

# **Survey of World Religions**

## **East and West**

### **West**

- Rationalistic- human reason can properly interpret the world and learn to navigate it
- Empirical- the world as you see it is how it is, there might be a spiritual realm, but it does not 'change' the physical world

### **East**

- There is no 'real.' Experience defines the real.

## **5 Degrees of Separation**

- Theistic Understanding- what is the nature of God? Personal? A 'force'? One of many?
- Scriptures- do they have a sacred text and what is their relationship to it
- Human Condition- what is the essential state of humanity in regards to relation with the Deity/Reality
- Relating to Divine/Salvation- what is the means to interacting with God/Reality. How is one 'saved'?
- Afterlife- what is the state of existence for the departed?

## **Islam**

Islam- submission. Muslim- one who submits

Islamic Denominations- Shi'a (Shi'ites), Sunni, Sufi

- Shi'a and Sunni are major distinctions, in our terms Shi'a would be Catholics, Sunni Protestants. Is an issue of authority in the Church. Like the Pope etc.
  - Sunnis would be like Protestants, they would disagree with other Sunnis over certain issues, but not say that the others weren't Muslims.
  - Shi'a think much of their imams, like Fathers in the CC. Reject the Sunni.

Sufis are the mystical Muslims and can be Shi'a or Sunni, but also just Sufi.

### **Theistic Worldview**

Believe in Allah- a personal God who is the only God. God is beyond all comprehension. Reject Christians as polytheists.

### **Scriptures**

The Koran is the only undefiled message from God. Must be read in Arabic in order to 'get it.' 114 surahs- in chronological order.

### **Human Condition**

Humans are not sinful by nature, they are 'free.' They are inclined to pride and therefore, errors of pride. Everyone has a moment where they understand right and wrong and are judged from that point on. Non-Muslims are not judged as harshly.

### **Salvation / Relation**

Muslims are expected to follow 5 principles to assure themselves as many good works as possible. Besides following Islamic law, they have the 5 pillars

- Shahadah- Creedal affirmation. Must believe correct Islamic theology. “There is only one God and Muhammad is His prophet.”
- Salah- ritual prayer done 5x a day, although some can be done together (Afternoon/Evening)
- Zakat- giving to the poor and the cause of spreading Islam. Is compulsory
- Sawm- Fast during the holy month of Ramadan. Do not eat or drink while there is light (during the day).
- Hajj- Pilgrimage to Mecca. All able-bodied Muslims who can afford it- once in their lifetimes.

### **Afterlife**

Good to heaven, evil to hell. Some have a ‘purgatory’ system where most will ‘work off’ their sin and then be saved.

### **Hinduism**

3<sup>rd</sup> largest- behind Christianity and Islam

Oldest confirmed religion, although about the same time as Judaism

A billion followers, mostly (90%) in India and Nepal.

Almost impossible to ‘denominate’- H-ism ranges from monotheism to atheism. Includes polytheism, pantheism (everything is God), panentheism (God is in everything) and monism (all is one).

## **Theistic Worldview**

**Monistic – Pantheistic**- All spirits are trying to reunite with the Brahman- the ultimate reality. You do this by realizing that you are one with it already (enlightenment)

**Dualistic (theistic)**- Brahman is represented by gods and goddesses like Vishnu, Shiva

### **Scriptures**

- Vedas
- Upanishads
- Bhagavad Gita

Contain theology, philosophy, mythology and rules for religious living. Interpreted different ways by different sects.

### **Relation / Salvation**

Humans are separated from reality and need to be rejoined. This happens through the cycle called *Samsara*. *Samsara* is the cycle of life and death and rebirth, called reincarnation. The goal is to reach *Moksha*, release from the cycle. This is accomplished through the accruelement of *Karma*, or good deeds. These deed are most quickly accumulated through *yogas*, practices of worship or lifestyle.

### **Afterlife**

*Nirvana* is the reward of the completion of *Samsara*. Depending on monistic/dualistic views, it is joining the Divine in essence or presence. Punishment is reincarnation, in a lower life form if really bad.

## **Buddhism**

Many have debated whether Buddhism is a religion or not. It is even mentioned as a 'science' for its meditative aspects.

### Denominations

- Therevada- Cambodia, Laos, Thailand
- East Asian- China, Japan (Zen), Vietnam
- Tibetan- Dali Lama

## **Theistic Worldview**

Atheistic- God is a manifestation of the mind. You are god and god is you.

## **Scriptures**

Tripitaka- lit 'three baskets'

- Disciplinary rules and doctrines
- Words of the Buddha
- Commentaries on the words of the Buddha

## **Human Condition**

Humans need to find 'reality.' Need to find truth and enlightenment. Separated from reality because of suffering caused by desire.

## **Relation / Salvation**

Follow the 'middle way.' Moderation in all things- a way between self-indulgence and self-abasement

## Four Noble Truths

- There is suffering
- Suffering has a cause- desire / craving.
- There is an eventual end to suffering, called Nirvana.
- There is a way to follow to the end of the suffering- the Noble 8-fold Path.

## Noble 8-fold path

- Right speech- (non-hurtful, non-exaggerated, always truthful)
- Right Actions- (avoid doing harm)
- Right Living- your actions effect
- Right Effort / Exercise- make yourself better
- Right Awareness- be aware of the scenario around you.  
Know the nature of reality.
- Right Concentration
- Right Understanding
- Right Thoughts

## 4 Conditions of Morality

- Chastity
- Calmness
- Quiet
- Contentedness

## **Other Asian Religions of Note**

**Shinto**- Japanese tribal. Became very intertwined with Bhdism, but separated later. Very compatible

**Taoism**- Chinese tribal. Polytheistic morality based

**Animistic tribal**- Animal souls and totems. Everything has a soul. Worship of sun, moon etc.

**Ancestorism**- Worship of ancestors. Following and calling on them for wisdom. Death day celebrations.

### **European Religions**

**Catholicism**- Obviously, being close to Rome and the history of the Church. Still holds sway in some places.

**Secular Humanism**- Europe 10-50 years ahead of America. It is 'post' Christian.