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Sociology of Religion

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Lesson No. 1**Introduction to Sociology of Religion****Topic 1: Definition of Religion*****Origin of the Religion***

There are different theories regarding the origin of the religion. But it cannot be certainly said that when and how religious ideas emerged in history. It is also certainly cannot be said that what is the origin of the ideas of religion. All these are due to the fact that there is no broad consensus amongst the thinkers of this field regarding the origin of religion. At the very inception of human race on earth, men were totally ignorant about the different events that occurred in nature around them. But they were curious to know the happenings and accordingly, they applied their own efforts. They had to face the different natural calamities like storms, floods, lightning; dangerous animals, famine etc. and they were unable to overcome these situations. As a result, they had to imagine an invisible power mightier than themselves upon whom they depended for assistance, strength and relief. Thus, fear and curiosity are the main factors responsible for the emergence of religious tendency in ancient people. They also believed that this unseen and invisible power would be helpful in their birth, sorrow, old age and finally in obtaining salvation. They sometimes conceived God as their object of love. Thus, in order to meet their ignorance and to get strength and courage to face natural calamities, men time and again depended on an imaginary existence, the result of which is named “God” in religion.

Definition of Religion

Religion is a cultural institution and is an instrument, for the satisfaction of needs. Religion comprises those aspects of our behavioral complexes that are organized around beliefs, in spiritual or super natural beings. Two concepts that are important in the definition of religion are the supernatural and the sacred. The concept of the super natural is basic and crucial in the definition of religion. The supernatural beings are of three main internal differentiate categories, God, spirits and ghosts. However, will be discussing only God.

The great and supreme God is believed to have created the universe and control all that is in it. God, who is considered all powerful, rules the world from above and is accessible to believers. God is generally believed to rule from the sky where he resides. He is approached through intermediaries.

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist defines **religion** as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden -- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim stated that religion involves “things that surpass the limits of our knowledge”. We define most objects, events, or experiences as profane (from Latin, meaning “outside the temple”), included as *an ordinary element of everyday life*. People understand profane things in terms of their everyday usefulness: We log on to the Internet with our laptop or turn a key to start our car. But we also consider some things sacred, *set apart as extraordinary, inspiring awe and reverence*, for example Jews believe that the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament) is sacred, in the same way that Christians revere the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and Muslims exalt the Qur’an (Koran). Setting the sacred apart from the profane is the essence of all religious belief.

What is sacred we reverently set apart from daily life, giving it a “forbidden” or “holy” aura. Marking the boundary between the sacred and the profane, for example, Muslims remove their shoes before entering a mosque to avoid defiling a sacred place with soles that have touched the profane ground outside. The sacred is embodied in ritual, or formal, ceremonial behavior.

Key Concepts

Following are the key concepts in religion

Totem

Totem, an object in the natural world collectively defined by people of society as sacred. The totem—perhaps an animal or an elaborate work of art—becomes the centerpiece of ritual, symbolizing the power of society over the individual. In our society, the flag is treated with respect and is not used in a profane way (say, as clothing) or allowed to touch the ground.

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion.

Religious experience: refers to the conviction or sensation that one is connected to “the divine.” This type of communication might be experienced when people are praying or meditating.

Religious beliefs: specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or believing in reincarnation. Another illustration of religious beliefs is that different religions adhere to certain stories of world creation.

Religious rituals: are behaviors or practices that are either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as Muslims pray five times a day or Christians make confessions.

Topic 2: Sociological Significance of Religion

Different kinds of social institutions such as, domestic, economy and politics have influence on religious institutions. But it is also true that these institutions are sometimes influenced by religious institutions. Hence, there are many sociological significances of religion.

Unity Lay Foundation for Humanitarian Activities

An important aspect of religion is prayer and different classes of people belonging to different castes of society assemble in religious institutions for performing prayer and worship. By these activities there forms common feelings which thereby further generate a common sentiments and fellowship amongst the worshipers of a particular religion.

Sometimes it is found that the members of a particular religion unite together, and for the greater interest of the society they perform different humanitarian activities. It is evident that religious institutions perform not only their religious activities, they also perform different activities related to social welfare such as, charitable hospitals, schools, homes for the homeless. These institutions also run orphanages and collect money for the poor people.

Religious Rites as Mean of Getting Almighty's Blessings

Different activities of the people and their different spheres of social life are still influenced by religious rites and ceremonies. People generally express their religious feelings through rituals and ceremonies.

Not only in primitive societies but also in modern societies religious activities occupy an important place. Religious rites are performed on different important social occasions such as, birth, marriage, harvesting, hunting, death etc. Similar activities are found in the events related with economic life also. In almost all communities' religious rites are common practices during various occasions in economic life such as, inauguration of a new building, oath taking etc. For example, Recitation of Quran before inauguration ceremonies in Islam and worshipping in Hinduism, holding holy books while taking oaths.

Promoting social control

Religion helps to shape the character of an individual and thereby it molds social life. It brings forth the sense of social value in the mind of people. In obeying the social laws or to respect the elders and to show sympathy towards the feelings of others, or to discharge the social obligations faithfully, the role of religion is immense. In those cases, it acts as a teacher.

Every society uses religious ideas to promote conformity. By defining God as a “judge,” many religions encourage people to obey cultural norms. Religion can also be used to back up the power of political systems. In medieval Europe, for example, monarchs claimed to rule by “divine right,” so that obedience was seen as doing God’s will.

Establishing Social Cohesion

Religion unites people through shared symbolism, values, and norms. Religious thought and ritual establish rules of fair play, organizing our social life. Not only this, a sense of fellow feeling amongst the people belonging to different communities is also taught by religion. Religion enforces uniformity of behavior and it strengthens social solidarity and thereby acts as an instrument in stabilizing social order.

In primitive age the influence of religion was very great in controlling society and this feature is not totally lost even today. Social life of primitive people was controlled by inspiring God-fear in their minds but in modern age people are inspired not by fear but by the hope for the attainment of virtuous and noble life. Thus, by fostering patriotic sentiments in men, religion helps to maintain social integration.

Topic 3: Elements of Religion

Religions is seen as belief systems that display seven or eight key features that are combined in each faith. The seven elements are based on the key features listed by the British philosopher and theologian Ninian Smart in his book *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (1969).

1. Doctrine

The basic principles of any religion are known as doctrines, which believers are taught to understand and accept. However, because they deal in concepts that are often hard to grasp, doctrines are also open to interpretation, which in itself leads faiths to change and diversify.

Sources of doctrine

Religious doctrines derive both from scripture, the sacred texts of each faith, and from the continual process of reading and interpreting these texts. A religion's mythology, which we find written in the scriptures, provides a body of stories about God or the gods. The descriptions of the divine beings and the moral and ethical ideas that these beings put forward in the scriptures are themselves doctrinal. For example, Muslims found their belief in the One God of the Qur'an.

This book, which Muslims believe is made up of God's own words, therefore contains a body of ethical and moral instruction that, according to Islam, comes directly from God himself. Another example is Hinduism, in which believers read one of their most important sacred texts, the Bhagavad Gita, both for its account of Krisna (an incarnation of the god Visnu often worshipped in his own right) and for its explanation of the doctrine of dharma—the spiritual law that governs each person's conduct. However, there are additional doctrines that do not come directly from the scriptures themselves, but from the way that later priests, scholars, and others have interpreted the sacred texts. These doctrines organize the stories in scripture and give them an intellectual framework.

Interpreting Doctrine

Specific groups of divinely guided people are often responsible for the interpretation of doctrine. Rabbis (in Judaism), priests (in Christianity), and imams (in Islam) have read, explained, or interpreted scripture. For example, Shi'i Muslims, for example, look to imams for doctrinal advice communicated directly from God. Catholic Christians heed the moral guidance of their leader, the pope; Jews respect the scholarly and doctrinal pronouncements of the early rabbis.

Many of their writings are concerned with guiding believers in the details of life, but they also address the big doctrinal questions. For example, if God is all-powerful, why does he allow evil into the world? This question has generated lengthy debates about religion.

Unity and Division

Doctrines are designed to bring the faithful together and to give believers a coherent set of beliefs to focus on. But, as we have seen, forming doctrines requires the debate and interpretation of scripture and this can lead to religious differences opening up. Disagreements and divisions may raise challenges and cause problems within a faith, but they also nurture in it an endless process of development and renewal. As a result, new varieties of religion and

religious movements evolve all the time to take up the challenge of doctrine and to give believers new perspectives on life and faith.

2. *Mythology*

Mythology is a collection of stories about God or the gods, covering particularly the origins of the cosmos and humanity, and the roles of the divine. A religion's mythology underpins its beliefs, explains the way the world is, and provides moral lessons to guide followers.

The Oral Tradition

The mythologies of primitive religions have been passed down orally for probably thousands of years. In general, they show that cultures with an oral tradition have lived a life close to nature. Primitive deities often take animal form and sacred places tend to be natural sites, such as rocks and springs, particularly in belief systems that need to explain certain features on which humanity depend for food and survival. Although today many of these ancient, oral narratives have been written down, they stay alive most vitally in the mouths of those who recite them from memory, perhaps altering them slightly in the retelling, so that the living tradition of their faith continues to evolve.

Myths of God or Gods

Most of the world religions, by contrast, record their mythologies in their sacred texts, poems and narratives. Most religions have a whole library of holy texts, many of them telling stories of God or the gods. Hinduism is an outstanding example, with many of its myths enshrined in two of the longest epic poems in the history of literature, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Chinese religion, which has countless deities, has also built up a vast body of myths. Even belief systems that are not necessarily "God-centered," such as Buddhism, may have a huge body of mythology. Buddhist texts tell the stories of the Buddha himself, and of the countless bodhisattvas, the saintly figures who help others along the road to enlightenment. Islamic tradition tells many stories of the prophet Muhammad's life and deeds, giving moral insights that complement those in the Qur'an, which Muslims believe to be the word of God himself.

3. *Religious Experience*

Common to all religions is the idea that worshippers, in some way or another, can experience the absolute, or God. This experience is most obviously recognizable as a kind of heightened state of being—ecstasy, trance, exaltation, or calm—that reaches beyond the everyday.

Some mystical revelation or vision stands at the inauguration of many of the world's religions. The Buddha, meditating under a tree, reached a transcendent state that enabled him to see his solution to the problem of suffering in the world. The prophet Muhammad had the religion of Islam revealed to him when he received the words of God that are now collected in the Qur'an. The prophets of the old Testament reported direct and life-changing experiences of God, experiences that still inform the religion of the Jews. Events such as these seem to throw inspiring light on God and accompany new perceptions about reality, and thus they open up new directions of thought and belief.

Taking part in any religious service that involves intense music, incense, dancing, or similar elements, can find worshippers in a state of religious experience, participants can experience or even see the deity that they are worshipping. But religious experience is not limited to dramatic moments such as these. Practitioner of yoga or a meditating Buddhist can undergo a trancelike spiritual transformation that resembles a perception of the absolute. The deeply felt belief of Christians and Muslims that the act of prayer enables them to communicate with God. Similar moments during worship in other religions, all bring the ordinary believer close to the ultimate reality that they seek in their faith.

4. Religious Institutions

Religious institutions are the groups of people who come together to lead a faith. A religion may have a single, central leader, who presides over a highly organized administration; or it may have a less formal governance, or consist of several churches with local leaders.

Priests and teachers

The roles of religious leaders vary from one faith to another. Some are scholars, people who study the sacred texts and help others to read and interpret them; some are teachers or gurus, who attract followers and inspire and instruct them in the faith; others perform a priestly function, presiding over sacraments and rituals. In many religions, the leaders may also play the role of spiritual guide, counsellor, or even healer; or do several of these jobs at once. Jewish rabbis are teachers and spiritual leaders, but, although ordained, are not priests. Christian priests and ministers teach and celebrate rituals and sacraments, as well as performing all kinds of pastoral duties, from providing spiritual advice to visiting the sick. Indian religions have produced many notable gurus, but may also have priests, such as the members of the Hindu brahmin class. In many religions faith is centered upon instruction from a specific guru, who

in Buddhism, for example, may be a teacher, the head of a monastery, or someone with extraordinary charisma or spiritual insight.

Types of Organization

The priests, shamans, teachers, counsellors, and other leaders of the world's religions operate within a wide variety of different organizational frameworks. Some, such as the Catholic Church, have a highly structured, top-down organization, with a defined hierarchy of pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests.

5. Ethics

Common to all the world's religions is the idea that we should try to live better lives. Sacred texts and later teachings brim with the moral instructions of early leaders, of prophets, and of God himself. The result is a rich framework of ethical values for all followers to live by.

The common cause in all religions, there is heavy stress on both understanding the ethical teachings and acting upon them. People who live their lives fully in accordance with their faith command great respect. Across the variety of ethical viewpoints, two precepts stand out.

1. The first is the notion of respect for the absolute and respect for the moral insights this can bring.
2. The second is the ethical “golden rule,” common to all faiths— that is, that you should treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

In the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, moral precepts come from God. Jews aim to follow God's law as laid out in the Torah, as well as according to the interpretations of the Torah by later scholars and rabbis. Muslims follow the ethical instructions laid out in the Qur'an, which they see as the word of God as revealed to the prophet Muhammad. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. Because Jesus saw himself and his ethics as in some way coming after and fulfilling the words and commandments of the Torah (which comprises the first five books of the Old Testament), Christians also pay heed to the ethical guidance found in the Jewish text.

All these sacred texts provide very specific instructions on how to live an ethical, moral life, and modern believers face the challenge of reading the ancient texts in a way that makes them relevant for today. This challenge has led, especially in Judaism and Christianity, to a variety of different branches of the religion, each offering a slightly different view of ethics and belief.

For example, Orthodox Judaism teaches worshippers to obey the commandments of the Torah precisely and rigorously, but reform Judaism (a movement that began in the 19th century and aimed to modernize the Jewish faith) interprets the laws of the Torah in a way that responds to the realities of modern life and lays strong emphasis on individual moral choice.

6. *Ritual*

A common theme runs through the practice of rituals in all the world's religions: rituals that resonate with the regular pulse of human life give believers chances to connect with the absolute—at specific stages of development, at particular times of year, or as part of regular worship. There are however different types of rituals.

Rites of passage

Throughout most of the world, religion presides over the life-cycle rituals that mark the key transitions in a person's life—birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. The ceremony involved helps both to mark the transitional point in the person's life, and to cement their attachment to their faith. For example, birth rituals, such as infant baptism, often involve either a naming ceremony or a rite that signals the child's admission into the religious community—and often both together. Funeral rituals mark transition of end of life and start of afterlife in all religions.

Calendar Festivals

Every calendar year includes certain religious festivals. Calendar festivals may mark key moments in the history of the religion, such as the birth of a god or prophet (for example, Christians celebrate Christ's birth on December 25). They may mark the end of a period of fasting, such as 'Id al-Fitr, which celebrates the end of Ramadan in the Muslim year, or the start of a new year. They are sometimes solemn events that remember martyrs or tragic times e.g. Muslim observe Ashura on 10th of Muharam to commemorate martyrdom of Husain ibn Ali, the grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. But there may also be joyous feasts, such as the Jewish feast of Passover, which bring whole communities together.

Regular Worship

The regular rituals of worship enable the worshipper to have a formalized connection with God or with the absolute. Regular religious observances, usually performed in a set way, at certain times, and often at a specific sacred place, can involve prayer, singing, meditation, or other

rituals. By worshipping in these prescribed ways, the believer not only engages in a kind of conversation with God; he or she also demonstrates a commitment to God. Faiths such as Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism emphasize this commitment because in these religions there is actually a divine commandment to worship or pray regularly. For example, Muslims pray five times a day and observant Jews three times.

7. Sacred Places and Objects

Held in special reverence, sacred places and objects are often linked with specific deities, religious leaders, or specific times in a faith's history. Places may be marked with grand temples or monuments, but even a wayside shrine used for spiritual contemplation can be sacred.

Natural sites

In many religions, holy places are natural sites that are remarkable in some way—tall mountains, wide or fast-flowing rivers, or large rocks. Such impressive natural features seem to stand out, and over time become associated with particular deities or religious stories. For example, there are sacred hill-top sites in Buddhism, Shinto, and Chinese popular religion. Rivers, especially the great Ganges River, are important in Hinduism. Many Hindus hope that they will die near the Ganges, so that when they are cremated, their ashes can be scattered on its waters.

Historical Sites

Other sacred sites mark places central to the history of a particular religion. The city of Jerusalem played host to important events in the stories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and is sacred to all three faiths. Worshippers usually hold the birthplaces of religious leaders and prophets in special reverence, too—from the birthplace of Jesus at Bethlehem to that of the Buddha at Lumbini, in modern-day Nepal, they are among the most revered of all sites.

A place where people have worshipped for hundreds or even thousands of years is likely to attract still others. And whether it is a place designed with the utmost simplicity, like a Buddhist monastery in rural Thailand, or somewhere that has accumulated rich decorations, like a spectacular Catholic cathedral, it is likely to exemplify the faith of those who have worshipped there over the years.

Pilgrimage

Visiting sacred places is an activity that is common to most faiths—and is central to some. All Muslims hope to make the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca (in western Saudi Arabia) at least once in their lifetimes. In fact, this pilgrimage, known as the Hajj, is one of the five major tenets or Pillars of Islam—essential duties that every Muslim must perform. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity also have strong traditions of pilgrimage. In most cases the pilgrimage has a certain set code or manner to which the devotee must adhere. For example, a pilgrim may have to dress in a specific way or perform particular rituals. Making the pilgrimage in the right way stresses the holiness of the enterprise and makes clear how much the pilgrim has in common with the countless others who have gone before. Whether a solitary expedition to a Buddhist shrine or part of a huge collective pilgrimage, such as the Hajj, the pilgrim's journey is often deeply moving or even lifechanging, so powerful is the combination of place and spirituality.

Holy Objects

Objects can be sacred too. They can make real or tangible the believer's connection with prophet, or god. *An object associated with a person or deity* who might otherwise seem remote from our own lives and everyday experience can bring the owner's reality into focus and lend it substance, helping us to understand something of that being's character. For example, the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, Sri Lanka, houses what is said to be the tooth of the Buddha, making it a popular place of Buddhist pilgrimage. There are many holy relics of Muslim world preserved at Topkapı Palace, Turkey for 500 years. It attracts many Muslim devotees around the world.

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Lesson No. 2

Belief in God

Topic 1: Theistic God, Theism and its types

Theos is the Greek word for god and is the root word for theism. Theism is then at its most basic the belief in at least one god. Theists may regard God as a unity (as in Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism) or a duality (The Wicca faith believes in a male god and a female god;), a Trinity (one entity with three persons as in most Christian faith groups), etc. Before discussing types of theism some concepts need to be clarified first.

1. Personal God

A personal god is a deity who can be related to as a person. Personal god is a god who has self-awareness and listens to people's requests, answering these requests by either refusing to act on them, or granting those requests in the form of intervention (which may take the form of miracles or spiritual strengthening). In the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions, God is described as being a personal creator, speaking in the first person and showing emotion such as anger and pride, and sometimes appearing in anthropomorphic shape.

2. *Impersonal God*

A god who created the Universe according to an intelligent plan, but no longer intervenes in the events of that Universe (i.e., doesn't respond to individual, personal requests, prayers etc., doesn't perform miracles, doesn't talk to individuals).

3. *Revealed Religion*

Religion founded primarily on the revelations of God to humankind, either directly from the higher power/s or indirectly through a medium of some sort, this medium could be a Seer, Prophet, or Super Natural Entity. For example, Islam, Christianity and Judaism are revealed religions.

4. *Non-Revealed Religion*

Any belief system where in the followers do not claim to have gotten a message from their higher power/s. In simple words, a man initiated that religion. For example, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Types of Theism

There are many different types of theists. Monotheists and polytheists are the most well known, but there are a variety of others as well. These terms describe types of religious thought rather than specific religions. Here are some of the more commonly known types.

Monotheism

Monos means alone. Monotheism is the belief that there is a single god. The Judeo-Christian religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as smaller groups such as the Rastas and the Baha'i, are monotheists. Some critics of Christianity claim that the concept of the Trinity makes Christianity polytheistic, not monotheistic, but the foundation of the idea of the trinity is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three aspects of the same single god.

Zoroastrians today are also monotheists, although there is some debate as to whether this has always been the case. There has also been an offshoot of Zoroastrianism called Zurvanism, which was not monotheistic.

Polytheism

Poly means many. Polytheism is the belief in many gods. Sometimes a polytheistic religion will have a supreme creator and focus of devotion, as in certain phases of Hinduism (there is also the tendency to identify the many gods as so many aspects of the Supreme Being, Like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva); sometimes the gods are considered as less important than some higher state or saviour, as in Buddhism; sometimes one god will prove more dominant than the others without attaining overall supremacy, as Zeus in Greek religion.

Religions such as that of the pagan Aztecs, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Egyptians, Norse, Sumerians, and Babylonians were all polytheist in nature. Not only do polytheists worship many gods and have a pantheon of gods they actively recognize, but they also are often open to the idea that the gods acknowledged by other cultures are real as well.

Pantheism

Pan means all, and pantheists believe that everything in the universe is a part of, is one with, and is the same as God. Pantheists do not believe in a personal god. Rather, God is an impersonal, non-anthropomorphic force. At its most general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe.

The term 'pantheism' is a modern term, possibly first appearing in the writing of the Irish freethinker John Toland (1705) and constructed from the Greek roots *pan* (all)

and *theos* (God). But if not the name, the ideas themselves are very ancient, and any survey of the history of philosophy will uncover numerous pantheist or pantheistically inclined thinkers.

Panentheism

“Panentheism” is derived from the Greek terms “pan”, meaning all, “en”, meaning in, and “theism”, meaning God. Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world.

Panentheists are similar to pantheists in that they believe the entire universe is one with God. However, they also believe that there is more to the God than the universe. The universe is one with God, but God is both the universe and beyond the universe. Panentheism allows for the belief in a personal God, a being with whom humans can forge a relationship, who has expectations for humanity, and who can be related to in human terms: God “speaks,” has thoughts, and can be described in emotional and ethical terminology as good and loving, terms that would not be used for the impersonal force of pantheism.

Henotheism

Heno means one. Henotheism is the worship of a single god without actively denying the existence of other gods. Henotheists, for various reasons, felt a specific connection with a single deity to whom they owe some sort of loyalty. The largest example of henotheism among today’s world religions is found in Hinduism. In this system, the practice of *bhakti* is common in which a person worships one deity while acknowledging many others. In the Hindu tradition, more than 300 million gods and goddesses exist.

Ancient Greek religion also provides an example of henotheism. For example, Zeus was an important deity who ruled over eleven other gods. All of these deities were believed to be divine, yet one was considered stronger than the others.

Deism

Deus is the Latin word for god. Deists believe in a single creator god, but they reject revealed religion. Instead, knowledge of this god comes from rationality and experience with the created world. Deists also commonly reject the idea of a personal god. While God exists, he does not

interfere with his creation (such as granting miracles or creating prophets), and he does not desire worship.

Deists do believe in a god. But their god is very different from the traditional concept of a personal deity. They believe that god created the universe, assigned it physical laws that made life possible, departed, let "nature" take its course, and has not returned. Their god remains remote and not directly concerned with the affairs of humanity. In general, Deism refers to what can be called natural religion, the acceptance of a certain body of religious knowledge that is inborn in every person or that can be acquired by the use of reason and the rejection of religious knowledge when it is acquired through either revelation or the teaching of any church.

Topic 2: Atheism

Defining "Atheism"

"Atheism" is typically defined in terms of "theism". Theism, in turn, is best understood as a proposition—something that is either true or false. It is often defined as "the belief that God exists", but here "belief" means "something believed". It refers to the propositional content of belief, not to the attitude or psychological state of believing. This is why it makes sense to say that theism is true or false and to argue for or against theism. If, however, "atheism" is defined in terms of theism and theism is the proposition that God exists and *not* the psychological condition of believing that there is a God, then it follows that atheism is not the absence of the psychological condition of believing that God exists. The "a-" in "atheism" must be understood as negation instead of absence, as "not" instead of "without". Therefore, in philosophy at least, atheism should be construed as the proposition that God does not exist (or, more broadly, the proposition that there are no gods).

This definition has the added virtue of making atheism a direct answer to one of the most important metaphysical questions in philosophy of religion, namely, "Is there a God?" There are only two possible direct answers to this question: "yes", which is theism, and "no", which is atheism. Answers like "I don't know", "no one knows", "I don't care", "an affirmative answer has never been established", or "the question is meaningless" are not *direct* answers to this question.

Atheism as Rejection of Religious Beliefs

A central, common core of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is the affirmation of the reality of one, and only one, God. Adherents of these faiths believe that there is a God who created the universe out of nothing and who has absolute sovereignty over all his creation; this includes, of course, human beings—who are not only utterly dependent on this creative power but also sinful and who, or so the faithful must believe, can only make adequate sense of their lives by accepting, without question, God’s ordinances for them. The varieties of atheism are numerous, but all atheists reject such a set of beliefs.

Atheism, however, casts a wider net and rejects all belief in “spiritual beings,” and to the extent that belief in spiritual beings is definitive of what it means for a system to be religious, atheism rejects religion. So atheism is not only a rejection of the central conceptions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; it is, as well, a rejection of the religious beliefs of such African religions as that of the Dinka and the Nuer, of the anthropomorphic gods of classical Greece and Rome, and of the transcendental conceptions of Hinduism and Buddhism. *Generally, atheism is a denial of God or of the gods, and if religion is defined in terms of belief in spiritual beings, then atheism is the rejection of all religious belief.*

Types of Atheism

While identifying atheism with the metaphysical claim that there is no God (or that there are no gods) is particularly useful for doing philosophy, it is important to recognize that the term “atheism” is polysemous—i.e., it has more than one related meaning—even within philosophy.

Most scholars recognize two types of atheist, and some employ a few subtle schemes to differentiate between them. The most of famous of these distinctions is that made by scholar George H. Smith (1979):

- 1. Implicit atheist:** (lower case atheist) is a person who has not yet learned about god(s), theism or religion. All people are born implicit atheists.
- 2. Explicit Atheist:** (upper case Atheism) is an atheist who understands what a god is and who has concluded that no such beings exist.

Explicit atheists are further divided into

- **Gnostic atheists:** are those who are sure that no gods exist of any type. They have examined the philosophical arguments against god, and conclude that it is a self-contradictory or impossible concept. They are also known as Strong atheist and positive atheist.

- **Agnostic atheists:** are those who do not think that god(s) exist, but, who do not think it is possible to completely disprove their possibility and yet they do not believe in god. They are also known as weak atheist.

There are a many other terms that can be used to differentiate between types of atheist.

Friendly, Unfriendly and Indifferent Atheism

William Rowe (1979) differentiate between subcategories of Atheism. He defines them as following

- **Friendly atheism** is the view that, although God does not exist, some (intellectually sophisticated) people are justified in believing that God exists.
- **Unfriendly atheism** is the view that atheism is true and that no (sophisticated) theistic belief is justified. In spite of its highly misleading name, this view might be held by the friendliest, most open-minded and religiously tolerant person imaginable.
- Finally, although Rowe refers to “**indifferent atheism**” as a psychological state, specifically, the state of being an atheist who is neither friendly nor unfriendly—that is, who neither believes that friendly atheism is true nor believes that unfriendly atheism is true.

Pro-God Atheism and Anti-God Atheism

Perhaps an even more interesting distinction is between pro-God atheism and anti-God atheism.

John Schellenberg, coined the term pro-God atheist. A pro-God atheist is someone who in some real sense loves God or at least the idea of God, who tries very hard to imagine what sorts of wonderful worlds such a being might create (instead of just assuming that such a being would create a world *something like* the world we observe), and who (least partly) for that very reason believes that God does not exist.

By contrast, anti-God atheists is a term coined by Thomas Nagel (1997). In general, an anti-God atheist find the whole idea of a God offensive and hence not only believe but also *hope* very much that no such being exists.

Some Other Types of Atheism

- ***Antitheists:*** are atheists who despise theistic religions, including Satanists and militant atheists.
- ***Humanists:*** are atheists who believe that ethical and moral principles need not rely on the supernatural or religion, but rather can be based on human experience, logic, and reason; all humans are of equivalent worth and value; working toward the equal treatment of all humans and a world free of discrimination is desirable; science is superior to religion as a method for discerning how the natural and social worlds work
- ***Religious atheists:*** belong to a religion that has no belief in creator gods (i.e., many forms of Buddhism), or, are atheist members of a religion that has no defined belief (i.e., Scientology).

Why Don't Atheists Believe in Gods?

Perhaps the most basic reason for not believing in the absence of good reasons for doing so. Just because a group of people isn't religious doesn't mean they still can't live moral lives. And just because they don't believe a "divine hand" lies behind all of life's actions doesn't mean they can't appreciate the intricate web of relationships that underlies life on Earth. Below are some reasons that why atheist don't believe in God.

Contradictory Characteristics

Theists often claim that their gods are perfect beings; they describe gods, however, in contradictory and incoherent ways. Numerous characteristics are attributed to their gods, some of which are impossible if you consider them rationally. How, for instance, is God at once the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (whatever that is), as asserted by Catholics? Described in such a contradictory manner, it's impossible for these gods to exist.

Gods Are Too Similar to Believers

In some cultures, like Ancient Greece and Rome, the gods are nearly indistinguishable from human beings. Yet, at the same time, they are supposed to be supernatural, fundamentally different from human beings or anything on earth. One has to wonder, then, if certain gods share so many characteristics with humans, perhaps they were created by human beings in the image of human beings, products of our vanity and not of the world's supposed sanctity.

Gods and Believers Behave Immorally

In most religions, gods are the source of all morality, meting out a set of divine laws that we mere mortals are supposed to follow if we do not wish to either be miserable here on Earth or in the afterlife. In reality, though, many horrors have been and continue to be perpetrated in the name of God or a specific religion or spiritual practice. For example, human sacrifices were common in many ancient religions.

Evil in the World

It's a question that has puzzled believers and non-believers alike throughout the ages: If God is truly good—or if "the gods" have humanity's best interests in mind—why does evil still exist in the world? The absence of substantive action against evil would be consistent with the existence of evil, or at least indifferent, gods. This is certainly not impossible, but few people believe in such gods. Most claim that their gods are loving. But to atheists, the suffering on Earth makes their existence implausible.

Faith Is Unreliable

All religions or other theist-based systems are predicated upon the concept of faith, defined as the belief in a concept that cannot otherwise be defended by logic, reason, evidence, or science. No concrete evidence is necessary to believe in God or gods. Instead, people are supposed to simply have faith—a position they wouldn't consciously adopt with just about any other issue. For instance, try standing in front of a speeding bus with nothing but "faith" to keep it from hitting you.

Science Points to Life as Material, Not Supernatural

Most religions assert that there is more to life than the matter we see around us. In addition, there is supposed to be some sort of spiritual or supernatural realm behind it all, and that our "true selves" are spiritual, not material. All evidence, though, points to life being a purely natural phenomenon, and who we really are is material and dependent upon the workings of the brain.

Topic 3: Agnosticism

Defining Agnosticism

The term ‘agnostic’ (from the Greek *gnostikos*, one who knows, with the prior ‘a’ that functions as a negative), from which the term ‘agnosticism’ is derived, was coined by the English scientist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), a biologist and zoologist. He supported Darwin’s theory of evolution and took it on himself to promote its diffusion. With this ‘agnostic’ he intended to define his own theological position, which is to say the idea that it is impossible for the human mind either to affirm or deny the existence of a metaphysical reality and in particular, of religious realities and the existence of God.

Roughly, Huxley’s principle says that it is wrong to say that one knows or believes that a proposition is true without logically satisfactory evidence (Huxley 1884 and 1889). But it was Huxley’s application of this principle to theistic and atheistic belief that ultimately had the greatest influence on the meaning of the term. He argued that, since neither of those beliefs is adequately supported by evidence, we ought to suspend judgment on the issue of whether or not there is a God.

So, an *agnostic* is a person who has entertained the proposition that there is a God but believes neither that it is true nor that it is false. Not surprisingly, then, the term “agnosticism” is often defined, both in and outside of philosophy, not as a principle or any other sort of proposition but instead as the psychological state of being an agnostic. From the premise of Huxley’s argument, the position that neither theism nor atheism is known, or most ambitiously, that neither the belief that God exists nor the belief that God does not exist has positive epistemic status of any sort. Just as the metaphysical question of God’s existence is central to philosophy of religion, so too is the epistemological question of whether or not theism or atheism is known or has some other sort of positive epistemic status.

Types of Agnosticism

One can at least distinguish two main points of view once the concept we are examining is distinguished from atheism, in the sense of a positive rejection of the existence of God, though in some cases the two ideas may converge.

Agnostic Theism:

This is the view (also called religious agnosticism) of those who do not claim to know of the existence of God or gods, but still believe in such an existence.

Agnostic Atheism:

This is the view of those who claim not to know of the existence or non-existence of God or gods, but do not believe in them.

Here is one other distinction between a ‘strong’ and a ‘weak’ agnosticism.

Strong Agnosticism

This is the view (also called hard agnosticism, closed agnosticism, strict agnosticism, absolute agnosticism or epistemological agnosticism) that the question of the existence or non-existence of God or gods is unknowable by reason of our natural inability to verify any experience with anything but another subjective experience.

Weak Agnosticism

This is the view (also called soft agnosticism, open agnosticism, empirical agnosticism, or temporal agnosticism) that the existence or non-existence of God or gods is currently unknown but is not necessarily unknowable, therefore one will withhold judgment until more evidence becomes available.

Key Difference between Atheism and Agnosticism

The definitions of atheism and agnosticism are not mutually incompatible. Since atheism is the condition of being without *belief* in a god or gods, and agnosticism is being without *knowledge* of a god or gods, one can be both simultaneously: an agnostic atheist.

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Lesson No. 3

Religious Organizations

Topic 1: Church: The Ecclesia and Denomination

Many types of religious organizations exist in modern societies. Sociologists usually group them according to their size and influence. Categorized this way, three types of religious organizations exist: church, sect, and cult. A church further has two subtypes: the ecclesia and denomination. We first discuss the largest and most influential of the types of religious organization, the ecclesia, and work our way down to the smallest and least influential, the cult.

Church

A church is a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society. Two types of church organizations exist.

Ecclesia

The first is the ecclesia, a large, bureaucratic religious organization that is a formal part of the state and has most or all of a state's citizens as its members. As such, the ecclesia is the national or state religion. People ordinarily do not join an ecclesia; instead they automatically become

members when they are born. A few ecclesiae exist in the world today, including Islam in Saudi Arabia and some other Middle Eastern nations, the Catholic Church in Spain, the Lutheran Church in Sweden, and the Anglican Church in England.

As should be clear, in an ecclesiastic society there may be little separation of church and state, because the ecclesia and the state are so intertwined. A church may operate with or apart from the state. As its name implies, a state church is a church formally allied with the state. State churches have existed throughout human history. For centuries, Roman Catholicism was the official religion of the Roman Empire, and Confucianism was the official religion of China until early in the twentieth century. Today, the Anglican Church is the official church of England, and Islam is the official religion of Pakistan and Iran. State churches count everyone in the society as a member, which sharply limits tolerance of religious differences.

In some ecclesiastic societies, such as those in the Middle East, religious leaders rule the state or have much influence over it, while in others, such as Sweden and England, they have little or no influence. In general, the close ties that ecclesiae have to the state help ensure they will support state policies and practices. For this reason, ecclesiae often help the state solidify its control over the populace.

Denomination

The second type of church organization is the denomination, a large, bureaucratic religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society but is not a formal part of the state. A denomination, “is a church, independent of the state, that recognizes religious pluralism.”

In modern pluralistic nations, several denominations coexist. Most people are members of a specific denomination because their parents were members. They are born into a denomination and generally consider themselves members of it the rest of their lives, whether or not they actively practice their faith, unless they convert to another denomination or abandon religion altogether.

Denominations exist in nations, including the United States, that formally separate church and state. This country has dozens of Christian denominations— including Catholics, Baptists,

Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Lutherans— as well as various categories of Judaism, Islam, and other traditions. Although members of any denomination hold to their own doctrine, they recognize the right of others to have different beliefs.

The Megachurch

A relatively recent development in religious organizations is the rise of the so-called *megachurch*, a church at which more than 2,000 people worship every weekend on the average.

Compared to traditional, smaller churches, megachurches are more concerned with meeting their members' practical needs in addition to helping them achieve religious fulfillment. As might be expected, their buildings are huge by any standard, and they often feature bookstores, food courts, and sports and recreation facilities. They also provide day care, psychological counselling, and youth outreach programs. Their services often feature showcase of religious artifacts and tourist attractions. Badshahi mosque in Lahore and Faisal mosque in Islamabad serves the purpose of megachurch for Muslims in Pakistan. Similarly, Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is a megachurch for Sikhs.

Although megachurches are popular, they have been criticized for being so big that members are unable to develop the close bonds with each other and with members of the clergy characteristic of smaller houses of worship. Their supporters say that megachurches involve many people in religion who would otherwise not be involved.

Topic 2: Sects

The second general religious form is the sect, “a type of religious organization that stands apart from the larger society.” A sect is a relatively small religious organization that is not closely integrated into the larger society and that often conflicts with at least some of its norms and values. Typically, a sect has broken away from a larger denomination in an effort to restore what members of the sect regard as the original views of the denomination.

Characteristics

Sects are seen in relation to churches. The following characteristics of sects can also be treated as comparison between churches and sects.

1. *Rigid Religious Convictions*

Sect members have rigid religious convictions and deny the beliefs of others. Because our culture generally considers religious tolerance a virtue, members of sects are sometimes accused of being narrowminded in insisting that they alone follow the true religion.

2. *Firm Plan for Living*

Compared to churches, which try to appeal to everyone (the term catholic also means “universal”), a sect forms an exclusive group. To members of a sect, religion is not just one aspect of life but a firm plan for living. In extreme cases, members of a sect withdraw completely from society in order to practice their religion without interference. The Amish community is one example of a North American sect that isolates itself.

3. *Less Formal*

In organizational terms, sects are less formal than churches. Sect members may be highly spontaneous and emotional in worship, compared to members of churches, who tend to listen passively to their leaders.

4. *Charismatic Leadership*

Churches and sects also have different patterns of leadership— the more churchlike an organization, the more likely that its leaders are formally trained and ordained. Sectlike organizations, which celebrate the personal presence of God, expect their leaders to exhibit divine inspiration in the form of charisma (from Greek, meaning “divine favor”), extraordinary personal qualities that can infuse people with emotion and turn them into followers.

5. *Social Composition*

Finally, churches and sects differ in their social composition. Because they are more closely tied to the world, well-established churches tend to include people of high social standing. Sects

attract more disadvantaged people. A sect's openness to new members and its promise of salvation and personal fulfillment appeal to people of all social classes.

6. *Can Evolve into Denomination*

Members of many sects typically proselytize (preach and attempt to convert) and try to recruit new members into the sect. If a sect succeeds in attracting many new members, it gradually grows, becomes more bureaucratic, and, ironically, eventually evolves into a denomination. Many of today's Protestant denominations began as sects, as did the Shi'a. It began as sect of Islam and now is a denomination. The Amish in the United States are perhaps the most well-known example of a current sect.

Topic 3: Cults

A cult is a small religious organization that is at great odds or largely outside with the norms and values of the larger society. Most sects develop from conventional religious organizations. However, a cult typically forms around a highly charismatic leader who offers a compelling message about a new and very different way of life.

Characteristics of Cults

Cults have following distinctive characteristics

1. *Unconventional Principles or Practices*

Because some cult principles or practices are unconventional, the popular view is that they are deviant or even evil. The suicides of thirty-nine members of California's Heaven's Gate cult in 1997—people who claimed that dying was a doorway to a higher existence, perhaps in the company of aliens from outer space—confirmed the negative image the public holds of most cults.

2. *Demands to Adopt Radical New Lifestyle*

Although the term *cult* today raises negative images of crazy, violent, small groups of people. This charge is unfair because there is nothing basically wrong with this kind of religious organization. Many longstanding religions—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism included—began as cults. Of course, few cults exist for very long. One reason is that they are even more at odds

with the larger society than sects. Many cults demand that members not only accept their doctrine but also adopt a radically new lifestyle. This is why people sometimes accuse cults of brainwashing their members, although research suggests that most people who join cults experience no psychological harm.

3. Cults are Violent

Another image of cults is that they are violent. In fact, most are not violent. However, some cults have committed violence in the recent past. In 1995 the *Aum Shinrikyo* (Supreme Truth) cult in Japan killed 10 people and injured thousands more when it released bombs of deadly nerve gas in several Tokyo subway lines (Strasser & Post, 1995). Two years earlier, the Branch Davidian cult engaged in an armed standoff with federal agents in Waco, Texas. When the agents attacked its compound, a fire broke out and killed 80 members of the cult, including 19 children; the origin of the fire remains unknown (Tabor & Gallagher, 1995).

A few cults have also committed mass suicide. In another example from the 1990s, some two decades earlier, more than 900 members of the People's Temple cult killed themselves in Guyana under orders from the cult's leader, Jim Jones (Stoen, 1997).

Difference between Cult and Sect

Cults are similar to sects but differ in at least three respects.

1. First, they generally have not broken away from a larger denomination and instead originate outside the mainstream religious tradition.
2. Second, they are often secretive and do not proselytize as much.
3. Third, they are at least somewhat more likely than sects to rely on *charismatic leadership* based on the extraordinary personal qualities of the cult's leader.

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Lesson No. 4

The Sociological Functions of Religion

Topic 1: Religion as an Integrative Force and Creating a Moral Community

Religion is a cultural universal because it fulfils several basic functions within human societies. It is a basic requirement of group life. In sociological terms, these include both manifest and latent functions. Among the manifest (open and stated) functions of religion are included defining the spiritual world and giving meaning to the divine.

Religion provides an explanation for events that seem difficult to understand. By contrast, latent functions or religion are unintended, covert, or hidden. Functionalists suggest that religion is a requirement for society and individual both because it serves both manifest and latent functions.

Some of the most important functions of religion are as follows:

Religion as an Integrative Force:

Durkheim believed that the primary function of religion was to preserve and solidify society. It functions to reinforce the collective unity or social solidarity of a group. Society is generally composed of individuals and social groups with diverse interests and aspirations. In this view, religious bonds often excel these personal and divisive forces. It gives people certain ultimate values and ends to hold in common. Sharing the same religion or religious interpretation of the meaning of life unites people in a cohesive and building moral order.

The social cohesion is developed through rituals such as reciting prayer in the honour of God, institutions of worship (church, temple, mosque, etc.), performing Namaz, and multitudes of observances and ceremonies practised by different groups. By regularly bringing adherents together to re-enact beliefs commonly shared, religion promotes group sense of identity,

oneness and unity which ensures cohesion. The unifying rituals of different faiths are also observed by individuals on the most significant occasions such as birth, marriage and death. This integrative function of religion was particularly apparent in traditional, pre-industrial societies.

Group unity and solidarity is more prevalent during crisis situation when the group faces imminent threat to its existence and survival. During crisis religion provides a rallying point for members of a society by offering them hope for tomorrow. By partaking in religious rituals adherents believe that their God is capable and at the appropriate time will answer them and provide solution to their problems.

Although the integrative impact of religion has been emphasized here, it should be noted that religion is not the only integrative force—the feelings of nationalism or patriotism may also serve the same end. In contemporary industrial societies, people are also bound together by patterns of consumption, ways of life, laws and other forces.

Religion as an Agent of Social Change:

Religion can enable individuals to transcend social forces; to act in ways other than those prescribed by the social order. Generally, religion is regarded as an obstacle in the path of social change but many religious groups, by criticizing existing rules of social morality and social injustice, and community or government actions, help in bringing about social change. It should be noted that many religious leaders have acted in the forefront of many social and political movements. For example, Martin Luther King fought for civil rights of Blacks in America. Swami Dayanand worked aggressively for women education and widow remarriage in India.

However, religion is sometimes against progress, for example, Buddhism protested against the development of capitalism in China. On the other hand, religion also snubs social change by encouraging oppressed people to focus on other worldly concerns rather than on their immediate poverty or exploitation. Hence, it acts as an opiate for people.

Creating a Moral Community:

Religion provides a system of beliefs around which people may gather to belong to something greater than themselves in order to have their personal beliefs reinforced by the group and its

rituals. Those who share a common ideology develop a collective identity and a sense of fellowship.

Members of moral community also share a common life. This moral community gives rise to social community through the symbolism of the sacred that supports the more ordinary aspects of social life. Religion then legitimizes society. It provides sacred sanction for the social order and for its basic values and meanings.

Religion as a Source of Identity:

Religion gives individuals a sense of identity—a profound and positive self-identity. It enables them to cope effectively with the many doubts and indignation of everyday life. Religion may suggest people that they are not worthless or meaningless creatures and thus helps them alleviating the frustrating experiences of life which sometimes force a person to commit suicide.

In industrial societies, religion helps to integrate newcomers by providing a source of identity. For example, Bangladeshi immigrants in India, after settling in their new social environment, came to be identified as Indian Muslims. In a rapidly changing world, religious faith often provides an important sense of belonging.

Topic 2: Religion Serves a Means to Provide Answers to Ultimate Question and Psychologizing Religion

Religion Serves a Means to Provide Answers to Ultimate Questions:

The world today is full of problems and diseases that sometimes make life seem meaningless. Religion provide doctrines that gives meaning and hope to life. Religion provide answers to the puzzling questions of human life, its origin, existence and ultimate opportunities of life. Religion provide answers to misfortune and meaning to a seemingly meaningless world. It is religion that provides the truth about the world.

These beliefs are based on the faith that life has a purpose, and there is someone or something that controls the universe. It defines the spiritual world and gives meaning to the divine. Because of its beliefs concerning people's relationships to a beyond, religion provides an explanation for events that seem difficult to understand.

Psychologizing Religion:

The notion of ‘positive thinking’ serves as an example of psychologizing religion. It provides peace of mind, promises prosperity and success in life, as well as effective and happy human relations. It is thus a source of security and confidence, and also of happiness and success in this world. Many times, it serves as a liberating and integrating force for individuals. For instance, it helps in bringing change (sobriety) to seemingly hopeless alcoholics.

Religion Acts as Psychotherapy:

In modern world, religion has also become a supporting psychology—a form of psychotherapy. Now, God is conceived of as a humane and considerate God. Such a hopeful perception helps the sufferer in alleviating his/her personal and social crisis.

In our society today that is full of problems, religion provide some form of emotional support to members of the society during events such as death, marriages and even when new ones are delivered into families. Important events in the life of the individual are marked by religious rituals and ceremonies. For example, marriages, births, deaths, and appointment into higher offices and promotions are marked by one form of religious activity or the other.

A new vocation of religious practitioner has recently come up in the mental health field as a helping professional. It already existed in village India and other places in the form of shamans, priests and magicians (shamans are treated as super-humans endowed with supernatural powers in some tribal societies).

Religion Controls Sexuality:

According to B. Turner (1992), ‘religion has the function of controlling the sexuality of the body, in order to secure the regular transmission of property via the family’. In feudalism, and now in capitalism, religious control of sexuality is an important vehicle for the production of legitimate offspring.

Topic 3: Religion as Emotional Support and Legitimizing Function of Religion

Religion as Emotional Support:

Religion is a sense of comfort and solace to the individuals during times of personal and social crises such as death of loved ones, serious injury, etc. This is especially true when something

‘senseless’ happens. It gives them emotional support and provides consolation, reconciliation and moral strength during trials and defeats, personal losses and unjust treatments.

When misfortune befalls a member of the society, people from religious group often sympathize with him and rally round him to ensure that the necessary psychological support is given. Usually, members gather round the affected member to provide the necessary company and sharing in the problem. If an individual is grieving for example members would usually come together to provide company in form of wake-keeps over a period of time. This is done so as to avoid fear, loneliness that may accompany the calamity and to provide the necessary assistance in terms of labour during burial.

Religion provides a means whereby man can face the crises of life with strength and fortitude. The concepts of karma and transmigration among Hindus and Jesus Christ as son of God and prayer among Christians seek to provide such fortitude and strength.

Religion offers consolation to oppressed peoples also by giving them hope that they can achieve salvation and eternal happiness in the afterlife. Religion increases the ‘God will provide’ the attitude.

Religion and the Control of Stress in the Society:

Majority of religions of the world preach self-denial and rejection of the materialism of the present world. They appeal to their members to try by all means possible to direct their energies towards making heaven. Members are urged to see present problems as tribulations which must come to pass. Adherents are encouraged to keep their store of wealth in heaven where it is safe and there is no destruction. This doctrinal condemnation of worldly wealth and materialism pacifies the mind of members and gives them hope for a better tomorrow thereby helping in discharging stress, frustration and anxiety.

Laws are derived from Religion:

Every society has its rules, laws, norms and legal prohibitions which define the limits to which individual can seek legitimate achievements. Societal laws relating to offences such as theft, murder, rape, assault etc are derived from the laws of God found in the religious books like Qur’an, Bible and Vedas. Religious rules legitimize secular laws and are therefore more potent

in controlling behaviour in society. At many times, even the so-called educated people regard religious laws as superior to the man-made laws.

In primitive and traditional societies and even some sections of modern societies, despite all-round attack over it, religion is a pervasive matter, and religious beliefs and rites play an important part in the activities of various kinds of groups—from family to occupational groups. Though inhabitants and citizens of a ‘modern’ society, many remain traditional in their religious and moral outlook. For some, this means that religious authority and principles override that of secular law.

Legitimizing Function of Religion:

According to Max Weber (1930), religion may be used to explain, justify or rationalize the exercise of power. It reinforces the interests of those in power. Even in societies not as visibly ruled by religious dogma, religion legitimates the political sector.

For example, India’s traditional caste system defined the social structure of society. According to one theory, caste system is a creation of the priesthood (Brahmins)—the uppermost stratum of this system, but it also served the interests of political rulers by granting legitimacy to social inequality.

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Lesson No. 5**The Sociological Theories of Religion - I****Topic 1: Functionalism: Émile Durkheim**

In the wake of 19th century European industrialization and secularization, three social theorists attempted to examine the relationship between religion and society: Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx.

Functionalism

Functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society. Religion, in fact, depends on society for its existence, value, and significance, and vice versa. From this perspective, religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control.

In providing answers, religion defines the spiritual world and spiritual forces, including divine beings. For example, it helps answer questions like “How was the world created?” “Why do we suffer?” “Is there a plan for our lives?” and “Is there an afterlife?” As another function, religion provides emotional comfort in times of crisis. Religious rituals bring order, comfort, and organization through shared familiar symbols and patterns of behaviour.

One of the most important functions of religion, from a functionalist perspective, is the opportunities it creates for social interaction and the formation of groups. It provides social support and social networking, offering a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help (spiritual and material) in times of need. Like in the wave of Corona pandemic, many political and religious conveyed message to people to seek refuge in religion and pray to Almighty for protection.

Early Life and Work

Durkheim’s father was the eighth in a line of father-son rabbis. He was chosen to pursue his father’s vocation and was given a good religious and secular education. He abandoned the idea of a religious or rabbinical career, however, and became very secular in his outlook. His

sociological analysis of religion in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) was an example of this. In this work he was not interested in the *theological* questions of God's existence or purpose, but in developing a very secular, sociological question: Whether God exists or not, how does religion *function socially* in a society?

Durkheim and Functional Perspective

He argued that beneath the irrationalism and the “barbarous and fantastic rites” of both the most primitive and the most modern religions is their ability to satisfy real social and human needs. Religion performs the key function of providing social solidarity in a society. The rituals, the worship of icons, and the belief in supernatural beings bring people together, provide a ritual and symbolic focus, and unify them. This type of analysis became the basis of the functionalist perspective in sociology. He explained the existence and persistence of religion on the basis of the necessary function it performed in unifying society.

According to Durkheim society has a life and power of its own beyond the life of any individual. In other words, society itself is godlike, shaping the lives of its members and living on beyond them. Practicing religion, people celebrate the awesome power of their society. As stated earlier, French Émile Durkheim defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things” (1915). To him, the sacred meant extraordinary—something that inspired wonder and which seemed connected to the concept of “the divine.”

No wonder people around the world transform certain everyday objects into sacred symbols of their collective life. Durkheim argued that “religion happens” in society when there is a separation between the profane (ordinary life) and the sacred. A rock, for example, isn't sacred or profane as it exists. But if someone makes it into a headstone, or another person uses it for landscaping, it takes on different meanings—one sacred, one profane. For example, Hijra e Aswad is a black stone built into the eastern wall of the Ka'bah (small shrine within the Great Mosque of Mecca) and probably dating from the pre-Islamic religion of the Arabs. Muslims believe that it is brought down by Heaven and helped prophets during building of Ka'bah. Hence it is held sacred by Muslims.

Members of technologically simple societies do this with a totem, an object in the natural world collectively defined as sacred. The totem—perhaps an animal or an elaborate work of art—becomes the center piece of ritual, symbolizing the power of society over the individual. In our

society, the flag is treated with respect and is not used in a profane way (say, as clothing) or allowed to touch the ground. Similarly, putting the words “In God We Trust” on U.S. currency (a practice started in the 1860s at the time of the Civil War) or adding the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance (in 1954) symbolizes some widespread beliefs that tie society together.

Functions of Religion

Durkheim identified three major functions of religion that contribute to the operation of society:

1. Establishing social cohesion

Religion unites people through shared symbolism, values, and norms. Religious thought and ritual establish rules of fair play, organizing our social life.

2. Promoting social control

Every society uses religious ideas to promote conformity. By defining God as a “judge,” many religions encourage people to obey cultural norms. Religion can also be used to back up the power of political systems. In medieval Europe, for example, monarchs claimed to rule by “divine right,” so that obedience was seen as doing God’s will. Even today, our leaders ask for God’s blessing, implying that their efforts are right and just. Finally, religion promotes social control: it reinforces social norms such as appropriate styles of dress, following the law, and regulating sexual behaviour.

3. Providing meaning and purpose

Religious belief offers the comforting sense that our brief lives serve some greater purpose. Strengthened by such beliefs, people are less likely to despair in the face of change or even tragedy. For this reason, we mark major life course transitions—including birth, marriage, and death—with religious observances.

Social Impact of Religion

Durkheim is generally considered the first sociologist who analyzed religion in terms of its societal impact. What would happen if religion were to decline? This question led Durkheim to posit that religion is not just a social creation but something that represents the power of society: when people celebrate sacred things, they celebrate the power of their society. By this reasoning, even if traditional religion disappeared, society wouldn’t necessarily dissolve.

Durkheim applied the methods of natural science to the study of society, he held that the source of religion and morality is the collective mind-set of society and that the cohesive bonds of social order result from common values in a society. He contended that these values need to be maintained to maintain social stability. Religion then provided differing degrees of “social cement” that held societies and cultures together. Faith provided the justification for society to exist beyond the mundane and partial explanations of existence as provided in science, even to consider an intentional future.

Topic 2: Conflict Theory: Karl Marx

The social-conflict approach highlights religion’s support of social inequality. Religion, proclaimed Karl Marx, serves ruling elites by legitimizing the status quo and diverting people’s attention from social inequities. Today, the British monarch is the formal head of the Church of England, illustrating the close ties between religious and political elites. In “practical terms, linking the church and the state means that opposing the government amounts to opposing the church and, by implication, God.

Early Life and Work

German philosopher, journalist, and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx (1818–1883) also studied the social impact of religion. He believed religion reflects the social stratification of society and that it maintains inequality and perpetuates the status quo. For him, religion was just an extension of working-class (proletariat) economic suffering: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (1844).

Marx’s Analysis

According to Marx’s theory, life determines consciousness. His theory can also be applied in the context of religion, such as the condition of suffering that alters religious thinking and concept. In addition, religion not only helps the poor and the oppressed people to survive but also to change the condition to be better. For them (the poor and oppressed people), religion can encourage them to respond the enormous problems that caused by globalization, such as poverty, environmental crisis, social justice and the like.

According to Marx, the foundation of irreligious criticism is man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man’s self-consciousness and self-awareness. This state and

this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an invented world. A religion is general theory of this world.

The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against the world whose spiritual aroma is religion. All in all, Marx notes that religion clearly benefits for those people in alienated society, but the ruling class benefit the most because one of the unintended consequences of religious beliefs. The solution to unhappiness is to remove the cause of it rather than escape from it, and the cause of human misery was the capitalist economic system and the solution was its forcible removal and replacement by nonexploitive economic system namely communism.

Conflict theorists also point out that those in power in a religion are often able to dictate practices, rituals, and beliefs through their interpretation of religious texts or via proclaimed direct communication from the divine.

Religion and Gender Inequality

The feminist perspective focuses specifically on gender inequality. In terms of religion, feminist theorists assert that, although women are typically the ones to socialize children into a religion, they have traditionally held very few positions of power within religions. A few religions and religious denominations are more gender equal, but male dominance remains the norm of most.

Topic 3: Max Weber's View on Religion

Early life and Work

Max Weber (born April 21, 1864, Erfurt, Prussia [Germany]—died June 14, 1920, Munich, Germany), German sociologist and political economist best known for his thesis of the “Protestant ethic,” relating Protestantism to capitalism, and for his ideas on bureaucracy. Weber’s profound influence on sociological theory stems from his demand for objectivity in scholarship and from his analysis of the motives behind human action.

Weber is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He noted that in modern industrial societies, business leaders and owners of capital, the higher grades of skilled labour, and the most technically and commercially trained personnel were

overwhelmingly Protestant. He also noted the uneven development of capitalism in Europe, and in particular how capitalism developed first in those areas dominated by Protestant sects. He asked, “Why were the districts of highest economic development at the same time particularly favourable to a revolution in the Church?” Development of the Protestant ethic—the duty to “work hard in one’s calling”—in particular Protestant sects such as Calvinism, Pietism, and Baptism gave rise to capitalism.

What Does Hard Labour Mean?

As opposed to the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church in which *poverty* was a virtue and labour simply a means for maintaining the individual and community, the Protestant sects began to see hard, continuous labour as a spiritual end in itself.

Hard labour was firstly an ascetic technique of worldly renunciation and a defence against temptations and distractions: the unclean life, sexual temptations, and religious doubts.

Secondly, the Protestant sects believed that God’s disposition toward the individual was predetermined and could never be known or influenced by traditional Christian practices like confession, penance, and buying indulgences. However, one’s chosen occupation was a “calling” given by God, and the only sign of God’s favour or recognition in this world was to receive good fortune in one’s calling. Thus material success and the steady accumulation of wealth through personal effort and prudence was seen as a sign of an individual’s state of grace.

Weber argued that the *ethic*, or way of life, that developed around these beliefs was a key factor in creating the conditions for both the accumulation of capital, as the goal of economic activity, and for the creation of an industrious and disciplined labour force.

Weber’s Rationalization

In this regard, Weber has presented an *idealist* explanation of the development of capital, as opposed to Marx’s historical materialist explanation. It is an element of *cultural belief* that leads to social change rather than the concrete organization and class struggles of the economic structure. It might be more accurate, however, to see Weber’s work building on Marx’s and to

see his Protestant ethic thesis as part of a broader set of themes concerning the *process of rationalization*.

Why did the Western world modernize and develop modern science, industry, and democracy when, for centuries, the Orient, the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East were technically, scientifically, and culturally more advanced than the West? Weber argued that the modern forms of society developed in the West because of the process of *rationalization*: the general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be transformed by the application of instrumental reason—rational bureaucratic organization, calculation, and technical reason—and the overcoming of “magical” thinking (which we earlier referred to as the “disenchantment of the world”). As the impediments toward rationalization were removed, organizations and institutions were restructured on the principle of maximum efficiency and specialization, while older, traditional (inefficient) types of organization were gradually eliminated.

Irony of Protestant Ethics

The irony of the Protestant ethic as one stage in this process was that the rationalization of capitalist business practices and organization of labour eventually dispensed with the religious goals of the ethic. At the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber pessimistically describes the fate of modern humanity as an “iron cage.” The iron cage is Weber’s metaphor for the condition of modern humanity in a technical, rationally defined, and “efficiently” organized society. Having forgotten its spiritual or other purposes of life, humanity succumbs to an order “now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production”. The modern subject in the iron cage is “only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march”.

Work Ethics in Modern World

The work ethic in the information age has been affected by tremendous cultural and social change, just as workers in the mid to late 19th century were influenced by the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Factory jobs tend to be simple and uninvolved and require very little thinking or decision making on the part of the worker. Today, the work ethic of the modern

workforce has been transformed, as more thinking and decision making is required. Employees also seek autonomy and fulfilment in their jobs, not just wages. Higher levels of education have become necessary, as well as people management skills and access to the most recent information on any given topic. The information age has increased the rapid pace of production expected in many jobs.

Working hard also doesn't seem to have any relationship with Catholic or Protestant religious beliefs anymore, or those of other religions; information age workers expect talent and hard work to be rewarded by material gain and career advancement. As this is becoming an empty promise for many in Western societies, especially youth, attention has turned to more critical analyses of the place and power of religion in society.

Comparison between three Theorists

For Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, who were reacting to the great social and economic upheaval of the late 19th century and early 20th century in Europe, religion was an integral part of society. For Durkheim, religion was a force for cohesion that helped bind the members of society to the group, while Weber believed religion could be understood as something separate from society. Marx considered religion inseparable from the economy and the worker. Religion could not be understood apart from its ideological role in perpetuating or mystifying the inequalities of capitalist society. Despite their different views, these social theorists all believed in the centrality of religion to society.

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Lesson 06**Sociological Theories of Religion- II****Topic 01: Psycho-Analytical Theory of Religion*****Freud's Major Work on Religion***

Freud unfolds his theory of religion in four different books: Totem and Taboo (1913), The Future of an Illusion (1927), Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), and Moses and

Monotheism (1939). Even though his theory takes different paths in his subsequent works, what Freud formulated in Totem and Taboo constitutes his main approach to religion, a book that he deemed as one of his most important writings. As other theorists of religion do, Freud seeks to respond to the two main questions regarding the origin and the function of religion. In Totem and Taboo, he attempts to determine what is the historical origin of religion.

His approach to study religion stems from the discipline of psychology and is based on his previous work on neurosis and neurotic patients. A neurosis is not a pathological condition. Rather, it is a psychological disorder “of pattern of thought, feeling and behaviours which develop during the life of the individual, and tend progressively to limit and disable that individual’s capacity for normal existence”.

Freud and Neurosis

Freud dedicated his life in working with neurotic patients and maintained that neurotics can be healed through psychoanalysis. In psychoanalytic therapy the therapist seeks to expose the cause of the neurosis with the patient’s help. The cause of the neurosis is hidden or camouflaged and cannot be spotted at first sight. Neurotic patients have experienced some painful episodes and feelings in their lives, that is, they were conscious about them when those incidents or feelings occurred and through the process of repression have placed them in the domain of the unconscious and have kept them there permanently. Being unconscious about those experiences does not mean not being aware of them; rather, it means that those experiences are forgotten as if they never happened at all but are still there, in the unconscious domain. Freud argues that those repressed experiences and emotions release themselves in forms and behaviours that no rational person would ever employ; for example, and other strange behaviours.

Ancient Myth and Freud’s Manifestation

Freud drew Oedipus complex from the famous ancient Greek myth of King Oedipus who, without being aware of it, killed his father and married his mother. Freud states that Oedipus complex is an instinctive drive. Freud argues that every male child between the age of three and six experiences contradictory feelings for his two parents. On the one hand, the child wishes to have sexual intercourse with his mother and have her exclusively for himself, and on the other hand experiences immense hatred towards his father for having his mother. However, the child at the same time adores the father; but he experiences feelings of jealousy and

competitiveness towards him because it is the father who stands amidst himself and his mother. Such feelings cannot be expressed openly and hence are repressed.

However, these feelings still not completely repressed remain in the unconscious and break out in symptoms of neurosis. Since the complex cannot be resolved within the unconscious, it breaks out as a neurosis.

Oedipus Complex as Foundation of Religion

Freud starts his inquiry with a study of the religious and social practices of the Australian Aborigines in his book 'Totem and Taboo'. Aborigines follow a totemic religious system. A totem is an emblem of an animal, more rarely of a vegetable and most rarely of a natural phenomenon (thunder, the moon, the sun, rain, et cetera) or an ancestor. A clan, which is the main and basic form of social grouping, has one totem that belongs to that group alone; no totem can belong to two or more different clans. If two clans have the same totem then they can only be subdivisions of the same clan.

The particularity of totemism is its kinship system. The clansmen who worship the totem are considered to be blood-relatives due to the fact that they have the same name, that of the clan, and they maintain that they form a single family. Consequently, the clansmen are not allowed to have sexual intercourse with or marry individuals from their own clan: this is the law of exogamy. The totemic belief also leads to another prohibition: that of not killing and/or eating the totem. This prohibition constitutes a sacred obligation that once broken leads to death or to very serious sanctions. The sacred law of not killing and eating the totem and the law of exogamy constitute the two taboos of totemism. In certain and designated periods, the clansmen are allowed to break these very two prohibitions: to kill and eat the totem and commit incest.

From Guilt to Religion

For Freud these contradictory feelings characterize the Oedipus complex that is encountered in all male individuals, primitive and modern. In order to justify his approach Freud draws information from evolutionary theories and he goes back to the time when, according to him, no religion existed. In the beginning of human life there was a primal horde that constitutes the first stage of humanity for Freud. Head of that horde was the father, a figure so strong and dominant, who kept all the females for himself and drove away all the males of the group in order to maintain his power. At some point the males, the band of brothers as Freud calls them,

came together and killed the father and devoured him in order to finally have access to the females.

Freud argues that in the first stage of the primal horde there existed no unconscious, no taboo, no sexual relations except for the dominant male, i.e. the father, and no religion within the group. In the second stage, that of the band of brothers, still there is no religion but sexual relations are now allowed since the dominant figure has been murdered. But the brothers who came together and killed the father were now feeling guilty for their deed. The father was a figure they simultaneously hated and loved, just like the feelings that any male child experiences according to Freud across space and time.

In order to alleviate the guilt the brothers created the concept of the totem (which for Freud is the third stage, that of religion – at least its first phase) in order to revoke their deed by prohibiting the killing of the now sacred animal (totem). At the same time the brothers renounced the very thing for which they committed patricide: to have sexual relations with the females of their group. The main reason for this prohibition was the inevitable urge that each one of the brothers would have felt: to take the place of the murdered father and keep all the females for himself.

Hence, for Freud, religion is an answer to the feeling of guilt that the band of brothers experienced after they had killed their father. Freud argues that the origin of religion is a response to the Oedipus complex and its actualization by the band of brothers and their subsequent feeling of guilt is to be seen in any religion, from the most ancient times to today. All religions, for Freud, are attempts that seek to solve the same problem: the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt that any male child experiences and who represses it into his unconscious. The contradictory feelings of the Oedipus complex have their roots in that primeval age and the murder that the band of brothers committed.

Religion and Civilization

In time Freud came to consider that the account which he had given in *Totem and Taboo* did not fully address the issue of the origins of developed religion, the human needs which religion is designed to meet and, consequently, the psychological motivations underpinning religious belief. He turned to these questions in his *The Future of an Illusion* (1927; reprinted 1961) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930; reprinted 1962). In the two works he represented the structures of civilization, which permit men to live in mutually beneficial communal

relationships, as emerging only as a consequence of the imposition of restrictive processes on individual human instinct.

In order for civilization to emerge, limiting regulations must be created to control the satisfaction of destructive drives, examples of which are those directed towards incest, cannibalism and murder. Even the religious injunction to love one's neighbour as oneself, Freud argued, springs from the need to protect civilization from disintegration. Given that history demonstrates that man is "a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien", the fashioning of a value system based upon the requirement to develop loving relationships with one's fellow man is a social and cultural necessity, without which we would be reduced to living in a state of nature. For Freud, the principal task of civilization is thus to defend us against nature, for without it we would be entirely exposed to natural forces which have almost unlimited power to destroy us.

Extending his account of repression from individual to group psychology, Freud contended that, with the refinement of culture, the external coercive measures inhibiting the instincts become largely internalized. Humans become social and moral beings through the functioning of the superego in effecting a renunciation of the more antisocial drives. However, the effect of such renunciations is to create a state of social harmony must in turn the create substitute satisfactions for the drives. Human beings make individual sacrifices for the sake of civilization. However, such sacrifices may result in suffering and loss. Here is when religion comes in and provide substitute satisfaction in turn of those sacrifices.

For Freud, then, the cultural and social importance of religion resides both in reconciling men to the limitations which membership of the community places upon them and in mitigating their sense of powerlessness in the face of a unruly and ever-threatening nature. In this respect again, Freud held, group psychology is an extension of individual psychology, with the powerful father figure in patriarchal monotheistic religions providing the required protection against the threat of destruction. It is in this sense, he argued, that the father-son relationship so crucial to psychoanalysis demands the projection of a deity configured as an all-powerful, benevolent father figure. Freud argued, religious ideas thus owe their origin neither to reason nor experience but to a primal need to overcome the fear of an ever-threatening nature.

Why Turning Away from Religion is Desirable and Inevitable?

Freud acknowledged that religion made very significant contributions to the development of civilization, and that religious beliefs are not strictly refutable, the question arises as to why he came to consider that religious beliefs are delusional and that a turning away from religion is both desirable and inevitable in advanced social groupings.

The answer given in *Civilization and its Discontents* is that, in the final analysis, religion has failed to deliver on its promise of human happiness and fulfilment; it seeks to impose a belief structure on humans which has no rational evidential base but requires unquestioning acceptance in the face of countervailing empirical evidence. That Freud saw the movement from religious to scientific modes of understanding as a positive cultural development that cannot be doubted.

Difference between Durkheim and Freud's View on Religion and Study on Australian Aborigines

The most famous studies of totemism among the Australian Aborigines is Émile Durkheim's "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life" (1912) and Freud's Totem and Taboo (1913). The books deal with the Australian Aborigines and their religious and social structures that pervade their whole life. Their religion is known as totemism, is the earliest stage of religion. Both theories are utterly different. For Durkheim, totemism is about the community and its coherence; what the Australian Aborigines worship is the community itself. For Freud, the psychological factor and the human unconsciousness is what regulates religion.

Topic 02: Evolutionary Theory of Religion - I

Over the years, scientists have offered a variety of explanations to account for particular religious phenomena and to make sense of the universality, complexity, and variation among religions. Yet many questions remain unanswered. While one religion may directly promote within-group dynamics, another may be based on individual spiritual devotion devoid of group attachments. How did these very different manifestations of religion evolve? In the field of evolutionary religious studies, scholars examine possible underlying psychological mechanisms of religious belief and behavior, as well as their adaptive and maladaptive features, to seek scientific answers to these questions.

The Evolutionary Process

Religion is a communication of a world view, or a created reality, that people develop as a group. Such realities have to start out in the mind of one person than they spread to others. How and why human beings developed the ability to create these internal realities and then communicate them? Let's move back in evolutionary time to our mammalian origins. The central nervous system evolved, at least in mammals, to facilitate survival and reproduction by relating input from sensory organs to an output of behavior. It has evolved so as to make this neural data processing adaptive in the sense of promoting survival and reproduction. In order to do this, it creates internal models of external realities. In fact, there is no absolute external reality only models of it that are created by the central nervous system.

Thus, we can think of the central nervous system as a data processing machine. Its inputs are the senses. Its internal memory is neural network. Its central processing unit is a complex neural processor that is soft-wired to increase the probability of certain connections and decrease the probability of others. Its output is behavior and emotions. Somewhere around 60,000 years ago human evolved a capacity for symbolic communication. This allowed them to share these internal models with each other. Thus, culture a storehouse of shared knowledge developed.

Many different models, all of them with adaptive possibilities, were communicated to other with symbols. The most popular of these cultural models become religions. Thus, we can also look at religion as a type of survival intelligence that is shared by a group. It is a result of the obligation of the central nervous system to lead human beings towards adaptive and reproductive behavior. Although it is shared by group, it is a product of the human brain, or mind if you like the designation, and it carries with it the imprint of the mammalian brain that preceded it.

Evolutionary Theoretical Camps

Thus far, evolutionists have formed three theoretical camps that view religion as:

Non-Functional Theory

Non-functional theorists hypothesize that religion is not an adaptation but instead an evolutionary byproduct of nonreligious adaptations. Nonfunctional accounts tend to emphasize the role of genetics and the development of the brain in generating the various components of religious systems.

Functional Theory

Functional theorists hypothesize that religion's benefits outweigh its costs in terms of survival and reproductive success. Work by such theorists focuses on identifying specific religious adaptations that serve particular functions. Functional accounts tend to emphasize social and cultural influences on behaviour with an explicit focus on religion's group level features.

Dysfunctional Theory

Dysfunctional theorists hypothesize that religious phenomena, particularly their maladaptive features, result from cultural evolutionary processes that are relatively independent of individual and group fitness. Dysfunctional accounts tend to emphasize the role of cultural transmission and rapid environmental changes in preserving costly aspects of religion.

Divergent Yet Complimentary Theories

At first glance these perspectives appear incompatible. A thorough review, however, reveals that these theorists address divergent yet complementary research questions. Non-functionalists ask: What are the evolutionary origins of the religion's cognitive components? Functionalists ask: What adaptive functions does religion serve and how did it evolve to serve these functions? Dysfunctional theorists ask: How are religious concepts transmitted and maintained, and why do maladaptive features persist? Research and theory driven by different questions has inspired divergent approaches and resulted in dissimilar conclusions. However, what appear at first to be incompatible results are actually more complementary than they seem.

The Evolutionary Theories of Religion

This multifaceted definition attests to the immense complexity of religion. As noted above, nonfunctional, functional, and dysfunctional approaches differ based on the three types of research questions they pose. Some of these perspectives have also generated different branches of theorizing, resulting in competing evolutionary theories of religion. These theories have been briefly discussed below.

Byproduct Theory

Many evolutionists hypothesize that religious thought is a byproduct of the normal function of nonreligious psychological mechanisms that evolved in ancestral contexts. Supporters of byproduct theory propose that these nonreligious adaptive mechanisms are responsible for religion's related existence and generate the illusion of its apparent design. This theory helps

explain religion's universality and cross-cultural similarity by outlining its cognitive foundation in adaptations such as theory of mind and other features of social intelligence. It also provides a viable explanation for the evolutionary origins of religious thought.

According to byproduct theorists, one cognitive adaptation that plays a key role in generating religious cognition is theory of mind, the human propensity to attribute mental states such as beliefs and intentions to others. Theory of mind allows humans to understand that the mental states of others can be different from their own. This provides the foundation for skills critical to social functioning, specifically in identifying cooperators, defectors, and cheaters in human social groups.

This naturally led to the development of the cooperative behaviors, ethical instincts, and moral systems that humans exhibit today. Theory of mind and social intelligence also gave humans a new perspective on self and other. In particular, other is redefined to potentially include anything that can be assigned agency (e.g. family members, friends, enemies, the deceased, supernatural entities, etc.). One cognitive device critical to this process is a hyperactive agency detection mechanism. This mechanism interprets unusual or ambiguous stimuli from our surrounding environment as signs of agency. This often makes us perceive human-like characteristics in non-living objects. This originally nonreligious mechanism would be seen as (i.e. mistaking a shadow for an intentional spirit, seeing faces in the clouds, etc.) as the origins of supernaturalism and religious ideation.

When coupled with a theory of mind, which readily assigns mental states and intentionality to these anthropomorphized objects, the resulting system incidentally generates thoughts of religious spirits and deities. Once humans developed these mechanisms, interactions among the mechanisms were inevitable, and the belief in the existence of immaterial, unverifiable, and supernatural entities with their own minds and intentions was a short cognitive step away.

Topic 03: Evolutionary Theory of Religion - II

Individual-level Adaptation Theory

Supporters of this theory hypothesize that religiousness enhanced the fitness of individual ancestors and still enhances individual fitness today. Individual-level theorists often argue that religion was specifically an adaptation to increase cooperative and altruistic behavior between non-kin. Essentially, individuals displaying higher levels of religiousness gain the benefits of

reciprocal support from other religious individuals. If these benefits were significant enough, and the fitness costs associated with religiousness were low enough, then selection pressures would have favored religiousness.

According to these theorists, evidence that the majority of individuals alive today are religious, or at least self-identify as religious, supports this hypothesis. This functional approach can be taken in many different directions. Many religious theorists examine specific aspects of religion and subject them to a functional analysis. For example, anthropologist Richard Sosis (2004) proposes that religious rituals often effectively display an individual's religious devotion and fitness, which increases his or her within-group status and reproductive opportunities. Likewise, this behaviour can indirectly provide individual benefits to everyone in the group, as group solidarity tends to increase with higher levels of costly signalling behaviour. Using this type of functional analysis, particular religious traditions and institutions can be examined from an individual-level perspective.

According to individual-level theorists, the beneficial effects of religiousness have been documented elsewhere as well. Recent studies have outlined correlations between religiousness and higher happiness, sociability, community involvement, lower anxiety, less emotional distress, and generally enhanced individual health.

Multi-level Selection Theory (MLST)

In their quest to answer questions regarding religion's functional purpose, multi-level selection theorists, led by David Sloan Wilson (2002, 2005, 2007), hypothesize that religion is primarily a group-level adaptation that promotes social cooperation and cohesion and thereby benefits social groups in comparison to other less cooperative social groups. Religion, by definition, entails group-level components, making it an inherently social phenomenon. In many cases, this social phenomenon appears to serve group-level functions. MLST offers a viable explanation for how this group-level functionality can emerge when selection between groups based on group-benefiting social and cultural features outweighs individual-level selection within groups.

Multi-level theorists conceptualize human groups such as religious congregations act as group organisms that function in competition with other group organisms. When applied to religion, MLST posits that selection can take place at the individual and group level because cultural evolution operates differently than genetic evolution in human groups. Cultural information can quickly and easily infiltrate an entire group organism relative to genetic mutations. Indeed,

this theory places heavy emphasis on the power of learning, development, and culture in influencing human behavior. When included in this field's theoretical integration, MLST helps illuminate the group-level selective pressures partially responsible for religion's co-opted functionality.

In *Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society* (2002), Wilson uses several extended examples to argue that religion specifically functions to unify social groups and solve problems encountered at the group level. He sees Calvinism, for example, as a group-level reaction to perceive injustices of the Catholic Church and the resulting civil unrest in sixteenth-century Geneva. The Calvinist Church successfully resolved some of the problems specific to that environment. A system of checks and balances among the clergy, a strong belief in predetermination, and a belief in a personal relationship with God for each follower helped eliminate corruption, comfort the lower classes, and rebuild the social order that had dissolved under Catholic rule.

From this perspective, religious systems socially evolve on short timescales via between-group competition. Systems that effectively display secular utility, that address and resolve group-level conflicts, and that promote individual and group fitness are thus socially selected and retained until inevitable environmental changes provoke another social movement.

According to Wilson, religious systems function at a higher level than other socially unifying features of culture in producing prominent beliefs in sacred things. He recognizes supernaturalism and beliefs in 'the sacred' as natural supportive forces that developed to better implement moral order and group solidarity. For instance, individual meditative practices elicit group-level benefits by building cooperative dispositions within practitioners despite their emphasis on introspection and mental isolation. Wilson argues that these practices, and the religions that support them, require a functionalist approach because they exhibit clear adaptive benefits for groups. In fact, he asserts that all otherworldly beliefs motivate practical behaviors that provide these benefits.

Anachronism Theory

Anachronism theorists, who focus on religion's modern dysfunctionality, have pointed out a fascinating phenomenon: on short historical timescales, environmental and social changes can dramatically alter the utility of religious beliefs, behaviors, practices, and traditions. In essence, what was beneficial about a particular feature of religion yesterday may be costly today, and vice-versa. Examples of this phenomenon include the human sweet tooth. Humans living in

hunter-gatherer tribes when food was scarce developed a significant, instinctual desire for high-caloric foods. Unfortunately, this ancestral adaptation has led to maladaptive behavior in modern fast-food environments.

Similarly, religion can be viewed as an ancestral adaptation that has become modernly maladaptive, making it an evolutionary anachronism. Anachronism theory adds to our understanding of the cultural evolution of religious systems and explains how religion can become dysfunctional. For example, some cultural psychologists have proposed that religion is an anachronism based on a human propensity for warfare. This war hypothesis posits that religion was adaptive in an environment defined by between-group conflict. Recent evidence has shown that inter-group conflict could have played a critical role in human evolution.

As evidence for a rapid change in functionality, anachronism theorists offer many examples of currently dysfunctional religious traditions. For instance, in an environment without modern food preservation technology, but with growing populations and expansive trade networks, certain foods become dangerous carriers of disease. Under these historical conditions, many religions developed doctrinal prescriptions to avoid certain foods (e.g. pork). In this case, fears of infection guided doctrinal modifications that were prompted in the social and cultural evolutionary process. Many food avoidance traditions that are still maintained are anachronistic and unnecessary given modern preservation techniques and could be maladaptive in food scarce environments.

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Lesson 07

Sociological Analysis of major world religions – I: Abrahamic Religions

Topic 01: Origin and History

Abrahamic religions



The Abrahamic religions refer to three sister monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) that claim the prophet Abraham (Hebrew: *Avraham* אַבְרָהָם ; Arabic: *Ibrahim* إبراهيم) as their common forefather. These religions account for more than half of the world's total population today.

The Prophet Abraham is claimed by Jews as the ancestor of the Israelites, while his son Ishmael (Isma'il) is seen in Muslim tradition as the ancestor of the Arabs. In Christian

tradition, Abraham is described as a "father in faith" (see Romans 4), which may suggest that all three religions come from one source.

In modern times, leaders from all three Abrahamic faiths have begun to interact and engage in constructive Inter-religious Dialogue. They have begun to acknowledge their shared spiritual riches to help overcome the pains and prejudices of past eras and move forward to building a world of religious co-operation.

Origin of the Expression

The expression 'Abrahamic religions' originates from the Qur'an's repeated references to the 'religion of Abraham'. In particular, this expression refers specifically to Islam, and is sometimes contrasted to Judaism and Christianity, as for example Abraham is declared to have been a Muslim, 'not a Jew nor a Christian' (Surah 3:67). The latter assertion is made on the basis that Prophet Muhammad's divine revelation is considered to be a continuation of the previous Prophets' revelations from God, hence they are all believed to be Muslims. However, the expression 'Abrahamic religions' is generally used to imply that all of the three faiths share a common heritage.

Adam, Noah, and Moses are also common to all three religions. As for why we do not speak of an "Adamic," "Noachian," or "Mosaic" family, this may be for fear of confusion. Adam and Noah are said to be the ancestors of all humanity (though as named characters they are specific to the Biblical/Qur'anic tradition). Moses is closely associated with Judaism and, through Judaism, continuing into Christianity; Moses is regarded as a Prophet in Islam, but the term "Mosaic" may imply a genealogical lineage that the first Muslims—being Arab—did not share (e.g., descending from Ishmael). Thus, the scope suggested by the first two terms is larger than intended, while the third is too small.

The Significance of Abraham

- For Jews, Abraham is primarily a revered ancestor or Patriarch (referred to as "Our Father Abraham") to whom God made several promises: that he would have numberless descendants, and that they would receive the land of Canaan (the "Promised Land"). Abraham is also known as the first post-flood person to reject idolatry through rational analysis. (Shem and Eber carried on the Tradition from Noah), hence he symbolically appears as a fundamental figure for monotheistic religion.

- For Christians, Abraham is a spiritual forebear rather than a direct ancestor.^[2] For example, Christian iconography depicts him as an early witness to the Trinity in the form of three "angels" who visited him (the Hospitality of Abraham). In Christian belief, Abraham is a model of faith,^[3] and his intention to obey God by offering up Isaac is seen as a foreshadowing of God's offering of his son, Jesus.^[4] A longstanding tendency of Christian commentators is to interpret God's promises to Abraham, as applying to Christianity (the "True Israel") rather than Judaism (whose representatives rejected Christ).
- In Islam, Ibrahim is considered part of a line of prophets beginning with Adam (Genesis 20:7 also calls him a "prophet"), as well as the "first Muslim" – i.e., the first monotheist in a world where monotheism was lost. He is also referred to as *ابو نوة ابراهيم* or "Our Father Abraham," as well as *Ibrahim al-Hanif* or Abraham the Monotheist. Islam holds that it was Ishmael (Isma'il) rather than Isaac whom Ibrahim was instructed to sacrifice.

All the Abrahamic religions are related to Judaism as practiced in ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah prior to the Babylonian Exile, at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E.

Shared Common Origins

A number of significant commonalities are shared among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:

- **Monotheism:** All three religions worship one God, although Jews and Muslims sometimes criticize the common Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity as polytheistic. Indeed, there exists among their followers a general understanding that they worship the same one God.
- **A Prophetic Tradition:** All three religions recognize figures called "prophets," though their lists differ, as do their interpretations of the prophetic role.
- **Semitic Origins:** Judaism and Islam originated among Semitic peoples – namely the Jews and Arabs, respectively – while Christianity arose out of Judaism.
- **Revealed Religion:** A basis in divine revelation rather than, for example, philosophical speculation or custom.
- **An Ethical Orientation:** All three religions speak of a choice between good and evil, which is conflated with obedience or disobedience to God.

Topic 02: Islam

Origins and History

The most recently revealed of the three great monotheistic religions, Islam spread quickly from its roots in the Middle East and has been hugely influential in both scholarship and politics all over the world. Although this influence has been complex, the essence of the faith is simple: a belief in one God and that Muhammad is his principal prophet. The early prophets, including Musa (Moses), tried to show people the truth about the one everlasting God. However, it was not until the 7th century CE that the Muslim faith was revealed, when an Arab merchant named Muhammad received God's teaching.

1. The Revelation of Islam

Muhammad (570–632ce) is so revered among Muslims that many make the blessing “may peace be upon him” when they mention his name. He was a member of the Quraysh, the most powerful Arab tribe of the period, and lived in the city of Mecca, but his work took him on travels around the Arabian Peninsula. As a young man, he became known as a person of integrity and high moral standards. It was his habit during the month of Ramadan to go to Mount Hira near Mecca to meditate, and, according to tradition, it was here in 610CE that Muhammad felt the presence of the divine. God's messenger Jibra'il (the archangel Gabriel) commanded him, “Recite,” and presently the Prophet found himself speaking the words of God. Muhammad was illiterate, but these words were later collected in the Qur'an, the sacred book of Islam. Muhammad understood that there was one God, who should be known as Allah, meaning “the one who is God.”

2. From Mecca to Medina

Muhammad shared his vision with people in Mecca, attracting a small group of followers. However, threatened by Muhammad's attack on immorality and believing that their power was being undermined, the Quraysh leaders began to persecute Muhammad's people. In 620 CE, Muhammad advised his followers to flee to the city of Medina, about 200 miles (320km) north of Mecca. Muhammad himself remained in Mecca for another two years. His eventual flight to Medina in 622 CE, called the Hijrah, is a major event in Islamic history and marks the start of the Islamic calendar. He banished polytheism and idol worship from Mecca before dying after a short illness in 632 CE.

3. The Caliphate

When Muhammad died, leadership of the Islamic community passed through his close companions. These leaders were known as Caliphs (Khalifa). Muslims deeply revere the first four Caliphs Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Usman, and ‘Ali. They are known as the Rightly Guided Caliphs, because they followed Muhammad’s example closely. However, there was a dispute among Muslims about the Caliphate. Some people felt that ‘Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin, should have been made Caliph earlier. ‘Ali’s supporters became the *Shi’i* Muslims, while those of Abu Bakr became the *Sunni*. After the death of ‘Ali, the Caliphate passed to the leaders of two important dynasties of the Quraysh, the Umayyads (661–750 CE) and the Abassids (750–1517), before passing to the ottoman dynasty of Turkey, until the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924.

Core Beliefs

At the heart of Islam is a single core belief: that there is One God, who is eternal, uncreated, and controls the entire cosmos. This belief directs and illuminates every aspect of Muslim life, from the mosque to the workplace and from birth to death.

1. *Tawhid: The One God*

God in Islam is referred to as Allah. He is the only God in Islam and, for Muslims, the sole creator of the cosmos. His divinity is beyond human understanding. Muslims believe that all living things owe their breath to the life-giving power of Allah, and if at any time he withdraws this power, all living things will die. Along with this omnipotence, Allah exhibits the qualities of goodness and compassion. Muslims commonly use the Arabic phrase, “*bis millah hirahman nir rahim*” (which means “in the name of God the merciful, the compassionate”) as a blessing before undertaking an important action; these words also precede every sura (chapter) except one of the Qur’an. The Arabic term for this assertion of God’s Oneness is *Tawhid*. In Islam it is important not only to believe in Tawhid, but to affirm it—and in making that affirmation to reject any notion of idolatry or polytheism (the worship of many gods).

2. *Submission to God*

The name “Islam” is commonly interpreted as “submission to the will of God,” but actually comes from the Arabic word *slm*, which means “to be in peace.” So, a more precise translation of the name Islam is “peace through submission to God.” The Muslim submission to God directs a devotee’s entire life. Muslims aim to dedicate all their actions to God—not just their

prayers and their reading of the Qur'an but everything they do, from their financial affairs to their work, from caring for other members of their community to their political beliefs. For this reason, Muslims often introduce God when they are talking about anything of importance. For example, before making a promise, it is common to say "*Inshallah*," which means "God willing." So, in Islam it is impossible to separate the church from the state or religious from secular life— Islam covers both.

Doctrine: The Holy Qur'an

The Muslim sacred book, the Qur'an, stands in a tradition of revelations to prophets stretching back to figures such as Moses. But the Qur'an is on a higher level than these other revelations, because its words are believed to be the words of God himself. This is why Muslims read the text of the Qur'an in the original Arabic, the language in which it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

1. Revelation

The name Qur'an means recitation, but the text is also known as al-Furqan, which means discrimination (between truth and falsehood), and Umm al-kitab, meaning the mother of all books. The revelation of the Qur'an began one night in 610 CE, an occasion now known as the *Lailat ul Qadr* ("Night of Power"). The angel *Jibra'il* (Gabriel) appeared to Muhammad and told him that he was going to be a prophet and that he should bring himself closer to God. When *Jibra'il* commanded Muhammad to "Recite" and began to reveal God's words to him, the Prophet started to speak and memorize them. *Jibra'il*'s revelations continued over a period of 23 years and Muhammad, who could not read or write, committed them all to memory. His followers memorized them, and they also wrote them down.

2. Documentation

At first their accounts were fragmented, written on pieces of skin, bark, and other materials, but eventually, during the reign of the third Caliph, 'Uthman, in the 7th century CE, the complete Qur'an was written down in the form that Muslims use to this day. Because it is made up of God's words, Muslims always reproduce the text of the Qur'an with the greatest accuracy, and in the original Arabic. The Qur'an is often written in calligraphic form. The Qur'an's text is divided into 114 *suras*, or chapters (themselves divided into many *ayat*, or verses), making up a total of around 78,000 words.

3. *A Book to Live By*

The central message of the Qur'an is that Muslims must believe in One God. These include appeals to people to believe in God and to live just lives; stories of the punishments meted out to earlier peoples who disobeyed God; signs of God in nature; sermons; stories; and juridical instructions. The text provides a source book for Islamic law on such matters as divorce, inheritance, and warfare, as well as on more obviously religious matters, such as fasting and worship. Because it provides the framework for every aspect of life, Muslims greatly revere the Qur'an.

Ethics, Morality and Law

Islam is a practical religion. It offers its followers a body of instruction about how to live their lives, and has established a system, called *shari'ah*, of coming to moral and legal decisions. Rooted in the Qur'an, this moral instruction also embraces the opinion of religious leaders.

1. *The Nature of Shari'ah*

Islam affects every aspect of the Muslim's life. The faithful are expected to follow the instructions of the Qur'an and the system of law and morality called *shari'ah*. Although often referred to in the West as "shari'ah law," and although it contains many precise instructions as to how a person should live, this system is not a legal code in the Western sense of the term. Its true nature is revealed by its name, which means "path to water:" *shari'ah* is the path that the Muslim must follow in order to live a good life. Although it can be strict and exacting, *shari'ah* is also highly practical. For example, it prohibits a woman revealing certain parts of her body to a man other than her husband, but these prohibitions may be lifted if the woman is ill and the only doctor who can treat her is a man.

i. *Elements of Shari'ah*

Shari'ah is made up of four elements. The *first and foremost element is the Qur'an* itself. As the word of God, this text is paramount and the legal instructions it contains are the first place to which Muslims look for guidance. The *second element is the sunnah*, which concerns the way in which the Prophet Muhammad and his followers lived, and what they said and did.

To resolve questions outside the scope of the Qur'an and Hadith, Muslims turn to the *two other elements of shari'ah, ijma' (consensus) and ijtihad (reason)*. To come to a consensus or to

apply reason, Muslims (in the early days, the whole Islamic community; nowadays, the community of scholars) come together to discuss the issue, always with reference to the instructions in the Qur'an and Hadith, eventually arriving at agreement. As an extension of this system of reason and consensus, local imams offer ethical advice and instruction to members of the congregation of their mosque.

2. *Legal Disputes*

Sunni Islam has four main schools of law: the Malaki (dominant in western Asia and West Africa), the Hanafi (in the countries that were part of the Ottoman Empire and in India), the Hanbali (in Saudi Arabia and Qatar), and the Shafi'i (in Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines). From the 8th century, these four schools have interpreted the laws of Islam in various ways. Shi'i Islam interprets Islamic law differently again, and itself has several schools. The schools of both Sunni and Shi'i Islam vary in the extent to which they draw on consensus and reason in making judgments. The differences between Sunni and Shi'i interpretations of the law have led to disputes between of Islam.

3. *Halal and Haram*

According to the Qur'an, everything that God has created is for human use. But there are some things that, for particular reasons, are prohibited. So, Muslims distinguish between what is permitted, or halal, and what is prohibited, or haram. The best-known example of this is in the dietary rules that limit the things a Muslim may eat. Meat may be eaten, with the exception of pork, but in order for the meat to be halal, the creature must be killed in the correct way—by severing blood vessels with a sharp knife while the slaughterer pronounces the name of Allah over the animal. The rules, which are carefully observed, lay down that the animal must not see the knife, and that no other animal should be able to see the act of killing. Aside from pork and improperly slaughtered meat, Muslims may not eat meat if its method of slaughter is unknown.

Muslims believe that God has set down dietary prohibitions for their protection, so there is an important exception. If people find themselves faced with a choice between starving and eating banned foods, the Muslim should eat. The other main dietary prohibition covers intoxicants, such as alcohol. Muslims learn that God has provided all kinds of foods for human enjoyment, but that it is wrong to misuse these gifts. For example, the fruit of the vine is good to eat, but

fermented fruit produces wine, an intoxicating drink that brings with it corruption and evil—and is therefore prohibited.

4. *Serious Sins*

Islam defines a number of serious sins, which the faith condemns and which may be punished severely. Several of these, such as murder, theft, and adultery, are recognized as sins in most cultures, but others are specific to Islam. The most serious and fundamental sin of all is shirk, the sin of associating anything with God other than God himself or putting something else in place of God.

Other serious sins in Islam are *riba*, or money-lending for profit, which is wrong because those who can do so should freely help others in need; *juba*, or cowardice; *qadhif*, or slander, which includes gossip and bad language; and the use of intoxicating drugs (including alcohol; see left), which make people lose control of their actions, something condemned in the Qur'an.

Religious Practices and Rituals

The most important practices of Islam are known as the Five Pillars. In many ways these define and, as their name suggests, support the entire religion, covering the expression of faith, regular prayer, and three key activities—supporting the poor, fasting, and pilgrimage.

1. *Shahadah: The Declaration*

The first Pillar of Islam is the *shahadah*, or declaration of faith: “I bear witness that there is no god but God and Muhammad is his Messenger.” This declaration is the central belief of Islam, and a person who makes the declaration sincerely, using the original Arabic words, is a Muslim. The first part expresses belief in the one creator, and submission to him. The second part, which recognizes Muhammad's role as Prophet, signifies that the Muslim accepts God's teaching, as revealed to the Prophet in the words of the Qur'an.

2. *Salah: Prayer*

This regular prayer (*salah*), five times a day at set times, is the second Pillar of Islam. The times for prayer are at dawn (*fajr*), just after noon (*zuhr*), at mid-afternoon (*asr*), at sunset (*maghrib*), and in the evening (*isha*). On most days of the week, prayer may take place at home or at work, but every Friday Muslims usually go to the mosque at midday for communal Friday prayers.

Before prayer, Muslims prepare for it by washing themselves ritually, using running water from a fountain at the mosque or a tap at home. When this preparation is complete, the devotee removes his or her shoes and, standing on clean ground or on a prayer mat, faces the direction of Mecca and begins to pray. The prayers themselves take place in a prescribed way, beginning with the words “Allahu Akhbar,” meaning “God is greater (than all else).” The words of prayer are accompanied by a number of movements that involve standing, bowing down, prostrating, and sitting. Collectively, these movements are known as a rak’ah.

3. Zakat: Alms Giving

The third Pillar of Islam is zakat, the payment of a tax, the money from which is then used to help the poor and needy. How much a person pays is based on their income—the amount is calculated as 2.5 percent of a person’s wealth, but the value of that person’s home and other essential possessions is not counted in the assessment. Through paying zakat, Muslims express their love of God by taking care of other people. They may also make additional donations to charities that will help the Muslim community, funding facilities such as hospitals and aiding the victims of natural disasters.

4. Sawm: Fasting

The fourth Pillar, sawm, is the practice of fasting and abstention during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan is important because the first revelation of the Qur’an to Muhammad occurred during this month. Throughout Ramadan, Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sexual relations in the hours from dawn to dusk. Several groups of people—the old, the sick, young children, and pregnant women—are excused from the fast. At the end of Ramadan, the festival of ‘*Eid al-Fitr* marks the breaking of the fast.

5. Hajj: Pilgrimage

Every Muslim who is physically able and who can afford the journey is required to go once on pilgrimage or hajj to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia: this is the fifth Pillar of Islam. The Hajj takes place every year in the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. It involves a series of rituals and prayers that bring together the vast Muslim community: Muslims from all over the world and from all walks of life gather in Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, to foster a spirit of equality and unity and a perception of the greatness of God. The rituals of the Hajj include wearing special white garments symbolizing the state of consecration or holiness,

known as *ihram*, as well as walking around the *Ka'aba*—a cubic monument in the centre of the mosque at Mecca—seven times, reciting certain prayers during the procession. To go on the Hajj is one of the greatest moments of a Muslim's life and those who have undertaken the pilgrimage are accorded great respect among the entire Muslim community.

Religious Rituals: Rites of Passage

When a baby is born in a Muslim family, it is customary to whisper the profession of faith or the call to prayer into the child's ear. seven days after the birth, there is traditionally a naming ceremony, a common part of which involves shaving the child's hair and offering the weight of the shorn hair in silver to the poor.

When Muslims reach adulthood, they are encouraged to marry, for marriage is believed to be a state that was designated by God. In addition, the family is seen as a positive force for stability, and marriage marks the unification of two families, helping to bind the Muslim community together. The marriage ceremony itself may be held at the house of the man or woman, or at the mosque, and it is usual to ask the local imam (Muslim leader) to preside. The details of the ceremony and celebration vary from one place to another, but generally the man gives a dowry or bride-gift to his new wife, the exact size and nature of which depends on his means, but which becomes his wife's sole property, for her to do with as she wishes.

Burial customs also vary in Islam, but generally Muslims prefer to bury their deceased as soon as possible after death. Funerary prayers consist of a *salah* with the addition of extra prayers.

Religious Festivals

A number of Islamic festivals celebrate key dates in the life of Muhammad, notably *Mawlid an-Nabi* (the Birth of the Prophet). But the most important Muslim festivals are linked to the Five Pillars. The first, *Eid al-Adha*, the feast of sacrifice, marks the culmination of the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and is celebrated with a communal prayer and the sacrifice of an animal. The other major festival is *Eid al-Fitr*, the festival that occurs at the end of the month of fasting, and marks the close of Ramadan. At Eid there is a special prayer, performed by the whole community together; alms are given, and celebrations go on for three days.

Sects

Islam is broadly divided into three denominations

- Sunni
- Shi'i
- Sufiism

Topic 03: Christianity

Origins and History

Christianity's history spans more than 2,000 years. The message of Jesus Christ, which can be interpreted at every level from simple faith to complex theology, has enabled the religion to diversify widely, especially since the Reformation, which began in the 16th century.

The first followers of the teachings of Jesus did not call themselves Christians. They referred to themselves as "disciples" or "brethren," only becoming known as Christians, followers of Christ ("the anointed one"), a few decades later. To begin with they were few in number, were seen as a sect within Judaism, and suffered persecution at the hands of Palestine's intolerant Roman rulers.

Soon, under the influence of the great missionary Paul, the Christian faith began to spread into the gentile (non-Jewish) world. Paul was a Jewish scholar who had persecuted the early Christians. But, on a journey to Damascus, he had a vision of Jesus and converted to the new faith. Around the middle of the 1st century CE, Paul travelled around the Mediterranean preaching, founding Christian churches, and writing letters to the faithful. These letters now form part of the Bible. Largely as a result of Paul's work in the early years, Christianity gradually put down strong roots in the Mediterranean world and by 313 CE it was established across the vast Roman Empire.

The city of Rome became the centre of what we know as the Roman Catholic Church, and the pope, who was based in Rome, became its supreme leader. The popes can trace their lineage back to the apostle Peter, and so claim a direct link with those who were closest to Jesus himself. Christianity also spread eastward, to cities such as Constantinople (modern Istanbul in Turkey). These eastern Christian communities were led by patriarchs who did not agree with Rome on some aspects of doctrine. Gradually, their differences created a division between the eastern and western churches. This division came to a head in 1054, when the eastern churches, now known as the Orthodox Churches, split from the Roman Catholic Church.

Symbol: The Cross

The cross at first seems an unlikely symbol of the Christian faith because of its links with the crucifixion and death of Jesus. However, its symbolism predates Christianity, and encompasses universality both in this world (by pointing to the four cardinal directions, north, south, east and west) and in the spiritual realms by joining Earth and Heaven via its vertical axis. Today, the cross provides a potent symbol of the sacrifice that Jesus made to save humanity from sin—the doctrine that lies at the heart of Christian belief.

Core Beliefs

Christians believe in one God, who is eternal, all-knowing, and good. At the heart of the religion stands God's son Jesus Christ, who offers believers a route away from sin and, through his teachings, provides them with a rich body of advice and instruction.

1. The Holy Trinity

Christianity differs from the other monotheistic religions, such as Islam and Judaism, because it sees God, who is a single substance, as a Trinity of beings—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This difficult concept enables Christians to come to terms with the paradox that God is infinite (and therefore in some ways cannot be perceived by humans, who are finite and limited), but can also intervene in our lives in ways that we are able to perceive and understand. He can influence life on Earth through the Son, Jesus Christ, whom he sent to save humanity, and through the Holy Spirit, which can descend upon believers and inspire them to action or give them the eloquence to preach.

2. Original Sin

In Christianity, God first created the universe, then he made humanity in his own image. The Book of Genesis, in the Bible's Old Testament, tells how the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, lived in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden grew the Tree of Knowledge. God forbade Adam and Eve to eat the tree's fruit, but the serpent tempted them, and they succumbed. After this original sin, God expelled Adam and Eve from paradise to live in a state of sinfulness. This "fall" is how Christians explain that life's horrors stem from human sin, not from God.

3. The Incarnation

After the Fall, God gave human beings the chance to redeem themselves by sending his son, Jesus Christ, to save them from sin. Jesus's arrival on Earth is described in the new Testament

of the Bible and begins with the Angel Gabriel visiting the Virgin Mary to say that she will become pregnant with God's son (an event known as the Annunciation). This miraculous birth, which enabled the Son of God to be born on Earth as a human being, is known as the Incarnation. Christians believe that it was predicted in many of the Old Testament's prophetic writings.

4. The Crucifixion and The Resurrection

The Gospels describe how, after a period of missionary work, Jesus was put on trial and crucified, but that, on the third day of his death, he rose from his grave and appeared once more to his disciples. Then he disappeared from Earth, apparently returning to Heaven to be reunited with God the Father. Christians believe that by following Jesus's teachings, and by repenting their own sins, they will be granted salvation—that is, that they too will enjoy everlasting life with God after the end of their earthly lives.

Doctrine: Bible

The Christian Bible, although usually bound as a single volume, actually contains many books written by various writers working in different periods of history. These books range in substance from poetry to historical accounts. However, in spite of this variety, Christians believe that all the Biblical writers were inspired by God, and some Christians refer to the Bible as God's Word.

1. The Old Testament

The first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, is the equivalent of the Jewish Hebrew Bible. It covers the story of the people of Israel from their earliest beginnings to the point just before the time of Jesus. For Christians, the Old Testament includes important stories, such as the fall of Adam and Eve. It also contains the utterances of prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. These bring moral messages from God, and many seem also to predict the coming of Jesus.

2. The New Testament

The first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, tell the story of Jesus's life and recount his work. Mark probably wrote his Gospel first, about 30 years after the Crucifixion; Matthew and Luke follow its story quite closely. These three

books are collectively known as the Synoptic (“seeing together”) Gospels. John’s text is very different and must have been written independently, probably at the end of the 1st century CE. Rather than concentrating on Jesus’s life, John emphasizes the meaning of his acts, death, and resurrection.

The other books of the New Testament are mainly concerned with the later history of the disciples. The Acts of the Apostles tells how the Holy Spirit visited the disciples and how they preached the Christian message. Acts is followed by a series of books in the form of epistles, or letters. These were written by leaders of the early Christian church, mainly Paul. The New Testament ends with Revelation, an account of a vision experienced by John where Jesus triumphs over evil.

3. Translating the Bible

The books of the Bible were first written down in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Greek. Beginning in the 4th century CE, scholars (most famously St. Jerome) translated them into Latin, which was used by the church throughout western Europe. Versions in mainstream European languages began to appear in the 15th century, following the invention of the printing press. Since then new translations have appeared, as scholars around the world attempt to render the meanings of the Bible’s texts more precisely.

Ethics, Morality and Law

The New Testament is full of instruction about how Christians should lead their lives in order to take their place in the kingdom of God. This instruction is in the form of stories that recount Jesus’s teachings, and through the letters of Christian leaders, such as St. Paul. The Jews of the Roman period looked forward to a time in the future when, as God had promised, a leader or Messiah would appear to guide them as they freed themselves from Roman oppression, and a virtuous kingdom of God would begin on Earth.

1. Christian Conduct

Jesus spent a lot of time teaching his followers how they should behave and, as in the Sermon on the Mount, his expectations were always high. His listeners were familiar with the old commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” but Jesus said this was not enough: they should renounce

hatred as well. They knew that they should not commit adultery—but they should not even entertain lustful thoughts. They should exercise forgiveness, even when that seemed difficult.

Jesus summed up all these teachings in the “Golden Rule:” do to other people what you would want them to do to you. he expressed a similar truth in the instruction: “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Jesus also taught that there is no virtue in ostentatiously praying or fasting, for example, if you just do it for show. The true believer concentrates on heavenly rewards, not earthly ones. Jesus’s teaching explores many facets of normal life. He supported marriage, opposing divorce as well as condemning adultery. He also valued family life, especially children.

Religious Practices

The Christian churches have a rich tradition of ritual and worship. At the heart of this worship are the sacraments, including baptism and the Eucharist. Christians also use prayers, music, Bible readings, and sermons to praise God and reflect on the meaning of their faith.

1. Prayer

From Christianity’s early beginnings, prayer has played a key part in worship. Prayers are central to every Christian service and, as the main medium through which Christians talk with God, are also central to the private devotions of believers. Prayer was so important to Jesus that he made a special effort to teach his followers how to pray for the best communication with God. He told them that there was no need for them to pray loudly or ostentatiously, as was the custom among many Jewish people at the time, because God, who is omniscient, would know what they were going to say even before they said it. Rather, they should pray quietly, undemonstratively, and often privately. Like many other Jewish teachers of the time, Jesus taught his disciples a particular prayer for their own use. Known as the Lord’s Prayer, this has been used as the main prayer in Christian worship ever since.

2. Music and Worship

The Psalms of the Old Testament were the hymns of thanksgiving, laments, and songs of praise of the Jewish people, who sang them in the temple as part of their worship. The Christians adopted the Psalms for their own worship from quite early on in the history of their faith. Many of the Psalms were intended to be sung to music.

Over time Christians added their own devotional hymns to their worship. These were valued for their direct language and simple, singable tunes. Around the middle of the 1st century CE, the church in the West adopted the practice of congregational singing—worshippers joining together to praise God in words and song. By the Middle Ages, most worshipful singing was performed by the church choir.

3. *Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass*

The most central and widely affirmed of the Christian sacraments—the rites instituted by Christ—is the sharing of consecrated bread and wine. This is known in different churches as the Lord's supper, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, or Mass. This ritual is a re-enactment of the Last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, at which he identified the bread and wine with his own body and blood. The rite commemorates the sacrifice that Jesus made for his followers.

4. *Sermons: The Word of God*

At Christian services, there is a concentration on the word of God as it appears in the Bible. There are usually readings (known as lessons) from the Bible, and in many churches the priest or minister preaches a sermon related to one or more of the readings. Sermons offer moral instruction, guidance on how to live a better life, and direction in how to interpret the Bible. For many Christians, reading and thinking about the text of the Bible is the most important religious activity, and for them the lessons and sermon are at the heart of regular worship.

Religious Rituals

There are many sacraments (religious rituals) that are performed in Christianity. Some of these rituals are explained below.

1. *Rites of Passage*

Most Christians mark the various stages of the believer's life with ceremonies.

i. *Baptism*

The first of these is baptism, which marks a person's entry into the church. Holy water is central to the ritual, and a lighted candle symbolizes the light of Christ come into the world. In most Christian churches, baptism occurs during infancy. The priest splashes water on the baby's head or uses the water to make the sign of the cross on the brow. This practice has been common in Christian churches since the 4th century CE. The Baptist churches baptize only adults and the ceremony involves complete immersion in water.

ii. Confirmation

Many churches follow baptism with the rite of confirmation, in which, usually, older children or adults confirm their membership of the church when they are old enough to understand the commitment that they make.

iii. Other Rites of Passage

The other key life-cycle rituals are marriage, centring on the exchange of vows in front of the priest or minister and before God, and funeral rites, which may involve either cremation or burial of the body.

2. Other Sacraments

The other Catholic sacraments are *the mass*, *ordination of priests*, *unction* (the anointing of people, usually the sick or the dying, with holy oil), and the process of *penance*, in which the believer confesses their sins to a priest, and the priest announces forgiveness in the name of the Father, son, and Holy spirit, then prescribes the penance to be done. The Protestant churches recognize only baptism and the Eucharist as sacraments.

Religious Festivals: Calendar Festivals

For Christians, the year is marked by a number of festivals and holy days that commemorate the key events in Jesus's life, his crucifixion and resurrection, and the foundation of the church by his disciples.

1. Christmas

The Christian year begins with Advent, several weeks at the end of the calendar year during which believers prepare for Christmas. Traditionally, the preparation was marked by fasting,

although this practice is no longer widespread. At Christmas, on December 25, Christians celebrate Jesus's birth with feasting, gift giving, and special church services.

2. *Easter*

The 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter make up Lent, a period of reflection, religious study, and, traditionally, fasting. This period commemorates Jesus's fast in the desert immediately before his crucifixion. Easter itself is the heart of the Christian year, when Christians commemorate the Crucifixion on Good Friday and then celebrate Jesus's Resurrection on Easter day.

3. *Ascension Day*

Other key festivals are Ascension Day, celebrated 40 days after Easter, which marks Jesus's return to Heaven.

4. *Pentecost or Whitsun*

Pentecost (or Whitsun), 10 days after Ascension, which marks the birth of the church, when the Holy spirit descended upon the apostles as tongues of flame.

Division of Christianity

There are three major denominations of Christianity

- Catholic
- Protestants
- Orthodox (Eastern)

Each denomination is further divided into numerous sects and cults. However, some most common sects are listed below

- Shakers
- Quakers
- Amish
- Baptist
- Evangelist
- Methodist

- Lutheran
- Anglican

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Lesson 08

Sociological Analysis of major world religions – II: Abrahamic Religions (Continue)

Topic 01: Judaism

Origins and History

No one knows for sure exactly how or when Judaism evolved, but the Bible tells of two significant figures who were crucial to its beginnings. The first of these was Abraham, the founding father or patriarch of the Jews, who migrated from Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) to the land of Canaan in the eastern Mediterranean. Famine drove Abraham's descendants from there to Egypt, where they lived as slaves, but their leader, Moses, later led them back to Canaan,

which God had promised the Jews during Abraham's time. On the way, Moses received the tablets of the law from God on Mount Sinai. This event, which is thought to have taken place in the 13th century BCE marked the beginning of the covenant, or special relationship with God, that lies at the heart of Judaism.

Core Beliefs

1. The One God

For the Jews there is one God, who is the source of all goodness and morality. He is so holy that even his name, traditionally represented by the four Hebrew letters YHWH, was thought to be too sacred to utter. Instead, Jewish writers and rabbis used phrases such as ha-Shem ("the Name") and Adonai ("my Lord") when referring to him, to avoid committing blasphemy.

Judaism sees God as the absolute who lies behind the whole of the cosmos and life. He is a transcendent being, who exists on another plane from life on Earth. He is therefore impossible to portray in an image or to describe in words, although it is possible to name his qualities, among the most important of which are the complementary attributes of justice and mercy. But in spite of his remoteness, God is always present to the Jews and is able to communicate with humans in various ways—especially through the law handed down to Moses and the insights granted to the Hebrew prophets.

2. Messianic Beliefs

The prophets and rabbis looked forward to the time when a Messiah would come to establish God's kingdom on Earth. This Messianic belief remains strong in Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Jews believe that a Messiah will one day rule in Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple there. Other branches of Judaism lay less stress on Messianic belief, concentrating on the ways in which God's commandments must be obeyed.

3. The Commandments

The essence of Judaism is that a covenant, or agreement, exists between God and his followers. This covenant lays down certain instructions that Jews must follow. Judaism, therefore, is as much about how people live their lives as it is about concepts of the supernatural.

The Torah contains 613 instructions, covering everything from food and clothing to rituals and festivals. Orthodox Jews follow these laws exactly, expressing their faith and devotion through the way that they live. Adherents to other branches of Judaism interpret them more flexibly, but still see them as the cornerstone of their faith. The ceremony of bar mitzvah when a Jewish boy comes of age (the equivalent for girls is a bat mitzvah), marks the point at which the individual promises to follow the commandments of God.

Doctrine: The TaNaKh and The Talmud

The essence of Judaism is contained in its most important texts. The Hebrew Bible is often known among Jews as TaNaKh, an acronym derived from the names of its three divisions: *Torah* (Instruction, or Law, also called the *Pentateuch*), *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and *Ketubim* (Writings). But Judaism has always been centred on the word of God and on scholarship, so it is not surprising that it has produced a large body of other writings, too—not just the other books of the Bible, but also a vast work of comment and interpretation called the *Talmud*.

1. The Torah (Pentateuch)

Torah is a Hebrew word usually translated as “law,” although it can also mean “instruction.” The Torah, which tells the story of the first Jews and lists God’s commandments to his people, is the most sacred text of Judaism. The Torah contains five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Every synagogue has a copy of the Torah, hand-written in Hebrew on a scroll and kept in a cabinet called the Ark, which is the focal point of the synagogue. Each Torah scroll is written with great care, because its text is never changed and must not be transcribed inaccurately.

2. Navi'im

The writings of the prophets are known as Navi'im. They are especially important as they are the words of the prophets who brought the Jews back to their religion when they strayed, and who helped them when they were in exile.

3. Ketubim

The Ketubim is other sacred collected text. Ketubim include books of history, lamentation, and, importantly, the Psalms, which are used in synagogue services.

4. Talmud

Since the earliest times, rabbis have discussed and interpreted the words of the Torah known as Talmud. Mishnah and Gemara together make up a book of commentary called the Talmud. It contains around two-and-a-half million words, covering subjects as diverse as folklore and prayers, and rituals and medicines. Around one third of this material is *halakhah*, or law; the rest is the body of history, legends, stories, and maxims known as the *aggadah*. With its huge size and enormous diversity, the Talmud has something to say about every aspect of human life.

Ethics, Morality and Law

1. The Avot

One of the most familiar parts of the Talmud is a work known as the Avot. This lays down some of the fundamental moral teachings of Judaism and sets out three basic requirements.

1. First, the Torah's teachings on religion and morality lay down what God requires of the Jews as the basis for a good life.
2. Second, God requires worship, not only through regular attendance at the synagogue, but also through actions that Jews perform in their everyday lives.
3. Third, genuine kindness is supremely important. This should be an active kindness—all Jews should help others, especially the weak, the elderly, and the sick.

The principles of the Avot and the text of the Torah provide a vast body of ethical instruction. The Torah alone contains 613 commandments, comprising 248 positive instructions and 365 negative commands that begin "Thou shalt not...." Orthodox Jews try to follow these commandments as closely as possible, but in other strands of the faith, they are interpreted more flexibly.

2. Morality

One fundamental value is the importance of charity. On a broad scale, there are many Jewish organizations that do charitable work throughout the world, and Jews put money in a charity box each week before the Sabbath begins. However, charity goes beyond the donation of money. Jews are encouraged to help others in all kinds of ways. Teachings of Torah and Talmud cover every aspect of human social life and put special emphasis values of hospitality, care of neighbours, moderation, mercy, honour promises and deeds, respect and kindness.

3. Justice

Fairness and justice have always been important in Judaism. Early in their history the Jews developed a legal system in which a supreme court, called the *Sanhedrin*, judged disputes and interpreted the instructions in the Torah. Other courts, called *Bet din* (meaning “house of judgment”), dispensed justice at a local level, and there is a huge literature made up of the judgments of the rabbis who presided over these courts. This long legal heritage continues to this day—there is still a court called *Bet din*, which decides on religious matters, such as granting divorces and deciding whether food is fit to eat. It has reinforced the powerful sense of justice in Jewish thought and encourages Jews to deal fairly with others, not just in specific legal disputes or in financial or business dealings but also generally, in their daily lives.

4. *The Family and The Home*

Jewish values are practical values, and Jews are expected to espouse them in their daily lives. This is especially clear in the case of the home and family. God commands his people to marry and have children. To have a family is therefore a blessing, and parents are regarded highly. Parents are expected to bring up their children well and according to the faith, teaching them their religion and its ethics. The role and status of women varies in Judaism. The Talmud tells husbands to look upon their wives as equals, but in traditional Jewish societies women have different roles from men.

5. *Food*

Judaism is unusual in the number and detail of its dietary laws. Food has to be *kosher*, which means fit to eat according to Jewish law. Kosher foods include meat from animals that have cloven hoofs and chew the cud, such as cows, and from domesticated poultry, such as chickens. Forbidden foods include pork, shellfish, and birds of prey. It is not only the animal itself that must be kosher, but also the way in which the meat is prepared. A professional Jewish slaughterer (called a *shohet*) must be a religious, practicing Jew and kill acceptable animals only in the manner laid down by Jewish law. Jews must then prepare food according to rules—for example, they must keep meat and dairy products separate from one other. The dietary laws remind Jews that food and eating are inextricably connected with God and hence is a religious ceremony.

Religious Practices

Religious practices of Jews consist of following.

1. *Private Prayer*

Prayer lies at the heart of Jewish practice. Observant Jews pray in the morning, afternoon, and evening, and there are extra prayers for the Sabbath and for festivals. They may say prayers in their own words or recite passages from the Jewish prayer book, the *Siddur*, which contains both prayers and blessings. When they pray, male Jews cover their heads with a small skullcap called the *kippa* or *yarmulka*. They also put on a *tallit* (prayer shawl) and, for morning prayers, wear the *tefillin*. *Tefillin* are two small boxes containing the text of the *Shema*, from the Book of Deuteronomy. One box is worn on the forehead, to make the wearer think of his faith; the other is attached to the arm, bringing the faith close to the wearer's heart. The Hebrew Bible tells Jews not only to attach the law to their bodies in this way, but also to write it on the doorposts of their houses. So, observant Jews attach a small case, called a *Mezuzah*, to their doorposts. This case contains the *Shema* and it turns the home into a sacred space.

2. The Synagogue

At the centre of Jewish life is the synagogue. The word synagogue originally meant “gathering,” and if 10 Jewish men gathered in one place, there was said to be a synagogue, and communal prayers could take place. This quorum (minimum number) of 10 is known as a *minyan*, and there must be a minyan before prayers in the synagogue can begin. Orthodox synagogues still require the minyan to comprise 10 men, but in Reform Judaism, the minyan can include both men and women.

As well as a gathering, the synagogue is also a building, which is used for both worship and study. The idea of the synagogue as a place of education, where people can learn Hebrew or discuss interpretations of the Torah, remains important in the Jewish faith. Synagogues are usually rectangular buildings, with the Ark, which contains the Torah scrolls, at one end. They also have the bimah (the raised platform where the Torah is read aloud), seats for the elders who organize synagogue worship, a pulpit, and plaques containing the Ten Commandments written in Hebrew. There are no pictures or statues in the synagogue as the Torah bans “graven images.”

3. The Sabbath

The climax of the Jewish week is the Sabbath, which begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. At home, Jews mark the Sabbath by lighting candles and saying prayers. Outside the home, respect for the Sabbath varies from one branch of Judaism to another. Essentially, though, it is a time for rest, worship, and spending time with the family or community. Worship at the synagogue involves a number of different activities, the precise

contents varying according to whether the service is on a weekday, the Sabbath, or a festival. The Psalms play a major part—the congregation reads them aloud from the prayer book.

4. Rites of Passage: Naming Ceremony

Jews mark the beginning of a new life by giving a Jewish baby a Hebrew name in addition to their ordinary name. A baby girl's name is announced in the synagogue on the Sabbath after her birth, or at a special naming ceremony. A baby boy's name is announced at his circumcision, which takes place on the eighth day after he is born. The circumcision is a sign of the covenant between God and mankind, and is known as *B'rit milah*, or seal of the covenant. Traditionally, a trained official, a *mohel*, performs the operation, although it may be done by a doctor.

5. Rites of Passage: Coming to Age Ceremony

Jews hold a bar mitzvah ceremony to mark coming of age. When a boy reaches the age of 13 he is considered to be *bar mitzvah*, “son of the commandment.” This means that he is responsible for observing all the commandments and rites of the religion and can be counted as part of the minyan in the synagogue. Many congregations also hold bat mitzvah ceremonies for girls, who come of age when they are 12.

6. Funeral Customs

At the end of life, funeral customs vary —although burial is traditional, many Jews today are cremated. There is traditionally a seven-day mourning period, during which mourners recite the *Kaddish*, a prayer in praise of God.

Festivals and Holy Days

The Jewish year is punctuated with various festivals and solemn holy days that remember important events in Jewish history, emphasize key beliefs, and bring Jews together in a round of celebration.

1. Rosh Hashanah

During Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Jews remember God's creation and celebrate the renewal of God's covenant with Israel it is marked with a special service when the shofar (ram's horn) is blown.

2. Yom Kippur

Ten days into the new year is Yom Kippur, the solemn Day of Atonement. Jews fast and seek forgiveness for their sins.

3. *Pesach*

Pesach (Passover) remembers the time when Moses led the Jews out of captivity in Egypt. Jews eat a celebratory meal and read the story of the Exodus from a book called the Haggadah.

4. *Sukkot*

Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) commemorates the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, when the Jews had to live in sukkot (temporary booths, huts, or tabernacles). Today, people build their own sukkot and either eat their meals in them or sleep there for seven days.

5. *Simchat Torah*

Straight after Sukkot comes Simchat Torah (Rejoicing in the Torah), when the Torah scrolls are taken from the Ark and paraded around the synagogue or streets and a new cycle of Torah readings begins.

6. *Shavuot*

Shavuot (the Festival of Weeks) is the Jewish harvest festival, held seven weeks after Pesach. Jews decorate both their homes and their synagogues, eat summer fruits, and make special readings from the Torah.

7. *Hanukkah*

Hanukkah (the Festival of Lights) celebrates a Jewish victory over the Seleucids (rulers of Syria and its neighbours) in 170BCE. Jews commemorate this event by saying blessings, singing special songs, and lighting one candle of the eight- branched menorah on each night of the festival until all eight candles are lit.

Branches of Judaism

Judaism is divided into following denominations:

- Orthodox Judaism
- Reform Judaism
- Conservative
- Reconstructionist

Furthermore, there are many sects of Judaism but most of them are now extinct. Following are active sects of Judaism

- Hasidism
- Neo-Orthodox Judaism
- Perushim
- Samaritans

Topic 02: Comparison between Religions-I

There are many common themes among Abrahamic Religions, yet these commonalities contrast among each other too. Following topics will discuss how, like monotheism is common yet is different in all three religions.

1. Monotheism

Judaism and Islam worship a Supreme Deity which they conceive strictly monotheistically as one being; Christianity agrees, but the Christian God is at the same time (according to most of mainstream Christianity) an indivisible Trinity, a view not shared by the other religions. A sizable minority of Christians and Christian denominations do not support the belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and sometimes suggest that the Trinity idea was founded in Roman religious culture, specifically suggesting that it was formulated due to Rome's absorption of some Zoroastrian and some Pagan ideology as part of their homogenized culture, and was not part of the original, primitive Christianity.

What God is Called?

This Supreme Being is referred to in the Hebrew Bible in several ways, such as *Elohim*, *Adonai* or by the four Hebrew letters "Y-H-V (or W) -H" (the tetragrammaton), which observant Jews do not pronounce as a word. The Hebrew words *Eloheynu* (Our God) and *HaShem* (The Name), as well as the English names "Lord" and "God," are also used in

modern day Judaism. Allah is the standard Arabic translation for the word "God." Islamic tradition also describes the 99 names of God.

Difference

Muslims believe that the Jewish God is the same as their God and that Jesus is a divinely inspired prophet, but not God. Thus, both the Torah and the Gospels are believed to be based upon divine revelation, but Muslims believe them to have been corrupted (both accidentally through errors in transmission and intentionally by Jews and Christians over the centuries). Muslims revere the Qur'an as the final uncorrupted word of God or the last testament brought through the last prophet, Muhammad.

2. Religious scriptures (People of the Book)

All three Abrahamic religions rely on a body of scriptures, some of which are considered to be the word of God — hence sacred and unquestionable — and some the work of religious men, revered mainly by tradition and to the extent that they are considered to have been divinely inspired, if not dictated, by the divine being.

The sacred scriptures of Judaism are comprised of the Tanakh, a Hebrew acronym that stands for *Torah* (Law or Teachings), *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (Writings). These are complemented by and supplemented with various originally oral traditions: *Midrash*, the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud*, and collected rabbinical writings. The Hebrew text of the Tanakh, and the Torah in particular, is considered holy.

The sacred scripture of Christians is the Holy Bible, which comprises of both the Old and New Testaments. This corpus is usually considered to be divinely inspired. Christians believe that the coming of Jesus as the Messiah and savior of humankind would shed light on the true relationship between God and humanity by restoring the emphasis of universal love and compassion (as mentioned in the Shema) above the other commandments, and de-emphasising the more "legalistic" and material precepts of Mosaic Law (such as the dietary constraints and temple rites).

Islam's holiest book is the Qur'an, comprised of 114 surahs ("chapters of the Qur'an"). However, Muslims also believe in the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity in their original forms and not the current versions, which they believe to be corrupted. According to the Qur'an (and mainstream Muslim belief) the verses of the Qur'an were revealed from Allah through the Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad on separate occasions. These

revelations were written down during Muhammad's lifetime and collected into one official copy in 633 C.E., one year after his death. Finally, the Qur'an was given its present order in 653 C.E. by the third Caliph (Uthman ibn Affan).

The Muslims consider the original Arabic text of the Qur'an as uncorrupted and holy to the last letter, and any translations are considered to be interpretations of the meaning of the Qur'an, as only the original Arabic text is considered to be the divine scripture. The Qur'an is complemented by the *Hadith*, a set of books by later authors that record the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. The Hadith interpret and elaborate Qur'anic precepts. There is no consensus within Islam on the authority of the Hadith collections, but Islamic scholars have categorized each Hadith at one of the following levels of authenticity or *isnad*: genuine (*sahih*), fair (*hasan*), or weak (*da'if*).

Differences

The Qur'an mentions and reveres several of the Israelite Prophets, including Jesus, amongst others. The stories of these Prophets are very similar to those in the Bible. However, the detailed precepts of the Tanakh and the New Testament are not adopted outright; they are replaced by the new commandments revealed directly by God (through Gabriel) to Muhammad and codified in the Qur'an.

3. Eschatology

The Abrahamic religions also share an expectation of an individual who will herald the end time (Greek: *eschaton*), and/or bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth, in other words the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Judaism awaits the coming of the Jewish Messiah (the Jewish concept of Messiah differs from the Christian concept in several significant ways). Christianity awaits the Second Coming of Christ. Islam awaits both the second coming of Jesus (in order to complete his life and die, since he is said to have been risen alive and not crucified) and the coming of Mahdi (Sunnis in his first incarnation, Shi'as the return of Muhammad al-Mahdi).

4. Afterlife

The Abrahamic religions (in most of their branches) agree that a human being comprises the body, which dies, and the soul, which need not do so. The soul, capable of remaining alive beyond human death, carries the essence of that person with it, and God will judge that person's

life accordingly after they die. The importance of this, the focus on it, and the precise criteria and end result differs between religions.

Reincarnation and transmigration tend not to feature prominently in Abrahamic religions. Although as a rule they all look to some form of afterlife, Christianity and Islam support a continuation of life, usually viewed as eternal, rather than reincarnation and transmigration which are a return (or repeated returns) to this Earth or some other plane to live a completely new life cycle over again. Judaism's views on the afterlife ("the World to Come") are quite diverse and its discussion is not encouraged. This can be attributed to the fact that even though there clearly are traditions in the Hebrew Bible of an afterlife, Judaism focuses on this life and how to lead a holy life to please God, rather than future reward, and its attitude can be mostly summed up by the rabbinical observation.

If there is an afterlife all agree in Judaism that the good of all the nations will get to heaven and this is one of the reasons Judaism does not normally proselytize. In Islam, God is said to be "Most Compassionate and Most Merciful" (Qur'an 1:1). However God is also "Most Just," Islam prescribes a literal Hell for those who disobey God and commit gross sin. Those who obey God and submit to God will be rewarded with their own place in Paradise. While sinners are punished with fire, there are also many other forms of punishment described, depending on the sin committed. Additionally, those who ultimately believe in God, but have led sinful lives, may be punished for a time, and then ultimately released into Paradise. Hell is divided into numerous levels, an idea that found its way into Christian literature through Dante's borrowing of Muslim themes and tropes for his *Inferno*. Christian beliefs are similar to Islam.

Topic 03: Comparison between Religions-II

5. *Worship*

Worship, ceremonies, and religion-related customs differ substantially between the various Abrahamic religions. Among the few similarities are a seven-day cycle in which one day is nominally reserved for worship, prayer, or other religious activities; this custom is related to the Biblical story of Genesis, where God created the universe in six days, and rested in the seventh. Islam, which has Friday as a day for special congregational prayers, does not subscribe to the 'resting day' concept.

Jewish men are required to pray three times daily and four times daily on the Sabbath and most Jewish holidays, and five times on Yom Kippur. Before the destruction of the Temple, Jewish priests offered sacrifices there; afterwards, the practice was stopped. Jewish women's prayer

obligations vary by sect; traditionally (according to Torah Judaism), women do not read from the Torah and are only required to say certain parts of these services twice daily. Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, and the Reconstructionist movement have different views.

Christianity does not have any sacrificial rites as such, but its entire theology is based upon the concept of the sacrifice by God of his son Jesus so that his blood might atone for humankind's sins. However, offerings to Christian Churches and charity to poor are highly encouraged and take the place of sacrifice. Additionally, self-sacrifice in the form of Lent, penitence and humbleness, in the name of Christ and according to his commandments (cf. Sermon on the Mount), is considered a form of sacrifice that appeals God.

The followers of Islam, Muslims, are to observe the Five Pillars of Islam. The first pillar is the belief in the oneness of Allah (God) and in Muhammad as his final prophet. The second is to pray five times daily (salat) towards the direction (*qibla*) of the Kaaba in Mecca. The third pillar is Zakah, is a portion of one's wealth that must be given to the poor or to other specified causes, which means the giving of a specific share of one's wealth and savings to persons or causes that God mentions in the Qur'an. The normal share to be paid is two and a half percent of one's saved earnings. Fasting during the Muslim month of Ramadan is the fourth pillar of Islam, to which only able-bodied Muslims are required to fast. Finally, Muslims are also urged to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life. Only individuals whose financial position and health are insufficient are exempt from making Hajj. During this pilgrimage, the Muslims spend several days in worship, repenting and most notably, circumambulating the Kaaba among millions of other Muslims. At the end of the Hajj, sheep and other permissible animals are slaughtered to commemorate the moment when God replaced Abraham's son, Ishmael with a sheep preventing his sacrifice. The meat from these animals is then distributed around the world to needy Muslims, neighbors and relatives.

6. Circumcision

Both Judaism and Islam prescribe circumcision for males as a symbol of dedication to the religion. Islam also recommends this practice as a form of cleanliness. Western Christianity replaced that custom by a baptism ceremony that varies according to the denomination, but generally includes immersion, aspersion or anointment with water. As a result of the decision of the Early Church (Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem) that circumcision is not mandatory, it continues to be optional, though the Council of Florence prohibited it and paragraph #2297 of the Catholic Catechism calls non-medical amputation or mutilation immoral. Many countries

with majorities of Christian adherents have low circumcision rates (with the notable exception of the United States and the Philippines). However, many males in Coptic Christianity and Ethiopian Orthodoxy still observe circumcision.

7. Food Restrictions

Judaism and Islam have strict dietary laws, with lawful food being called *kosher* in Judaism and *halaal* in Islam. Both religions prohibit the consumption of pork; Islam also prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages of any kind. Halaal restrictions can be seen as a subset of the kashrut dietary laws, so many kosher foods are considered halaal; especially in the case of meat, which Islam prescribes must be slaughtered in the name of God. Protestants have no set food laws. Roman Catholicism however developed ritual prohibitions against the consumption of meat (but not fish) on Fridays, and the Christian calendars prescribe abstinence from some foods at various times of the year; but these customs vary from place to place, and have changed over time, and some sects have nothing comparable. Some Christians oppose the consumption of alcoholic beverages, while a few Christians also follow a kosher diet, sometimes identified as a "What Would Jesus Eat?" diet. Some approaches to practice have developed in Protestant denominations, such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which strongly advise against certain foods and in some cases encourage vegetarianism or veganism.

8. Proselytism

Christianity encourages evangelism in an attempt to convince others to convert to the religion; many Christian organizations, especially Protestant churches, send missionaries to non-Christian communities throughout the world.

Forced conversions to Christianity have been documented at various points throughout history. The most prominently cited allegations are the conversions of the pagans after Constantine; of Muslims, Jews and Eastern Orthodox during the Crusades; of Jews and Muslims during the time of the Spanish Inquisition where they were offered the choice exile, conversion or death; and of the Aztecs by Hernan Cortes. Forced conversions are condemned as sinful by major denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, which officially state that forced conversions pollute the Christian religion and offend human dignity, so that past or present offenses are regarded as a scandal (a cause of unbelief). It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.

The *Qur'an* has a chapter (*Sura*) dealing with non-believers (called "*Al-Kafiroon*"). In the chapter there is also an often quoted verse (*ayat*) which reads, "There is no compulsion in religion, the path of guidance stands out clear from error" [2:256] and [60:8]. This means that no one is to be compelled into Islam and that the righteous path is distinct from the rest. According to this verse, converts to Islam are ones that see this path. The Muslim expansion during the Ummayyad dynasty held true to this teaching, affording second-class citizenship to "People of the Book" instead of forced conversion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that pagan Arab tribes were given the choice of 'Islam or *Jizya* (defense tax) or War.' Another notable exception is the *en masse* forced conversion of the Jews of Mashhad in 1839. In the present day, Islam does not have missionaries comparable to Christianity, though it does encourage its followers to learn about other religions and to teach others about Islam.

While Judaism accepts converts, it does not encourage them, and has no missionaries as such. Only a few forced conversions to Judaism have been recorded for example the Idumeans, were forced into conversion to Judaism by the Hasmonean kings. However Judaism states that non-Jews can achieve righteousness by following Noahide Laws, a set of seven universal commandments that non-Jews are expected to follow. In this context the Rambam (Rabbi Moses Maimonides, one of the major Jewish teachers) commented, "Quoting from our sages, the righteous people from other nations have a place in the world to come, if they have acquired what they should learn about the Creator." As the commandments applicable to the Jews are much more detailed and onerous than Noahide Laws, Jewish scholars have traditionally maintained that it is better to be a good non-Jew than a bad Jew, thus discouraging conversion. Most often, converts to Judaism are those who marry Jews.

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Lesson 09**Sociological Analysis of major world religions – III: Shramana Religions****Topic 01: Jainism*****Introduction to Shramana Religions***

Shramana religions developed as a result of Shramana movement. It could reasonably be called one of the first social revolutions in history and one of the most significant. India before 6 century BCE was split into many different kingdoms and it was a time of massive social change, inequality and dissatisfaction. The religion at the time was that given from the sacred texts the Vedas of Hinduism, it enforced a rigorous caste system that split people into categories given by birth (A system still in place today in some parts), required rigorous sacrifices to the many Gods and more. Women and the lower castes especially had no rights and were treated as less than human. The Vedic texts could only be accessed by the Brahmins – the Priestly Caste, they were unavailable to the mostly illiterate common population.

A spiritual crisis began and many people were starting to lose their faith completely in the enforced religion. This was how the Shramana came into being. Many dissatisfied people of all ages and castes went into the forests in an attempt to find spiritual enlightenment and “Moksha” (release or liberation) from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth without adhering to the enforced Vedic religion and its many rituals. They walked away from the caste system, defiantly rejecting it, the Brahmins and in many cases even rejecting God all together, they left their material comforts and, in many cases, even their families sometimes doing it alone or forming their own communities. These people were not seen as heretics and sinners, at least not by the common person but were seen as “heroic pioneers, they were also honoured as rebels”.

The two main schools/religions that became the most popular was Jainism led by Mahavira and Buddhism led by Siddhartha Gautama. It is unknown if the two ever met but they were around and teaching at the exact same time so it is highly possible that they in fact did, though there is not much evidence for this. Eventually, most people rallied behind either Mahavira or Siddhartha Gautama. Mass conversions took place to the two religions as people left the Vedic religion to flock to the new faiths. Their message of equality, self-reliance, absence of much religious dogma and the inclusion of all people regardless of caste resonated with much of the disenfranchised who had been looking for a new faith to follow. Both spread rapidly around the sub-continent and beyond its borders.

Core beliefs and religious teachings of Jainism and Buddhism are discussed below.

Jainism: Origin

Jainism is considered an independent, pre-Buddhist religion that began c. 700 BCE, although its origins are disputed. Some scholars claim Jainism has its roots in the Indus Valley Civilization, reflecting native spirituality prior to the Indo-Aryan migration into India.

Various seals from Indus Valley Civilizations bear resemblance to Rishabha, the first Jain as the visual representation of Vishnu. Many relics depict Jain symbols, including images with serpent-heads, and the bull symbol of Vrshabadeva. However, other scholars believe the Sramana traditions were separate and contemporaneous with Indo-Aryan religious practices of the historical Vedic religion.

Core Beliefs

The aim of Jainism is to live as pure and disciplined a life as possible in order to move closer to the ultimate spiritual goal of enlightenment. Jains realize that enlightenment is a highly exalted state that most people will be unable to attain—but still all Jains aspire to it.

1. Five Levels of Supreme Beings

Jains do not believe in a supreme creator god, and while they may recognize gods that exist in the universe, they do not see them as objects of worship nor as powers that can help in the quest for enlightenment. Jainism does, however, recognize five levels of supreme beings who can help believers along their spiritual path and whom they revere.

- At the top of the Jain spiritual hierarchy are the *jinas* or *tirthankaras*, the figures from whom the original teachings of Jainism stem and who attained enlightenment.
- Next come the *siddhas*, liberated souls who dwell in Heaven.
- Then come the senior religious teachers who lead the Jain monastic orders;
- They are followed by the teachers who, although they do not lead their own orders, play a vital role in instructing the monks and nuns about the scriptures.
- Fifth are the monks themselves.

2. Gods, body, and soul

In Jainism, a living thing is seen as being made up of two parts, a body and a soul. The body is essentially a physical container—it is the soul (known as the *jiva*) that really matters. The *jiva* is eternal and provides us with our moral responsibility.

3. Circle of Life and Death

Like the followers of other Indian religions, Jains believe that life is a series of deaths and rebirths, and that a person's actions throughout life attract karma (a spiritual credit and debit system), which influences the way in which a person is reborn after death.

Jainism's unique take on this process is that the karma that a person's actions attracts is seen as a kind of physical substance that attaches to the soul. To break out of the endless round of death and rebirth, karma has to be removed. To achieve this, a person has to undergo a process of purification and discipline described in the teachings of the spiritual guides, the *tirthankaras* or *jinas* (spiritual teachers).

4. The Spiritual Path

In particular, Jains try to follow the path of the Three Jewels—Right knowledge, Right faith, and Right conduct. For those who follow the most demanding spiritual path—becoming a monk or nun and adopting a life of almost total renunciation—Jains add a fourth Jewel, that of asceticism (sometimes called Right penance). Monks and nuns take five “Great Vows” of nonviolence, speaking the truth, sexual abstinence, not taking what is not given, and detachment from people, places, and things.

Lay people take similar but less restrictive vows—for example, unlike monks and nuns, they are not expected to renounce relationships with other people. Lay Jains do, however, renounce violence, eat only vegetarian food, and do work that does not involve the deliberate destruction of life. Even these strictures can be difficult to follow. For example, those who grow things in the soil can easily destroy unintentionally the lives of insects or other creatures— and these lives, overlooked in most religions, are just as important to Jains as the lives of other species, including humans.

Nevertheless, lay Jains aim to get as close to the ideal as they can, and in so doing they hope to make progress along a path of spiritual advancement. One Jain text lays out 14 stages on this path, beginning with a kind of spiritual sleep and ending with total freedom from attachment to the physical world. Most people hope to rise through these levels of spiritual progress, but accept that they will not get anywhere near the last few stages, which are reserved for liberated souls and *tirthankaras* alone.

Religious Places

Although Jains do not recognize a supreme god, they do have temples and shrines containing statues of the *tirthankaras*, which they use for worship. Jains believe that by honouring the *tirthankaras*, but not by appealing to their mercy, they can move closer to enlightenment.

1. Temple

Each Jain temple is presided over by one of the *tirthankaras*, the early teachers of the faith. Inside the temple there is a statue of the relevant *tirthankara* and, for most Jains, this image is central to their worship.

2. Home Shrines

As well as the communal temples and shrines, many Jain houses contain small shrines to enable the inhabitants to perform rituals of worship at home. These home shrines can be carved quite elaborately in a style similar to the temples, and they may contain statues not only of the *tirthankaras*, but also of their attendants. Image-related worship, whether in communal temples and shrines or shrines in the home, is common among most Jains.

Religious Rituals

Lay Jains usually try to practice as many of their faith's daily rituals as possible. These include time spent in prayer and meditation, including a 48-minute meditation when the devotee should aim to be at peace with the world; visits to a temple or shrine, ideally in the morning and evening; and reading from the scriptures. Jains Home shrines and altars are common features of Jain worship, giving space to the private worship of *tirthankaras*. Also like to make a habit of helping those in need, caring for others, and giving regularly to the monks and nuns.

1. Darshan: Regular Worship

The simplest form of Jain worship is called *darshan*. This ritual, which is also used in Hinduism, involves making eye contact with the image of the tirthankara, often while reciting a mantra (a sacred sound or verse). Jains believe that darshan brings the worshipper into contact with the tirthankara and his teachings, which in turn takes the devotee further down the spiritual path.

2. Cleaning Image of Tirthankara

Another form of worship intended to bring the worshipper closer to the supreme beings involves cleaning the image of the tirthankara, anointing it with substances such as saffron, and decorating it with flowers. Some adherents insist that Jains should use only flowers or petals that have already fallen from the plant in order to comply with the ethic of nonviolence. Finally, worshippers may also make offerings to the tirthankara.

3. Rites of Passage

Jains celebrate the rites of passage for lay people in similar ways to those of Hinduism. marriage ceremonies, for example, can be elaborate, including the couple's declaration to marry, giving gifts to the bride-to-be, exchanging vows, and other rituals. The main ceremony is usually conducted by a Jain priest or by a senior, respected member of the community. Jainism stresses that adherents should not waste time and money on ceremony, but that they should perform the rituals with the seriousness appropriate to a celebration that takes place once in a lifetime.

4. Religious Festivals and Fasting

An austere religion, Jainism places a strong emphasis on fasting at key points in the calendar—in particular, at the end of the Jain year during the festival of *Paryusana Parva*. This lasts eight

days during the monsoon season (usually in August). Most Jains stop work, fast, and spend time at the temples and monasteries—the most devout Jains spend at least 24 hours in a monastery, following the same routine as the monks or nuns. The festival ends with an act of reconciliation—people ask the forgiveness of others and everyone vows not to carry any grudges they may bear into the new Year.

Jains fast on other days, too, such as the full moon each month, and during festivals that commemorate the birth and death of Mahavira. Some of the Jain festivals are adapted from Hinduism. The most popular is *Diwali*, the festival of lights. Whereas Hindus focus on the goddess Lakshmi during Diwali, Jains see the festival as celebrating the enlightenment of Mahavira.

Division of Jainism

There are two main branches of Jainism

- Digambaras
- Shvetambaras

Topic 02: Buddhism

Origin and History

Buddhism originated in the middle of the first millennium BCE in northern India. Led by Siddhartha Gautama prince of the Sakya tribe of Nepal, who later became known as the Buddha (The awakened one). When Siddhartha was a young man, he wanted to see the world, and he persuaded his father to let him go on a series of journeys. For the first time, he saw evidence of suffering—his journeys included encounters with the aged and sick, and with a dead man being carried to his cremation. Some accounts of Siddhartha's life portray these experiences as occurring on actual, physical journeys; others depict them as spiritual adventures. But the result is the same: Siddhartha understood human suffering.

When he met a wandering beggar, Siddhartha decided to leave his family, follow the ascetic's path, and search for the truth and for ways to overcome hardship. Finally, thin and exhausted, he sat down under a bodhi (or bo) tree at Bodhi Gaya, in northeast India, to meditate. Siddhartha meditated until he reached a transcendent state known as enlightenment or nirvana, in which he completely understood life, and became free from the fear of human suffering and the

endless round of death and rebirth. He had become a Buddha, an enlightened being, who could understand the truths of existence. From this point on he was known as the Buddha.

Traditional versions of the Buddha's life story say that, after enlightenment, the Buddha meditated under the tree for several weeks, at the end of which he began to tell others about his perceptions—for example, that the best way to live was to follow a middle way between the paths of luxury and poverty. Soon, like many Indian sages, he had a group of followers, who listened intently to his ideas about the problem of suffering and the best ways to overcome it. He preached his first sermon in a deer park at Sarnath in northeast India, where he had realized that his first five followers, known as the five ascetics, whom he had known previously, were living. This sermon marked the start of a preaching and teaching career that lasted some 40 years until the Buddha died in 483 BCE, aged about 80. Siddhartha's death came about when, visiting a smith in Kusinara (modern-day Kasia in northern India), he ate some poisoned food.

Core Beliefs

The Buddha set out his core doctrines very clearly in the form of two lists: the Four Noble Truths about suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path, which explains how we can avoid suffering and live a better life. All the later ideas of Buddhism are founded on these essential beliefs.

1. Faith Without God

In its most basic form, Buddhism, whether Theravada or Mahayana, has no gods, because the Buddha explained that believing in and following the dhamma (his teaching), rather than worship, would lead to enlightenment. The Buddha himself is seen as an enlightened teacher, but not as a deity. Variants of Buddhism, especially of Mahayana Buddhism, recognize other figures—the saint like bodhisattvas, or “Buddhas-to-be”—who renounce enlightenment in order to help others to reach nirvana.

2. Four Noble Truths

The foundation of all the Buddha's teachings is the Four Noble Truths, which deal with suffering.

- The first Truth is that all life is suffering— meaning not simply physical pain, but also disagreements and problems in all life’s spheres, from personal, physical, and mental to economic and social.
- The second Truth is that the cause of suffering is desire, because humans always want what they do not have.
- The third Truth is that suffering will end when we are free from desire, and
- The fourth is that release from desire and suffering will occur as a result of following the Noble Eightfold Path.

3. *Buddha’s Noble Eight-Fold Path*

A collection of the Buddha’s teachings, the Noble Eightfold Path makes up a guide for virtuous living. It is not eight consecutive steps on a journey to perfection, but eight elements that the Buddhist should aim to practice all at once. Each element of the path deals with a specific human activity.

- The first, “Right understanding,” means that a Buddhist must grasp the Four Noble Truths and understand the nature of existence.
- The second, “Right intention” (or “Right thought”), indicates that the person must want to change, and in doing so must rid their mind of negative thoughts and feelings, especially desire.
- The third element of the path, “Right speech,” involves telling the truth and not boasting or using coarse language.
- “Right conduct,” the fourth element, means that a person’s actions must try to be without ego or thought for the self, and they must be good and moral in order to defeat evil.
- The fifth part, “Right occupation,” means choosing a job that is useful and does not involve such things as bloodshed, arms dealing, slavery, or people trafficking.
- The sixth element is “Right effort,” cultivating self-knowledge and self-discipline;
- The seventh element is “Right mindfulness,” avoiding extremes and banishing vices such as sloth, malevolence, doubt, and worry; and
- The eighth element is “Right concentration,” which is concerned with meditation.

4. *Guiding Principles*

There are several key principles behind the Eightfold Path. One is that the Buddha asked people to avoid extremes and follow a middle way. On a personal level, he wanted to leave behind both the luxury of his upbringing and the ascetic's way of poverty and find a balance between them. Another key idea was that people should leave behind their ego to reach a state of *anatta* ("no-self") to better attend to the needs of others and better follow certain elements of the Eightfold Path, such as "Right intention" and "Right conduct." There is also another reason to achieve *anatta*. Buddhism recognizes *samsara*, the eternal round of death and rebirth, and the law of *karma* —that a person's deeds in one life affect their rebirth into the next. If there is no self, *karma* has nothing to attach itself to, and so the person comes closer to avoiding *samsara*, and to reaching the ultimate goal of the state of enlightenment, or *nirvana*.

Doctrine: The Pali Canon and Sutra

Buddhism has no single sacred text like Judaism's Hebrew Bible or Islam's Qur'an. The Buddha's teachings, originally handed down by word of mouth from one generation of monks to the next.

Theravada Buddhists use a collection of the Buddha's teachings recorded in the Indian language of Pali and known collectively as the Pali Canon. The Pali scriptures are gathered together in three collections, known as the three baskets (*ti-pitaka* in Pali, collections are named *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka* and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*). Monks of the Theravada tradition wrote these scriptures down several hundred years after the Buddha died, and most of their teachings are also accepted by Mahayana Buddhists.

Later, Mahayana Buddhists developed their own versions of these teachings, which they wrote down in the texts known as the sutras, which are claimed to be genuine accounts of the Buddha's life and work. One of the most important of these is the Lotus Sutra, which was probably compiled during the 1st century CE. Written mostly in verse, this text is particularly revered among Buddhists in China and Japan, many of whom believe that they can come closer to *nirvana* by simply reciting or chanting its words.

1. Vinaya Pitaka

Monasticism (monkhood) plays a key part in Theravada Buddhism, so the first collection of scriptures of Pali, the Vinaya Pitaka, contains rules for monks and nuns. Many Theravada Buddhists join a monastery—sometimes for a short period, sometimes for life. The monastic community is important for lay people too, because they can acquire merit by making donations of food to the monks or nuns. Monastic guidelines therefore have a key importance in Buddhism. The section covering the monastic rules is called the *Patimokkha*, a word carrying the meaning of “things that should be made binding.” The number of rules varies in the different versions of the text, but there are always more than 200 rules, and they cover practical aspects of monastic life, such as food, clothing, and housing, as well as ethical issues. The Vinaya Pitaka also includes guidelines for settling disputes and procedures for dealing with monks or nuns who have broken monastic rules.

The collection also contains stories about the Buddha’s life and historical accounts of the early communities of monks. Other branches of Buddhism have produced their own versions of these texts, which exist in the Chinese and Tibetan languages.

2. *Sutta Pitaka*

This collection contains a series of teachings and discourses based on the recollections of the Buddha’s own words memorized by his closest follower, Ananda. It is a large collection, and contains several different kinds of texts, from lengthy dialogues to shorter stories and sayings. Some of its most interesting sections are the *Jatakas*, narratives of the previous lives of the Buddha, which tell of the selfless deeds of the being—sometimes human, sometimes animal in form—who would later be born as the Buddha. These stories, which read like traditional fables, all have morals, and are highly entertaining. They also form valuable historical sources about life in India at the time of the Buddha.

The other important section of the *Sutta Pitaka* is called the *dharmapada*. It is a collection of 423 verses that together explain how to live a life that will lead to enlightenment. Its key messages—living a good life, avoiding evil, cultivating a pure mind—are still important to Buddhists everywhere, and the *dharmapada* is one of the most popular and most quoted of all Buddhist scriptures. The *Sutta Pitaka* as a whole, with its vivid stories and inspiring teachings, is the part of the Pali canon that appeals most widely to lay Buddhists. There are also Chinese versions of the collection, but the Pali version is the most complete.

3. *Abhidhamma Pitaka*

The name of this part of the Pali Canon means “higher doctrine” and its analytical, interpretative content appeals mainly to monks and scholars. It is made up of a number of analyses of the Buddha’s teachings and has itself been the subject of extensive analysis by Buddhist scholars—commentaries have been written on each of its seven books along with works examining the whole collection.

Ethics, Morality and Law

Buddhists are encouraged to help those in need, to be considerate, to avoid violence, and to refrain from activities that harm others. They follow an ancient set of moral precepts, the *pancha sila*, which are as relevant today as when they were drawn up many centuries ago.

1. Law of Cause and Effect: Karma

As in the other religions of India, such as Hinduism and Jainism, Buddhism adheres to the law of moral cause and effect, or karma. According to this law, human beings accrue merit or demerit (good or bad karma) as a result of their behaviour. At death, the final balance of this good and bad karma determines whether the person’s rebirth is favourable (such as being reborn as a human again, rather than as an animal), or not. Buddhists hope eventually to break free from the cycle of death and rebirth by reaching enlightenment, but they realize that for most people this will take a very long time. In the meantime, they hope to build up merit by following the ethical precepts laid down when Buddhism began. There are eight main moral precepts, although three apply principally to monks and nuns.

2. Code of Conduct: Eightfold Path and Pancha Sila

The basic guidelines of Buddhist morality are laid down in the Eightfold Path (as discussed above) which forms one of the core doctrines of Buddhism. Among other things, the Eightfold Path encourages Buddhists to act with “Right speech,” “Right conduct,” and also “Right occupation.” But Buddhism has added a number of more specific ethical instructions to guide followers, too. Chief among these are the *pancha sila* (“five moral precepts”), a group of widely accepted rules that dates back to the beginnings of the faith.

- The first precept is not to harm living things, a rule influenced by the Indian ideal of ahimsa (non-violence). For many Buddhists this rule, as well as prohibiting harm to humans, places a ban on harming animals—most Buddhists do not take part in blood

sports and are vegetarian. However, some take a pragmatic course: they prefer not to kill animals themselves but will eat those killed by others.

- The second precept is not to take what has not been given. This rules out stealing, and also means that monks may accept charitable gifts but they may not beg, as the gifts must be given willingly.
- The third precept places a ban on misconduct involving the senses—in other words on sexual misconduct.
- The fourth is to abstain from false speech, so Buddhists should not lie, nor should they make offensive remarks or gestures.
- The fifth and final precept bans the use of drugs or alcohol, which affect the mind, thus making it impossible to make proper moral choices.

3. Monastic Precepts

The stricter life of the Buddhist monk or nun requires three further moral precepts. These were drawn up in the early history of Buddhism, and they show an austerity in monastic life that exists even today.

- First, Buddhist monks and nuns should avoid eating at the wrong time (traditionally, meals are taken before midday).
- Second, they should avoid “secular” behaviour, such as going to the theatre or dancing.
- Finally, they should not use high chairs or beds, which represent the comfortable furniture owned by the wealthy.

Religious Rituals and Practices

Buddhism is about absorbing the teachings of the Buddha and living a life inspired by them, which means that it does not have to be a ritualistic faith. Nevertheless, Buddhism does have several practices of regular devotion, and festivals that mark key points in the year.

1. The Triple Refuge

Buddhists respect the Buddha, and although he is not a god, their religious practices reflect the enormous respect that he inspires. At the heart of Buddhist ritual practice is the recitation of the Triple Refuge: *“I go to the Buddha for my refuge. I go to the dhamma for my refuge. I go to the sangha for my refuge.”* This is a way for Buddhist followers to voice their commitment to the Buddha as an authoritative, even reliable, teacher; to affirm their faith in his teaching (dhamma), especially the Noble Truths and Eightfold Path and to openly declare their trust in the Buddhist monastic community (sangha), which includes the Buddha’s first five companions (the first Buddhist monks) and the wider community of Buddhist monks and nuns.

2. *Becoming A Monk*

Monasticism plays an important role in Buddhist practice, especially in the practice of Theravada Buddhism. In this form of Buddhism many young people become monks or nuns, and still more boys join a monastery as learners for a short period as part of their education. Buddhist monks and nuns must obey a series of rules that regulate every aspect of their lives. They renounce property, money, sexual relations, and luxury, living a simple life, wearing plain robes, and shaving their heads. They spend much time meditating, and some live-in remote country monasteries. However, they do not cut themselves off from the wider community. They teach others about the dhamma, they care for the needy, and they help the lay people who give them their food to acquire merit (good karma).

3. *Rites of Passage*

Buddhism has two very important life-cycle rituals.

- The first of these is an initiation ceremony, which introduces a child or adolescent into adult society and prepares the young person to spend time in a monastery. Those being initiated may be given rich clothes to wear, like those that Siddhartha put on when he went on his journeys to discover the truth about suffering, or they may be given their monastic robes.
- The second is a funeral ceremony. When a person dies, the body is taken to the temple where the monks make chants or recitations that dwell on the process of death and rebirth. The prospect of rebirth helps to make Buddhist funerals hopeful occasions, in spite of their inevitable sadness. Cremation is common, especially in Theravada Buddhism, but some Mahayana Buddhists also practice burial.

Religious Calendar Festivals

Because Buddhism spread through many countries, it has a rich tradition of festivals, many of them joyous celebrations of the Buddha or the spread of Buddhism.

1. Vesak

The Buddha's birthday is particularly widely celebrated. In the Theravada tradition, his birthday is usually marked as part of the festival called Vesak, which celebrates not only the great teacher's birth, but also his enlightenment and death. Followers clean temples, make offerings, and light lanterns to symbolize the Buddha's enlightenment. In Japan, Mahayana Buddhists hold the flower festival Hana Matsuri to mark the Buddha's birthday.

2. Other Festivals

Other notable festivals include:

- New Year (famous for its water-sprinkling rites, symbolizing cleanliness),
- *Asala Puja*, a major festival in Sri Lanka that celebrates the Buddha's first sermon, and
- *Parinibbana*, a festival belonging to the Mahayana tradition that commemorates the Buddha's death and second and final nirvana.

Divisions of Buddhism

There are three main branches of Buddhism

- Theravada Buddhism
- Mahayana Buddhism
- Vajrayana Buddhism

Some other branches are

- Pure Land
- Tantric Buddhism
- Tibetan Buddhism
- Zen Buddhism
- Soka Gaki Buddhism
- Theravada Forest Tradition

Topic 03: Comparison

Similarities between Buddhism and Jainism

There are many similarities between two religions which are listed below;

1. Common Decent

Both religions emerged in eastern India. Both Buddha and Mahāvira come from Kshatriya families and were princes. They do not belong to the priestly families or Brahmanic clan. Both possessed the background of the Aryan culture and were inspired by the ascetic ideals and the philosophy of the Upanishads, particularly that of Sankhya-Yoga. Both appealed to the socially down-trodden, the Vaishvas who were not granted social status corresponding to their growing economic power, and the Sudras who were definitely oppressed. They were able to get support for their cause from the contemporary ruling class, different Kshatriya rulers and economically prosperous Vaishvas.

2. Rejected the Existence of God

Both rejected the existence of God or external power. Neither religion believes in God as the creator of the universe. They acknowledge all creation as being part of the universe's divinity. As such, their holy texts are not considered the word of a god or sacred stories. Their scriptures are teaching tools to help guide the individual to enlightenment through thought and practice.

3. Rejected the Authority of Brahmins and Vedas

Both rejected the authority of the Vedas and the necessity of performing sacrifices and rituals and opposed the rule and supremacy of Brahmins.

4. Concept of Rebirth

Both recognized the theories of rebirth and Mokṣa. Both believed that Nirvana or salvation of an individual meant his or her deliverance from the eternal chain of birth and death. Both religions believe in reincarnation, which is the rebirth of the soul in a new body after the death of the previous body. They also believe the soul can eventually, through enlightenment, exist in a permanent state of paradise. They also don't believe in a hell or a final judgment of the soul.

5. *Karma*

Both religions believe in the concept of karma, which is an attachment of positive and negative forces to the soul based on a person's actions, beliefs, and spiritual attachments. Reincarnation carries this force forward and requires effort to purify the soul. A soul cannot attain enlightenment or reach paradise with negative karma weighing them down.

6. *Taught Non-Violence*

Ahiṃsā (non-violence) was the important teaching of both religions. Both strongly denied the animal sacrifices because they taught loving kindness, and compassion.

7. *No Discriminations*

Both accepted disciples from all castes and from both genders, male and female to become monks and nun into their tradition.

8. *Right Conduct*

Both emphasized on right conduct and right knowledge, not on religious ceremonies and rituals as the way to attain *mokṣa*.

9. *Code of Conduct*

Both have their own three gems or 'Tri Ratna'. Tri Ratna of Jainism Right View, Right Knowledge, Right Conduct. The Threefold refuge (Ti-Ratna, Pāli) of Buddhism comprise of the Budhha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Difference between Buddhism and Jainism

There are striking similarities between two religions but there are also some fundamental differences between two religions.

1. *Difference Regarding Conception of Mokṣa*

According to Buddhism, a man attains Mokṣa (Nibbāna) when one ends all desires and defilements, and one can achieve it while living in the world. In contrast, Jainism Mokṣa is the freedom from miseries and can be attained only after death then one was called “Siddha”.

2. Means of Attainment of Mokṣa

According to Buddhism, the Buddhist monks denied the self-mortifications and penances because it was too extreme way. Jainism practiced in fasts and severest penances.

3. Ahimsā

Though both emphasize the principle of Ahimsā, yet Jainism is stricter in this kind of practice.

4. Soul

Jainism believes the existence of soul in every living being. In contrast, Buddhism does not believe in the existence of soul at all.

5. Regarding Conduct

Jainism emphasized Tri Ratna but Buddhism emphasized the Noble Eightfold Path.

6. Language of Religious Texts

Most of the Jain texts are in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages in contrast Buddhist texts are in Pāli or Magadhi language.

7. Their connection with Hinduism

Jain religion is nearer to Hinduism whereas Buddhism followed the policy of keeping away from Hinduism.

8. Caste system

Jainism dissent it, on other hand, Buddhism opposed and attacked it strongly about caste system and both offered the equality of human life.

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Lesson 10

Sociological Analysis of major world religions – IV

Topic 01: Vedic Religion: Hinduism

Vedic Tradition

Vedic religion, also called **Vedism**, the religion of the ancient Indo-European-speaking peoples who entered India about 1500 BCE from the region of present-day Iran. It takes its name from the collections of sacred texts known as the Vedas. Vedism is the oldest stratum of religious activity in India for which there exist written materials.

Vedic materials are the texts known as the Vedas, which were composed and handed down orally over a period of about 10 centuries, from about the 15th to the 5th century BCE. The Vedic corpus is composed in Sanskrit. The most important texts are also the oldest ones. They are the four collections (Samhitas) that are called the Veda, or Vedas. To each Veda is attached a body of prose writings of later date called Brahmanas (c. 800–600 BCE), which explain the

ceremonial applications of the texts and the origin and importance of the sacrificial rites for which the Vedas were composed.

Vedism was a polytheistic sacrificial religion involving the worship of numerous male divinities (and a few goddesses), most of whom were connected with the sky and natural phenomena. The priests who officiated at that worship were drawn from the Brahman social class. The complex Vedic ceremonies, for which the hymns of the Rigveda were composed, centred on the ritual sacrifice of animals and the drinking of a sacred, mind-altering liquor pressed from a plant called soma.

The basic Vedic rite was performed by offering those to a sacred fire, which was itself deified as Agni. The god of highest rank, however, was Indra, a warlike god who conquered innumerable human and demon enemies and brought back the sun after it had been stolen, among other feats. Another great deity was Varuna, who was the upholder of the cosmic and moral laws. Vedism had many other lesser deities, among whom were gods, goddesses, demigods, and demons.

Over the centuries, the Vedic rites became increasingly complex and governed by innumerable rules, which were embodied, together with the hymns and prayer formulas used, in the Vedas. This became the downfall of Vedic period. During the late Vedic period the complexities of ritual were emphasized to such an extent that only highly trained Brahmins could carry them out correctly, and it was maintained that improperly or incorrectly performed rites could, unless rectified, bring about disaster or death.

When Vedic religion gradually evolved into Hinduism between the 6th and 2nd centuries BCE, the texts, taken collectively, became the most sacred literature of Hinduism. The legacy of Vedic worship is apparent in several aspects of modern Hinduism. The basic stratification of Vedic society into four *varnas*—the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors or rulers), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (servants)—by and large persisted in later Hinduism. Sacrifices performed according to Vedic rites continue to be performed in India occasionally, and the offering of oblations to a sacred fire (*homa*) is an important element of much modern Hindu worship. The Hindu rite of initiation is another direct survival of Vedic tradition. Vishnu and Shiva, the major deities of classical Hinduism, are briefly mentioned in Vedic mythology, and Indra remains the king of the gods in narratives, although he is no longer worshipped.

Core beliefs and religious teachings of Hinduism and Sikhism are discussed below.

Hinduism: Origins and History

The beginnings of Hinduism can be traced right back to the Indian subcontinent's earliest city-based culture, the so-called Indus Valley civilization. This culture flourished in the 3rd millennium BCE. They seem to have worshipped both a goddess and a god with three faces. This three-faced deity may be the origin of the triad of gods who later became central to Hinduism.

During the 2nd millennium BCE, India was invaded by another people, known as the Aryans. They worshipped many gods, and saw these deities as forces of nature. We know about the Aryans' religion from texts The Aryan scriptures, called the *Vedas* (from the Sanskrit word for knowledge), written down in around 800 BCE. These *Vedas* are the first texts of Hinduism. The oldest of the Vedas is the *Rig Veda*, which contains more than 1,000 hymns, each addressed to a specific god. Among the many gods mentioned in these hymns, two of the most popular are the warrior deity *Indra* and the fire god *Agni*. Sacrifices played a major part in the worship of these Vedic gods and the priests who presided over the rituals were among the most important people in Indian society.

Core Beliefs

Hinduism is the most diverse of the major faiths and one that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The result is a complex religion, with thousands of gods, which displays no standard practice. There are, however, a few key concepts that are drawn on by all followers. Hindu belief centres on three main ideas: The Absolute, *Samsara*, and *Moksa*.

1. The Absolute

Hindus believe in an overall absolute reality known as *Brahman*. Because it is absolute, Brahman cannot be described, and is often talked about in terms of what it is not—it is neither male nor female, nor manifest in any one form, and it does not die. Creation, which is also infinite, is part of Brahman, and as humanity is part of creation, we carry Brahman around with us, too. The part of the individual that is Brahman is the soul, known as the *atman*. This linking of the soul and the infinite, of *atman* and Brahman, is one example in Hinduism of the bonds between large and small, and God and human. For many, this is the essence of the religion.

2. *The Pantheon*

Another way of looking at Brahman is to see it manifested in scores of deities, the gods that make up the Hindu pantheon. Each deity is identified with an aspect of the ultimate reality, and Hindus revere them all. Of the many gods, the most prominent are a trio known as the *Trimurti* and each of the gods has his own female companion who are powerful goddesses in their own right.

- *Brahma*, known as a lofty creator figure and his wife is *Saraswati*;
- *Visnu*, known as the preserver and his wife is *Laksmi*; and
- *Siva*, the destroyer of life who also recreates it and his wife is *Kali*.

In addition, Visnu has the special ability to manifest himself on Earth in 10 different forms or avatars, the most widely revered being the noble lord *Rama* and the hero warrior god *Krisna*. Most Hindus focus their worship on a particular god or goddess. Other gods are usually acknowledged in their worship, and a group of five (*Devi*, *Ganesh*, *Narayan*, *Siva*, and *Surya*) are often invoked at the beginning of Hindu worship.

3. *Samsara to Moksa*

Hindus believe in the concept of *samsara*, “the continuous cycle of birth and reincarnation”, and in *karma*, “the law of cause and effect that links the way we live to the kind of rebirth we will have.” Hindus hope to achieve a favourable rebirth by living well in their current life and thereby achieving good karma. Crucial to this process is *dharma*, “the concept of what is right in both ritual and everyday behaviour.” Believers aspire to live as closely as possible to the *dharma*. But there is also the hope that one can break out of the cycle of *samsara* by achieving *moksa*, which the Bhagavad Gita describes “as freedom from the body, from anger, from death, and even from karma itself.”

Religious Doctrine: Sruti and Smrti Writings

The sacred texts of Hinduism are divided into two categories. The oldest are called the *sruti* texts. Although they are often difficult to understand, they are believed to be the holiest of the Hindu scriptures. Later and more accessible is the *smrti* literature of the great Hindu epic poems, which reveal truths through gripping stories and interesting characters.

1. Surti Texts: Vedas and Upanishads

These works are known as *sruti*, or “heard,” because the ancient sages went off to remote places to meditate, when they would hear or perceive sacred truths. *Sruti* literature is composed of Vedas and Upanishads.

i. Vedas

The word veda means knowledge and is divided into four collections. Vedas cover different areas of sacred knowledge and ritual:

- a) hymns to the gods in the Rig Veda;
- b) chants in the Sama Veda;
- c) rituals in the Yajur Veda;
- d) and rites and spells, especially those concerned with healing, in the Atharva Veda.

ii. Upanishads

The Upanishads focus on Brahman, and the relationship of the soul with this ultimate reality. Their title means “sitting down near to,” just as followers of the early sages, or gurus, sat down next to their masters to learn their wisdom.

2. Smrti Texts

i. The Mahabharata

The longer of the two epics that make up the *smrti* writings is the *Mahabharata*, meaning “The Great Story of the Bharatas”. It tells of a long power struggle between two rival families, the Pandavas and Kauravas. Both of these families are descendants of a king called Bharata, whose name derives from an early name for India. The epic has a vast cast of characters and covers the whole range of human experience from love to war, combined with teaching on all kinds of subjects—politics, personal morality, and religion.

ii. The Bhagavad Gita

The sixth section of the Mahabharata is so famous that it is read as a book in its own right and is called the Bhagavad Gita, meaning “Song of the Adorable One”, it describes events before a great battle between two warring families. *Arjuna*, a member of the Pandava family, is preparing for the battle, but is overcome with horror at the prospect of war and tells his chariot driver that he cannot fight. But the chariot driver is *Krishna*, an avatar (manifestation) of the god *Visnu*. *Krishna* explains to *Arjuna* the concept of *dharma*, that each person must act according to the proper path set down for him. Finally, *Arjuna* understands that it is his *dharma* to be a warrior, and that, when he fights, he will be helping good triumph over evil. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the classic explanation of Hindu concepts, and is one of the best-loved Hindu scriptures.

3. *The Ramayana*

The other Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*, tells the story of *Rama*, the seventh avatar of *Visnu*, and his loyal wife *Sita*. At its heart is a story about the abduction of *Sita* by a demon, *Ravana*, and her rescue by *Rama*, with the help of the monkey god *Hanuman*. One of the most popular stories in Indian literature, the *Ramayana* appeals because it stresses the human side of *Rama*’s character and portrays very real human emotions. It describes how its hero and heroine undergo hardship and pain, but find fulfilment through making the right moral choices and following their *dharma*s.

Ethics, Morality and Law

The ethics of Hinduism are based on karma, the moral law of cause and effect, and on *dharma*, the concept of the correct moral path each person must follow. As our characters and circumstances vary, so the faith offers many ways a person can live well and follow their *dharma*.

1. *Dharma and Karma*

Hindus aim to act and live well in order to produce positive karma. One lifetime is not enough to reach perfection and so people look forward to endless reincarnations as the cycle of *samsara* turns. Acting well is a matter of acting according to *dharma*, the path that is right. There is no single *dharma* (*dharma* means what is right in the specific circumstances), so each individual, society, and social class has its own *dharma*. Hindus also believe that *dharma* alters through a person’s lifetime. There are four traditional stages of life, each with its own *dharma*.

- The first stage, childhood, has a dharma dominated by education.
- The next stage, that of the household, is focused on bringing up a family.
- The third stage is when one becomes a grandparent, and its dharma involves retiring from the world of work and living a life that concentrates more closely on spiritual matters.
- The final stage marks the end of life, when a devout Hindu renounces the world and concentrates on the absolute.

2. *Moksa*

The ultimate goal, which is recognized as being unattainable for most, is to move beyond the cycle of death and rebirth, and to attain a transcendent state known as moksa. To achieve this, the person has to realize the atman, the inner soul identified with Brahman, and merge with the absolute itself. There are several paths that can lead to this state.

- One is a path of concentration on Brahman, a life of solitary meditation under the guidance of a teacher or guru and encompassing the discipline of yoga.
- Another route to moksa is the path of action—pursuing good actions in the world, but in a way that is totally selfless.
- Loving devotion to the divine is a third way a person can move toward moksa.

3. *Values*

Although dharma varies from one person to another, there are still Hindu values that are universal or widespread. All life is sacred, so Hindus avoid violence, and many, though not all, are vegetarians because they object to killing animals for food. The cow is a sacred animal, and most Hindus will not eat beef or veal. The raising of children is also very important, and traditionally, the female roles of motherhood and homemaker are valued highly. The women of the household are usually responsible for regular worship at the home's shrine.

4. *Castes and Varnas*

Hindu society is divided into a series of social classes, called varnas and castes, into which people are born. Everyone's lives and actions depend on which class they are born into. A person's dharma is traditionally related directly to the varna into which they are born. The four traditional varnas are:

- the *brahman*, or priestly class;

- the *kshatriya*, or warriors;
- the *vaishya*, or merchants and farmers; and
- the *sudra*, or lowest division.

The caste a Hindu is born into traditionally affects their choice of job, their choice of marriage partner, and the people with whom they may eat or from whom they may accept food. Hindu ethics fit into this class system, and obeying caste rules is important if a person is to stay ritually pure.

Religious Rituals and Practices

The long history of Hinduism has led to the development of a rich variety of rituals and other practices. Hindu observances range from quiet daily worship in front of a small shrine at home to national festivals that involve days of celebration all over India and beyond.

1. Puja

Hindus worship every day, either at the temple or, more commonly, at a small shrine in the home. This daily worship, known as *puja* (a word that conveys the meaning of honour and veneration), is an important and very diverse part of Hindu practice. Puja centres on the image of a deity, which is regarded as a symbol of the god and, more than this, as part of the deity's essence.

Key elements of puja include ritual purity (it is common to bathe before puja), and the symbolic washing of the deity's image, which is treated as a guest in the house or temple. Food, flowers, fragrant incense, and light in the form of a burning oil lamp, are offered to the deity. There may be hymns in honour of the god, especially in temple worship, and devotion can also be expressed by dancing. A pivotal part of puja is *darshan*: having audience with or viewing the deity, which is done by either sitting facing the image of the deity or by walking around it.

2. Rites of Passage

There are 16 rituals, called *samskaras*, that mark the stages of a Hindu's life. The importance of children and family life in Hinduism means 11 of these are to do with babies and young

children. Many people will not celebrate all of these rituals, but the most popular are those that take place at birth like

- ceremonial cleansing,
- sacred sounds being whispered in the baby's ear,
- naming ceremony, at which songs are sung and the child's horoscope may be cast.
- Most important of all is the sacred thread ceremony, which is held between the ages of 6 and 14, the age variation depending partly on the family's social class. In this ritual, a boy is given a thread made of three strands of cotton yarn, symbolizing his link to God, his parents, and his teacher; he wears this sacred thread for the rest of his life.

Of the other samskaras, the most important are

- betrothal,
- marriage (accompanied by celebrations lasting several days), and
- the ceremonies that take place after a person dies.

Religious Festivals

Most Hindu festivals are happy occasions, reinforcing the view that life is God given and something to be enjoyed. Hinduism has many festivals, most of which are associated with specific seasons of the year.

i. Diwali

One of the most popular is diwali, the festival of lights held in October or November, during which people decorate their homes, workplaces, and temples with lights. It is a time for celebration and also renewal —people decorate and clean their houses, and the goddess Laksmi is said to visit every home and to bring prosperity and happiness to those that are well decorated.

ii. Holi

Holi, takes place in the lead-up to the new Year in March or April. It celebrates both the spring harvest and the coming of the new year, and is marked by the relaxing of social rules, the playing of pranks, and the throwing of coloured powder, a trick once played by Krisna, whose image is carried through the streets.

iii. *Other Festivals*

Other festivals celebrate specific gods, including

- *Ram Navami* which is Lord Rama's birthday,
- *Navami* which is celebration of the goddess *Durga*, and
- *Ganesh Chaturthi* which is celebrated in honour of the popular elephant headed god, *Ganesh*.

Divisions of Hinduism

There are four denominations of Hinduism

- Vaishnavism
- Shaivism
- Shaktism
- Smartism

Topic 02: Sikhism

Origin and History

The Sikh religion was founded in the late 15th century (1499) in northern India by Guru Nanak, the first guru (teacher). Sikhism originates from one part of south Asia: the Punjab in north western India, which is home to its most sacred places. The history of the faith is closely tied to its founding fathers—the “Ten Gurus”—and to the story of the Indian subcontinent. Guru Nanak was followed by a succession of nine other gurus, who guided Sikhism between the 16th and early 18th centuries. Sikhs undertake to work hard, to serve others, and to meditate regularly upon the name of God.

Guru Nanak, heard his spiritual calling. Nanak was a government official who had been born in Talwandi, west of Lahore. He had always shown an interest in spiritual matters, but in 1499, when he was 30, he had a mystical experience. After bathing in the Bein River, he was struck silent for a day, and then he made the following pronouncement: “There is neither Hindu nor Muslim, so whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path.” Nanak's assertion that there is neither Hindu nor Muslim can be interpreted in two ways. The practical effect of the

statement for Nanak was that he became the teacher and leader of a new faith that focused closely on God.

Nanak travelled widely, explaining his new religious message to communities all over India and beyond—some accounts say that he even travelled to Mecca, in modern-day Saudi Arabia, to preach. But in 1521 he settled down and founded a Sikh village at Kartarpur, in the Punjab, and established a pattern of meditation and regular worship. This village became the heart of a Sikh community that flourished and began to expand throughout the rest of Nanak's life.

The Khanda: Symbol

The symbol of Sikhism is called the *khanda*. It is made up of three separate parts. Rising up the centre is a two-edged sword representing freedom and justice. On either side are a pair of curved swords or *kirpans*, one of which represents the religious concerns of the Sikh, the other his worldly concerns. The third element is a circle, a symbol of unity (the oneness of God and of humanity) and balance.

Core Beliefs

The One God is at the center of all Sikh belief. Sikhs aim not only to worship God, but also to achieve a close, personal experience of God by such means as meditation, the repetition of God's Name, and full absorption in the teachings of the Gurus.

1. The One God

Sikhs believe that the one God is the eternal creator of the universe. They see God as Sat Guru ("the true teacher"), but God is also the Absolute, formless, and impossible to describe. Sikhs therefore follow the human Gurus, the ten original leaders of the Sikhs, and the "Eleventh Guru," the sacred book known as the *Guru Granth Sahib* (or sometimes the *Adi Granth*) as those who have revealed God's nature and teachings.

In the *Guru Granth Sahib*, God is depicted as an immortal being, without fear or hatred, who is the embodiment of truth. In this way, Sikhs see God not only as the creator but also as the being on whom all depend. It is therefore important that Sikhs not only understand the nature of God but also achieve a personal, direct experience of Him.

2. The Name of God

According to Guru Nanak, one way to have a personal experience of God is to keep God's Name in your heart. The Name of God is important to Sikhs as it encapsulates God's being and shows how the formless and Absolute God is present in the world. The Name is so important that Guru Nanak actually referred to God as *Nam*, or Name. To meditate on the Name is one of three promises that a devotee makes on entering the Sikh community, so Sikhs spend much time meditating on the Name to bring God into their own being. The other promises are to work hard and honestly, and to give alms.

3. *Cycle of Rebirth*

The law of karma is the process of moral cause and effect that influences how we are reborn after death. The Sikh view of the process of death and rebirth sees five stages of existence, each on a higher moral plane than the previous one. A person may lead one life as a *manmukh* ("wrongdoer") but, through a series of rebirths, may reach the focus on God known as *gurmukh* and the fifth and final stage of *sachkand* ("bliss"), the state beyond rebirth.

In Sikh belief, living a good life is important in the process of favourable rebirth, but how we are reborn cannot be entirely in our own hands. God is so great that it is only through his will that a person can achieve a positive rebirth or reach the state of bliss. This fact makes focusing on God and his Name all the more central to Sikhism.

Doctrine: The Guru Granth Sahib

The Sikh scriptures are collected in a volume called the Guru Granth Sahib or Adi Granth (meaning "Primal Book"). The book is central to the Sikh faith, enshrining the message that belief in the sacred Name of God is at the heart of their religion, and its words form part of all Sikh worship. The Sikh place of worship, the gurdwara, is defined as a place in which a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib is kept. The Guru Granth Sahib does not contain a systematic explanation of Sikh teachings. It is a book of poetry and praise rather than one of moral instruction. But knowledge of its content is vital to Sikhs as a way to move closer to an understanding and love of God.

1. *The History of the Book*

The idea for an authentic collection of the Sikh scriptures came from the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev (1563–1606). To lay to rest concerns over whether or not certain texts were genuinely the work

of the early Gurus, Arjan began to gather the true manuscripts. Over the course of several years, he sent his trusted companions to locate original manuscripts and then he and his follower Bhai Gurdas copied them into one volume. In 1604 the volume was finished, and Guru Arjan taught his followers to revere the book as the divinely inspired work of the early Gurus. Around 100 years later, the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, revised the book, adding the hymns of the Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, and, modestly, just one of his own. The book also contains works by a number of respected spiritual leaders and saints from other faiths, most importantly Muslims and Hindus. After Gobind Singh declared that the book would be the Sikhs' final Guru, it became known as the Guru Granth Sahib.

2. *The Content of the Scriptures*

This sacred book contains thousands of hymns, written in Gurmukhi, a Sikh script. The hymns are arranged in 31 sections following traditional Indian musical forms called ragas. Within each section, the hymns are grouped according to the Guru who wrote them, with those by non-Gurus coming at the end. Together the texts of the hymns set out and celebrate the basic beliefs of Sikhism—that God is the One, universal creator and that all the world's peoples are equal. They also indicate the moral and ethical goals of the faith, from eliminating evil to living in humility and compassion.

3. *Reading Holy Book*

Sikhs read certain key passages in daily prayer at home. Another way to use the book is to read the entire text in a continuous reading called an *akhand path*—reading the scripture out in this way this usually takes around 48 hours and often forms part of Sikh festivals. Occasions on which such a reading may take place include important family events and festivals that commemorate the birth or death of one of the Gurus.

4. *Respect for the Book*

Sikhs must house the Guru Granth Sahib properly and treat it with respect. The volume is kept in the gurdwara on a small throne topped by a canopy close to the ceiling. It is covered with cloths that Sikhs should keep clean and change daily, and it is laid to rest ceremonially at night. Those who read from the book adopt special rituals to show their reverence for its contents. In the presence of the book, people must be barefoot and must cover their heads. Sikhs bow before the book to show their reverence for God. And the reader or a volunteer (called a *sewadar*)

waves a sacred whisk, known as a *chauri*, over the book as a sign of respect while the reading takes place. If someone needs to carry the book, for example during a festival procession, he or she bears it aloft on their head—this is a sign of the book’s elevated status.

Ethics, Morality and Law

Sikh ethics are grounded firmly in the need to do good in the world. There are many ways to do good, but two stand out as particularly important: to help others through a practical ethic of service, and to embrace the high moral standards of the Khalsa, or Sikh community

1. Virtues and Vices

The ethics of Sikhism are guided by the Sikh awareness of five key virtues and five cardinal vices.

<i>Virtues</i>	<i>Vices</i>
Truth	Lust
Contentment	Anger
Service	Greed
Patience	Worldliness
Humility	Pride

By upholding these virtues, Sikhs hope to obey the will of God and to grow nearer to him. Giving in to these vices is seen as turning away from God. Sikhs see the vices as a constant threat and temptation, and hope to avoid them by focusing on God’s Name and by selflessly upholding the virtues. In doing all these things they aim to attract God’s grace.

2. Service

For Sikhs, an important way to serve God is by adhering to the concept of *seva*, meaning “service.” In effect, this means serving or looking after other people. Seva is learned both in the family, where children are brought up to obey and respect their parents, and in the gurdwara, where members of the congregation help one another. The gurdwara is also the setting for the most public display of the Sikh belief in service for all. At the end of Sikh worship, the gurdwara offers a communal meal (known as the *Langar*) to the community. This meal usually consists of pulses, rice, vegetables, and bread. Although Sikhs may eat meat, the Langar is usually a vegetarian meal, because Sikhs extend their hospitality beyond those of their own religion to followers of other faiths, too. Sikhs are expected to help the needy, whether they are followers of Sikhism or not. This caring service may take the form of charitable work inside or outside the gurdwara.

3. *Equality*

Extending the ethic of service to the whole of humanity is one example of an important principle in Sikh morality. Sikhs believe that all of humanity was created by God and therefore that all of humanity is equal. Even though Sikhs have lived—and in many cases continue to live—in societies in which specific roles are assigned to women or to members of a particular social class, Sikhs value equally people of all races, castes, and social status, and they do not support discrimination. Also, men and women are regarded as equals in Sikh culture.

4. *The Ethics of the Khalsa*

The community of adult-initiated Sikhs is called the Khalsa. Although the original Khalsa members were men who were prepared to take a military role in defending their people and their faith, Sikhism now permits both sexes to be admitted to this special community. Women members are referred to as *Ardhangi* (“the better half”). All members are admitted to the Khalsa in a special initiation ceremony at which men take the surname Singh (“Lion”), and women Kaur (“Princess”). Guru Gobind Singh laid down an ethical code for the Khalsa. Members must not commit adultery, worship Hindu deities, or use alcohol, tobacco, or narcotics. They must rise early, read the prescribed scriptures, and meditate on God’s Name. They must also keep their heads covered—men with a turban, women with either a turban or scarf.

5. *Symbolic 5 Ks*

Members of Sikh religion and especially members of Khalsa must wear the symbolic “Five Ks.” These are

- the *kesh*: the Sikh’s long, uncut hair,
- the *kangha*: a comb to keep the hair in place,
- the *kaccha*: shorts worn as undergarments,
- the *kara*: a bracelet, and
- the *kirpan*: a short sword.

Religious Rituals and Practices

The worship and other religious practices of the Sikhs focus closely on the Guru Granth Sahib. Singing hymns from this sacred book makes up a major part of worship at the gurdwara, while life-cycle rituals and annual festivals also find their focus in its words.

1. Regular Worship

A communal service in the gurdwara comprises three main parts, known as *Kirtan*, *Anand*, and *Langar*.

1. *Kirtan* consists of singing hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, accompanied by musical instruments such as the harmonium and tablas (small drums). In some sections of the service, the musicians sing the hymns alone, while sometimes the whole congregation takes part. It is the main part of the service and may last for several hours. Its focus on the hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib shows the centrality of the book in the Sikh faith.
2. *Anand* is the second element of service, and consists of following
 - It includes further hymns, and
 - Is followed by the recital of the *Mool Mantar* which appears at the beginning of the Guru Granth Sahib and distils the essence of Sikhism. It was composed by Guru Nanak. Its words are so important that Sikhs believe that they cannot be properly translated. This prayer, contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, is said to comprise the first recorded saying by Guru Nanak after his enlightenment.

- Then comes a short sermon, and the distribution of *karah parshad*, a sacred sweet food made of flour, water, sugar, and ghee (clarified butter), to the congregation.
 - A communal prayer called *Ardas* ends this part of the worship.
3. The last section of the service, *Langar*, is a communal meal.

2. *Rites of passage*

Sikhism marks all the stages of life with special ceremonies. Two of the most characteristic are held for the naming of infants and the initiation of new members into the Khalsa.

i. *Naming Ceremony*

Shortly after a baby is born to a Sikh family, the child is taken to the gurdwara for its naming ceremony. The child may be given a little *amrit*, a nectarlike drink made of sugar crystals and water, which represents the ambrosial nature of God's Name. The Guru Granth Sahib is opened at random and the *granthi*, who officiates, reads the hymn on the left-hand side of the page. Parents then select a name for the child that begins with the first letter of the first word on the left of the opened page. Once the ceremony is over, the congregation gives a celebratory cheer.

ii. *Initiation into the Khalsa*

Five existing Khalsa members (recalling the original five members initiated by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699) perform the initiation ceremony. The five take turns to stir *amrit* in an iron bowl, while reciting verses from the Guru Granth Sahib. The five drink some of the *amrit* and the initiates drink what is left. Then the five say the *Mool Mantar* and the initiates repeat it five times. After this, the initiates are told their Khalsa duties, from praying daily to wearing the "Five Ks". A reading, and sharing of *karah parshad*, ends the ritual.

Religious Festivals

Because Sikhism originated in the Indian subcontinent, the Sikhs adopted many of the traditional Hindu festivals, giving them meanings appropriate to their own faith.

i. *Diwali*

Diwali, the festival of lights, which for Sikhs recalls the release from prison of the Sixth Guru, Hargobind, in the 17th century, when people lit their houses with candles to welcome him home.

ii. *Hola Mohalla*

Hola Mohalla is the Sikh equivalent of the Hindu *Holi*. “hola Mohalla” means “Attack and place of attack” and commemorates the training of the early Khalsa members in martial arts.

iii. *Gurpurbs*

Sikhism has its own festivals in addition to the festivals adopted from Hinduism called *gurpurbs*. These mark key events in the faith’s history and the lives of the Gurus. They are celebrated with processions in which devotees carry the Guru Granth Sahib through the streets. A key part of many *gurpurbs* is often a complete reading of the book, which takes about 48 hours. Adherents also sing hymns and give readings connected with the particular Guru whom they are commemorating. The most important *gurpurbs* are

- Birthday of Guru Nanak, it is most holy of all *gurpurbs*,
- Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (the Tenth Guru) and
- Martyrdom of the Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur.

Divisions of Sikhism

Following are the divisions of Sikhism

- Namdhari
- Nirankari
- Nirmala
- Radha Swami
- Sindhi Sikhs
- Udasi

Topic 03: Comparison between Hinduism and Sikhism

Sikhs are not Hindus. Both religions do share some similarities and festivals but Sikhism rejects many aspects of Hinduism. Sikhism is a distinct religion with a unique scripture, principles, code of conduct, guidelines, initiation ceremony, and appearance developed over three centuries by ten gurus, or spiritual masters. A brief comparison of both religions is given below.

Similarities between Sikhism and Hinduism

1. Reincarceration

Like Hinduism, Sikhism also believes in the transmigration of the soul. There are countless cycles of births and deaths. One only breaks this cycle when they achieve *mukhti* (merger with God).

2. Karma

Karma regulates the reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. Sikhism links Karma with the doctrine.

3. Maya

Both religions firmly believe that the world is just an illusion and some get enchanted with this illusion and forget God.

Difference between Sikhism and Hinduism

1. Origin

Hinduism can be traced as far back as 10,000 B.C. and is considered to be one of the earliest religions practiced by civilized man. Aryan invaders introduced the religion to the Sindhu River of the modern-day Indus region of India about 2,000 B.C. The river later became known as the Hindu and the people Hindus. Whereas Sikhism originated in Punjab, in what is now Pakistan, circa 1499 with the birth of Guru Nanak, and is based on the guru's writings and teachings.

2. Deity

Hinduism is a polytheist religion and believes in a hierarchy of deities with Brahman as the foremost all-encompassing, followed by the trinity *Brahma* (creator) *Vishnu* (sustainer) and *Shiva* (destroyer). Other important gods are *Krishna*, *Rama*, *Ganesha*, and *Hanuman*, along with goddesses *Lakshmi*, *Kali*, *Durga*, and *Saraswati*. There are many lesser demi-gods and demi-goddesses with some 33 million deities in all, which include plant, animal, and mineral spirits, all of whom are worshiped by means of idolatry, relying on intervention of *pandits*, or priests.

On the other hand, Sikhism rejects idolatry and has no clergy system. Guru Nanak introduced the concept of one god, Ik Onkar, one creator present in all of creation. Hence Sikhism is a monotheist religion. Sikhs refer to the divine as Waheguru, the Wondrous Enlightener.

3. Scripture

Sikhs believe the scripture of Siri Guru Granth Sahib to be the living word of their Guru or Enlightener. The Guru Granth Sahib offers guidance and instruction on how to be free of egoism and achieve humility, as a means to illuminate the spiritual darkness and liberate the soul from the cycle of transmigration.

Hindu scriptures are collectively known as Shashtra and are comprised of two types: *Sutri* (conceptualized) - Vedas and Upanishads and *Smriti* (poetic epics) - Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Mahabharata.

4. Worship

Sikhs begin the day with meditation and recite morning, evening and bedtime daily prayers. There is no hierarchy of clergy, any Sikh who is knowledgeable may perform religious duties. The congregation gathers with heads covered to worship in the gurdwara where services include:

- *Kirtan* - Devotional hymns.
- *Ardas* - Offering of Prayer.
- *Hukam* - Verse read from Guru Granth Sahib.
- *Prashad* - Sacred pudding distributed to worshipers.
- *Langar* free food from the guru's kitchen.

Hindus worship in a *mandir*, or temple, where idolatry rituals and *Puja* rites and ceremonies are performed by high caste priests. Hindu males don a ritual sacred thread at about the age of puberty, which is ceremoniously changed each year.

5. *Conversion and Caste*

Hinduism is based on a rigid caste system which one can only be born into, but can neither marry to become, nor convert to. Devotees are welcome to worship deities, but must wait until a future lifetime to be reborn into the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system. Strict adherence to principle and righteous deeds gives hope, that upon rebirth, they may reincarnate into an upper caste.

Whereas, Sikhism does not actively seek converts, but accepts anyone, regardless of social background, who wishes to be initiated.

6. *Marriage and Status of Females*

Hinduism teaches that a woman is to be always dependent either on father, or husband, for the duration of her life to ensure spiritual advancement. Hindu marriage is performed according to conditions of the Hindu Marriage Act between any two Hindus generally of the same caste. Dowry is also a consideration when arranging marriage. The marriage is performed by the bride and groom taking seven steps around a sacred fire. Hindu widows have little, or no status in India.

Sikhism teaches that bride and groom are fused by the four rounds of the Anand Karaj ceremony with the divine sharing one light in two bodies. Dowry is discouraged. Caste is not supposed to be a consideration when choosing a spouse. Widows are permitted to remarry. Sikh women are considered to be equal in status to men in every aspect of worship and life. Sikh women are encouraged to be educated, have careers, become community leaders, and are welcome to take part in every ceremony.

7. *Dietary Law & Fasting*

Hindu dietary law forbids eating meat from a cow. Fasting is done on auspicious occasions for a variety of reasons, and to purify body and soul. Whereas, Sikhism scripture counsels

against consuming intoxicants and flesh specifically chicken and fish if one wishes to advance spiritually. No kind of meat is ever served in any gurdwara, however, a Sikh who decides to indulge in meat eating is restricted only against eat an animal slaughtered ritually according to Muslim law *halal*. Sikhism does not believe in ritual fasting as a means to spiritual enlightenment.

8. Appearance

Hindu men may go bare-headed, wear a cap, or a festive turban over cut hair. Aesthetics may shave heads, or grow hair and a beard, but generally do not wear turbans, although some may. Hindu religious headgear is seldom worn outside of India. Hindu women never wear turbans. Hindu men traditionally wear *dhotis*, and women *saris*.

However, Sikhism Armitdhari initiates and Keshdhari devotees do not cut or remove hair from the scalp, face, or body. Devout Sikh men and some women wear religiously mandated turbans in a variety of styles to cover and protect unshorn hair. Sikhs are not permitted to wear caps or hats. Sikhs traditionally wear warrior style attire. Both men and women wear *chollas*. Men wear *kurta pajama* and women *salwar kamees*.

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Lesson 11**Religion in Changing Society****Topic 01: Changing Affiliation**

Before discussing changing affiliation, we must first understand what religiosity and religious affiliation means.

Religiosity

Religiosity is an important aspect of religion which often is viewed as the intensity of religious beliefs and participation. Religious beliefs are, notably, beliefs in hell, heaven, and an afterlife. Religious participation includes such behaviours as church attendance, participating in church-related activities, viewing/listening to religious broadcasts, and reading the holy books of the religion. Strong religiosity usually is marked by strong daily influence of religious beliefs on individual decisions and frequent participation in religious activities.

However, exactly how religious we are depends on how we operationalize this concept. For example, 90 percent of U.S. adults claim to believe in a divine power. Fifty-eight percent of adults say they pray at least once a day, but just 30 percent report attending religious services on a weekly or almost weekly basis. Clearly, the question “How religious are we?” has no easy answer, and it is likely that many people claim to be more religious than they really are. Although most people say they are at least somewhat religious, probably no more than about one-third actually are. Religiosity also varies among denominations. Members of sects are the most religious of all, followed by Catholics and then “mainstream” Protestant denominations such as Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

In general, older people are more religious than younger people. Finally, women are more religious than men: 49 percent of men and 63 percent of women say religion is very important in their lives. What difference does being more religious make? Researchers have linked a number of social patterns to strong religious beliefs, including low rates of delinquency among young people and low rates of divorce among adults. According to one study, religiosity helps

unite children, parents, and local communities in ways that benefit young people, enhancing their educational achievement.

Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation is the self-identified association of a person with a religion, denomination or sub-denominational religious group. National surveys show that about 81 percent of U.S. adults identify with a religion. Data shows that more than half of U.S. adults say they are Protestants, one-fourth Catholics, and 2 percent Jews. Large numbers of people follow dozens of other religions, from animism to Zen Buddhism, making U.S. society the most religiously diverse on Earth. Religious affiliation has strong influence on the social and political life of people.

For example, fertility differentials can be seen as a result of specific doctrinal differences among religions. Religious groups whose doctrines are against contraception and abortion and favour a large family size should have a higher fertility rate. For those religious groups who do not have such doctrines, the fertility rate should be lower. Examples of religious groups with these doctrines include Roman Catholics, fundamentalist Protestants, Mormons and Amish. Religious groups who have no prohibitions on birth control are, for example, mainstream Protestants and Jews. Research has provided some evidence that mainstream Protestants and Jews have higher levels of contraceptive use and lower fertility rates compared to Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants.

Changing Affiliation

A lot of change is going on within the world of religion. Within the United States, membership in established, mainstream churches such as the Episcopalian and Presbyterian denominations has fallen by almost 50 percent since 1960. During this period, other religious categories have increased in popularity. Many people are moving from one religious organization to another. A survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2008) shows that 44 percent of adults in the United States report that they have switched religious affiliation at some point in their lives. The pattern by which people are born and raised with a religious affiliation they keep throughout their lives is no longer the case for almost half of the U.S. population. Such personal changes mean that religious organizations experience a pattern of people coming and going. Catholics, for example, have represented almost one-fourth of the U.S. adult population for some time. But this fairly stable statistic hides the fact that about one-third of all people raised

Catholic have left the church. At the same time, about the same number of people—including many immigrants—have joined this church. A more extreme example is the Jehovah's Witnesses: Two-thirds of the people raised in this church have left, but their numbers have been more than replaced by converts recruited by members who travel door-to-door spreading their message. This pattern of religious "churn" means that there is an active and competitive marketplace of religious organizations in the United States. Perhaps one result of this active competition for members is that U.S. society remains among the most religious in the world. But it also reflects a loosening of ties to the religious organizations people are born into, so men and women now have more choice about their religious beliefs and affiliation.

Topic 02: Secularization and Civic Religion

Secularization

Secularization is the historical decline in the importance of the supernatural and the sacred. Secularization (from a Latin word for "worldly," meaning literally "of the present age") is commonly associated with modern, technologically advanced societies in which science is the major way of understanding. Today, we are more likely to experience the transitions of birth, illness, and death in the presence of physicians (people with scientific knowledge) than in the company of religious leaders (whose knowledge is based on faith). This shift alone suggests that religion's relevance to our everyday lives has declined.

Historical sociologists Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud anticipated secularization, claiming that the modernization of society would bring about a decrease in the influence of religion. Weber believed membership in distinguished clubs would outpace membership in Protestant sects as a way for people to gain authority or respect.

Harvey Cox (1971:3) explains: The world looks less and less to religious rules and rituals for its morality or its meanings. For some [people], religion provides a hobby, for others a mark of national or ethnic identification, for still others an aesthetic delight. For fewer and fewer does it provide an inclusive and commanding system of personal and cosmic values and explanations.

If Cox is right, should we expect religion to disappear someday? Some analysts point to survey data that show that the share of our population claiming no religious affiliation is increasing. The share of first-year college students saying they have no religious preference has gone up, doubling between 1980 and 2010. This trend is mirrored in the larger adult population. But other sociologists are not so sure that religion is going away. They point out that the vast majority of people in the United States still say they believe in God, and as many people claim to pray each day as vote in national elections. In fact, they remind us, the share of people with a religious affiliation is actually higher today than it was back in 1850.

Finally, more people may be switching their religious affiliation from one organization to another, and some may be leaving organized religion entirely but their spiritual life may continue all the same. Everyone sees religious change, but people disagree about whether it is good or bad. Conservatives tend to see any weakening of religion as a mark of moral decline. Progressives view secularization in more positive terms, as liberation from the dictatorial beliefs of the past, giving people greater choice about what to believe.

Secularization has also helped bring some practices of many religious organizations, such as ordaining only men, into line with widespread support for greater gender equality. According to the secularization thesis, religion should weaken in high-income nations as people enjoy higher living standards and greater security. A global perspective shows that this thesis holds for the countries of Western Europe, where most measures of religiosity have declined and are now low. An important event in the history of the secularization debate took place in 1963, when the U.S. Supreme Court banned prayer in public schools, claiming that school prayer violates the principle of separation between church and state. In recent years, however, religion has returned to many public schools; the Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box takes a closer look at this trend.

Conversely, some people contend that secularization is a root cause of many social problems, such as divorce, drug use, and educational downturn. While some scholars see the Western world, including Canada, becoming increasingly secular, others observe that religion is still all around us. For example, recent statistics show that about 75 percent of Canadian marriages still involve a religious ceremony. But this varies from a high of 90 percent in Ontario to less than 40 percent in British Columbia.

Civil Religion

One expression of secularization in the world is the rise of what sociologist Robert Bellah (1975) calls civil religion, a quasi-religious loyalty linking individuals in a basically secular society. In other words, formal religion may lose power, but citizenship takes on religious qualities. Most people in the United States consider our way of life a force for moral good in the world. Many people also find religious qualities in political movements, whether liberal or conservative.

For several centuries before the American Revolution the history of the Roman republic had figured prominently in European political theory, and in the late 18th century the history of Roman liberty served as a model for the new republic. American civil religion started to take form during the War for Independence, which lasted from 1775 to 1783. It resulted in one of the few successful revolutions in the modern world and the instalment of a revolutionary new political order. Civil religion developed further after the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. The roots of civil religion derive from Puritan and Christian traditions. Civil religion is appropriate to actions in the official public sphere, and Christianity and other religions are granted full liberty in the sphere of personal piety and voluntary social actions. This ‘institutionalized’ set of beliefs about the nation, provides a sense of cohesion and solidarity, especially in times of profound national crisis.

Elements of American Civil Religion

Rites, rituals and symbols are associated with national heroes, national accomplishments, and national historical events. Many civil ceremonies in the United States have a marked religious quality. Thanksgiving Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and presidential inaugurations, together with more minor celebrations, all celebrate national values and national unity. Also, the public-school system serves as a particularly important context for the cultic celebration of civil rituals. The Durkheimian social perspective of religion lies behind Bellah’s notion that these celebrations provide an annual ritual calendar by which civil religion structures American social life.

In the American civil religion, there are national shrines such as the memorials in Washington D.C., the Capitol itself, the birthplaces of key presidents, war memorials, and other “sacred”

places to which Americans can make pilgrimages. It is not their age or even historical significance but their ability to symbolize the wholeness of the nation as a “people” that inspires awe and reverence. Similarly, there are sacred objects of the civil religion. The symbol that predominates over all other symbols is the flag and it is very central to national identity. Americans salute to the flag and have a holiday, Flag Day, to honour their flag. Scholars have pointed out that the flag became essentially a religious symbol. Certain acts cannot be performed except in its presence, and elaborate rules govern what may touch it and how devotees must behave in its presence. Similarly, the national anthem holds important place in national ceremonies as it is sung on all important national and social events. The sanctity of national symbols is protected by treating them gesturally as sacred.

Civil religion also has its saints. Abraham Lincoln is an historic figure who particularly symbolizes the civil religion. His actions and speeches contributed to the articulation of that religion in a time of crisis, the Civil War, when the theme of death, sacrifice and rebirth entered civil religion, symbolized in the life and martyrdom of Lincoln. Other “saints” include key presidents such as Washington, Jefferson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Kennedy, and military heroes such as MacArthur and Theodore Roosevelt. Although these shrines, saints, and ceremonies are not conventionally religious, they are still set apart as special and not to be profaned.

Topic 03: Spirituality without Formal Religion

In recent decades, more and more people have been seeking spiritual development outside of established religious organizations. This trend has led some analysts to suggest that the United States is becoming a post denominational society. In simple terms, more people seem to be spiritual seekers, believing in a vital spiritual dimension to human existence that they pursue more or less separately from membership in any formal denomination. What exactly is the difference between this so-called New Age focus on spirituality and a traditional concern with religion? As one analysis puts it, spirituality is

“the search for...a religion of the heart, not the head. It...downplays doctrine and dogma, and revels in direct experience of the divine whether it’s called the “holy spirit” or “divine consciousness” or “true self.” It’s practical and personal, more about stress

reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It's about feeling good rather than being good. It's as much about the body as the soul."

Hank Wesselman, an anthropologist and spiritual teacher, identifies five core values that define this approach:

1. ***Seekers believe in a higher power.*** There exists a higher power, a vital force that is within all things and all people. Each of us, then, is partly divine, just as the divine spirit exists in the world around us.
2. ***Seekers believe we are all connected.*** Everything and everyone is interconnected as part of a universal divine pattern that seekers call "spirit."
3. ***Seekers believe in a spirit world.*** The physical world is not all there is; more important is the existence of a spiritual reality or "spirit world."
4. ***Seekers want to experience the spirit world.*** Spiritual development means gaining the ability to experience the spirit world. Many seekers come to understand that helpers and teachers (traditionally called "angels") dwell in the spirit world and can touch their lives.
5. ***Seekers pursue transcendence.*** Through various techniques (such as yoga, meditation, and prayer) people can gain an increasing ability to rise above the immediate physical world (the experience of "transcendence"), which seekers believe is the larger purpose of life.

From a traditional point of view, this New Age concern with spirituality may seem as much psychology as it is religion. Perhaps it would be fair to say that New Age spirituality combines elements of rationality (an emphasis on individualism as well as tolerance and pluralism) with a spiritual focus (searching for meaning beyond everyday concerns). It is this combination that makes New Age seeking particularly popular in the modern world.

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Lesson 12

Religious Extremism

Topic 01: Fundamentalism

There is a quantum in religion which gradually increases and which have fundamentalism on lower end and terrorism on high end. To understand the concept of fundamentalism, the concepts of radicalization and extremism needed to be understood. All these terms are discussed in detail below.

Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism, often at the heart of radicalization, can be defined as an unwavering faith to a religious belief system. A belief in an absolute religious truth which is challenged by the forces of evil and which must be followed today in the same way as in the past. It can be seen to rely on three attitudes:

- believers should go back to absolute and unchangeable rules established in the past,
- these rules allow for only one interpretation to be held among believers, and
- religious rules should prevail over secular ones.

It is worth noting that the term, originally applied to the Protestant revival movement in the early 1900s in the United States, is not unique to Islam but has been used to refer to similar movements within Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Islamic fundamentalism stems from Salafism, a socio-political movement that emerged in Egypt in the 19th century within Sunni Islam, which opposed integration into mainstream Western European societies. Salafists believe that Muslims must return to the path of the Prophet and adhere literally to the Koran. Given their conservative religious lifestyle, all Salafists can be considered fundamentalists, but not all violent militants.

Causes of Religious Fundamentalism

Several factors seem to be common in the fundamentalist movements summarized as follows:

First of all, one aspect of religious fundamentalism is closely related to socialization process. It is usually the case that individuals coming from religious families are generally more religious than those brought up within more secular environments. Such people, like their parents and ancestors, tend literally to interpret religious text(s) in accordance with their traditions. Their behaviours are mostly fall in the category of “nonviolent intolerance”. They are usually ethnocentric, they would advocate language of militancy, but normally, they are not directly associated with physical violence.

Many people become devoted believers due to inner insecurity, caused by a real or perceived frightening or confusing environment. Religious fundamentalism, as literal thinking, serves to these ends in many ways. First, Religion satisfies the desire to know and to understand, and is resorted to when more mundane means of explanation fail. In that sense, religion fundamentalism can be said to offer intellectual security by largely satisfying cognitive needs of the person.

Religion satisfies, so to speak, substantive needs of the individual in an imaginary way as well. Material needs which cannot be satisfied in other ways are believed to be eventually fulfilled, if not in this life, in the next life for sure. This belief, in turn, reduces anxiety by providing the individual with a sense of confidence. Religious fundamentalism serves to reduce anxiety by promising justice. In most parts of the world, economic and social conditions are such that some enjoy prosperity and well-being, while some others hardly survive. Thus, in the face of earthy injustices, religion promises that justice will be done and all sins will be punished eventually. In the next life, everyone will get what he or she actually deserves. This belief helps the individual face life’s difficulties with relatively comfort and confidence.

Sometimes it is also the case that strong identification with a particular religion is caused by a desire to achieve a positive self-esteem. That is, individuals would like to be identified with a grouping that appears worthy and prestigious. In this respect, many may become attached to a religion of the powerful and prestigious. Many Asian people living in the US, for example, become Christians in order to be more smoothly integrated into the community in which they live. These people tend to be more vigorous supporters of Christianity to be more easily accepted by their community, as well as to digest their new religious identity inside themselves.

Radicalization

Historically speaking, term radicalization has been born by the term ‘radicalism’ which means the process of changing orthodox in any social structure. This change was mostly meant to be the political one. The one’s asking for change in an unjust political social surrounding were called ‘radicals.’ Thus, we can say that this term has a positive meaning and implementation in the gone days. However, if we speak of today, the term radicalization originated from the root words radical/radicalism and has an entirely different meaning. The modern meaning is mostly linked with religious and violent radicalism. In contemporary world the term radicalization is mostly conceived as a pathway to develop extremist ideologies and practices.

Broadly speaking, the word "radicalization" can be used to describe a process in which an individual (and even groups) change a certain attitude gradually that can if provided right conditions and opportunities increase the risk that he or she will engage in violent extremism or terrorism. In social sciences, the term 'radicalisation' or 'radicalism' is not defined uniformly. Radicalisation is defined as legitimate opposition to mainstream political orientation with the intention to bring about reform.

Moreover, in political discourse it is often used interchangeably with notions such as 'extremism'. Although these phenomena can be said to share the same objective – challenging the existing order – the objectives may be different. One interpretation is that while radicalism seeks to modify the existing political and social structure, it need not be violent, hence the adjective 'violent' is often added.

Extremism

Extremist is a label used for those individuals or groups, who generally resort to violence in order to impose their beliefs, ideology or moral values on others. The term implies to those factions and individuals who have become radicalized or fundamentalist in some way, both the terms have negative connotations in present day situation. The term radical or fundamental mean to going to the essentials and basics.

Extremist or fundamentalist religious groups are found in many religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Religious organisations of these religions now and historically use tactics to encourage fear-based obedience to doctrines, such as fear-mongering tactics, immediate and intense unscientifically based opposition to the physical realities, and

intentional concealment and distortion of the real message to enforce obedience to religion. They strongly discourage rational, reason and logic. They are also called literalist. The term can be traced to Biblical literalism (also called Biblicism or Biblical fundamentalism) is the interpretation or translation of the explicit and primary sense of words in the Bible.

In the past many prominent Islamic scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd-alWahhab were proponents of it. It has been a primary area of contention between Shi'as and many Sunnis, especially proponents of Salafism who suggest that the Qur'an is entirely literal. Only Salafist Jihadism focuses on the use of violence to bring about radical change. The jihadists advocate the use of violence to create a new caliphate and win back territories once ruled by Muslims. Following their teachings, the jihadists reject religious pluralism and aspire to dominance of political Islam in the whole world.

Difference between Extremism and Radicalization

There is a slight difference between extremism and radicalization. The former one refers to an attitude and a specific mindset which is most of the times rigid and not ready to accept any other philosophy or idea. It is a concept mostly related to an individual; whereas, radicalization is a process of change and for a specific but bigger (societal and institutional) change. Although, these two terms have different meanings but these two terms share some commonalities too. Both are the products of specific social surroundings and both can be harmful rather than being fruitful. Sometimes process of radicalization can change into extremism eventually. Thus, both terms are used in same meanings often and are interconnected deeply. It can be said that radicalization and extremism are two ends of a same continuum, the first one mentioned is a start of a complete process of dogmatic change, and the second one is the ultimate end of that beginning.

Radicalization: How and Where does it Occur

Following are some prominent ways through which radicalization can occur.

1. Relative Deprivation, Inequality and The Expectation – Achievement Gap

Individuals whose expectations for social mobility and economic welfare have been unsatisfied are at a greater risk of radicalisation. Thus, countries where a highly educated population

remains largely unemployed or underemployed may be breeding grounds for extremist ideology.

Tunisia, as an example, illustrates this point. The country has among the highest numbers of citizens fighting alongside Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as foreign fighters. In 2015, it was estimated that there were 700,000 Tunisian job seekers, of which 200,000 were university graduates who were vying for 79,000 largely low skill job vacancies.

Individuals may feel relatively deprived economically or socially even in situations where in an absolute sense they are not. This partly explains why many studies on terrorism have found that poverty does not correlate with terrorism and that in fact many terrorists have come from well-off families or countries.

2. Role of social bonds

Radicalisation processes draw on social networks for joining and staying connected. Bonding of various types is essential but because trust is of utmost importance, preference falls on close networks based on friendship, kinship and ethnicity. Recruiters are often charismatic leaders who are able to exploit emotional triggers such as hatred, revenge and frustration. Moreover, direct contact with people who have fought in conflict zones like Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan or Iraq can have a powerful impact. Moreover, figureheads of militant organizations are considered role models.

3. Use of Mass Media

Propaganda is essential to legitimising extremist views, highlighting both real and imaginary grievances, magnifying the tensions between 'believers' and the 'enemy', and building a group identity. While the means used encompass video, audio recordings, books, magazines and speeches, the internet is nowadays the main tool.

Social media in particular have gained ground as an efficient channel for recruitment and indoctrination. Since these channels provide easy access to a wide target audience, terrorist organisations, through YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media. They take advantage of the fact that, in contrast to traditional channels that required waiting for individuals to come to the terrorists, they can now reach out to their audience. Terrorist

organisations can review the online profiles of their recruits and choose appropriate ways to approach individuals.

4. *Schools and Universities*

Radicalisation in schools has been a concern for more than a decade. Some extremist organisations and radical preachers have been known to target specific universities, notably those with large numbers of Muslim students. To highlight the fact that schools need more support in preventing intolerance and fighting radicalisation, a Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education was adopted in 2015 at the informal meeting of the EU's Education Ministers.

5. *Prisons*

Prisons have long been associated with the development of radical thinking. Prison is also a fertile ground for temporary opportunistic alliances. As regards conversion to religion in prisons, it appears that for some individuals this is a continuation of their own religious search, while others use it to manage their relations with inmates and ensure their personal safety. In both cases it is important to make sure that prison preachers are trained to teach moderate forms of religion and to offer counter-narratives to extremist views that might have been held before entering prison.

Topic 02: Terrorism

Terrorism: Origin of the Word

Within terrorism lies the word terror. Terror comes from the Latin *terrere*, which means “frighten” or “tremble.” When coupled with the French suffix *isme* (referencing “to practice”), it becomes akin to “practicing the trembling” or “causing the frightening.” Trembling and frightening here are synonyms for fear, panic, and anxiety—what we would naturally call terror.

The word terror is over 2,100 years old. In ancient Rome, the terror was a state of panic and emergency in response to the coming of the Cimbri tribe killers in 105 BCE. This description of terrorism as being rooted in terror is an example of etymology. The word terrorism, in and of itself, was coined during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror (1793–1794). The Reign of Terror was a campaign of large-scale violence by the French state; between 16,000 and 40,000 people were killed in a little over a year.

Evolution of Terrorism

Modern terrorism can be traced back to nineteenth century revolutionary radicalism, and, in particular, the emergence of “anarchist”, “collectivist anarchist” and “anarcho-communist” groups. Anarchism is a political theory, which is skeptical of the justification of authority and power, especially political power. Anarchism is usually grounded in moral claims about the importance of individual liberty.

For example, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, groups led or influenced by the Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the German Karl Marx, and the Russian Mikhail Bakunin, were promoting one or another anti-establishment model. Within a decade, similar groups had appeared throughout Western Europe, the Balkans and Asia. The German revolutionary Karl Heinzen was the first to articulate the use of violence, even mass murder, by individuals to effect political change in his influential 1853 pamphlet.

The principal violent method of spreading terror utilized by virtually all such groups at the time was targeted assassination, which not only carried with it, serious personal risk but also the potential for political martyrdom. Targeted assassination could be differentiated from ordinary criminal acts, because targeting persons acts according to code of honour that spare innocent citizens. However, technological developments in the mid and late nineteenth century also played a pivotal role in the rise of terrorism. The ready availability of weapons of destruction like bombs etc, development of mass communication and means of commercial development changed the dynamic of terrorism.

Definitions from Various Scholars and Institutions

Throughout the years, various scholars have attempted to define terrorism. Yet, the term is so loaded with conceptual problems that a totally accepted definition of it still does not exist. Below is a list of definitions of terrorism by some of the most distinguished scholars and institutions on the matter:

- David Rapoport: terrorism is “the use of violence to provoke consciousness, to evoke certain feelings of sympathy and revulsion.”
- Yonah Alexander: terrorism is “the use of violence against random civilian targets in order to intimidate or to create generalized pervasive fear for the purpose of achieving political goals.”
- League of Nations Convention Definition of Terrorism (1937): terrorist acts are “all criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public.”
- Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism: terrorism is “any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize a national resources.”

There is no universally agreed-on definition of terrorism. At best, we have a “most universally accepted” definition of terrorism, which is the following: terrorism is the use of violence to create fear (i.e., terror, psychic fear) for (1) political, (2) religious, or (3) ideological reasons. The terror is intentionally aimed at non-combatant targets (i.e., civilians or iconic symbols), and the objective is to achieve the greatest attainable publicity for a group, cause, or individual.

The meaning of terrorism is socially constructed. Terrorism is different from murder, assault, arson, demolition of property, or the threat of the same; the reason is that the impact of terrorist violence and damage reaches more than the immediate target victims (e.g., government or military). It is also directed at targets consisting of a larger spectrum of society (e.g., civilians or even society as a whole). Terrorism is distinct from regular crime because of its powerful objectives. The change is desired so desperately that the inability to achieve change is perceived as a worse consequence than the deaths of civilians.

Old Terrorism Vs. New or Modern Terrorism

Walter Laqueur (1999), a prominent terrorism expert, suggests that “there has been a radical transformation, if not a revolution, in the character of terrorism”. Laqueur compares old terrorism with new terrorism. Old terrorism is terrorism that strikes only selected targets. New terrorism is terrorism that is indiscriminate; it causes as many casualties as possible. Laqueur argues that “the new terrorism is different in character, aiming not at clearly defined political demands but at the destruction of society and the elimination of large sections of the population”. Terrorism has changed because of a paradigm shift. When a paradigm changes, the whole group experiences a paradigm shift. Many scholars argue that the paradigm shift from old to new terrorism occurred at some point in the 1990s, with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system by Aum Shinrikyo (a deadly Japanese cult).

While old terrorism was mainly secular in its focus and drive, new terrorism works hand-in-glove with religious extremism. New terrorism rejects all other ways of life and advocates a categorical and inflexible worldview consistent with the belief of the religion. New terrorism is also increasing. Gurr and Cole (2000) examined the sixty-four international terrorist organizations that existed in 1980; they found that only two of them were religious organizations (only 3% in total). By 1995, the number of religious terrorist organizations rose sharply to twenty-five out of fifty-eight (43% in total). It was an increase of 40% in just fifteen years.

1. Classical, Modern and Postmodern Terrorism

For Ganor (2002), the comparison between old and new terrorism can be articulated through the differences between classical, modern, and postmodern terrorism.

- Classical terrorism means that group warfare is direct; it is aimed at specific targets with few casualties (e.g., assassinations) or wreaks havoc on “non-significant” facilities. The damage is fairly low because the terrorist acts are perpetrated to achieve a specific political objective.
- In modern terrorism, a more indirect approach is used; attacks are more indiscriminate and destruction is much higher, inflicting hundreds of casualties. Although

conventional weapons are used in modern terrorism, they are used to create mass fatalities.

- *Postmodern terrorism* has the objective of altering the reality of the conflict (with its enemy) by the very act of terrorism—such as using CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons; pronounced C-BURN) weapons or attacks against symbols of the enemy—to materially demolish as much of their adversary as possible. The objective here is to eliminate the source of conflict itself.

2. *Four Waves of Terrorism*

The comparison between old and new terrorism can also be explained through the evolution of terrorism in four waves, the Fourth Wave being new terrorism.

The first wave was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The second wave was the colonial wave, confined within national geographical boundaries from 1921 until today. The third wave was the contemporary wave; it introduced international terrorism, crossing national boundaries, which began in the 1960s. The fourth wave is symbolized by religious justification for killing, international scope, unparalleled gory tactics and weapons, and dependence on technologies of modernity. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks gave rise to the Fourth Wave of terrorism (both for the U.S. and nations worldwide). It consists of communications, ease of global travel (i.e., moving across borders), and accessibility to finances and WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). In the Fourth Wave, terrorism has reached a global phase. The use of any weapon is justifiable.

The fourth wave suggests a Culture of Terror, which refers to a collapse (both physically and figuratively) of America and the West through massive killings, the constant availability and uses of WMDs or CBRN weapons, and religious legitimization for terrorist attacks against civilians in any country that is considered Satan, infidel, or apostate (i.e., religious rebel). For example, the intent of Aum Shinrikyo to kill people in Tokyo subways in 1995 (through sarin poison gas attacks) was to punish everyone: infidels and faithful alike. This herald the reality of sacred apocalyptic terrorism.

Types of Terrorism

According to Hirschmann (2000), five types of terrorism now exist:

1. *Ideological*, involving the desire for revolutionary changes within political or social structures;
2. *Ethno-political*, in which ethnic minorities long for their own state within an existing state or some degree of political and cultural autonomy;
3. *Religious*, where a desire to impose religion-based norms of conduct appears and can evolve into apocalyptic fanaticism;
4. *Single Issue*, involving the extremist militancy of groups/individuals protesting a perceived grievance; and
5. *“Chosen Ones”*, who are mentally disturbed/deranged individuals with a certain mission or social philosophy who are not connected to a network.

All the types of terrorism are worth discussing but we will not focus on religiously motivated or religious terrorism.

Religiously Motivated Terrorism

Ranstrop (1996) simply calls it “terrorism in the name of religion”. Religiously-motivated terrorism (RMT), in addition, seems to be the most recognized and concerning type of terrorism especially in the western countries like the US and many other European countries during the post-9/11 attacks event. Gregg (2014) defined religiously motivated terrorism as “the threat or use of force with the purpose of influencing or coercing governments and/or populations towards saliently religious goals”. Religiously motivated terrorism is mostly regarded as being affiliated with Middle-east and Islam. It, however, has a broader coverage and longer history than Islam and the terrorist activities in the name of Islam. Different religions have been used as a basis and legitimizing ground for several fanatic and violent behaviours.

Historical and Ideological Background

Hoffman (2006) indicates that there has been an increasing trend in the religiously motivated terrorist activities since 1968. Between 1960s and 1990s, the number of different religiously

motivated terrorist groups almost tripled. It has become more prominent and concerning especially during the post Cold War era as the result of increasing ethnic and religious conflicts in the different regions of the world.

Even though they are affiliated with different religions, all of the religiously motivated terrorist activities carried out in the name of religion share one mutual characteristic; they all believe that their acts are a reflection of obeying God's (or a kind of supreme power's) orders. It is a sacramental act and divine duty that needs to be carried out as a response to a theological requirement. This understanding brings a limitless area for religiously motivated terrorist acts where there are no restrictions resulting from political, moral, and/or practical considerations.

Unlike other terrorist organizations, religiously motivated terrorism is primarily motivated by religion, but they may also develop several other secondary concerns and justify some of their acts through these motivating forces, such as political considerations of a specific term or a region. In some instances, this complexity makes it difficult to distinguish political and religious aspects of religiously motivated terrorism. Activities of Hamas in Palestine, Hizb'Allah in Lebanon, and Turkish Hizb'Allah in Turkey can be identified as examples of this complexity.

It is, nevertheless, considered to be important to distinguish religiously-defined motivations (apocalyptic, millennial, and/or messianic) of these groups from politically-defined motivations in order to develop effective counter-terrorism strategies. This complexity of religious and political objectives actually indicates also the very fact that religiously motivated terrorist has actually resulted from a perception of crisis in a group's social, political, economic, cultural, and spiritual environments.

Objectives of Religiously Motivated Terrorism

Objectives of religiously motivated terrorism can also be defined as either immediate or ultimate objectives. In this sense, *immediate objectives*, are usually related to the political motivations of these organizations to establish a religious government. *Ultimate objectives*, on the other hand, is mostly apocalyptic and/or messianic like conveying God's message to everybody.

In addition to this dual taxonomy, Gregg (2014) indicates *apocalyptic goals* as another important motivation for religiously motivated terrorism. The apocalyptic motivation, in his sense, refers to causing “catastrophic destruction to people, property, and the environment with the hope of provoking the end of time and ushering in religious promises of a new world. Gush Emunim, in Israel, is an example of religiously motivated terrorist organization mostly bearing an apocalyptic motivation. They are involved in acts to create needed catastrophic conditions to hasten the coming of the messiah. Another example, from the US, would be The People’s Temple, which led to the group suicide of 900 people.

Creation of a religious government, on the other hand, is another important motivation for RMT. This is mostly the case for jihadist Islamic militants where they strive to establish an independent state governed by Islamic Law (Shari’a). Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), for instance, claim to be a state governed by Islamic law and the leader of this group calls himself Calipha. In this sense, Al Qaeda, which preceded ISIL, also intended the creation of Islamic Caliphate beyond the borders, as a super-state. This is, however, not endemic to the Islamic groups, but there are examples from other religiously motivated terrorist organizations as well. Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma bomber, for instance, was connected to Christian Identity Movement and Covenant, and the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA). These groups were also intending to establish a Christian state within the US.

Lastly, *religious cleansing* is another important motivation for religiously motivated terrorist groups. Based on this motivation, they intend to eradicate infidels from their religion, either within or from outside of their religion. This is mostly based on how they interpret a certain religion or religious script and teaching, and how others differ from them in their understandings and practices. Turkish Hizb’Allah, for instance, assassinated several “infidels” in Turkey and buried them in cement. Likewise, ISIL has been carrying out terrorist attacks in Muslim countries, including Turkey and Iraq with this motivation. Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination in Israeli by a Jewish fundamentalist was another example of religiously motivated terrorists acting because of this this motivation.

Common Tactics

Religiously motivated terrorism tactics relying heavily on violence. Religiously motivated terrorism also targets governments and the higher officials of the existing governments especially when they are acting with the motivation of establishing a religious government.

Assassinations of Israel's Prime Minister Rabin and the Egyptian President Sadat are two prominent examples of this tactic.

If they are motivated with causing the end of the world, they rely heavily of catastrophic events that would cause major losses. The latest bombings in European cities (i.e., Brussels, Paris, Istanbul) by ISIL as well as the Jewish terrorist organizations' attacks on Palestinian people or Hezbollah's attacks on Israeli cities are among the commonly known examples of this tactic; the most important goal is to harm and destroy the enemy.

Several other targets in these attacks may also be purposefully chosen, as well, to convey a message, or to cause a specific type of harm. In 9/11 attacks, the Pentagon was targeted as the representative of military forces, the Twin Towers represented the capital power of the western world. Similarly, in one of the recent attacks in 2016, Istanbul's major international airport, of great importance in Turkey's economical life, was targeted.

Although bombings seem to be the most common type of attacks carried out by religiously motivated terrorists, suicide bombings can be considered as the most distinct. Since the overall religious motivation of these terrorists claims that they are carrying out the wishes of their God in whatever they are doing in their ideology, dying in this way is also considered a holy and invaluable self-sacrifice. Martyrdom is the ultimate goal, for instance, for Islamic militants who commit suicide bombings. In this type of attack, the attackers, suicide bombers, have no concern for getting caught. Developing counter strategies for suicide bombers, therefore, has especially been challenging.

Topic 03: Difference between Fundamentalism and Terrorism

Fundamentalism is both a specifically focussed mindset and a certain kind of narrow worldview, which can apply to just about any sphere of human activity, but especially so to religion and politics, for both are concerned with the context and aims of human existence. When looking at how fundamentalism has accelerated terrorism, one must consider the effect fundamentalism has had on modern day terrorism.

A broader, and more scholarly, understanding of religious fundamentalism, reveals that the phenomenon is found mainly in two types of intolerance: nonviolent intolerance and violent intolerance. The key difference between fundamentalism and terrorism is that fundamentalism

has a nonviolent aspect too. Terrorism on the other hand is always destructive. Terrorism produces radical value systems, different methods of legitimation and justification, skewed morality, and subsequently may be a more lethal threat than that posed by traditional terrorists. Development of a more symbolic nature of religion could bring about an emphasis on sacrifice and war as a means to achieve their specified end.

Nonviolent fundamentalism can be detrimental for society but its violent aspect that threatens the world. The violent intolerance of religious fundamentalism is basically called terrorism. So, it can be concluded that religious fundamentalism causes religious terrorism. For complete understanding let's discuss both aspects of fundamentalism in detail.

Nonviolent Intolerance

Nonviolent intolerance refers to extreme self-identification with a particular religion. The world is believed to revolve around religious norms and whatever religion says, it is taken as final. Although religious norms are subjectively interpreted, an unquestioned submission to this interpretation is typical and no further inquiry is seen as necessary.

Usually, nonviolent intolerance is not directly associated with physical violence. Most religious people in this category live in their own world and indeed, they would be seen quite pacific from an outside perspective. However, strong self-identification with a religion inevitably leads to ethnocentrism, that is, exaggerated in-group centrality and discrimination of out-groups. This, in turn, breeds group stereotypes, a set of beliefs that a religious group is convinced are valid. Group members attribute desired qualities to themselves and unwanted ones to out-groups. They view themselves as good, successful, honest, virtuous, and peace-loving, while seeing out-group members with opposite terms; as evil, lazy, deceptive, bellicose, and so on. This tendency inescapably harms inter-communal relations and gives rise to a societal tension, reducing, thus, the quality of civic life, even if there is no overt conflict.

A more extreme form of religiously-driven nonviolent intolerance manifests itself in the psychological process of dehumanization. Dehumanization can be characterized by a decline in empathy for out-group members. It systematically destroys the individual's tendency to identify himself or herself with other human beings. Thus, dehumanization psychologically justifies brutal tactics in situations of conflict.

Also, individuals dehumanizing out-group members usually become more conflict-prone against them. In fact, a significant segment of religious people throughout the world – whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or other – uses much of the language of militancy, the language of warfare and combativeness. They typically represent themselves in a fighting mode; they are “fighting back” or “fighting against” the enemies of what is true and right, fighting for the implementation of righteous beliefs. Such people do not necessarily take action, but nonetheless, nonviolent intolerance generates cognitive and emotional conditions whereby violent intolerance may take place whenever inter-communal tension arises.

Violent Intolerance or Terrorism

Apart from discriminating and dehumanizing out-groups, the most dangerous aspect of religious fundamentalism manifests itself in violent intolerance. This violent intolerance is an aspect of fundamentalism that is called terrorism. Now let's discuss reasons of violent intolerant fundamentalism or terrorism.

Violent intolerance involves direct use of physical violence in pursuing subjectively-defined religious missions, including killing and destroying. Terrorists believe that present establishment is unlawful and should be replaced. They believe policies are flawed and need to be changed. They do not believe in any existing law and policy and do not trust government representatives. They believe they had to act themselves to establish a system that is defined by religion and they resort to violence for this purpose which is justified in the name of God's work. There have been numerous widely publicized examples, such as the massacre by a Jewish zealot of two dozen Muslim worshippers in Hebron, the explicit blessing of violence by both Serbian Orthodox and Croatian Catholic Christians in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the September 11 attacks on the US, as well as the July 2005 bombings of the London subway and an Egyptian hotel by militant Islamic groups in which so many innocent people became victims.

Some of the world's most dangerous terrorist organizations today, such as Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and El-Kaida, are ideologically fed by religious fundamentalism. Most people in such organizations strongly believe that direct use of violence in the name of religion is obligatory. They are also convinced that if they die in their “holy struggle”, they will be rewarded in the next life; they will directly go to heaven. This belief removes fear and guilt feeling, making killing and dying much easier consequently. Violent intolerance, thus, emerges as the most

frightening appearance of religious fundamentalism i.e. terrorism and begs for careful analyses before coping with the issue effectively.

Religiously-driven violence or terrorism has a common characteristic, that it involves a kind of sacred application of the notion of necessity. The idea is that a given group or “people” taken to be specifically chosen representatives of the divine order believe themselves to be catastrophically threatened by a sinister enemy. The “right to survival” warrants an extreme response against the enemy whose very existence constitutes a continuing danger. Therefore, violent intolerance mostly takes place as a broadly-defined “anticipatory self-defence”, even if no objective condition exists for justifying taking action.

When regarding the lethality of religious terrorism, one must consider the prevalence of suicide tactics- with the terrorist knowing that they will die because of the act, the idea of self-sacrifice and great reward empower him/her to take more risks and be more destructive, as they are more likely to succeed. Terrorist groups build new mythologies to justify their actions, and these most often include self-sacrifice or death, leading members to seek martyrdom and terror as their way of life and very existence becomes threatened by peace; this in itself could lead to increased violence, as the member committing the act of terror has no fear of repercussion from authorities.

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Lesson 13

The World View of Islam

Topic 01: Moral System in Islam

Moral sense is inborn in man and through the ages it has served as the common man's standard of moral behaviour, approving certain qualities and disapproving others. While this instinctive faculty may vary from person to person, human conscience has given a more or less uniform verdict in favour of certain moral qualities as being good and declared certain others as bad. On the side of moral virtues, justice, courage, bravery and truthfulness have always elicited praise. History does not record any period worth the name in which falsehood, injustice, dishonesty, and breach of trust may have been upheld.

This shows that human moral standards are in fact universal and have been well-known to mankind throughout the ages. Good and evil are not myths to be hunted out. They are well-known realities and are equally well-understood by all. The sense of good and evil is inherent in the very nature of man. Hence, in the terminology of the Qur'an virtue is called "Ma'roof" (something to be announced) and evil is designated as "Munkar" (something to be denounced); that is to say virtue is known to be desirable for everyone and evil is not known to commend itself in any way.

Why Differences?

The questions that arise are: if the basic values of good and evil have been so well-known and there has virtually been a universal agreement thereon, then why do varying patterns of moral behaviour exist in this world? Why are there so many and do conflicting moral philosophies? Why do certain moral standards contradict each other? What lies at the root of their difference? What is the unique position of Islam in the context of the prevailing ethical systems? On what grounds can we claim that Islam has a perfect moral system? And what exactly is the distinctive contribution of Islam in the realm of ethics? These questions are important and must be squarely faced; but justice cannot be done to them on the brief span of this talk.

We find that the grounds for these differences emerge from different peoples conflicting views and concepts about the universe, the place of man in the universe, and the purpose of man on the earth. Various theories of ethics, philosophy and religion are merely record of the vast divergence of views of mankind on these most vital questions, viz. Is there a God and a Sovereign of the universe and if there is, is He One or are there many gods? What are Divine Attributes? What is the nature of the relationship between God and the human beings? Has God made any arrangements for guiding humanity through the rough and tumble of life or not? Is man answerable to God or not? If he is, then what are the matters for which he is to be answerable? What is the ultimate aim of man's creation which he should keep in view throughout his life? Answers to these questions will determine the way of life, the ethical philosophy and the pattern of moral behaviour of the individual and the society.

Islamic Concept of Life and Morality

The viewpoint of Islam, however, is that this universe is the creation of Allah Who is One. He created it and He alone is its unrivalled Master, Sovereign and Sustainer. The whole universe is functioning under His Divine Command. He is All-Wise, All-Powerful and Omniscient. He is *Subbooh* and *Quddoos* that is, free from all defects, mistakes, weaknesses and faults and pure in every respect). His God-hood is free from partiality and injustice. Man is His creature, subject and servant and is born to serve and obey Him.

The correct way of life for man is to live in complete obedience to Him. It is the duty of man to take the code of his life from sources of divine guidance i.e. Quran. Man is answerable to God for all his actions in life. The time for rendering an account will be in the life-hereafter and not in this world. The short span of worldly life is really an opportunity to prepare for that great test. During this test every person is responsible for all his beliefs and actions. There will be an impartial assessment of his conduct in life.

Goal of Moral Striving

Seeking the pleasure of God is the standard by which a particular mode of conduct is judged and classified as good or bad. This standard of judgment provides the nucleus around which the whole moral conduct should revolve. Man is not left like a ship without moorings, being tossed about by the blows of wind and tides. This dispensation places a central object before mankind and lays down values and norms for all moral actions. It provides us with a stable and flawless set of values which remains unaltered under all circumstances.

While providing a normal standard Islam also furnishes us with means of determining good and evil conduct. It does not base our knowledge of vice and virtue on mere intellect, desire, intuition, or experience derived through the sense-organs, which constantly undergo shifts, modifications and alterations and do not provide definite, categorical and unchanging standards of morality. It provides us with a definite source, the Divine Revelation, as embodied in the Book of God and the Sunnah way of life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him).

This source prescribes a standard or moral conduct that is permanent and universal and holds good in every age and under all circumstances. The moral code of Islam covers the smallest details of domestic life as well as the broad aspects of national and international behaviour. It guides us in every stage of life. These regulations imply the widest application of moral principles in the affairs of our life and make us free from exclusive dependence on any other source of knowledge, except as an aid to this primary source.

Logic Behind Morality

This concept of the universe and of man's place therein also furnishes the logic that must lie at the back of every moral law. Viz., the love and fear of God, the sense of accountability on the Day of Judgment and the promise of eternal bliss and reward in the life hereafter. Although Islam wants to cultivate a powerful and strong mass opinion, which may induce individuals and groups to abide by the principles of morality laid by it and also aims at the evolution of a political system which would enforce the moral law, as far as possible, through its legislative and executive power. Islam's moral law does not really depend on these external pressures alone. It relies upon the inherent urge for good in every man which is derived from belief in God and a Day of Judgment.

Before laying down any moral injunction, Islam seeks to firmly implant in man's heart the conviction that his dealings are with God Who sees him at all times and in all places. That he

may hide himself from the whole world but not from Him. Man has to die one day and present himself before the Divine court of justice where no advocacy, favour, or fraud will be of any avail and where his future will be decided with complete impartiality and justice.

There may or may not be any police, law court or jail in the world to enforce the observance of these moral injunctions and regulations but this belief firmly rooted in the heart, is the real force at the back of the moral law of Islam which helps in getting it enforced. If popular opinion and the coercive powers of the state exist to give it support so much the better; otherwise, this faith alone can keep a Muslim individual and a Muslim community on the straight path of virtue, provided, the spark of genuine faith dwells in their hearts.

Motives and Incentives

On one hand, belief in the Day of Judgment and the belief that whosoever obeys Divine Commands is sure to have a good life in the Hereafter, the Eternal Life, whatever difficulties and handicaps he may have to face in this transitory phase of life, provides a strong incentive for virtuous life. On the other hand, the belief that whoever violates the Commandments of God in this world and dies in a state of *Kufr* (unbelief) shall have to bear eternal punishment however superficially nice a life he may have led in this temporary abode is an effective deterrent against violation of moral law. If this hope and fear are firmly ingrained, and deeply rooted in one's heart, they will provide a strong motive-force to inspire one to virtuous deeds even on occasions when worldly consequences may appear to be very damaging and harmful, and it will keep one away from evil even on occasions when it looks extremely attractive and profitable.

Distinctive Features of Islamic Moral Order

By setting Divine pleasure as the objective of man's life, it has furnished the highest possible standard of morality. This is bound to provide limitless avenues for the moral revolution of humanity. By making Divine Revelation the primary source of knowledge, it gives permanence and stability to the moral standards. Through belief in God and the Day of Judgment, moral order furnishes a motive force which enables a person to adopt the moral conduct with earnestness and sincerity, with all the devotion of heart and soul.

It covers his life from home to society, from the dining table to the battlefield and peace conferences, literally from the cradle to the grave. In short, no sphere of life is exempt from the universal and comprehensive application of the moral principles of Islam. It makes morality

reign supreme and ensures that the affairs of life, instead of being dominated by selfish desires and petty interests, should be regulated by the norms of morality.

It stipulates for man a system of life which is based on all good and is free from all evil. It invokes the people, not only to practice virtue, but also to establish virtue and eradicate vice, to bid good and to forbid wrong. It wants that the verdict of conscience should prevail and virtue must not be subdued to play second fiddle to evil. Those who have responded to this call and gathered together into a community (Ummah) are given the name “Muslim” and the singular object underlying the formation of this community (Ummah) is that it should make an organized effort to establish and enforce goodness and suppress and eradicate evil.

Topic 02: Sources of Islamic Law

The two primary and transmitted sources of Islamic Law are the Quran and the Sunna (Prophetic traditions and practices). This combination of the two crucial sources of Islamic Law is seen as a link between reason and revelation.

The Quran

The Quran is considered the most sacred and important source of Islamic Law, which contains verses related to god, human beliefs and how a particular believer should live in this worldly life. The human conduct that should govern the believers’ life, which is clearly stated in the Quran, is indeed the domain of Islamic Law. The Quran comprises about five hundred legal verses that explicitly set out legal rulings that need to be applied by all believers. Even non-legal verses in the Quran do support the establishment of the legal system of Islam.

The Sunna

The second primary and transmitted source of Islamic Law is the Sunna, which represents the Prophet Mohammad’s (peace be upon him) deeds and sayings, which were formulated in the form of narratives and became known as Prophetic Hadith. The Sunna also comprises a number of legal provisions that must be applied by all believers of Islam. Certain legal rulings in these transmitted Islamic sources are definitive. In other words, the lawgiver Allah has formulated them in such a way which does not need personal legal reasoning and is not open to different interpretations as they are clear and definitive.

Conversely, there exists a corpus of legal contents stated in both the Quran and the Sunna, the application of which requires reasoning. However, there has been a pivotal reason behind making a huge bulk of legal contents mentioned in the Quran and the Sunna open to legal reasoning. This flexibility in the law qualifies it to be legally valid for all legal cases regardless of time and place as it is amenable to development and change. Furthermore, the difference in the interpretation of a particular legal issue is deemed amongst jurists a kind of mercy. The presence of legal contents stated in the Quran and the Sunna, the application of which demands independent legal reasoning leads us to another source of Islamic Law known as legal reasoning.

Ijtihad: Legal Reasoning

Legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) is an untransmitted source of Islamic Law, whose emergence is due to the fact that Islamic jurists could not always interpret the language of the Quran and that of the Sunna in the same way arriving at the same legal result, rather they frequently differ in their interpretations of certain Quranic verses and particular Prophetic traditions, reaching different legal rulings. This is owing to the fact that the law-giver has deliberately set out a number of legal rulings in these two revealed legal sources, and formulated them in such a way that makes them open to reasoning and juristic interpretation so that the law becomes legally valid on a permanent basis and is susceptible to development as new legal issues emerge. Certain terms in the Quran and the Sunna can have more than a single legal interpretation. Metaphorical lexical items, for instance, need to be interpreted to convey specific legal meanings. Hence, Muslim jurists develop a body of certain linguistic rules in an attempt to overcome such problems. One crucial aim of exercising his personal reasoning is that the jurist would establish a particular legal norm for each legal case he confronts.

Acts according to the Sharia fall within five different legal norms.

- The first is represented by the prohibited category, which demands punishing the doer after committing a prohibited act.
- The second is the obligatory category, which entails punishment on account of failure to perform an act whose performance is deemed obligatory in the eyes of Islamic Law.
- Other categories are the recommended, permissible and abominable. If the person performs the abominable and not the recommended category, he/she shall not be punished. However, the person, by performing the recommended and leaving the

abominable, shall be rewarded in the hereafter. The permissible category involves neither permission, nor prohibition, a matter which entails neither reward, nor punishment.

Hence, when the jurist confronts a Quranic verse and/or a Prophetic tradition which may include an imperative or prohibitive form, he is required to specify within which of the five legal norms/categories the legal ruling of the verse and/or the tradition falls.

Ijma: Consensus

Related to legal reasoning is another source of Islamic Law known as consensus (*ijma*), which refers to the agreement of jurists, living in a particular age, on a specific legal ruling of a particular act, after being subject to different legal views and opinions. Consensus has to be founded on the Quran and/or the Sunna. Consensus plays a crucial role in ratifying and ascertaining legal rules which may have been grounded in credible evidence. If there exists a particular consensus on a specific credible evidence, such evidence can never be subject to error. Consequently, it can safely be argued that consensus is chiefly based on rules which are grounded in particular methods of reasoning. However, it is worth noting that the legal cases upon which there has been consensus are indeed limited within Islamic Law, though such legal cases have acquired special importance on account of being subject to this extraordinary source of law.

Qiyas: Analogy

Also, categorized within the realm of legal reasoning is another legal source of Islam referred to as analogy (*qiyas*). Analogy is resorted to in respect to the problems about which there is no specific provisions in Quran and Sunna. In such issues, jurists have derived law through analogical deduction on the basis of provisions of Quran and Sunna on similar situation.

Interpretation of Islamic Law

As stated above, the two primary sources of Islamic Law are the Quran and the Sunna. These two revealed legal sources have contained certain definitive legal rulings, which require no legal reasoning from the part of the jurist, rather need to be applied as they are. The Quran and the Sunna have also comprised legal contents, the implementation of which demands legal reasoning from the side of the jurist. This legal reasoning points to the maximum effort exerted

by the jurist to interpret and apply the rules pertaining to the origins of jurisprudence (*alfiqh*), in quest for the appropriate legal ruling that best fits the legal case in question.

Indeed, a huge bulk of Islamic Law is subject to legal reasoning and is dependent thereon. This is owing to the fact that only limited legal rulings stated in the Quran and the Sunna have a definitive nature, and the rest of the legal body of Islamic Law is contingent upon the jurists' legal reasoning. This is not at all a defect in the law, since the law-giver who set out definitive legal rulings, was indeed able to enforce a wholly definitive law, the application of its legal rulings is not subject to any reasoning. However, there have been important reasons behind this flexible nature of Islamic Law.

This very nature of Islamic Law has made the law flexible and adaptable to all societies and regions. Moreover, the law has become susceptible to develop and change in different ways. Its development can be shown through choosing certain legal views that are more appropriate than others in addressing the legal cases concerned. The development can go even further than that by creating new legal views as new legal cases emerge. This aspect does unequivocally make Islamic Law legally valid for all legal cases regardless of time and place. The importance of the interpretation of Islamic Law does not lie in the different legal views held by different jurists with regard to a particular legal case, rather it chiefly resides in the way in which the jurist interprets the law.

When interpreting a particular Quranic verse, for instance, the jurist cannot interpret it in isolation. He should, however, consider the verse, its legal and linguistic contexts, its occasion of revelation and all the events that surround the revelation thereof. In other words, a particular legal text never stands on its own according to Islamic legal system, but it is with no doubt influenced by a number of events that scaffold the jurist to extrapolate the most appropriate legal ruling for the legal case in question. Elements of coherence and intertextuality are of utmost significance and should always be in the jurist's mind during the process of interpretation and extrapolation of legal provisions.

Topic 03: Rights of Citizens in an Islamic State

Rights of the citizens in an Islamic State are more extensive than the general human rights they are discussed below.

The Security of Life and Property

Islam prohibits homicide but allows only one exception, that the killing is done in the due process of law which the Quran refers to as bi al-haqq (with the truth). Therefore, a man can be killed only when the law demands it, and it is obvious that only a court of law can decide whether the execution is being carried out with justice or without justification.

In case of war or insurrection a just and righteous government alone, which follows the Shari'ah or the Islamic Law, can decide whether a war is just or unjust, whether taking of a life is justified or not; and whether a person is a rebel or not and who can be sentenced to death as a punishment. These weighty decisions cannot be left in the hands of a court which has become heedless to God and is under the influence of the administration. A judiciary like this may miscarry justice.

Along with security of life, Islam has with equal clarity and definiteness conferred the right of security of ownership of property, as mentioned in the address of the Farewell Hajj. On the other hand, the Holy Quran goes so far as to declare that the taking of people's possessions or property is completely prohibited unless they are acquired by lawful means as permitted in the Laws of God.

The Protection of Honour

The second important right is the right of the citizens to the protection of their honour. In the address delivered on the occasion of the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet did not only prohibit the life and property of the Muslims to one another, but also any encroachment upon their honour, respect and chastity were forbidden to one another. The Holy Quran clearly lays down:

(a) "You who believe, do not let one (set of) people make fun of another set.

(b) Do not defame one another.

(c) Do not insult by using nicknames.

(d) And do not backbite or speak ill of one another" (49:11-12).

The Sanctity and Security of Private Life

Islam recognizes the right of every citizen of its state that there should be no undue interference or encroachment on the privacy of his life. The Prophet has gone to the extent of instructing his followers that a man should not enter even his own house suddenly or surreptitiously. He

should somehow or other inform or indicate to the dwellers of the house that he is entering the house, so that he may not see his mother, sister or daughter in a condition in which they would not like to be seen, nor would he himself like to see them in that condition. Peering into the houses of other people has also been strictly prohibited, so much so that there is the saying of the Prophet that if a man finds another person secretly peering into his house, and he blinds his eye or eyes as a punishment then he cannot be called to question nor will he be liable to prosecution.

The Prophet has even prohibited people from reading the letters of others, so much so that if a man is reading his letter and another man casts sidelong glances at it and tries to read it, his conduct becomes reprehensible. This is the sanctity of privacy that Islam grants to individuals.

The Security of Personal Freedom

Islam has also laid down the principle that no citizen can be imprisoned unless his guilt has been proved in an open court. To arrest a man only on the basis of suspicion and to throw him into a prison without proper court proceedings and without providing him a reasonable opportunity to produce his defence is not permissible in Islam.

If the Government suspects that a particular individual has committed a crime or he is likely to commit an offence in the near future then they should give reasons for their suspicion before a court of law and the culprit or the suspect should be allowed to produce his defence in an open court, so that the court may decide whether the suspicion against him is based on sound grounds or not and if there is good reason for suspicion, then he should be informed of how long he will be in preventive detention.

This decision should be taken under all circumstances in an open court, so that the public may hear the charges brought by the government, as well as the defence made by the accused and see that the due process of law is being applied to him and he is not being victimized.

The Right to Protest against Tyranny

Amongst the rights that Islam has conferred on human beings is the right to protest against government's tyranny. This means that God strongly disapproves of abusive language or strong words of condemnation, but the person who has been the victim of injustice or tyranny, God gives him the right to openly protest against the injury that has been done to him. This right is not limited only to individuals. If an individual or a group of people or a party usurps power,

and after assuming the reins of authority begins to tyrannize individuals or groups of men or the entire population of the country, then to raise the voice of protest against it openly is the God-given right of man and no one has the authority to usurp or deny this right.

Freedom of Expression

Islam gives the right of freedom of thought and expression to all citizens of the Islamic State on the condition that it should be used for the propagation of virtue and truth and not for spreading evil and wickedness. Whether this evil is perpetrated by an individual or by a group of people or the government of one's own country, or the government of some other country; it is the right of a Muslim and it is also his obligation that he should warn and reprimand the evil-doer and try to stop him from doing it. Over and above, he should openly and publicly condemn it and show the course of righteousness which that individual, nation or government should adopt.

This obligation of inviting people to righteousness and forbidding them to adopt the paths of evil is incumbent on all true Muslims. If any government deprives its citizens of this right, and prevents them from performing this duty, then it is in direct conflict with the injunction of God. The government is not in conflict with its people, but is in conflict with God. In this way it is at war with God and is trying to usurp that right of its people which God has conferred not only as a right but as an obligation. As far as the government which itself propagates evil, wickedness and obscenity and interferes with those who are inviting people to virtue and righteousness is concerned, according to the Holy Quran it is the government of the hypocrites.

Freedom of Association

Islam has also given people the right to freedom of association and formation of parties or organizations. This right is also subject to certain general rules. It should be exercised for propagating virtue and righteousness and should never be used for spreading evil and mischief. This means that it is the obligation and duty of the entire Muslim community that it should invite and enjoin people to righteousness and virtue and forbid them from doing evil.

Freedom of Conscience and Conviction

Islam also gives the right to freedom of conscience and conviction to its citizens in an Islamic State. Though there is no truth and virtue greater than the religion of Truth-Islam, and Muslims

are enjoined to invite people to embrace Islam and advance arguments in favour of it, they are not asked to enforce this faith on them. No force will be applied in order to compel them to accept Islam. Whoever accepts it he does so by his own choice. Muslims will welcome such a convert to Islam with open arms and admit him to their community with equal rights and privileges. But if somebody does not accept Islam, Muslims will have to recognize and respect his decision, and no moral, social or political pressure will be put on him to change his mind.

Protection of Religious Sentiments

Along with the freedom of conviction and freedom of conscience, Islam has given the right to the individual that his religious sentiments will be given due respect and nothing will be said or done which may encroach upon this right.

These instructions are not only limited to idols and deities, but they also apply to the leaders or national heroes of the people. If a group of people holds a conviction which according to you is wrong, and holds certain persons in high esteem which according to you is not deserved by them, then it will not be justified in Islam that you use abusive language for them and thus injure their feelings. Islam does not prohibit people from holding debate and discussion on religious matters, but it wants that these discussions should be conducted in decency.

The Right to Basic Necessities of Life

Islam has recognized the right of the needy people that help and assistance will be provided for them.

"And in their wealth there is acknowledged right for the needy and the destitute" (51:19).

In this verse, the Quran has not only conferred a right on every man who asks for assistance in the wealth of the Muslims, but has also laid down that if a Muslim comes to know that a certain man is without the basic necessities of life, then irrespective of the fact whether he asks for assistance or not, it is his duty to reach him and give all the help that he can extend. For this purpose, Islam has not depended only on the help and charity that is given voluntarily, but has made compulsory charity, zakat as the third pillar of Islam, next only to profession of faith and worship of God through holding regular prayers.

The word *wali* which has been used by the Prophet is a very comprehensive word and has a wide range of meanings. If there is an orphan or an aged man, if there is a crippled or unemployed person, if one is invalid or poor and has no one else to support him or help him,

then it is the duty and the responsibility of the state to support and assist him. If a dead man has no guardian or heir, then it is the duty of the state to arrange for his proper burial. In short, the state has been entrusted with the duty and responsibility of looking after all those who need help and assistance. A truly Islamic State is therefore a truly welfare state which will be the guardian and protector of all those in need.

Equality Before Law

Islam gives its citizens the right to absolute and complete equality in the eyes of the law. Religious brotherhood and the uniformity of their rights and obligations is the foundation of equality in Islamic society, in which the rights and obligations of any person are neither greater nor lesser in any way than the rights and obligations of other people. As far as the non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic State are concerned, their (of the dhimmis) lives and properties are as sacred as the lives and properties of the Muslims. Discrimination of people into different classes was one of the greatest crime.

Islam clearly insists and demands that all officials of the Islamic State, whether he be the head or an ordinary employee, are equal in the eyes of the law. None of them is above the law or can claim immunity. Even an ordinary citizen in Islam has the right to put forward a claim or file a legal complaint against the highest executive of the country.

The Right to Avoid Sin

Islam also confers this right on every citizen that he will not be ordered to commit a sin, a crime or an offence; and if any government, or the administrator, or the head of department orders an individual to do a wrong, then he has the right to refuse to comply with the order. His refusal to carry out such crime or unjust instructions would not be regarded as an offence in the eyes of the Islamic law. On the contrary giving orders to one's subordinates to commit a sin or do a wrong is itself an offence and such a serious offence that the officer who gives this sinful order whatever his rank and position may be, is liable to be summarily dismissed.

If such a situation arises then the person who commits the offence and the person who orders that such an offence be committed, will both be liable to face criminal proceedings against them. And if an officer takes any improper and unjust measures against a subordinate who refuses to carry out illegal orders, then the subordinate has the right to go to the court of law for the protection of his rights, and he can demand that the officer be punished for his wrong or unjust orders.

The Right to Participate in the Affairs of State

According to Islam, governments in this world are actually representatives (khulafa') of the Creator of the universe, and this responsibility is not entrusted to any individual or family or a particular class or group of people but to the entire Muslim nation. According to this principle it is the right of every Muslim that either he should have a direct say in the affairs of the state or a representative chosen by him and other Muslims should participate in the consultation of the state. Islam, under no circumstance, permits or tolerates that an individual or a group or party of individuals may deprive the common Muslims of their rights, and usurp powers of the state.

Similarly, Islam does not regard it right and proper that an individual may put up a false show of setting up a legislative assembly and by means of underhand tactics such as fraud, persecution, bribery, etc., gets himself and men of his choice elected in the assembly. This is not only a treachery against the people whose rights are usurped by illegal and unfair means, but against the Creator Who has entrusted the Muslims to rule on this earth on His behalf, and has prescribed the procedure of an assembly for exercising these powers. The *shura* or the legislative assembly has no other meaning except that:

- (1) The executive head of the government and the members of the assembly should be elected by free and independent choice of the people.
- (2) The people and their representatives should have the right to criticize and freely express their opinions.
- (3) The real conditions of the country should be brought before the people without suppressing any fact so that they may be able to form their opinion about whether the government is working properly or not.
- (4) There should be adequate guarantee that only those people who have the support of the masses should rule over the country and those who fail to win this support should be removed from their position of authority.

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Lesson 14

Social Institutions in the light of Islam

Topic 01: Islam and Family Institution

The foremost and fundamental institution of human society is the unit of family. A family is established by the coming together of a man and a woman, and their contact brings into existence a new generation. It then produces ties of kinship and community, which gradually develop into a large society. The family is the institution through which a generation prepares the succeeding generation for the service of human civilization.

In this respect, the family can be truly called the fountain-head of the progress, development, prosperity and strength of human civilization on the earth. Hence, among social problems Islam devotes much attention to those relating to the family and strives to establish this important social unit on the healthiest and strongest foundations.

Marriage

According to Islam the correct form of relationship between man and woman is marriage, that is, the one in which full social responsibilities are undertaken by them and which results in the emergence of a family. Islam holds every form of extra matrimonial sex-relationship as sinful, forbidden (Haram) and punishable under the criminal law of Islam. It prescribes severe punishments for the offense so that such unsociable behaviour may not become common. At the same time, it aims at purifying and purging the society of all activities which encourage such irresponsible actions or provide opportunities for them. Regulations of Hijab (For Muslim Women) ban on free mixing of men and women, restrictions on filthy music and pictures, and discouragement of the spread and propagation of obscenities and aberrations, are all intended to guard against this. Their sole object is to protect and strengthen the institution of the family.

Islam does not merely regard the desirable form of social contact as just permissible but holds and affirms it as a good and virtuous act, indeed, an act of worship. It does not simply look upon celibacy of an adult person with disfavour, but it calls upon every young man to take in the social responsibilities of married life just as his parents did so in their time. Islam does not merely regard asceticism and celibacy as no virtue at all but as deviations and departures from the true nature of man and acts of revolt against the Divine plan of things.

It also strongly disapproves those rites, ceremonies or restrictions which tend to make marriage a difficult affair. The intention of Islam is that marriage may become easy and fornication the most difficult thing in society and not vice versa as it is in most of the societies today. Hence, after debarring a few specified relatives from entering into matrimony with one another, it has legalized marital relations with all other near and distant kith and kin. It has removed all distinctions of caste and community and permitted matrimony of any Muslim with any other Muslim.

It has recommended that the amounts of Mehr (dower) should be fixed at a low and easy figure, the burden of which can be easily borne by the husband and has dispensed with the necessity of priests and offices of compulsory registration. In an Islamic society marriage is such a plain and simple ceremony as can be performed anywhere before two witnesses, though it is essential

that the proceedings should not be kept secret. The idea is that the society should know that the couple is now going to live a matrimonial life.

Position of Man and Women in Household

Islam itself has assigned to man a position of authority in family so that he may maintain order and discipline, as the chief of the household. Islam expects the wife to obey and look after the comforts and well-being of her husband and expects the children behave accordingly to their parents. Islam does not favour a loose and disjointed family system which is devoid of any authority, control and discipline and in which someone is not pointedly responsible of the proper conduct and behaviour of its members.

Discipline can only be maintained through a central authority and in the view of Islam the position of father in the family is such that it makes him the fittest person to take over this responsibility. But this does not mean that man has been made a tyrant and oppressor in the household and woman has been handed over to him as a helpless chattel. According to Islam the real spirit of marital life is love, understanding and mutual respect. If the woman has been asked to obey the husband, the latter has been called upon to exercise his privileges towards the welfare of the family and treat the wife with love, affection and sweetness.

It makes the marital bond strong but not unbreakable. It aims at keeping the bond intact only so long as it is founded on the sweetness of love or at least the possibility of lasting companionship still exists. When this possibility dies out, it gives man the right of divorce and woman the right of separation, and under certain conditions where married life has become a source of misery or nuisance, gives the Islamic courts of justice the authority to annul the marriage.

Relatives and Neighbours

Beyond the limited circle of family, the next social sphere which is sufficiently wide is that of kinship and blood relationship. Those who are one's kith and kin through relationship with common parents or common brothers and sisters or relations through in-laws, Islam wants them all to be mutually affectionate, cooperative and helpful. In many places in the Qur'an good treatment of the *Zawil Qurba* (near relatives) is enjoined. In the traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) good treatment of one's (Silat Al-Rahm) has been emphasized and counted among the highest virtues.

A person who cold-shoulders his relatives or treats them in an indifferent manner is looked down upon by Islam with great disfavour. But this does not mean that it is an Islamic virtue to be partial or unduly lenient toward one's relatives as may result in injustice, is repugnant to Islam which condemns it as an act of *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance). Similarly, it is utterly un-Islamic for a government official or public trustee to support his at public expense or to be partial to his kith and kin in his official divisions: his would actually be a sinful act. Fair treatment of one's as enjoined by Islam, should be at one's own expenses and within the limits of justice and fair play.

Next to relations come the neighbours. The Qur'an has divided them into three categories: A neighbour who is also a relative; an alien neighbour; and a casual or temporary neighbour with whom one had occasion to live or travel for some time. All of them are deserving of fellow-feeling, affection, courtesy and fair treatment.

Islam requires all neighbours to be loving and cooperative with one another and share one another's sorrows and happiness. It enjoins that they should establish social relations in which one could depend upon the other and regard his life, honour and property safe among his neighbours. A society in which two persons, separated only by a wall, remain unacquainted with one another for years and those living in the same area of a town have no interest or confidence in one another can never be called Islamic.

Islam and Education Institution

*"Read! In the Name of your Lord who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not."*¹⁹

Education is the core basis of human being that gives satisfaction and saves him from destruction. Islam is the only religion which first verse of the Holy Scripture, Al Quran was revealed with the instruction of education. The first word "Iqra" is a command that means 'read' in Arabic, and that implies the concepts of 'learning', 'exploring' and 'seeking enlightenment'. This demonstrates that reading (knowledge) is the way to approach the creator of all that exists. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity. Allah created

man and provided him with the tools for acquiring knowledge, namely hearing, sight and wisdom. Allah says - "And Allah has brought you out from the wombs of your mothers while you know nothing. And He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts that you might give thanks (to Allah)". Allah also created human being as a agent of Allah and sent them in the world for establishing His rules. Allah honoured human being over all of His creations only by knowledge and wisdom.

Education for All in Islam

Everyone can get education according to his capability. Allah has favored human being with unlimited talents and virtues and has instructed for developing these talents through education. To seek knowledge is a sacred duty; it is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female. Islam affirms the right to education for all without gender discrimination i.e. Al Quran says- "Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember. The verse addresses all people and indicates that people will be judged by their knowledge and understanding. In addition, women's education is emphasized in many of Al-Quran and Al-Hadiths. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said "Seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim".²⁸ He also encouraged education to the members of the most marginalized communities including slave girls. The Prophet said: "He who has a slave-girl and teaches her good manners and improves her education and then manumits and marries her, will get a double reward; (narrated by Abu MusaAl-Ashari)" This approach indicates the importance of girl's education. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) not only encouraged people to be educated but also He implemented the rules' how to be educated. For example, at the battle of Badr, in which our beloved Holy Muhammad (PBUH) gained victory over His foes and seventy enemies were taken to prison. These prisoners were literate people. In order to benefit from their education the Prophet declared that if one prisoner teaches ten Muslim children how to read and write, this will serve as his ransom and he will be set free. This was the first school in the history of Islam established by the Prophet himself with all its teachers being non-Muslims. The Sunnah of the Prophet shows that education is to be received whatever the risk involved.

Education for Moral Value

Education is identified in Islam as worship. The acquiring of knowledge is worship, reading the Quran and pondering upon it is worship, traveling to gain knowledge is worship. In Hadith Abdullah ibn Abbas (R) narrated that Allah's Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Acquiring knowledge in company for an hour in the night is better than spending the whole night in prayer." In Islam; Education creates feelings of love and respect in the heart of Muslim for Almighty Allah. Islam is the only ideological religion which creates moral values, pious feelings and right thinking in any one's heart. Islam guides all the Muslim to striving for gaining knowledge. The objective of Islamic education is to keep Muslim on right path. Acquiring the love of Allah is the ultimate goal of human's life. Prophet (PBUH) also said about moral significant of Education- "When a man dies, his acts come to an end, but three, recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people) benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him (the deceased)." So, we can agree with the statement of Socrates about Education and He said- "From knowledge comes virtue and goodness, from ignorance comes all that is evil, No man willingly chooses what is evil, and he does evil out of ignorance".

So, Education in Islam is a comprehensive matter, which brings about harmonious development of mind, body and soul. Because the focus of education in Islam is both on morals as well as on knowledge and wisdom. Morality purifies human mind and creates the relationship between mind and body.

Topic 02: Islam and Economic Institution

Islam has laid down some principles and prescribed certain limits for the economic activity of man so that the entire pattern of production, exchange and distribution of wealth may conform to the Islamic standard of justice and equity. Islam does not concern itself with time- bound methods and techniques of economic production or with the details of the organizational pattern and mechanisms. Such methods are specific for every age and are evolved in accordance with the needs and requirements of community and needs of the economic situation.

According to the Islamic point of view, God has created for mankind the earth and all that it contains. It is, therefore, the birth right of every human being to try and secure his share out of the world. From the standpoint of Islam, there can be no bar on any individual, race, or class for taking to certain means of livelihood or adopting certain professions. All are entitled to equal opportunities in the economic realm.

Right of Property

Resources which are provided by nature free of cost and which can be use directly by man may be utilized freely and everyone is entitled to benefit from them to the extent of his needs. Water flowing in the rivers and springs, woods in the forest trees, fruits of wild plants, wild grass and fodder, air, animals of the jungle, minerals under the surface of the earth and similar other resources cannot be monopolized by anyone. Nor can a restriction of any sort be imposed on their free use by Allah's creatures to fulfil their own needs. Of course, people who may want to use of these things for commercial purposes can be required to pay taxes to the state. Or if there is a misuse of the resources, the Government may step in and set the things right. But there is no bar on the individuals to avail of Allah's earth as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others or of the state.

Anyone who takes possession of the natural resources directly and renders it of value acquires a rightful title over it. For instance, if somebody takes possession of an uncultivated piece of land, on which nobody has a prior right of ownership, and makes a productive use of it he cannot be arbitrarily dispossessed of that piece of land. This is how rights of ownership originated in the world.

When man appeared for the first time in the world and population grew, everything was available to everyone. And whoever took possession of anything and made it useful in any manner became its owner; that is to say, he acquired the right of using it especially for his own purpose and obtaining compensation from others if they wanted to use it. This is the natural basis of all the economic activities of mankind and must not be tampered with. This right of ownership which one may acquire by permissible legal means is to be honoured under all circumstances. The legality of ownership can be inquired thoroughly by the competent authority through legal means to determine its validity in accordance with the *Shari'ah* law. If, it be found to be illegally acquired, such ownership be cancelled and be terminated accordingly.

However, in no case, shall there be allowed any state or legislation to arbitrarily deprive the people of their legitimate rights of ownership without justifiable cause. Islam cannot approve of an economic policy which destroys the rights conferred by the *Shari'ah*. Social justice and collective good are very dear to Islam, but not at the cost of rights given by the *Shari'ah*.

It is as unjust to reduce or remove the restrictions placed by the *Shari'ah* on the rights of individual ownership for the sake of collective good of the community as it is to add such restrictions and limitations which do not fit into the scheme of the Islamic law. It is one of the

duties of an Islamic state to protect the legal (Shari'ah) rights of the individuals and to ensure that they fulfill their obligations to the community as enjoined by law. That is how Islam strikes a balance between individualism and collectivism.

The Problem of Equality

If we observe the phenomena of nature and Allah's blessings unto mankind, we find that He has not observed equality in the distribution of His bounties and favours but in His infinite wisdom has accorded precedence to some individuals over others. Beauty of form, pleasantness of voice, excellence of physique and mental talents, etc, have not been granted to men in equal degree. The same is the case with the material means of life. Human nature has been so ordained that divergence, variety and inequality among men in their modes and standards of living seem to be most natural thing. The equality in which Islam believes is equality in respect of the opportunities of struggle for securing a livelihood and for climbing the uppermost rung of the ladder of well-being and prosperity.

Islam desires that no legal, functional or traditional handicaps should exist in society, to prevent an individual from struggling for a living according to his capacity and talent nor should any social distinctions exist with the object of safeguarding the privileges of a particular class, race and dynasty or group of people.

Hence, Islam aims at putting the economic system on the natural footing so that the opportunities of struggle may remain open to all. At the same time Islam does not agree with those who desire to enforce complete equality in respect of the mean of production and the fruits of economic endeavour, as they aim at replacing, limited natural inequalities by an artificial equality.

Only that system can be the nearest to human nature in which everyone joins the economic struggle at the start and in the circumstances in which Allah has created them. He, who has inherited an airplane, should struggle to be equipped with it; while he who has only a pair of legs should stand on his feet and try to move ahead.

The laws of society should neither establish a permanent monopoly of the airplane owner over his airplane nor make it impossible for the bare-footed to acquire an airplane nor such that the race for every one of them should compulsory begin from one point. And under the same conditions and they should all per force be tied to each other right till the end of the race. Contrary to this the economic laws should be such as to make it possible for the bare-footed

who started his race under adverse conditions, to secure and possess an airplane if he can do so by dint of his struggle and ability. And for him who inherited the airplane, to be left behind in the race and be without it if that is due to his own inability or incapacity or inefficiency. Effort should be paid and inactivity penalized.

Social Justice

Islam does not wish that this economic race takes place in an atmosphere of cold impartiality, moral neutrality and social apathy. It deems it desirable that the participants in the economic race should be considerate and sympathetic to one another. On the one hand, Islam through its moral injunctions aims at creating a feeling of mutual love and affection among the people. Under which they may help their weak and weary members and at the same time create a permanent institution in the society to guarantee help and assistance to those who are lacking in the necessary means of subsistence. People who are unable to take part in the economic race should secure their share from this social institution. And those who need some assistance to commence their struggle in the economic field may also receive it in full measure from this institution.

To this end, Islam has commanded that Zakat should be levied at the rate of 2.5% per annum on the total accumulated wealth of the country as well as on the invested capital. On agricultural produce 10% are levied on lands which are irrigated by natural means (through rains) and 5% on irrigation's which require man's efforts. And 2.5% is required on mineral products. The annual Zakat should also be levied at a specified rate, on the herds of cattle owned by anyone beyond a certain minimum number.

The amount of Zakat thus collected is to be spent on giving assistance to the poor, the orphans and the indigent, etc. This provides man a social insurance in the presence of which no one in an Islamic society can ever remain without being well provided with the necessities of life. No worker can ever be forced through fear of starving to accept any conditions of employment which may be dictated to him by the industrialist or the landlord to his disadvantage. And nobody's physical health can ever be allowed to fail below the minimum standard of fitness for lack of proper medical care and hospitalization.

With regards to the position of the individual, vis-vis the community, Islam aims at striking such a balance between them as it would promote the individual liberty of a person and at the same time ensure that such freedom is not detrimental to the interests of the community as a

whole. Islam does not approve of a political or economic organization which aims at merging the identity of the individual into that of the community and depriving him of the freedom essential for a proper development of his personality and talent.

The inevitable consequence of nationalizing all the means of production in a country is the annihilation of the individual by the community, and in these circumstances the existence and development of his individuality becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible. Just as political and social freedom is essential for the individual, economic freedom is likewise indispensable for civilized moral existence. Unless we desire to completely eliminate the individuality of man, our social life should have enough margins for an individual to be free to earn his living, to maintain the freedom of his conscience, and to be able to develop his moral and intellectual faculties according to his own inclinations and aptitudes.

Just as Islam does not like such a system, it also does not favor a social system which gives unbridled economic and social freedom to individuals and gives them a blank check to secure their individual interest and achieve their objective even at the whole or by exploiting and misappropriating the wealth of others.

Between these two extremes Islam has adopted the middle course according to which the individual is first called upon, in the interest of the community, to accept certain restricts, and is then left free to regulate his own affairs. He has freedom of enterprise and competition within a framework which guarantees the good of both the individual and the society. It is not possible to explain all these obligations and restrictions in detail and I shall, therefore, content myself with presenting a bare outline of them.

Obligations and Restrictions

Take the case of earning a livelihood first. The meticulous care with which Islam has distinguished between right and wrong in respect of the means of earning wealth is not to be found in any other legal and social system existing in the world.

It condemns as illegal all those means of livelihood which injure, morally or materially, the interests of another individual or of the society as a whole. Islamic law categorically rejects as illegal the manufacture and sale of liquor and other intoxication, adultery, professional dancing and obscenity, gambling, speculation, race and lotteries, transactions of speculative, imaginary, fraudulent or controversial nature; business transactions in which the gain of one party is absolutely guaranteed and assured while that of the other party is left uncertain and doubtful;

price manipulation by withholding the sale of necessities of life; and many other similar transactions which are detrimental to the interests of community.

If we examine this aspect of the economic laws of Islam, we will find a long list of practices declared illegal most of which can and are making people millionaires in the capitalistic system. Islam forbids all these unfair means and allows freedom of earning wealth only by those means through which a person renders some real and useful service to the community and thereby entitles himself to a fair and just compensation for it.

Islam accepts the rights of ownership of an individual the rights of ownership of an individual over the wealth earned by him by legitimate means but even these rights are not unqualified. A man can spend his legitimate wealth, only in legitimate avenues and by legitimate means. Islam has imposed restrictions on expenditure so that while one can lead a decent life, one cannot waste one's riches on luxurious pursuits. A person cannot transgress the prescribed limits of exhibiting his status and affluence and behave as super being vis-vis other persons. Certain forms of illegal and wasteful expenditure have been clearly and unequivocally prohibited while some others, though not expressly banned, may be prohibited at the discretion of the Islamic state.

One is permitted to accumulate wealth that is left over after meeting his legitimate and reasonable requirements, and these savings can also be used in producing more wealth but there are some restrictions on both of these activities. In the event of accumulation of wealth, he will, of course, have to pay Zakat at the rate of 2.5% per annum on the accumulation exceeding the specified minimum. If he desires to invest it in business, he can only do so in what is declared as legitimate business.

It is permissible for a man to undertake the legitimate business himself or to make his capital available to others on a profit-loss sharing basis. It is not at all objectionable in Islam if, working with in these, a man becomes even a millionaire. But in the interests of the community as a whole Islam imposes two conditions on the individual;

- first, that he should pay Zakat on his commercial goods and 'Ushr (1/10) (which has not required any man effort for irrigation) and 5% on irrigated produce which has required man's efforts of the value of agricultural produce,
- secondly, that he should deal fairly and honestly with those whom he brings into his partnership in trade industry or agriculture, with those whom he takes in his

employment and with the state and the community at large. If one do not do justice to others, particularly his employees, the Islamic state will compel him to do so.

Then again, even wealth that is accumulated within these legal limits is not allowed by Islam to be concentrated at a point or place for a long time. By virtue of its inheritance Islam spreads it over a large number of persons from generation to generation. In this respect, the spirit of Islamic law is different from that of other laws prevailing in the contemporary world. Most of the inheritance laws attempt to keep the wealth once accumulated by a person concentrated in the hands of the beneficiary from generation to generation.

As against this, Islam has made a law under which the wealth accumulated by a person in his lifetime is distributed among all of his near relatives soon after his death. If, there are no near relatives, then distant relatives are to benefit from it in the proportions laid down by the law for each one of them. And, if no distant relative is forthcoming, then the entire Muslim society is entitled to its inheritance. Under this law, the creation or continuance of any big family of capitalists or landlords becomes impossible.

Topic 03: Islam and Political Institution

The political system of Islam has been based on three principles, viz., Tawheed (Oneness of Allah), Risalat (Prophet hood) and Khilafat (Caliphate). It is difficult to appreciate the different aspects of the Islamic policy with- out fully understanding these three principles. I will, therefore, begin with a brief exposition of them.

1. Tawheed

Tawheed (Oneness) means that one Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of this universe and of all that exists in it organic or inorganic. Life, in all its forms, our physical organs and abilities, the apparent control which we have over everything that exists in this universe, and the things themselves none of them has been created or acquired by us in our own right. They are the bountiful provisions of Allah and in bestowing them upon us, no one is as Him.

Hence, it is neither for us to decide the aim and purpose of our existence or to prescribe the limits in our worldly authority nor is anyone else entitled to make these decisions for us. This right vest only in Allah Who has created us endowed us with mental and physical faculties, and provided all material provisions for our use. This principle of the Oneness of Allah altogether negates the concept of the legal and political sovereignty of human beings, individually or

collectively. Nothing can claim sovereignty, be it a human being, a family, a class or group of people, or even the human race in the world as a whole. Allah alone is the Sovereign and His Commandments are the Law of Islam.

2. *Risalat*

The medium through which we receive the Law of Allah is known as “Risalat” (Prophethood). We have received two things from this source:

The broad principles on which the system of human life should be based have been stated in the Quran. Further, the Prophet of Allah has, in accordance with the intention of the Divine Book, set up for us a model of the system of life in Islam by practically implementing the law and providing necessary details where required. The combination of these two elements, according to Islamic terminology, is called the “Shari’ah”.

3. *Khilafat*

It is Khilafat on earth which encompasses the range of activities of human being. It consists in settlement on earth, exploration of its resources and energies, fulfilment of Allah’s purpose of making full use of its resources and developing life on it. In brief this task requires the implementation of Allah’s way which is in harmony with the Divine Law governing the whole universe.

The role of Khilafat is definitely an integral part of meaning of worship. This is what Islam means when it lays down that man is Khalifah (servant) of Allah on the earth. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will have to fulfil the purpose and intent of Allah by working on Allah’s earth within the limits prescribed by Him and in conformity with His instructions and injunctions.

Purpose of the Islamic State

The Holy Qur’an clearly tells that the aim and purpose of this state is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues, with which the Creator of this universe wishes the human life to be adorned and the prevention and eradication of those evils the presence of which in human life is utterly abhorrent to Allah. The state in Islam is not intended for political administration only nor for the fulfilment through it of the collective will of any particular set of people; rather, Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of which, it must use all the means at its disposal. And this purpose is that the qualities of purity, beauty,

goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which Allah wants to flourish in the life of His people, should be created and evolved.

And that all kinds of exploitation, injustice and disorders which, in the view of Allah, are damaging for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures are suppressed and prevented. Simultaneously, by placing before us this high ideal, Islam gives us a clear outline of its moral system clearly stating the desired virtues and the undesirable evils. Keeping this outline in view the Islamic state can plan its welfare program in every age and in any environment.

The persistent demand made by Islam is that the principles or moral in must be observed at all cost and in all walks of life. Hence it lays down an unalterable policy for the state to base its politics on justice, truth and honesty. It is not prepared, under any circumstance whatsoever, to tolerate fraud, falsehood and injustice for the sake of any political, administrative or national expediency.

Whether it be the mutual relations of the rulers and the ruled within the state, or the relations of the state with other states, precedence must always be given to truth, honesty, and justice over material consideration. It imposes similar obligations on the state as on the individual. Viz., to fulfill all contracts and obligations, to have uniform measures and standards for dealings, to remember duties along with the rights and not to forget the rights of other when expecting them to fulfil their obligations; to use power and authority for the establishment of justice and not for the perpetration of injustice; to look upon duty as a sacred obligation and to fulfil it scrupulously; and to regard power as a trust from Allah and use it with the belief that one has to render an account of one's actions to Him in the Hereafter.

Fundamental Rights

Although an Islamic state may be set up in any portion of the earth, Islam does not seek to restrict human rights or privileges to the geographical limits of its own state. Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances whether such a person is resident within the territory of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is at peace with the state or at war.

Human blood is sacred in any case and cannot be spilled without justification. It is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, sick persons or the wounded. Woman's honour and chastity are worthy of respect under all circumstances. The hungry person must be

fed, the naked clothed, and the wounded treated medically irrespective of whether they belong to the Islamic community or not or even if they are from amongst its enemies.

These and a few other provisions have been laid by Islam fundamental rights for every man by virtue of his status as a human being to be enjoyed under the constitution of an Islamic state. Even the rights of citizenship in Islam are not confined to persons born within the limits of its state but are granted to every Muslim irrespective of his place of birth.

And every Muslim is to be regarded as eligible and fit for all positions of the highest responsibility in an Islamic State without any discussions of race colour or class. Islam has also laid down certain rights for the non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic State and these rights must necessarily from part of the Islamic Constitution.

According to the Islamic terminology such non- Muslims are *Dhimme* (the covenant), implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection. Their life, property is protected exactly like that of a Muslim citizen. There is no difference at all between a Muslim and *Dhimme* in respect of the civil or criminal law. The Islamic State shall not interfere with the personal law of the *Dhimme*. They will have full freedom of conscience and belief.

Executive Responsibilities

The responsibility for the administration of the Government, in an Islamic state, is entrusted to an Amir (leader or chief) who may be likened to the President or the Prime Minister in the conventional democratic state. The basic qualifications for the election of an Amir are that he should command the confidence of the *Ablul Hal Wal'aqd* (The Constitutional Body).

They are recruited from among the scholars (of Islam), leaders, and notables who effectively have the duty to carry out this task of appointing the ruler. In this, they do not act on their own personal preferences, but on behalf of the whole nation, being as they are, its representatives. Three conditions must be met for eligibility to membership of this body, namely:

Moral credit (piety and moral standards): To be well versed in religion so as to be in a position to decide upon who deserves the position of *Amir*. Good and sound judgment leading to a sharp perception of who is most suitable for the role of *Amir*. The *Amir* can retain office only so long as he observes Allah's *Shari'ah* laws. Being himself the primary example of it both in his dealings and conduct, honouring his commitments and being true to his trust; in brief, he should

conform to the conditions originally stipulated upon his holding office and will have to vacate his office when he loses this confidence.

But as long as he retains such confidence, he will have the authority to govern and exercise the powers of the Government, of course, in consultation with the *Shura* (the advisory council) and within the limits set by a *Shari'ah*. Every citizen will have the right to criticize the Amir should he deviate from the straight path, fail to honour the trust laid in him, transgress and tyrannize over people, change his conduct for the worst, freeze the implementation of Allah's penal code, or flouts Allah's regulations in anyway. If he fails to live up to one of the conditions stipulated for his eligibility to the office, the nation has the right to overrule his judgment either by correcting him or by deposing them.

Legislative Responsibilities

Legislation in an Islamic state will be restricted within the limits prescribed by the law of the Shari'ah. The injunctions of Allah and His legislative body can make any alterations or modifications in them or make any law repugnant to them. As for the commandments which are liable to two or more interpretations the duty of ascertaining the real intent of the Shari'ah, in such cases, will devolve on people possessing a specialized knowledge of the law of Shari'ah. Hence, such affairs will have to be referred to a sub-committee of the advisory council comprising men learned in Islamic Law. A vast field will still be available for legislation on questions not covered by any specific injunctions of the Shari'ah and the advisory council or legislature will be free to legislate in regard to these matters.

In Islam the judiciary is not placed under the control of the executive. It derives its authority directly from the Shari'ah and is answerable to Allah. The judges, no doubt can be appointed by the Government but once a judge has occupied the bench, he will have to administer justice among the people according to the law of God in an impartial manner.

The organs and functionaries of the Government will not be outside his legal jurisdiction much so that even the highest executive authority of the Government is liable to be called upon to appear in a court of law as a plaintiff or defendant like any other citizen of the state. Rulers and the ruled are subject to the same law and there can be no discrimination on the basis of position, power or privilege. Islam stands for equality and scrupulously sticks to this principle in social, economic and political realms alike.

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Lesson 15

Religion in Pakistan

Topic 01: Islam as Foundation of Pakistan (Two nation Theory and Constitution)

There were many reasons responsible for Pakistan movement i.e. economic, political, social and cultural but the religion was the most important among them all. Islam almost overlapped all other reasons. Islamic government, Islamic constitution, Islamic state were the slogans during the entire movement of Pakistan and even for some years after the creation of Pakistan.

In a heterogeneous society of India where the people of the same religion were speaking different languages and following different cultures, Islam was the only cementing and uniting force. It was Islam and nothing else, which united Punjabis, Bengalis, Pashtuns, Sindis, Baluchis and many other small groups at one single platform for the creation of Pakistan. The Pakistan Movement was an expression of Muslim India's firm desire to establish an Islamic State. The movement was inspired by the ideology of Islam and the country was carved into existence solely to demonstrate the efficiency of the Islamic way of life.

Islam in Politics: Pre-Independence Era

The consolidation of a distinct Muslim identity had started even before the idea of Pakistan germinated in the minds of the intellectuals. The quest for such an identity can be identified with the Mujaheedin movement which had started under the leadership of Syed Ahmad Brelvi who wanted to purify the Muslims, mostly converts from Hinduism, from the influence of Hindu culture and religion. The madrassas in Deobandh, and the Mohammedan Educational Conference provided awareness to the Muslims as a distinct socio-cultural and religious group and led to the emergence of the pan-Indian Muslim consciousness movement.

Islam, however, became politically useful after the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. For the first time, the mutiny unified Indians against British imperialism. But the kind of emotional appeal it generated especially among the Muslims (and for that matter, also among non-Muslims) was

noticed by intellectuals. Freedom from religious encroachment became a new ideology and the Muslims of the subcontinent were convinced that their religion would continue to be in danger in the British regime.

The elites, as a writer points out, "managed to foster a degree of general Muslim identification with issues like lack of education, discrimination in employment, inadequate political representation, etc. Thus, while their use of Islam may have been subjectively opportunistic, it was nevertheless effective given the context. Initially, Syed Ahmad Khan and other Muslim Leaguers, comprising mostly Western educated elites, were not anti-British in their approach and orientation. They believed that by cooperating with the British, the Muslims would gain in political terms.

In order to maintain and strengthen their rule, the British widened the cleavages of Hindu-Muslim differences by providing separate electorates (Indian Council Act 1909) and partitioning Bengal. Moreover, the presence of Hindu hardliners exerting a decisive say in the Congress consolidated the differences between the two communities and alienated the Muslims further. For the first time during the British rule, creation of a separate entity for the Muslims within or without the British Empire was given a territorial shape by Mohammad Iqbal in his presidential address to the annual session of the Muslim League in 1930. Iqbal prescribed cultural uniqueness to be coterminous with territoriality. He definitely argued for autonomy rather than independence; nonetheless he was first to impinge on the idea of territoriality to mobilise the Muslims, and provided a direction to the Muslim League.

The Lahore Resolution adopted by the Muslim League clearly defined the territoriality of the proposed Muslim state by including the north-western and eastern zones of India to be grouped together to constitute independent states where the units would be autonomous. The idea of a Muslim state emerged in the minds of many Muslim leaders when the Congress backtracked from the agreed policies on the coalition government with the Muslim League. Finally, after a long and tedious process, Pakistan was born as a nation embodying the Muslim aspirations.

Islam in Post Partition Era

After the creation of Pakistan, the contour of its state structure was debated. The nature of the state, including its ideology, was discussed. Since religion had played an important role in the creation of Pakistan, the role of religion in the context of an independent Pakistan assumed significance. Jinnah, from the very inception of the state, made it clear that Pakistan was not

going to be a theocratic state ruled by religious priests. Advocating equal citizenship to all communities and hinting at religious freedom which would unshackle any kind of religious identity.

Conflicting Views

While framing the Constitution of Pakistan, a debate had ensued in the Constituent Assembly regarding the contour of the Constitution and its Islamic content. The unitary formula of the state was approved by stating that it is in consonance with Islam. Moreover, the political elites of Pakistan, comprising the Muslim bourgeoisie, feudal lords and bureaucratic elites, were not in favor of an Islamic state: rather they wanted to confine the role- of Islam to cultural identity. This is due to the fact that "the system of education under which they were educated made them familiar with only the Western type of democracy based on the principle of separation of religion from politics. Their position was subsequently strengthened by Pakistan's alignment and dependence on the West in economic and defense matters.

Islam as Unifying Force

Soon after independence, serious problems to Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity were posed by the Balochis and Pathans who demanded succession due to historical and ethnic factors. Realizing the potential of such challenges to national integration, the political elites tried to reorient Islam in order to neutralize sub-national identities. Thus, the Islamic identity was displayed overzealously and people were urged to be sensitive to the Islamic ethos and culture as their only identity which is coterminous with their Pakistani identity (a state based on religion).

Objective Resolution: the first Triumph of Ulama

The question of the place of Islam in constitution considerably delayed the constitution making process. The Jamaat-i-Islami led by Manlana Mohammad Maudoodi and other religious parties played an important role in giving an Islamic orientation to the Pakistani polity through the Objectives Resolution. Until 1949 the assembly was unable to pass even a single constitutional bill. On March 12, 1949 Objective Resolution was passed which provided 'the Aims and Objectives of the Constitution. It laid the foundation and outlines for the future constitution. It is considered the most important occasion in the life of Pakistan, next in importance to the creation of Pakistan. Objective Resolution appeared to suggest that the government had

accepted the demand of Ulama. It was the first remarkable achievement of Ulama. The most important feature of the Objective Resolution was that it provided base to the constitution of Pakistan on the ideals of Islam. The preamble of the resolution made a frank and unambiguous recognition to the sovereignty of God and declared that all authority must be subverted to Allah.

Islam and 1956 Constitution

The views of the ulema were accommodated to a large extent in the 1956 Constitution by endorsing certain Islamic principles and declaring Pakistan as an Islamic Republic. However, Islam was not declared the state religion. The Islamic principles as incorporated in the 1956 Constitution required that the head of the state should be a Muslim. No laws could be enacted by the legislature which were "repugnant to the injunctions of Islam." The judiciary could not intervene in case the National Assembly enacted a law according to the Islamic prescription. Thus, while incorporating some Islamic symbols and ideas, the elites were conscious of the contours and knew the limitations of such manipulations.

Declaring Ahmadiyas as Non-Muslims

The orthodox religious views, for the first time in Pakistan's history, found political expression when their demand to expel the Ahmadiyas (viewed as heretical by most Muslims due to their rejection of the finality of Mohammad's prophethood) surfaced in 1953 in the province of Punjab. The inadequacy and vulnerability of the Western educated elites were displayed blatantly when they imposed martial law for the first time in Pakistani history to bring the situation under control.

For the first time, this also demonstrated the effectiveness of Islam as a political force in the hands of the Opposition which consequently disarmed the politicians ideologically. Though many of the ruling elites were convinced about the misuse of Islam and its future implications, they lacked the strength to say so openly in an Islamic country without being criticized by fundamentalist or religious groups who had strengthened their hold on certain sections of the masses.

Islamization under Zia's Regime

It is no surprise that Islam is used as a political tool by politicians but the most prominent among them is Zia-ul-Haq's regime. During General Zia's period, Islam was used to consolidate his hold on power, legitimize his rule and exclude any threat to his government. Zia declared himself a practicing Muslim to portray himself as a pious Muslim eligible to rule an Islamic state.

After taking over, Zia praised the spirit of Islam that had characterized the anti-Bhutto movement. In his address to the nation on July 5, 1977, he said, "It proves that Pakistan which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of the Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country.

On December, 1984, Zia announced elections to be held on a non-party basis because party-based elections were deemed un-Islamic by him. The main issue or theme of this farcical election was that people would be asked to vote on a single question: "whether they supported the process initiated by the government for Islamization of all laws in accordance with the Holy Quran and Sunnah and whether they supported the Islamic ideology of Pakistan." He further said that an affirmative vote would not only usher in an era of Islamic values but would also serve as a vote of confidence by electing him as the President of Pakistan for the next five years.

Zia further proposed that all the laws passed by the Majlis-i-Shoora, which was established by him, would be reviewed by the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) established in 1980 in order to ensure that they were not "repugnant to Islam," and conform to the dictates of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah as interpreted by the Council of Islamic Ideology. There was a Shariat bench in each provincial High Court. Appeals against the judgements of the FSC were heard by the Shariat Appellate bench of the Supreme Court.

In February 1979, General Zia announced a series of reforms. Nizam-i-Islam was aimed at bringing all laws into conformity with Islamic tenets and values that had been established by Prophet Mohammad during his decade-long reign over Medina (AD 622-632). During this period, the universalistic and humanist values of Islam as portrayed by Sufi tradition were reduced to a minimum but the birthdays of sufi saints were celebrated with much pomp by the regime.

In 1980, compulsory collection of zakat (alms) and ushr was introduced. This required 2.5 per cent deduction of taxes from the banks and other financial assets of the Muslims and Muslim

majority owned commercial enterprises. The government created zakat committees to distribute this money to the needy and to various religious organizations. This founded the sectarian difference which otherwise had remained dormant in the post-British colonial rule phase. Shias vehemently criticized the state's role in collecting zakat which according to them is integrally related to the issue of legitimacy.

A substantial amount of funds generated by zakat was distributed through the madrassas largely belonging to the Sunni sects of Deoband, the Ahl-e-Hadith and Barelvi. This funding led to an increase in the madrassas. The most controversial among Zia's Islamization programmes was the introduction of Hudood Ordinances imposing Islamic penalties for certain offences. The sectarian divide took place under Zia's regime with the introduction of Hanifi Fiqh.

Reading of the Quran was introduced at the matriculation level in school. Maktab schools were elevated to the status of regular schools and their certificates were considered equivalent to a Master's degree. An Islamic university was established in Islamabad, funded largely by Saudi Arabia, with that country retaining a say regarding the choice of faculty. In selecting teachers at all levels, knowledge of Islam became essential. In 1981, Pakistan Studies was introduced as a compulsory subject for all degree students. The textbook authors were given directives to guide students towards "the ultimate goal of Pakistan—the creation of a completely Islamized state." Modern textbooks emphasized the formal or ritualistic aspect of Islam and defined the ultimate goal of Pakistan as the creation of a completely Islamized state.

Topic 02: Religious Demography

The area now comprising Pakistan has historically also been a centre of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism (in that order). Indeed, Hinduism and Buddhism were present here much before Islam which entered Sindh in the eighth century and northern Pakistan in the eleventh century. The general trend of peaceful existence between communities was to continue in the colonial period. Other religious minorities, such as the Parsi and the Jewish community, were too small and too isolated to be seen as a problem. And Christians, patronized by the British rulers in India, also remained on good terms with their Muslim neighbours. The upheaval of Partition substantially changed the demographic and religious contours of the region that is now Pakistan.

A Profile of the Religious Minorities of Pakistan

The 1998 population census of Pakistan tells us that Muslims constitute an overwhelming 96.28% of the population (175,376,000). While the Punjab, NWFP and Balochistan are predominantly Muslim provinces each having 99.44%, 97.22% and 98.75% of the Muslim population, respectively, Sindh is more pluralistic having 91.32% Muslims and 6.51% Hindus. Out of these, 9.77% live in the rural areas and 3.08% reside in cities.

According to available official figures, 96.28% of Pakistan's population consists of Muslims. Christians are 1.59% of the population whereas Hindus make up 1.60% of the people. Pakistani Christians are primarily based in the Federal Capital Islamabad, Punjab and Sindh, while Hindus and Scheduled castes are concentrated in rural Sindh. Since 1974, Pakistan's religious minorities have also included the Ahmadis (or Ahmaddiyyas). Although formerly recognized as a religious sect within Islam, Ahmadis were constitutionally declared as non-Muslim by the Second Constitutional Amendment (Act) 1974. Ahmadis, like other religious minorities, claim underrepresentation in the official figures, which currently suggest their population – spread across Pakistan – as 0.22% of the entire population.

Christian and Hindu Communities

Pakistani Christians and Hindus face similar challenges even though they have the largest populations in terms of percentage. In the 1956 Constitution, and later in the amended 1973 Constitution under the Zia ul-Haq regime, Pakistan instituted separate electorates against the will of minorities. This has benefitted minorities by at least granting them dual voting rights. However, this legislative change does not provide Christians, Hindus and other religious minorities the freedom to become an unencumbered part of the Pakistani electoral system.

Christians and Hindus are also vulnerable to persecution under the blasphemy laws. Many individuals mete out punishments towards members of these religious communities based on desecration of the Holy Quran or a blasphemous comment allegedly directed at the Prophet. Whether these allegations have any credibility cannot be determined as most of these incidents are 'settled' outside of court. Due to the worsening of religious intolerance in recent years within Pakistan, political parties seem hesitant to nominate non-Muslims for general seats and do not advocate for an increase in the number of reserved seats for non-Muslim minorities. Hence, even with the provision of a joint electorate the electoral process itself is not free and inclusive with regard to religious minorities after almost a decade of its implementation.

Sikh Community

The Sikh community, one that bore the brunt of violence in Partition and was involved in some of the most violent clashes with Muslims at the time, too has some major places of worship in Pakistan such as Nankana Sahib and Panja Sahib in Hasanabdal. The community is small but linguistically more integrated among the Punjabis as their language is the same as their Muslim Punjabi neighbours. In the Pashto-speaking areas, Sikhs speak Pashto and it is only recently that the Pakistani Taliban has forced them to leave their homes in some places. In general, though, it would be fair to say that Sikhs have until recently faced less persecution than the Hindus have faced in Sindh. The recent commissioning of a Sikh, Harcharan Singh, as an officer in the Pakistan Army on 27 October 2007 can be seen as an indicator of new confidence in sections of this community.

Parsis Community

The case of the Parsis, another small community, is not too different. In an atmosphere of religious intolerance, it is not uncommon to find press reportage on fear and discrimination such as a recent one by the anthropologist Akbar S. Ahmed who reported that the Parsis are emigrating abroad because ‘they are worried about Talibanisation’.

Zikri Community

The Zikri community of Balochistan has not been given adequate attention by scholars but it too, like the Kalash community in Chitral, has been harassed by zealots who wanted to convert it to their version of Islam or, failing that, make its members’ lives miserable. What emerges is the picture of a country where the religious minorities are very small in numbers. Moreover, in the case of the Hindus and Christians, they are not necessarily rich or powerful.

Social Issues of Religious Minorities

Pakistan is home to many Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi/ Zoroastrian, and Christian citizens who face continued threats to their security and are subject to various forms of harassment and social exclusion.

Social issues also continued to negatively impact non-Muslims. Forced conversion of women to Islam from various religious backgrounds continued in 2017. However, in February 2017 the Senate passed the Hindu Marriage Act to protect the rights of Hindus who wish to apply the family law prescribed by their religion. The act formally recognizes Hindu marriages and family law for the first time in the country's history.

There was no substantive progress on the Christian Marriage and Divorce Bill of 2017, due to inaction by the government and disagreement among leaders in the Christian community. While the Christian Marriage and Divorce Bill was originally proposed in 2012, it stalled for several years before being sent to the Ministry of Human Rights for review before the National Assembly votes on the bill. Non-Muslims remain on the periphery of the political sphere, with only 10 representatives granted to such minorities in parliament. After the 2017 census was released, non-Muslim leaders have complained that increases in their communities' population were not fully disclosed or reflected. Some activists have implied that the non-Muslim census figures have remained confidential because the non-Muslim population is likely entitled to more reserved seats in parliament based on its growth.

Topic 03: Minority Rights

In Pakistan several minorities are also residing in different parts. These minorities are guaranteed all their fundamental rights according to Islam. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedom of religion to all the citizens of Pakistan. The minorities are free to practice their religion as well as build their worship places.

With the —Objectives Resolution the process of constitution making started off. After passage of this resolution in 1949, several committees were framed by the Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution on the basis of principles laid down by the resolution. Among these committees —The Basic Principles Committee was the most important. It consisted of twenty-four members and was headed by the prime minister. A committee on —Fundamental Rights of the Citizens of Pakistan and on matters relating to Minorities had been established by the Assembly in its inaugural session on 12 August 1947.

The committee was primarily divided into two sections. One was occupied with the formation of Basic Human Rights and the other section was looking into the rights and protection of the minorities in Pakistan. In 1950, the Constituent Assembly adopted the reports devised by this committee, which was finalized in 1954. By virtue of this report presented by the Committee

on Human Rights and after its acceptance by the Constituent Assembly in 1950, minorities were granted generous rights as citizens of Pakistan. The fundamental rights were guaranteed to all the citizens of the state i.e. both Muslims and non-Muslims, and included the following provisions:

- Equality of all citizens before law.
- Equal protection of all citizens before law.
- No discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- The right to induction in the services of the state.
- Freedom of speech, conscience, expression, association, profession, occupation, trade, or business.
- Every community would be allowed to provide religious instructions to the pupils of its own community and personal law of every community was guaranteed.
- No person would be compelled to pay any special taxes for the propagation of any religion other than his.
- No discrimination against any community in the matter of exemption from or concession in taxes granted with respect to religious institutions.
- No discrimination in admission to educational institutions.

The report was highly appreciated both inside as well as outside the Constituent Assembly. With regard to rights of minorities in Pakistan, in its final report, the Constituent Assembly added the following provisions in the fundamental rights.

- Any minority residing in the territory of Pakistan or any part thereof having a distinct language, script, or culture of its own should not be prevented from conserving the same.
- The state shall not discriminate in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution merely on the ground that it is mainly mentioned by a religious minority.
- There shall be a Minister for Minority Affairs both at the centre and in the provinces to look after the interests of the minorities and to see that the safeguards provided in the constitutions for the minorities are duly observed. The first constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1956; it included all the fundamental rights for all the citizens irrespective of their religion.

All the minorities living in Pakistan were guaranteed all their fundamental rights. Unfortunately, this constitution was abrogated in 1958 and new constitution was framed in 1962 which did not include fundamental rights but these were included in the constitution through constitutional amendment afterwards. Unfortunately, this constitution also could not last long and once again a new constitution was framed in 1973, this time by the Assembly elected by the people of Pakistan. This constitution guaranteed all the fundamental rights to all the citizens of Pakistan.

The Rights of Equality

The constitution grants equality of rights. This right is based upon the supremacy of law. It means that minorities living in Pakistan are also provided equal protection of law and all are treated equally without any kind of discrimination.

Whosoever qualifies as the citizen of Pakistan stands eligible for all type of public service without any discrimination of religion, race, sex or descent. In the services of state special quota is reserved for the non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan. That is why non-Muslims are serving in all most every walk of life i.e. education, defence, judiciary, bureaucracy, etc.

Rights to Life and Personal Liberty

This is one of the most significant of the entire set of basic human rights. It provides foundations to the concept of rule of law. It stands for the sanctity of human life, honour and liberty except in accordance with law i.e. no person can be arrested; detained put under restraint except law authorizes such arrest or restriction. The minorities freely enjoy their right to life and personal liberty.

Rights to Freedom

The minorities have freedom of speech, expression, association, occupation, and peaceful assembly. They can fully participate in the political system of Pakistan and have the right to criticize the government. —Pakistan Christian Post is a Christian daily newspaper in which Christian point of view about the policies of government is presented without any type of fear. So far as the right to freedom of association is concerned the minorities are free to assemble peacefully in any part of the country. They also have the right to move freely throughout

Pakistan and to reside in any part of the country. There are so many non-Muslim colonies all over Pakistan and even in the big cities of Pakistan.

Freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice, and propagate any religion, subject to public order and morality. Minorities are free to profess any religion. They are not forced to accept any type of religion. They are also free to build their worship places and perform their religious rituals freely. Even the Muslims participate in their religious festivals. There are so many temples and churches in Pakistan. These worship places of non-Muslims are respected by the Muslims and even protected by the government.

The minorities are free to attend any educational institution and have the exemption from any kind of tax which could be used for propagation of the religion other than one's own. There are so many Christian educational institutions run by Christians. Students get education of Christianity in these institutions. In Lahore Forman Christian College and University is run by Christians and students from all over Pakistan come here for education. These Christian institutions are run freely without any interference from the government or any other segment of society.

Rights to Property

The minorities have the freedom of acquisition and disposal of property. They can sale or purchase any property according to their own will. No person can be deprived of his property without adequate compensation. No discrimination is shown to sale or purchase property from the non-Muslims.

Right to Culture

The people residing in any part of the country have the right to preserve their culture. No one is discriminated on the basis of his culture. The Christians living in Punjab and Hindu community of Sindh have never been forced to leave their culture instead the Muslims and the non-Muslims respect each other's cultures. All the minorities living in Pakistan have protection of social rights. They are given equal social status everywhere in society.

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