

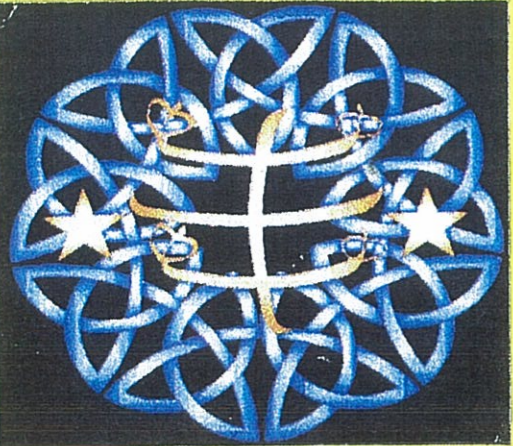
'Abdu'l-Bahá was Bahá'u'lláh's chosen successor and the authorised interpreter of His teachings. Today the world community is administered by the Universal House of Justice, a body instituted by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Bahá'í community gathers on the first day of every Bahá'í month in a meeting known as the Nineteen Day Feast. These are open to children and adults alike, and are a blend of worship, fellowship and administration.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh and Centre of His Covenant

Shrine of the Báb, Haifa, Israel. The Báb was the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh

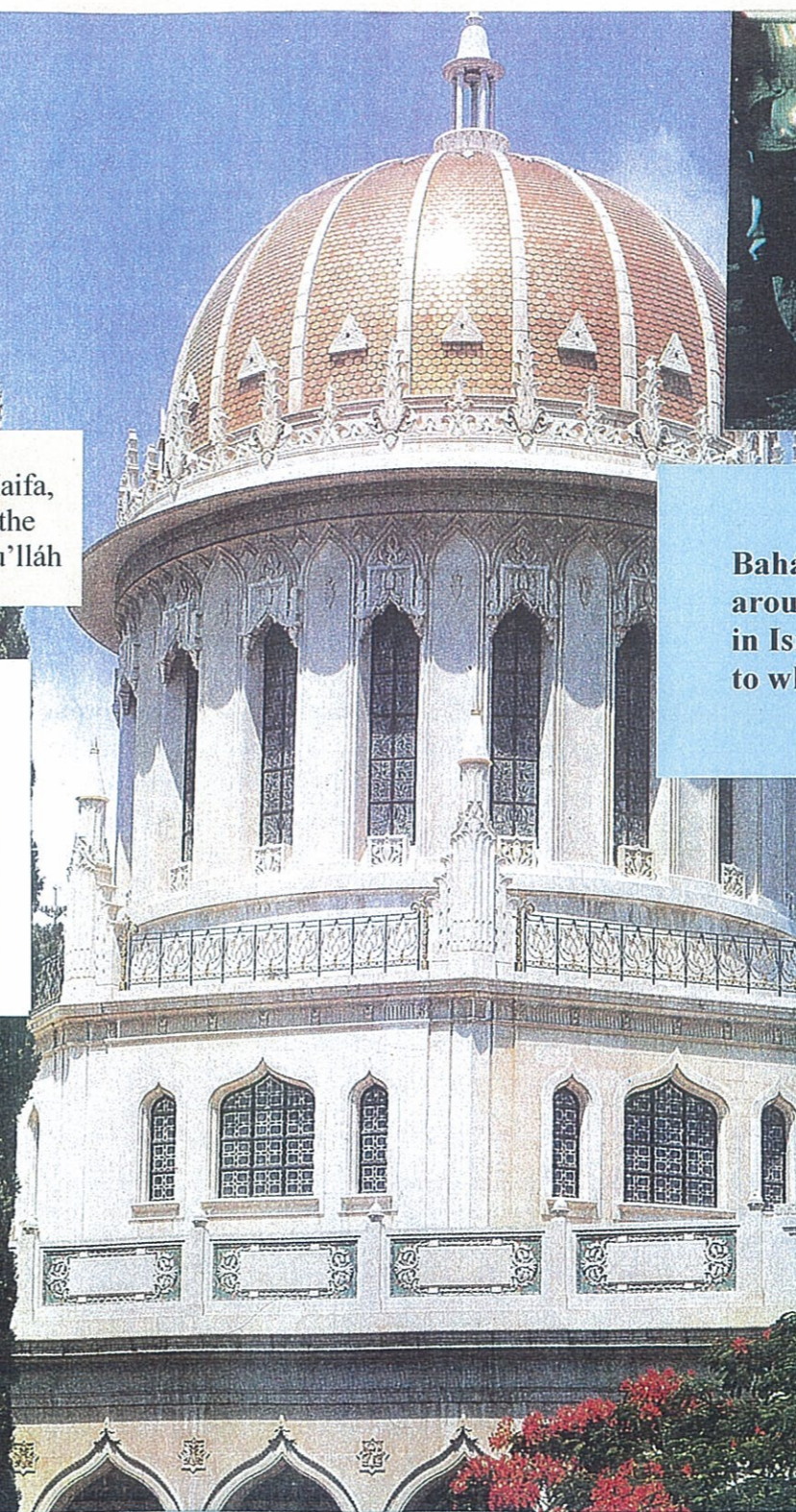
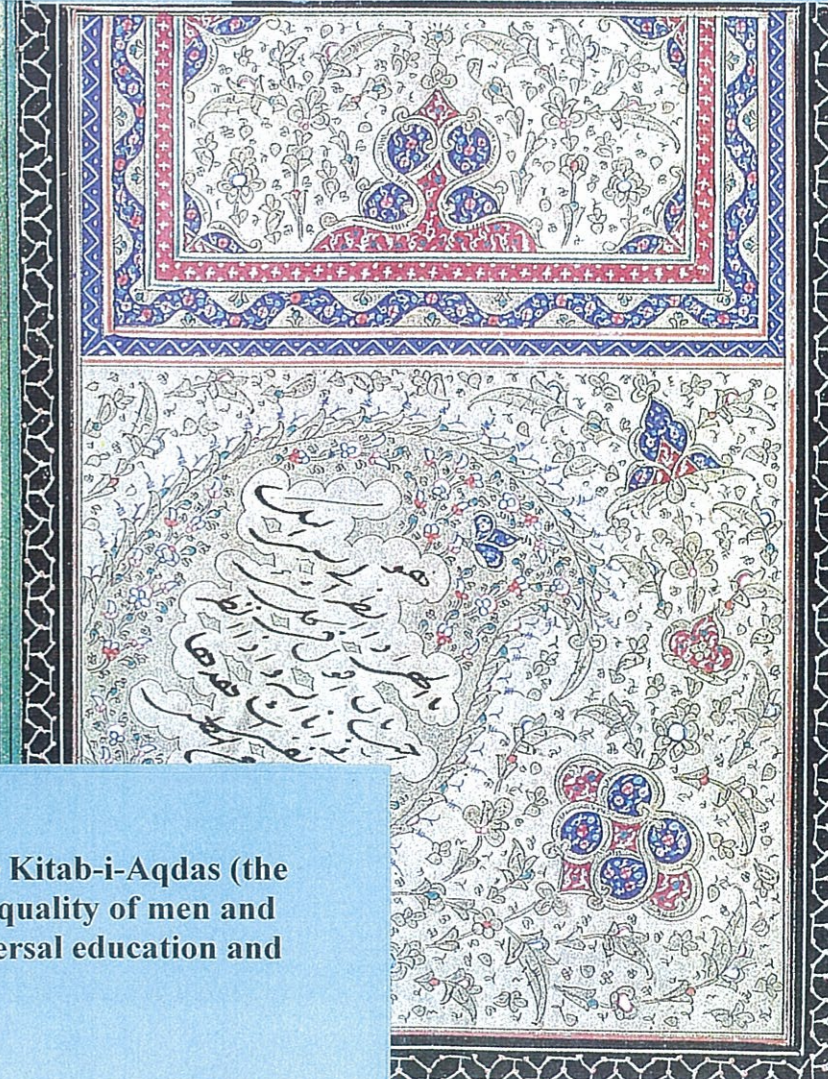
Bahá'ís have constructed many shrines and houses of worship around the world. Their most holy site is the mansion of Bahji, in Israel. Bahji is where Bahá'u'lláh lies buried; it is the point to which all Bahá'ís turn when performing their daily prayers.

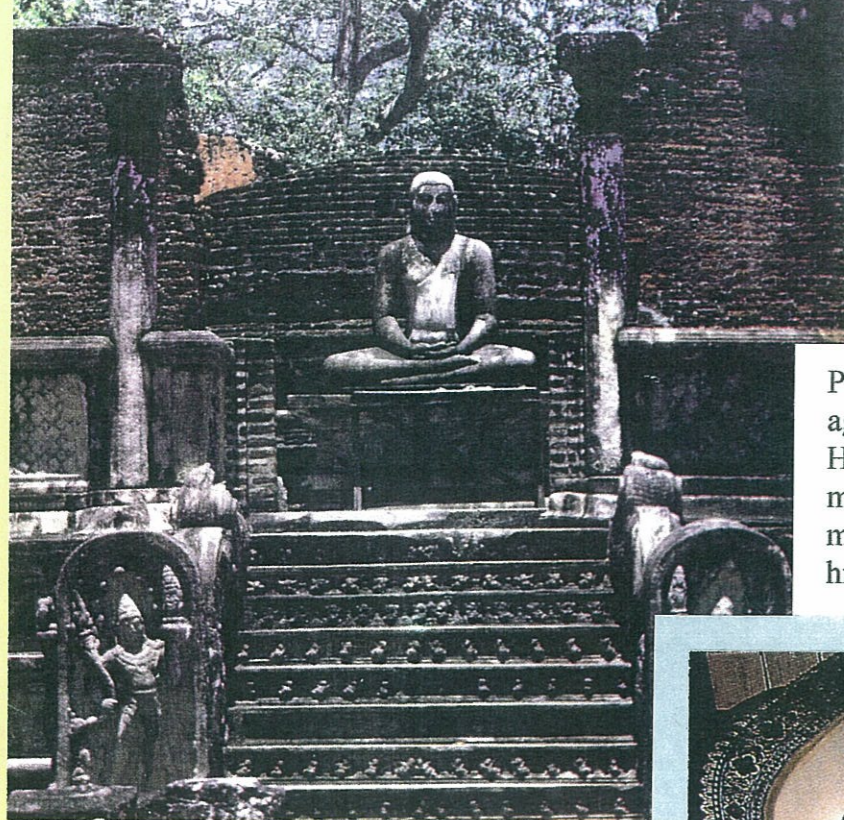


# BAHÁ'Í FAITH

The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh (1817 – 1892), Who is revered as the most recent Messenger of God, following in the footsteps of Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad. Bahá'u'lláh taught that all religions are essentially one, and that in this day, through the influence of His teachings, humankind will achieve true unity.

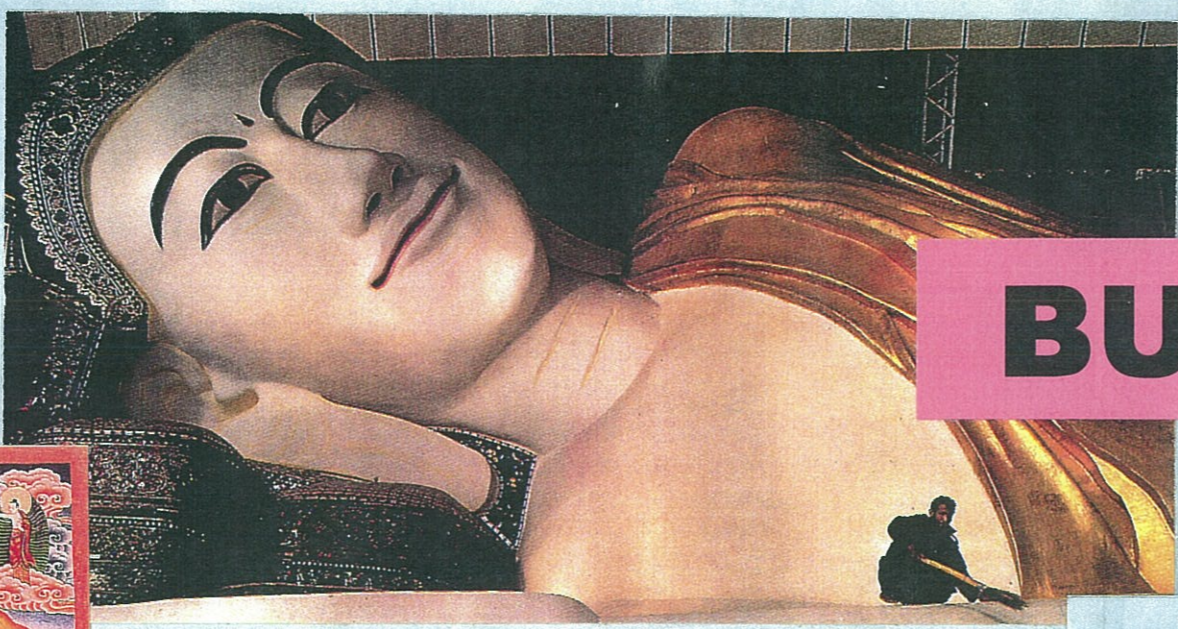
Bahá'u'lláh wrote many texts, foremost of which is the Kitab-i-Aqdas (the Most Holy Book). In these writings He advocated the equality of men and women, the elimination of all forms of prejudice, universal education and the creation of an international language.



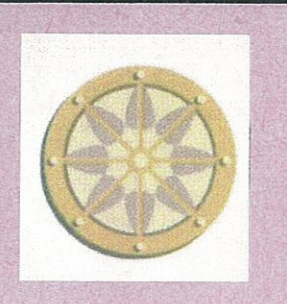


The 5 Precepts recommend all Buddhists to abstain from harming others (including animals), stealing, sensuous misconduct, lying and getting intoxicated on alcohol or drugs.

Prince Siddhartha Guatama, who lived some 2500 years ago in North East India, was born to a wealthy Jain family. He eventually took up the life of an ascetic and, through meditation beneath the Bodhi tree, came to find enlightenment. The term 'Buddha' means "enlightened one", and his teachings form the basis of Buddhism.



# BUDDHISM



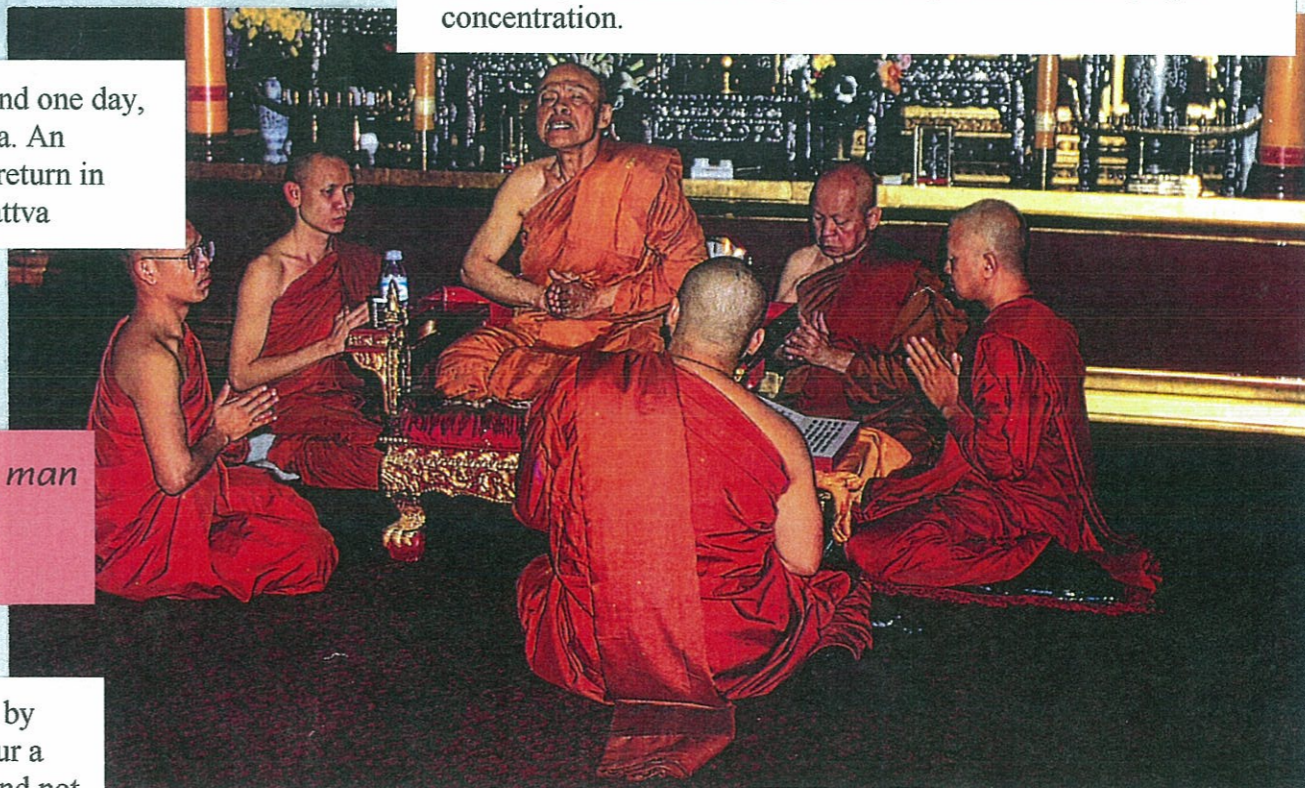
Buddhist monks and nuns follow in the ascetic tradition of the Buddha, and seek to live the Eightfold Path which consists of: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Buddhahood is a state of spiritual attainment to which all beings can aspire and one day, through the cycle of rebirth, all will achieve it. This state is known as Nirvana. An enlightened one is free from the cycle of rebirth, unless he or she chooses to return in order to help others liberate themselves. Such a person is known as a bodhisattva



*"From craving springs sorrow and from sorrow springs fear. If a man is to free himself from craving, he is free from fear and sorrow."*  
Dhammapada 216.

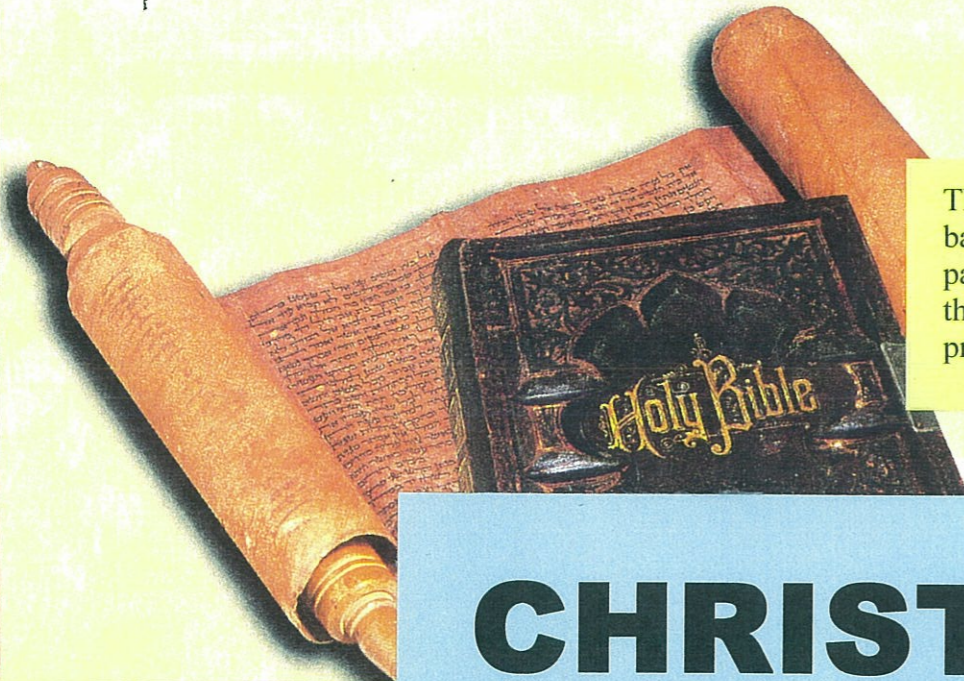
There is no external God or spiritual force in Buddhism, the universe is pervaded by spirit; every living being is pervaded by spirit. Some branches of Buddhism honour a variety of Gods and Goddesses, though these are seen as aspects of the universe and not as separate beings. Included amongst these forces is Mara, a demon-like force of delusion, which chains humankind down through greed, lust, cruelty etc.



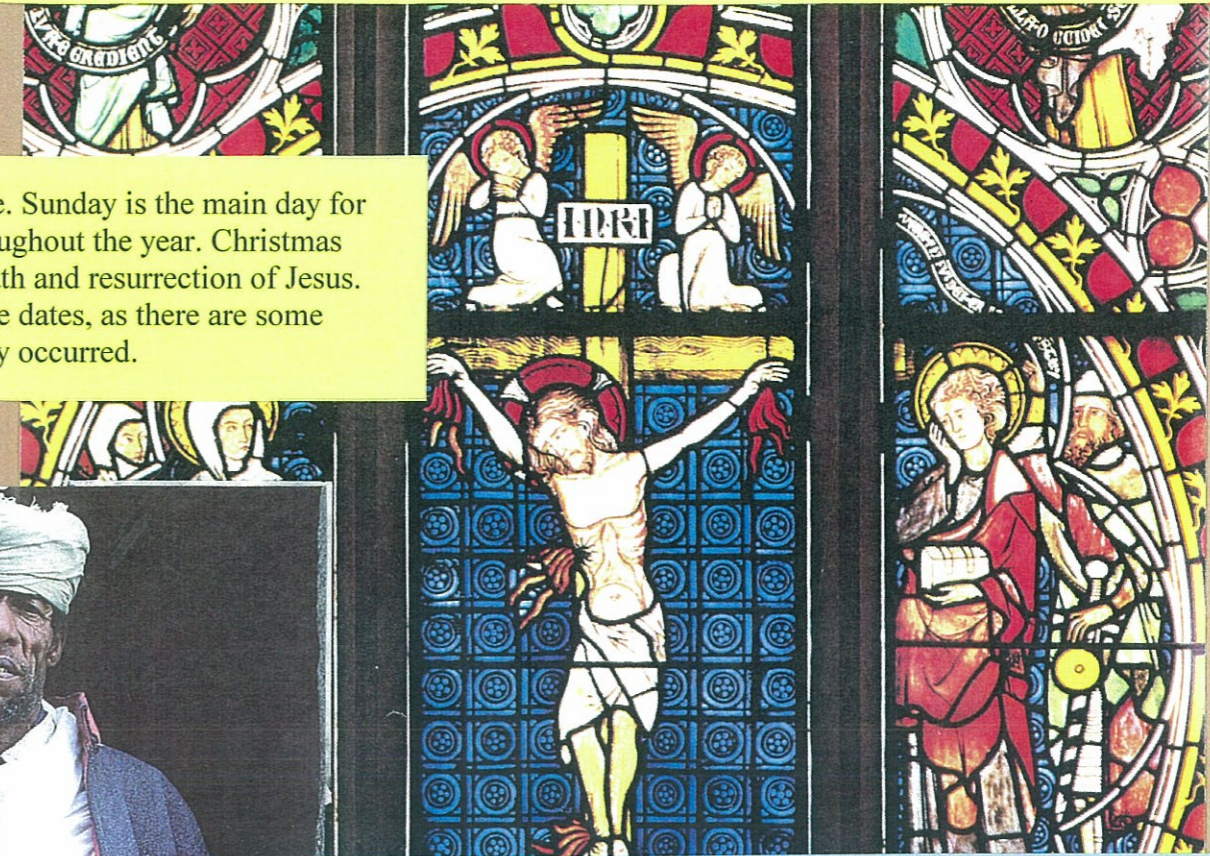


Jesus of Nazareth lived in the Holy Land, preaching a radical message of salvation through belief in the one God. He was crucified by the Romans around 30AD, and was revered by his disciples as the Messiah and Son of God. His death upon the Cross is seen to be a sacrifice to absolve the world of sin.

Most Christians worship in a church or meeting house. Sunday is the main day for worship, and there are many important holy days throughout the year. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, and Easter marks the death and resurrection of Jesus. Not all denominations hold these festivals on the same dates, as there are some differences of opinion as to when these events actually occurred.

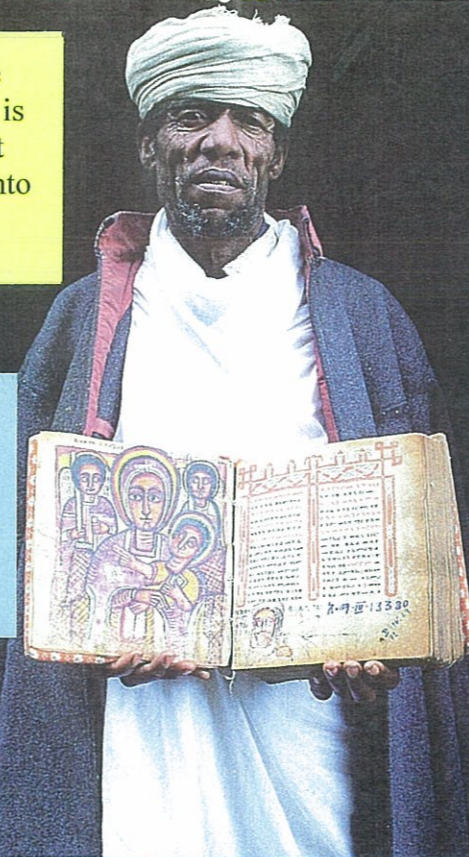


The Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is the basis of Christian teaching. The New Testament is particularly important as it contains stories about the life of Jesus. The Bible has been translated into practically all known languages.



# CHRISTIANITY

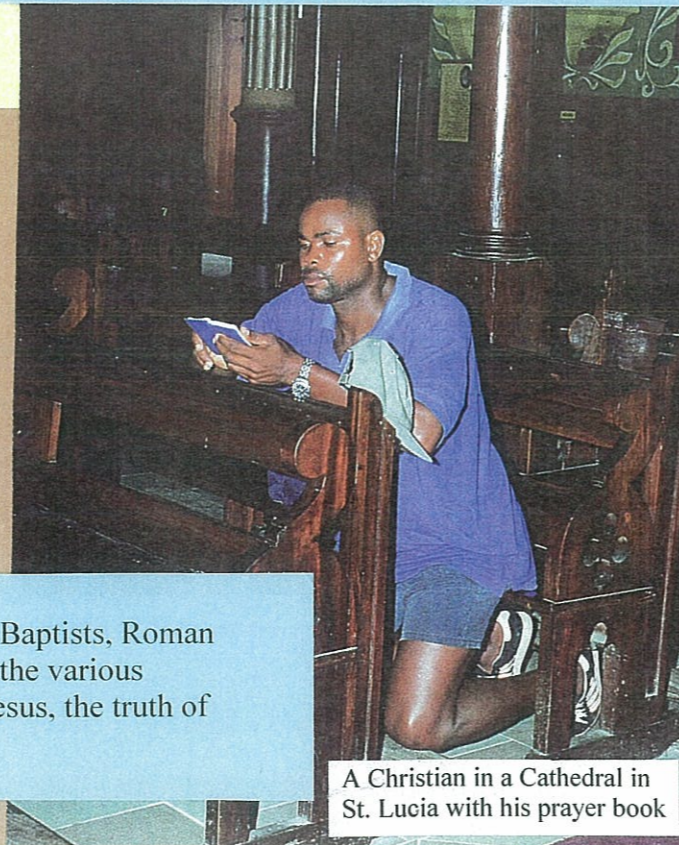
Jesus is known as the Christ, a Greek form of the word Messiah. He is believed to have been born of a virgin, Mary, who was impregnated by the power of God. He is regarded as the only person in history to be without sin, or moral failing.



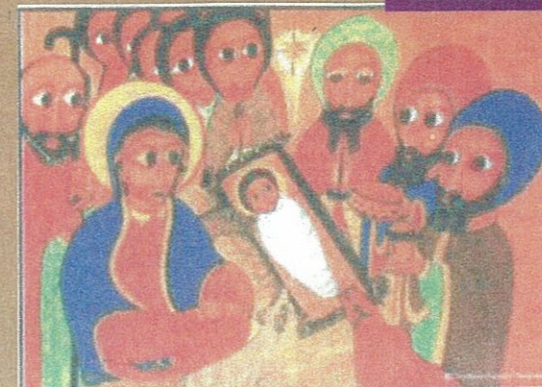
An Ethiopian priest with a sacred book called 'The Miracles of Mary'



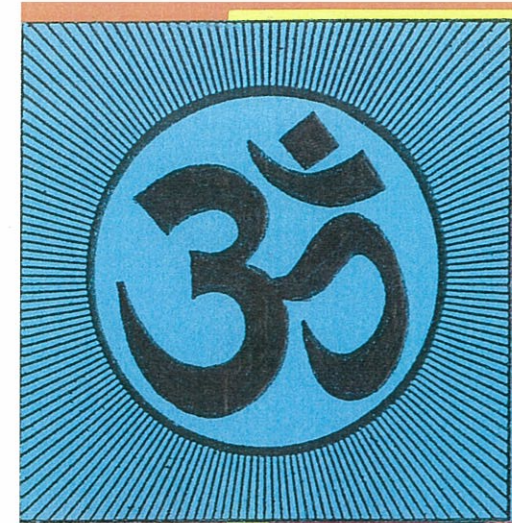
There are many different denominations within Christianity, such as Baptists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, and the Christadelphians. Despite the various differences of approach, they all have a belief in the divinity of Jesus, the truth of the Bible and the hope of salvation.



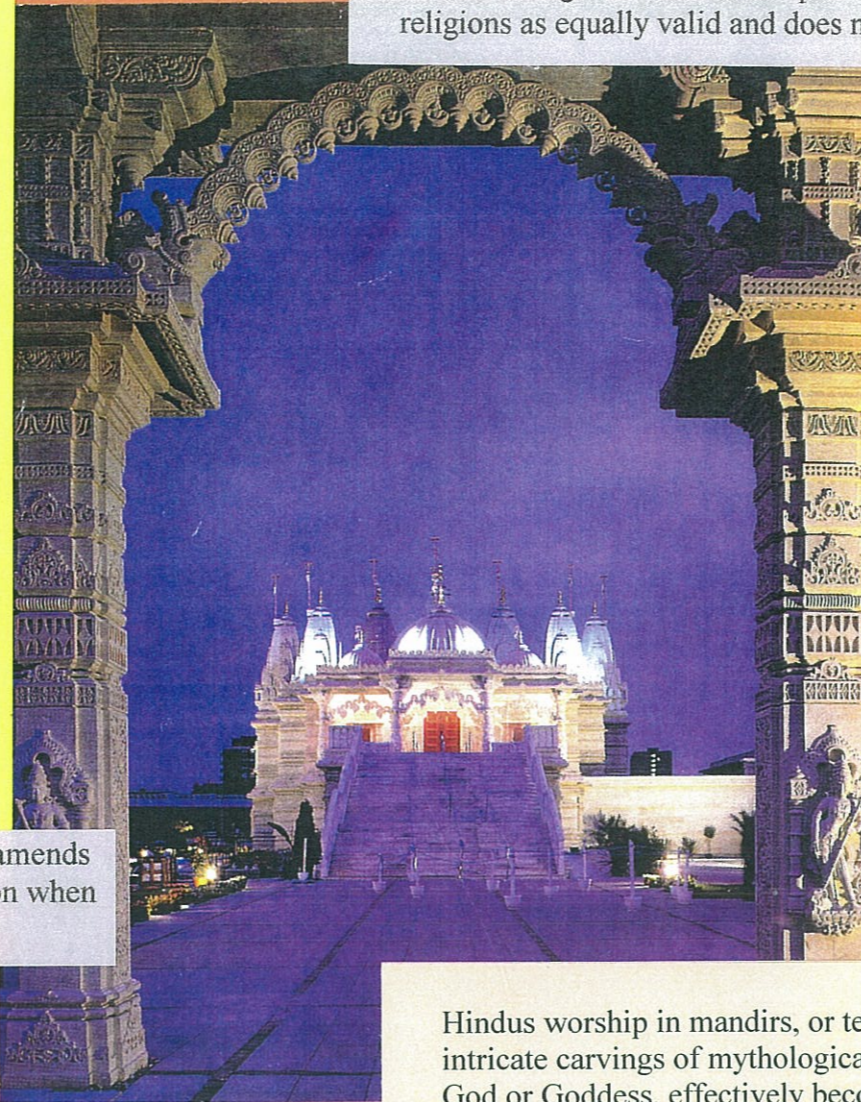
A Christian in a Cathedral in St. Lucia with his prayer book



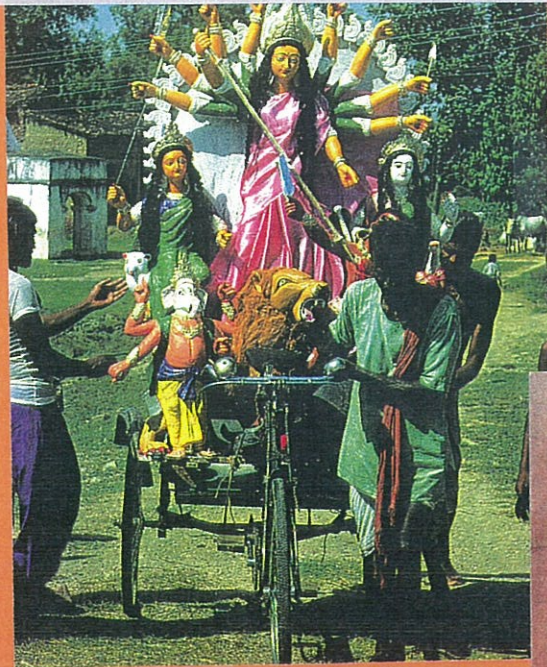
Lighting the Advent candles



Hinduism regards itself as one path amongst many to the Divine. It accepts other religions as equally valid and does not seek to actively convert.



Through the cycle of reincarnation, the Hindu aims to gain in wisdom and make amends for past mistakes. Ultimately the soul aims to achieve Moksha, a state of liberation when it ceases to incarnate and exists permanently in the divine realm.



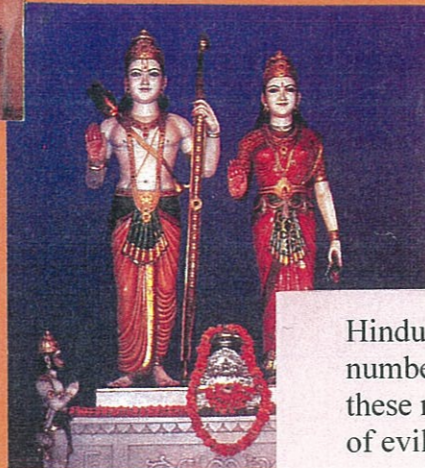
# HINDUISM

Hindus worship in mandirs, or temples. Most mandirs are fabulously ornate, full of intricate carvings of mythological scenes. Each mandir houses at least one statue of a God or Goddess, effectively becoming the house of that deity. The statue is seen as a symbol of the deity. It is also viewed as a literal incarnation of the God, and therefore is worthy of reverence.

Animals are seen as manifestations of the Divine, and so are worthy of respect. Many Hindus will not eat meat for this reason, preferring a vegetarian diet. The cow is particularly sacred and even those Hindus who eat some meat will avoid beef. The special status of animals is reflected in the portrayal of various deities, such as Ganesha, the elephant-headed God who brings good fortune and sweeps away obstacles to success.



Hinduism originated with the Vedic civilisation that flourished in India over 8500 years ago. There is no single founder of this creed, nor one single holy book. Particularly important texts are the Four Vedas, which contain knowledge of such things as art, music, economics, geometry, ritual and ceremony.



Hindus believe in Parabrahman, the All-Powerful Creator, who manifests in a vast number of ways, as the innumerable Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism. Some of these manifestations include Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth; Durga, the destroyer of evil; and Shiva, the hero-God.



Humanism advocates an open society with representative democracy and universal suffrage, in which all people can work towards the common good. In such a society education, health and justice would be available for all without regard to belief, colour, sex, racial origin, wealth or any similar criterion.

Science and technology have led to great advances in human achievement. However, science does not exist in a moral vacuum, and research should be conducted along ethical guidelines, to avoid encroaching upon human or animal welfare.

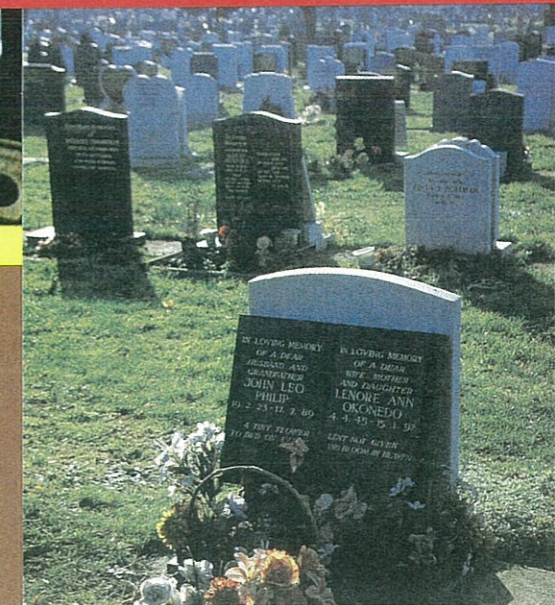
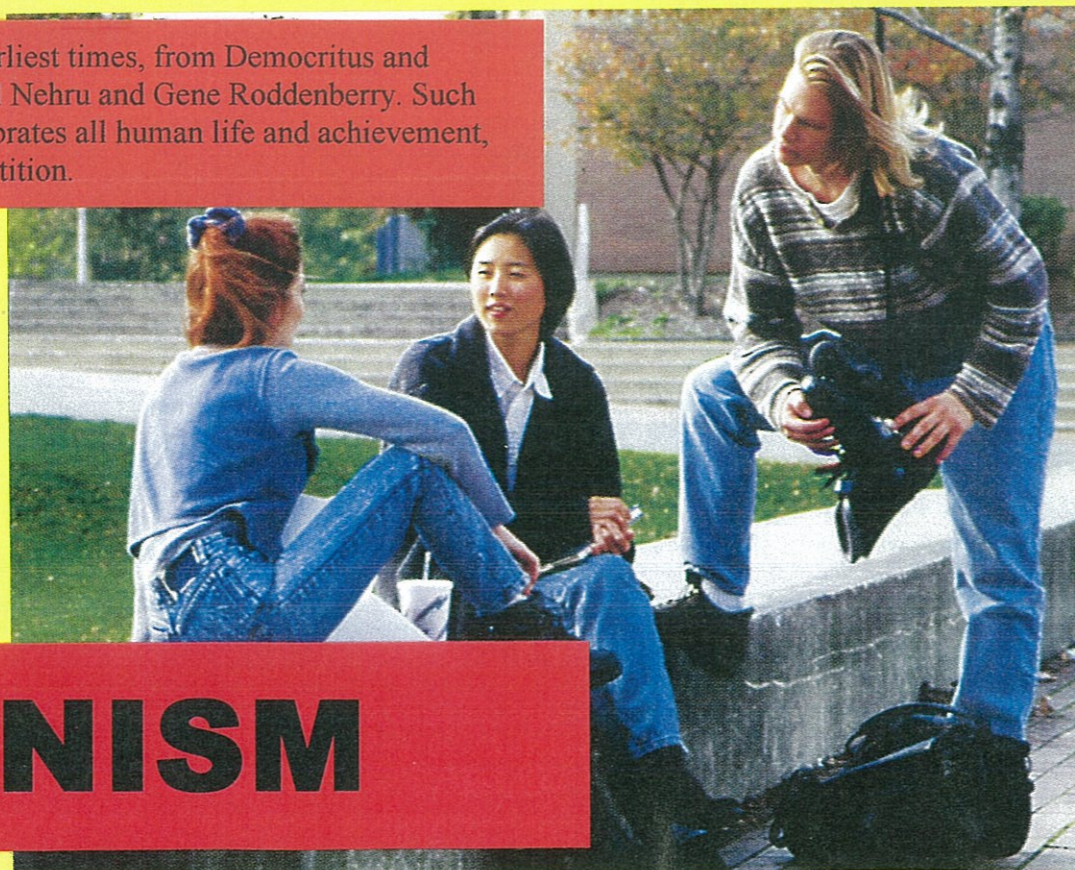
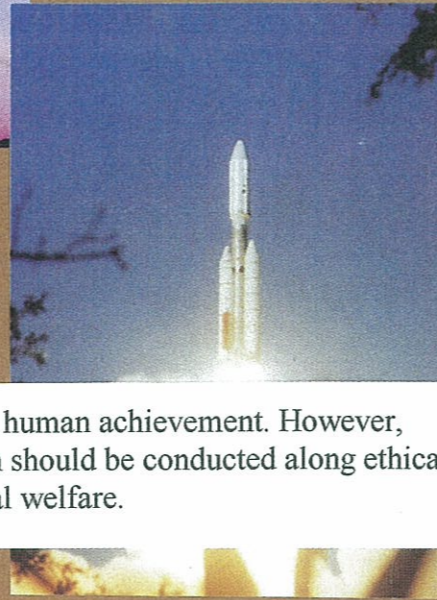
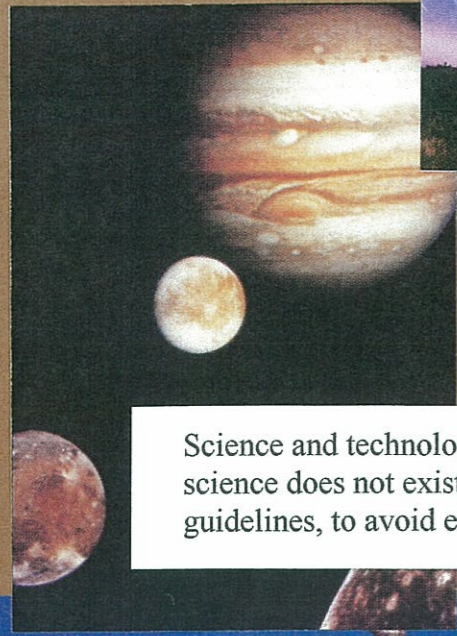
Humanist philosophers have existed since the earliest times, from Democritus and Epicurus through to Charles Darwin, Jawarharlal Nehru and Gene Roddenberry. Such people have sought to create a world which celebrates all human life and achievement, without recourse to supernatural forces or superstition.

Humanist values are based on the recognition of what makes life worth while for humankind. These values give us rights, freedom and dignity, but also give us responsibilities.

Humanists do not believe in the existence of a soul, nor in any kind of afterlife. People can be said to 'live on' in the memories of those they leave behind. We should strive to ensure that our actions in life lead to us being remembered warmly and with admiration for our contributions to society.

Humanists see the world through rationalist eyes, believing that there is no God or other supernatural force. Humans must take responsibility for their own lives, and for the community and world in which we live.

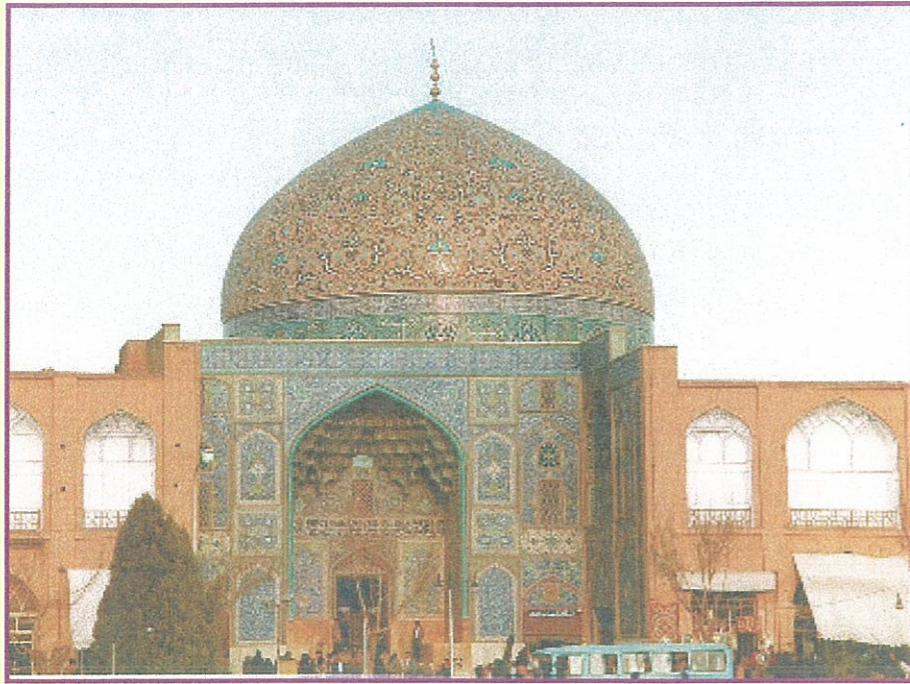
# HUMANISM



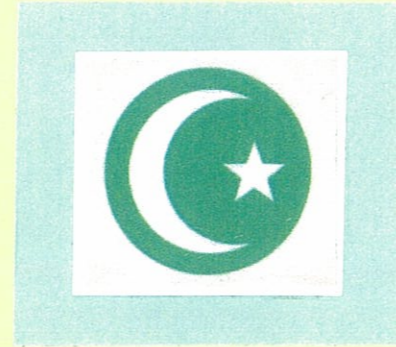
# ISLAM

The word 'Allah' means 'The God'

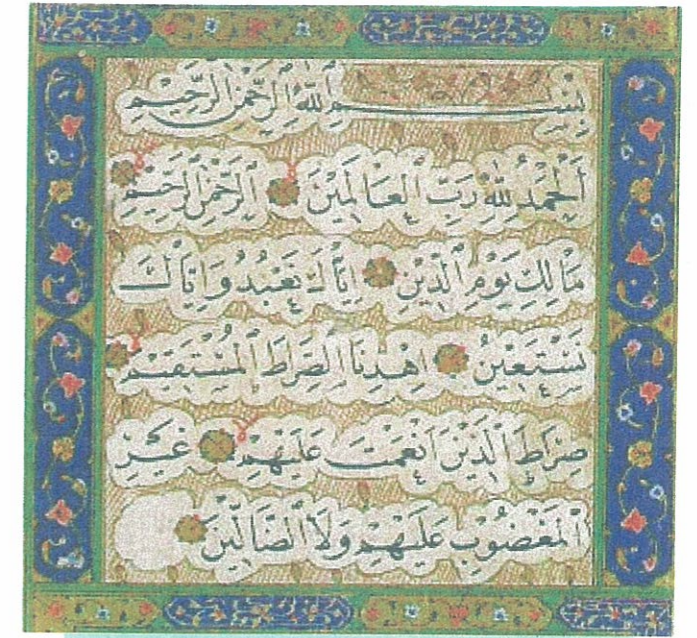
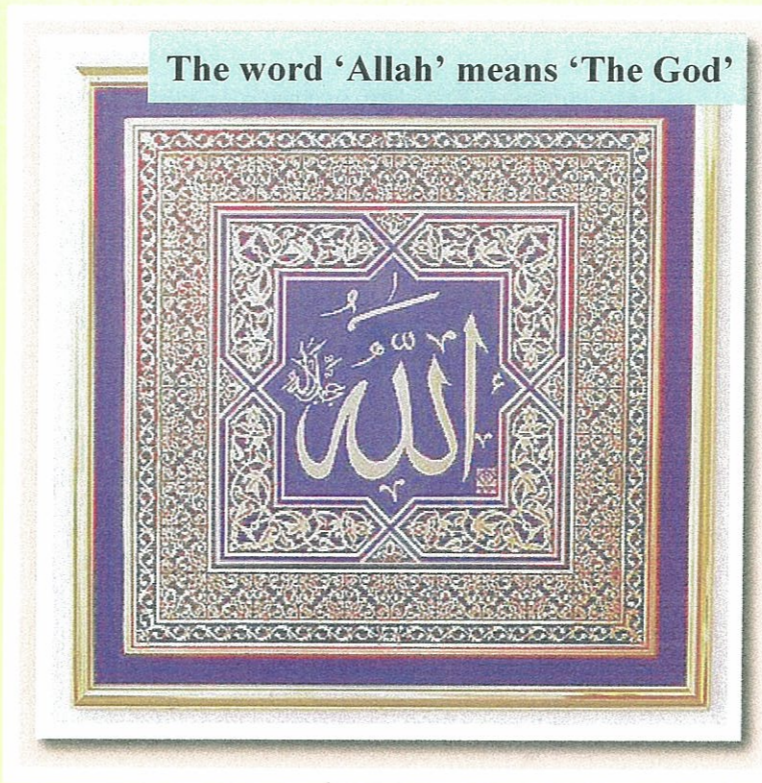
"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"  
These words open every chapter of the Quran



The Shaykh Lutfullah Mosque, Isfahan



Islam means 'Peace'



The first Surah (chapter) of the Quran, entitled 'Al-Fatihah' ('The opening')

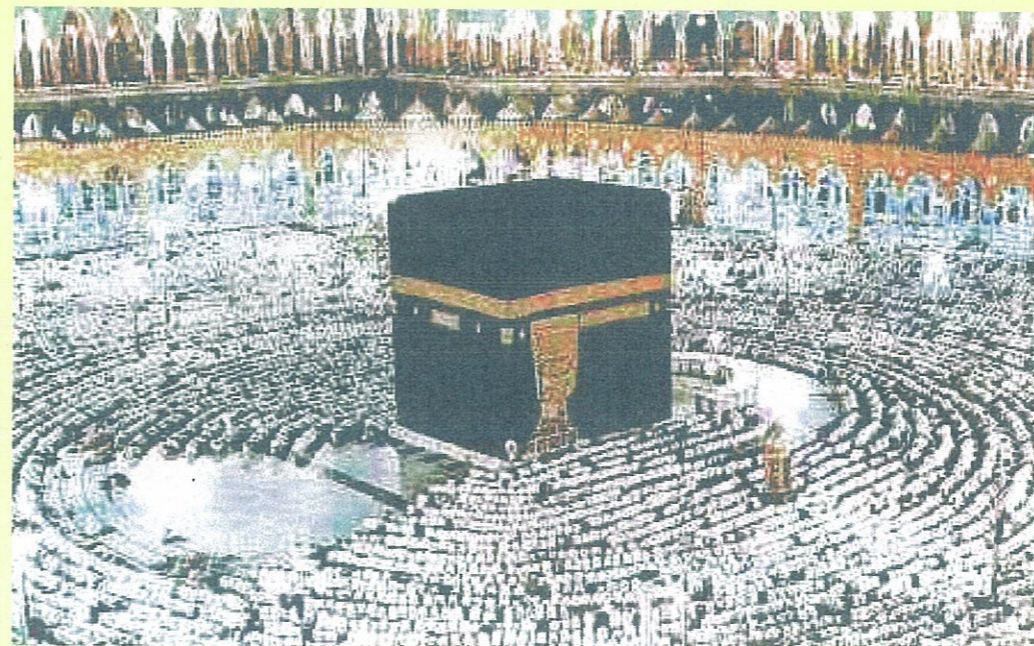
A Muslim's devotion is shown through the 5 Pillars of Islam:

- Declaration of faith ('There is no god but Allah & Muhammad is His Messenger')
- Prayer 5 times a day
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan
- Giving of alms (charitable donations)
- Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca

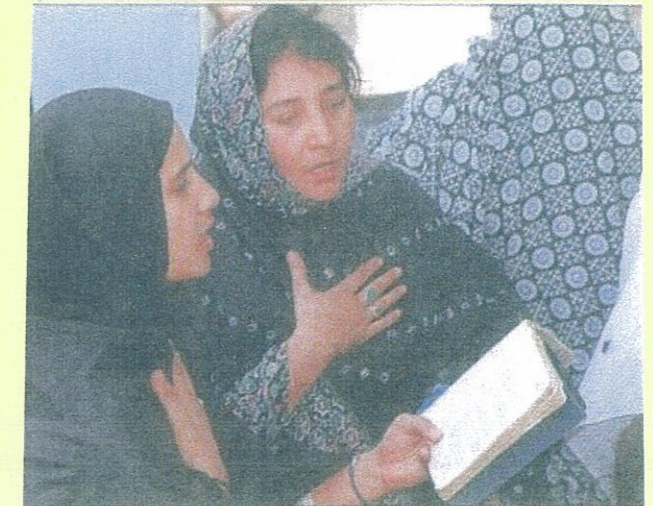
The Quran is the absolute Revelation of God, revealed to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.



Muslims believe in a chain of prophets (Peace be upon them) from Adam (PBUH) to Muhammad (PBUH)



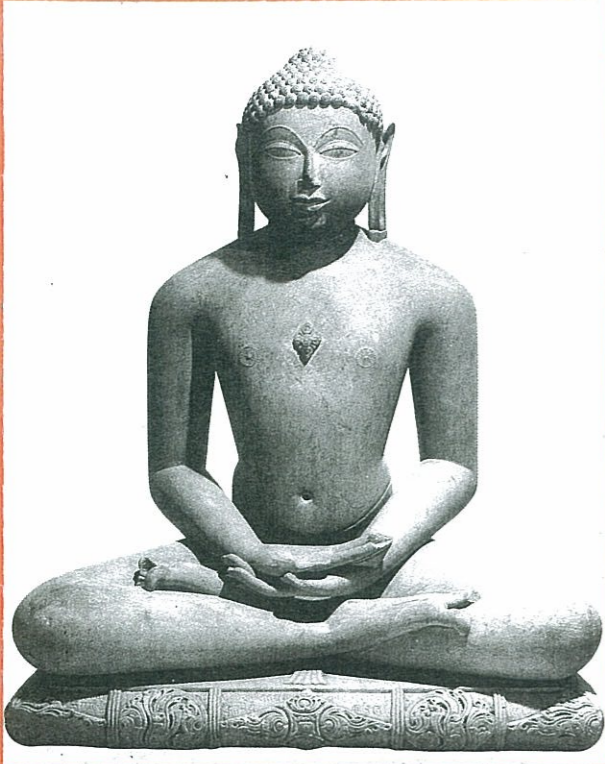
The Kaaba Mosque at Mecca. The most sacred place on earth, built by Abraham and Ishmael.



### Basic Islamic Beliefs

**Tawhid** (Oneness of God): everything originates from the One and the only Creator, Sustainer, source of guidance.  
**Risalah** (Prophethood): belief that God has sent guidance through the prophets.  
**Akhirah** (Life after death): all our deeds will be judged by God in the Hereafter.

Two major Muslim festivals are: *Eid Al-Fitr*, celebrating the end of Ramadan; *Eid Al-Adhur*, commemorating Abraham's strength of faith.



Jains believe all living beings are connected and should live together peacefully. They also believe that a person's soul attracts good or bad karma according to his or her deeds. Jains strive to live in a way that inflicts the least damage to the world around them. This principle is called 'Ahimsa.'

The Kalakacharyakatha recounts the exploits of the Jain monk Kalaka



Jains believe in 24 sages. The lastest, Mahavira, was born c. 600 BCE in India. A sage who has achieved enlightenment is known as 'Jina', or 'victorious one', which is the root of the word 'Jain'

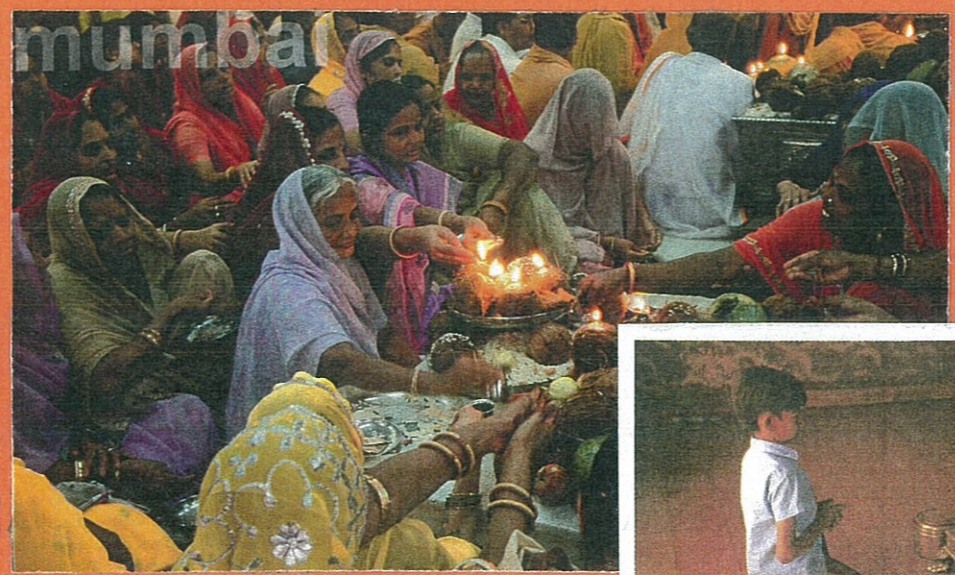


# JAINISM

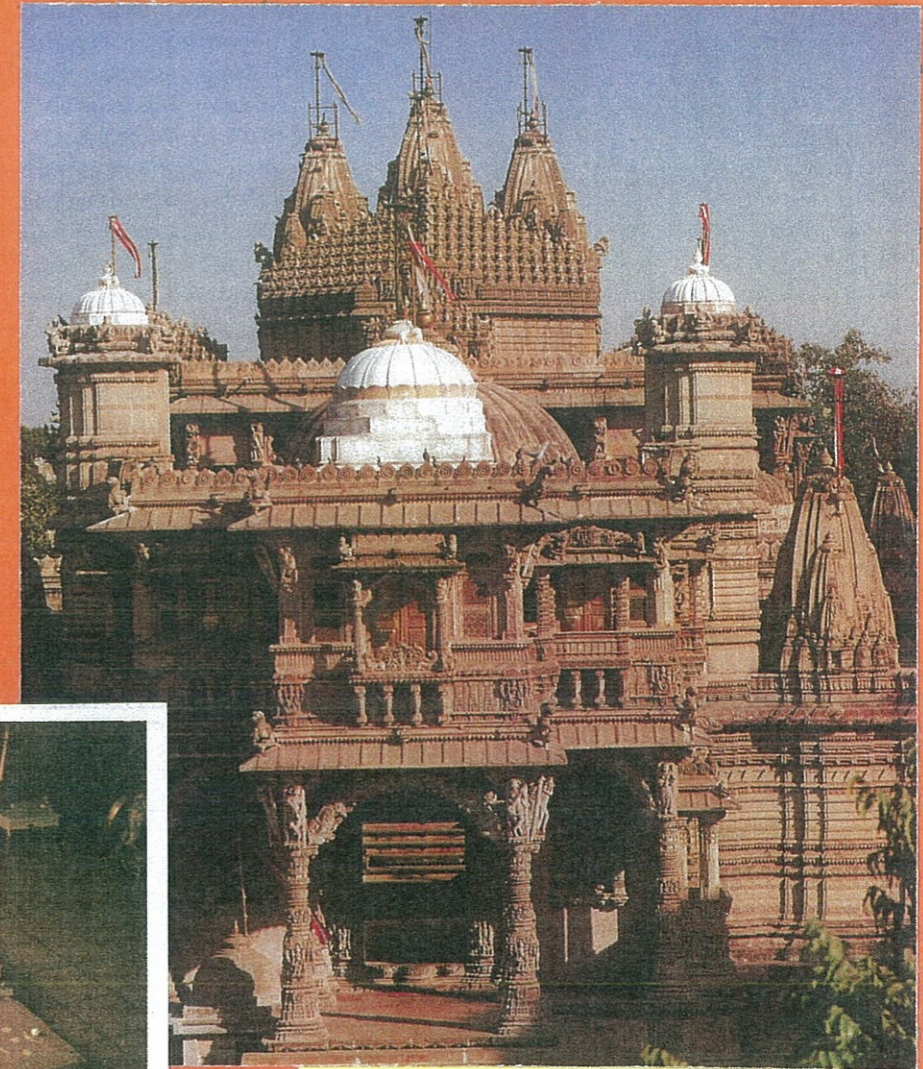
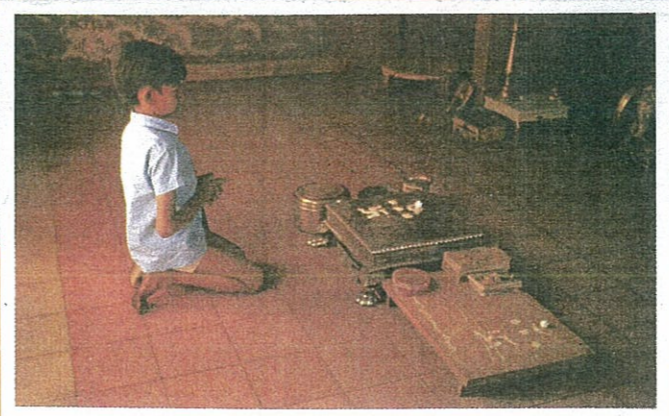
Jains believe in an infinite universe and reincarnation. The cycle of life, death and re-birth can be broken through absolute detachment from worldly affairs.



Wearing a piece of cloth over the mouth prevents damage to creatures that live in the air. Jains see this as a symbol of dedication to purity in all things.

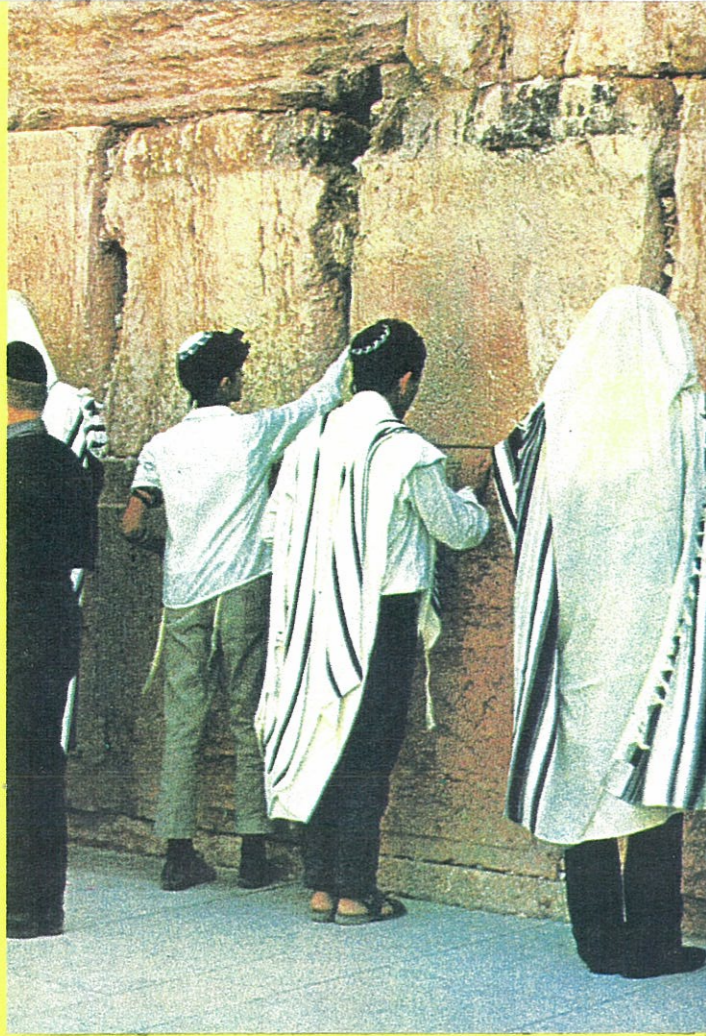


Daslakshan festival at Gulawadi Temple in Mumbai, celebrating the ten days of forgiveness for Digambar Jains.

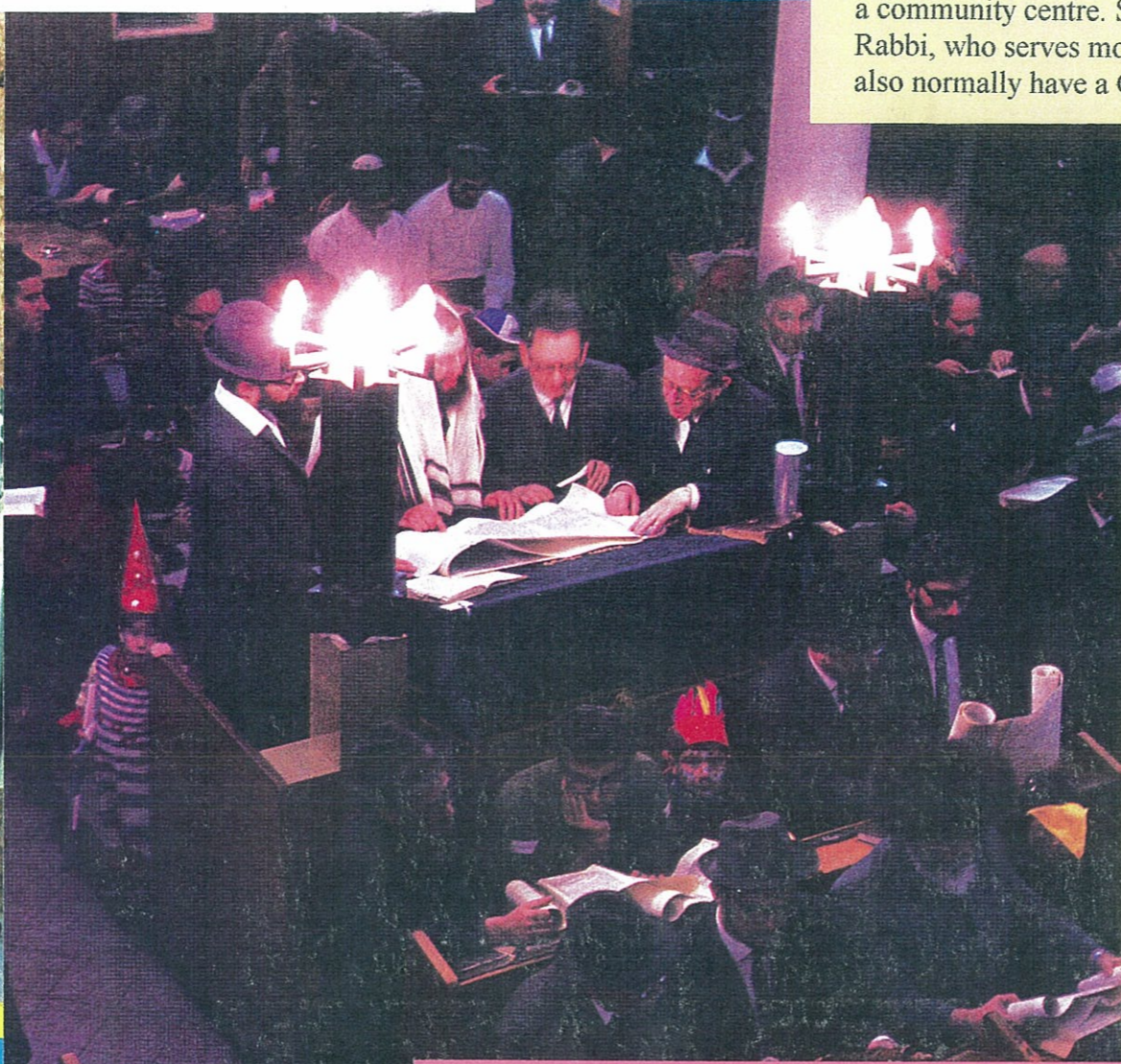


Jains worship at home, in a hall or in a temple. They also meditate and make confession.

Israel is both the homeland of the Jewish peoples, where Solomon once built the temple, and also a term for the whole of Jewry ~ a sense of fellowship and identity. Jews trace their ancestry back to Judah, one of the sons of Jacob



The synagogue is a place of both worship and education, often also acting as a community centre. Services in a synagogue are usually conducted by a Rabbi, who serves more as a teacher than as a priest. Orthodox synagogues also normally have a Cantor, who sings the prayers.



The weekly Shabbat lasts from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, and is celebrated with a special meal. Other festivals include Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Pesach (Passover) and Chanukah (Festival of Lights.)

# JUDAISM



There are different denominations within Judaism. Chassidic Jews are very strict and see the Torah as the literal word of God. They are easily recognisable by the men's large black hats, long coats and long side curls. Their women always keep their heads covered. Orthodox Jews also observe Torah teachings, but are less strict. Reform, Liberal or Progressive Jews see the Torah as more metaphorical, and are more adapted to modern living.

The Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) is central to Judaism, and forms the basis of Jewish law and teachings. The Torah is written in Hebrew, which is also the language that most Jewish prayers are spoken in.

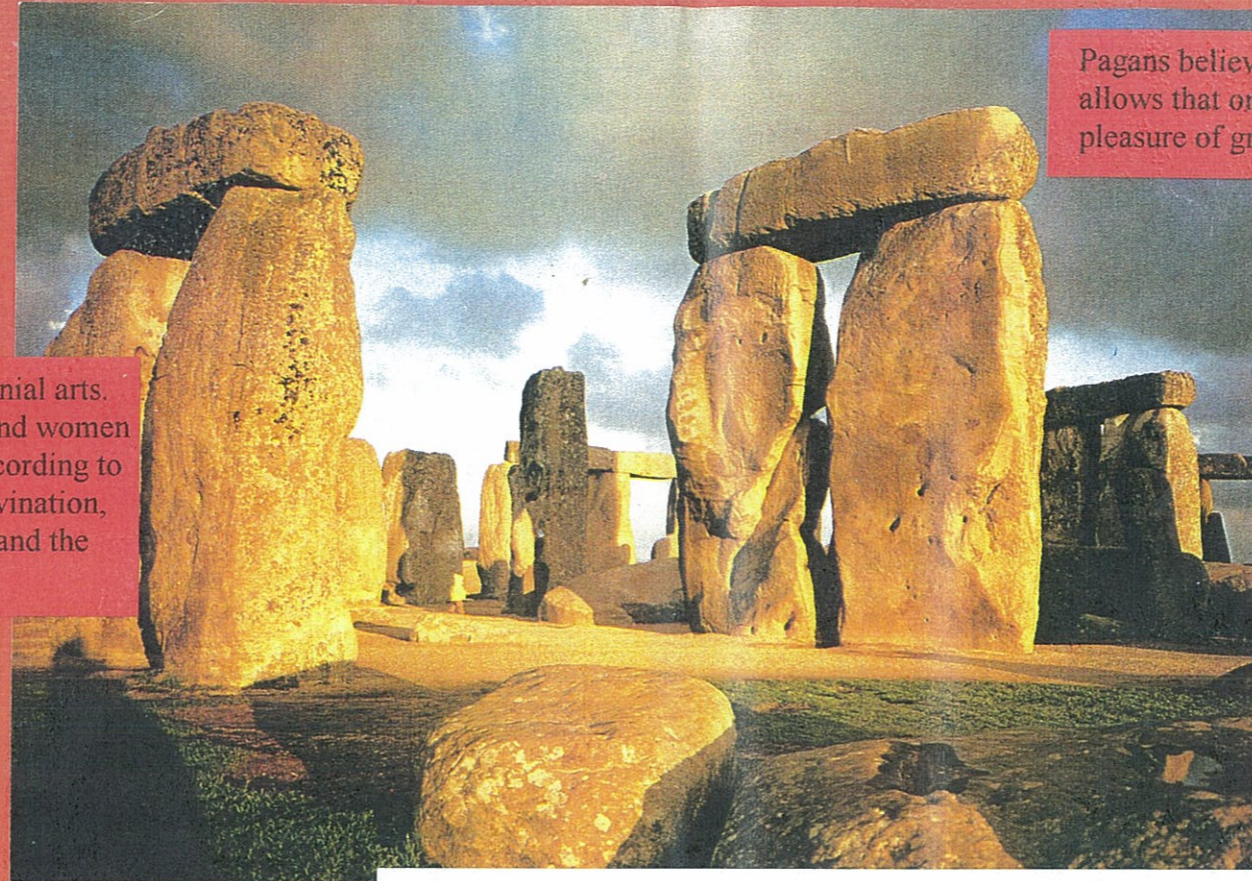






Most Pagans prefer to worship outdoors (weather permitting!) Many meet in woodland groves, on seashores, in caves etc. to attune to spirits of that place. Some ancient Pagan cultures developed temples, such as those of Ancient Greece, but few of these impressive buildings are used for worship today.

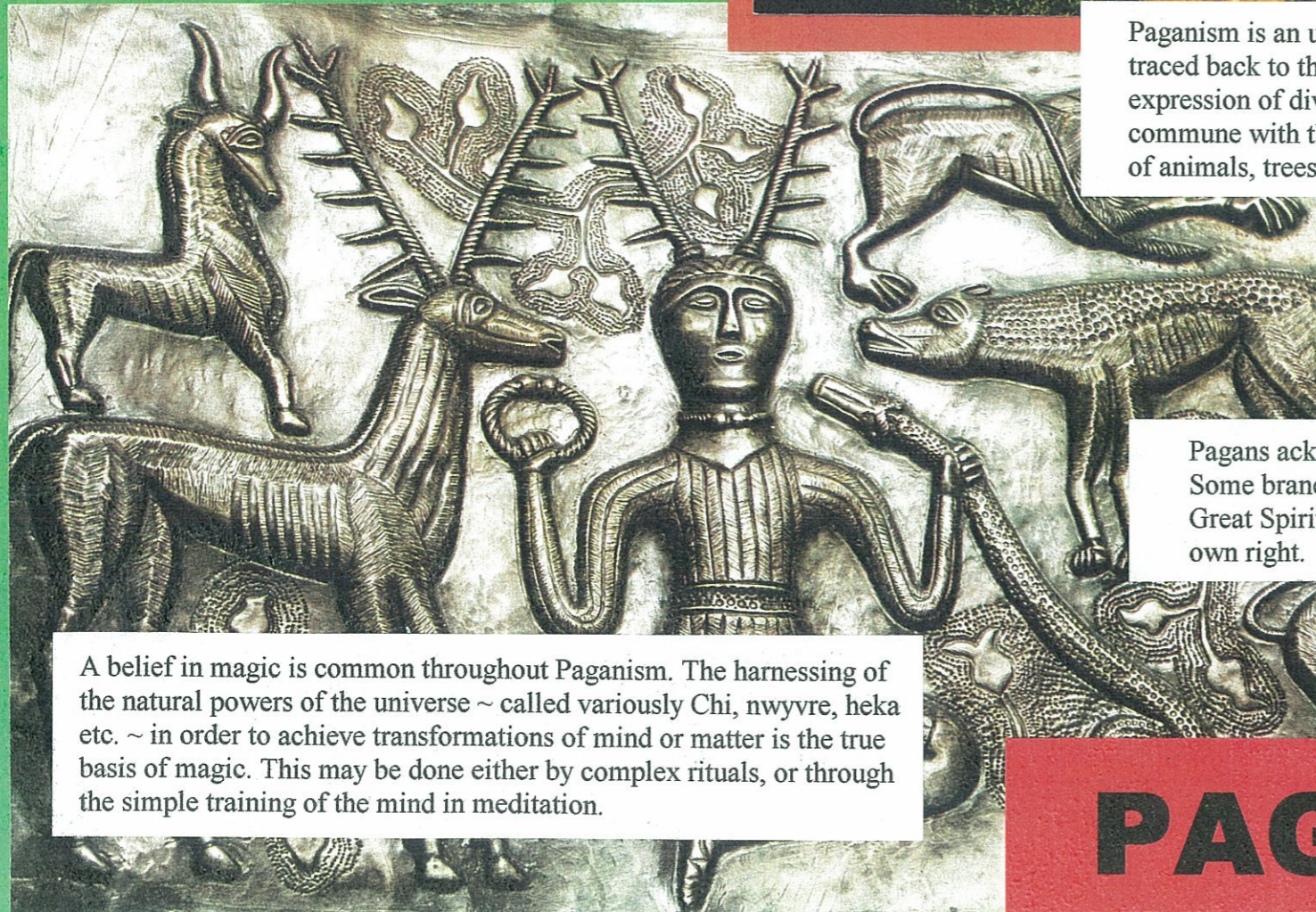
The priesthood specialise in developing the magical and ceremonial arts. Priestesses have been part of Paganism for thousands of years, and women hold equal rank with men. Priests, known by different names according to the cultural background, are called upon for spiritual healing, divination, the performance of magic, marking the changing of the seasons and the passages of life with ritual.



Pagans believe in the cycle of reincarnation. Some believe in transmigration, which allows that one might reincarnate as an animal (or even a plant.) The soul returns for the pleasure of growth, it does not aspire to a state of perfection or transcendence.

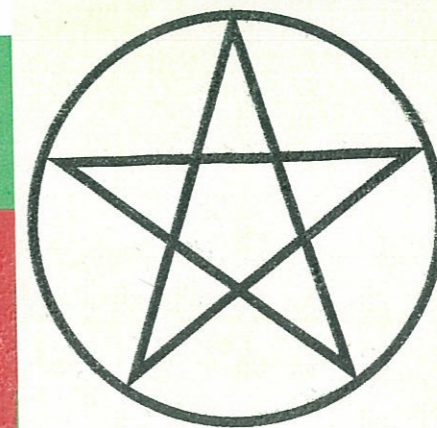
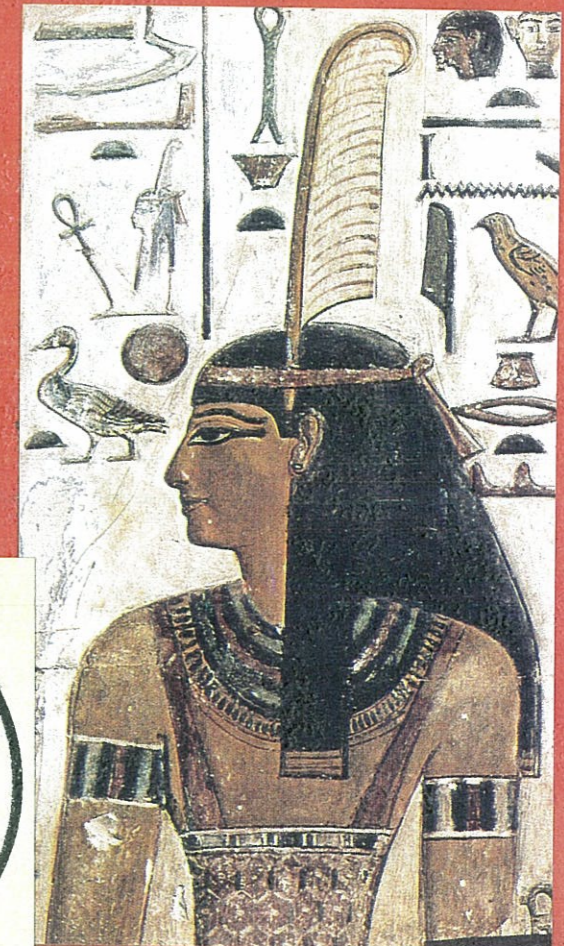


Paganism is an umbrella term for a collection of animistic faiths whose origins can be traced back to the ancient world. Animists believe that everything which exists is an expression of divine spirit and, therefore, has some form of sentience. Pagans seek to commune with the natural world, endeavouring to develop an understanding of the spirits of animals, trees, rocks etc.

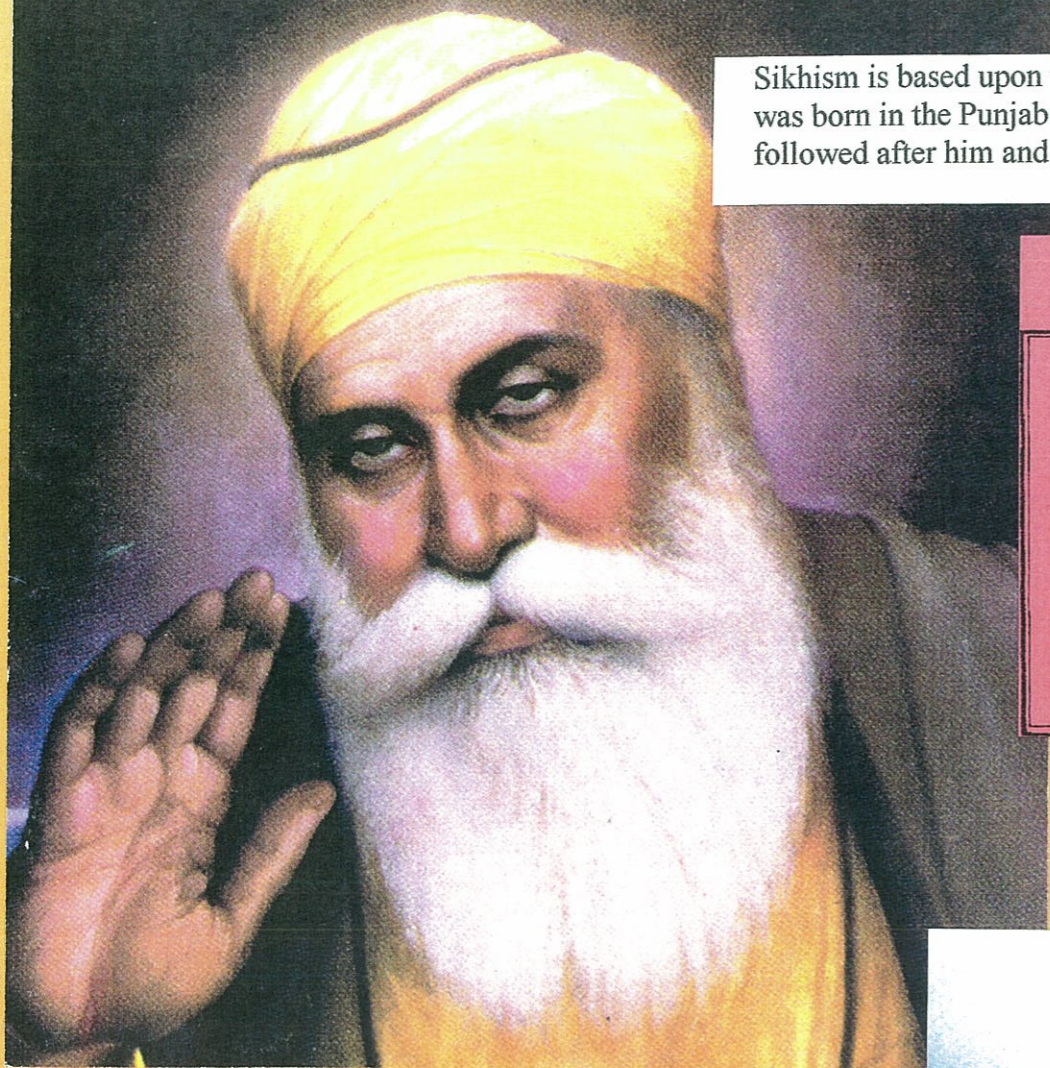


Pagans acknowledge the existence of many Gods and Goddesses. Some branches of Paganism see these deities as all aspects of one Great Spirit, while other branches see each deity as a force in its own right.

A belief in magic is common throughout Paganism. The harnessing of the natural powers of the universe ~ called variously Chi, nwyvre, heka etc. ~ in order to achieve transformations of mind or matter is the true basis of magic. This may be done either by complex rituals, or through the simple training of the mind in meditation.



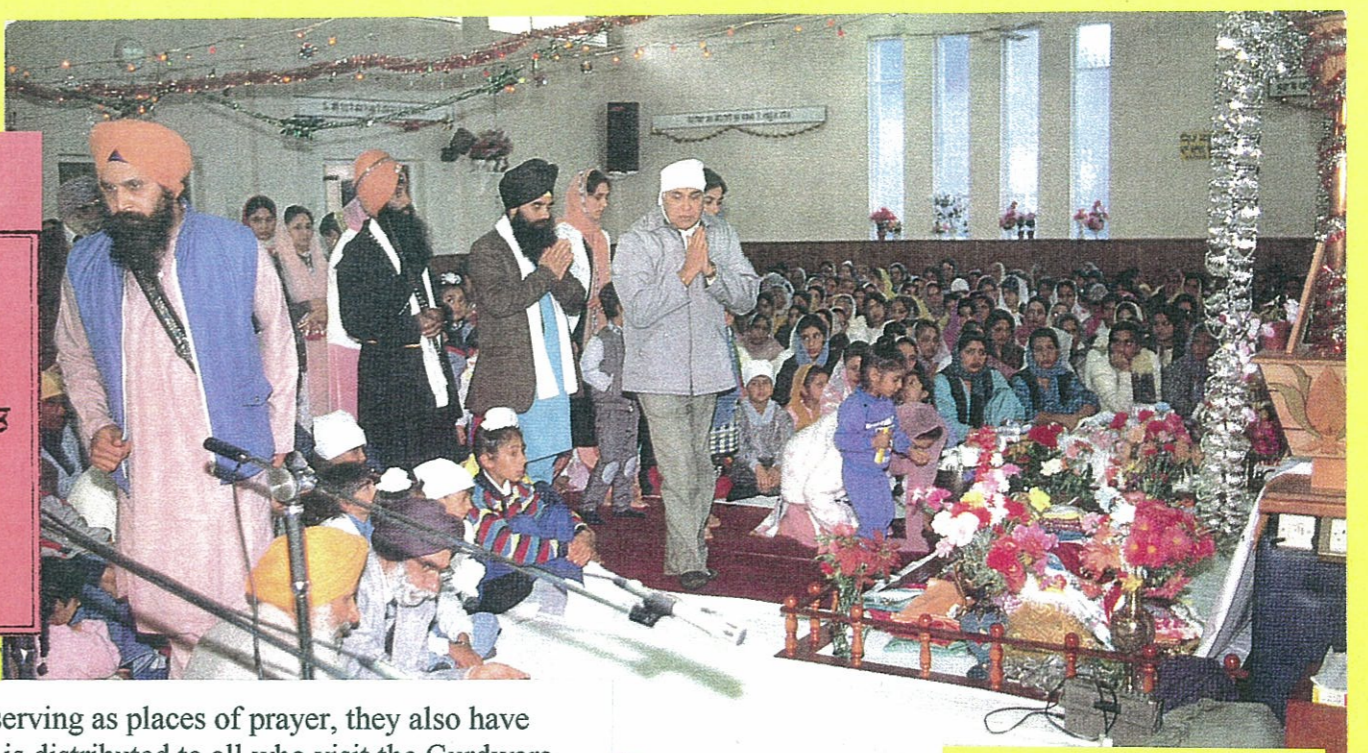
# PAGANISM



Sikhism is based upon the teachings of Guru Nanak, who was born in the Punjab in 1469CE. Nine other Gurus followed after him and contributed to the body of teachings.

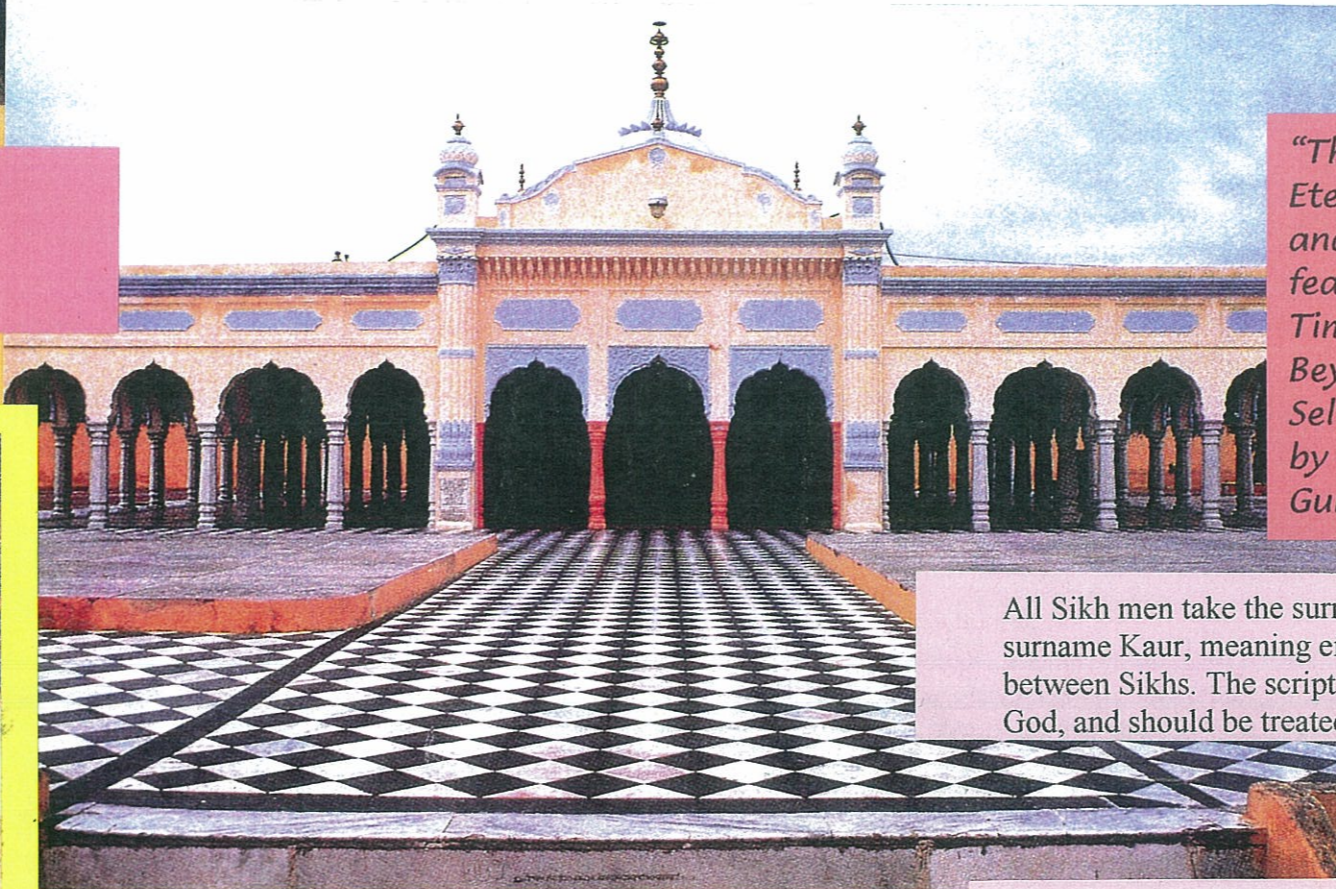
**MOOL MANTAR**

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ  
 IK ONKAAR SAT NAAM KARTA PURKH  
 ਨਿਰ ਭਉ ਨਿਰ ਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ  
 NIR BHAI NIR VAIR AKAAL MOORAT  
 ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥  
 AJOONI SAIBHANG GUR PARSAAD ॥

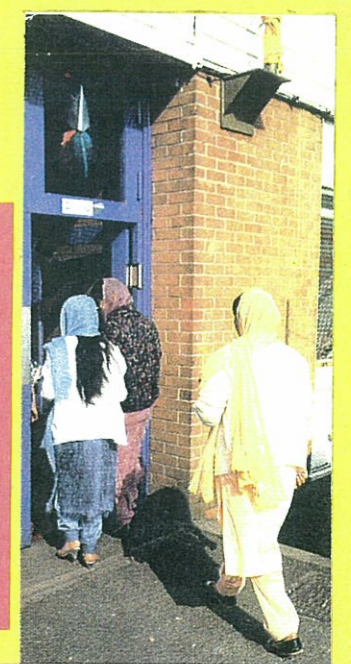


Sikhs worship in a Gurdwara. As well as serving as places of prayer, they also have dining halls called langar where free food is distributed to all who visit the Gurdwara. Travellers are also offered a place to sleep at the Gurdwara, which often act as community centre for all manner of activities.

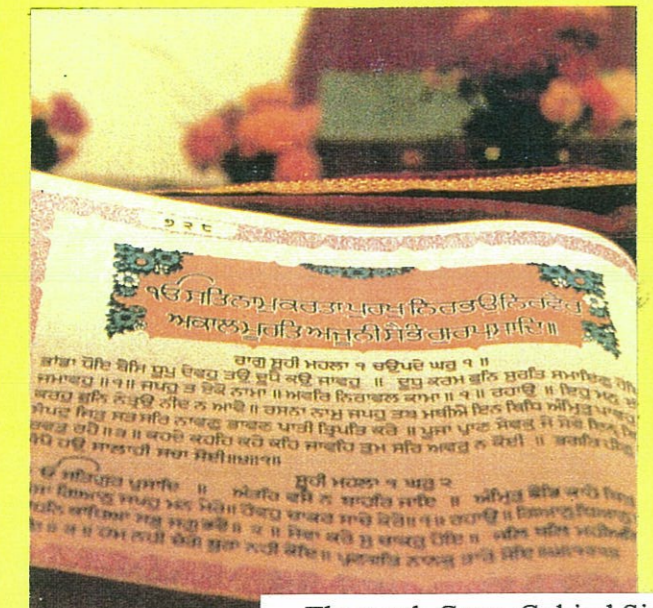
# SIKHISM



*"There is only One God; Eternal truth; Creating and pervading; Without fear; Without hate; Timeless and formless; Beyond birth and death; Self-enlightened; Realised by the grace of a true Guru."* Mool Mantar.



All Sikh men take the surname Singh, meaning 'lion', and all Sikh women have the surname Kaur, meaning either 'lioness' or 'princess'. This is done as a sign of equality between Sikhs. The scripture teaches that men and women are absolutely equal before God, and should be treated as such.

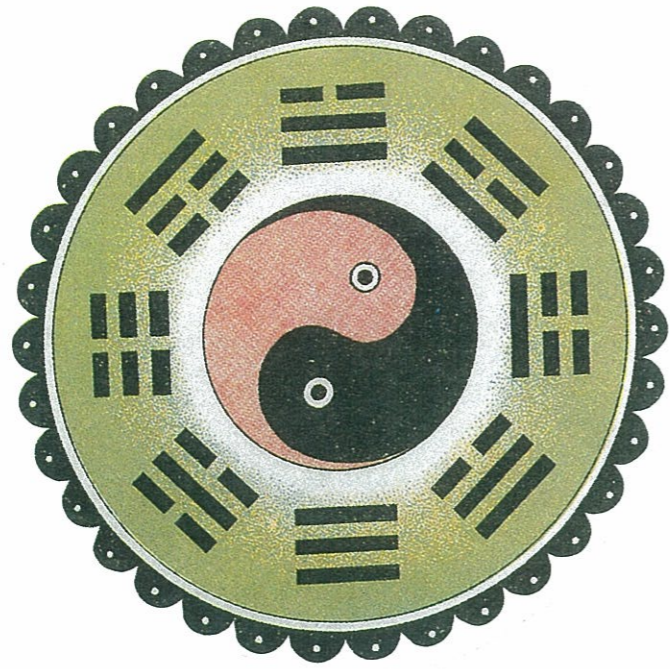


The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, finalised the holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, and venerated it as the Word of God. The existence of this text means that there is no longer any need for future Gurus. When brought out for readings in the Gurdwara, the Guru Granth Sahib is elevated above the seated congregation upon a platform.

Sikhs wear five items as symbols of their faith, often called the 5 K's. These are: Kesh (uncut hair symbolising humility), Kangha (a comb representing cleanliness), Kachha (underwear indicating self-control), Karra (a bracelet indicating the encircling presence of God), Kirpaan (a sword showing honour and justice.)



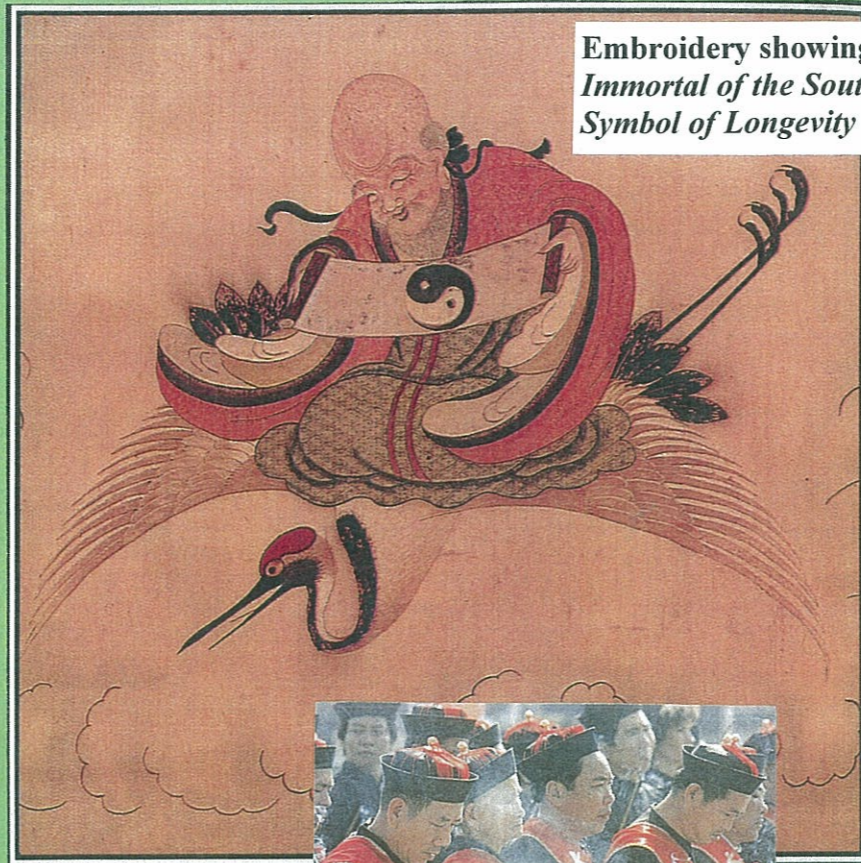
# TAOISM



The Yin-Yang symbol represents the two halves of the Tao; the two opposite, complementary principles that Taoists see in nature: Yin – dark, female, passive, soft; Yang – light, male, active, hard. The interactions of the two give rise to the infinitely varied patterns of life symbolised in the three-line symbols of the 8 trigrams.

Taoists believe that there is a principle, or force, running through, and controlling, the whole of the natural world. They call this principle the 'Tao', which means 'way' or 'path'. To follow the Tao is to follow the way of nature.

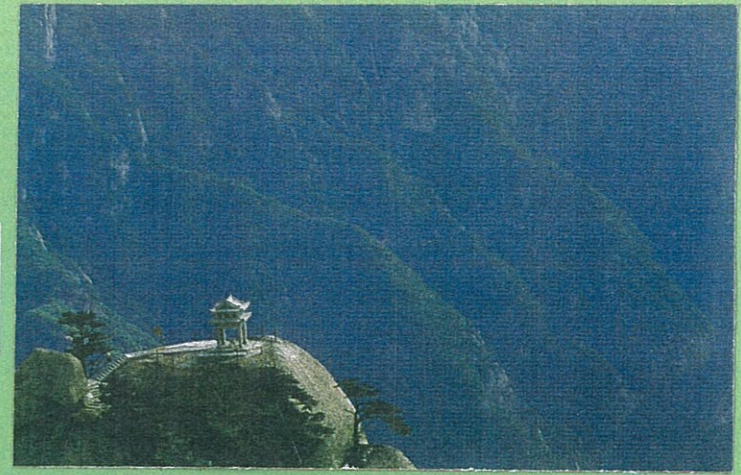
Lao-tzu lived in China in the 6th BCE. He composed the Tao Te Ching – the greatest of Taoist writings - in three days.



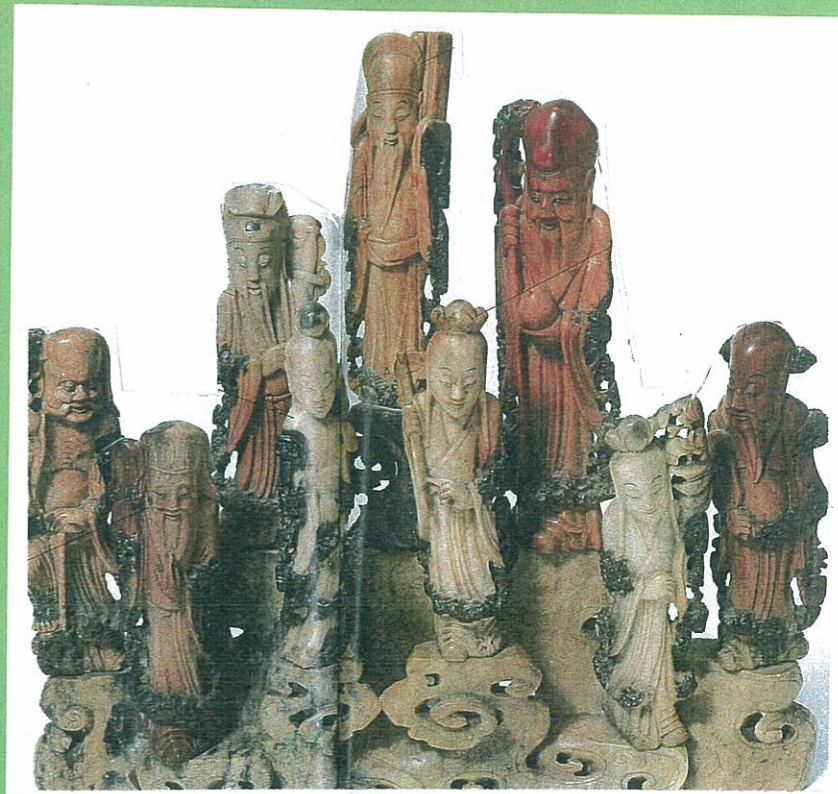
Embroidery showing *Old Immortal of the South Pole, Symbol of Longevity*



Priests burning incense at a popular ceremony where, through magic and ritual, power (Te) is harnessed. Priests are mainly concerned with curing sickness and casting out evil spirits.



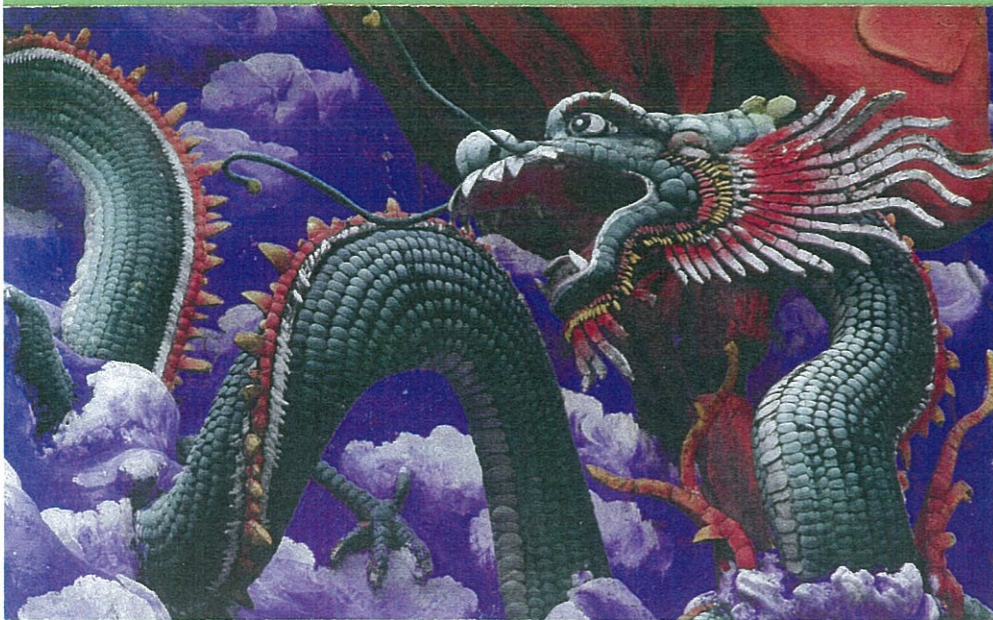
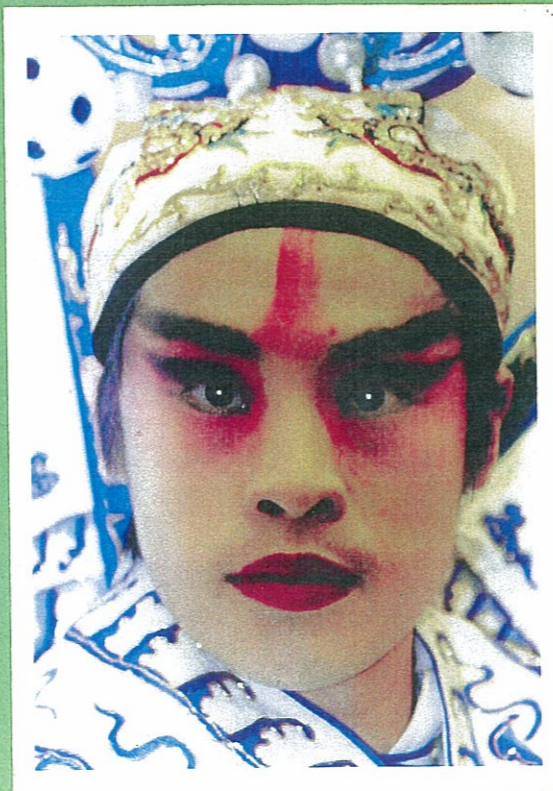
Hua Shan was the sacred mountain of the West. The hero Yu, who controlled the great flood of China, visited four corners of the world, marked by the sacred peaks. At Hua Shan he found people who drank dew and ate the air, and who had three faces each but only one arm. Taoists believe that mountain tops brought them closest to the Tao.



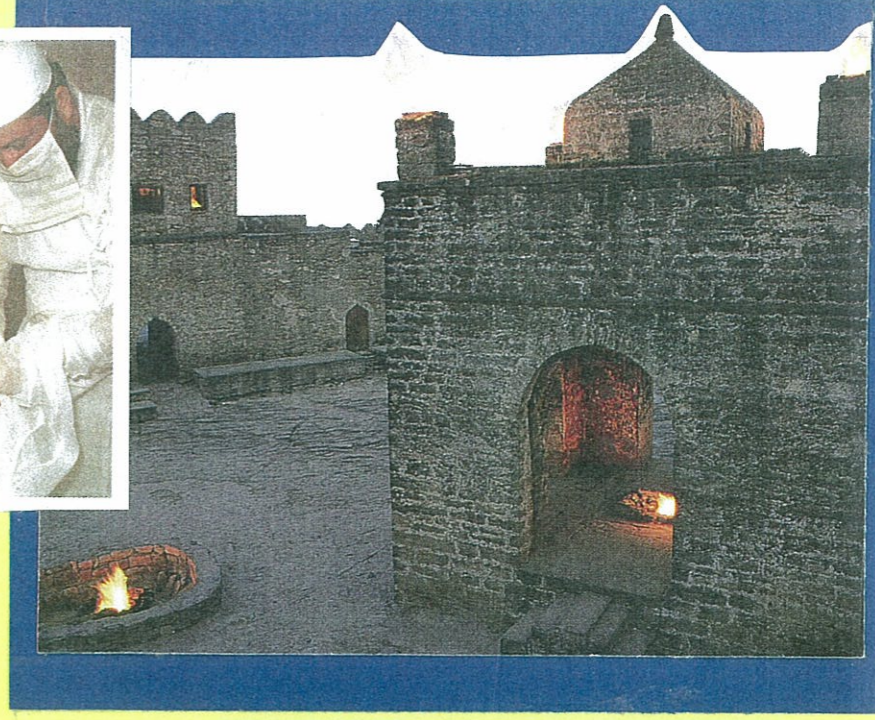
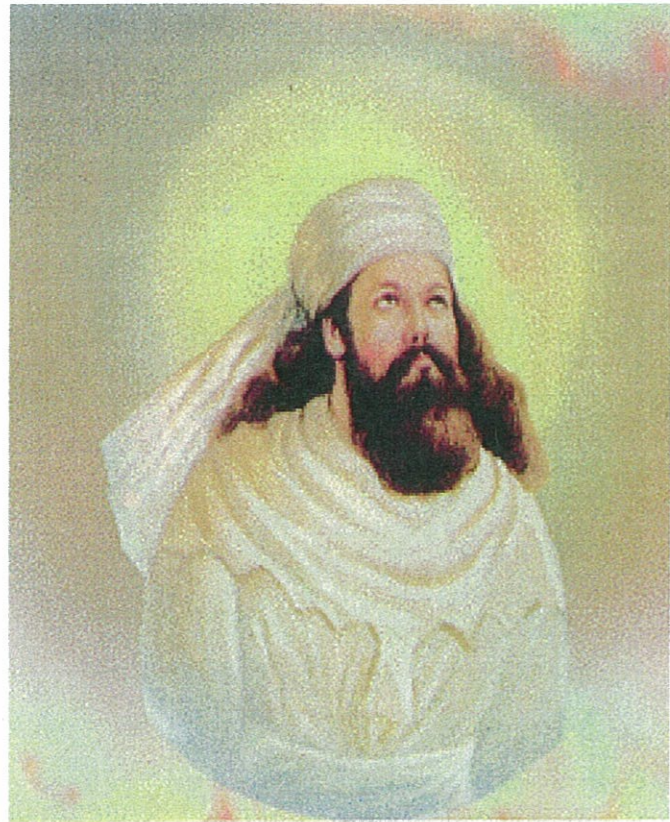
The Eight Immortals are legendary beings believed to have attained immortality through their practice of the Tao principle. They are said to have lived on earth at various times, and each represents a different condition in life: poverty, wealth, aristocracy, low social status, age, youth, masculinity and femininity. Here they are shown with a fabulous being called Si Wang Mu, who has power to give away the peaches of immortality.



Many Taoists practise Tai Chi, which consists of gentle exercises designed to benefit body and mind



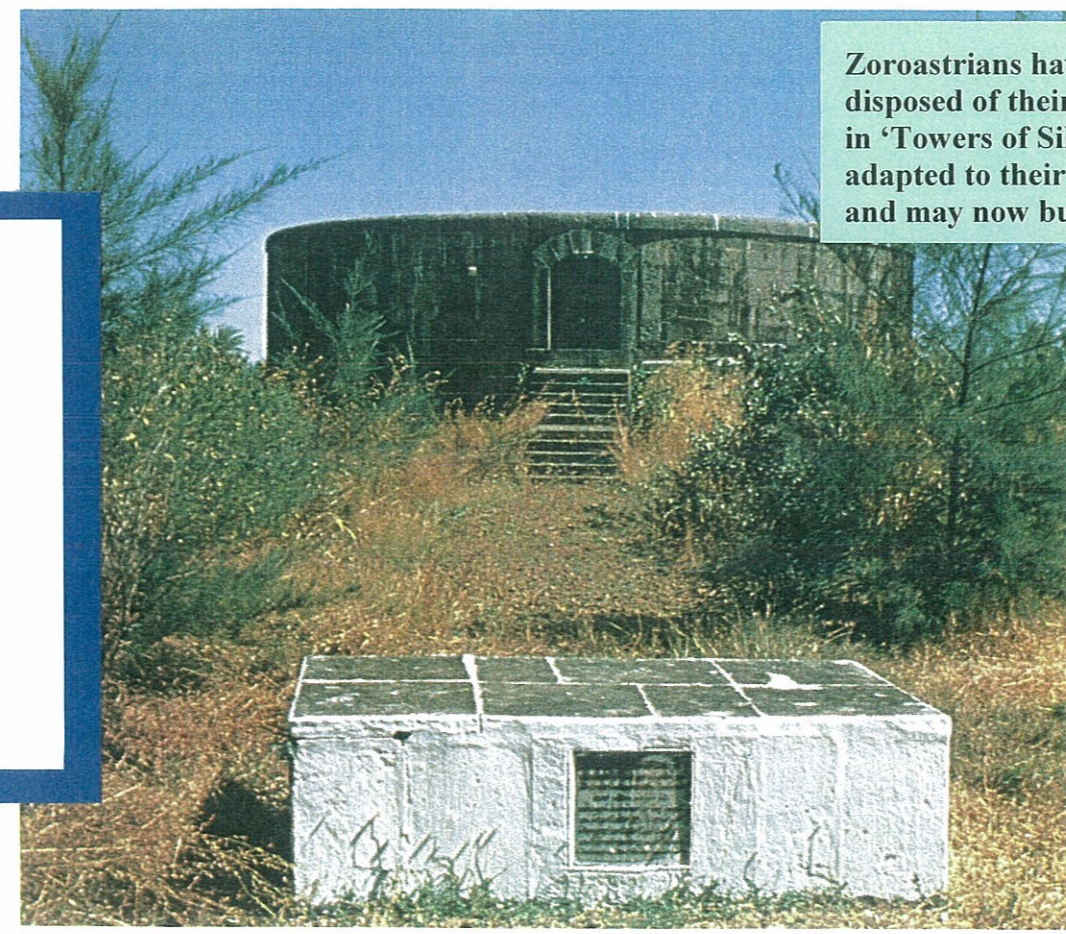
The Ancient palace of Zoroastrian Iran at Persepolis.



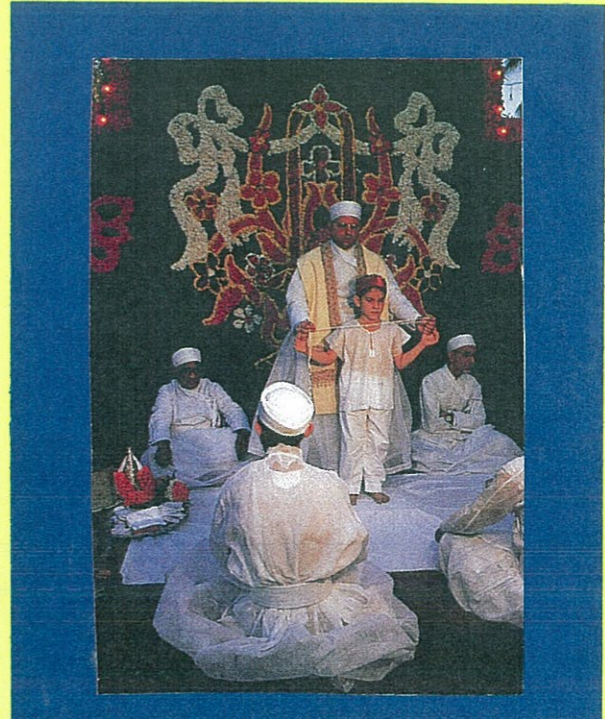
Zoroastrians worship in a fire temple where prayer rituals are performed in the presence of a sacred fire, which is seen as a living embodiment of Ahura Mazdah.

# ZOROASTRIANISM

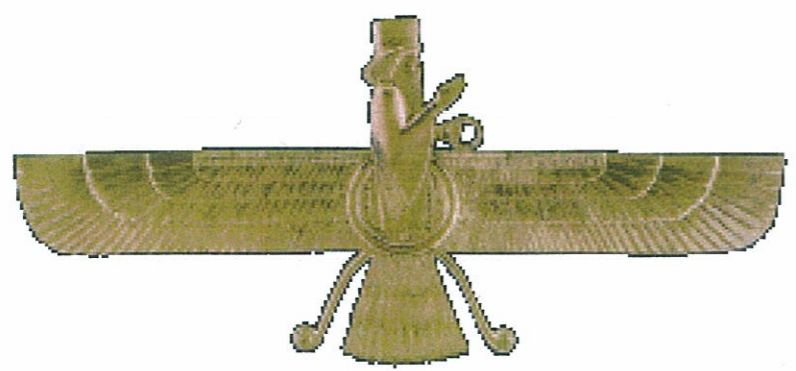
Zoroastrians follow the teachings of the prophet Zarathushtra (also called Zoroaster), who lived in Persia over 3000 years ago. He taught that there is one supreme God, called Ahura Mazdah. Zoroastrians try to be like Ahura Mazdah by following the path of righteousness, called Asha.



Zoroastrians have traditionally disposed of their dead ecologically in 'Towers of Silence', but have adapted to their local environment and may now bury or cremate them.



Between the ages of 7 and 12 young Zoroastrians are initiated into their faith in the Navjote ceremony, at which they symbolically take on the responsibility to uphold the Zoroastrian virtues. They are given a sacred thread, or Kushti, to wear, and a sacred vest, or Sudreh. The Kushti has 72 strands, which symbolise universal fellowship and the 72 chapters of the Holy Book, the Yasna. The Sudreh is white, for purity and renewal.



This image is a Fravashi, or guardian spirit. Fravashis represent the God-essence in people, and assist those who ask them for help.