



The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 6.21

Eastern Religions 1

Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism



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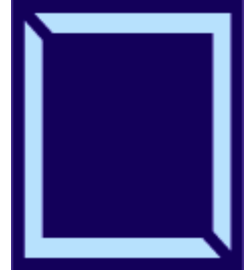
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Chapter 6.21

Eastern Religions 1



Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism

- Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism are three of the traditional religions of India. All contribute to the spiritual depth and breadth and quality and value of the world religion.
- The real value or contribution of these eastern religions is not so much in the cultural-religious dimension but in the philosophical-moral framework and in the perspective of religion as a moral philosophy and means of individual practice (progress) rather than in the more western sense of religious authority and imposed teachings.

Eastern Religions 1

There is no conveniently proper way to categorize or organize the various eastern religions, but they can be grouped almost artificially into those traditional religions which predominate in the Indian subcontinent at the present time and those which predominate at the present time in the far east, i.e., in China and Japan. Thus the first group includes Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, while the second group includes Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, and Zen. And while Islam is a major religion in the eastern hemisphere, it belongs perhaps more logically with the western religions due to its more intimate relationship to Christianity.

Hinduism is by no means the only significant religion in India, but it enjoys a majority and is related significantly to both Jainism and Sikhism. Thus Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism are three of the traditional religions of India. But each of these (and more) is a significant religion in its own right, and each contributes to the whole (collective world religion). Within each of these religions there are a number of sects, indeed within Hinduism there are many. Each has a peculiar emphasis and each offers opportunities for improving one's relationship to God (the higher Self). Moreover, within Hinduism there are major religious movements that might be considered religions, but there is a sufficient commonality, much like the various Protestant denominations or religions of Christianity, although distinctions between and within religions are sometimes almost arbitrary.

Hinduism is perhaps significant on a broader scale than just India due to the effective export and elucidation of various metaphysical and theosophical principles steeped in Sanskrit terminology that are traditionally associated with Hinduism (and principally with theosophy in its non-historical sense of ageless wisdom). These principles are not exclusive to Hinduism, but they are much more a part of outer (popular) Hinduism than is the case of most religions (where the inner teachings are not popularized). While Jainism and Sikhism contribute in part due to their respective emphases, e.g., ahimsa in the case of Jainism, and freedom from artificial (caste) constraint in the case of Sikhism. But while Hinduism has close ties to Buddhism and Sikhism, Sikhism has close

ties to both Hinduism and Islam (whereas Hinduism does not, properly, have close ties with Islam). Thus all of these religions are interrelated in various ways, meaningfully and otherwise.

But none of these distinctions really matter. What really matters is the underlying mystical core, which is common to all religions, and the flavor or features that each contributes. Collectively, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism (and theosophy) contribute a great deal through underlying principles, like evolution in consciousness (progressive reincarnation), the nature of dharma and karma, achievement of self-mastery as a stepping-stone to liberation, the various practices and means of yoga, the various cosmological insights, the nature of life and illusion in this world, the relationship of the human being both to God and to "other" lives, and the relationship between God and the various gods (aspects of the one God).

The real value or contribution of these eastern religions is not so much in the cultural-religious dimension but in the philosophical-moral framework and in the perspective of religion as a moral philosophy and means of individual practice (progress) rather than in the more western sense of religious authority and imposed teachings. It is not only the similar inner core that matters, but also the synthesis of inner principles framed in different ways.



Section 6.211



Hinduism

- Hinduism is santana-dharma, the eternal religion of India with its diversity of scriptures and underlying themes of unity, karma, and (properly) progressive reincarnation. In Hinduism, there is one God and religious (spiritual) practice is directed toward realization of that oneness with God. Hinduism exemplifies the unity of the One and the three (Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma) and the many.

Hinduism 1

Hinduism would seem to be the dominant or majority religion of contemporary India, although not without influencing and being influenced by other religions that have emerged or have engaged the Indian subcontinent from time to time. Some would say that theosophy borrows a great deal from Hinduism, and to some extent from Buddhism, but the obverse may also be true.

Like all God-centered religions, the mystical core of Hinduism relates to personal spiritual growth, to the attainment of freedom from the perceived world, to transcending materialism and egoism, to achieving communion with God (within). But unlike many of the world's religions, the outer emphasis of Hinduism is more closely related to the inner, more mystical emphasis. While quite complex and diverse in its outer machinations, the basic teachings and principles of Hinduism are quite simple.

One of the most basic principles, usually suppressed in other outer religions (but nonetheless present in every mystical core), is reincarnation or the progressive, cyclic evolution of the soul which incarnates for experience and expression and eventually achieves liberation and moves on to another, higher level. Cycles are an important aspect of the Hindu tradition, as there is great appreciation for the cycles of the soul, the cycles of life in this world, and the cycles of the world itself. Another basic principle, accentuated perhaps in other religions, is the oneness of God. Many think of Hinduism as pantheistic or polytheistic, having many deities, but it is more a matter of perspective (and (mis)understanding) and is really no more so than other religions, e.g., Catholicism. In fact, there is one God who lives through all lives. And consequently there are many gods within the one God. Each god or deity simply symbolizes some aspect of the one (real, true) God. It is simply a matter of perspective. Hindus do not properly worship animals or things or people any more than Christians rever their saints and Muslims rever their martyrs. But Hindus do seem to recognize God within animals and things and people more so than most other peoples.

While meditation is a major aspect of all religions in their mystical cores, it is Hinduism and the yoga of Hinduism that has popularized various meditation disciplines and practices in more modern times. While all religions have their special prayers and mantras, it is Hinduism that more directly and more outwardly explains the mantric value of prayer. While all religions properly embrace some sense of karma, it is Hinduism that more directly explains the nature of karma. But it is really the combination of some sense of karma and some sense of the grace of God that more readily approaches the truth of the matter. And it is in yoga, progressive communion or union with God, that leads the spiritual student of any faith toward his or her goal.

There are many scriptures within Hinduism, including the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. The classic language of these scriptures, Sanskrit, is particularly well-suited to the expression of metaphysical and spiritual and theosophical principles. Thus many spiritual students of eastern and western faiths study the traditional scriptures of Hinduism. But much like reading the Holy Bible of Christianity, it is the symbolic value of the words and scriptures that really matters and not so much the stories themselves. And while westerners tend to interpret eastern concepts in more familiar terms, that generally leads to misunderstanding. Instead of trying to fit something to an existing frame of reference (belief or perception system), one is better advised to expand and broaden and deepen the reference frame.

† Commentary No. 1313

Hinduism 2

Thus Hinduism, like most eastern religions, if properly considered, offers potentially to the western student a deeper, more profound understanding of his or her own religion. The trinity of Hinduism (Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva), for example, is not unrelated to the Christian trinity. And there are many parallels between the various religions, each offering a broader view than perhaps otherwise realized.

Perhaps it should be kept in mind that each religion addresses particular needs of its peoples at a particular time in history, and then grows and adapts as it

needs to. Some religions stray from their principles and become entangled in no-longer-meaningful rituals or details that do not really matter. But in the core of each, there is similarity and consistency. And in the outer expression of each, there is richness and meaningful (complementary) diversity. In Hinduism, much like Christianity, there are large numbers of sects or denominations, each contributing some emphasis to the whole. But in Hinduism, unlike popular Christianity, the emphasis is upon one's place and progress rather than promulgation and conversion. There are ascetic elements as well as elements that focus on social progress. In Hinduism, every day is the Sabbath. While there are temples there are also private worship rituals in the home. There are many paths and many ways, but ultimately the goal is self-mastery and communion with God.

While the emphasis in Hinduism is upon the cycle of reincarnation and achieving liberation, there is no less concern for the sacredness of life, indeed the sacredness of all life, giving rise to a sense of ahimsa (harmlessness). There is dharma or true being, responsibility to cosmic law, to one's true (higher) nature. There is karma or the inexorable law of cause and effect, as each action, attitude, behavior, feeling, and thought has consequences. And each consequence is evoked from and through consciousness, past and present and future. The web of karma and the cycles of life provide a panorama for experience and expression in the world. The purpose of life is moksha, liberation. Nirvana refers to the state of liberation, which is evoked eventually from the tempering (extinguishment) of the ego, which allows communion, which leads in turn to liberation. But somewhere along the way one's intent (liberation) is transcended, as it is (ultimately) only through freedom-from-intent that one can actually achieve liberation.

Hinduism is properly a collection of principles and practices, though there is no substantial doctrine or hierarchy of religious authority. Thus Hinduism is less well-defined in "western" terms, all the while contributing much through its diversity of practices. Where some may see contradictions and paradox, others may (properly) see aspects and dimensions of some greater truth. Where some see rigidity and limitation in the traditional caste system, others see opportunities afforded thereby. While most people identify with the apparent self (personality, superficial existence), others identify with something higher (the jiva) or much higher (atman). While some are wholly entangled in the

world of maya and glamour and illusion, others awaken to a higher, deeper sense of reality. While some are enamoured with a guru, others simply learn from the experience, and yet others rely on the guru within.

Hinduism (and Sanskrit (and theosophy)) offer(s) a great deal of insight into human nature and the nature of the world in which human beings find themselves. As one works through the various principles and gradually embraces them, there is progress.

† Commentary No. 1314

Hinduism 3

Many are the terms of Hinduism. Adarsana is ignorance or the inability to perceive the truth of things, caused by immersion in the material and sensual world. Adharma is lawlessness, not being attuned to one's dharma. Aditi is infinity or boundlessness. Advaita is the principle of non-duality. Agni is the element of fire and relates both to sacrifice and mediation between God and humanity. Ahankara is the principle of individuality and leads to the study of the inner (real, genuine) and outer (unreal, artificial) selves and their relationship. Ahimsa is the principle of harmlessness or non-injury and includes vegetarianism. Akasa refers to space or the etheric realm. Aksara refers to the imperishable. Ananda refers to bliss, more properly the inner, quiet joy (love) evoked through bhakti or communion.

Arjuna is the name of the central character in the Bhagavad Gita, who symbolizes the spiritual student. Artha refers to the four goals (dharma, artha, kama, and moksa). Asana refers to the sitting position or posture for meditation or other form of yoga practice. Astanga yoga refers to Patanjali's eight-fold path of training elucidated in the Yoga Sutras. Atman refers to the monad or highest element of the human being (in contrast with the soul and the personality), or to the soul (atma-buddhi-manas). Avatara refers to a divine descent into worldly incarnation. Avidya is another term for ignorance, being enamoured by worldly appearances.

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the more important Hindu scriptures, an epic conversation between the student (Arjuna) and his higher self (Krishna).

Bhajan refers to worship. Bhakti is the principle of love and devotion. Bhakti yoga is a path emphasizing love and devotion. Bodhisattva refers to an enlightened being and the office (place) (position) of such a being. Brahma is the first or creative aspect of the Hindu trinity. Brahmacharya refers to embracing a particular spiritual discipline or discipleship, or being focused on the spiritual path. Brahman refers to the atman or divine source in its transcendental aspect. Brahmin refers to a priest or member of the priestly caste. Buddhi is the principle of higher intelligence or intuition, what comes from the higher self rather than the mind.

Chakras are the centers of force within the human form. Chela refers to the student or disciple of some guru. Cit refers to consciousness. Darsana refers to seeing the truth, either within oneself or from within the presence of some guru. Devas are gods or angelic beings and nature spirits, belonging to a lifewave that is parallel to that of humanity. Dharana refers to concentration, a stage in meditation. Dharma has many meanings and implications, including righteousness, virtue, integrity, duty, truth, and reality. Dhyana refers to meditation, a second stage, beyond concentration. Dvaita refers to the illusion and state of duality. Guna refers to substance or quality (the three gunas are sattva, rajas, and tamas). Guru refers to a spiritual teacher, not necessary but sometimes helpful.

Hatha yoga is a preliminary form of yoga involved with the discipline of the body. In principle, hatha yoga leads to more meditative practices. Jiva refers to life or the soul rather than the ego or personality. Jnana refers to knowledge leading to understanding and to wisdom. Kama refers to the emotional plane. Kamamanas refers to the bridge between emotional and mental levels, i.e., the desire-mind. Kundalini refers to one's spiritual potency and to the serpent power of the spine and chakra system. Kundalini yoga is a practice relating to the cultivation and management of kundalini.

Hinduism 4

Manas refers to the mind or mental plane. More properly manas refers to the mental principle and the context for antahkarana or the bridge between the lower mind of the personality and the higher mind of the soul. Mandalas are circular diagrams or artwork utilized in meditation. Mantras are sounds or words of power. Mantra yoga is a discipline involving utilization of mantras. Marga refers to the spiritual path or to particular spiritual paths, e.g., ananda marga. Maya is underlying worldly illusion, one of three dimensions of illusion (the others being glamour or illusion on emotional levels and illusion proper being illusion on mental levels). Moksa refers to liberation from the wheel of life.

Namaskar is a salutation. Padma is the lotus or symbol of purity. Paramartha refers to the highest truth, paramatman to the highest or supreme self. Prajna refers to intelligence or wisdom gained from enlightenment. Prakriti refers to nature or manifestation, pralaya to sleep or its dissolution, that part of the cycle in which the universe is not being manifested. Prana refers to the etheric life force or breath. Purusa refers to a person in some higher sense or to the spiritual core of a person. Raja yoga refers to meditational yoga in contrast with hatha yoga. Rajas is one of the three gunas and is energy. Rupa refers to the form or body (while arupa refers to the formless or higher nature).

Sadguru refers to a proper spiritual teacher, sadhana to personal spiritual discipline. Samadhi refers to a higher state of meditation, samsara to the global flow of individual and collective rebirths and remanifestations. Sat refers to being or existence (reality). Sattva is another of the three gunas and is purity. Satya refers to truthfulness. Siddhi refers to accomplishment or to magical powers achieved through yoga or some particular spiritual practice (siddhis are not to be desired or sought but simply allowed to manifest as they need to as a consequence of spiritual progress). Sutra refers to a thread or aphoristic statement of truth, e.g., the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Sakti refers to divine power or potency.

Tamas is one of the three gunas and is darkness or inertia or matter. Tattva refers to truth or reality. Vidya refers to the knowledge and wisdom that dispels ignorance. Viveka refers to discrimination between what is real and what is not, especially with regard to discriminating between the soul (self) and the personality (not-self). Yama refers to self-control leading to self-mastery. And yoga refers to any one or another of the spiritual disciplines that facilitate self-control and lead to communion or union with God (the highest self).

There is yoga and there are many (many) yogas. Yoga in its entirety includes all of the many paths and practices that individually and collectively contribute to evolution in consciousness. But each particular practice or focus or stage constitutes a yoga or sorts. The Bhagavad Gita for example contains three yogas, and each of the three contains another six yogas. There are yogas that emphasize physical discipline and practice (e.g., hatha yoga), yogas that emphasize etheric discipline and practice (e.g., kundalini yoga and laya yoga), yogas that emphasize emotional or devotional practice (e.g., bhakti yoga), and yogas that emphasize mental discipline and practice (e.g., jnana yoga). And there are yogas that focus on action and consequence (e.g., karma yoga). But yoga proper is a combination of all of these (and more), and not strictly a matter of Hinduism.



Section 6.2111



Aspects of Hinduism

- Many are the aspects of Hinduism, including the *Bhagavad Gita*, the four aims of life, the Hindu trinity of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma, and the caste system.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Hindu scriptural trinity consists of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita. The Upanishads are considered to be the cream of the Vedas, as the Vedas are the source of Hindu scripture. The Brahma Sutras are an elucidation of the Vedanta philosophy through maxims, while the Bhagavad Gita contains the essence of the Upanishads and is contained within the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is a great epic of eighteen books and might be considered as a fifth Veda, while the Bhagavad Gita may be considered as the condensation of the Mahabharata into understandable philosophy.

As one of the eighteen books of the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita consists of eighteen chapters, each of which constitutes a system of yoga. The eighteen perspectives are interrelated and divided into three major groups. The first six chapters deal with life (power), existence (sat), karma yoga (the path of right activity), the soul and its potential, limitations, and perfection. The second six chapters deal with love (consciousness), spiritual happiness (ananda), bhakti yoga (the path of devotion), God, and reality. The final six chapters deal with light, knowledge (cit), understanding, jnana yoga (the path of philosophical discrimination), and the relationship between God and man.

The Bhagavad Gita is santana dharma, spiritual laws applied to life and a clarification of principles utilizing a variety of methods. It is the story of yoga and the nature of the soul. It is an allegorical, symbolic treatise dealing with the becoming and being, with the theory and practice of Vedanta. The Bhagavad Gita is an orthodox Hindu scripture as well as a metaphysical discourse. It was written in metaphysical Sanskrit and has been translated into poetic English, ordinary English, and transliterated English. Though the full English translation is helpful, a translation which mixes English and Sanskrit (with English implications) seems most helpful to the Western student. The power of Sanskrit words to enlighten and to penetrate the depths of consciousness is diminished by the use of English partial-equivalents.

The song celestial (Bhagavad Gita) is, in the literal reading, a profound dialogue between the prince Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna, about to enter

the battlefield. A literal reading can be greatly misunderstood, for the essence of the treatise has naught to do with physical human warfare or bloodshed; but rather, has to do with the spiritual struggle of the human soul. The allegorical warfare implies the struggle between right and wrong, between wisdom and ignorance, between the self (soul) and the not-self (personality); the symbolic, inner struggle in consciousness and self-discipline; and the struggle between truth (reality) and the glammers (illusions) of objectivity which must be overcome in the battle for eternal life.

The dialogue of Arjuna and Krishna symbolizes a communion of man (Arjuna) and the God-Christ within man (Krishna). Arjuna is the aspirant seeking to become the disciple. Arjuna represents both the individual and humanity standing at the threshold of the spiritual path. The result of this communion is guidance in dharma (duty), the truth within. The wheels of the chariot are right effort; the driver is truth; and the destination is perfection. The experience urges man to wake up, to achieve awareness, to establish himself in the soul, to recognize the nobility of the soul, and to find the unity and coherence of man and God. The charioteer Krishna is an incarnation of God, and lives in the heart (soul) of man. Through the experience is achieved self-realization and equilibrium. Pleasure is superseded by that which is good. And Arjuna the aspirant becomes the world disciple.

† Commentary No. 757

The Four Aims of Life

Life experience and expression in the lower (objective) worlds of human incarnation (from the point of view of personality or lower self) generally consists of fulfilling one or two of the four aims of life, namely, in Sanskrit terms, artha, kama, dharma, and moksa. There are, more properly, seven aims, where the intermediate aims of artha-kama, kama-dharma, and dharma-moksa are included. The intermediate are important in the sense that most people consciously or unconsciously pursue one or another of the intermediate aims.

The first and most primitive aim is that of artha or the accumulation of material objects, comforts, and/or wealth. The underlying driving force for this aim is the animal instinct for survival. This aim is only really pertinent for those who are

absorbed in materialism. Some rationalize their materialism (e.g., providing for the welfare of the immediate family) but by “spiritual standards” there is no need for such materialism. For the spiritual student, being focused on material goals is a great distraction, and for those who focus on higher, more worthy aims, the material needs (not necessarily desires) are incidentally and naturally fulfilled. Yet many of humanity function at the artha level, gathering whatever (primitive) experience may be gained thereby.

Many (of humanity) also exist and function at the kama level (while the bulk of humanity exist and function according to artha-kama in pursuit of both material wealth and (sensual) pleasure). Kama or the desire for sense impression (expression), the pursuit and fulfillment of pleasure or emotional experience, is the second of the four aims, and to a large extent affects most of humanity in one way or another (at the artha-kama, kama, and/or kama-dharma levels or the tendency to function on these (lower) levels even when primarily established on higher levels). The underlying driving force for this aim (kama) is the (animal) desire nature and the overwhelming pressure of (astral) glamour and associated (emotional) stimulations. Most people are absorbed in various emotional polarizations and have minds and bodies largely overcome (biased) by the potencies of the desire nature. Kama is also the realm of personal (possessive) (relatively exclusive or self-centered) love. By “spiritual standards” there is no need for such (emotional or egoistic) materialism, as being self-centered in the desire nature is also a great distraction, although kama can be adapted or utilized consciously by the aspirant to reach kama-dharma levels (just as it was utilized unconsciously to reach beyond artha).

The third aim is that of dharma or spiritual duty or responsibility (in the lower sense, religious and moral duty, in the higher sense the obligations (discipline and service) of the spiritual path). While kama-dharma (the desire or aspiration toward spiritual responsibility) is preliminary to the path, dharma in the higher sense is the spiritual path. Dharma (in this higher sense) does not embrace either physical materialism (artha), emotional (egoistic) materialism (kama), or mental (egoistic) materialism (dharma in the lower sense). It does, however, carry the student above and beyond the materialism and egoism of the personality and into the realm (field) of the soul.

The fourth aim is moksa or redemption (spiritual release) and is only operational at soul levels. Those who “feel” a drive toward redemption are actually functioning on kama-dharma levels. The first two (four) of the four (seven) aims functionally involve only the personality, while the third and its subsequent (dharma and dharma-moksa) involve both the personality and the soul (and their relationship). Moksa is not a noble aim of the personality. The spiritual student should instead be focused essentially upon and within dharma.

† Commentary No. 765

Shiva

Shiva is the third aspect of the Hindu trinity (of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva), the god of dissolution and destruction, the destroyer of ignorance (attachment) (worldliness), and God transcendent (the supreme reality) (total divinity) (the Absolute). In the broader context of the esoteric philosophy, Shiva is the first aspect of the trinity (of Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma) and the creator (in the higher sense) of Vishnu and Brahma. Shiva is considered to be beyond manifestation and not at all distracted by or involved in manifestation except (to some small extent (assimilation)) through its intermediary (Vishnu) and its reflection (Brahma). Shiva is predominantly indirect and subtle in its manifestation.

Thus Shiva is the first aspect when viewed from above (in the esoteric tradition), in the context of precursor and creator, from which all else (necessarily lesser) follows, and the third aspect when viewed from below (in the traditional religious context), in the context of (the aspiration of) manifested life returning to its source. In the context of the seven rays, Shiva is the underlying first ray (life) (creation) (purpose) (law) (precursion) (will) and the underlying seventh ray (manifested life) (order) (organization) (ceremony) (the field of consequence(s)) (but not the first ray or the seventh ray in any manifested sense). The pole of Shiva is the relationship(s) between the first ray (life) and its reflection in matter (the seventh ray).

Shiva is the creator-destroyer in the sense of (1) having purpose, (2) evoking manifestation (without being that manifestation) in order to serve and fulfill that purpose, (3) providing the fundamental, underlying rules (order)

(organization) of manifestation (without being those rules or order), and (4) eventually (and periodically) destroying the form (forms) (manifestation) whenever and however the intended purpose is (incrementally) accomplished (or whenever and however the incarnated (induced) life has gone sufficiently astray (from serving the intended purpose(s) of manifestation). Shiva is the periodic forcing function (from which the cycles of Brahma are evoked) in a number of ways (cycles within cycles).

From the higher perspective, Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma form a hierarchy with Shiva superior, Vishnu intermediate, and Brahma inferior or lesser. From a more moderate perspective, the three aspects are equal, with each dominating a sphere or realm (in aspect or in turn). In this sense, Shiva is more remote and more subtle in its working (influence) and operates on a vastly longer timescale than either Vishnu or Brahma. Shiva works through Vishnu and Brahma (rather than more directly in manifestation). Thus Shiva provides qualification (of Vishnu and Brahma) and yet remains uninvolved in the working out of its energies (i.e., Shiva sets the stage (the field of manifestation), plants the seeds (life) and establishes the rules (underlying order), then remains withdrawn while its indirect influence upon manifestation (through remote qualification) enables the working out of its purpose, and finally (Shiva) withdraws (assimilates) the fruits of manifestation (as it recalls all of the manifested lives).

In the human context, Shiva is represented by the human monad on its level. In this (monadic) sense, Shiva creates Vishnu (represented by the soul on its level) which in turn creates or evokes Brahma (represented by the personality or form on its level). The monad lives indirectly through the soul, while the soul lives indirectly through the personality. When the personality has served its purposes it is released (dissolved) by the soul. Likewise, when the soul has fulfilled its purpose, it is released by the monad.

Vishnu

Vishnu is the second or intermediate aspect of the Hindu trinity, the sustainer (preserver) of manifestation (and of life in the (lower) worlds of consciousness), and the guardian of dharma. In the broader context of the esoteric philosophy, Shiva (the father) is the underlying spirit, Vishnu is (intermediate) consciousness, and Brahma (the mother or Holy Spirit) is matter (manifestation per se). Thus Vishnu serves to maintain the balance between spirit and matter, between cause and effect, between the creator (Shiva) and its manifestation (Brahma), and between purpose and its fulfillment. Vishnu is the aspect of consciousness, and in the case of all manifested lives, Vishnu (Christ) is the indwelling and/or overshadowing consciousness that animates the vitalized matter of the manifested universe.

Vishnu is the second aspect when viewed either from above (in the esoteric tradition) in the context of preserving or sustaining manifestation or from below (in the more practical religious or spiritual sense) in the context of evolving consciousness (and the spiritual path). In the context of the seven rays, Vishnu is the second ray of love-wisdom (underlying consciousness) and its reflection through the fourth ray of balance and the sixth ray of idealism and religion. While Brahma provides (is) a field of manifestation (a field of consequences) and manifested lives, Vishnu provides (is) the means of evolution and evolutionary pressure (through consciousness). The pole of Vishnu is the relationship(s) between the second ray, the fourth ray, and the sixth ray.

Vishnu is the preserver in the sense that it provides the connection or relationship between the precursor (cause) (Shiva) and the field of consequences (manifestation) (effects) (experience) (Brahma). Without that connection (consciousness and evolutionary pressure through consciousness) there would be no activity in manifestation, nor any growth or development (evolution), nor any learning or assimilation. Without that connection there would be no means of qualification or manipulation (adaptation) of matter and material forces (and no adaptation in consciousness). Thus the connection (intermediary) is crucial to all of manifested life (and the field of manifestation for evolutionary forces).

Thus, of the three aspects of the trinity, Vishnu is the most important with regard to humanity (and the evolution of human consciousness). From the point of view of humanity, Shiva is sufficiently remote to be unreachable in consciousness. Brahma, on the other hand, is quite close (in manifestation) and provides considerable opportunity for absorption in matter (and mundane matters) to challenge and test consciousness and its ability to rise above the material aspects of manifestation. Brahma (matter) pulls human consciousness toward the material (including maya (on physical and etheric levels), glamour (on emotional levels), and illusion (on concrete mental levels)). Shiva (spirit), through Vishnu (the medium and underlying qualification of consciousness), pulls human consciousness away from the material and egoistic, toward the spiritual.

In the human context, Vishnu is represented by the soul on its level. In the beginning of human manifestation, Brahma (material forces) dominate and Vishnu (the soul) struggles to (indirectly) qualify the manifested (absorbed) life (personality). As evolution proceeds and progress is made through experience, Vishnu grows stronger (in its influence (not intrinsically)) and the balance gradually and progressively shifts toward spiritual forces (through the forces of consciousness). When the soul has evolved sufficiently, the personality is released and the cycle is repeated on the next higher level (i.e., between the soul absorbed in consciousness and the monad on its level).

† Commentary No. 767

Brahma

Brahma is the first aspect of the Hindu trinity, the (immediate) (apparent) creator of the (manifested) universe. In the broader context of the esoteric philosophy, Brahma is the manifested universe (all of (the aspect of) matter and the underlying forces of material manifestation), the third aspect of trinity, while Shiva is the real creative impulse (and first aspect) that results in (evokes) manifestation and the creative forces (Brahma) in (of) manifestation. Brahma is the field of manifestation (substantial existence) and the immediate (direct) source of light and the immediate (indirect) source of life (through induction, from Shiva), while Vishnu is the field of consciousness and the immediate

source of love (indwelling or overshadowing consciousness) (through induction, from Shiva).

While Shiva is wholly detached from involvement in manifestation and while Vishnu is reasonably detached (indirectly involved), Brahma is wholly (directly, albeit impersonally) involved in manifestation. In the context of the seven rays, Brahma is both the third ray and its reflection (the fifth ray), and the four rays of attribute (fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh rays). The pole of Brahma is the relationship(s) between the third ray and the fifth ray as well as the relationship(s) between the first ray and the third ray (and through the third ray with the four rays of attribute).

While Shiva is the father (aspect) of manifestation, the progenitor of all that is (manifested), and while Brahma is the mother (aspect) of manifestation, enfolding all of life and consciousness in the womb of manifested existence, Vishnu is the son (aspect) or that which is born of the union of spirit and matter (i.e., consciousness) and that which relates the two. Thus Brahma is the sun (solar system) and the earth, while Vishnu is the son (consciousness) that overshadows the sun and all (of the children of God) that is (are) manifested within the system.

Brahma is the realm of effects and of the working out of (causal) (karmic) forces (tension) (law(s)). Those effects and law(s) derive both from higher levels (i.e., spirit in the sense of overall purpose and consciousness in the sense of the interactiveness between spirit and matter) and from within the realm of effects (in the sense of being consequences and/or derived consequentially from higher sources) (and in the sense that effects are in themselves secondary causes or induce secondary causes). Brahma does not qualify. Rather, Brahma is qualified. Brahma is the personality of the soul which is Vishnu, while Vishnu is the soul of the monad which is Shiva. Shiva qualifies (indirectly), while Vishnu qualifies more directly.

In the human context, then, Brahma is represented by the personality, which is the instrument of the soul for experience and expression within the (material levels of the) field of manifestation. The personality is created (evoked into manifestation) by the soul within the substance made manifest by the monad, just as the soul was created (evoked) by the monad (more directly) within the

substance of consciousness. Each (monad, soul, and personality) (Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma) has a role to play within the evolutionary panorama of manifestation. Identification with Brahma is identification with matter (God immanent in the lower sense) and (purposive) (consequential) material forces (i.e., involution). Identification with Vishnu, on the other hand, is identification with consciousness (God immanent in the higher sense) and the evolutionary forces. Identification with Shiva is identification with spirit (God) transcendent.

† Commentary No. 773

Shiva Dharma

The Shiva Dharma is the role or responsibility (duty) of the first aspect of the logos. Shiva Dharma embraces life in all of its fundamental attributes and characteristics. Shiva is the provider of life and is primarily and fundamentally responsible for the orchestration of the various cycles (birth and death, manifestation and pralaya, etc.) and activities in the more fundamental (basic) sense (of existence rather than applied manifestation).

Shiva releases each first (greater or lesser) emergence from the Godhead, and Shiva recalls each (relatively fulfilled) emergence at its appropriate time and circumstances. It is Shiva that provides the underlying "life" behind and/or within each manifested life-form. Thus Shiva Dharma involves creating (inducing) and releasing (and recalling) each fundamental "spark" of divinity. Since Shiva is the first (highest) aspect, its manifestation is more subtle and indirect (by reflection). Thus Shiva Dharma is not properly concerned with consciousness (the second aspect) or with form (the third aspect).

Human life is (fundamentally) (merely) monadic. What appears within the human form is a rather dim reflection of the monad (while the human monad is actually the more direct expression of Shiva). The monadic life induced within the human form is "life" only in its fundamental sense. It is not consciousness nor is it the form in any sense (the monadic life that "is" the (constituent elements of) form is an entirely different (and much more primitive) dimension of Shiva-monad). The human soul is a more direct (but still reflective) expression of the Shiva-monad, but only in the sense of "life" (not in the sense

of consciousness) (the soul is the higher aspect of consciousness, while the monadic life of the soul merely underlies that consciousness (as it underlies the form) (and as consciousness also underlies the form)). The monad (and Shiva Dharma) is only interested in (concerned with) sustaining the life (and recalling it appropriately). It is not interested in or concerned with the actual manifestation or working out of that life except in the sense of the overall purposive and karmic qualification of manifestation.

Shiva Dharma manifests as a network and panorama of sparks (lives) on monadic levels much (analogously) like the etheric web on the physical plane. All lives (greater and lesser) are linked (overlap) on monadic levels, sharing the same fundamental qualification (vibration) (energy) of life, without mutual tension. The only tension that exists or manifests on monadic levels is the tension of the existence of Shiva (relative to its non-existent or absolute (unmanifested) state). The Shiva-energy is thus equally available and shared by all indiscriminately on monadic levels. On reflective levels, however, there is considerable discrimination as cause and effect (karma) is worked out. But on the more fundamental levels of existence there is only (one) life and no conditioning or qualification.

Shiva is the precursor. Thus Shiva Dharma is precursive (precursion). In the sense of life Shiva Dharma is directly concerned with ordered existence (and associated rules). In the sense of consciousness Shiva Dharma is concerned (indirectly) with assimilation (and the rules of assimilation). In the sense of form Shiva Dharma is (even less directly) concerned with appropriation and utilization (and dissolution). Shiva is not really concerned with learning (as is Vishnu). But Shiva (and Shiva Dharma) is concerned with the growth of the spark into more fiery manifestation (substance). Thus Shiva Dharma is the fanning of the flames of existence (through the intermediary of consciousness (learning) and the reflection into matter), and the conveyance of life.

Vishnu Dharma

The Vishnu Dharma is the role or responsibility (duty) of the second aspect of the logos. Vishnu Dharma embraces consciousness (the reflection of life in its intermediacy) in all of its attributes and characteristics and workings. Vishnu is the provider of consciousness and is primarily responsible for its manifestation and growth (expansion) (higher qualification). While Shiva is concerned with manifestation in the higher precursive sense and while Brahma is concerned with manifestation in the lower more practical sense (i.e., its working out), Vishnu is concerned with linking the two aspects of manifestation (spirit and matter) (life and form) intelligently and purposively.

Vishnu is both the provider of consciousness and consciousness (per se). Vishnu Dharma involves all of the intermediate aspects of manifestation, of cause and effect relationships, of qualification for the stimulation, growth, refinement, and expansion of consciousness, of preserving or sustaining manifestation to afford the working out of whatever precursive qualifications there may be (i.e., each cycle of manifestation has certain goals or objectives to be achieved in consciousness (not in matter nor in spirit)). In a sense, Vishnu is dharma (and Vishnu Dharma is dharma dharma) and thus links all of conscious and unconscious manifestation together, on its level, with and/or through responsibility (duty). Vishnu is also the spiritual path in all its glory (and Vishnu Dharma is properly and primarily fulfilled in the context of that path for all lives (consciousness)). The Vishnu Dharma is evolutionary pressure in all its aspects and attributes and working out.

Human life is (practically) the combination and interaction of the personality (lesser and lower) consciousness and the soul (greater and higher) consciousness. What appears at these two levels is primarily consciousness expressed through the respective forms (i.e., the causal body of the soul and the (integrated or otherwise) form of the personality (the concrete mind, emotions (astral body), and physical-etheric body)). The Vishnu Dharma is expressed (fulfilled) on human levels via the experience that takes place on personality levels and the learning and assimilation of experience that takes place on or nearer soul levels. While Shiva and Brahma involve karma in the more

fundamental sense, Vishnu involves karma in the more practical sense of involvement and learning (assimilation).

Vishnu Dharma is the conveyance and qualification of consciousness. While Shiva Dharma manifests as a network and panorama of (fundamental) lives, Vishnu Dharma manifests as a network of distributed and interacting consciousness. While Shiva is non-discriminatory and Brahma is discrimination (in its primitive sense), Vishnu is moderation and the application of wisdom. Thus Vishnu Dharma is concerned with balance and adjustment, of moderation and modification, of refinement and harmonization, of growth and assimilation. The individual lives (consciousness) within the second aspect are not important fundamentally (as individual lives) but are (much more) significant collectively. Vishnu is the expression in consciousness of the logos. Thus all lives (as consciousness) are part of Vishnu and subject to Vishnu Dharma, and fulfillment is primarily collective, as the individual and group contributions are balanced and blended together on behalf of the greater life.

While Shiva-energy (life) consists of the sparks of electric (monadic) fire, Vishnu-energy (consciousness) consists of the flames of magnetic (solar) fire. The soul is the ultimate (human) arbiter of consciousness and the link to Vishnu Dharma. All human lives participate more or less directly in Vishnu Dharma.

† Commentary No. 775

Brahma Dharma

The Brahma Dharma is the role or responsibility (duty) of the third aspect of the logos. Brahma Dharma embraces the form (matter) (material existence or manifestation) (the reflection of life in its more fundamental sense) in all of its attributes and characteristics and workings. While Vishnu is concerned with the field (medium) of manifestation, Brahma is concerned with manifestation proper. It is Brahma Dharma that results in the working out of the various creative impulses and provides the opportunities for the emergence and cultivation of consciousness (but not the actual work of consciousness which is the assimilation of experience).

The entire panorama of deva life is largely orchestrated within the Brahma Dharma (while the workings of the human evolution (and the greater devas) are primarily within the Vishnu Dharma). Where Vishnu is concerned with the wisdom aspect of karma (i.e., actual learning and assimilation), Brahma is concerned with the registration (enforcement) (resolution or fulfillment in manifestation) of karma. Thus Brahma Dharma is evolutionary pressure at its most basic level (material manifestation), while Vishnu Brahma is evolutionary pressure in actual consciousness. It is Brahma Dharma that embraces the development and cultivation and utilization of all forms (in response to the stimulation (creative and destructive impulses) provided by Shiva).

In a sense, Shiva is the God of the monad (spirit), while Vishnu is the God of the soul (consciousness), and while Brahma is the God of the personality (form) (matter). In this sense, those who identify with Brahma (the Holy Spirit) are thereby identifying with the form aspect of life, with the personality (ego), the material world (and the working out of forces in the material world) (and mundane or personal matters), and things which are beneath the evolutionary field (which is counterproductive for those who are on the spiritual path). Similarly, those who identify with Vishnu (Christ) are thereby identifying with the soul and the evolution of consciousness (and the spiritual path). And those who identify with Shiva (the Father) are thereby identifying with the monad and things that are beyond the evolutionary field (which is counterproductive for those in incarnation).

Human life is (practically) the combination and interaction of the personality (lesser and lower) consciousness and the soul (greater and higher) consciousness. Those who live as personalities are governed by the Brahma Dharma and therefore are very much subject to external (material (etheric, astral, and concrete mental)) forces (and the rules of worldly existence). Those who live within the influence of the soul (who have predominantly risen above the personality) are governed by the Vishnu Dharma (the responsibilities and associated rules of the path). While assimilation of experience is a matter of consciousness (Vishnu), experience per se and absorption in the mundane world are matters of form (Brahma).

In the higher sense, the Brahma Dharma embraces enlightenment (and the conveyance of light) while the Vishnu Dharma embraces realization (and self-

realization) (and the conveyance of love-wisdom). Brahma Dharma manifests through the (differentiation and) manifold of forms and the fanning of the internal fires. Vishnu Dharma embraces the solar fire and the blending of the internal fires. And Shiva Dharma embraces the electric fire and the final abstraction of the solar fire. Although the responsibilities (dharma) differ in many respects, the three aspects of the logos (Shiva-Vishnu-Brahma) are ever ultimately complementary and fully coordinated.

† Commentary No. 1321

The Caste System

The caste system of traditional India and Hinduism, while no longer sanctioned, having been officially abolished, nonetheless continues to contribute a great deal to Indian culture and continues to be subject to various abuses. In the first place the caste system had a qualitative basis and the various castes served particular cultural and societal needs and were treated equally and equitably. But eventually the system became hereditary and institutionalized and rather rigid.

In this jati or caste system there are four (five) castes (varnas) or social divisions, namely (1) the brahmana or priestly caste, (2) the ksatriya or caste of rulers, aristocrats, and warriors, (3) the vaisya caste or middle class of farmers, merchants, craftsmen, and peasants, and (4) the sudra or caste of laborers and servants. In addition to the four castes are the untouchables or pariahs who are "below" caste and the sannyasin or pilgrims who are "above" caste. And of course there are many social divisions within each caste, i.e., thousands of castes. While the caste system is often viewed as peculiar to India and Hinduism, in fact many societies have embraced caste systems (by other names or without acknowledgement) through relatively rigid class distinctions, based on education, heredity, race, ethnic distinctions, religion, traditional vocation, or otherwise. So the Indian caste system is by no means the only one, nor by any means the only one to continue to have influence in the world. In a sense, the Indian caste system is simply more open and honest than the others, while others tend to be imposed in relatively more subtle ways. The underlying premises are that a caste system is intended to protect the racial purities (even

while there is no such actual need) and that the caste system facilitates clarity of duty and obligation to society.

People are simply born into one or another of the castes and are expected to fulfill the karma of their respective caste. While this is superficially consistent with the laws of karma, there are aspects of the caste system which are not consistent with karma, e.g., there is traditionally and even today to some extent prohibition (or inhibition) from transferring from one caste to another, through marriage or other means. Whereas in karma, one who is able to “move” to another level or place should be afforded an opportunity to do so. In a rigid caste system (Indian, English, or otherwise) the opportunities for education and training, hence for advancement, are limited by one’s caste or socio-economic standing. In a more enlightened culture, education is relatively more universal and those of “low” birth circumstances who are able to advance professionally and socially may do so.

The caste system has facilitated cultural and social and national stability, and perhaps has served its purpose. Instead of evolving in consciousness throughout one’s lifetime with the hope of being subsequently reborn into a higher caste, one should be able to advance according to one’s needs and opportunities rather than being limited artificially. But the real abuse conveyed through the caste system is the emphasis on differences between groups of peoples rather than acknowledgment of the underlying common divinity within. Thus the caste system is inherently separative, while a more homogeneous society has at least the potential to be less so.

The soul, of course, does not belong to any caste, to any religion or race or culture or ethnic group, or sex or social group. Only the personality can have any of these attributes. But the soul incarnates progressively through whatever birth circumstances are needed for experience and expression.

Section 6.212



Jainism

- Jainism is a religion of the God-within-all-lives, in which "liberation is attained through right belief, right knowledge, and right action" and where "the practice of non-injury (ahimsa) of living beings is particularly stressed."

Jainism 1

Jainism is usually considered to be an outgrowth and extension of Hinduism, with emphasis on charity and respect for all animal life, a religion of the God-within-all-lives and a strong sense of “attainment of liberation through right belief, right knowledge, and right action.” Much of the religious philosophy and practice of Jainism is consistent with theosophy and actively encourages growth in evolution of consciousness. There is emphasis on self-mastery. Indeed, a Jain is a Jina, one who (seeks to) be a conqueror of the lower self. but there are actually nine principles traditionally associated with Jainism, namely soul, non-soul, virtue, vice, inflow, bondage, checking, shedding, and freedom.

Soul (jiva) is the principle of consciousness, usually associated with life. The soul is eternal, inherently conscious and formless. The soul inhabits the body, for experience and expression, but the goal is to be a free soul (mukta) rather than a bound soul (bandha). Freedom comes from self-mastery, evolving in consciousness to the point where one transcends life-in-this-world and is no longer required to (re)incarnate. Most souls in this world exist in the bound state. In incarnation the soul has two aspects, that which overshadows from its own plane of consciousness, and that which is entangled in materialism and egoism. The soul itself (on its own level) is perfect, the soul in incarnation generally much less so.

Incarnation consists of obscurity, where the soul in incarnation loses its insight and seeks, gradually, to find itself (return to its own level), bringing with it the assimilation of experience in the lower worlds. The human being in incarnation, then, is typically a bound soul, struggling over the course of (many) lives to overcome the limitations of this world, to learn and grow through various levels of imperfection, and serve, eventually to achieve liberation.

Non-soul (ajiva) is, at first glance, simply everything other than soul, namely matter (pudgala), motion (dharma), rest (adharma), space (akasa), and time. All of which are also eternal. Matter provides the framework for incarnation, for experience and expression. Motion is a principle that allows, indeed encourages, progress (evolution in consciousness). Rest facilitates cyclic

(spiralic) activity which in turn facilitates motion. Space is in one sense an illusion induced by matter, in another sense an underlying reality substantially beyond "space" as it is known to the ordinary senses. Time is in one sense another illusion induced by immersion in matter and cycles of experience and expression, in another (higher) sense the principle that allows endurance (growth) and continuity. The role of ajiva is to provide the means and opportunity for the jiva to evolve. And in that sense ajiva is not jiva. But in a deeper sense, what is ajiva is also jiva, both in some higher framework (the existence (reality) of principles) and in some lower framework (of souls bound in matter at a more fundamental, elementary level).

Virtue and vice are the two poles of karma, one (right action) leading to liberation, the other (wrong action) to increased bondage. Vice is counter-evolutionary, that which inhibits progress. Virtue is evolutionary, that which encourages and facilitates progress. One begins with desire for that which binds us to this world, to material wealth, pleasures of the senses, etc. Then one gradually rises above these things and embraces more noble desires. But all desire per se evokes karma, and so, eventually, one rises above desire altogether and becomes free from the wheel of birth and death.

† Commentary No. 1317

Jainism 2

Inflow refers to sustained karma, the attraction of karmic "particles" or binding consequences of action (behavior) (feeling) (thinking). Bondage refers to the state of the soul being asleep in the world (and worldliness). Being engaged in karma the "soul" remains asleep. In the fulfillment of karma, in becoming free of continuing karma, the soul awakens and finds liberation. In Jainism there are four causes of inflow and bondage, namely wrong belief, vowlessness, passions, and activity.

Wrong belief includes (one-sided) conviction, perverse belief, doubtful belief, ignorant belief, and blind devotional belief. One-sided conviction is where one believes that one knows something truly when in fact one does not, which leads to considerable illusion. True liberation is where one makes no such

assumptions and remains open to the (broader, deeper) possibilities of truth. Everything is relative. (Virtually) nothing is absolute. Everything that is known and understood is known and understood (necessarily only) partially and relatively. Perverse belief is a one-sided conviction that is counter-evolutionary, e.g., that there is “good” in killing animals for any purpose. Doubtful belief is relatively more healthy than one-sided conviction or perverse belief, but is ultimately limiting (one needs, actually, to get beyond needing to believe) (as the soul (in its higher aspect) is progressively embraced in consciousness, one relies more and more on intuition and not on (merely) intellectual understanding). Ignorant belief is less healthy, more passive, a matter of not making an effort to understand what is believed. And blind devotional belief is “clinging to convictions even in the face of evidence” to the contrary.

Vowlessness refers to the absence of the commitment and practice of ahimsa (non-injury, nonviolence, harmlessness) with regard to all (other) lives, human and otherwise. Passions refer to emotional entanglements which impede the progress of the spiritual student, e.g., pride, anger, deceit, greed. Activity refers to whatever distracts the waking-consciousness from focusing on the spiritual path and its practices, whatever actions evoke karma and continued bondage. There are gentle activities which relatively facilitate growth and progress and freedom, and there are less gentle activities which do not. Embracing humility, honesty, and harmlessness are gentle activities. Having desires and having attachments are less gentle activities.

Checking and shedding refer to the process of minimizing and then eliminating the inflow of karmic “particles” and fulfilling (shedding) that (karma) which has been attracted. Spiritual practice (e.g., meditation) is designed to help the student in this process of checking and shedding. To become aware of the limiting attitudes and behaviors, to check them, and to embrace (more) positive (less limiting) practices. As one accomplishes these things, one gradually achieves liberation.

Jainism is a “working” religion in the sense that there is emphasis on the soul finding its own salvation. There is no external God to appeal to. God is within. And God is all. Thus the jiva (soul) is God and God lives through all jivas. The omniscience achieved in liberation is the (intuitive) omniscience of collective consciousness. The omnipotence achieved in liberation is the power

to remain at the soul level and not be entangled in karma. It is, in effect, living with (as) God. To live in the world without being entangled. And to not need to return to the world. But even the entangled human being is a noble creature, for God (jiva) lives within all.

† Commentary No. 1324

Ahimsa

Ahimsa does not belong merely to the Jains nor to Jainism, but is a concept found to some extent in every God-centered religion, but ahimsa has been popularized mainly through Hinduism and Jainism and theosophy.

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit word with many meanings and implications. It is a principle of non-harming or non-violence, of dynamic harmlessness embracing both truth and compassion. Ahimsa “is a central concept of Hindu and Jain morality” but it appears in other words and forms in virtually every other religion as well. In Hinduism ahimsa is a basis for rejecting animal sacrifices, a basis for vegetarianism, and a basis for right human relations. In Jainism the concept is extended to the microscopic realm and to all of life. Clearly one cannot avoid “harming” lives for which one is barely aware, but the principle is a matter of intent as well as practice, and one must endeavor to not harm other lives directly or deliberately, and to minimize the harming of other lives indirectly (incidentally). Thus it is both an ideal and a daily practice.

The basis of ahimsa is a simple recognition of the God that lives within all lives. To harm another creature is to harm oneself. To harm another creature (or oneself) is to live not in harmony with God. The implications are vast, and extend from individual human relationships to collective consciousness to relationships among nations, races, and cultures, to relationships with other kingdoms (especially the animal and plant kingdoms). There is of course an underlying purpose to all of life, and intended relationships between kingdoms, such that the animals are evolving (involving) through their relationship with humanity (which does not include provision of food), while the plants are involving less directly (more passively) (and which does include the provision of food to other lives). In other words, eating flesh foods is counter-evolutionary, it does not contribute to the evolution of animal consciousness, while eating plant

foods is evolutionary and does contribute to the evolution of (collective) consciousness, especially if it is done with respect and consideration for plants-as-life.

Ahimsa is very much a matter of awareness. As one approaches the God-Self, one simply finds oneself unable to harm others in any direct or deliberate sense, one finds oneself more and more averse to flesh foods (i.e., one who is relatively refined in consciousness becomes more and more sensitive to the quality and caliber (and suitability) of foods and the digestive system will eventually reject all animal foods). As the awareness grows, so does the recognition and apprehension of consequences of our attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. One simply becomes more aware of the potential harm and there is (gradually) evoked a natural change in attitude and behavior and feeling and thinking such that one is less and less harmful to others.

Ahimsa is not merely a passive attitude. In proper practice it is an active, dynamic process. It is not a matter of weakness, it is a matter of spiritual strength. It is a matter of allowing the God within to express itself, which naturally embraces compassion, gentleness, harmlessness, harmony, peace, and poise. It is not simply a matter of not hurting someone but of embracing compassion for all others, regardless of circumstances. It is accepting responsibility for one's own actions (on every level of consciousness) and for one's own circumstances. It is living from the heart. It is embracing reverence for (all) life. The student is not expected to be perfect in all these regards, but the student is expected to sincerely embrace the principle and its practices, to the full extent of his or her abilities and awareness.

Section 6.213



Sikhism

- Sikhism is a religion that bridges the (merely apparent) gap between Hinduism and Islam, embracing evolution (karma) (reincarnation) and liberation through self-mastery.

Sikhism 1

Sikhism is another religion that is considered to be an outgrowth and extension of Hinduism, indeed in some sense a Punjabi version of Hinduism, and it is also considered by some as a bridge between Hinduism and Islam (Sufism), embracing evolution (karma) (reincarnation) and liberation through self-mastery. While Sikhism is similar to Hinduism in some ways, it also contrasts with Hinduism in some ways, e.g., in promoting sexual equality and in rejecting the caste system. In the final analysis, Sikhism is a religion in its own right, and not simply an extension of one and a bridge to another.

The attributed founder of Sikhism is Guru Nanak, the first of ten Sikh Gurus. A Sikh is literally a "learner" and one who follows the path of liberation revealed by the ten Gurus. In the Sikh tradition, these Gurus were inspired messengers of God, instruments of divine revelation, not unlike the progressive revelation of the Judaic-Christian-Islamic-Bahai lineage, except that the ten Gurus formed a continuity with each leading directly to the next. But the central theme of Sikhism is not "upon" the Gurus but upon the way of union with God, "by dwelling in God while remaining detached in the midst of worldly attachments." Thus Sikhism is inherently monotheistic and is inherently mystical, even while there are cultural aspects, as there are in every religion. The cultural context of Sikhism leads to the perception of Sikhism being a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, while in fact it borrows from both and adds another dimension as well (as no religion (and no human culture) is wholly isolated one from every other). Sikhism emerged within, indeed may have been evoked by, a cultural context in which Hinduism and Islam were in contrast. Perhaps the intent of Guru Nanak was to illustrate the truth that emerges naturally from within, rather than what is revealed or obscured by formal religions.

This concept is furthered in the notion of the collective Guru, present in the spiritual community rather than through successive outer (external) Gurus. The principal Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, is treated much as a living Guru, not merely as a scripture to be read and studied and its principles to be embraced. Yet God is the supreme Guru. And "God as Guru is the self-

revealing aspect of the divine whose purpose is to bring about the spiritual liberation of humanity." Thus while there is a cultural dimension to Sikhism, the practical-spiritual dimension of Sikhism is quite profound in its consistency with the deeper, mystical dimensions of other religions.

In Sikhism (as in fact) the ordinary human being is ignorant of his or her spiritual dimension, of the truth within. Such a person is immersed in worldliness and egoism and doomed to cycles of gradually progressive reincarnation (the comings and goings of life (lives) (lifetimes) in this world). The ignorant (self-centered) person must eventually become God-centered, through the practices of the spiritual path and (simultaneously) through the grace of God.

There is karma, the process (principle) of action and consequence, in which accumulated karma must be fulfilled and the student must reach the place in consciousness where no additional karma is acquired, not through indifference or inaction, but through transcending the ways of the world and the ways of ego. Through communion with God. Thus a state of liberation is possible even while incarnated. The person and his or her purpose are transformed, from being focused on self-interests to being focused on spiritual practice and liberation, ultimately to merely serving God.

† Commentary No. 1319

Sikhism 2

Sikhism breaks new ground with respect to a number of traditional Hindu practices and principles. Traditional Hinduism embraces a caste system and people are perceived in the context of their birth circumstances, some being perceived as being more highly evolved than others and therefore closer to liberation. In Sikhism one is not bound by caste or circumstances, but anyone who can is free to seek liberation (i.e., noble souls may be incarnated in difficult (lesser) circumstances, but circumstances alone do not determine one's ability to evolve in consciousness. In traditional Hinduism there are several (four) stages in life, while in Sikhism these four stages are merged and one can embrace aspects of all four simultaneously. Thus while (traditional) Hinduism emphasizes an orderly progression, according to circumstances and timing, in

Sikhism there are opportunities to all, without discrimination. Of course there are benefits to both approaches, and each complements the other.

In principle, Sikhism also embraces equality of the sexes, though in practice the various ideals embraced by any religion are not so easy to achieve. While some religions are exclusive in their scriptures in the sense that "truth" is found only within a particular (culturally-focused) religious context, Sikhism more readily acknowledges truth from sources beyond its own writings. It is not surprising then that many of the underlying ethics and principles of Sikhism are quite consistent with those of other God-centered religions and with theosophy. One of the basic principles of Sikhism is seva or community service. It is not sufficient merely to believe, one must also practice. And spiritual development leading to liberation invariably includes some form of seva. Another principle is that of oneness of God and unity of humanity which leads to the "rejection of discrimination" not merely in the sense of the traditional caste system and equality of the sexes but in other ways as well.

In the (mystical) tradition of Sikhism, God is one, immanent, and all-pervading. God is self-revealing and sovereign. God is self-consistent. God is ineffable. God is personal, but does not employ "human" strengths and weaknesses. God is beyond being male or female. God is noble and God's love is both personal and impersonal. God is both immanent and transcendent. God is creator and sustainer, eternal and infinite, in time and beyond time, in space and beyond space. And God is Guru.

There are many and various terms utilized in Sikhism. The Adi Granth is synonymous with the Guru Granth Sahib, the principal scripture of Sikhism, consisting of 1430 pages of shabads. Amritsar is a place of special significance to many Sikhs, even while pilgrimage plays no essential part in this religion. The Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple is located in Amritsar. Anbhav prakash is enlightened experience. The Atman is the soul or God within. Daswandth is the Sikh equivalent of tithing in the service of the Panth (spiritual path). Dharam Yudh refers to war in the defense of righteousness (as a last resort, with minimum force, without enmity, without abusing one's enemies or one's enemies' property, and without mercenaries). Dharma refers to the Sikh dharma or religious teachings and to the Sikh lifestyle (ethics, conduct).

Grace and karma are both utilized in Sikhism. "The body takes birth because of karma, but liberation is attained through God's grace." One should take responsibility for one's actions, but liberation is not mechanistic. Guruwara is a place of worship, the doorway to the Guru (God). Gurmukh is one who has become God-oriented and God-filled instead of being self-centered, i.e., one who has attained some measure of spiritual liberation.

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Guru is God, especially in the revelatory sense. It also refers to the ten human Gurus and to the Guru Granth Sahib (scripture). Haumai is the principle of the non-liberated state. Haumai applies to human beings prior to liberation. Haumai relates to the karmic cycle, to bondage, and to the transcendence of this wheel of life and death as one overcomes haumai or the tendencies of the human being to be self-centered, materialistic, etc. Heaven and hell are places in consciousness, in this world and this life. The objective is not so much to be free from the wheel of birth and death (action and consequence) (reincarnation and karma), but to achieve communion with God (in which case one transcends duality). Hukam refers to God's Order (the Tao) which is truth.

Kabir was a man, not a Sikh, who is respected in Sikhism and whose writings have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Khalsa is the community of Sikhs initiated through the rite of amritsanskar. Langar is a matter of taking food together, an assertion of social equality, when visiting a gurdwara. Man Mukh is an ordinary person, dominated by haumai, engaged with maya (delusion). Mukti or jivan mukti refers to the spiritual liberation of the jiva (soul), achievable as one lives in accord with God's Order (as one's karma is fulfilled and as one accumulates no additional karma). In principle, liberation can be achieved here and now if one is properly prepared. Nam refers to the name of God or God manifest. "Nam is all pervading." "Nam the immaculate is unfathomable. How can it be known? Nam is within us, how can it be reached? It is Nam that works everywhere and permeates all space. The perfect Guru awakens your heart to the vision of Nam. It is by God's grace that one comes to enlightenment." Sat Nam means the True Name, and is

often utilized to express acknowledgment of oneness with all lives, human and otherwise.

Nam jpana, kirt karna, vand chakna refer to "meditation on God's name, honest work, and giving to those in need" and are the "three major characteristics of Sokh spirituality and morality." Nam Simran refers to being focused on God, in prayer and meditation (and otherwise). Nirankar refers to the formlessness of God. God is spirit, does not take human form, and while God may inspire human beings, human beings (the ten Gurus) are not more than human. Nirguna refers to the qualitylessness of God, and discourages attempts at anthropomorphization. There are no avatars. Panth or Qaum refers to the spiritual path or way, and also to the "nation" of Sikhs and to groups who follow a particular teacher or teachings. Punjab is the homeland of the Sikhs, the land of the five rivers.

Sahaj is the state of spiritual peace resulting from communion with God. Samsara refers to the wheel of life and death, of successive lives (progressive reincarnation, not transmigration in any lesser sense), within a framework of divine qualification. Sangat or satsang refers to association or community. In Sikhism, family and community are quite important. One does not renounce either of these for the sake of self-mastery. Sat Guru refers to God, the supreme Guru. Human teachers may be helpful, but ultimately one must rely on God (within). Sat Sri Akal is a salutation meaning "Truth is eternal."

Singh (lion) refers to those who follow the Khalsa code of discipline and is a (middle) name traditionally given to Sikh males (while Kaur (princess) is a (middle) name traditional given to Sikh females). There are five stages or realms of development on the path of enlightenment, namely Dharam Khand (duty), Gyan Khand (awareness), Karam Khand (endeavor leading to wisdom), Saram Khand (grace), and Sach Khand (truth).

