day period after the death during which the mourner slowly re-enters society; this includes the seven days of shiva. (5) The fifth stage of mourning is the 12-month period up to the first anniversary of the death. During this period attendance at festivities where music is played is discouraged.

Holy Days and Festivals

Five major and four minor festivals are part of the Jewish year. The major festivals are:

Passover, also known as **Pesach**: Commemorates the escape (Exodus) of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible recounts that, before Pharaoh would let the Hebrew slaves leave Egypt, God visited plagues upon Egypt. During one of the plagues, the Angel of Death took the eldest son of every Egyptian family. Only the Hebrews, who put the blood of a lamb on their doors as directed by their prophet Moses, were spared. Thus, the Angel of Death “passed over” the houses of the Hebrew slaves.

Sukkot: An autumn harvest festival, Sukkot also remembers the escape from Egypt. Jews build and eat in temporary shelters outdoors, either at home or at

their synagogue. The roofs of the shelters are made from materials that were, but are no longer, growing. The inside is decorated with fruits, vegetables, and streamers, usually by the children. Palm, willow, myrtle, and citron are four plants used during this festival.

Shavuot: During this festival, which remembers God giving the Torah to Moses, Jews decorate the synagogue with fruits and flowers. Dairy foods such as cheesecake and cheese blintzes are customary because milk, like the Torah, is considered the basis of life. Furthermore, the land of Israel is called the “land of milk and honey,” and this holiday celebrates this aspect.

Rosh Hashanah: The Jewish New Year, celebrating God’s creation of the world and His judgement. It begins the Ten Days of Repentance that end at Yom Kippur. The *shofar*, or ram’s horn, is blown at Rosh Hashanah services as a reminder to Jews to “wake up” to repentance. During this time, Jews reflect on their deeds of the past year and, if they feel they need to apologize for something or atone for an action, they will do so.

Yom Kippur: The Jewish Day of Atonement. This is a day of fasting for Jews, beginning at sundown and lasting for approximately 26 hours during which no food or drink is consumed. Fasting usually begins after the age of bar/bat mitzvah, although the sick, pregnant, etc., are required to eat in order not to commit the error of “pikuah nefesh” or putting one’s soul (health) in jeopardy. The sound of the shofar ends the day of fasting.

The minor festivals are:

Hanukah (also *Chanukkah*, *Hanukkah*): This eight-day festival usually occurs in December. It commemorates the day according to Jews they won back the Temple in Jerusalem. There was only enough oil to keep the Temple menorah burning for one day, but the light burned for eight days, until more oil was found. The Hanukah menorah has nine branches, one for each day plus a helper branch to light the others. Small gifts such as books, chocolate, and money are given to children during this holiday.

Purim: Purim is a day honouring the Jewish heroine Esther, who, according to the book of Esther in the Hebrew Bible, saved the Jews from being killed by a Persian government minister named Haman by interceding with the king. Esther had been raised in Persia by her uncle, Mordecai, and was a member of the king’s harem. She became the king’s favourite wife, but the king did not know she was Jewish. Haman hated the Jews, especially Mordecai. As advisor to the king, he told the king the Jews made their own laws, and did not follow his. The king told Haman to deal with them as he saw fit. Mordecai asked Esther to intervene. She went before the king without being summoned, which could have resulted in her death. Instead, the king listened to her, and Haman ended up being hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

When the **Megillah**, or Scroll of Esther, is read, people (especially children) sound noisemakers, musical instruments, and the like to “drown out” the name of Haman. It is customary to dress in a costume and make merry during this holiday, which is particularly oriented toward children. The Megillah is the only book in the Hebrew Bible that does not mention God directly. Mordecai does say that if Esther does not save the Jews, someone will, but God’s name is never used.

Tu Bi’Svat (*the fifteenth day of the month of Shvat according to the Jewish Calendar*): This is the name for the festival called the New Year of the Trees. It is customary to eat the fruits and nuts of the Land of Israel (e.g., carobs, dates, figs, apricots, almonds). Extensive tree planting takes place on this holiday in Israel.

Tisha Be-Av (*the ninth of Av*): This is a traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, in 586 B.C.E., and by the Romans in 70 C.E., both of which occurred on or around this date. It also commemorates other calamities around this date such as the fall of Bethar, last stronghold of Bar Kochba, in 135 B.C.E.; the decree by the Roman emperor Hadrian forbidding Jews to enter Jerusalem; and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. It

is at this time that the massacring of entire communities during the Crusades is remembered. This date has been observed since 70 C.E. (Zechariah 7:5). On the night of the 9th, Jews congregate in synagogues where lights are dimmed, special Kinot or dirges are read and the leader of the congregation recites, “This year is the ———th since the destruction of the Holy

Temple.” A period of complete abstention from food and drink begins, and bathing other than the washing of hands and face for hygienic purposes is forbidden. As on Yom Kippur, footwear made of leather is not worn. One sits either on a low stool or on the ground as during the Shivah (mourning) period.

Hinduism

Introduction

Hinduism, the first of four major world religions to come from India, emerged some 5000 years ago. (Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are the other three religions arising out of India.) The word “Hindu” comes from the River Indus, which flows through northern India. In ancient times, the river was called Sindhu, but in the fifth century B.C.E., the Persians who came to India could not pronounce the letter “s” at the beginning of a word, so they called the river the Hindu and the people who lived in the Indus River Valley Hindus. Today Hinduism is the third-largest world religion, after Christianity and Islam, with more than 750 million adherents. The majority of Hindus live in Southeast Asia, East and South Africa, and the East Indies, but large groups also live in England, the United States, and Canada. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, about 300 000 Hindus live in Canada; 405 live in Newfoundland and Labrador. The figure for Canada represents an 89.3 percent increase over the 1991 Census. Hinduism is the dominant religion in the nations of India, Nepal, and Bali.

Known as the **Sanatana Dharma**, or eternal religion, Hinduism can be difficult for westerners to understand for a number of reasons. It was not founded by, or based upon, the teachings of a specific individual, and it does not have one major sacred book or central major religious doctrine. “Truth is one, paths are many,” is a phrase that illustrates the tolerance that Hinduism exhibits. Hinduism is strongly inclusive, meaning that it includes many religious beliefs and practices. Hinduism considers all sincere approaches to God to be valid; there is no

one path, and, indeed, there may be as many paths as there are individuals in the world.

In 1995, India’s Supreme Court answered the question of “who is a Hindu?” with these words:

Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the truth that the number of gods to be worshipped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion.

Sacred Writings

Hinduism has produced a large body of sacred literature. The sacred writings of Hinduism, among the world’s oldest surviving writings, can be divided into two main classes: the **Shruti**—what has been heard (from the gods), and **Smriti**—what is remembered, or tradition.

The Shruti

Among the Shruti, or revealed sacred scriptures, are the **Vedas**, **Upanishads**, and **Brahmanas**.

The Vedas are the primary texts of Hinduism. According to Hindu belief, the Vedas were revealed by God to people who then wrote them down. Therefore, no syllable may be changed. There are four Vedas, or books of knowledge. Written from about 1500 B.C.E. to about 600 B.C.E., they contain hymns, instructions for domestic and public rituals, and a collection of spells and charms to control the weather, bring good luck, and defeat one’s enemies.

The Upanishads were written from the eighth century B.C.E. to the fifth century B.C.E., and are philosophical meditations on the meaning of life and the universe.

The Brahmanas describe priestly rituals and the myths behind the rituals. Although the Vedas are the primary texts of Hinduism, the majority of Hindus are more familiar with the Bhagavad-Gita, one of the Smriti writings.

The Smriti

The Smriti contain the practical teachings of Hinduism. They are preserved in oral tradition, as well as being written down. The two great Sanskrit literary epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are part of the Smriti, as are the Puranas, which are stories of the gods and creation, Dharmashastras and Dharma-sutras, which are the textbooks on sacred law.

The Bhagavad-Gita—sometimes simply called the Gita—means “Divine Song” or “Song of the Lord.” Found in the Mahabharata, one of Hinduism’s most famous literary epics, it is a much beloved scripture read daily by millions around the world. The Gita tells of a conversation between the young warrior, Arjuna, and his charioteer, who is, unbeknown to Arjuna, the god Krishna. Arjuna is about to wage battle against his family and he is in despair. As translator Jack Hawley describes it, “In the Gita, the Divine comes to His friend man in the middle of a vicious war and carefully expounds the laws and principles that govern human life.”

Central Beliefs and Teachings

Despite the fact that Hindus worship many gods and goddesses, Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. In Hinduism, there is one Supreme Being, Eternal Spirit, Supreme World Spirit or Soul, or God, called Brahman. Brahman is everywhere—within all people, all living creatures, and all plants. Some Hindus use the term “Universal Soul” when referring to Brahman. However, the Hindu belief is that Brahman cannot be described in just one image or in human words, so there are many gods and goddesses to represent the many aspects of Brahman’s character. Vishnu, the preserver of life, Shiva, the destroyer of evil, and Brahma, the creator of life, are the three most important aspects and are the aspects of Brahman most often worshipped.

Additional Aspects of Brahman

Satyanrayana	Protection
Lakshmi	Nourishment, prosperity, beauty
Saraswati	Creativity, knowledge, learning
Durga/Parvati/ Amba/Kali	Mother, protector of followers
Rama	Ideal man—seventh incarnation of Vishnu
Krishna	Love—eighth incarnation of Vishnu
Karttikeya	Perfection
Ganesha	Wisdom, strength, remover of obstacles
Hanuman	Courage, intelligence
Gauri	Purity

According to Hindu belief, all people have eternal souls—known as the atman—that are born, die, and are reborn into different bodies here on earth. The spiritual aim of Hinduism is to break free of this endless cycle—called samsara—of birth, death, and rebirth (reincarnation), and instead to be absorbed into Brahman, or the Universal Soul—a process called moksha, or liberation.

Dharma is the backbone of Hindu spiritual life and society. In Hinduism, dharma means “that which sustains or supports,” and encompasses all actions, including thoughts, feelings, and verbal expression. Dharma includes the sacred laws or codes of conduct that outline desirable norms of behaviour. The dharma also includes such virtues as honesty, justice, charity, self-control, mercy, chastity, selflessness, and service to others. In Hinduism, right action means worshipping the Brahman and carrying out the duties expected of them, according to the laws of dharma.

Karma is a concept of cause and effect; the Hindu belief is that the future will always depend on past and present actions. Karma is impartial. Individuals forge their karma with thoughts, words, and deeds, and the results of those may become apparent in their current incarnation or during subsequent reincarnations. If they do good deeds and live according to dharma, they will be reborn as one with good tendencies and will be closer to achieving liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Values Promoted

- All life is spiritual.
- Begin and end each day with prayer.
- Practise honesty and justice.
- Practise self-sacrifice and restraint.
- Practise compassion and giving to or serving others.
- Vegetarianism is encouraged, because the killing of living creatures is not favoured.
- The Golden Rule is honoured: “This is the sum of duty: Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.” (Mahabharata, c. 150 B.C.E.)
- Respect for self and others:
 - Give to others without expecting anything back.
 - Don’t try to detect the faults of others.
 - “Fix” oneself before trying to “fix” others.
 - Repay evil with good.
 - Do no harm to any living thing (ahimsa).
 - Give reverence to elders and teachers.

Diversity of Beliefs

In Hinduism, any sincere path to the Divine is viewed as acceptable. Generally, these paths fall into four main categories:

1. Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion
2. Karma Yoga, the path of selfless service
3. Jnana Yoga, the path of inquiring reflection
4. Raja Yoga, the royal path of meditation

These subtraditions reflect differences based on ideas and worship of the central name for God as Vishnu, Shiva, or Brahma.

Stages of Life

Hindus believe that there are four stages of life, known as ashramas. They are:

- Brahmacharya (a student)
- Grihastha (a householder)
- Vanaprastha (a hermit). At this stage, individuals

have raised their families and fulfilled their obligations to society. They now focus on self-discipline, study, and meditation. Sometimes they do this within a quiet part of the family home; other times they move away. Often couples will move into the forest together to do this, remaining available for consultation with family members.

- Sanyasi (a person of renunciation). At this stage, an individual breaks all ties and renounces all attachments to worldly things. He or she wanders alone, serving as a model of spiritual perfection. Most people do not reach this stage.

Hindus also believe that life has four goals (**purusharthas**). These are:

- Dharma, or religious merit
- Artha, or earning wealth, including money, possessions, knowledge, good character
- Kama, or enjoying the wealth acquired
- Moksha, or liberation, after discharging all obligation to society

Worship and Practices

Hinduism teaches that Hindus should begin and end their day with acts of worship. Most daily worship—the **puja** ceremony—takes place at home. During puja, Hindus express their devotion to Brahman. They receive the grace of the Brahman into their homes and hearts. Many Hindus set aside a special place within the home to serve as a shrine. The shrine may contain a small statue of a god or pictures of a god or goddess or of several deities. It does not need to be a separate room, or even a very large space. During the puja, Hindus will make an offering of fruit, incense, or flowers to the deity. Although people may worship alone, often the whole family will worship together. At the end of the puja, worshippers may turn around three times to show that they remember that God is all around them.

A Hindu temple is called a **mandir**. Each mandir is dedicated to a particular deity. The mandir houses a statue of the deity in the innermost, holiest part of the temple. There are no set worship times; Hindus may visit whenever they like. Some people go every

day, while others may go only on feast days. Women cover their heads before entering a temple as a sign of respect, and Hindus always take off their shoes upon entry. Hindus believe that the ground (Mother Earth) is holy, and so when offering prayers, they remove their shoes. Some Hindus refrain from wearing shoes of leather, since leather is obtained from killing animals. They wear wooden clogs.

In the puja ceremony at the mandir, as at home, Hindus make an offering of fruit, incense, or flowers to the deity. The priest presents the gifts to the deity to be blessed, and then returns them to the worshippers. A red mark called a tilaka will then be placed on the foreheads of the worshippers.

The Bindi, or “Dot” on the forehead: It used to be that both men and women wore this dot—women’s as a circle, men’s in a more elongated form—as a sign of piety and to indicate that they were Hindus. The placement of the dot coincides with what is considered the spiritual “third eye,” which is focused inward on God. Married women would wear a red dot; unmarried or widowed, a black dot. Today the dot is seen less frequently, and when women wear it, they will often match the colour to the sari they are wearing.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Hindus love to mark occasions, from the birthdays of specific gods and goddesses to harvest time and family events. Celebrations of life are referred to as *samskaras*. Following are four primary *samskaras*.

Birth: A naming ceremony is held ten days after a baby is born. A priest will draw up the child’s horoscope and use it later in life, to set a favourable wedding date for the child.

Teenage Years: The sacred thread ceremony, *upanayana*, is held exclusively for boys of the top three castes (see page 35) when the boy is between 8 and 12 years old. A long loop of cotton is hung over the boy’s left shoulder and under his right arm by the teacher who will instruct him in the Vedas. He promises to read the scriptures and to do his duty as a Hindu, and he will wear the thread for the rest of his life. Once

they have undergone this initiation rite, Hindus are referred to as “twice-born.”

Marriage (vivaha): A Hindu wedding may last several hours or even days. Couples wear bright-coloured clothing and exchange garlands in order to welcome each other into each other’s lives. The most important part of the ceremony is the bride and groom’s walk around the sacred fire in a clockwise direction. The sacred fire symbolizes the presence of God. Usually the couple walk around the fire four to seven times. Circling the fire marks the point at which the couple become husband and wife.

Death: After death, family members wash and clothe the dead person. Relatives and friends form a procession to take the body to the cremation grounds, led by the eldest son of the deceased. The body is placed on pyre and the son sets it on fire, saying a prayer to speed the soul on its way to the place of the ancestors. After the cremation, the mourners depart without looking back and take a purifying bath before entering their homes. Three days later, the eldest son will gather the bones and take them to the River Ganges or another body of water symbolic of the Ganges. Ritual offerings of rice cakes and water are made while reciting sacred verses. Rituals continue for 12 days as a symbolic year. In Canada, Hindu funeral ceremonies include walking around the body with a lighted torch, and take place at funeral homes or crematoria.

The Caste System in India

Although the Hindu caste system was abolished by law in India in 1949, it still remains a powerful influence in the country, especially in rural areas. Caste still tends to influence many decisions Hindus in India make. For example, even today in India, the occupations Hindus choose to follow, their choice of marriage partner, what foods they may eat or which ones must be avoided may depend on the person’s caste.

It is believed that castes were formed about 1500 B.C.E. and were based on people’s natural qualities and functions. They were not originally the rigid social categories they became. The four primary castes were:

1. Brahmins, or Brahmans: the priests, professionals; it was their duty to study and teach the Vedas and to preside over important rituals and sacrifices.
2. Kshatriyas: the rulers, administrators, soldiers; their duty was protection of the people and just administration of a government.
3. Vaishyas: the peasant-farmers, merchants; their duty was to provide for the economic needs of the community.
4. Shudras: the artisans; their duty was to serve the upper three castes.

A fifth category was added about 1000 B.C.E., probably by the conquering peoples who required those they conquered to carry out the more unpleasant jobs within society, such as tanning leather and removing dead animals from their villages. People who did these jobs were “unclean” and lived in a separate area from the rest of the village. Eventually they became known as “untouchables.” Today many people in this caste still refer to themselves as dalit, meaning depressed, not so much in the emotional as in the political sense.

Holy Days and Festivals

Diwali (also spelled Divali), Holi, and Dassehra are the main festivals of the year.

Diwali is a festival of lights celebrated in October or November. The central ritual involves lighting many rows of lamps, both inside and outside the home. Lights symbolize prosperity, and a temporary altar containing symbols of wealth such as coins, ornaments, and shells is set up inside the home. Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, is invited. People perform the puja ceremony. Diwali is a time of housecleaning and refurbishing, and a general renewal of life. For business people, it signifies the beginning of the new business year.

Holi is the festival to welcome spring, and is the most popular festival in northern India. It is celebrated on the full moon at the beginning of spring (February–March). It commemorates the story of Prahlada, who worshipped Vishnu in spite of his father’s wishes

that Prahlada should worship only him, the king, and no other. His wicked aunt, Holika, who was the king’s sister, tried to destroy Prahlada in the fire at the request of his father. Holika had received a boon from God that she would not be destroyed by fire. Thinking she was immune to the flames, she held the boy in her lap in the midst of the burning fire. Prahlada was saved by his God Narayana (Vishnu), but Holika was destroyed. The boons received from God can only be used for doing good. Because Holika had sought to destroy a devotee of Vishnu using her boon, her boon did not work.

On the eve of Holi, a large bonfire is lit. The Holi bonfire is considered sacred. Those present walk around it once and streak their foreheads with ashes, to bring them luck during the coming year. In this festival, distinctions between castes are put aside, and each member of the community finds something to feed to the Holi fire. Hymns are sung and everyone joins in dancing around the fire. During this festival people play practical jokes on one another, including spraying one another with coloured powder and red-coloured water. In the evening, after a special parade and fireworks, people exchange sweets and offer one another good wishes.

Dassehra celebrates Rama’s victory over Ravana, a demon king. This is another story from the Ramayana. (The **Ramayana** is a very popular and famous book, which contains many stories about the Hindu god Rama. Most households have a copy.) In some parts of India, it celebrates the goddess Durga’s victory over a demon in the shape of a buffalo. This celebration is called **Durga Puja**. Both the Holi and Dassehra festivals celebrate the triumph of good over evil.

Pilgrimage

The experience of pilgrimage is very important to Hindus in India. Although going on pilgrimages is not as important to Canadian Hindus, most Hindus visit holy temples and places of pilgrimage when they visit India. India has many holy places, and Hindus find it spiritually rewarding to visit them. Among the more famous places Hindus visit on pilgrimage are

- the Kumbha Mela Festival, held every three years at four different cities. The largest occurs at Allahabad in the Ganges Plain of Northern India every 12 years.
- Mt. Kailasa in the Himalayas, known as a Dhamas (abode of a god); considered to be the home of Shiva and Parvati, his consort. Shiva and Parvati are the parents of Ganesha, one of the favourite gods in the Hindu pantheon.
- Puri in the Bay of Bengal, also a Dhamas, considered to be the home of Krishna in his incarnation as Jagannath (Lord of the World).
- Mathura in Northern India, the birthplace of Krishna

Buddhism

Introduction

Buddhism, the second major religion to originate in India, after Hinduism, arose out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, born a Hindu of the warrior caste, about 563 B.C.E. Today, it is estimated that there are between 150 million and 300 million Buddhists worldwide, making it the fourth largest religion. The number of adherents is difficult to calculate with certainty. One reason is the difficulty in estimating the number of adherents in Communist countries such as China. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, just over 300 000 Buddhists live in Canada; 185 live in Newfoundland and Labrador. The figure for Canada represents an 83.8 percent increase over the 1991 Census.

Siddhartha Gautama

In accordance with Hindu custom, Siddhartha's father, King Shuddodana, had a horoscope prepared for his infant son. According to the horoscope, Siddhartha would become either a great king, even an emperor, or he would become a great sage and saviour of humanity. King Shuddodana wanted Siddhartha to become a great king. He therefore shielded him from ordinary life. He was allowed to see only beauty and healthy people.

One day, however, Siddhartha left the grounds of his father's palace. What he saw changed his life. According to Buddhist belief, he encountered an old man who was stiff and unsteady on his old legs and a man who was ill and in great pain. Later he saw the body of a dead man being followed in a funeral procession by his weeping family. Siddhartha had never encountered such misery and sorrow. He also saw a

Hindu holy man who looked so calm and peaceful that it made Siddhartha thoughtful. When he was 29, he left the palace, his wife, and his son to seek the meaning of suffering.

For six years he practised with ascetics, denying his body nourishment and engaging in arduous spiritual practices. This lifestyle was the exact opposite of the luxurious life he had led at the palace. Eventually, he thought there must be a middle way between clinging to extremes of luxury (hedonism) and rejecting all forms of support and comfort (asceticism). According to Buddhist belief, in the town of Bodhi Gaya, Siddhartha sat under a Bodhi tree and vowed to stay there until he had found the answer to the problem of suffering. Eventually, after intense meditation, and after testing and temptation by Mara (Sanskrit for "illusion"), Siddhartha finally understood the answer to the question of suffering, and became the Buddha, which means, "one who is awake." He "saw his experience and all things as they are, beyond personal attachment or rejection." He was 35 years old. According to one legend, he began to teach when he was asked to by other spiritual seekers. According to another legend, Brahma (see Hinduism, Central Beliefs and Teachings, page 32) convinced the Buddha to teach. For 45 years, the Buddha travelled around Southeast Asia; he taught until his death in 483 B.C.E. The Buddha taught people of all social classes (castes), insisting that a person's spiritual worth is not a matter of birth. Among his many disciples were his father, wife, and son. Before he died, he established an order of monks and an order of nuns.

Development of Buddhism

The Buddha did not leave a written record of his teachings, although the oral traditions of ancient India were very strong and scholars agree that the Buddhist teaching has been well preserved in many cultures. Over time, and across many countries, his followers interpreted his teachings in a variety of ways. According to the traditions of Central Asia (from Northern India to Mongolia), the Buddha “turned the Wheel of Dharma (Truth)” three times, and each time he presented the truth, he took into account the varying needs and abilities of the recipients. The first turning was for ordinary adherents seeking an end to their own suffering. The second turning was for those who understood the origin of their suffering and the path to liberation. The third turning was for those who were firmly committed to working for the benefit of others.

In earliest recorded teachings, the first turning of the Wheel of Dharma is known as **Theravada Buddhism**, sometimes called “the way of the elders.” People generally believe that members of the **sangha**—the community of Buddhist believers, first established by the Buddha—are closest to achieving liberation from suffering, or **Nirvana**. Nevertheless, Theravaden Buddhists believe that members of the lay community can come closer to Nirvana through leading a good life and achieving a better rebirth. Theravaden Buddhists live mainly in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and other parts of Southeast Asia, as well as in the West

In the second and third turning of the wheel, called the **Mahayana** tradition, sometimes called the “great way,” people believe that all Buddhists can attain full spiritual enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhists believe that self-liberation is not complete enlightenment. They recognize the interdependence of all living beings and set aside their own personal liberation in order to help ordinary men and women on the spiritual path. By devoting themselves with complete compassion to working for all sentient beings, they gradually achieve complete enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism is found in Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and in the West. Mahayana Buddhism

contains many other traditions within it, including Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), Zen, and Pure Land Buddhism.

The second turning of the wheel of Dharma is the truth of emptiness. The apparently substantial things that we perceive and think about are all dependent upon each other, and therefore empty of any reality in and of themselves. In other words, nothing exists by itself; everything is in relation. As the truth of interdependence and emptiness arises, natural compassion and our connection with all sentient beings also arises.

The third turning of the wheel of Dharma explains that while all of apparent reality is empty of anything substantial, that does not mean it is utterly nonexistent (thus arguing against any misunderstanding that the second turning is nihilistic). While all apparent reality is empty, it is also an expression of Buddha Nature, or the luminosity of mind itself. Yet Buddha Nature is no “thing”: it is beyond concepts and only recognized by those who are beyond personal attachments and rejection. The term “Buddha Nature” is only a “finger pointing at the moon.” We may stare at the finger and miss what it is pointing at.

Sacred Writings

The earliest Buddhist scriptures are from the Theravadin tradition, and were not written until about 400 years after the Buddha’s death. These were written in the Pali language, and are known as the Three Baskets—Tipitaka in Pali, or Tripitaka in Sanskrit—because they are in three parts. The first part is the Vinaya Pitaka, or the regulations governing life in the monasteries. The second part is known as the Sutta Pitaka, which contains discussions and discourses attributed to the Buddha, and the third part is the Abhidamma Pitaka, which includes discussions and classifications relating to philosophy, psychology, and doctrine. The Dhammapada, one of the best known of the Buddhist scriptures, is part of the Sutta Pitaka. It contains a summary of the Buddha’s teachings about mental disciplines and moral issues.

Mahayana Buddhist scriptures are written in the Sanskrit language. There are many Mahayana texts,

but the most famous are the Heart Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, and the Diamond Sutra. Sutras (or Suttas in Pali) are regarded as the actual teachings of the Buddha. However, all Buddhist texts are regarded as sacred. Tibetan Buddhism, which is often called Vajrayana Buddhism, combined all three turnings by adding voluminous commentaries on all the Sutras. The most widely known Tibetan Buddhist text in the West is the *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This is a book of instruction for the dying and their spiritual guides.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

Buddhist beliefs are a guide for how Buddhists are to live their lives. Practising Buddhists are to live and worship based on their knowledge of the Three Jewels, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Three Jewels

These are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The Buddha is an example of one who became enlightened (or completely awake), the Dharma is the teaching leading to enlightenment, and the Sangha is the community of those practicing the Dharma. These three jewels form a framework for belief and practice, which is why they are precious and called “jewels.” They are also called the “three refuges.” Down to the present day, Buddhists express their identity as part of the Buddhist community by saying “I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha.” When people take refuge in the three jewels, they are saying that they depend on the three jewels for support on their spiritual journey. At the same time the Buddha taught his followers that each of them had to test the teaching against his or her own contemplative experience:

*O monks, just as a goldsmith tests his gold
By melting, cutting, and rubbing,
Sages accept my teaching after full examination
And not just out of devotion [to me].*

Source: B. Alan Wallace,
Tibetan Buddhism from the Ground Up, p. 28

The Four Noble Truths

According to Buddhist tradition, the truths that the Buddha came to understand as he achieved enlightenment are summarized as the Four Noble Truths.

1. Human life is full of suffering (dukka).
2. The cause of suffering is craving for and personal attachment to material goods, opinions, beliefs, and desires.
3. The cessation of suffering can be achieved.
4. The path to liberation and peace is to let go of attachment through the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path

The Noble Eightfold Path is built on the teachings of the Four Noble Truths. This path is also known as the middle way between asceticism and hedonism. Buddhists believe that by following these teachings they can achieve a state of peace, happiness, and universal compassion. The Eightfold Path is not a consecutive path; all parts of the path are interconnected. People should start where they are; wherever one is on the path is valid. The term “right” was not used by the Buddha to indicate a religious or moral duty. Rather, the word “right” meant “skillful.” No one is commanded to follow these steps because the Buddha taught them. Rather, one is encouraged to try them for oneself to see if they do indeed lead to liberation from suffering, awakening, or Nirvana.

- right understanding, right viewpoint, or right thinking: To look at life from the right point of view, to understand for oneself the Buddha’s teachings about life and the purpose of life
- right thought or intention: To understand the real value of things. To not cause harm to others
- right speech, based on right thought: Not to lie or boast or encourage malice or hatred, but to be kind and helpful in what you say
- right action or behaviour: To behave well and not, for example, to steal, kill, or lie
- right work or living: To follow a way of earning a living that does not harm others

- right effort: To attend to all experience with diligence and gentleness
- right mindfulness: To remain focused on the present moment and recognize things as they are, beyond personal attachments and rejection
- right contemplation: To learn how to remain open to experience at all times and cultivate insight into the dependent factors that cause suffering

Values Promoted

The chief values are

- not causing harm to others
- maintaining an “awake” mind free from passion, aggression, and prejudice
- cultivating compassion for all sentient beings

Traditionally, Buddhists of all paths follow the Five Precepts, which are

- I undertake to observe the rule to abstain from taking life
- to abstain from taking what is not given
- to abstain from sensuous misconduct
- to abstain from false speech
- to abstain from intoxicants as tending to cloud the mind

In addition, monks and nuns refrain from

- eating after the midday meal
- dancing, music, and singing, except in a spiritual context
- garlands, perfumes, and personal adornments
- using high and luxurious seats (and beds)
- accepting gold and silver

All Buddhists revere compassion toward all beings, and clear thought.

Diversity of Beliefs

Diversity of belief tends to be a matter of emphasis on specific teachings, rather than contradictions between beliefs. For example, Theravada Buddhists emphasize liberation from personal suffering. Mahayana Buddhists add a broader emphasis through the role of the bodhisattva (enlightened beings) vow—the

commitment to work for the benefit of all sentient beings. The distinction between different Buddhist schools is less a denial of others and more an emphasis suited to particular groups of people.

Worship and Practices

Buddhists do not worship the Buddha as a god. Rather, they regard the Buddha as an example of an ordinary person who completely achieved enlightenment. Buddhists meditate on the Buddha and his teachings as a way of experiencing what the Buddha experienced. Meditation is a central practice of Buddhism. It helps calm the mind, allowing the meditator to recognize the unconditional nature of mind itself. Rather than suppressing distracting thoughts, the meditator works gently to allow more and more space. Eventually meditation helps the practitioner gain the strength to see his or her experience clearly, without prejudice or aggression.

In many cultures, Buddhists bow to the image of the Buddha, acknowledging that the spiritual path has been travelled before and aspiring to do so themselves. They may chant from scripture, and they may offer incense and bow again. Most Buddhists have a small shrine in their home where they practise meditation, offer fresh flowers or food offerings, light a candle, bow, or recite prayers. The shrine usually contains a central figure of the Buddha. Temples and meditation centres provide a gathering place to practise together and study the dharma as a community.

A **stupa** is a particular type of Buddhist shrine. Stupas were originally holy burial mounds. They were raised to honour kings and religious teachers in ancient times. The Buddha originally had 10 stupas created to contain his cremated remains, but they no longer exist. Stupas are rich in symbolism and are the focal point of Buddhist worship in public areas. A pagoda is a Japanese or Chinese style of stupa. When Buddhists arrive at a stupa, they walk around it clockwise three times, to remember the Three Jewels of Buddhism. Prayer flags decorate the stupa and may symbolize loving-kindness or other aspirations.

In the West, most Buddhists do not become monks or nuns although they may do intensive

retreats together or alone in order to strengthen their practice. Traditionally, when Buddhists do choose to become monks or nuns, they shave their heads and put on simple robes. The colour of monks' and nuns' robes varies depending upon the type of Buddhism practised, their location, and the kind of dye available in that location. For example, Theravada nuns of Sri Lanka wear orange robes, while in Thailand, Theravada nuns wear white robes. Black robes are usually worn by Japanese monks and nuns. In India, Buddhists wear yellow robes; they consider yellow the colour of renunciation. Tibetan robes are usually maroon.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Generally speaking, Buddhism does not have universal ceremonies and rituals; they vary depending upon the culture. The ceremonies and rituals described below occur most frequently in Southwest Asia.

Birth: Buddhists have certain local traditions for the birth of children, and although Buddhists believe that a monk may bring blessing to the family by his presence, there is little religious ceremony. The same is true of weddings; although a Buddhist monk officiates, there is little ritual or ceremony.

Teenage Years: Theravada Buddhists have a ceremony in which a son becomes a novice monk, or a daughter becomes a novice nun. There is great celebration and festivity; family members may gather from far away. The children are dressed up as princes and princesses. Once the festivities are over, the children change into monk's or nun's robes, the monks and nuns assemble, shave the boy or girl's head, and he or she takes the vows of monastic life. The night is spent in the monastery, and the next day, the novice monk or nun goes out begging. The relationship between monks, nuns, and lay people is very respectful. Theravada Buddhists believe that monks and nuns are working on their behalf, and that when they put food or alms in the begging bowl, they are accumulating spiritual merit. The monks and nuns go out with their begging bowls only once a day, in order not to burden the community. They do not ask for food, and they accept anything that is offered

to them, even meat, provided it has not been killed specifically for the purpose of feeding the monks. The lay people will sometimes wait for them, and will thank them for the opportunity to put food or money in their bowl. When children become novice monks and nuns, even their parents bow to them to honour their higher spiritual status. The child may return to normal life several days, weeks, or years later, but he or she is now spiritually an adult and may enter the monastery or convent in the future if he or she so desires.

Marriage: Formal ceremonies for marriage vary depending on local customs. In one Theravadin tradition from southeast Asia, the officiating teacher ties a thread between the couple and himself to symbolize that the commitment of the two is with the Dharma as much as each other. In Tibetan, as in westernized versions of Buddhist weddings, the couple offers food, water, flowers, music, incense, and candles to signify commitment to generosity, discipline, patience, energy, meditation, and wisdom. The significance of marriage is commitment to work for the benefit of others rather than just oneself.

Death: Buddhists believe a person's rebirth is determined by the sum of his or her actions in this life and the state of his or her mind at the time of death. Buddhist rituals related to death and dying therefore focus on helping the dying person attain a calm and clear state of mind. Although rites vary, all Buddhists recognize death as a critical passage that affects everyone, the living as well as the dead. After the death, the body is washed and the head shaved. After the body has lost stiffness (rigor mortis), consciousness has left the body and the body is generally cremated. In some cultures it may be a final act of generosity and interdependence to allow one's body to be offered as food for birds or wild animals. The modern practice of donating healthy organs for medical transplants is highly regarded by Buddhists.

Holy Days and Festivals

Annual feasts and holy days in Buddhism commemorate events in the life of Buddha or of bodhisattvas (people who have achieved enlightenment). Buddhists celebrate and sometimes recreate these

events. The dates usually vary, because most are based on a lunar calendar. The most important festivals are the New Year's festival (which usually comes in April), the Buddha's birthday, the beginning of the Rainy Season Retreat, the presentation of robes to the monks, and the Ulambana festival celebrated in China and Japan, the purpose of which is to speed the liberation of ancestors who have died, and to honour those who are still alive.

The Birthday of the Buddha: This festival occurs on

the last full moon in May in Southeast Asia and on April 8 everywhere else in the world. The key ritual in the Theravada tradition is washing the Buddha image. This ceremony is based on the tradition that the gods rained down scented water on the Buddha and his mother after he was born. There is a parade of Buddha images, along with people cheering, shouting, setting off firecrackers, and the like. Children dress up in their finest clothes, each of them a "little Buddha."

Christianity

Introduction

Christianity is the most widespread of the major religions in terms of distribution around the globe. It has approximately 1.9 billion adherents worldwide. According to the 2001 Census, nearly 80 percent of the Canadian population who indicate a religious affiliation are Christian. Because it shares some elements of its sacred writings with Judaism and Islam, followers of Christianity are members of a group sometimes referred to as "people of the Book."

Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus the Christ, who was born in Bethlehem. Sixth-century scholars used his birth to begin the series of dating currently referred to as the Common Era (C.E.) and what was formerly known as A.D. (Latin for *anno Domini*, or "in the year of our Lord"). It is now believed that the scholars miscalculated by about four to eight years, which places Jesus' birth somewhere between 4 B.C.E. and 8 B.C.E. The title "Christ" was given to Jesus by his disciples. It comes from the Greek *Christos*, which is a translation of a Hebrew word meaning "Messiah." Jesus' followers believed that he was the realization of the prophecy in the Hebrew Bible that a Messiah would come to liberate the people of Israel from Roman domination.

Jesus the Christ

What is known of Jesus' life and ministry is contained in the four New Testament gospels (writings) of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All of these gospels were written after Jesus' death. According to these accounts, Jesus was born in Bethlehem,

where his parents, Mary and Joseph, had travelled as required by the Romans who were taking a census. He was raised in Nazareth, where he studied Jewish scripture and likely trained as a carpenter. At about 30 years of age, Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan by his cousin John (the Baptist), and for the next three years, he travelled around present-day Israel and Palestine teaching and healing. He was very popular, and the religious leaders of the day felt threatened by his popularity, while the Roman rulers worried about the possibility that his teachings might incite rebellion against their authority.

Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (see Judaism, Holy Days and Festivals, page 30), where he was greeted enthusiastically by crowds placing palm branches before him to honour him. He celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples, and then went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, where he was arrested and charged with blasphemy. He was found guilty and crucified. On the third day of his death, his tomb was found empty, and during the next 40 days, a number of his disciples claimed to have seen him and to have received instruction from him. Forty days after his resurrection, according to scripture, his disciples saw him ascend into heaven, an event Christians celebrate as the Ascension.

Sacred Writings

The Christian Bible is made up of 66 books. It has two main parts: the Old Testament, which includes many of the books of the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament, which contains the four gospels, the

Acts of the Apostles (disciples of Jesus), and letters written by several authors, including Paul, one of the first leaders of the Christian Church.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

- There is one God, creator of the universe and all that is in it.
- God consists of three persons in one (Trinity): God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (sometimes called the Holy Ghost).
- God sent His son, Jesus, to show people how they should live. Jesus is the word of God in human form.
- Jesus took upon himself the punishment that all people deserve because of their sinful character, thoughts, and actions. He was crucified, buried, and resurrected so that people would receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God.
- God is all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent, and eternal.
- God is the source of the revelations on which the Christian faith, ways of worship, and lifestyles are based.
- God answers prayer.

Values Promoted

Jesus emphasized a personal relationship with God, and Christians around the world still use the prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9–13:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.*

Christians develop their relationship with God through prayer, Bible reading, and attending church. They follow God because they love God.

Matthew 22:37–38 records one of Jesus' key teachings, which practising Christians of all denominations try to live up to.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your

strength.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like unto it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Christians try to live as Jesus lived. They strive

- to develop a good character and a good attitude
- to foster a genuine love for their neighbours
- to refrain from repaying evil with evil, to turn the other cheek, and to love their enemies
- to put others before themselves; to pray for and serve others
- to follow the Ten Commandments
- to be kind
- to encourage others
- to take care of one another

Diversity of Beliefs

Christianity encompasses many subtraditions. Although a belief in Jesus unites all Christians, interpretations, rituals, emphases, and ceremonies vary widely. For example, the World Council of Churches records membership from more than 300 Christian denominations. The larger traditions include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Churches.

Disunity in the Christian Church began in its earliest years. Two of the best-known apostles—Peter and Paul—argued at an important meeting held in Jerusalem. Their argument is referred to throughout the book of Acts in the New Testament. Simply put, one of the questions that divided them was whether a believer had to be a Jew first, as Jesus was, in order to become a Christian. If so, some of the implications would be that non-Jewish males had to be circumcised, and all would have to follow kosher.

Throughout the first centuries of its life, the Christian Church continued to hold councils to work out common core Christian beliefs. At these councils, Church leaders discussed such divisive questions as the nature of Jesus (fully God and fully human?), whether the Jews remained the chosen people of God, whether Christians' baptism remained

valid if the person who baptized them later gave up the Christian faith while being tortured, and whether the bread and wine at Communion were actually, or symbolically, the body and blood of Jesus.

Disagreements over the answers to these types of questions eventually led to schism. In 1054, the Church split into two, with one group—the Western Church—recognizing the authority or leadership of the Bishop (Pope) of Rome (Roman Catholic) and the other—the Eastern Church— supporting equality among the Bishops of the East (Eastern Orthodox) but recognizing the Bishop of Constantinople as “first among equals.” Churches within the Eastern Orthodox tradition (Russian, Romanian, Armenian, Greek, Ukrainian, Serbian, and other smaller groups) are led by Patriarchs.

In 1517, Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic priest, began to make public his questions and complaints

about Church beliefs and practices of Church officials. His actions finally led to a major split in the Western Church, with the separation of Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. In the centuries since the 1500s, the Protestant Church has continued to subdivide, sometimes over important questions of Church doctrine, other times because of personal conflicts among Church leaders. Officially, the Roman Catholic Church remains one, because all Roman Catholics acknowledge belief in the Roman Catholic Church’s creed, or statement of core beliefs. However, there are differences within the Roman Catholic Church about official Vatican (papal) teachings on social issues such as birth control and the ordination of women. Some of these groups are organized and formally protest certain positions of the Vatican on specific social issues.

The chart below shows many of the wide array of religious groups that have arisen since Martin Luther

Major Divisions/Subtraditions in the Christian Church 200 C.E.–1879 C.E.			
PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD	16TH CENTURY (CONTINUED)	17TH CENTURY	19TH CENTURY
Roman Catholicism Gnostics c. 200 Coptic Church 452 Eastern Orthodoxy 1054 Waldensians 1173 Peter Waldo Lollards c. 1379 John Wycliffe Hussites 1415 Jan Hus (John Huss)	Anglicanism 1534 Henry VIII Mennonites c. 1536 Menno Simons Calvinism 1536 John Calvin German Reformed Church c. 1540s Hungarian Reformed Church c. 1550s	English Baptists c. 1606 John Smyth Quakers 1647 George Fox Amish c. 1690 Jacob Ammon	United Brethren in Christ 1800 Philip Otterbein Evangelical Association Jacob Albright 1807 Unitarianism US 1819 William Ellery Channing Christian Churches 1827 Barton W. Stone Hicksites c. 1828
16TH CENTURY Lutheranism 1517 Martin Luther Anabaptism 1521 Scandinavian Lutherans Christian II Zwinglianism 1523 Huldreich Zwingli	French Calvinists (Huguenots) Scottish Presbyterians John Knox c. 1560 Congregationalism Puritans 1560 Dutch Reformed Church c. 1570s	18TH CENTURY Moravians c. 1722 Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf Methodism 1739 John Wesley Shakers 1776 Ann Lee Protestant Episcopal Church 1785 Swedenborgians 1789 Emanuel Swedenborg	Elias Hicks Disciples of Christ 1831 Thomas Campbell Anglo-Catholicism 1833 Seventh-Day Adventists William Miller 1863 Salvation Army 1865 William Booth Christian Science 1879 Mary Baker Eddy

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first nailed his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, protesting certain practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.

Worship and Practices

Christian communal worship usually occurs within a church building. Churches can be large or small, richly decorated, or quite plain. Most church services are conducted by a minister or priest, although readings from the Christian Bible are often carried out by lay persons.

Communion is the church service during which Christians remember Jesus' Last Supper. Different names for Communion include Eucharist, Lord's Supper, and Breaking of the Bread. Just before his arrest, Jesus broke bread and shared wine with his disciples, inviting them to remember him when they did this in future. In Christian Communion, the bread represents the body of Jesus, and the wine represents his blood. Although Communion is a service most Christians participate in, there is considerable disagreement about whether the bread and the wine (or grape juice) are symbolic, or whether they actually become the body and blood of Jesus (called transubstantiation). Not all Christians include Communion within their services—for example, members of the Quakers and Salvation Army.

Worship services are mainly held on Sundays, although some churches also have services on other days of the week. Music is often part of the church service, ranging from traditional hymns and organ music to gospel singing to rock music, depending upon the church.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Birth: Some Christian denominations baptize babies, while other traditions wait until the young person or adult chooses this rite. Infant baptism usually involves the parents or guardians, and in some denominations, godparents, promising to raise the child in the Christian faith. The congregation—the members of the church—promises to support the parents. As part of the baptismal ceremony, water is sprinkled

over the baby or young person or adult, symbolizing the washing away of sin and the start of a new life in Jesus. In some adult baptisms, the person being baptized is completely immersed in water. Baptism can be carried out anywhere, but is usually done in a church and is considered a joyous occasion, bringing families together to celebrate a new birth in Jesus.

Teenage Years: For Christian denominations that baptize babies, the rite of confirmation occurs around the age of 14, at which time the teenager accepts, on his or her own behalf, the promises that parents or guardians, godparents, and the congregation made at birth: to follow the teachings of Jesus. Confirmation is usually preceded by instruction in the Christian faith by members of the clergy, so that young people understand more fully their faith and their commitment to it. The service is usually conducted at the church, and is again an occasion for the extended family and the congregation to come together and celebrate this important rite of passage.

Marriage: Many Christians marry in a church, with a minister or priest performing the ceremony. In some traditions, couples receive some instruction prior to marriage so that they understand the obligations marriage entails, and how their religious community views this commitment.

Death: Funeral services are often held at a church, and prayers are said for the dead person and their family. The church community serves as support for bereaved family members.

Holy Days and Festivals

Just about every day of the year is a feast day or holy day for Christians somewhere in the world.

The most important holy day, however, is *Easter*, which celebrates the rising of Jesus from the dead—the Resurrection—and the promise of everlasting life to those who accept Jesus as Lord.

Easter is preceded by Lent, a 40-day period during which many Christians devote themselves to increased Bible study and prayer. The 40 days of Lent remind Christians of Jesus' spending 40 days in the desert before he began his ministry. According to

Christian scripture, Jesus resisted great temptation by Satan three times during those 40 days. During the 40 days of Lent, Christians will often give up something they enjoy, so they can understand a little how it feels to resist temptation.

Holy Week leads up to the Easter celebration. During this week, many Christians will attend Bible study; others will fast on one or more days, especially Good Friday. On the Sunday before Easter, called Palm Sunday, Christians remember Jesus' triumphal arrival in Jerusalem when palms were laid before him. Maundy Thursday service commemorates the Last Supper, and Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. Good Friday is remembered as the day Jesus was crucified on the cross. Some traditions hold that it is called "good" because it showed Jesus' goodness

in dying for others. Many scholars, however, believe that it was originally known as "God's Friday" and that over time, "God" was changed to "good." Easter Sunday services are considered by many to be the most joyful of Christian services.

Christmas is widely celebrated to commemorate the birth of Jesus, although it was not part of the Christian calendar until at least the fourth century C.E., and scholars believe that the date of December 25 was chosen because it allowed a Christian festival to replace a pagan one. Like Easter, Christmas is preceded by a special time of preparation, in this case called Advent. Advent means "coming," and during the four weeks preceding Christmas, Christians prepare for the Christmas celebration.

Islam

Introduction

Founded in the early seventh century C.E. by the Prophet Muhammad, Islam is today the world's fastest growing religion, with approximately 1.3 billion adherents around the world. The largest populations are found in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and parts of Africa. Arabs in the Middle East represent about 20 percent of today's Muslims. In the United States, Muslims represent about 2 percent of the population, or 6 million people. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, about 600 000 Muslims live in Canada, making Islam the second largest religion in the country after Christianity; 630 Muslims live in Newfoundland and Labrador. The figure for Canada represents a 128.9 percent increase over the 1991 Census. According to the Canadian Islamic Congress, about 55 percent of Canada's Muslims are Canadian born, 3 percent are converts, and 42 percent are immigrants from all over the world.

Islam comes from the Arabic word for "submission." Muslim means "one who is in a state of submission to God." Those who follow the Islamic faith submit to (or obey) God's will and try to live in the way God instructed through His Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims refer to God as **Allah**.

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is lunar-based. It consists of 12 lunar months. In a cycle of 30 years, the 2nd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 18th, 21st, 24th, 26th, and 29th years are leap years of 355 days; the others are common years of 354 days. The year is dated from the Prophet Muhammad's departure, the Hegira, from Makkah to Medina in 622 C.E., year 1 of the Islamic calendar.

The Prophet Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad was born about 570 C.E. in Makkah, in what is present-day Saudi Arabia. His ancestry can be traced back to Ibrahim (known as Abraham to Jews and Christians) through Ibrahim's son with Hagar—Ishmael. Because of this connection, Ibrahim (Abraham) is sometimes called the Father of three faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The followers of these three religions are known as "People of the Book" because they share some portions of the same holy scripture.

The Prophet Muhammad's father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was six. He was raised by his uncle and became a trader, eventually working for a rich widow named Khadjia. The Prophet Muhammad was known as "al-Amin" or

trusted one, and Khadija was so impressed with his honesty that she offered him marriage, which he accepted.

According to Muslim belief, about 610 C.E., God spoke to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel, and named him a Prophet of God. For the next two decades, the Prophet Muhammad continued to receive and share revelations from God. He became known as the Messenger of God. The Prophet Muhammad could not read or write, so he memorized God's words and recited them or dictated them to followers who wrote them down. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized monotheism, economic and social justice, and the last judgement. He taught that God had sent other prophets to other nations—Adam, Moses, Jesus, for example—but that he was the last, the “seal of the Prophets.”

The Prophet's teachings about social and economic justice created enmity, and he and his followers were persecuted by some of the wealthy rulers of the area, who wanted him to stop teaching. In about 622 C.E., the Prophet had a vision that his life was in danger. Around the same time, a delegation from the city of Yathrib (later Medina) asked him to come and help them solve the tribal disputes that were a problem in that city. He agreed, and he and his followers left for the city, some 290 km north of Makkah. This journey became known as the Hegira (Arabic for “departure”). In Medina, the Prophet established the first Muslim community, called the Ummah.

The merchants of Makkah continued to fight the Prophet Muhammad, but by 630 C.E., they were defeated. The Prophet then ordered the destruction of all idols within the Ka'ba, which was Makkah's place of pilgrimage. Idols were worshipped as gods, which Islam forbids. The Ka'ba then became Islam's holiest shrine. According to Islamic tradition, the Ka'ba was first constructed by Abraham and Ishmael and restored by the Prophet Muhammad.

By the time of his death in 632 C.E., the Prophet Muhammad had united all of Arabia under Islam. Within a hundred years, the Muslims of Arabia conquered most of the Middle East and moved beyond the borders of China and India. They then moved

westward across North Africa and into Spain and part of France.

Sacred Writings

The Qur'an

Qur'an (sometimes spelled Koran) means “recitation.” Muslims believe it contains the words of God as given to the Prophet Muhammad. The first Muslims memorized the messages, but the Prophet Muhammad also dictated God's words to followers who wrote them down and collected them into one book, the Qur'an. The Qur'an was first gathered together in 650 C.E., and has remained unchanged since that time. It is divided into 114 parts, known as suras. The Qur'an contains three types of teachings: direct doctrinal messages such as monotheism and following a moral path through the Five Pillars; historical accounts that often coincide with accounts from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures; and mystical expressions. The Qur'an teaches about all dimensions of life, including God, prophets, angels, Satan, prayer, good and evil, repentance, salvation, and other matters related to spiritual life. It also gives instructions about topics related to daily life, and it provides details about the worship of God. Muslim worship has four purposes:

1. to strengthen an individual's relationship with God and increase his or her love for Him
2. to improve the individual's physical condition
3. to promote unity among people
4. to bring about economic fairness

The Qur'an does not make any distinction between spiritual life and secular life. Topics related to everyday life, including interpersonal relationships, diet, and government, appear in the Qur'an. In Islam, men and women have equal spiritual worth. Every instruction in the Qur'an refers to both male and female believers.

All Muslims, regardless of their first language, learn the Qur'an in Arabic. Translations are permitted for private use, but they may not be used for daily prayers because of the accuracy of the original version. Some Muslims also believe that the sound

of the language of the Qur'an alone can bring healing and peace. Millions of Muslims memorize the Qur'an and try to shape their daily lives by it. Muslims regard those who have memorized the entire Qur'an as Hafiz, those who keep the Qur'an in their heart. Memorization is also a requirement for admission into some Arab universities, including al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, which predates England's Oxford University, established about 1096 C.E., by a little more than 100 years.

Before touching the Qur'an, Muslims observe certain rituals to make their bodies, minds, and spirits pure. The Qur'an is never allowed to touch the ground.

Sunnah

The Sunnah is a supplementary text to the Qur'an, gathering together everything known about the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, teachings, thoughts, and actions. It includes the Hadith, collected sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the Sirah, or story of the Prophet's life.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

- Muslims believe in one creator God; "Allah" is the Arabic word for "God."
- God is the source of the revelations on which the Islamic faith, ways of worship, and lifestyle are based; God revealed these truths to the Prophet Muhammad, and those recitations have been recorded in the Qur'an.
- God is just, yet merciful.
- Muslims consider the Prophet Muhammad the seal of the prophets; there were other prophets before him—Adam, Moses, Jesus—but the Prophet Muhammad completes their work and is the last prophet.
- The Qur'an contains all that humankind needs to know to live according to God's will.
- According to Islam, all people will face a Day of Judgement. On that day, Allah will give out deserved rewards and punishments based on how individuals have lived their lives. Islam teaches that both paradise and hell await. Qur'an schol-

ars disagree about whether those condemned to hell must stay there forever or only for a time of purification. Some Muslim teachers believe that ultimately all people will end up in paradise. Some Muslims, particularly **Shiite** Muslims, believe that Muslims who die fighting for Islam become martyrs and ascend directly to Paradise.

Values Promoted

- In Arabic, the word "Islam" means both "peace" and "submission." Human beings and society gain peace from submission to the will of God, and all Muslims are to struggle to submit themselves to His will. This is the true meaning of the word "jihad"—the struggle to follow the path of God.
- All life has spiritual meaning or significance.
- Follow the Five Pillars of Faith (see Worship and Practices, at right).
- Be generous and caring to the disadvantaged in society.
- Show honesty and respect to parents.
- One's closest friends should be fellow believers.
- Always be prepared for death; one never knows when it will come.
- Be sincere in devotions and good deeds.
- Be humble and modest.
- Do not consume alcohol.

Diversity of Beliefs

When the Prophet Muhammad died suddenly in 632 C.E., he had no sons, so his followers decided that the "best" Muslim should be chosen as their new leader. Abu Bakr, the father-in-law and friend of the Prophet Muhammad, was chosen as leader, or caliph. After Abu Bakr, two other caliphs led the Muslims. The fourth leader was Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. Some Muslims believed that Ali should have been the first caliph because he was the closest male relative of the Prophet. The Muslims who believed that the leaders should come from the Prophet Muhammad's family split into a separate group called Shi'a or Shiite Muslims. About 16

percent of Muslims today are Shiite Muslims. Shiite Islam is the state religion of Iran, and has followers in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, and other places, including Canada.

The majority—about 83 percent—of Muslims belong to a group called Sunnis. They are followers of the sunna or way of the Prophet. Sunnis accept that the first caliphs were all true leaders of Islam. In addition to their differences of belief about the caliphs, Shiite Muslims emphasize the role of the Imam, or religious leader, while the Sunnis emphasize the individual's direct relationship with Allah.

The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. Sufis can be either Sunni or Shiite. They seek union with Allah through contemplation and prayer. The thirteenth-century poet Rumi, whose poems are widely translated today, was a Sufi mystic. Other famous Sufis include the early sixteenth-century poet Kabir, who was an influence on Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith, and the twentieth-century teacher and author Idries Shah, whose books introduced many westerners to Sufi thought.

Worship and Practices

- The Five Pillars of Faith are the foundation of Islamic worship. Found in the Qur'an, the Five Pillars are five formal religious duties that all faithful Muslims must perform. They are called "pillars" because they form the foundation of Islamic worship.
- *The First Pillar:* Declaration of Truth. Muslims are to accept that "there is no god but God and Muhammad is His Prophet." This declaration reminds Muslims that God created the universe, that He gave to the Prophet Muhammad His commands for how they are to live their lives, and that Muslims are God's servants.
- *The Second Pillar:* Regular Worship. In Muslim belief, all life is to be lived as if we are always in the presence of God. In that broad sense, all of Islamic life can be thought of as worship, or as prayer. Although they can pray whenever they wish, Muslims must pray at five specified times per day: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and during the night. The Qur'an states: "So be patient about anything they may say, and hymn your Lord's praise before the sun's rise and before its setting, and in the small hours of the night. Hymn it well at the ends of the day so that you may meet approval" (20:130).
- *The Third Pillar:* Alms for the Poor (Purification). Generosity and caring for the poor and the disadvantaged are important virtues in Islam. There are two kinds of alms (money or gifts for the poor) that are given: legal (zakat), as set down in the Qur'an, and voluntary. The Qur'an instructs all Muslims to give a percentage of their annual savings to the poor and disadvantaged, or for other charitable purposes. On Id-ul-Fitr, the day that marks the end of the Ramadan period of fasting, Muslims make a special contribution to the care of the poor. This contribution is called Zakat-ul-fitr, "the charity of fast-breaking." Muslims who are poor must give something they received on that day. Giving alms reflects the Islamic concern that wealth be distributed fairly among all people.
- *The Fourth Pillar:* Fasting. Ramadan, the holiest month of the Muslim year, recalls the beginning of Allah's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad about 13 years before the Prophet moved to Medina from Makkah. During Ramadan, Muslims strive for greater virtue and purity. Unless they have special dispensation, all Muslims must fast from before sunrise to sunset during this period. Ramadan follows the lunar cycle; therefore, it advances through the solar year about 11 days per year. In other words, although Ramadan is always the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar, the dates it is observed in terms of the common era (C.E.) shift.
- *The Fifth Pillar:* Pilgrimage. All who are physically and financially able must attempt to make a pilgrimage, the Hajj, to the holy city of Makkah at least once in their lives. In Makkah, Muslims worship in the city of the Prophet Muhammad's birth and at the House of Allah (the Ka'ba). Regardless of where they live, all Muslims face

the Ka'ba when praying. More than two million Muslims from all over the world gather in Makkah during this yearly pilgrimage, which occurs during the twelfth month of the Islamic Calendar.

In addition to their daily prayers, Muslims try to attend Friday services at the mosque, the Muslim house of worship. Many mosques are dome-shaped and have minarets, or tall, slender towers. In some places, the call to prayer is made from the minaret. A man known as a muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. Every mosque, no matter where in the world it is, includes a mihrab, or niche or alcove in the wall that faces Makkah, so that Muslims know in which direction to pray. Before prayer, Muslims wash their hands, face, and feet in a ritual known as wudhu, following the example laid down by the Prophet Muhammad. During services, men and women worship separately.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

All Muslim ceremonies centre on readings or recitations from the Qur'an. Because Islam is an international religion, ceremonial aspects apart from Qur'an readings vary widely, in accordance with local customs and traditions.

Birth: When a baby is born, the head of the family takes the baby into his arms and whispers the call to prayer in the right ear, including the command to rise and worship. Thus, the first word a baby ever hears is God. A naming ceremony called the akikah is often held seven days after the birth. All Muslim males are circumcised, and in some communities the ceremony takes place at the same time as akikah. In others, the ceremony may take place a few days later. In some places, circumcision does not take place until the boy is older, but it is always before puberty. In the Muslim tradition, circumcision is strongly associated with ideas of personal cleanliness and purity

Marriage: The marriage ceremony occurs in the mosque, and can be a quiet affair. Witnesses observe the groom's formal offer of marriage, and the bride's acceptance of it. The presiding religious leader will

speak on the subject of marriage. The reception afterwards, called the waleemah, may take place at the mosque or anywhere else. It usually includes music and dancing.

Death: Burial usually occurs within 24 hours of the death. Prayers for the dead, known as janazah, are carried out at the gravesite. The mourning period lasts about 40 days, although Muslims will normally return to work before then.

Holy Days and Festivals

Ramadan is a month-long commemoration of God's first revelations to the Prophet Muhammad. From dawn to dusk, Muslims fast—they have nothing to eat or drink. Muslims believe that the practice of fasting teaches self-discipline. It also serves as a reminder that many are poor and hungry, and helps Muslims become more aware of God's blessings.

Ramadan ends with the feast of Id-ul-Fitr. During this feast, Muslims visit mosques, visit with friends and relatives, and exchange cards wishing each other Id Mubarak, or "Happy Id." The Feast of Id-ul-Fitr is also a time of giving money to charity

Id-ul-Adha is the festival that ends the month of the Hajj, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. This festival remembers how the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham to Christians and Jews) was ready to obey God even by sacrificing his son to him. God, however, provided a ram for the Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice instead. Muslims on the Hajj sacrifice a sheep or goat. Muslims elsewhere often sacrifice an animal and share the meat with the poor.

Sikhism

Introduction

Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion in 1499, in the Punjab, an area of Northwest India. At the time, the Hindus of India were ruled by Muslims, and there was considerable religious strife between the two groups. Nanak was born in the warrior caste (see Hinduism), and received a Hindu upbringing with considerable exposure to the Islamic faith. According to Sikh tradition, during Nanak's thirtieth year, he experienced a vision of God. After the vision, he said, "There is neither Hindu nor [Muslim]; so whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor [Muslim] and the path I follow is God's." Nanak wanted to bring people together to worship this one God and to end the suspicion and quarrelling that divided people of different beliefs. For many years, he travelled and taught in India and in other countries. He wrote his teachings in verse, and his followers sang and chanted his hymns to music. He taught that each person must establish a direct personal link with God. He also taught that all men and women are equal in God's eyes and that God is present in all people and things.

Nanak eventually came to be called Guru Nanak. "Guru" in the Hindi language means "prophet teacher"—someone who dispels darkness or ignorance and brings enlightenment. Nanak's followers became known as "Sikhs," or "disciples."

Sikhism contains elements of both the Hindu and the Muslim faiths. For example, Sikhism rejects the caste system of Hinduism, but retains the concepts of birth, death, and rebirth, and along with Islam affirms that there is only one God. There are approximately 23 million Sikhs worldwide, making the Sikh religion the fifth largest in the world. The vast majority of Sikhs live in India. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, about 280 000 Sikhs live in Canada; 130 live in Newfoundland and Labrador. The figure for Canada represents an 88.8 percent increase over the 1991 Census.

Developments within the Sikh Religion

From Guru Nanak through nine more Gurus, the Sikh religion spread. The Guru was important to the Sikhs because he was considered the vehicle through whom God was explained. Each Guru is remembered for various accomplishments. For example, the fourth Guru, Ram Das, established the village of Amritsar, which eventually became the religious centre for the Sikhs. The next Guru, Arjan, began to build the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

Gobind Singh, the tenth and final Guru, founded the Khalsa. In creating the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh combined spiritual excellence and military courage—the concept of the saint-soldier. The Guru told Sikhs to have faith in one God; to be brave and never to run from the enemy; to help the poor and protect the weak; and never to smoke or use drugs. Members of the Khalsa are identifiable anywhere by the five distinctive features of their dress—the Five Ks—all of which begin with the letter "K" in Punjabi:

- Kes/Kesh (hair) In order to look as they believe God meant them to, Sikhs do not cut their hair.
- Kangha (comb) Sikhs follow the instructions in the Sikh ethical code to keep their hair well-groomed by using special combs. Males wear the comb in the hair under their turbans, and females wear it under their head coverings. The Kangha symbolizes cleanliness of body and spirit.
- Kara (bracelet) Sikhs wear a steel wristlet on the right forearm. The bracelet reminds Sikhs that God is all-powerful and has no beginning and no end.
- Kachh (trousers) Sikhs wear special short trousers or underpants symbolizing modesty and moral restraint
- Kirpan (dagger) Sikhs carry at their side a small, ornate dagger as a reminder that they are "God's soldier[s]...to stand against oppression and to protect the weak and oppressed."

Although not all Sikhs belong to the Khalsa, almost all—men, women, and children—wear the Kara on their right forearm as an external symbol of their faith. Although the turban is not one of the Five Ks, most male members and some female members of the Khalsa wear one. The turban has become an important symbol of the Sikh faith, and male Sikhs do not wear anything else on their head. Within Canada and the United States, Sikhs have brought several court challenges since the 1970s to allow them to wear turbans and to carry the kirpans. See <http://www.sikhs.ca/kirpan/index.html> and http://www.sikhs.ca/kirpan/5Ks_Rights.html for specific details.

Guru Gobind Singh declared that the line of Gurus ended with him. From that day on, he said, the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh sacred writings, would be Guru for the Sikhs.

From 1780 to 1849, the Sikhs ruled their own kingdom in major parts of the Punjab region of India. The British conquered this area in 1849, but they treated the Sikhs fairly, and so many Sikhs served in the British Army with distinction and bravery. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, many Sikhs joined India in the battle for independence from Britain. When the British partitioned India in 1947 to form a Muslim Pakistan, the partition split the Punjab region in two. More than 2.5 million Sikhs had to move across the new border to India, leaving behind their property and many of their holy places, such as the birthplace of Guru Nanak.

Sacred Writings

The Guru Granth Sahib, sometimes also called the **Adi Granth**, contains the sacred scriptures of the Sikhs. It is considered to be the “living Guru.” The Guru Granth Sahib contains the writings of Sikh Gurus, poets, saints, and philosophers, as well as writings by Hindus and Muslims. The Sikh sacred writings teach Sikhs how to worship and how to live, serving as the guiding force in shaping their careers and their lives. It covers religious and social concerns, calling for devotion to one God, purity of life, and service to the poor. Every copy of the Guru Granth

Sahib contains exactly the same number of pages and hymns and verses. No change is allowed in the scriptures. All Sikh ceremonies are conducted in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.

At the beginning of each chapter is a sacred chant of Sikh beliefs called the “Mool Mantra,” the first hymn written by Guru Nanak.

There is only one God.

Truth is his name.

He is the creator.

He is without fear.

He is without hate.

He is timeless and without form.

He is beyond death—the enlightened one.

He can be known by the Guru’s grace.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

Sikhs are a monotheistic people: they believe in one God. The goal of life is to break the cycle of births and deaths and merge with God. This goal can be achieved by following the teachings of the Guru, meditating on the Holy Name, and performing acts of service and charity.

Sikhs also believe in the equality of all individuals. When individuals join the Khalsa, they take the surname Singh (lion), or Kaur (princess). In adding these titles to their names, they remove class and economic differences. Men and women worship equally together. After worship at the gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, everyone, rich and poor, men and women, young and old, friends and strangers, Sikhs and non-Sikhs, is invited to join in langar, the sharing of free food. Participants sit side by side in rows, promoting a sense of equality. All members of the gudwara take turns working at langar. Cooking and serving food at langar, cleaning the floor, washing the dishes, and so forth, are considered a privilege.

The first Guru, Nanak, taught a way of life still followed by Sikhs today. This way of life includes:

Nam Japna To get up each day before sunrise, to clean the body, meditate on God’s Name, and recite the Guru’s hymns to clean the mind. Throughout the day, followers are to remember God’s Name with every breath.

Dharam di Kirat Karni To work and earn by the sweat of the brow, to live a family way of life, and practise truthfulness and honesty in all dealings.

Vand Ke Chakna To share the fruits of one's labour with others before considering oneself. Thus, to live as an inspiration and a support to the entire community.

Values Promoted

Each of the ten Gurus represents a virtue that Sikhs value:

Guru Nanak: Humility

Guru Angad: Obedience

Guru Amar Das: Equality

Guru Ram Das: Service

Guru Arjan: Self-sacrifice

Guru Hargobind: Justice

Guru Har Rai: Mercy

Guru Harkrishan: Purity

Guru Tegh Bahadur: Tranquility

Guru Gobind Singh: Royal Courage

Diversity of Beliefs

Although Sikhs who belong to the largest Khalsa group are generally united in their views, some Khalsas tend more toward contemplation and scholarship, while others focus more on a military stance.

There are two smaller, non-Khalsa groups. The Udasi take vows of asceticism and poverty, wear yellow robes, shave their head and beard, and gain their food using begging bowls. The Sahaj-dhari group is also clean-shaven. They are pacifists who do not adhere to the teachings of the tenth guru. Some Sikhs still hold the vision of an independent Sikh state in the Punjab.

Worship and Practices

Most gurdwaras have priests, called granthi. In the absence of a granthi, each individual is free to perform the rituals of worship, which centre around the Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru Granth Sahib is kept in the place of honour in the gurdwara. It sits on a low table and is draped in embroidered silks under a canopy. People remove their shoes and cover their heads when they enter the gurdwara. They might bring flowers or coins to place before the Holy

Book. They bow before it, and then move back away respectfully to sit on the carpeted floor of the gurdwara. Services consist of two main activities: reading and explaining the scriptures, and singing the hymns. Both men and women may read from the scriptures. Trained musicians will often lead the group in devotional music (kirtan). After the service, Sikhs receive karah parshad, or sacred food, made of flour, sugar, and ghee.

The gurdwaras are managed by local Sikhs who are democratically elected. There is also a kind of central authority for the Sikhs, drawn from leaders of the four major gurdwaras in India, especially the gurdwara considered the most important, the Golden Temple at Amritsar. This central authority makes any decisions that affect the Sikh community as a whole.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Birth: Some Sikhs observe the tradition of reciting the first five verses of the morning prayer into the ear of a newborn child. Later, during the naming ceremony that takes place in the gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened and the child is given a name starting with the first letter of the first word at the top of the page.

Amrit Ceremony: This ceremony formally admits Sikhs into the Khalsa. The ceremony is conducted by five Sikhs who are already members of the Khalsa. It is done only when Sikhs, male or female, are mature enough to take the Khalsa vows: to wear the Five Ks, to refrain from any sexual relationships outside of marriage, to follow a vegetarian diet, and to abstain from using tobacco, alcohol, and all other intoxicants.

During the ceremony, a steel bowl filled with amrit—sweetened water—is kept churning with a two-edged sword wielded by the five adult Sikhs. As they stir, they recite sacred verses. Thus sweetness is mingled with the strength of steel and the word of God. The water is a symbol of life and represents purity and humility. The sugar represents sweetness and saintliness. Because the sugar easily dissolves in the water, the sugar also symbolizes the breakdown

of social divisions. The five Sikhs administer amrit to the males and females being welcomed into the Khalsa. The amrit is sprinkled on their eyes, hair, and hands. They must also drink five palms full or more of amrit from the steel bowl.

Marriage: The Sikh marriage ceremony is called the Anand Karajh, which literally means “a good deed which is to bring happiness and contentment.”

The bride and groom go to the gurdwara and present themselves to receive the Guru Granth Sahib’s blessing, as well as the blessing of family and friends present. The couple circles the Guru Granth Sahib four times, each time bowing before the Holy Book. The marriage is complete when the fourth round is complete.

Death: When a Sikh dies, the body is washed and new clothes are put on. There is a procession to the crematorium or cremation ground, during which time prayers are said and the funeral pyre is lit. When the ashes are cool, they are placed into running water such as a river. The reading of the Guru Granth Sahib then begins. It is read from beginning to end (1430 pages) and this takes about ten days. The reading can be done from the home of the deceased or at the gurdwara. When the reading is finished, a final service is held, and parshad (holy food) is served. This marks the end of mourning.

Holy Days and Festivals

Sikhs celebrate many of the festivals Hindus do, such as Holi and Diwali. They also celebrate important anniversaries associated with the lives of their Gurus. These celebrations are referred to as gurburbs. The most important gurburb commemorates the birthday of Guru Nanak, and traditionally occurs in November. There may be a procession of the Guru Granth Sahib led by five Sikhs carrying the Sikh flag. Food may be offered to people outside the gurdwara. Hymns and readings accompany the ceremonies.

Another celebration is Baisakhi, which celebrates the formal birth of the Khalsa. The festival normally falls on April 13. Baisakhi is the start of the Hindu and Sikh New Year and coincides with the springtime harvesting of crops. Baisakhi has special significance for Sikhs because the Khalsa was created on this day. The celebration starts in the gurdwara with the reading of Sikh scriptures. For the 48 hours leading up to the holidays, the scriptures are read from cover to cover. At dawn on April 13, children and parents get out of bed early, put on new clothes brought especially for the day, and exchange gifts. Large congregations of Sikh families gather for a special service at the gurdwara. Later, Sikhs gather to participate in athletic, poetry, and music contests.

Baha'i Faith

Introduction

Founded in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, the Baha’i Faith now numbers between six million and seven million adherents in more than 300 countries. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, about 18 000 Baha’i live in Canada. All provinces and territories have at least one Baha’i community. Eighty Baha’i live in Newfoundland and Labrador. According to the Baha’i National Centre, in 2003 there were 20 384 Baha’i in Canada, and 110 in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The key Baha’i religious principles are the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, and the oneness of humanity. Baha’is support world unity and the de-

velopment of international governing bodies. Baha’is work closely with government agencies, including the United Nations and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Mirza Ali Muhammad of Shīrāz (the Bab, Arabic for “gate”), and Mirza Husayn Ali of Nur (Bahá’u’lláh, Arabic for “the Glory of God”)

In 1844 in Iran (then called Persia), the Bab, founder of the Babi Faith, pronounced that prophets were divine manifestations of God, that he was one of these messengers, and that 19 years later an even

greater manifestation of God would appear. His major work, the *Bayan*, stressed a high moral standard, with an emphasis on purity of heart and motive. It also upheld the station of women and the poor, and it promoted education and useful sciences. The Bab's teachings brought him into conflict with the Islamic authorities of Iran, who in 1850 executed him. Despite the conflict, the Bab Faith continued to spread throughout the area, and in 1863, Baha'u'llah declared himself to be the manifestation the Bab had referred to 19 years earlier—whose mission would be to usher in the age of peace and plenty that had for so long been promised in Islam, as well as in Judaism, Christianity, and most other world religions—and founded the Baha'i religion.

Baha'u'llah was a Persian nobleman who suffered 40 years of imprisonment and exile. He was the son of a wealthy government minister whose family could trace its ancestry back to the great dynasties of Iran's imperial past. Baha'u'llah led a princely life as a young man, receiving an education that focused largely on horsemanship, swordsmanship, calligraphy, and classic poetry.

Baha'u'llah married Asiyih Khanum in 1835, with whom he had three children. Abdu'l-Baha, the eldest son, was born in 1844. Baha'u'llah declined a career in government and instead worked for the poor. In 1844, he became one of the leading advocates of the Babi movement.

In 1852, Baha'u'llah, along with other followers of the Bab, was arrested and brought, in chains and on foot, to Tehran and cast into the notorious Black Pit for four months. During this time Baha'u'llah experienced a revelation that he was the prophet foretold by the Bab. The dungeon became the birthplace of a new religious revelation.

After four months in the Black Pit, Baha'u'llah was banished from Iran and continued to live for 40 years in exile where he was often imprisoned and persecuted. He spent time in Baghdad, Kurdistan, Constantinople, and Adrianople (Edirne). Although kept a virtual state prisoner within his home, his reputation continued to grow, attracting the interest

of scholars, government officials, and diplomats who would visit with him. He communicated with many world leaders of his time. He spoke of the dawn of a new age and urged world leaders to pursue justice.

Continued agitation from opponents caused the Turkish Government to send Baha'u'llah and his family to Acre, a penal city in Ottoman Palestine (now Akko, in Israel). As in Baghdad and Adrianople, Baha'u'llah's moral stature gradually won him the respect and admiration of all who came into contact with him.

It was in Acre that Baha'u'llah's most famous work, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (The Most Holy Book) was written.

On May 29, 1892, Baha'u'llah died. His remains were laid to rest in a garden room adjoining his restored home in Akko, which is known as Bahji. For Baha'is, this home is the most holy place on earth.

Baha'u'llah's son Abdu'l-Baha (Arabic for "servant of glory"), who remained a state prisoner until 1908, continued his father's work, eventually travelling to Europe and North America (including Canada) to spread his father's teachings. He named his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, guardian of the faith. Under Rabbani's leadership from 1921 to 1957, the Baha'i Faith developed an administrative order in local and national communities and internationally. The world headquarters of the Baha'i Faith are on Mount Carmel in the Haifa/Acre area in Israel.

Sacred Writings

According to Baha'i tradition, during his imprisonment in Tehran's Black Pit, Baha'u'llah received a vision of God's will for humanity. His experience there set in motion a process of religious revelation that, over the next 40 years, led to the production of hundreds of books, tablets, and letters, that today form the core of the sacred scripture of the Baha'i Faith. In those writings he outlined a framework for the reconstruction of human society at all levels: spiritual, moral, economic, political, and philosophical. All of Baha'u'llah's revelations were recorded and authenticated at the time they were written. After

each period of revelation, the original manuscript would be re-transcribed, with Bahá'u'lláh overseeing and approving the final version. The following works represent some of the important themes in Bahá'u'lláh's writings.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book)

This work was revealed during the darkest days of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment in Acre. The book is the chief repository of the laws and institutions that Bahá'u'lláh designed for the world order he conceived, recording essential laws and principles that are to be observed by his followers, and laying the groundwork for Baha'i administration.

The Kitab-i-Iqan (The Book of Certitude)

This work is the principal exposition of Bahá'u'lláh's doctrinal message. It deals with the great questions that have always been at the heart of religious life: the nature of humanity, the purpose of life, and the function of revelation.

The Hidden Words

This work is a collection of verses of guidance and comfort that form the ethical heart of Bahá'u'lláh's message. It is a distillation of the spiritual guidance contained in successive revelations of God.

The Seven Valleys

These mystical writings, in poetic language, trace the stages of the soul's journey to union with its Creator.

Central Beliefs and Teachings

The main theme of Bahá'u'lláh's message is unity. He taught that there is only one God, that all the world's religions represent one changeless and eternal faith in God, and that all humanity is one race, destined to live in peace and harmony. The essential message of Bahá'u'lláh is this call to unity. Spirituality must embrace not only personal and group life, but also the collective progress of humanity as a whole: "Let your vision be worldembracing, rather than confined to your own self." The principles emphasized by the Baha'i Faith are

- the concept of Divine and religious unity
- the oneness of humanity

- the equality of women and men
- the elimination of prejudice
- the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty
- the independent investigation of truth
- universal education
- religious tolerance
- the harmony of science and religion
- a world commonwealth of nations
- a universal language

Values Promoted

Baha'is follow the moral code of the Ten Commandments—and more. Bahá'u'lláh forbids killing, stealing, lying, adultery and promiscuity, gambling, alcoholic drinks, drug abuse, gossip, and backbiting.

Baha'is strive to uphold a high moral standard. Bahá'u'lláh stressed the importance of honesty, trustworthiness, chastity, service to others, purity of motive, generosity, deeds over words, unity, and work as a form of worship.

Worship and Practices

A few major houses of worship have been built to stand as "beacons calling the world to a new mode of religious worship and life." Houses of worship have been built on each of the continents: in Russia, the United States, Uganda, Australia, Germany, Panama, Western Samoa, and India.

Each house of worship has its own distinctive design and yet conforms to a set of architectural requirements that give a unifying theme. It must have nine sides and a central dome to symbolize both the diversity and the unity of the human race.

Houses of worship are open to people of every religion. There are no sermons, rituals, or clergy. Worship includes prayers and readings from the scriptures of the Baha'i Faith and of other religions.

A simple nine-pointed star is generally used by Baha'is as a symbol of their faith. The number nine has significance in the Baha'i Revelation. Nine years after the announcement of the Bab in Shiraz,

Bahá'u'lláh believed that he received his mission in the dungeon of Tehran. Nine, as the highest single-digit number, symbolizes completeness. Since the Baha'i Faith claims to be the fulfillment of the expectation of all prior religions, this symbol reflects that sense of fulfillment and completeness.

Some Ceremonies and Rituals Related to the Life Cycle

Bahá'u'lláh reduced all ritual and form to an absolute minimum. The few forms that remain are external symbols of an inner attitude.

Birth: Baha'i teachings do not provide for formal ceremony, although friends and family certainly may come together on such happy occasions.

Teenage Years: At age 15, young people reach the age of spiritual maturity. At this age, they assume responsibility for the laws of the faith, such as prayer, and they participate in the fast (see Holy Days and Festivals, following).

Marriage: The Spiritual Assembly authorizes the holding of a wedding ceremony. Once the consent of both sets of parents is obtained, the couple recite, in the presence of at least two witnesses, this prayer: "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God." Other prayers, readings, and music may be included, but the ceremony is kept as simple as possible.

Death: The body is regarded as the temple of the soul and therefore is treated with the utmost respect. Baha'is do not cremate or embalm their dead, and burial is carried out within an hour's travel time of the place of death. The only required prayer is called the Long Prayer for the Dead, but many other prayers and readings can be heard.

Holy Days and Festivals

There are nine Holy Days on which work should be suspended. All are anniversaries of significant dates. Naw-Rúz, the Baha'i New Year, March 21; three days of the 12-day Ridvan period of April 21 to May 2 during which Bahá'u'lláh prepared for exile from Baghdad and Declared His Mission in 1863, the First Day of Ridvan, April 21, the Ninth Day of Ridvan, April 29 and the Twelfth Day of Ridvan, May

2; the Declaration of The Bab (1844), May 23; the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh (1892), May 29; the Martyrdom of The Bab (1850), July 9; the Birth of The Bab (1819), October 20; and the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh (1817), November 12.

There are two additional Holy Days: the Day of the Covenant, November 26 and the anniversary of the Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha (1921), November 28.

The period from February 26 to March 1 is an annual period of hospitality and gift giving before the start of the Fast.

The Nineteen-day Feast: The Feast is the centerpiece of Baha'i community life. It is held throughout the year once every 19 days, beginning on March 21. There are 19 such feast days in the year. The feast day is the regular gathering that promotes and sustains the unity of the local Baha'i community.

The feast always contains three elements: spiritual devotion, administrative consultation, and fellowship. This practice combines religious worship with grassroots governance and social enjoyment.

The term "feast" suggests that the community should enjoy a "spiritual feast" of worship, companionship, and unity. Bahá'u'lláh stressed the importance of gathering every 19 days "to bind your hearts together."

The Fast: Bahá'u'lláh called on Baha'is to refrain from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset for 19 consecutive days each year from March 2 to March 20. This period, known as the Fast, is considered a time for deep reflection on one's own spiritual progress. Efforts are made to detach one's self from material desires.

Those who are ill are exempted from fasting, as are pregnant and nursing women, people under 15 or over 70 years old, travellers, and those engaged in arduous physical labour.