



# Training in Religion and Belief

Award winning religious  
diversity course

A half day training programme

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# Part 1

## Welcome to Religion & Belief

### Religious diversity in Great Britain

#### Course Aims

This training programme on religious diversity seeks to impact at three levels:

The **individual as a person** - our understanding, perceptions, attitudes, behaviour are important in regard to the issue of religious diversity. How we develop our understanding, impacts on our families, our friends and those we work with.

The **workplace** - how do our organisations respect, through their systems and practices, the needs of those from other faiths? We as individuals and employees have an ongoing and important part to play in this.

The cumulative impact of all of this is to help to create the type of **society** in Great Britain that respects and values each of its citizens irrespective of culture, religious belief or background.

#### Course Objectives

- To outline the belief systems and faith patterns in Great Britain
- To explore the beliefs and practices of the main faiths
- To provide an overview of the equality provisions contained in Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- To develop awareness of religion and belief needs in the workplace
- To look creatively at religion and belief issues and suggest a model for meeting the needs of different faiths at work
- To create an action plan in relation to our own role and the promotion of the acceptance of religious diversity

This first section aims to:

- Outline the **belief systems and faith patterns** in Great Britain
- Put forward some **ideas and concepts** to develop our understanding of the issues

## Exercise

### Quiz (World Religions in Great Britain)

All the following questions relate to religious groups with a presence in Great Britain.

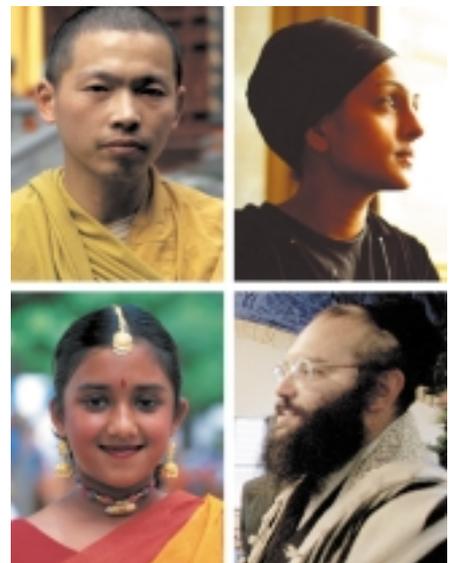
1. What is the largest religious group present in Great Britain apart from Christianity?
2. What feast day is Rosh Hashanah?
3. Which religious group is recognisable by the wearing of turbans?
4. What is Diwali?
5. Name a religion which seldom speaks of God.
6. To what major religion does the Hare Krishna movement belong?
7. Where did the Bahá'í faith originate?
8. Name three Abrahamic faiths.
9. Which is the odd one out:  
Hindu                  Sikh                  Moravian                  Zen
10. Name a famous Zoroastrian!

## Exercise

### The Multi-Faith number line

The task is to represent the relative numbers of each faith in Great Britain by standing in a line with the smallest first up to the largest. Discussion is allowed!

- |                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Judaism</b>          | <b>Hinduism</b> |
| <b>The Bahá'í Faith</b> | <b>Jainism</b>  |
| <b>Christian</b>        | <b>Buddhism</b> |
| <b>Islam</b>            | <b>Sikhism</b>  |



## The 2001 Great Britain Census - Belief systems and faith patterns

### Religion In Britain

#### Census shows 72% identify as Christians

In 2001 the Census collected information about religious identity. The topic was new to the Census in England, Wales and Scotland although the subject had been included in previous Censuses in Northern Ireland.

Religion	Thousands	%
Christian	42,079	71.6
Buddhist	152	0.3
Hindu	559	1.0
Jewish	267	0.5
Muslim	1,591	2.7
Sikh	336	0.6
Other religion	179	0.3
<i>All religions</i>	<i>45,163</i>	<i>76.8</i>
No religion	9,104	15.5
Not stated	4,289	7.3
<i>All no religion/not stated</i>	<i>13,626</i>	<i>23.2</i>
<b>Base</b>	<b>58,789</b>	<b>100</b>

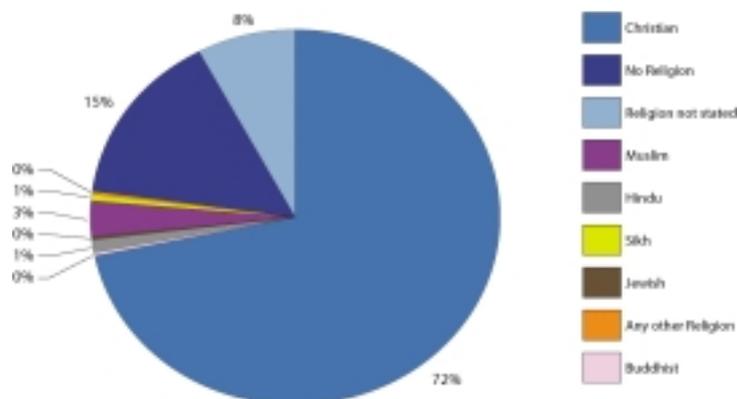
Just over three-quarters of the UK population reported having a religion. More than seven out of ten people said that their religion was Christian (72 per cent). After Christianity, Islam was the most common faith with nearly 3 per cent describing their religion as Muslim (1.6 million).

The next largest religious groups were Hindus (559 thousand), followed by Sikhs (336 thousand), Jews (267 thousand), Buddhists (152 thousand), and people from Other religions (179 thousand). These groups each accounted for less than 1 per cent and together accounted for a further 3 per cent of the UK population.

People in Northern Ireland were most likely to say that they identified with a religion (86%) compared with those in England and Wales (77%) and Scotland (67%). About sixteen per cent of the UK population stated that they had no religion. This category included agnostics, atheists, heathens and those who wrote Jedi Knight.

The Census religion question was a voluntary question. Nevertheless, over 92 per cent of people chose to answer it.

Breakdown of Religions in England and Wales



### Regional Variations

There are 37.3 million people in England and Wales who state their religion as Christian. The percentage of Christians is similar between the two countries but the proportion of people who follow other religions is 6.0 per cent in England compared with 1.5 per cent in Wales.

In England, 3.1 per cent of the population state their religion as Muslim (0.7 per cent in Wales), making this the most common religion after Christianity.

For other religions, 1.1 per cent in England and 0.2 per cent in Wales are Hindu, 0.7 per cent in England and 0.1 per cent in Wales are Sikh, 0.5 per cent in England and 0.1 per cent in Wales are Jewish and 0.3 per cent in England and 0.2 per cent in Wales are Buddhist.

In England and Wales 7.7 million people state they have no religion (14.6 per cent in England and 18.5 per cent in Wales).

The English region with the highest proportion of Christians is the North East (80.1 per cent). London has the highest proportion of Muslims (8.5 per cent), Hindus (4.1 per cent) Jews (2.1 per cent) Buddhists (0.8 per cent) and people of other religions (0.5 per cent).

Fifty-eight per cent of people in London gave their religion as Christian, with the highest proportion in the borough of Havering (76 per cent). Thirty-six per cent of the population of Tower Hamlets and 24 per cent in Newham are Muslim. Over one per cent of the population of Westminster are Buddhist, while Harrow has the highest proportion of Hindus (19.6 per cent) and Barnet the highest proportion of Jewish people (14.8 per cent). Over eight per cent of the populations of Hounslow and Ealing are Sikh.

Sixteen per cent of the population of London say they have no religion, including 25 per cent in the City of London.

Outside London, the counties with the highest proportion of Christians are Durham, Merseyside and Cumbria, each with 82 per cent or more. The districts with the highest proportions of Christians are all in the North West: St Helens, Wigan and Copeland (Cumbria) each have 86 per cent or more.

The district with the highest proportion of Sikhs is Slough. One person in seven of the population of Leicester is Hindu. One person in nine of the population of Hertsmere in Hertfordshire, is Jewish. Over one per cent of the population of Cambridge are Buddhist. Brighton and Hove has most people stating other religions (0.8 per cent).

The districts with the highest proportions of people with no religion are Norwich, Brighton and Hove and Cambridge, all with over one-quarter.

In Wales, the highest proportion of Christians is found on the Isle of Anglesey (79 per cent) and the fewest in Blaenau Gwent (64 per cent). Rhondda, Cynon, Taff has the highest proportion with no religion (25 per cent). Cardiff has the highest proportion of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews. Ceredigion has the highest proportions of Buddhists and people of other religions.

At the time the Census was carried out, there was an internet campaign that encouraged people to answer the religion question "Jedi Knight". The number of people who stated Jedi was 390,000 (0.7 per cent of the population).

### Ethnicity And Religion

The 2001 Census collected information about ethnicity and religious identity. Combining these results shows that while the population is more culturally diverse than ever before, White Christians remain the largest single group by far. In England and Wales, 36 million people (nearly 7 out of 10) described their ethnicity as White and their religion as Christian.

Majorities of Black people and those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds also identified as Christian (71 and 52 per cent respectively). In total there were 810 thousand Black Christians and 347 thousand Christians from Mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Among other faiths the largest groups were Pakistani Muslims (658 thousand) and Indian Hindus (467 thousand) followed by Indian Sikhs (301 thousand), Bangladeshi Muslims (260 thousand) and White Jews (252 thousand).

The Indian group was religiously diverse. 45 per cent of Indians were Hindu, 29 per cent Sikh and a further 13 per cent Muslim. By contrast the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were more homogenous, Muslims accounting for 92 per cent of each ethnic group.

Some faith communities were concentrated in particular ethnic groups. For example, 91 per cent of Sikhs were Indian and 97 per cent of Jews described their ethnicity as White. Other faiths were more widely dispersed; significant proportions of Buddhists were found in the White, Chinese, Other Asian and Other Ethnic groups.

Overall, 15 per cent of the English and Welsh population reported having no religion although variation by ethnicity was marked. Just over half of all Chinese people, and one quarter of people from Mixed ethnic backgrounds, stated they had no religion. Asian, Black African and Irish people were least likely to have no religious affiliation. Fewer than 1 in 200 Pakistanis and Bangladeshis reported having no religion.

14 per cent of people in the Other Black group chose not to answer the religion question, almost twice the average for England and Wales as a whole. Similar proportions of people in the Black Caribbean and Mixed ethnic groups also gave no answer.



### Quotes

"If you're a Hindu, you have problems. If you're a Hindu with a dot, you have more problems"

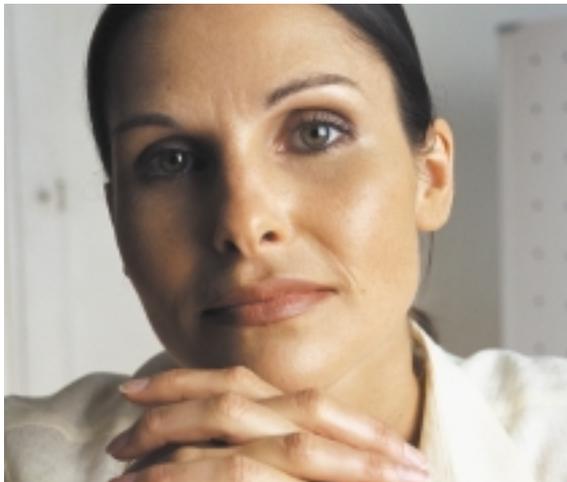
"You are instantly more vulnerable if you wear traditional dress, whether you wear it for religious or cultural reasons"

"You have to let people know; you have to be strong enough not to conform - like cut your hair in order to be accepted"

"People don't know I'm Catholic - they see me as Asian, hear my accent and think I'm Caribbean - they already have enough pigeon holes to slot me into. I haven't had the occasion to tell them about my religion!"

"Anyone with strong identity as a faith, even within Christianity, has trouble"

"...the media portrays stereotypical images of religious communities bobbing up and down on Sundays rather than their aspirations and activities"



## British Identity - Discussion

**Citizenship** - What kind of Britain do we want? What does a British citizen look like? What do we value? What does social inclusion mean for our relationship with other cultures?

**Perception** - How do we react when we see Hare Krishnas chanting in the street? How should we react?

**A multi cultural / religious / ethnic Britain - What are the limits?** - How multi-cultural can we be? What limits do we place on other cultures? How far are we prepared to go on immigration? Are we setting limits?





### Learning Points from Part 1

1. Greater understanding of the range of faiths in Britain.
2. Enhanced awareness of how GB is developing in terms of religious diversity.
3. Increased sensitivity to the issues of democracy and inclusion in respect of religious diversity.

## Part 2

# Getting to know our colleagues

## Meeting the different faith communities

The aims of this section are to:

Explore the **beliefs and practices of a range of faiths** present in Britain.  
Look at some of our **current perceptions** of other faiths.

### Beliefs and practices of a range of faiths

This section will help us to explore the beliefs and practices of a range of faiths present in Great Britain including all those listed in Part 1 - **Judaism, The Bahá'í Faith, Christian, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism.**

### Exercise

#### Mini Presentations

Split up into 4 groups. Each group has to prepare and deliver a short (2 minute) presentation on the two faith traditions that have been allocated to them. You have 20 minutes to prepare this. Your objective is to present your information on one page of flip paper - in a way that generates respect for the faith concerned, helps others to remember the key points and creates a genuine desire to learn more.



# Christianity



*'I give you a new commandment; love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another'*

**Jesus to his disciples**



## Introduction

There are over 1 billion Christians in the world today, making it the world's largest religion.

Christians believe that a man born about 2,000 years ago called Jesus Christ was the son of God. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as well as the teaching of the various churches within Christianity.

In Great Britain, according to the 2001 census, there are approximately 30 million people describing themselves as Christians.

## History

The main denominations within Christianity are:

- **Roman Catholic:** The Roman Catholic Church is headed by the Pope, and its claim to authority in the Christian world rests upon the belief that the Pope is in a continuous line of succession from St Peter, on whom Jesus Christ bestowed authority in the Church. Clergy are not permitted to marry.
- Within the **Anglican church**, there are many different strands of belief, but traditionally the Anglican church sees itself as part of the universal catholic and apostolic church, while not accepting the authority of the Pope. The Scriptures and the Gospels, and writings of the early Church Fathers, provide the foundations for Anglican faith. Clergy are permitted to marry.

- **Protestantism:** Martin Luther may be regarded as the “father” of Protestantism. It is difficult to accurately categorise all forms of Protestantism because there are so many and they are varied. Lutheranism is based on Martin Luther’s teachings and it forms the second largest Protestant group. Reformed and Presbyterian churches are based on the teachings of John Calvin. Free, or independent churches (like Baptist and Congregationalist) exercise congregational government. Each congregation within the groups is autonomous. Clergy are permitted to marry.
- **Eastern Orthodoxy:** Eastern Orthodoxy denies the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope to speak and act for the entire church by himself without a church council. Parish priests are expected to be married, but bishops are chosen from among monks, and are therefore not married.

### Traditions/Beliefs

- A belief that there is only one God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, but that there are three Persons in one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
- A belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who for the salvation of humankind became a human being, lived on earth, was crucified, died and was buried, but rose again from the dead.
- A belief that through the faith in Jesus, his death and resurrection it is possible to have a right relationship with the God.
- A belief in Life after Death on earth.
- A belief that Prayer is the vehicle to communicate with God. Prayers can be formal or informal.
- A belief that Christians should receive a baptism for the remission of sins.
- A belief in the Eucharist (also called the Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion, The Mass, the Divine Liturgy and Blessed Sacrament). It consists in the ritual of repeating Christ’s actions at his last supper with his disciples.

### Worship

The most important Christian religious practices are the sacraments, rites or ceremonies regarded as instruments or symbols of spiritual benefit from Christ to the worshipper. The Holy Scripture for Christians is called the Bible (which consists of an Old Testament (shared with Judaism) and the New Testament (which includes the life and teachings of Jesus)).

The Holy day in the Christian Church is Sunday. On this day worshippers congregate in churches. In most, but not all churches, there is the singing of hymns, prayers, scripture reading and talks (most often by the clergy of the church).

### Holy Days, Festivals and Rituals

The Roman Catholic church recognizes seven sacraments:

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Penance
- The Eucharist
- Matrimony
- Holy Orders
- Extreme Unction (the sacrament of anointing of the sick, especially when administered to the dying)

The Protestant churches for the most part only recognise Baptism and the Eucharist because these alone can be proved from Scripture to have been instituted by Christ himself. Protestant churches do have formal ceremonies for matrimony, but it is not regarded as a sacrament.

### Holy Days and Celebrations

Different forms of Christianity celebrate different festivals and observe different holy days, but all forms observe (though might not celebrate it in the same way) the following 6 holy days:

- **Christmas:** 25th December. Marks the birth of Jesus Christ.
- **Epiphany:** 6 January. Marks the Journey of Three Kings to worship Jesus in Bethlehem
- **Good Friday:** The Friday before Easter (March/April), it commemorates Jesus' passion (suffering) on the cross.
- **Easter:** (March/April) Marks the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb.
- **Ascension:** Forty days after Easter, the ascension of Christ to heaven is commemorated.
- **Pentecost:** The seventh Sunday after Easter. Marks the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, which began the work of the Church.

# Islam



*'We believe in God and that which is revealed to us: in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, and the tribes: to Moses and Jesus and other prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them, and to God we have committed ourselves.'*

**Qur'an 2:136**



## Introduction

There are over a thousand million Muslims (people who follow Islam) in the world today. The word "Islam" literally means "submission" (to God). This monotheistic religion was founded by the Prophet Muhammad over 1300 years ago.

There are roughly 2.5-3 million Muslims living in Britain today, which makes it the 2nd most popular religion in the UK.

## History

In 610 C.E., on a night now referred to by Muslims as the "Night of Power and Excellence", an Arabian called Muhammad (a Meccan business man) heard a voice commanding him to "recite". This voice was the Angel Gabriel who communicated the word of God (Allah) to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 22 years. This recital from Allah was recorded and is the Muslim Holy Scripture called the Qur'an. Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be God's human instrument (in receiving and reporting his revelations) and the model or ideal for all believers (some refer to it as the "living Qur'an").

The Prophet Muhammad died in Medina in 632 C.E., not long after the Arab Islamic state was established. After his death a series of Caliphs (designated successors to Muhammad) emerged as political leaders and defenders of the faith.

### Traditions/Beliefs

The Qur'an (literally translated, it means the "recital"), the Islamic scriptures, is one of the most important books in human history. It was written in Arabic and it is thought to be authoritative only in that language. All Muslims memorize and recite the Qur'an in Arabic. It is made up of 114 sutras (chapters) and 6,000 verses. The first chapter begins with the words "Praise be to Allah" and this is universally used in the daily prayers of Muslims around the world. According to the Qur'an, God (Allah, the Arabic word for "The God and Creator") is transcendent, all-powerful, all-knowing and the creator, sustainer, ordainer and judge of the universe. The Qur'an also emphasizes that Allah is also merciful and compassionate.

A few of the major Qur'anic teachings are:

- The Qur'an teaches that Muslims are obliged to be God's servants and to spread God's message - this obligation is to the individual as well as to the community at large.
- The Holy Scripture also stresses that all individuals are equal before Allah and places a large obligation for the rich to help the poor and disposed in society.
- Quranic revelation also raised the status of women in marriage, divorce and inheritance. "Men and women are equal in the eyes of God; man and woman were created to be equal parts of a pair"(51:49)
- The Scripture stresses pluralism and tolerance - that God has created many nations and peoples. It clearly and strongly states that "there is to be no compulsion in religion"(2:256)

The Five obligations (often referred to as pillars) of Islam which are outlined in the Qur'an are:

- **Shahadah** - *Confession of one's faith in God and in his Prophet Muhammad.* "There is no God but God; Muhammad is the Prophet of God".
- **Salat** - *Ritual Worship.* Prayer five times daily (before sunrise, after midday, at mid-afternoon, shortly after sunset and in the fullness of night)
- **Zakat** - *Almsgiving.* A Zakat (purification tax) on property is paid by all Muslims for the benefit of the poor).
- **Sawm** - *Fasting.* Fasting is observed during the holy month of Ramadan
- **Hajj** - *Pilgrimage.* Every Muslim who is of sound body, sane, and able to afford the journey is expected to make a **Hajj** (pilgrimage) to the holy city of Mecca.

*These Pillars are central to Muslim observance and practice.*

### Worship

A mosque is a building used by Muslims for worship and prayer.

Muslims remove their shoes and perform ritual washing before entering a Mosque to pray.

Internally, a Mosque is sparse, having little or no furniture. There will be no artwork or statues in the chamber. Islam does not condone any form of representation of Allah - to attempt to create an image of Allah is regarded as profane.

A niche is made on the wall which denotes the direction of Mecca - the direction in which people are to pray - this is called the **qibla wall**. Everyone is considered equal and all in attendance sit on the floor. Women may attend the mosque, but they sit separately from the men.

As one of the five pillars of faith, a Muslim is duty-bound to pray five times a day. These prayers do not have to be made within the walls of a Mosque. **Wudu** (ritual washing) must be performed prior to prayer (when water is not available, there are other acceptable practices). During the prayer recital there are also ritual movements (rak'ha) which should be performed. All prayer is performed in the direction of Mecca.

Mosques offer talks on Fridays by the Iman (a Quranic scholar) just before the midday prayer.

### Holy Days, Festivals and Rituals

#### Rituals

Like most religions, Islam observes some of the major events in a persons life:

- **Akikah.** An informal birth ceremony. This ceremony is not practiced widely.
- **Shadada.** The marking of a young Muslim's formal entry into Islam. There is no set age for this rite, though it is most commonly celebrated during the teenage years.
- **Marriage Ritual.** Witnesses observe the groom's formal offer of marriage and the brides acceptance of it. There is no elaborate ceremony. The **waleemah** is the reception which includes music and dancing.
- **Funerals and Mourning.** This includes the recitation of the **janazah** (prayers for the dead) at the gravesite and may include a service at the funeral home. Muslims do not condone cremation and burial of the dead takes place within 24 hours of death. The official mourning period for a family member is 40 days.

### Holy Days and Festivals

- **Ramadan.** This Holy Festival takes place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is a time of fasting and daily repentance.
  - **Lailat ul-Qadr** - The final 10 days of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate Muhammad's first revelation.
  - **Id al-Fitr** - The feast period just after the month long fast of Ramadan. It lasts for three days.
- **Id ul-Adha.** Two to three months after Ramadan, animals are slaughtered to benefit the poor. The purpose of the the *Id ul-Adha* is to celebrate the faithfulness and obedience of Abraham.
- **Al-Isra Wal Miraj.** Celebrated on the 27<sup>th</sup> Day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month in the Islamic Calendar. It marks Muhammad's journey from Mecca.
- **Maulid al-Nabi.** Celebrates the birth of Muhammad.

# Hinduism



*That man or woman attains Peace who lives devoid of longing, freed from all desires, and without the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine'.*



## Introduction

Hinduism, one of the world's oldest living religions, has approximately 800 million followers, most of them in India.

Hinduism is an amalgamation of several faith traditions. It may be helpful to view Hinduism not so much as a single religion, but as a family of religions. Hindus themselves use various terms such as *sanatana-dharma* (loosely translated as "eternal religion") to describe their faith; the word "Hindu" is originally a geographic designation (those who live east of the Indus River) and is not found in any Hindu scriptures.

Hinduism has no single founder. While Hinduism may be a collection of faiths, one basic tenet of Hinduism is a belief in the difference between spirit (eternal) and matter (temporary).

With 400,000 followers, Hinduism is the fourth largest religion in the UK.

## Scripture

The Vedas are the oldest Hindu scriptures and, as with most Hindu scriptures, are written in Sanskrit. The word Veda means knowledge.

The Vedas are divided into four books, each section dealing with different aspects of knowledge. They are, *Rig-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sama-veda*, and *Atharva-veda*.

The Vedas were codified into *sutras* (aphorisms) in a scripture known as *Vedanta-sutra*. Much of Hindu philosophical writing stems from this and develops the ideas in *Vedanta-sutra* according to time, place, and circumstance.

As well as the Vedas other classes of scriptures include:

**Itihasas:** Histories, such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*

**Brahmanas:** Instructions for ritual worship

**Puranas:** Epic texts explaining Vedic teaching through historical and allegorical narrations

**Upanishads:** Philosophical texts, such as *Bhagavad-gita*

Of all these scriptures, *Bhagavad-gita* is probably the best known and most widely taught.

## Teachings

### Reincarnation and karma

One of the main teachings of Hindu scriptures (*sastra*), is that the living entity is caught in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth; this cycle is called *samsara*. The soul, as eternal spirit, is caught in a world of temporary matter. This is an unnatural position, and escape means return to the spiritual world.

According to all Hindu traditions, one's next birth is decided by one's karma (work) and one's consciousness at the time of death. Karma is a principle of universal justice. Whatever action is performed, good or bad, there is a subsequent reaction, if not in this life then in the next. But ultimately the aim is to become free from repeated birth (and subsequent old age, disease and death) by engaging in spiritual activities.

According to *Bhagavad-gita* there are three paths a Hindu can follow in order to break the cycle of birth and death.

**Work (*karma yoga*):** The performance of meritorious religious deeds including rituals, giving in charity, and performing pilgrimages.

**Knowledge (*jnana-yoga*):** Realisation of the true nature of matter and spirit.

**Devotion (*bhakti-yoga*):** Devoting one's life to developing a loving relationship with God.

### God and demigods

One of the fundamental differences of opinion within Hinduism is the identity of God. Some schools teach that God is impersonal, that he has no form or identity, and other schools teach that God is personal, that He is the supreme person. And within each of these schools are further sub-schools with different understandings of the nature and personality of God. These differences of understanding are the reason

that Hinduism cannot really be viewed as one religion. Although these theological disputes exist, there is a tradition within Hinduism of accepting all valid religious traditions, Hindu or non-Hindu, as part of God's plan to teach people according to their abilities and inclinations.

The three main branches of Hinduism are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism. The Vaishnavas worship Lord Vishnu as God, specifically in His forms of Krishna, Rama, and Narayana. Shaivites worship Lord Shiva and Shaktas worship Durga-devi, the Goddess in charge of the material energy. Worship of the deity form (*murti*) of the Lord is considered to be an integral part of worship because all aspects of God - His name, forms (including the deity form), pastimes, and words - are considered to be equally part of God and equally worshipable.

As well as these main deities are the numerous demigods. These personalities, while not God, are of a higher level than humans and have specific roles to play within the functioning of the universe.

### Guru

A central figure in Hinduism is that of the guru. The teacher who passes on the teachings of his or her lineage, without changing the essence but with consideration of changes in society. The lineage of the guru is known as *parampara* (disciplic succession) and orthodox Hindus will generally see their place in Hinduism in terms of their particular *parampara*.

### Worship

There is no particular day of worship in Hinduism. To Hindus, every day is a day of worship.

Traditionally Hindus will have a shrine for worship at home and, depending on proximity, will visit the temple regularly as well.

The temple is a sacred focus for Hindus. However, respectful visitors are generally welcomed.

Worship consists of items such as *kirtan* (singing the names of God), *bhajan* (devotional songs), *puja* (offering items such as flowers, food, water and incense to God), *sastra* (reading from scriptures), *sanga* (associating with fellow devotees), and *prasadam* (sharing food offered to God). There are many cultural variations that determine which of these are performed and how they are performed.

There are many rites-of-passage within Hinduism. Again, these vary according to tradition but can include rituals to mark birth, babies first hair-cutting, babies first grains, formal acceptance of a guru, sacred-thread (brahmin) initiation, marriage, death and many others.

### Holy Days and Festivals

It has been said that in Hinduism there is a festival for each day of the year. This may be an underestimate!

In common with other faiths, Hindu festivals mostly fall into two broad categories: Those that celebrate teachers and saints in the tradition and those that celebrate notable events from scripture.

Hindu festivals are an opportunity for devotees to refocus on their spiritual life and to increase their meditation on God and his pure followers. Most festivals include prayer and reading of scripture while some will include fasting for part or all of the day. Some festivals are immensely joyful, such as Holi where revellers throw coloured dyes and powders over each other. Other festivals are very attractive, such as Diwali, when houses and temples are lit up with candles.

Hindu holy days and festivals follow a lunisolar calendar, thus dates vary from year to year. A few of the most popular are:

- **Diwali.** Known as the festival of lights, this commemorates the return of Lord Rama from His exile in the forest. It is, for many traditions, a new-year celebration. It takes place between late October and the middle of November.
- **Dussehra.** A celebration of good conquering evil, this festival lasts ten days and takes place between late September and the middle of October.
- **Holi.** A spring festival to celebrate creation and renewal, linked with Lord Krishna.
- **Navaratri.** A nine day festival which celebrates the triumph of good over evil.
- **Janmastami.** A celebration marking the appearance on earth of Lord Krishna.

# Sikhism



*'There exists but one God, who is called the True, the Creator, free from fear and hate, immortal, not begotten, self-existent, great and compassionate.'*

**(from Guru Nanak's hymn)**



## Introduction

There are approximately 25 million Sikhs in the world today.

Sikhism is a monotheistic faith, which was founded in the fifteenth century by Guru Nanak in the region of Punjab, northwest India. It is recognised as the youngest of world religions. Among its many teachings Sikhism promotes the unity of God, universal love, equality and brotherhood of man, strict moral conduct and the rejection of the caste system, idol worship, superstitious belief and inferiority of women.

There are approximately 500,000 Sikhs living in Great Britain today.

## History

The founder of Sikhism was **Guru Nanak** (1469-1539).

The human line of Gurus ended with Guru Gobind Singh (Tenth Nanak) in 1708, who conferred the eternal Guruship to the sacred Sikh scripture.

Once initiated, a Sikh wears the “**Five Ks**.” These are:

- **Kesh:** Uncut hair covered with turban, respecting natural form.
- **Kirpan:** A short sword for last line of defence.
- **Kangha:** A wooden comb to keep hair tidy, a reminder to maintain cleanliness and keep thoughts pure.
- **Kara:** A steel wristband, a reminder to maintain self-restraint.
- **Kachera:** Cotton shorts or breeches for chastity and self-respect.

On initiation, the surname ‘**Singh**’ (lion) meaning to be brave, is given to male Sikhs, and women ‘**Kaur**’ (princess), to elevate social status of women, following the Tenth Guru’s instructions. A Sikh’s personal conduct and discipline was to be exemplary in every respect. All (immoral) actions not conducive to spiritual progress such as adultery, infanticide, untruthfulness and slander were to be shunned. Alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants were also to be strictly avoided. Freedom from fear, ceaseless meditation on the Name of God and service to fellow man was the Sikh path to spiritual liberation and union with the Supreme Spirit (God).

### Traditions/Beliefs

Some of the Basic Beliefs of Sikhism are:

- There is only one God, the sole creator, sustainer and destroyer. Sikhs do not believe in duality, but unity in diversity. God cannot take on the human form. Daily prayer and devotion to God and His Creation is required.
- The rejection of the divisive Caste system. Sikhs reject any distinction made for class, race, creed or sex. Sikhs believe in full equality for all people.
- The Sikh goal is to end the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and unite the separated individual soul with the Universal Soul (God). The way to attain this goal is through applying the teachings of the Gurus to all situations, continuous meditation on the Holy Name, selfless service, control of mind and correct regulation of desires and impulses.
- In Sikhism there are 4 cardinal sins (Kurahts). Sikhs should not; cut their hair, commit adultery, use tobacco or other drugs and not eat ritually slaughtered meat, such as halal meat.
- Sikhism identifies 5 vices, which a Sikh must regulate and control. These are: **Kaam** (lust), **Krodh** (anger), **Lobh** (greed), **Moh** (worldly attachment) and **Ahankar** (egotism).
- Blind rituals such as idol worship, yoga, superstitions, pilgrimages and fasting are prohibited.
- The recognition that the Sikh sacred scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, is the eternal Guru and that there will be no more human Gurus.
- To protect and help those in need through charity and community service.

### Worship

Congregational worship at the Sikh place of worship (**Gurdwara**) is called **Diwaan**, and its purpose is to praise God and develop the spirituality of the individual and community. There are no ordained holy days in Sikhism. In Sikhism each moment is considered holy and living itself considered an act of devotion. Most Sikh families tend to visit a Gurdwara on a Sunday. A Sikh should visit the Gurdwara as often as possible to receive teachings from Guru Granth Sahib and seek the company of the holy congregation (**Saadh Sangat**) for spiritual guidance and upliftment through meditation (**Naam Simran**), prayer (**Paat**), singing of hymns (**Keertan**) from Guru Granth Sahib and rendering selfless service (**Seva**).

Sikhs are expected to become and remain God-conscious with every breath. Their prayers exhort the need for self-exploration, self-knowledge and self-realisation, and the running of their daily lives in accordance with the Guru's Word (**Gurmatt**). Sikhs pray daily at three times. Before sunrise (**Nitnem**), evening (**Raihraas**) and before going to sleep (**Sohelaa**). However, Sikhs can additionally pray and meditate as much as they like when and where it practically suits them. Sikhs do not pray in any particular direction, believing God resides everywhere in His Creation. At the Gurdwara everyone sits on the floor to show equality of all people; this included Prince Charles when he visited a Gurdwara in Derby.

Public worship can be lead by any competent member of the Sikh community and therefore the notion of priesthood is alien to Sikhs. Women participate fully in all aspects. People appointed to special positions do not have a job for life. When their particular duty is over they revert to being members of the community.

### Celebrations and Festivals

- **Gurpurbs.** The marking of important anniversaries relating to the birth or death (martyrdom) of a Guru. This includes the full recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib as well as the singing of hymns and Sikh lectures.
- **Baisakhi.** The day is celebrated around the 13th April. It is the celebration of the founding of the Khalsa Order and Sikh nation. Many Sikhs choose to be initiated on this day. Often, a religious street procession marks this key event.
- **Bandi Chhor.** Sikhs commemorate the release of Guru Hargobind (Sixth Guru) from false imprisonment. It coincides with the Indian Festival of Lights (Divali) between the end of October and mid-November. A Muslim saint laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple, also on this day.
- **Maghi.** This celebration occurs around the middle of January and marks the martyrdom of forty Sikhs at the hands of the Mughal army.
- **Hola Mohalla.** On this day Sikhs practice military exercises, stage mock battles, perform martial arts and organise sports competitions. This is to keep the martial skills and spirit alive. Hymn singing and lectures also take place. It occurs the day after the Indian festival of Holi around mid-March.

# Judaism



*'Just as the soul fills the body,  
so God fills the world. Just as the  
soul bears the body, so God  
endures the world. Just as the soul  
sees but is not seen, so God sees  
but is not seen.'*

**The Talmud**



## Introduction

There are approximately 12 million Jews in the world today.

Judaism began in the Middle East over 3,500 years ago. Jews believe that there is only one God and they are His chosen people. It is sometimes referred to as the “parent faith” of Christianity. Christianity and Judaism both recognise the Old Testament as Holy Scripture.

There are approximately 300,000 Jews in Great Britain today.

## History

The word Judaism comes from the Hebrew word Yehudah (meaning “The Praised”). Yehudah (sometimes called Judah) was the founder of a tribe of people. This tribe took his name and eventually Judah became the name of a Kingdom and a new state. One cannot look at the word Judaism only as a description of a religion, it is more than that. Judaism is linked by three elements, the union of a God, a people (Israel) and a country (the Holy Land).

The Torah (the Five books of Moses that begin the Hebrew and Christian bible) states that the Hebrews are descended directly from Abraham. Abraham was alive around 2000 B.C.E. and he was raised in the religion of the time which worshiped the moon and other natural gods. Moses rescued Israel by helping people to

escape the Egyptians by parting the water of the Red Sea for them. The children of Israel wandered the desert for forty days until they came to the wilderness of Sinai. It was there that the Jews believe that God entered into a new covenant with Moses. It was a wider and new covenant than the one before, it was made with the people as a whole, and it demanded that the Israelites offer great sacrifice and total dedication to their God. The covenant consisted of 613 commandments; 365 referred to forbidden things and 248 to things that had to be done. He gave Moses a complete and detailed system of rules by which his people were to live. The most important were the first Ten Commandments or Decalogue). These commandments are some of the most important spiritual pillars in Judaism and represent the heart of the Law in Jewish tradition. Here is an abridged version of this Decalogue:

- I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- Thou shalt have no Other Gods before Me.....
- Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.....
- Honour thy father and mother.....
- Thou shalt not kill
- Thou shalt not commit adultery
- Thou shalt not steal.
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
- Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife, nor his manservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbours. (Exodus 20:2-17)

It is worth noting that these same commandments have a very important role in some other religious traditions as well, particularly Christianity.

In 1948 the British army, who were occupying Palestine since the end of World War 1, gave control of the area to the Jews. Jews from all over the world left approximately 74 countries and arrived in Palestine to begin a new life.

### Traditions/Beliefs

- A belief in one True God who is an all-powerful being; with whom each individual person has a direct personal experience and to whom prayers are addressed.
- A belief that Life is Holy.

- A belief that the Torah (Jewish Holy Scripture) is the guide to correct living. Studying the Torah is a form of worship.
- That Community is very important. Group worship and prayer are essential elements of right living and Jews have a sense of collective purpose and shared responsibility for one another.
- A belief in the Covenant (God's agreement with the chosen people of Israel).
- A belief in the Ten Commandments

Within Judaism there are three main movements, they are:

- The **Orthodox** movement: Orthodox Jews believe that complete uncompromising conformity to the dictates of God is what is required. They are bound to preserve ritual, tradition and doctrine as it was received in the past (back to its' very beginnings). Conforming to new social conventions is not important to the Orthodox view, it is vital to live as God's will was revealed in the Holy Scriptures. For the Orthodox view, Judaism is the world and obedience to the will of God is the primary objective.
- The **Conservative** Jew. For the Conservative Jew, the idea of absolute adherence to past traditions is not the guiding principle. It is important to preserve the "old ways" as much as possible, but not to the degree of importance for an Orthodox Jew. They affirm the primacy of tradition within their religious experience, but do acknowledge the importance of carefully chosen adjustments to accommodate the world in which they live.
- **Reform** Judaism. For the Reform Jew it is important to retain the essential elements of Judaism which make the most sense in a contemporary setting. The Torah is accepted, but it is seen to be more open to study and interpretation by the individual than the previous movements mentioned. This movement sprang arose in the mid-nineteenth century and experienced remarkable growth, particularly in the United States.

## Worship

For Judaism life is a religious ceremony in itself - the emphasis on the detailed code of conduct and the following of each individual and community of these codes is a form of daily worship. Therefore, all of life is a liturgy (public worship).

It would be impossible to speak about Judaism without mentioning the Jewish **Dietary Laws**. The adherence to these food laws are another form of worship for the Jew. The rules were set out in the Hebrew Bible. Kosher (that which is in accordance with the established standard of Jewish ritual) Food laws are broadly:

- Kosher meat comes from an animal that chews a cud and has cloven hoofs (sheep and cows for example). The meat must be killed in accordance to special rules and the meat must be prepared in such a way that all blood is removed.

- Seafood is Kosher if the animals have scales or fins.
- Poultry is kosher if it follows the special rules of slaughter and preparation.
- It is prohibited to consume dairy products at the same time or shortly after a meal which included meat products.
- Separate utensils are required for dairy and non-dairy meals.

Synagogues are the names of the Jewish places of worship. Group prayer is extremely important. The prayers vary depending on the hour of the day, the day of the month and the branch of Judaism. During services Jewish males are required to wear yarmulke (small headpieces).

The Jewish holy day is called the **Shabbat** (repose). The Shabbat begins at sunset on Friday and continues until nightfall on Saturday. Work is prohibited during the Shabbat. On the Shabbat prayer services are more detailed for all branches of Judaism - Friday services can be anywhere from half an hour to an hour and a half; and Saturday morning services can be as long as three hours.

### Holy Days and Celebrations

- **Rosh Hashanah.** The Jewish New Year. Occurs around the middle of September/October. It celebrates the religious New Year and the creation of the earth.
- **Yom Kippur.** Occurs shortly after Rosh Hashanah. It is the Day of Atonement. It runs from sunset to sunset and believers do not eat or drink during this time. It is a time to repent for actions of the past year.
- **Sukkot.** The feast of Booths. It lasts for eight days and occurs around the end of October. It is known as the Harvest celebration.
- **Channukah (Hanukkah).** Occurs early to mid December. Known as the Festival of Lights it celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians in the second century B.C.E.
- **Purim.** Occurs late February to early March. It remembers the deliverance of the Persian Jews from destruction. The day before Purim is spent fasting, the actual day of Purim is joyous.
- **Pesach (Passover).** Occurs from late March to early April. It honours the delivery of the Jewish people from slavery. It lasts between 7 and 8 days (depending upon the branch of Judaism).
- **Shavout.** Occurs in May/June and lasts for 2 days. It is the spring harvest festival and the celebration of God's gift of the Torah.

# Buddhism



*'Impermanent are  
all created things. Strive  
on with awareness.'*

**(Said to be the Buddha's last words)**



## Introduction

There are 350 million Buddhists worldwide.

Buddhists do not worship gods or deities. Buddhists believe that the pathway to enlightenment is found by personal spiritual development. Buddhism developed from Hinduism, and while there are some fundamental differences between the two there are also some core beliefs which they both share.

According to the 2001 Census, there are approximately 152,000 Buddhist living in Britain today.

## History

It is believed that Siddhartha Gautama was born about the year 566B.C.E. He was the son of a wealthy and powerful ruler in a region which we now call southern Nepal. Prior to his birth a sage foretold that he would become a **chakravartin** (turner of the wheel). A **chakravartin** becomes either a great king and turns the wheel of conquest or a religious teacher and turns the wheel of **Dharma** (religious teaching). Siddhartha's father was eager to ensure that his son became a great King rather than a religious leader. In order to ensure his sons future greatness the King kept his son isolated within the Kingdom's walls and gave him a life of supreme luxury. Siddhartha was raised as a prince, married and had a child.

Buddhists believe that in his early 30s he finally made his way outside of the palace walls. He was confronted with old age, illness and death. These human conditions had previously been hidden from him and his revelations upon seeing these things forever changed his life. He renounced his life of luxury and left the palace to become an ascetic.

He vowed to become a holy man and pursued a life of deprivation and asceticism. He followed a path of severe fasting and self-discipline. He found that this method to enlightenment was unproductive and developed a mode of discipline known as the **Middle Path** (avoiding the extremes of self-denial and self-indulgence). Some time after this realisation, he sat under a tree to meditate. Following a period of intense meditation Siddhartha woke up to the truth.

Following this experience he became known as the Buddha (a fully enlightened being). He achieved the state that Buddhists call **nirvana** (which means to extinguish or to blow out). A Buddha is a person who understands the causes of suffering and has "blown them out" and therefore, no longer suffers from the ignorance and desire that feed the fire of death and rebirth.

The Buddha got up from the tree of his awakening and walked to a village near-by and began preaching to a small group of his former companions. He spent the rest of his life travelling the countryside to preach and organize a monastic community called the **sangha**.

At about the age of 80, the Buddha lay down between two trees and passed gently from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. This is referred to as the **parinirvana** (complete extinction). His body was cremated.

There are currently two major schools of Buddhism - **Theravada** and **Mahyana**.

**Theravada** Buddhism holds the most sacred text to be the teachings of the Buddha himself. It emphasizes a solitary life of personal religious discipline. The **Theravada** school of Buddhism survives today in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

**Mahayana** Buddhism emerged around 100 C.E. This view of Buddhism focused more on the importance of compassion and service and the notion of emptiness. This form of Buddhism is mostly likely to be found in Japan, Korea, Mongolia and China.

There are also other forms of Buddhism. Two other forms which are derived from Mahayana Buddhism are **Tibetan** Buddhism and **Zen** Buddhism.

**Tibetan** Buddhist consider the most important Mahayana teachers to be Bodhisattva (one who deserves Nirvana but who postpones entry to it until all sentient beings are rescued from the rebirth and suffering). In addition (and outside of the two major schools of Buddhism), **Tibetan** Buddhists use yogic discipline to transcend and redirect desire with the ultimate goal of uniting with the Ultimate Reality. This practice, called **Vajrayana**, ties in with the Hindu tantric practice.

Zen Buddhism major focus is on the value of personal meditation. The word Zen means "meditation". Zen sprang forth from the Mahayana school of Buddhism. Zen stresses the importance of discovering one's own "original mind and true nature".

### Traditions/Beliefs

The four noble Truths were given by the Buddha during a talk called the Deer Park Sermon. He wished to offer his followers a path which would help them to avoid the obstacles that stop people from understanding their true nature.

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. **Life is Suffering.** Human existence is painful. Death does not bring an end to suffering because of the cycle of death and rebirth.
2. **Suffering has a cause: craving and attachment.** Selfish cravings and attachments are the cause of our suffering. This aspect is what causes our ignorance to true reality.
3. **Craving and attachment can be overcome.** Completely transcending selfish craving ceases suffering and allows one to enter the state of Nirvana.
4. **The path towards the cessation of craving and attachment is and Eightfold Path:**

**Right Understanding**

**Right Purpose**

**Right Speech**

**Right Conduct**

**Right Livelihood**

**Right Effort**

**Right Alertness**

**Right Concentration**

Other major teachings of the Buddha were that the abiding self is illusory. The tendency of humans to regard themselves as an independent, controlling entity is a significant barrier to spiritual progress.

### Worship

It is not a requirement of Buddhist to worship in a temple. Typically when worshipping in the home, a Buddhist will have a Buddha statue, candles and an incense burner.

A Buddhist Temple must have a statue of the Buddha. The temples are built to reflect the five elements (fire, air, earth, water, and wisdom). Buddhist Temples, called **Stupa** are one of the most common structures. A **Stupa** is made of stone and is constructed over Buddhist relics or copies of Buddhist texts.

Actual communal worship practices vary widely among the different types of Buddhism. Some components of worship may be chanting, meditation, readings from religious texts and music.

### Celebrations

Because of the wide variety of Buddhist in the world it is impossible to represent all of the denominations and varying traditions.

- **Nirvana Day** Celebrated on the 15th February, it is the date that Buddhist observe his passing.
- **Buddha Day** This is the celebration of the Buddha's birth. It occurs on the 8th April.
- **Bodhi Day** This day marks the day that Siddhartha sat under the tree (a Bodhi tree) and eventually attained enlightenment.

# Jainism



*'All Souls are alike and  
potentially Divine.  
None is Superior or Inferior.'*

**Lord Mahavr**



## Introduction

There are approximately 3.5 million Jains in the world today.

It is one of the world's oldest living religions and originated in India, where the majority of its followers still live today. Jainism does not believe in a creator God, but it does believe in many Gods who are the self-realised individuals who have attained enlightenment. Jainism believes that the universe and all its substance or entities are eternal. Jains believe that all living things (animals and plants) have souls and are of equal value.

All Jains are compelled to be vegetarians.

## History

Jainism was founded by Mahavira in the 6th Century B.C.E.

Mahavira preached that the world was made of two substances, soul and matter. He believed that the cause of all misery is the connection of the contaminated material body to the pure eternal spirit. He believed the goal for all is to liberate the soul from matter and that the law of karma and reincarnation are closely linked to the drama of the flesh and spirit.

Mahavira believed that the salvation of the soul was each individual's responsibility and could not be achieved through outside forces. To Mahavira, the Gods were of little consequence because they are living in a different plane and were not concerned with mankind's reality. Therefore, he did not feel that there should be any worship or prayer. While Mahavira did not believe in prayer or worship, his followers worship and pray to him because it is believed that he was sinless, omniscient and incarnate as the last of the 24 Tirthankaras (saviours of men).

Jains are forbidden from entering all occupations that profit from taking life; which has resulted in most Jains working in commercial or "white collar" fields.

### Traditions/Beliefs

Like some of the other world religions, Jainism is a religion of self-help. There are no Gods or God who will help humans on the road to liberation. They believe that life is a series of births, deaths, and rebirths until the soul has shed all karma and can achieve liberation. The three most central guides for the individual to attain this goal are: **Right Belief, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct**. The physical actions of a lifetime do not take precedence over the mental or contemplative acts of the individual. Both physical and mental/spiritual acts are needed to break the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Therefore, deed and thought are weighed equally in Jainism.

There are nine fundamental philosophies in the Jain tradition, they are called the Nav Tattvas (nine fundamentals) and they are:

- **Jiva** (soul). All living beings are called **Jiva**. The soul is described as a sort of eternal energy which is indestructible, invisible, and shapeless. The body is merely a home for the soul.
- **Anjiva** (non-living matter). Anything that does not have a soul or consciousness. **Anjiva** is divided into five categories:
  - **Dharmastikay** (medium of motion)
  - **Adarmastikay** (medium of rest)
  - **Pudgalastikay** (matter)
  - **Akashatikay** (space)
  - **Kala** (time)
- **Punya** (results of good deeds) **Punya** is acquired by the undertaking of wholesome activities. Charitable acts and propagating religion are among the activities which can help to attain **Punya**. When **Punya** matures it brings forth comfort and happiness.
- **Pap** (results of bad deeds) Bad activities lead to **Pap**, or bad karma. Cruelty, violence and anger are among the things that can bring **Pap**. When **Pap** matures it brings suffering, misery and unhappiness.

- **Asrava** (influx of karma) **Asrava** is caused by wrong belief, passions and negligence among other things. These karma “particles” attach themselves to the soul.
- **Samvar** (stoppage of karmas). This is achieved by observing carefulness, control, mental reflection, suffering, and through the ten-fold **yati-dharma**(monkshood).
- **Bandh** (bondage of karmas) this occurs when we react to any situation with a sense of attachment or aversion.
- **Nirjara** (eradication of karma). **Nirjara** is the process by which we shed karmas. It can occur through passive or active efforts. Passive efforts mean simply waiting for karmas to mature and give their results in time. Actively matured karma can be achieved by performing penance, regretting, asking for forgiveness and meditation (to name a few).
- **Moska** (liberation) if we rid ourselves of all karmas, we attain liberation.

The individual Jain is also called adhere to the 5 tenants of the Mahavratas (5 great vows), which are:

- Non-Violence (non-injury to life)
- No Lying
- No Stealing
- Non-Attachment to possessions
- Sexual Restraint (Celibacy is the ideal)

## Worship

Jains believe that devotions to any God figure would be pointless as God (or the Gods) is not involved in doing or undoing things in the human realm. To perform any devotions therefore, would not lead to liberation.

While Jains recognise that there is no real place for **Bhakti** (devotion) or **Pooja** (worship), they do in practice have certain worship practices.

Many Jains worship at temple everyday, while others do so much less frequently. For Jainism worship is a means to personal spiritual and karmic development, it is not actually worship for exultation or devotion to any particular entity.

Jainism does not recognise really have any type of clergy, though **Svetambara** Jains do have priests (who's only purpose is to assist in rituals, not to direct or guide other Jains).

### Holy Days, Festivals and Rituals

Fasting is a very important part of the Jains tradition. Most Jains fast during holy days and festivals; some Jains choose fasting at other times in order to purify or to assist in their spiritual development. This ritual can vary from giving up food and drink entirely to only giving up favourite foods. Many Jains choose to fast when their death is approaching so that they may purify their thoughts in the preceding moments to their death.

### Holy Days and Celebrations

- **Mahavira Jayanti** Occurs around March/April. A celebration of the birth of Mahavira (the founder of Jainism). Celebrations include community worship, processions, and other devotional and spiritual activities.
- **Paryushana** Occurs in August/September. Considered by some to be the most important festival in Jainism. All Jains are required to fast and the spiritual preceptors read out and explain in detail the Kalpasutra (sacred scripture). The first seven days of the festival are days of attainment, and the eighth and finally day is one of fulfilment and achievement.
- **Diwali** Occurs in October/November. The whole night of Diwali should be spent in the recitation of holy hymns and meditation. Svetambara Jains believe that on the night of the day of Diwali in 537 B.C.E., Mahavira achieved Nirvan, or deliverance and attained to a state of absolute bliss. The day after **Diwali** marks the beginning of the New Year in their calendar.
- **Kartak Purnima** Occurs in October/November. Thousands of Jains go on pilgrimages on this day to sacred Jain sites.
- **Mauna Agyaras** Occurs around November/December. This is the day on which Jains fast and observes total silence. It is a day for meditation.

# The Bahá'í Faith



*'The earth is but  
one country and  
mankind its citizens'*

**Bahá'u'lláh**



## Introduction

There are approximately 5 million members of the Bahá'í Faith worldwide. It is the second most widespread of all world religions - currently found in 253 countries.

Central to the Bahá'í Faith is the conviction that all people are equal and share a common destiny. It is a monotheistic faith that recognizes the validity of all the world's great religions. The religion was founded approximately 160 years ago, making it the world's youngest monotheistic faith.

There are approximately 6,000 Bahá'ís in the UK today.

## History of the Bahá'í Faith

### The Herald

The Bahá'í Faith began with a youth, named Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, known as the Báb (Gate), who in May, 1844, at the age of twenty-five, advanced the claim of being the Herald who, according to the sacred Scriptures of previous Dispensations, must prepare the way for the advent of One greater than Himself, Whose mission would be to inaugurate an era of righteousness and peace, an era that would be hailed as the consummation of all previous Dispensations, and initiate a new cycle in the religious history of mankind.

Swift and severe persecution, launched by the organised forces of Church and State in Iran, precipitated His arrest, His exile to the mountains of Adhírbáyján, His imprisonment in the fortresses of Máh-Kú and Chihríq, and His execution, in July, 1850, by a firing squad in the public square of Tabríz. No less than twenty thousand of his followers were put to death with barbarous cruelty.

### Bahá'u'lláh

Mírzá Husayn-'Alí, surnamed Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God), a native of Mázindarán, Whose advent the Báb had foretold, was imprisoned in Tihrán, was banished, in 1852, to Baghdád, and then to Constantinople and Adrianople, and finally to the prison city of 'Akká, where He remained incarcerated for twenty-four years, and in whose neighborhood He passed away in 1892. In the course of His banishment, He formulated in over a hundred volumes, the principles of His Faith.

### Traditions and beliefs

Like Christianity, Bahá'ís believe in one God and that Jesus is His Son. Like Islam, Bahá'ís believe that God has sent many prophets, including Jesus and Muhammad. Bahá'ís have no priests, ministers or prayer leaders, and have very little public ritual. Daily private prayer and study are essential parts of individual Bahá'í life, and the Bahá'í community meets regularly for worship and consultation.

The primary belief is in the oneness of the human race. The Bahá'í goal is lasting world peace and unity which Bahá'ís believe can be reached only when the barriers of prejudice - from gender imbalance to racism - have been broken.

Bahá'ís believe all humans are equal, part of God's creation and on a spiritual journey which begins in the womb, continues throughout life and goes on after death. There is no concept of "heaven" or "hell" - at least, not as places. To Bahá'ís, "heaven" is closeness to God and "hell" is distance from God. In this life, we make choices which bring us closer to God: developing honesty, generosity, justice in our dealings with others, and other spiritual qualities.

Like people of all religions, Bahá'ís believe that actions in this life prepare us for the next. Bahá'ís pray and meditate, hold an annual fast, and study the Bahá'í writings. The Bahá'í teachings make clear that work done in the spirit of service is equivalent to worship. This practical expression of the Bahá'í Faith takes many forms. There are Bahá'í social and economic development projects around the world - schools, village literacy projects, healthcare, and the development of village democracies. All work done in service to others, Bahá'ís believe, takes us closer to God.

After death, Bahá'ís believe that the journey towards God continues - and, if we use our time in this life well, we will already have made progress in this journey. Bahá'ís do not believe that non-believers will not reach God, but they will not have come as far along the way. Bahá'ís believe that in the end, however, we are all dependent on God's mercy.

Bahá'u'lláh's main message was that the earth is truly one country, and that lasting peace will be impossible until we really live with this in our hearts and minds. Bahá'ís regard world peace as being not just desirable, but inevitable. However Bahá'ís are not pacifists. The religion took no stance on the Iraq war, for example or

any other conflict. It takes no sides in the political controversies of the day. Nor do Bahá'ís have any quarrel with the other great religions. Bahá'ís believe that all the religions come from one divine source: God. Bahá'í followers believe that they are parts of a single historical process taking humankind from its beginnings to the global civilisation that Bahá'ís believe will be the inevitable development in human life.

### Worship

Bahá'í houses of worship hold ceremonies which include readings from sacred texts, prayers, meditations and choral music. At certain times, fasting is also practiced. The Faith has no clergy or sacraments. There is no equivalent of the Sabbath for Bahá'ís, The Nineteen Day Feast would be the closest approximation. As the name implies, this observance occurs every 19th day.

The Bahá'í community believes that in offering service to humanity one is worshipping God, however there is still a very strong emphasis on the need for community worship and Bahá'í communities hold regular devotional meetings that are open to people from all faith communities.

As already has been said, there are few rituals in the Bahá'í Faith:

- The obligatory daily prayer.
- At funerals, the recitation of a special Prayer for the Dead.
- A simple marriage vow.

### Holy Days, Festivals and Rituals

#### Holy Days and Celebrations

- **Naw-Rúz** The New Year, celebrated on the first day of spring (March 21st)
- **Ayyám-i-Ha** 26 February - 1 March. Days in which followers should offer hospitality, gift-giving and kindness
- **Fasting** 2 - 21 March. Fasting is required from sunrise to sunset. This occurs during the last calendar month of the Bahá'í year
- **Ridván** 21 April - 2 May. It marks the time that the Bahá'u'lláh spent in the garden of Ridván, just before he announced that he was the prophet heralded by the Báb
- **Bahá'u'lláh's public declaration of His mission** April 21, 29, and May 2
- **Báb's declaration of His mission** 23 May
- **Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh** 3am, on the 29th May

- **Martyrdom of the Báb** 9 July
- **Birth of the Báb** 20 October
- **Birth of Bahá'u'lláh** 12 November
- **The day of the Covenant** 26 November
- **The Passing of Abdu'l-Bahá** 28th November

### Learning Points from Part 2

1. Greater understanding of each of the following faiths in Great Britain

Judaism

The Bahá'í Faith

Islam

Hinduism

Janism

Buddhism

Sikhism

Christian

2. Better awareness of the nature of religious diversity in Britain.



# Part 3

## Working together

### Legal requirements and practical considerations

This section aims to:

- Provide an **overview** of the equality provisions contained in The Employment Equality (Religion and belief) Regulations 2003 - particularly with regard to different religious beliefs
- Develop an appreciation of how organisations can be more proactive in meeting the needs the **needs of different faiths in the workplace**

### The Employment Equality / (Religion or Belief) Regulations

#### Introduction

The new Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations became effective on December 2nd 2003. The Regulations implement the principle of equal treatment in employment and training, irrespective of religion or belief.

Particular religious groups may be seen as a single monolithic block, static and unresponsive to change and new realities, rather than as a diverse and often progressive group. They may wrongly be seen as not having aims or values in common with the wider community around them. Lack of knowledge and insight can lead to stereotyping, misunderstandings or misrepresentations. A Muslim woman wearing a head scarf (hijab) is perceived as oppressed; a Muslim man with a beard is viewed as threatening.

Religion or beliefs discrimination may occur in not very obvious ways and tackling it effectively requires commitment and creativity. Treating everyone the same, irrespective of their group identities, ignores the importance of that identity to the individual and importantly, demonstrates the extent to which the dominant culture and religion drives the way we do things. Awareness of the needs of other religions and beliefs is therefore very important.

#### Why the Regulations have been introduced

The Equality (Religious or Belief) Regulations have been introduced because unfair discrimination has such a damaging impact on people's lives. They are part of a commitment to ensure that, in law, people can no longer be denied jobs because of prejudice; harassment can be tackled promptly and effectively and people have an equal chance of training and promotion, whatever their background.

There is also a growing understanding of the benefits to business of treating all people fairly and with dignity and respect.

Such benefits can include:

- Attracting candidates from non-traditional labour pools
- Enjoying positive productive working relationships and cooperation
- Effective, value added team work
- Reduction in time consuming negative activities, complaints, arguments, grievances etc
- High staff retention / low staff turnover
- Reduced absenteeism / sickness absence
- Staff willing and happy to provide cover on days when the dominant religion(s) wish to be absent - for example, Christmas
- A high return on investment in training and development activity
- Building a wide inventory of skills and experience
- Flexibility to provide cover during times when dominant religions prefer to take leave, for example, Christmas, Easter
- More diversity, new ideas, different perspectives, creativity, innovation...
- Enhanced company reputation as a good employer
- Improved corporate image
- Improved, informed customer care responsive to diverse customer needs
- Employee loyalty
- Advantages in dealing with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders in multicultural and globalised markets

### The Employment Equality Directive

- Implements the principle of equal treatment in employment and training irrespective of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age in employment and training.
- Includes identical provisions to the Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC on definitions of discrimination, rights of legal redress and the sharing of the burden of proof.
- Allows for limited exceptions to the principle of equal treatment, for example, to preserve the ethos of religious organisations.

### Who do the Regulations cover?

The Regulations apply to all employers/businesses whatever their size. They cover the private and public sector, including the police.

The Regulations also protect office holders appointed by the Government and other office holders where they fall within the scope of the Directive (that is if they are paid and are subject to some form of direction.) This means, for example, that the regulations will cover clergy and judicial offices including magistrates and Employment Tribunal members.

The Regulations do not cover people who hold elected office, or an office that is not on a par with a job, for example, an executor - appointed under a will.

The Regulations also outlaw discrimination on grounds of religion or belief by:

- *Barristers in relation to an offer of pupillage or tenancy*
- *Advocates in relation to taking any one as a pupil*
- *Partnerships within firms*
- *Trade organisations*
- *Qualification bodies*
- *Providers of vocational training*
- *Institutions of further and higher education*
- *Employment agencies*
- *Professional and other qualification bodies*

### The Regulations - An Overview

The Regulations apply to all aspects of employment including recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training. They also apply to vocational training.

The Regulations make it unlawful on the grounds of religion or belief to:

- **Directly discriminate against anyone.** This means that a person cannot be treated less favourable because of their religion or belief. This includes treating a person less favourable because they are perceived to have a particular religion or belief, irrespective of whether that perception is right or wrong. It also includes treating a person less favourably because of someone else's religion or belief, for example, the religion of their spouse or partner.
- **Discriminate indirectly against anyone.** Indirect discrimination occurs where a person applies a criterion, provision or practice equally but people of a particular religion or belief are disadvantaged because they are not able or less able to satisfy the requirements of particular criterion, provision or practice. This will be unlawful unless it can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Victimise someone** because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation as a result of the new regulations. This also applies where someone is victimised because they have given or intend to act as a witness in relation to a complaint.
- **Subject someone to harassment.** Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating having regard to all the circumstances and the perception of the person harassed. It should be 'reasonable considered' that the person's dignity has been violated or that the environment has been offensive.
- **Discriminate or harass** someone in certain circumstances **after the working relationship has ended**, for example in the giving of references.

#### Notes

The Regulations do permit discrimination in very limited circumstances where a genuine occupational requirement exists. The employer must be able to demonstrate that she or he has an ethos based on religion or belief that results in a genuine and determining occupational requirement for a worker to be of a particular religion or belief and that it is proportionate to apply that requirement in a particular case.

The Regulations provide for positive action to be used to '*prevent or compensate for disadvantage linked to a persons religion or belief.*' Positive action may be used therefore, to attract job applicants from minority communities or to encourage people from different religions and beliefs to apply for training and development opportunities.

# 1. The Hindu at Work



## Holidays and Festivals

Hindus celebrate many festivals but the most popular are Kashna Janmastami, Durga-Puja and Diwali, the autumn festival of lights that also marks the new financial year. For Hindus, these festivals are as pivotal as the Sabbath for Jews or the two Eids for Muslims.

## Diet

Hindus uphold the sacredness of all life, including animal life. Devout Hindus will not eat meat or fish. Some will rarely eat eggs. Even those Hindus who have decided to eat meat will nonetheless refuse to eat beef since the cow is seen as a sacred animal. Pork is also avoided. Hinduism forbids the consumption of alcohol.

Strict Hindus and Hare Krishnas do not eat garlic and onions. Strictly orthodox Hindus will not eat food prepared by someone not practising to the same religious standard. Some Hindus regard as unclean any utensils touched by non-practitioners. As an employer, your catering staff should bear in mind some of these sensitive dietary restrictions, and cater for them insofar as is reasonably practicable in the workplace.

## Clothes

Hindus do not keep strictly to any specific cultural dress. They will happily wear clothes from other countries, including western apparel. Nonetheless, many Hindu women (especially from the older generation) would prefer to wear a sari, a long piece of material wrapped around the body, over a fitted blouse and petticoat. Married Hindu women also wear a bindi - a red powder spot marked on the forehead. Hindu men typically wear a pyjama (narrow trousers) and kurta which is a baggy overshirt; Hindus rarely wear anything on the head.

## New Baby

Six days after a baby's birth, there is a ceremony for naming the child. The Chudthi ceremony is important for the parents and relatives because it is believed that the child's future destiny is declared here. The mother and child visit the temple forty days after the birth.

## Marriage

Many Hindu marriages take place in a Mandir (temple). The bride is 'given away' by a closely related married couple, usually the bride's parents. Several other complex rituals are meticulously followed under the guidance of a qualified priest who recites appropriate parts of scripture in the original Sanskrit.

## Death

When a Hindu dies, a priest is called to invoke blessings on the corpse. Elders in the family wash and prepare the body for the funeral. The corpse is taken to a crematorium by relatives; the eldest and youngest son must be present for the required rituals to be properly performed. The ashes are sprinkled into flowing water as soon as possible after the cremation. A good employer will consider favourably any applications for leave related to the need for celebrating rituals (such as Chudthi) or for mourning the loss of relatives.

## 2. The Sikh at Work



### Holidays and Festivals

Sikhs celebrate several festivals that combine a religious with a cultural significance. The central festival is Vaisakhi is a dual celebration incorporating both a harvest festival and a commemoration of Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the Khalsa, the pure brotherhood of Sikhs. Sikhs celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. They celebrate these main anniversaries, Guru Nanak's birthday, Guru Gobind Singh's birthday and the day of the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Devji.

### Diet

Sikhism forbids smoking and the consumption of alcohol. Any devout Sikhs will not eat eggs or any animal by-product. You will now find many Sikhs who do eat meat. Ritually slaughtered meat, such as halal meat, is forbidden. Sikhs regard the cow as a sacred animal, therefore, do not eat beef. The pig is thought to be dirty and pork is therefore, avoided. As an employer, your catering staff should perhaps be advised about some of these sensitive dietary restrictions and cater for them insofar as is reasonably practicable in the workplace.

### Clothes

Sikh men are religiously required to wear turbans to cover their uncut hair. (A Sikh woman may also wear a turban). Young Sikh boys will wear their long hair tied in a top knot. Sikhism originated in India, so, the Shalwar Kameez (long tunic and baggy trousers) is worn by women while the pyjama kurta (trousers and loose fitting top) is worn by men. Many Sikh living in the West have adapted their dress sense to suit work and modern westernised lifestyle patterns. The five Ks will be worn on the person: some will be visible, such as Kesh (the uncut hair covered by a turban) and Kara (the steel bracelet) while others, such as the Kirpan (sword) and Kachcha (shorts) will be worn under the clothes.

Some married Sikh women, like their Hindu counterparts, may also wear a bindi - a red powder spot marked on the forehead.

### New Baby

Although the Sikh scripture proclaims the equality of the sexes, Sikhs generally celebrate the birth of a boy with greater joy because men are traditionally expected to bear responsibility for the family. Six weeks after birth, a child is ceremoniously named; the mother and child attend the Gurdwara to be blessed and to settle on a choice of name. Guru Gobind Singh introduced the practice of using the middle name Singh (lion) for a boy and Kaur (princess) for a girl.

### Marriage

Punjabi Sikhs have several distinctive rituals surrounding marriage. The official engagement, the Kural, takes place either before the wedding day or on the actual marriage day at the Gurdwara. A ceremony known as Mainyan for entertaining guests and relatives, takes place two days before the wedding day. The climax is the Anand Karaj (the ceremony of joy) which takes place in the Gurdwara and solemnises the marriage bond.

### Death

On death, Sikhs must be cremated and their ashes are scattered over flowing water. The family washes the corpse and dresses it in new clothes before it is taken for cremation. The son or the oldest relative starts the cremation ritual. Burial is prohibited.

## 3. The Muslim at Work



### Holidays and Festivals

Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadhan and the Eid-ul-Adha roughly seventy days later. The dates of these festivals are predictable well in advance although there can be some uncertainty over precise dates.

Devout Muslims pray at dawn (Fajr), in the early afternoon (Zuhr), late afternoon (Asr), at sunset (Maghrib) and finally, late in the evening (Isha). The believer must perform ablutions before prayers can commence. Depending on the time of year, the number of prayers falling within normal working hours vary from one in the summer to three during the winter. Muslims are encouraged to attend the midday congregational prayer on Fridays in a communal setting. Every Muslim adult is required to fast in Ramadhan. He or she must abstain from food, drink and sex from dawn to sunset for one lunar month. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, menstruating women and those on a journey are exempt from fasting, as are people who are ill and whose condition will worsen by fasting.

All missed fasts must be made up at a later date. The month of Ramadhan, based on the lunar calendar may fall at any time of the year thus Ramadhan falls during each of the four seasons with 10 days shift every year.

Some Muslims may apply for leave (for 1-3 weeks) in order to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca during the Hajj season.

### Diet

In Islam, all food is classified as halah (lawful) or haram (prohibited). Religious law requires that animals be slaughtered. An animal should not be stunned before slaughter; a quick deep stroke of a sharp knife across the throat is required. (This resembles the Jewish preparation of ritually prepared meat). Pork and alcohol are forbidden.

As an employer, your canteen staff should bear in mind some of these sensitive dietary restrictions and cater for them insofar as is reasonably practicable in the workplace. You should bear in mind that utensils used to serve haram food may not be used on halal food.

### Clothes

Both men and women are required to dress and behave modestly. Once a young woman reaches puberty, she must cover her hair and wear loose flowing opaque garments which conceal the shape of her body. This style of dress (hijab) must be practised in the presence of all men except those whom a woman is forbidden to marry, such as the father or brothers. Men should also dress modestly. Western clothes may be worn so long as these fulfil the criteria for modesty mentioned earlier.

### New Baby

Although the Quran regards men and women as spiritually equal, it imposes different duties, specific to their gender. In most Muslim countries, there are local cultural rituals surrounding birth, marriage and death, which are permissible as long as they do not conflict with the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.

The father (or if he is absent, some other close male relative) recites the call to prayer in the ears of the newborn child. Boys are circumcised on or around the seventh day. To celebrate the birth, two sheep are sacrificed for a boy and one for a girl.

### Marriage

Islamic law requires all Muslims to marry. Marriage is a legal contract (nikah) between a man and woman. It is not a sacrament; divorce is permitted but discouraged. A marriage is rendered invalid if either or both parties refuse to freely consent to it. Weddings are normally celebrated with much pomp and ceremony though the faith encourages moderation.

### Death

A corpse must be buried as soon as possible after death. Post-mortem examinations are discouraged unless for legal reasons and cremation is forbidden. Relatives of the deceased wash the body while reciting prayers. The body is wrapped in white material. The body is then taken to either the mosque or the cemetery where members of the Muslim community offer the funeral (Janazah) prayer. The body is laid to rest with the deceased's head facing the holy city of Mecca.

## 4. The Jew at Work

### Holidays and Festivals



The halakah requires Jews to refrain from work on the Sabbath in imitation of God's rest on the first sabbath. The Sabbath starts on Friday before dusk and lasts for about 25 hours. A practising Jew must be able to leave work in sufficient time to arrive home by the start of the Sabbath.

Apart from the weekly Sabbath, there are twenty one holy days in the Jewish calendar: Passover (8 days); Pentecost (2 days); New Year (2 days); Day of Atonement (1 day) Simchat Torah (1 day) and Tabernacles (7 days). All festivals commence immediately before dusk and may fall on a weekend or a weekday. It is unlikely that a Jewish employee would take all 21 days.

### Diet

Jews are religiously obliged to eat kosher food. The precise rules are complex but, in practice, a devout Jew can only eat certain kinds of meat and fish. Meat must be prepared in a ritually acceptable manner. Meat and dairy products may not be eaten in the same meal. Pork is forbidden to Jews. As an employer, your canteen staff should perhaps be advised about the major dietary restrictions and cater for them insofar as is reasonably practicable in the workplace.

### Clothes

Devout Jewish men keep their head covered at all times generally by wearing a Kippah (skull cap). Orthodox Jewish women are required to dress modestly. An employer who prevents them from doing so could be guilty of an act of racial discrimination. Special dress regulations apply to ultra-orthodox groups of Jews.

### New Baby

For Jews, life begins at birth. The father is expected to mark the birth of his child by "blessing the reading of the Torah" in the synagogue. A blessing is also recited for the health of the mother and child. A girl will be named at this time. A boy will be named on circumcision which normally takes place on the eighth day of the boy's life.

### Marriage

Jews are required to marry: the command to marry is the first mitzvah (commandment) in the Torah. As part of the wedding ceremony, the husband gives the wife a ketubah, a written marriage contract. This contract spells out the husband's obligations to the wife during marriage, conditions of inheritance upon his death, and obligations of support of children. It also stipulates support for the wife in the event of divorce. The marriage ceremony itself is a colourful combination of blessings, symbolic wine drinking and celebration.

### Death

The funeral of a Jew must take place as soon as possible after death, sometimes even as early as the end of the day following the death. The body is cleaned and wrapped in a plain linen shroud in preparation for burial. (Cremation is prohibited). After the funeral, the immediate family of the deceased mourn for a week. This is the Shiva ceremony during which the immediate family stays at home, saying prayers and receiving condolences from visitors.

A good employer will consider favourably any applications for leave related to the need, for example, attending a funeral at short notice - he would grant as compassionate leave.

## Exercise

### Organisation Review

'Employers should consider whether their policies, systems, rules and procedures directly or indirectly discriminate against staff of particular religions and beliefs, and if so whether reasonable changes might be made.'

Can you identify any systems, procedures or training needs in your organisation which could be further addressed to promote and encourage equality and respect for all traditions?

1. Read the 'at work' section (5 minutes)
2. Produce a checklist on a flip chart (20 minutes)

Here are a few headings to help you.

#### Individual employee level

- Has your organisation found out about different individuals from minority faiths? Has it enquired about individual needs and requirements?
- How well does your organisation respond to this information? What else could be done?
- Does your appraisal / review system take account of identifying issues and needs in respect of faith issues?

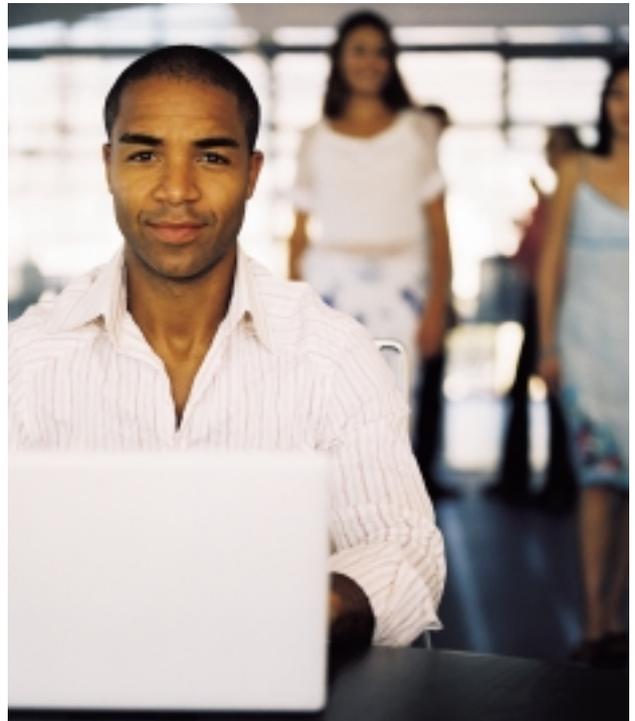
#### Staff training and development

Which of the following may need to be developed:

- Training needs audit
- Induction training
- Management / Supervisory development programmes
- Appraisal training for Managers / Supervisors

### Learning Points from Part 3

1. An overview of the equality provisions contained in The Employment Equality (Religion and belief) Regulations 2003 with regard to different religious beliefs.
2. A greater appreciation of how organisations can be more proactive in meeting the needs of different faiths in the workplace.



## Part 4

# Creativity in Religion and Belief

### A case study and model

This section aims to:

- Look creatively at religion and belief issues in the context of children (case study)
- Suggest a model and approach to assist us in the workplace

#### Quote

*“Every time a child starts a new school, the parents have to go in and make a stand. The problem is that there are a lot of grey areas, and what might be an issue or okay with some parents won’t be for others. You end up having to explain to teachers, and not all parents say the same thing. The outcome of these sorts of encounters depends on the particular person’s level of articulateness. I know this isn’t intended as a form of persecution, but it involves starting from a negative view of the issue at hand.”*

### Common elements of different faiths in schools

There are a number of common elements to consider

1. Each faith tradition sees itself as worthy of consideration in its own right rather than in terms of another. Thus, for example, Sikhism should not be treated as a development of Hinduism.
2. To say that two people belong to the same faith is not to say that they practice it in the same way. Statements which begin, ‘All Buddhists ...’ or ‘All Christians ...’ are usually wrong. It is important therefore to consult parents for clarification of the family’s faith position and its effect on the practicalities of school life. We should also avoid making any one pupil accountable for a whole faith tradition.
3. Our pupils are from Northern Ireland, but the different faith traditions on which we are focusing are world-wide. News headlines about events in India may have particular significance for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Asian Christians.
4. We need to listen before we judge. Stories which seem fanciful or customs which seem strange when first encountered may prove full of significance on closer acquaintance.
5. The particular practices of a faith tradition, be they in worship, in food, in festivals or celebrations, provide points of access, allowing the outsider to experience something of what it is like to be a member.

No single training pack can provide definitive answers to all the questions which may arise from Interfaith relationships and we therefore cannot stress too strongly the value of a network of local contacts within the faith communities. No one of us will be able to get everything right all of the time and so our personal attitude is critical at all times.

## Practical issues in Schools - Ten points to consider.

### 1. Dates

Some members of some faith communities find the use of BC and AD in dates offensive. To say that a date is 'before Christ', and even more so to say that something happened in 'the year of our Lord' is to ascribe a theological significance to Jesus which is only appropriate for Christians. An increasingly common alternative terminology is BCE (before the common era) and CE (common era). This accepts as a matter of fact that the Christian system of dating has become the commonly accepted system without ascribing theological significance to it.

### 2. Attendance

Being marked sick/absent when it's a religious holiday for members of a particular faith, is inappropriate.

### 3. Names

It is important that teachers and other school staff respect children's names which are different or unusual. Learning to pronounce names properly is a serious matter (especially for the child concerned) and should never become a joke between the teacher and other children.

### 4. Dress and modesty

There are various dress codes associated with religious and cultural behaviour. Most will include keeping legs or arms or head (or any combination of these) covered. Because of the diversity of practice it is necessary to be sensitive to individual requirements. For many religious communities the guiding principle behind dress requirements is that of modesty. This may be challenged by activities such as swimming, PE and games. Parental requests need to be acknowledged and dealt with sensitively. This will include appropriate arrangements for changing and showering, particularly as pupils approach puberty.

### 5. Ethnic origin and religious affiliation

Ethnic origin is not a reliable indicator of religious affiliation and care should be taken not to make assumptions of this kind. For example, a child whose parents come from the Punjab could be Christian, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh.

## 6. Festivals

Religious groups do not necessarily celebrate the same festivals in the same way and the emphasis placed on festivals will vary. Local communities are the best source of information on this. At Christmas and Easter, difficulties may arise from an assumption that everyone is a Christian. This is especially true of Christmas which is much more widely celebrated among the general public than Easter. Known Jews and Muslims have been asked in media interviews, 'What will you be having for Christmas dinner?' Some members of other faith communities will celebrate Christmas in a secular way, that is, by eating Christmas food and exchanging presents, but this is not to be assumed. From a Christian standpoint it is important that the true religious significance of these festivals is understood.

## 7. Food and fasting

Dietary requirements are complex and it is important to discuss them with parents. All involved in the preparation or serving of food should be made aware of these needs.

Use separate serving spoons for separate dishes; some kinds of food are forbidden and therefore need to be served separately. Washing facilities should be available to all children as this is a religious requirement for some as well as a matter of hygiene for all.

Some children may be unfamiliar with the use of a knife and fork. Adverse comments on this need to be dealt with gently but firmly.

Teachers and supervisors should be aware that at certain times of the year children, particularly Muslims, Bahá'ís and Hindus, may be fasting during the school day. This may also include a prohibition on any intake of fluid. All staff should be kept informed of any children who are fasting and of the arrangements that have been made for them. Excessive exercise should be avoided and children given the opportunity to stay indoors during very hot weather. Topic work on 'Food' should be avoided as far as possible at such times.

## 8. Health education

Lessons in health education may be a cause for concern among some religious communities, including some Christian groups. If it is considered axiomatic within a faith community that sexual relationships take place only within marriage there may be objection to the provision of information on contraceptives. Similar objections may be raised to any discussion of sexual relationships between members of the same sex. While such issues are most likely to be raised explicitly in health education lessons (by whatever title they are known) they may of course occur spontaneously in many other contexts. It is not suggested that such discussion should always be prevented but that recognition should be given to the fact that some religious communities do not consider sexual ethics to be a matter of personal choice.

## 9. Religious education lessons

Teachers of RE will naturally regard children of the faith communities within their classrooms as living resources, but they need to be very cautious about the use they make of them. No pupil should be made

accountable for the beliefs and practices of an entire faith community. It is important in religious education lessons to say 'Christians believe ...' just as one would say 'Hindus believe ...' or 'Muslims believe ...' and not 'We believe ...' which rests on an assumption that everyone in the room is of a single faith community.

It may be helpful at the start of the school year for teachers to speak with parents of non-Christian children in order to plan alternative and relevant material (verse, text, etc) that Children from other faiths could study or learn.

### 10. Washing facilities

Washing before certain activities is a religious requirement for members of some faith communities. It is important to ensure that such facilities are always available.



### Group Exercise Christmas in School

How would you advise a primary school teacher who has a mixed faith class for the first time (of 8 year olds) coming up to Christmas. What should the teacher do about the nativity play?

- List all the options
- Who should she/he talk to or consult with?
- What are the key issues?

### Creativity in Religion & Belief - a possible model

- Identification of need
- Consultation with the relevant people
- Generation of options
- Evaluation of options and decision
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation

### Learning Points from Part 4

1. The importance of looking creatively at religion and belief issues, the need for consultation and the generation of options (children case study)
2. One possible model and approach to assist us in the workplace



## Part 5

# Building good relations with people of different faiths and beliefs

## Action plan

The aims of this section are to:

- Outline the work of Diversiton and how we are helping organisations and individuals
- Draft a '**Personal Action Plan**' to build upon and take forward today's training.

## Introduction

People of other faiths do not live in books, but in houses or flats. They wait for buses, look after children, and suffer from backache. They probably know as much or as little about their faith as an average Christian. They may be more aware of being in a minority in Northern Ireland, so may have to explain their beliefs from time to time.

Once we meet, we realise that Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or Jews, or whoever we are meeting, are not what we thought. Many of the inherited stereotypes, the images we have subconsciously absorbed, the assumptions we have built up over the years, are simply wrong. What we used to have in mind when we thought of a Muslim, a Hindu or a Sikh does not conform with what we find when we meet Zia or Jyoti or Bhupinder. There are no text-book Buddhists or Jews. There are only people.

These people share in their own tradition, but each has made their tradition their own in a different way, holding firm to some things, but neglecting others, or being quite unconcerned or even unconscious of them.

In recent years many Christians have been making similar discoveries about other Christians, in the ecumenical movement. Baptists have learned that Roman Catholics disagree among themselves, sometimes hotly. So do Muslims. A Christian from one of the Orthodox Churches may be bewildered by the endless variety of Protestant Churches. There is an even greater variety of Hindus and of Buddhists.

## Summary

It is important to spend some time thinking about the training today, the information, the exercises and the discussions.

During this programme we have looked at many issues and ideas. We have considered the implications at work, throughout many aspects of life in Britain today.

But what does it all mean to you as an individual? Does this training mean that you will think about religious diversity in a different way? Will you do anything different - at home, in work or when you meet with others from a different faith background? Will you respond more openly or positively? Has today helped you to develop your own attitudes or thinking about certain situations?

Finally, we ask you to build upon your learning today and draw up a checklist of 'things to do next'. This is your **Personal Action Plan**.

What can you do to build upon your learning today? You might like to think in terms of work, home, social life, etc

Things to do next - my list	Date - When I will do this	Priority ranking

Have you thought about some of these ...

- **Share** some of what I have learned to-day with other members of my family
- Check out the latest training packages from Diversiton
- **Learn** more about other faiths on the internet. Start by checking out

[www.diversiton.com](http://www.diversiton.com)

[www.Interfaith.org.uk](http://www.Interfaith.org.uk)

[www.Interfaith-center.org](http://www.Interfaith-center.org)

[www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)

[www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion)

- **Arrange** a follow up discussion with your work colleagues (e.g. in two weeks time) when you have had an opportunity to reflect on the information and ideas arising from today.
- **Identify** specific action points for changes needed at work in response to the Employment Equality (religion & belief) Regulations 2003

### Learning Points from Part 5

1. An appreciation of the work and activities of Diversiton.
2. A 'Personal Action Plan' to take away and build upon the training.



### Course Evaluation Form

This form should be completed and returned to the trainer at the end of this course.

Thank you for participating so well in the training today.

# Course Evaluation Form - Religion & Belief

*Diversiton would like to thank you for taking part in the training today. We hope that you found it useful and enjoyable. This feedback will provide important information for the development of future initiatives. Please take a minute to answer the questions below and then give the form back to your trainer.*

**Your Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

What was your overall impression of the programme?

Which aspects did you find most interesting or useful?

What was most challenging?

What aspects of your organisation do you think need to be developed to comply with the requirements of The Employment Equality (Religion and belief) Regulations 2003?

Will you think differently about other faiths as a result of this programme? How?

What is your main priority as a follow up to this course?

Would you like to be kept informed of future initiatives and courses? Any particular areas?

**Thank You**