

Equality & Diversity Fact Sheet 3

Considering Religion and Belief in Healthcare

Please note the information contained within this Fact Sheet serves as guide only – the best course of action is always to discuss an individuals needs with them.

Atheism

Atheists are people who do not believe in a god or gods (or other immortal beings), or who believe that these concepts are not meaningful.

Beliefs

Not all atheists are hostile to religion but they may feel there are bad points of religion as well as some good.

They may feel that religion makes people believe something untrue and that people base the way life is run on a falsehood. They feel that religion divides people and is the cause of conflict and war, it stops people thinking in a rational and objective way and that its hierarchal structure, evident in a lot of religions, is anti-democratic and thus offends basic human rights.

Atheists may concede that there are some good things about religion such as religious art and music, charities and good works, wisdom and scripture, and human fellowship and togetherness.

History

Most histories of atheism choose the Greek and Roman philosophers Epicurus, Democritus and Lucretius as the first atheist writers. Whilst these writers certainly challenged the idea of God, they don't entirely deny that gods could exist.

Epicurus put forward the theory of 'materialism' and claimed that the only things that exist are bodies and the space between them. Epicurus taught that the soul is made of material objects, so when the body dies the soul dies with it. There is no afterlife. Although it was viewed that gods might exist, if they did, they did not have anything to do with human beings.

Ceremonies

Atheists have their own rituals for events such as weddings, christenings and funerals which given them significance and meaning without any religious content. These ceremonies can have as much significance and are as dignified as a religious ceremony.

Naming Ceremonies

These welcome the baby into the family and the community and give friends and family the opportunity to make a commitment to support and protect the child as it grows up. Often the ceremony will include a place where the chosen individuals declare a commitment to interest themselves in the child's life. This is the non religious version of 'god parents' and is sometimes referred to instead as a mentor.

Weddings

These are also non religious. They allow for greater personalisation of the ceremony and often emphasise the equality of men and women. They mark that people will share their lives together but in a different ceremony to religious ones.

Funerals

Non religious funerals are legal and funeral directors are used to arranging them. They don't include anti-religious material and often religious people will arrange this type of funeral if it is for a non religious relative or friend.

Baha'i

The Baha'i faith is one of the youngest of the world's major religions. It was founded by Baha'u'llah in Iran in the 19th century.

Baha'is believe in a single God who is known through Gods creation and prophets. They accept the prophets of other religions such as Jesus Christ as continuing stages in the revelation of God. Baha'u'llah is the latest prophet or manifestation of God.

Holy Books

The writings of the Báb and Baha'u'llah are regarded as Divine Revelation. The writings of Abdu'l-Bahá are recognised as sacred. Their holy book is similar and they make reference to the Qur'an.

Unity and Equality

Bahá'is believe in unity, equality and human rights for everyone. Baha'u'llah taught that world unity is the final stage in the evolution of humanity.

Holy Days

There are 11 holy days of which nine are viewed as major holy days. Amongst themselves Bahá'is are encouraged not to celebrate the holy days of other religions.

These include:

- **Feast of the Ascension of Bahá'u'llah:** Commemorates the anniversary of Bahá'u'llah's death
- **Feast of the Birth of the Báb:** On the 20 October thousands of followers celebrate the birth of Báb.
- **Feast of the Declaration of the Báb:** Celebrates the announcement of the Báb's mission
- **Feast of the Martyrdom of the Báb:** Commemorates the events surrounding the Bab's death in 1850.
- **Naw-Rúz:** The Bahá'í's New Year festival, an occasion for family celebration and prayer.
- **Nineteen Day Feast:** This is the community meeting which happens at the start of every month
- **Ridván:** A festival that marks Bahá'u'llah's time in the garden of Ridván and his announcement that he was the prophet promised by the Báb.
- **Fasting:** Bahá'í's fast as a discipline of the soul, they see not eating food as an outer symbol of a spiritual fast. By distancing oneself from all the appetites of the body they can concentrate on oneself as a spiritual being and get closer to God. They fast for 19 days immediately before the Bahá'í New Year. It occurs between 2nd and 21st March. Those who are sick, elderly and very young are exempt from fasting as are pregnant or nursing mothers, travellers and those doing heavy physical work. If a Holy day falls during the fasting, then the fast is not obligatory on those days.

Prayer

Prayer is seen as a vital part of Bahá'í's spiritual life. It is seen as a conversation with God rather than making a request to God. It's not the language that's important when praying but the attitude of mind in which they pray.

The aim of the prayer is to change the person and action and prayer go together. Pray about the problem, meditate on what they should do and then do it. Even if the action is the wrong one God can use the action to help discover what they should do.

Family

The family is seen as the fundamental building block of communities and nations. Strong and loving families are seen as essential for society to work properly.

Marriage

Marriage is regarded as a natural and normal way for people to live and join participants in both body and spirit in an everlasting union. Marriage is not the central purpose of life and those who don't marry are not regarded as second class citizens.

People are free to choose their own partners although generally they have to get the consent of their parents before they get married; arranged marriages however are not permitted.

Divorce

Divorce is strongly disapproved of but not banned.

Children

The Bahá'í community is strongly child centred and gets involved with parents in bringing up a child. The Bahá'í view a child as a person entrusted in their care rather than a possession.

Children are expected to participate fully in family life including making decisions in the family council about matters appropriate for their age.

Death

They believe that each human being has a soul which moves to another state of existence when the body dies.

Buddhism

Buddhism is based on the teachings of Gautama the Buddha, who was born about 563 BC in North India. He started his life as a young nobleman who, through his own efforts, achieved enlightenment, thus becoming known as Buddha. The word Buddha means someone who no longer experiences any hatred, cravings or mental confusion but has qualities such as wisdom, compassion and contentment.

The enlightenment which Buddha found was a middle way between extremes of luxury and self-torture. It was based on meditation and a simple life of self-control. His teaching is contained in the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths are:

- Suffering is part of life;
- Suffering is due to selfishness;
- Suffering will stop if selfishness is overcome;
- The way to bring suffering to an end is to follow the Eightfold Path.

The enlightenment which Buddha achieved can be attained by following the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path

- Seeing the limitations of one's present life and experience, as well as the possibility of leading a more satisfying, fulfilling, truly human life.
- Resolving to take the necessary steps to change oneself and one's life
- Practising truthful, kindly, harmonising speech, avoiding lies, backbiting and gossip
- Trying to avoid harming or exploiting other living beings including animals, birds, fish and insects
- As far as possible, earning one's living in a way which does not harm either oneself or the environment
- Avoiding harmful thoughts and actions and trying instead to develop good, kindly thoughts and feelings
- Learning to be aware of oneself, other people and one's surroundings
- Learning to concentrate one's mind through meditation.

Temple / Community Centre

The Buddhist centre is a simple place of worship and meditation called a Vihara or meeting house. It will contain a shrine and attached to the buildings may be accommodation with facilities for the community and accommodation for a number of Buddhist teachers.

Buddhist Teachers / Monks

The spiritual community is a very important part of Buddhism, which encourages and helps others to practice the teachings of Buddha. The more spiritually mature Buddhists are able to function as teachers and leaders. Some of these teachers become monks, and they play a vital role in the community. They are easy to recognise because they wear orange-coloured robes and have shaven heads.

Shrine

Most Buddhists will make a shrine somewhere in their home. A typical shrine consists of a small table with a statue or image of Buddha in the centre with flowers, candles and sweet smelling incense around it.

Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism began in Northern India and from there it spread to other parts of the sub-continent including Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Sri Lanka. In recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of Buddhists to be found in the West. It has been estimated that there are now over 130,000 practising Buddhists in Britain.

Diet

Since Buddhism encourages its followers to practise non-violence, Buddhists will normally be vegetarians, or at least be taking steps in that direction. These meals vary considerably, depending on their country of origin.

Dress Code

There is no special Buddhist dress. Men and women usually wear the dress of the country in which they live.

Birth and growing up

As in most countries and religions, the birth of a child is a time of rejoicing. Parents may decide to give their child a Buddhist name and perhaps have a name-giving ceremony at the Temple and Community Centre. In Buddhist families children will be encouraged to respect their parents and to relate to them in a positive way. Buddhists place great emphasis on the health and education of their children and encourage them to look after their parents in old age.

Marriage

Marriage in Buddhism is not a religious sacrament but is simply a social arrangement.

Family Planning

Buddhists believe that life begins at conception and so do not condemn contraception. However, abortion is seen as taking life and is, therefore, condemned.

Death

Buddhists believe in rebirth after death. They also believe that their actions, whether good or bad, will have consequences, not just in this life but possibly in future lives too.

At a Buddhist funeral there will be a good remembrance of and a rejoicing in the good qualities of the deceased. Those present will try to develop warm and friendly feelings for the dead person in the belief that this will help in the after-death state, before he or she is reborn. Finally the dead person is cremated.

Christianity

Christians believe that Jesus was the Christ and the son of God. He was born in Bethlehem in Southern Palestine over 2000 years ago. When he was about 30 years old he was baptised and began a new life of teaching and healing. He travelled through the towns and villages of Palestine with 12 men whom he had chosen to be his companions (apostles). This lasted for less than three years until he came into serious conflict with the Roman authorities in Jerusalem the most important Jewish city.

Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death, crucified and was nailed to a cross until he died.

It is believed that within three days he had risen from the dead. His companions (apostles) discovered his tomb was empty and then they reported meeting, talking and sharing meals with him. A few weeks later, they watched Jesus being taken to heaven by God.

Holy Book

The Christian Bible contains the complete Jewish Bible which is called the Old Testament. To this was added a collection of books written during the hundred or so years after Jesus, and known as the New Testament.

Church

Christians can worship anywhere, but they have built churches since the end of the third century. The more important places of worship are called Cathedrals. The services in churches and cathedrals are led by specially trained and ordained priests.

The Centre of Faith

The common focus for all Christians is their belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God, who lived on earth as human and suffered pain and death and then rose from the dead. They believe God sent Jesus to show the world how much he loves them and to save the world from sin.

Christian Groups

There are many different Christian groups and there are often great differences between one group and another. Such differences have led to a long tradition of debate, disagreement and disputes between the Christian family which has helped to shape a lively and vigorous faith. However, the simple concept of one God who reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is central to all Christian teaching.

Christian tradition recognises seven sacraments which are:

1. Baptism – the most important sacrament which marks the entry of a person into the faith;
2. The Eucharist – also known as Holy Communion;
3. Confirmation;
4. Penance / Confession;
5. Matrimony / Marriage;
6. Ordination (Deacons, Priests and Bishops);
7. Sacrament of the Sick.

Different churches vary in the importance they attach to the different sacraments.

The two most common Christian groups in the UK are Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The third group, known as the Free Churches, is made up of several Christian groups which include the Methodists, Baptists, United Reform Church and Pentecostal.

Anglicans / Church of England

The Church of England's roots go back to the first Christians who came to Britain during Roman times; King Henry VIII made the break with Rome and established the Church of England as the state church. About 57% of the population of the UK is considered to be Anglican.

Roman Catholics

Roman Catholicism began with the followers of Jesus Christ. As well as their belief in Jesus Christ, they consider Mary, the mother of Christ, to be the centre of their faith. Catholicism places greater emphasis on the sacraments and significance of worship than some other churches. About 13% of the population in the UK are followers of the Catholic faith.

Roman Catholics are expected to conform to a certain code:

- They attend a church service every Sunday and certain other designated days of the year;
- That adults should fast on some days and abstain from eating meat on special religious days;
- Every Friday they try to do without something and instead, do something positive for someone else;
- They believe in confession, where they talk to a priest about sins which they believe they have committed and ask for God's forgiveness.

According to the Catholic faith, there are seven sacraments which every Catholic experiences as an outward sign of God's grace or favour.

Baptism

Most Christians regard Baptism as an outward physical sign of re-birth. It marks the start of a new life which they share with other Christians, and the water is a symbol of the way in which sin was removed from human life by Jesus.

The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and most Protestant churches baptise children when they are still babies. During the service the Minister makes the sign of the cross on the baby's forehead. The parents and godparents promise to help the baby grow up as a Christian.

Confirmation

This ceremony is conducted when a Christian decides to 'confirm' the promises made on his or her behalf at baptism and prayers are said for the person to be strengthened in their Christian life.

Marriage

Christians believe that marriage is central to human life because it marks the beginning of a new family and a new generation. A Deacon or Priest blesses the marriage and the church recognises the validity of civil marriage.

Family Planning

Christian views on family planning vary considerably. Roman Catholics do not believe in any family planning devices, but in practice, individuals may vary their approach. Anglicans do not have any objections.

Sacrament of the Sick

The Sacrament of the Sick is a symbol of Christ's healing and loving. It can be adapted according to the severity of the illness and repeated if the circumstances change. If the person is dying, the priest anoints the dying person in a special ceremony which symbolises forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. For those who believe in these sacraments this service is of great significance.

Death

It is often important that a priest is called at the time of death. Christians are taught that Jesus will return to the world to rule forever and on that day the dead will rise and join in His glory. In the past, most believed that they should be buried not cremated. The churches recognise practices of burial and cremation.

Confucianism / Taoism

Confucianism

Confucianism is the ancient religion of China. From about 400 BC (before Christ) to 900 AD, the teaching of the wise man Confucius was the main religion of the Chinese people.

In Chinese Confucius' name, Kong Fu TZS, means 'The wise teacher King' and this is how, after more than 2,000 years, many Chinese people still think of him.

Confucius taught that if people followed his way they would become good and holy and wise. They would become what he called 'noble minded people'.

The five rules to follow are:

1. Goodness
2. Justice
3. Respect
4. Consideration

5. Courtesy.

Taoism

The great Taoist religion is in many ways the opposite of Confucianism. One major difference between the two religions was the Taoism quest for freedom. For some it was a freedom from the political and social constraints, for others it was a more profound search for immortality. Change itself was a very important part of the Taoist view of reality.

Cross-Fertilisation

The two great Chinese religions have always been influenced by each other's developments. The picture became even more complicated with the introduction of Buddhism into China. Both Taoism and Confucianism borrowed a great deal from Buddhism.

The three are one

The great heyday of cross-fertilisation of religions in China came in the 13th century. The best features of Taoist and Buddhist meditation were combined with the Confucian sense of shared concern for fellow creatures in a uniquely Chinese synthesis. This kind of religious life is still present in China today and, in fact, it would not be far wrong to say that most religious Chinese people draw on a mixture of all religions.

Different codes for different needs

The Chinese have scores of gods from whom they seek help at different times and for different reasons. The gods are important as the Chinese believe that when they die, they will go before 10 judges of the underworld who punish evil people.

Most Chinese gods stem from either Taoism or Buddhism. Taoist gods are either legendary figures or real people who have achieved fame during their lives.

Practical Matters

Chinese people have a very practical approach to their religion. They consult their gods on such matters as career prospects, important dates or during illness.

Prayer / Worship

Worship is a daily event for many Chinese and praying is a personal affair. There are no special holy days or priests to take services. Even when people pray aloud together they seldom use the same prayer.

In 1949, the Chinese Communists proclaimed their country a People's Republic. Since then, religion has been discouraged.

Diet

Chinese people believe that in order to be healthy, equilibrium between hot and cold needs to be maintained, be it in the form of food, herbs or medicine. All Chinese foods are classified as hot or cold so, in order to restore balance, they must adhere to a special diet. Rice and noodles are the staple food of the Chinese and are eaten with a variety of meat, fish and vegetable dishes. Chinese meals have greatly influenced eating habits in the western world.

Dress Code

Most Chinese people wear western clothes. Older females tend to wear trousers and tunics.

Ideas of Modesty

In general, Chinese women may be shy and modest. They prefer to be examined by a female doctor.

Birth and Growing Up

Traditionally large families are a source of pride. The birth of a son is celebrated, as boys represent security and are expected to look after their ageing parents. Families are very close-knit and children are taught to respect their parents from an early age. Children also learn to respect their ancestors. Ancestor worship is the way a family honours an ancestor's achievements in life.

Marriage

Arranged marriages used to be a traditional method of getting married. Fortune tellers are consulted, using the couple's birthdays, but the parents have the final decision. Matchmaking is rare these days as most young people choose whom they wish to marry, although they still prefer to get their parent's consent.

Family Planning

Chinese people accept family planning. They now put more emphasis on the quality of the upbringing of their children rather than the size of the family. The idea of having a balance of male and female children is growing, though the preference for male descendants is still strong among the more traditionally-minded parents.

Hinduism

Hinduism is a collection of different forms of Indian beliefs. It is the third largest religion, after Christianity and Islam. Estimates of the size of the Hindu community in the UK vary considerably. A widely accepted estimate is about 400,000 people.

Hinduism began about 2,000 years before the life of Jesus Christ and did not have a founder like most other religions. Hindus believe that Brahman is the supreme spirit of all creation. It is perfect and unchanging and is neither male nor female. Brahman created the Hindu gods.

There are hundreds of these, but the three most important ones are:

1. Brahma – The Creator of Life;
2. Vishnu – The Preserver of Life;
3. Siva – The Destroyer of Life.

These gods and goddesses are seen as the many manifestations of the same God.

Hindus believe that the soul must be cleansed of earthly sins before it can return to Brahman (The Creator).

Karma (Actions) and Re-Birth

Hindus believe that a person's Karma is formed by his or her good and bad deeds and by the religious merits gained in each life. Karma is formed as the cause and effect of all that happens in one's life. This Karma controls what a person will be in his or her next life. In Hindu belief, the human soul does not necessarily have to be reborn in a human body. A person with a very bad Karma may be reborn as an animal or even an insect. The wheel of life continues turning until the soul is pure enough to return to the Spirit of Creation.

Salvation through Yoga

Good deeds alone are not enough to purify the soul. Certain religious duties and rituals may also help. One action that helps to develop good Karma is Yoga, which means 'union'. In this case it means the union of the human mind with Brahman. Yoga is a form of deep meditation that is aided by certain positions and control of the body and control of the mind.

Vedas

These are religious books of knowledge, the oldest of which is the Rig-Veda. It was written in 1000 BC but existed in oral form before this date.

Shri Bhagvat Vita

This is the most commonly used Holy Book, out of which verses are recited at various religious ceremonies.

Hindu way of life

To be a Hindu there are certain things that one must believe in and live by.

These are:

- A belief in Karma – the result of one's good and bad deeds in life;
- A belief in Dharma – the traditions of Hinduism and inherent individual qualities;
- A belief in Gods – Brahma, Vishnu and Siva;
- A belief that the soul is reborn after death in a new body;
- Reverence for the Sacred Vedas;
- A belief that the soul can by means of a religious life, liberate itself from the wheel of life
- Reverence of an ascetic religious life;
- 'OM' is the symbol and sound of God.

Temples and Worship

Most Hindus today are followers of one of the personal gods. The centres of worship are Temples but some worship is also practised in the home. At certain times of the day the head of the family will make offerings and say prayers before the image of the chosen god.

River Ganges – Holy River

The River Ganges is regarded as a sacred river which has purifying and healing properties. Millions of Hindus visit the temples along the banks of the Ganges and bathe in its water. It is the wish of most Hindus that after death they have their ashes scattered on the River Ganges.

Dress Code

The female national costume of the country is a saree which is worn over a short blouse and an underskirt. The midriff is usually left bare. Married women may wear a Bindi – a coloured red spot – on their forehead.

The male costume of the sub-continent is a long jacket with high collar and buttons down the front, worn over western style trousers. Most men wear western style clothes.

Diet

Hindus place great significance on spiritual diet. They have a great love of animals because of their belief in reincarnation. For this reason, they do not believe in killing animals. Hindus believe a cow to be the most sacred animal. Therefore the killing of a cow is one of the greatest religious crimes. Hindus are very strict vegetarians. They will not accept food which has come into contact with prohibited foods.

The Stages of Hindu Life

Hinduism is taught from the cradle and is ingrained in its followers. In addition, Hindu customs and culture are deeply rooted in the religion. Hinduism provides each person with a road map to follow through their entire life.

Birth and Growing Up

When a baby is born in a Hindu family there is great rejoicing and the priest is informed of the date and exact time of the child's birth. From this information the baby's horoscope is prepared. Hindus accord great significance to astrology at such important stages of their lives. The priest will then suggest suitable syllables from which the parents may select a name for the baby. This is one of the main reasons why Hindus do not register the name of their baby immediately in western countries.

Hair Cutting Ceremony

Many boys go through a ceremony when they have their first haircut. Their head is completely shaved. The symbolic meaning is that bad impressions from the previous life are removed.

Upanayana

This is one of the important ceremonies when a Hindu boy is given a thread with three strands which he wears on his body. The thread is a symbol of his second birth when he starts to learn from his Guru (teacher). The three strands symbolise his duties to god, his parents and to the world.

Marriage

Most Hindu marriages are arranged by the parents and the marriage is seen as the unity of two souls through two families, rather than two individuals. The marriage day and time is fixed by the priest after reference to astrology.

Family Planning

There is no Hindu objection to family planning from the religious point of view. However, there may be strong social and family pressures on the woman, particularly if no son has yet been born. It is advisable for the husband to be involved in any discussion of family planning.

Death

The dying person is read passages from the Holy Book and prayers are said. Thread similar to that worn by the young boys with three strands may be tied around the wrist. The forehead is marked with a holy paste. It is believed that after death the soul immediately leaves the body to start its new life and it is the hope of every Hindu not to be re-born but to achieve unity with God. God's name is repeated into the ears of the dying person.

Hindus believe that a body without a soul is a carcass which must return to nature, thus they are cremated. Because of the strong belief in this, a dying person may occasionally request to be placed on the ground during the final few breaths. The ashes of the dead are scattered either in the sea or river, preferably in the River Ganges. Children under the age of five are buried.

Hindus prefer to cremate the body as soon as possible after death before the next sunset. If the body is to be left in a room overnight, a light or candle must be left burning throughout the night.

Humanism and Unitarianism

Humanism is a positive attitude; centred on human experience, thoughts and hopes.

Belief

Experience and rational thinking are the things that humanists believe provide the only source of knowledge and moral code to live by. They reject the idea of knowledge revealed to us by gods or in special books.

Ideas

Most humanists would agree to the following:

- Supernatural beings don't exist;
- The material universe is the only thing that exists;
- The only reliable source of knowledge about the universe is science;
- There is no such thing as reincarnation and the only life that we live is this life;
- Human beings can live ethical and fulfilling lives without religion;
- Human beings derive their moral code from lessons of history, personal experience and thought.

Unitarianism is an open minded and individualistic approach to religion that gives scope for a very wide range of beliefs and doubts.

Values

Unitarians are sceptical about any person or tradition possessing the whole truth. Rather than being seen as destructive, Unitarians suggest that human differences of opinion and lifestyle should be seen as potentially creative and enriching.

Whilst Unitarians don't have a creed as such, they don't allow members to believe in anything.

Unitarians:

- Base religious ideas on rational thoughts rather than external authority;

- Support freedom of religious thought;
- Tolerate a wide range of religious ideas, including humanism;
- Form their religious principles from conscience, thinking and life's experiences.

Within Unitarianism there is a role of the individual, they must believe that:

- Everyone has the right to seek truth and meaning for themselves using their own experience of life as a way of achieving this;
- The best setting for finding religious truth and meaning is a community that welcomes each individual for themselves, complete with their beliefs, doubts and questions.

Islam

The word Islam means submission and the followers of the religion are known as Muslims. Islam is a worldwide religion founded by Prophet Mohammed in Saudi Arabia in the sixth century AD. Muslims believe in one God, Allah.

The religious duty of the Muslims is summed up in five pillars as follows:

1. **Creed** – God is one, and only one, supreme Creator and Mohammed is the prophet of God.
2. **Prayer** – prayer is an essential part of religion and Muslims are required to pray according to set rituals, five times a day.
3. **Almsgiving** – each person is asked to contribute a proportion of their income to the poor.
4. **Fasting** – this takes place for a whole month, the month of Ramadan. The Islamic year consists of 356 days (11 days shorter than the international year) so the month of Ramadan can occur during any of the four seasons of the year in 333 year cycles. During this month, all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk. The sick, aged, children and nursing mothers are excused from fasting.
5. **Pilgrimage** – once in a lifetime, if possible, every Muslim is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, the Holy City.

The Mosque and Worship

The Mosque is the religious centre which plays an important part in the lives of Muslim men. Men and woman are segregated into different rooms. The Islamic religion dictates that all Muslims pray five times a day. The prayer itself has a set of rituals which are carried out whilst kneeling on a special mat and facing towards Mecca, the Holy City.

The Koran (Quran)

This is the most sacred scripture of Islam. Muslims believe that the scriptures in Koran are Allah's (God's) commands which were revealed to Prophet Mohammed.

Priesthood

There is no priesthood in Islam and no titles for religious officials. Anyone who knows the Koran and the Islamic way of life can lead the prayer. The one who leads the prayer is called Imam (leader).

The Spread of Islam

Muslims live in almost every country in the world. In more than 50 countries, Islam is the biggest religion. Most Muslims live in the great belt stretching from Morocco to Pakistan. Indonesia, followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan, has the largest population but there are also tens of millions of Muslims living as minority groups in India, China and Europe.

Muslims in Britain

Britain's Muslim population is very mixed, ranging from student from Nigeria and Malaysia, businessmen from the Middle East and East Africa, to former farmers from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. The estimated population of Muslims in the UK is about 1.5 million.

Diet

Diet has spiritual significance. Muslims are forbidden to eat pork or pork products. In addition, a Muslim cannot consume the meat of animals or birds that is not ritually slaughtered. Meat which satisfies the Muslim religious laws is known as Halal. This is the same principle as Kosher food for Jews. Alcohol is forbidden, but not tobacco.

Dress code

The Islamic religion has high moral values which demand:

- Men and women are separated in public places;
- Women keep their bodies covered, apart from their faces, at all times especially in public places;
- Women wear a head scarf and men wear a brimless hat.

Birth and childhood

When Muslims become parents, they have a special responsibility to ensure that their children grow up understanding the faith. The very first thing a Muslim baby hears upon coming into the world is the Shabadah (the profession of faith). The birth of a child, especially a boy, is a time of rejoicing.

Naming a child

Naming a child has a religious significance, therefore names cannot be chosen before the birth of a baby. Muslim boys are circumcised, usually while they are only a few days old. This occasion is celebrated as a great religious event.

Muslim babies also have their hair shaved as part of a religious ritual. Most young children are sent to religious schools where they are taught to read the Koran.

Marriages

In Islam, a happy family is regarded as the foundation of a healthy society. The Koran encourages Muslims to marry and have children. It also emphasises that sexual relationships outside marriage are always wrong. Marriages between Muslims are often arranged by their parents and marrying within the family, for example first cousins, is encouraged.

Muslim men are allowed to have up to four wives, but it is very rare for most ordinary men to have more than one wife. Muslims do, however, think that it is good to be able to have a second wife if the first is unable to have children. In such cases, both

wives live together as part of the family. In Britain due to the legal requirements the man has to officially divorce his first wife for the second marriage to take place.

Extended Family

In most Muslim countries, the family is a large group, consisting of grandparents, parents and many uncles, aunts and cousins, either in one household or very close to each other. Members of the large extended family network are expected to help each other. This concept of extended family support is difficult in the UK for many reasons. One main reason is the style of housing which restricts the number of people who can live together.

Family Planning

Strictly speaking, orthodox Muslims do not approve of family planning devices. In practice, individuals vary widely in their approach.

Death

Muslims believe in the resurrection of the body after death and, therefore, they bury their dead. Burial is expected to take place as quickly as possible after death. The traditional reason for this is the effect of heat on the corpse. Before burial, the body is washed and wrapped in a shroud. A funeral prayer follows. It is the duty laid upon all Muslims to see that the believers of the faith have a proper funeral. Women do not usually attend the burial but often visit the grave for years afterwards.

Jainism

Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is to live a life of harmlessness and renunciation. The aim of Jain life is to achieve liberation of the soul.

Dharma

Jain believes that non-injury is the highest religion. Their aim is to live in such a way that their Jiva (soul) doesn't get any more Karma and so that the Karma they do have can be or begin to be eliminated. They do this by following a disciplined path. Karma can be described as the total effect of a person's actions and conduct during the successive phase of the person's existence, regarded as determining the person's destiny.

The path or Dharma (truth / feeling) that was advocated by Mahavira was one of strict ascetism, renunciation and moral cultivation. He instructed his followers to cultivate the three jewels of:

- Right Belief;
- Right Knowledge;
- Right Conduct.

The five abstinences or vows are of:

- Ahimsa (non violence);
- Satya (truthfulness);
- Asteya (not stealing);

- Apcingraha (non acquisition);
- Brahmacharya (chaste living) emerging from the three jewels relating to the right conduct.

There are two forms of the five vows:

- Mahavrata: The five great vows followed by Jain monks and nuns;
- Anavrata: the lesser vows (less strict version of the great vows) followed by Jain lay people.

God

Jain's do not believe in God in the way that other religions do, but they do believe in divine beings who are worthy of devotion.

Fasting

Fasting is very common in Jainism and whilst most Jain's fast at special times of the year such as festivals and holy days, some fast at any time. Monsoon period is one of the fasting times in Jainism and it is more often carried out by women than men.

People who practice Jainism fast because they believe that it purifies the body and mind and reminds the practitioner of Mahavira's emphasis on renunciation and ascetism as Mahavira spent a lot of time fasting.

Fasting has to be done in the mind and isn't just about stopping your intake of food. Jain's believe that you have to stop wanting to eat otherwise the fast is pointless.

There are different types of fasting:

Complete fasting – giving up food and water completely for a period;

Partial fasting – eating less than you need to avoid hunger

Vruti Sankshepa – limiting the number of items of food eaten;

Rasa Parityaga – giving up your favourite foods.

Pilgrimage

Although there are no compulsory pilgrimages these play a large part in Jain life. When lay Jains go on pilgrimage they take on some of the lifestyles and attitude of a Jain ascetic (monk or nun). Jains may visit any number of temples or other locations that are associated with the lives and deeds of the Tirthankaras. One of the most famous and holy sites for pilgrimage for Jains is in Shatrunjaya in Gujarat. It is one of five holy mountains and contains many temples.

Prayers

Jain prayers tend to recall the great qualities of the tirthankaras (saints) and remind the individual of various teachings.

Family

Lay Jains may have sexual relationships and children; the lay version of chaste living simple means remaining faithful to one's chosen partner. Jains are to avoid sex before marriage and sexual thoughts so as to retain a clear mind unclouded by desire. Monks and nuns live in the community acting as teachers and living examples of Jain truth. They are to remain completely celibate in body and mind.

Reincarnation and deliverance

When a human being dies its soul immediately goes into another form, it may not be a human or animal. The form which it takes depends upon the person's Karma.

A being achieves deliverance when it is free from Karma, when this has happened it travels instantly to the supreme abode. The supreme abode is the highest level of the universe and the being will live in a disembodied state of bliss with other liberated souls.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses are a worldwide Christian Society of people who actively bear witness regarding Jehovah God and his purpose affecting mankind. They base their beliefs solely on the Bible. The estimated number of active witnesses in Britain is about 130,000.

Beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses

1. Bible

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God and instead of adhering to a creed based on human tradition, they hold on to the Bible as the standard for all their beliefs.

2. God

They worship Jehovah as the only true God and freely speak to others about him and his loving purposes toward mankind. Anyone who publicly witnesses about Jehovah is usually identified as belonging to one group, Jehovah's Witnesses.

3. Jesus Christ

They do not believe that Jesus Christ is part of a Trinity. Instead they believe that, as the Bible says; he is the Son of God, the first of God's Creations, that he had a pre-human existence and that his life was transferred from heaven to the womb of a virgin, Mary. His perfect human life, laid down in sacrifice, makes possible salvation to eternal life for those who exercise faith and Christ is actively ruling as King with God given authority over all the earth since 1914.

4. God's Kingdom

They believe that God's Kingdom is the only hope for mankind, that it is a real government, that it will soon destroy the present wicked system of things including all human governments, and that it will produce a new system in which righteousness will prevail.

5. Heavenly Life

They believe that 144,000 spirit-anointed Christians will share with Christ in his heavenly kingdom, ruling as Kings with him. They do not believe that heaven is the reward for everyone who is 'good'.

6. The Earth

They believe that God's original purpose for the earth will be fulfilled, that the earth will be completely populated by the worshippers of Jehovah, that these will be able to

enjoy eternal life in human perfection and that even the dead will be raised in an opportunity to share in these blessings.

7. Death

They believe that the dead are conscious of absolutely nothing, that they are experiencing neither pain nor pleasure in some spirit realm and that they do not exist except in God's memory, so hope for their future life lies on resurrection from the dead.

8. Last Days

They believe that we have been living since 1914, in the last days of this wicked system of things, that some that saw the events of 1914 will also see the complete destruction of the present wicked world and that lovers of righteousness will survive into a cleansed earth.

9. Separate from the World

They earnestly endeavour to be no part of the world, as Jesus said would be true of his followers. They show genuine Christian love for their neighbours, but they do not share the politics or the wars of any nation. They provide for the material needs of their families but shun the world's avid pursuit of material things and personal fame and its excessive indulgence in pleasure.

10. Apply Bible Counsel

They believe that it is important to apply the counsel of God's word in everyday life – at home, in school, in business and in their congregation. Regardless of a person's past way of life, he may become one of Jehovah's Witnesses if he abandons practices condemned by God's word and applies its godly counsel. But if anyone thereafter makes a practice of adultery, fornication and other sins such as drunkenness, lying and stealing, he will be dis-fellowshipped from the organisation.

Health Issues

Jehovah's Witnesses have absolutely refused the transfusion of blood and its primary components ever since these techniques became universally available. This is a deeply held core value and they regard a transfusion without their consent as a gross physical violation. This absolute refusal may conflict with a clinician's medical and ethical responsibility for preserving life.

Jehovah's Witnesses are usually well informed both about medical procedures and their right to determine their own treatment.

To administer blood in the face of a refusal by the patient may be unlawful and lead to criminal and / or civil proceedings.

In the management of trauma the Jehovah's Witness status of a patient may be unknown. Nevertheless, the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses carry on their person a signed and witnessed advance directive card, absolutely refusing blood and releasing clinicians from any liability arising from this refusal. In the case of trauma, victims identified as a Jehovah's Witness but without documentation, every effort

should be made to avoid the use of blood and blood products in the perioperative period.

Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a network of hospital liaison committees who are available to assist with the management of individual Jehovah's Witness patients. These maintain list of clinicians prepared in principle to accept Jehovah's Witnesses and will provide their names on request on a case-by-case basis.

Language and communication
Language of the country of origin.

Diet

Any food that contains blood, for example black pudding, is strictly prohibited.

Death and Dying

Post-mortems are not forbidden.

Important Festivals

The most important festival is the annual memorial of the death of Christ. Each year the date will vary, in line with the Jewish calendar, Nisan 14.

Judaism

Judaism has existed for over 5,000 years. Throughout its long history the Jewish religion has had many leaders and prophets but there is no single founder of the religion. Moses is recognised as the most important leader of the Jews.

The Jewish belief about God is simple. They believe there is only one God and he alone should be prayed to. He is the Creator of the Universe. Judaism teaches that because God is good, so people should be good. The Jewish religion demands that Jews should love both God and all people. An important Jewish teaching is that as God chose them by giving them his laws. They see themselves as the light to the nations, which means teaching the world about their hopes of a united human race and peace.

The Bible

The oldest sacred book of the Jewish people is the Bible. Christians refer to it as the Old Testament but Jews usually call it the Tenach. The first five books are considered the most important and in Hebrew they are called the Torah. The contents of these books form the Torah Scrolls, parts of which are read in the Synagogue each Monday, Thursday, Saturday (Sabbath) and on special festive days.

Rabbi

A religious leader of the Jewish faith is called a Rabbi.

The Synagogue

The synagogue is the Jew's house of worship and is also used as a community centre. There are three daily prayer sessions: morning, afternoon and evening. Whenever possible, Jew's prayers should be said at a public service, but if this is not possible then prayers can be said at home or elsewhere.

Orthodox and Progressive Jews

Most of the world's Jews can be divided into two groups:

- Orthodox;
- Non-orthodox or progressive

Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah is the word of God, given directly by God and written down by Moses. It is perfect and the laws it contains are eternal. They must be obeyed without question.

Non-orthodox Jews believe that while the Torah is certainly the word of God, it is also a human document. Parts of it speak to every generation and parts are not necessarily relevant in today's world. They believe that some laws are eternal but others can be abolished or changed and new customs can be introduced to help Jews cope with the problems of the modern world.

Spread of Judaism

Jews have been great travellers throughout history. Over the centuries they have made contact with most parts of the world and the various groups of Jews today owe their differences to these early settlements. A small number of Jewish immigrants settled in Britain early last century but it was in the 1930s that most arrived from Germany and East European countries. The Jewish population in the UK is estimated to 300,000.

Dress Code

There is no special dress code but it is a requirement that married women cover their heads when praying. Although there is no Jewish law demanding that men should cover their heads while they pray, it is a binding custom that they do. Any suitable headgear is acceptable, but many wear the Kipah (skullcap).

Diet

Judaism promotes compassion for animals and, according to their religious laws; animals should be slaughtered in a humane way. The meat from the slaughtering process is called kosher meat. Most Jews will only eat kosher meat and the very orthodox Jews will not eat kosher meat which has been cooked in utensils used for cooking non-Kosher meat. To be on the safe side, some may eat only vegetarian meals.

Jews only eat the meat of animals which chew the cud and are cloven footed, such as sheep and cows. Pigs and rabbits are forbidden. Fish must have both fins and scales so salmon, trout and shellfish are forbidden. A further ruling states that meat and milk products cannot be eaten together. This means they do not have milk in their drinks or cream with their desserts after a meat meal and do not use butter on meat sandwiches.

Fasting

There are several minor fasts in the religious calendar but the prominent fast which almost every Jew observes is the Yom-Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is a 25-hour fast, which usually falls in late September or early October. This day is considered to be the holiest day of the Jewish calendar and one that is considered to

set the path for the year to follow. If health permits, most Jews prefer to keep this day as a special day for fasting and prayer.

Birth and Growing Up

Jewish children are given both a common name and a Hebrew name at birth, usually that of a deceased ancestor, in order to perpetuate the name. The Hebrew name has a Jewish historical meaning. The common name may be chosen from among those that are popular at the time.

A boy is given his name during a circumcision ceremony which is a very important and ancient ritual. It is important that this ceremony takes place on the eighth day after birth except in exceptional circumstances due to ill health. The ceremony is performed

Most Jewish children attend two schools; their ordinary day time school and a religious school on Sunday morning and some week-day evenings. Part of being Jewish is learning about the religion so that it is properly understood. Boys must be able to read Hebrew by the time they are 13 years old, an age which marks a boy's entry into manhood when he is expected to observe all the Jewish laws.

Marriage

Judaism encourages Jews to marry within the Jewish community. Although weddings do not have to be performed in synagogues, most of them are. It is hoped that every marriage will result in the birth of children, for they are considered a very important link between the generations.

Family Planning

Not all methods of contraception are permitted but today almost all Jews will use some method of family planning. According to Jewish law only women, not men, may use contraceptives for health reasons. Jewish law forbids contraception by men. The Pill is widely used by women.

Death

Jewish tradition demands that funerals and burials must take place as soon as possible after death, ideally within 24 hours and usually within three days. The body is washed and shrouded by volunteer members of the Jewish faith before being placed in the coffin. Funeral services are always simple and the use of flowers is not encouraged. Cremation is not allowed among orthodox Jews but is common in the progressive groups.

Mormonism

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded in 19th Century America and has over 12 million members world-wide, including 190,000 in the UK. The Church is centred on Christ, but has substantial differences in belief to the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christian Churches.

Mormons believe their church is a restoration of the Church as conceived by Jesus and that the other Christian churches have gone astray.

Mormons believe that human beings can become like Gods they call this deification. They cannot grow to replace gods nor do they become equal to God they remain subordinate to God even when they become exalted and like God. They cannot become at one with God but take on attributes of God whilst remaining separate beings.

Pre-mortal existence

Mormons believe there are three stages to human life:

- Pre-existence as spiritual children;
- A time of probation on earth;
- Eternal life with the Heavenly Father.

Mormons see their time spent on earth as a time to learn talents and gifts in preparation for meeting God.

Their time on earth, where they experience highs and lows enables them to fully understand and appreciate the true nature of joy.

Fasting

Every month, on the first Sunday, Mormons fast by going without two meals. They give the money they would have spent on the meals to the Church; this is called the fasting offering. These offerings are used by the Bishops to provide food, shelter and medical care for the needy. The fast is preceded, accompanied and followed by a prayer, without a prayer the fast has very little spiritual value.

Prayer

Mormon prayer is a heartfelt and sincere conversation with God the father. They pray only to God.

Individual Mormons pray privately every morning and night. Families try to come together every morning and night to pray and they also ask for a blessing on food before eating.

Public prayers are expected to be simple and brief.

The Temple

The temple is not used as a regular weekly worship but it used for some of the Churches most holy ceremonies. Only Mormons regarded as worthy by the Church are allowed to enter the temple.

Mormons don't discuss what goes on within the Temple and non-Mormons are not allowed to enter. They feel that what goes on inside is so holy that it should only be spoken of inside the temple.

Before they take part in ceremonies at the Temple, Mormons must change into white, simple and modest clothing. Wearing white symbolises purity and reverence, by all being dressed alike it reminds them that they are all equal in God's eyes.

Tithing

Tithing is a custom by which Mormons give one tenth of their salary to the Church/ this provides the main income for the Church. Mormons regard this payment as a matter of conscience between them and God. Tithes are paid by everyone, even children. As the payment is one tenth of their income everyone is regarded as equal in the amount which they donate.

Baptism

People must be spiritually clean in order to live with God and so baptism is essential for Mormons if they are to receive salvation and return to live with their Heavenly father. Mormon children are baptised at the age of eight.

Baptism for the dead is where a person takes the place of the deceased in the baptism. It does not make the person taking their place a Mormon. Mormons believe that this doctrine ends the injustice of people being damned because they died without learning the Gospel of God.

Weddings

Marriage is central to Mormons; they believe that God has ordered them to have children so that spirits can spend time learning and testing on the earth in physical bodies. They believe that the family unit can continue beyond the grave and that marriage is part of the plan of salvation.

Families

Mormons regard having children as their duty and because of this, they don't normally delay in making a family. Family home evening is where the family gets together to share in spiritual training as well as spending quality time together. During the family home evenings there will be prayers, songs, scriptural readings, teaching and discussions on the ethics of life.

Polygamy

Although this was accepted in the past, in 1890 this became unacceptable by the Mormon Church and those who practice it were excommunicated. There are still some who believe that by practicing polygamy they are preserving the original Mormon belief.

Funerals

Mormons prefer to bury their dead rather than have them cremated. As Mormons know that families will be reunited after death, the natural grief at the funeral is tempered with certainty and hope of what is to come.

Paganism

Paganism encompasses a diverse community with some groups concentrating on specific traditions, practices or elements such as ecology, Celtic traditions or certain gods.

Wiccans, Druids, Shamans, Sacred Ecologists, Odinists and Heathens all make up parts of the Pagan community.

Wheel of the Year

The Pagan seasonal cycle is often called the Wheel of the Year. Almost all Pagans celebrate a cycle of eight festivals, which are spaced every six or seven weeks through the year. Four of the festivals have Celtic origins and are known by Celtic names; Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhain. The other four festivals are points on the solar system; Spring and Autumn Equinox (when the length of the day is exactly equal to the night), Summer and Winter Solstice (longest and shortest days of the year).

Worship

Paganism is a very diverse religion, it has many distinct although related traditions and the forms of worship vary widely. Worship can be collective or solitary and may consist of formal prayer or meditation or formal, structures rituals through which the participants affirm deep spiritual connections with nature, honour their gods and goddesses and celebrate the seasonal festivals of the timing of year and the rites of passage of human life.

They have no specific public buildings set aside and most believe ceremonies are best conducted out of doors. Often rituals take place in woods or caves, on hilltops or along the seashore.

Women and men almost always worship together, with women normally taking the lead role as representatives of the pre-eminence of female principle.

Pagans don't believe they are set above, or apart from the rest of nature. Their worship is mainly concerned with connection to, and the honouring of, immanent divinity.

Weddings

Pagan weddings and ceremonies are called handfasting and mark the coming together of two people in a formal, loving and equal sexual partnership. As with all pagan ceremonies there is a considerable variation in the precise form a handfasting rite will take, but some parts are universal.

If possible the ceremony will be held outside and begin with the marking of sacred space, the honouring of the four elements and a welcome to those present. The gods and goddesses are then called upon to bless the couple and the right hands of the couple are bound together (hence handfasting), they swear the oaths that will define their relationship, their hands are then unbound in token that they will remain together unbound by their own free will.

Sikhism

Sikhism is one of the youngest of the world's major religions. The Sikhs are people who follow the teachings of ten leaders who they call Gurus. All the Gurus lived between 1469 and 1708 in the part of Northern India called Punjab.

The first Guru, known as Guru Nanak, was born in 1469. The main religions in India at the time were Hinduism and Islam. Members of these two religions followed

practices which Guru Nanak rejected, such as rituals of idol worship, caste system, purdah (veiling) and sati (widow-burning).

Sikhism is as much a way of life as a religion and belief in one God. They are supposed to be distinguished by the five symbols, often referred to as the five K's, because of their Punjabi names which begin with that letter.

The five K's:

- Kesh – uncut hair;
- Kangha – small combs used to keep the hair tidy;
- Kara – steel bangle;
- Kaccha – special shorts worn as underwear;
- Kirpan – dagger / sword.

Sikh men wear a turban to keep their hair in place. It is an insult to try to remove a person's turban.

Guru Granth Sahib

This is a holy book containing scriptures which is used at all religious services.

Priesthood

Although there are some specially trained priests, anyone can conduct the worship, provided the person is competent. Both men and women can act as priests.

Sikhism – A Way of Life

The main ideals that influence the way of life for Sikhs are based on the following ideas.

Equality – all human beings are equal because God is contained in every heart. The distinction of caste, colour and creed only serve to perpetuate the inequalities which are created by selfish human beings. The Sikh concept of equality embraces both men and women in secular and religious life.

Worship of God – Sikhs believe God to be present everywhere, therefore prayer can be said anywhere, at any time. The best times for prayers are considered to be before dawn and dusk.

Dignity – Sikhism condemns idleness or a tendency to live off the work of others. For Sikhs there is a dignity in labour in any job, provided that it is legal and ethical. Dishonesty is regarded as a serious sin.

Giving to Charity – the idea of living and sharing together is shown in the Sikh concern for the needs of the poor.

Voluntary service – this plays an important part in the Sikh way of life.

The Sikh Code of Conduct

Sikhs are forbidden to:

- Cut their hair;

- Commit adultery;
- Smoke or chew tobacco;
- Eat Halah or Kosher meat.

Sikhs in Britain

Approximately 400,000 Sikhs live in Britain and they form the largest Sikh community outside India.

Diet

Many Sikhs do not eat beef because of the Hindu influence. While most will accept other meats, some women will not eat any kind of meat and may choose to be vegetarian. Vegetarians will also find food unacceptable if it has come into contact with meat dishes, for example serving food with the same serving knife which has been used for cutting meat sandwiches. Tobacco and alcohol are discouraged.

Dress Code

Sikhs do not cut their hair and take great pride in keeping their hair clean and tidy. Most men wear a turban which clearly identifies their religion but some do not because of social difficulties. In their own home they may choose not to wear a turban at all or use a substitute with a smaller head cover. Young Sikh boys may have their hair either plaited or tied in a knot which is then covered with a small handkerchief until such time as they are able to wear a turban.

Men wear western clothes outside their home but may wear pyjamas with a long shirt at home or in hospital.

Women dress modestly and wear a range of different clothing. Traditionally, they wear loose trousers and a long tunic with a long scarf called Chuni. The scarf is used to cover their head as a mark of respect, especially when entering a place of worship. Young girls are encouraged to keep their legs covered when they reach their teens. Some older women will keep their head covered with a scarf at all times.

Birth

The birth of a baby is a time of rejoicing, especially if it is a boy. Sometimes the birth of a girl appears to be a disappointment to the parents due to their desire for a son. Sons are seen as security, especially as the boys are expected to look after their ageing parents. This tradition has greater significance in countries where there are no social welfare systems to provide for the older population.

Naming a Child

Soon after the birth of a child, the parents visit the temple and pray and decide on a name. This is done by opening the Holy Book at random, and the first letter of the first word on the left page is accepted as the letter with which the child's name must begin. For this reason, parents are unable to choose the name of their child before birth.

The first name is common to both sexes. The second name is usually Singh for a boy and Kaur for a girl, followed by a family name (surname).

Marriage

Marriage is particularly important for Sikhs as it is the basis for bringing up children in the Sikh faith. Marriage involves not just the couple but also their families and, because of this, the choice of a marriage partner is made with the advice and assistance of the families. Sikhs regard marriage as a sacred bond of mutual dependence between a man and a woman.

Family Planning

Sikhs have no objection to family planning.

Family Life

Sikh families, like most Indian families, have a tradition of extended or joint families. Sikhs maintain a strong and supportive family structure. Going to night clubs is discouraged, especially for girls. All family members are encouraged to attend religious service at the temple, especially on a Sunday.

Death

Sikhs believe in reincarnation, therefore death is seen as another stage of the life cycle. Following death, the room in which the body is laid must have a light switched on until it is removed. Traditionally, the funeral takes place before the next sunset. At Sikh funerals, families say goodbye to their dead relatives. The pray said before going to bed is also recited at a funeral service, symbolising that death is similar to sleep and should not be mourned. The body is cremated and the ashes scattered in running water, for example in a river or sea.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism was founded by the prophet Zoroaster in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago. It is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions.

Worship and Prayer

Zoroastrians try to live their life by the creed: Good Thoughts, Good Works, and Good Deeds. Zoroastrians believe that the elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom. Prayers are said facing the sun or another form of light which represents Ahura Mazda's light and energy.

Ceremony

At the age of seven Zoroastrians are given a sudreh (shirt) and kusti (cord) as part of an initial ceremony called Navjote. They tie the cord around them three times to remind them of the creed. From then on they perform this ceremony with prayers several times a day.

Festivals

Festivals are linked with the seasons and are a very prominent aspect of Zoroastrian worship. The Zoroastrian calendar is full of holy days, feasts and festivals. This gives Zoroastrians the reputation of being a joyful religion full of celebration. The calendar presents difficulties for Zoroastrians due to the number of changes over the centuries. This has resulted in three different calendars resulting in festivals being

celebrated at different times depending on which calendar is being used by the communities.

Weddings

In a Zoroastrian wedding there are two stages. One is the signing of the contract which is signed by the bride and groom and their guardians and the second is the service followed by a feast and the celebrations which last between three and seven days.

Both bride and groom dress in white which is a symbol of purity. During the ceremony married female relatives hold over the couple's heads a fine scarf usually white. At the same time two crystallized sugar cones are rubbed together, to sweeten the couple's life. Two parts of the scarf are then sewn together to symbolise the uniting of the couple for the rest of their lives.

Family and Community

Zoroaster was a family man and so most of the worships happen in the family home.

Funerals

In India, Zoroastrians would lay out their dead on a purpose built tower to expose it to the sun and be eaten by the birds of prey. This is done because they see death as the work of Angra Mainu, the embodiment of all that is evil, but the earth and all that is beautiful is considered to be the work of God. Contaminating the elements (Earth, Air, Fire and Water) with such decaying matter as a corpse is considered sacrilege. In Western countries where exposure is either impractical or illegal Zoroastrians usually opt for cremation.

Glossary of Religious Terms

BUDDHISM

Dana	Generosity or unselfishness
Karma	The sum of a person's good or bad actions in a previous life that determines his / her present and future fate
Mathayana	Populist non-orthodox branch of Buddhists prevalent in China and Japan
Nirvana	State of perfect contentment attained when the soul is freed from suffering caused by selfish desires
Parinirvana	Complete passing away of the Buddha
Silas	The five rules of conduct: do not kill, do not steal, be honest, abstain from intoxicating substances, and refrain from improper sexual conduct
Theravada	Orthodox school of Buddhism prevalent in India, Sri Lanka and South-East Asia
Ullumbana	Buddhist New Year and feast of all souls
Wesak	Celebration of the birth of Buddha and his entry into

external nirvana

HINDUISM

Arti	Offerings to the Gods
Bhagavaid Gita	The most important holy script for Hindus
Bindi	Red spots worn by women on their foreheads to indicate they are married
Brahmin	The highest caste in the Hindu religion
Caste	Social category inherited at birth
Diwali	Festival of light held in October
Eshta devata	A family's chosen deity (somewhat akin to a patron saint)
Janeu	Sacred thread worn over the right shoulder and around the body
Jammastami	Birthday of Krishna
Karma	The sum of a person's good or bad actions in a previous life that determines his / her present and future fate
Krishna	One of the most important Hindu gods
Mahasgivaratri	Celebration of the birth of Lord Shiva, held in February or March
Mangal sutra	Gold brooch worn by married women
Om	Mystical symbol of the Supreme Spirit
Puja	Family prayer room
Pujani	Hindu priest
Ram Navami	Celebration of the birth of Lord Ram, who is the incarnation of the god Vishnu
Sindu	Dye used by newly-wedded women to colour the parting of their hair

ISLAM

Bayram	Feast marking the beginning of the month of pilgrimage to Mecca (Id al-Adba in Arabic)
Burka	Headscarf used by Bangladeshi women
Chador	Persian / Urdu for the large veil or tunic worn by women for modesty (correspondence to hijah)
Faqth or Fqih	Traditional faith healer
Hibla	See qibla
Hajj	Pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca that must be

	undertaken at least once in a lifetime, lasting about two weeks
Halal	Meat slaughtered in the ritual manner by cutting the animal's jugular vein to drain out the blood
Haram	Forbidden by Islam
Hijab	Religious dress for women (usually a cloak or long coat and headscarf) corresponds to chador worn in Iran
Id al-Adha	(Bayram in Urdu and Turkish) feast marking the start of the holy month of pilgrimage (<i>hajj</i>)
Id al Fitr	Feast marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan
Khitan / Khatna	Circumcision (male)
Mawlid	Al-Nabi birthday of the Prophet Mohammed
Muslim	Follower of Islam and member of the Umma
Namaaz	Prayer
Quibla	Direction of Mecca, and of prayer
Qur'an	(Koran or Quran) holy book of Muslims containing the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed, as revealed to him by Allah.
Ramadan	Lunar month during which Muslims abstain from eating, smoking, drinking and sexual activity from dawn to dusk
Rouzeh / Rowza	Persian or Urdu terms for fasting
Umma	The entire community of Muslim believers who have embraced the Faith

JUDAISM

Ashkenazi	Jews originating from Eastern and Central Europe
Bar Mitzvah	Ceremony marking a young boy's entry to adulthood
Bat Matzvah	Ceremony marking a girl's attainment of womanhood (recently adopted by Progressive Jews)
Chanukah	Festival of candles held in mid-December
Haredim	The Orthodox religious community
Hassidim	East European (Ashkenaz) branch of the Orthodox community who tend to adopt a special rabbi as their leader
Kappel	Small skullcap worn by observant Jewish men
Kosher	Permitted food e.g. approved by a Rabbi and in the case of meat, ritually slaughtered by cutting the jugular vein to allow the blood to drain out
Luhavitch	Ultra-orthodox sect of the Hassidim

Misnagdim	Non-Hassidic Haredim, who do not follow a particular leader.
Mobel	Person qualified to perform circumcision
Payot	Distinctive locks of hair worn by Hassidic Jews
Pesach Passover	Eight day festival celebrating the exodus of Jews from Persia
Rabbi	Jewish priest
Rosh Hashanah	Jewish New Year, in September / October
Scheitel	Scarf or wig worn by Orthodox Jewish women to cover their hair in public
Sephardi	Jews originating from Spain, North Africa and the Middle-East
Shabbat	Sabbath or Saturday, the weekly day of rest
Shavuot	Harvest festival and celebration of the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai (Pentecost)
Shivah	Period of mourning following death
Sukkot	Autumn harvest festival commemorating the 40 years of Jewish exile from Egypt (Tabernacles)
Tallit katan	Fringed undergarment worn by Orthodox Jewish men
Talmud	Book of religious law, as interpreted by religious scholars from the Torah
Ttisha R'av	One day fast in August to commemorate the destruction of the Temple
Torah	Jewish holy book and first five books of the Bible (Old Testament)
Treifa	Prohibited food
Yom hu-Din	Judgement Day
Yom Kippur	Day of Atonement, marking the end of the ten days of judgement

SIKHISM

Divali	Festival of light (the triumph of good over evil) held in October
Dupatta	Religious scarf
Gurdwara	Temple
Gurpurb	Commemorative occasion or feast day
Hola	Three-day pageant commemorating Sikh military victories, held in the early spring
Jhatka / Chakar	Meat from animals which have been ritually slaughtered

	with one stroke
Kaccha	Symbolic undershorts worn by all Sikh men
Kangha	Comb worn by Sikh men in their hair
Kara	Steel bangle talisman
Kesh	Uncut hair
Kirpan	Symbolic dagger carried by Sikh men
Kameez / Kurta	Traditional long shirt or blouse
Karma	The sum of a person's good or bad actions in a previous life that determines his / her present and future fate
Kaur	Title given to all Sikh women meaning "Prince". The term "prince" was originally bestowed on women in an attempt to bring their status closer to that of men. However, Kaur is generally translated as "princess" to avoid confusion.
Khalsa	Religious order into which all Sikhs are baptised on the 13 th day after birth.
Mela	Festival
Pagri	Turban worn by most Sikh men
Patka	Inner turban used to wrap the hair
Shahwar Kameez	Loose trousers and long blouse worn by Sikh women
Singh	Title given to all Sikh men, meaning "lion"
Vaid or Vayid	Traditional healer
Vaisakhi	Sikh New Year, celebrated in April

Quick Reference Guide on Diet

Food	Observant Muslims	Observant Jews	Observant Hindus	Observant Sikhs
Eggs	√	√	x	x
Milk	√	√	√	√
Yoghurt	√	√	√	√
Butter/ Ghee	√	√	√	√
Cheese	If no animal content	If no animal content	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
Mutton	Halal	Kosher	x	x
Beef	Halal	Kosher	x	x
Pork	x	x	x	x
Fish	√	With scales (no shellfish)	x	x
Lard	x	x	x	x
Root vegetables	√	√	Jains √	√

Useful Resources

'Religion or Belief' – A Practical Guide for the NHS (DH 2009) Contains useful information and guidance on key areas for consideration in providing services and employment. The guide also includes useful contacts. To view the document visit: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/.../DH_093133

A list of local faith centres can be viewed by contacting the PPI team on 275026 or emailing; PPIteam@northstaffs.nhs.uk

