

**The Lives and Teachings of
The Ten Adi Gurus**

Edited by Chris Marlow



Researches in Sahaja Yoga - No. 7

In order to lead people towards knowledge of the Divine the Ten Primordial Masters founded cultures, religions and civilisations in which ninety-nine percent of the world's population now live. They defined and established Dharma - the righteous conduct which sustains and nourishes humanity in our striving for a higher purpose.



Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi - the only Adi Guru of whom we have photographs.

The 'Researches in Sahaja Yoga' Series

'Researches in Sahaja Yoga' is a series of books on subjects related to the teachings of Her Supreme Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, researched through Her writings and lectures and other scriptures. The series aims to elucidate the ancient and unbroken stream of Divine Knowledge which has culminated in Sahaja Yoga.



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The Ten Primordial Masters

The Lives and Teachings of The Ten Adi Gurus

Edited by Chris Marlow

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'Researches in Sahaja Yoga' No. 7





This book is humbly offered at the Divine Lotus Feet
of the Guru of all Gurus, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi,
as an attempt to provide historical and scriptural
information about the Ten Incarnations
of the Divine Guru Principle within us.
We ask Her forgiveness for any mistakes herein.



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“Shri Mataji’s quotations are all in Maiandra font with double quotation marks and referenced in the text.”

‘Other quotations are in Sylfaen font with single quotation marks’

Shri Mataji’s book ‘Creation’ has been published under the title ‘The Book of Adi Shakti’.

MME = Shri Mataji’s book ‘Meta Modern Era’.

Shri Mataji on the Ten Adi Gurus

“The (Ten Adi Gurus) all represent the water element which is within us for sustaining ourselves. They tell us how to sustain ourselves as a human being. And all of them have tried to establish religion within us - doesn't mean outside, but religion as the capacity, or you can say, the quality of a man; what a human being should be like.”

21-04-80, Caxton Hall

“To help (*human beings*) cross the Ocean of Illusion, they were given guidance through this incarnation of the Primordial Master (*Âdi Guru*) again and again in different lives. He was created as the three-headed child Dattâtreyâ by Âdi Shakti as Satî Anasûyâ, wife of the Sage Atreya.

He was born as Âdi Nâth who founded Jainism, one of the oldest religions. Then He was born as Râjâ Janaka, father of Janakî also called Sîtâ, Râma's wife. She was an Incarnation of Âdi Shakti. He was also born as Macchindra Nâth, and again as Zoroaster who was worshipped by the ancient Persians, and still revered by Parsees. Earlier He had taken birth as Abraham and later as Moses, the Fathers of Judaism. In China He was born as Confucius and as Lao Tse, and in Greece as Socrates.

He took a very significant Incarnation as Mohammad Sahib, the Messenger, Paigambar* and Founder of Islam, whose daughter Fâtima was Sîtâ reborn, an Incarnation of Âdi Shakti.

Yet again He took birth as Guru Nânak, founder of the Sikh religion whose sister was Nânakî (*Janakî, Sîtâ, Fâtima*).

Most recently He was born as Shrî Sâi Bâbâ of Shirdî in Mahârâshtra where He died just over sixty years ago. Altogether there were ten major Avatâras of Dattâtreyâ.”

Creation. Ch.2.

* Arabic/Urdu/Hindi for ‘messenger, prophet’



ADI GURU DATTATREYA

ADI GURU DATTATREYA

Śhrī Dattātreyā¹ is widely worshipped all over India. He epitomises renunciation and detachment from all worldly ties, and grants the highest liberation. The Ten Ādi Gurus in this book are all Incarnations of His Principle.

“The Real Gurus are manifestations of this great Principle of Primordial Master, Dattātreyā, who came on this Earth many-a-times and tried to establish within us our Sustenance, our Dharma with this Central Force of Evolution.” **06-02-81, Delhi**

“Dattātreyā helps human beings to seek their salvation by crossing the Void or Ocean of Illusion within themselves.” **Creation. Ch.9.**

Due to the many legends it is hard to say when His Incarnation occurred. He narrates the Tripura Rahasya² to Śhrī Paraśhurāma³, the seventh incarnation of Śhrī Vishnu contemporary to Śhrī Rāma and Rājā Janaka, c.5000 BCE. Śhrī Rāma and Sītā are said to have visited Sage Atri and Anasūyā, Śhrī Dattātreyā’s parents.

The teachings attributed to Him, such as the Tripura Rahasya, are mainly Tantric, ie. concerning the necessity to awaken the Kuṇḍalinī and traverse the six Chakras in order to experience union with the Divine in Sahasrāra.

¹ ‘Dattātreyā’ means ‘Given to Atri (His father)’ [Datta –‘given’, Ātreya –‘to Atri’] It can also mean ‘Granting the state beyond the three (states)’ ie. the Turiya –‘fourth’ state of Pure Spirit. (A-tri –‘without the three’)

² An English translation is available to download free on symb-ol.org.

³ Paraśhurāma lived more than 5000 years and appears in the Rāmāyāna and in the Mahābhārata 2000 years later, as Karna’s Guru.

Dattātreyā was the son of Sage Atri* and His wife Anasūyā –‘without envy’. They had a boon that the Trimūrti –‘Three Forms of God’, (Śhiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu) would be born to them, and Dattātreyā is considered an incarnation of all three but mainly of Śhrī Viṣṇu. His brothers Durvasa and Chandra were Brahmā and Śhiva incarnated.

Śhrī Mataji recounts the story of His birth:-

“You must be knowing the story of a very devoted wife, a Satî, her name was Anasūya and she was so religious and so dedicated that the wives of all the Gods, Brahmā, Vishnu, Mahesha, got very jealous of her. So they told their husbands that, ‘You must go and test her, if she is really a woman with chastity or not.’

So all of them came down as Sadhus –‘seekers’, dressed up like Sannyasis –‘ascetics’. And she said she wanted to serve them, give them something. They said, ‘We want to have food.’ She said, ‘All right, come and sit down.’ She cooked food for them. So they said, ‘No, we will not have the food unless and until you take out all your clothes. We will only have the food if you take out all your clothes.’ She said, ‘Is it so?’, they said, ‘yes’.

So she made them into little, little children, three little children and then she became nude. Because innocence doesn't understand anything about nudity. And then she joined them together, their three innocence was joined together. That's how the Âdi Guru was created. So Guru has to be an innocent person and not a cunning man.”

30-08-92, Cabella

Śhrī Dattātreyā left home at an early age and devoted Himself to austerities. He attained enlightenment by observing nature whose

* Atri was a ‘mind-born’ son of Shri Brahmadeva and is considered to be one of the main authors of the Rig Veda.

twenty-four principles taught Him all things. His philosophy includes leading a simple life, kindness to all, questioning accepted truths and seeking the spiritual meaning of life.

Ādi Guru Dattātreya was completely detached, but to test the faith of some of the Devas who had come to Him for help, He spent a hundred years on an island in the middle of a lake apparently indulging in alcohol and sporting with a beautiful female form (*which had emerged from the top of His head!*) (*Markandeya Purana Ch.17-18*). Many of the Devas left in disgust but a few remained faithful. The point was to show the Devas that one cannot indulge in a luxurious and sensual lifestyle, as many of them did, and still expect Divine blessings. His Śhakti is Anagha –‘sinless’ Lakṣhmī.

Śhrī Dattātreya is often depicted surrounded by four dogs of different colours, representing the Disciple Principle and the Dharma of the four castes and four Vedas; and the wish-fulfilling cow Kāmadhenu, representing spiritual sustenance. His three heads and six arms indicate the triple incarnation of Śhiva (*Trident and Drum*), Brahmā (*Water-pot and Rosary*) and Viṣṇu (*Conch and Discus*). The Trishūla –‘Trident’ represents mastery over the three Guṇas –‘attributes’.

Other Incarnations

Shri Mataji mentions that other incarnations of Śhrī Dattātreya include Macchindra-nāth (10thc. *Mahārāshtra, the first of the Nine Nāths**) and Ādi-nāth (*also called Rīṣhabha-deva, the first Tirthankara of Jainism. Mahāvīra was the 24th and last Tirthankara*)).

* In *Mahārāshtra, the Nav Nāths or Nāth-panthi* –‘Nine Gurus, Masters’ is a spiritual tradition based on Śhrī Dattātreya’s teachings founded by Macchindra-nāth and His disciple Gorakh-nāth to which Gñyāneshwar’s brother Nivrīti belonged.

The Ten Primordial Masters (*Adi Gurus*)

A brief summary in assumed chronological order



Rājā Janaka

Rājā –‘king’, Janaka –‘father, generating’ (*Sanskrit*)

5000 BCE, Mithila, India/Nepal

Rājā Janaka was the King of Mithila in modern-day Nepal and the adoptive father of Shri Sītā, the wife of Shri Rāma. He was brave, virtuous and well-versed in sacred literature and practices. Despite the responsibilities and trappings of being a king, Rājā Janaka was completely detached from worldly desires and on one occasion remained in meditation by the river while His city burned down which deeply impressed His disciple Nachiketa.

Rājā Janaka found Śhrī Sītā as a baby in a chest which He unearthed while performing a ritual ploughing for the prosperity of the nation. At Her Swayamvara –‘choosing a husband ceremony’, He met Shri Rāma whom He recognised as an incarnation of Śhrī Viṣṇu.

Rājā Janaka is featured in several sacred books such as the Aṣṭavakra Gītā, Śhatapatha Brahmana, Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad and Rāmāyāna. The Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad, the oldest and longest of the Principal Upanishads, contains spiritual conversations between Him and Sage Yajñavalkya.

‘Develop a sense of proportion and a due sense of values. Love the things of the world with the love that is their due and no more.’

‘When you live in the realm of Divine Power, the Brahman, That looks after you.’

Rājā Janaka



Abraham (Ibrahim)

‘Father of multitudes’ – Abra -‘father’, Hamon – ‘many, multitude’ (Hebrew)

Ā-brahma –‘reaching God’ (Sanskrit)

1800 BCE, Mesopotamia and Palestine

Prophet and First Patriarch of the Jewish nation

Abraham is an important figure in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. His eldest son Ishmael is the ancestor of the Arabs and the Prophet Mohammad. As the grandfather of Jacob whose twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel, He is the ancestor of the Jews and of Jesus.

After a revelation of the One God, He opposed idol worship in His home town of Ur on the Euphrates. On God’s orders He migrated with His family to Canaan (*Israel -the ‘Promised Land’*) which God promised to Him and the great nation He would engender.

God sent Him to warn the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, near the Dead Sea, to give up their perverted and licentious ways. They did not listen and, despite Abraham’s pleading with God, the cities were destroyed.

God tested His faith by asking Him to sacrifice His son Isaac, which He prepared to do, but an angel appeared to stop Him at the last moment. His faith, dedication and surrender to God were absolute.

‘Saith the Lord: in thy seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.’ **Genesis, Ch.22**

“Abraham came on this Earth just to prophesize, just to protect the devotees of God.... Abraham taught you how to lead yourself in the right path.” **28-05-79, London**



Zarathustra (Zoroaster)

Zarat-‘golden’, **Ushtra** –‘star, light, camel’
(*Persian*)

Zoro –‘golden’, **Aster** –‘star’ (*Greek*)

1600 BCE, Persia

Persian prophet and religious poet

Zarathustra established the first monotheistic religion outside India. Known to His followers as Zartosht, He viewed life and the Universe as a cosmic struggle between truth and falsehood. He emphasised the importance of free will in sustaining truth by good thoughts, words and deeds through active participation in life.

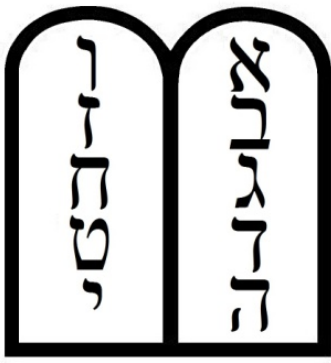
He received Divine revelations at the age of thirty and started preaching but encountered resistance from the people of his native state. It was ten years before He established a following in a neighboring kingdom. His teachings are expounded in the Gathas – ‘songs’ which are in Avestan - a language close to Vedic Sanskrit.

In Zoroastrianism, God is worshipped through mantras and the sacred fire as in the Judaic and Vedic traditions. Many ideas in Jewish, Islamic and Christian cultures such as Adam and Eve, Heaven and Hell, the Devil and the Last Judgment can be traced back to Zoroastrianism.

'Therefore may we be those who shall heal this world!'

‘Love your fellows, console the afflicted, pardon those who have done you wrong.’

Zarathustra



Moses

Moshe-‘drawn out (of the reeds)’ (*Hebrew*), ‘son’ (*Egyptian*).

1350 BCE, Egypt

The Founder and Law-giver of Judaism

Though born of Hebrew slaves, Moses was raised as an Egyptian prince, but left Egypt and lived as a shepherd for many years.

On Mount Sinai God spoke to Him from a burning bush telling Him to return to Egypt and lead the Children of Israel out of slavery. After a conflict with Pharaoh where God rained plagues and disasters upon the Egyptians, the Israelites left Egypt and wandered for forty years through the wilderness towards the Promised Land, while Moses struggled to correct them.

On Mount Sinai, He received the Ten Commandments and God spoke to Him daily revealing the Jewish Law which is recorded in the Torah - the first five books of the Bible. This was the beginning of Judaism, the great seminal religion, which later gave rise to Christianity and Islam, together followed by more than half the world’s population. He is therefore one of the most widely-revered prophets of all time.

'You shall therefore keep all the commandments, which I command you this day, that you may be strong.' ***Deuteronomy 11***

‘I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil, blessing and curse; therefore choose life; not lusting after your neighbor's house or wife or maid or ox.’ ***Ibid. 30***



Lao-Tse (Lao-Zi)

Lao –‘old, ancient’, **Tse, Zi, Tzu** –‘respected, master’

6th century BCE, China

Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism

Very little is known about Lao Tse, not even His real name for Lao Tse, like ‘Sāī Bābā’ simply means ‘Old Master’.

The legend is that, after many years of government service, Lao Tse decided to retire to the wilderness. As He was crossing the border post mounted on a water buffalo, a guard asked Him to leave some record of His wisdom before He departed. Three days later He handed the guard a small manuscript of only five thousand characters known today as the Tao Te Ching –‘*Book of the Way of Virtue*’, expounding the Tao or the Way - the universal truth that transcends the physical Universe and all mental concepts.

The Tao –‘way’ is to be found by being natural, experiencing the unity of all creation and being at one with the Inner Self. Te –‘virtue’ is the inner essence which, like water, flows naturally and always seeks the lowest levels.

‘Knowing others is intelligence, knowing oneself is wisdom.

Mastering others is strength, mastering oneself is true power.’

Lao-Tse



Confucius (Kong-Zi)

Kong - 'opening' (*family name*), **Zi, Fu-zi, Fu-tse** - 'teacher, master'

551-479 BCE, China

Chinese statesman, teacher and philosopher

Confucius, known in China as Kong-zi – '*Master Kong*', has deeply influenced the way of life and thinking in China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam for the past two thousand years.

He believed that enlightened rulers produced happy societies and emphasised self-restraint and morality on both personal and governmental levels. He expounded an ideal of the Superior Man whose main virtue was Ren – '*humanity*', a caring and concern for others. He believed in the ancient wisdom and advocated a study of the 'Five Classics' – books of wisdom, poetry, history, etc. including the I Ching which He edited into its present form.

After striving to restore peace and balance in His native state of Lu, He left His post as a government minister and wandered China for twelve years but could find no rulers of the calibre He advocated.

He spent His last years teaching and preparing His students to be righteous government servants.

'Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.'

'I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.'

Confucius



Socrates

Sos –‘whole, safe’, **Kratos** –‘power’ (*Greek*)

469-399 BCE, Athens, Greece

Greek philosopher considered the father of Morality, Logic and Western Philosophy

Socrates devoted Himself to the moral and intellectual reform of His fellow citizens of Athens but in return was condemned to death for corrupting the youth.

He believed in absolute truth and often referred to guidance from a 'divine voice' within. He was an advocate of careful reasoning in pursuit of the truth and His analytic practices gave rise to what has become the 'Socratic Method'.

Socrates Himself wrote nothing but His teaching formed the basis of Plato's philosophy; and it is said that all western philosophy is 'a series of footnotes to Plato'. Plato's disciple Aristotle was also an authority in religious and scientific thought until the Renaissance. So Socrates and His search for truth can be considered one of the greatest influences on Christian and western philosophy.

'The unexamined life is not worth living'.

'Falling down is not a failure. Failure comes when we stay where we have fallen.'

'True wisdom comes to each of us when we realise how little we know about life, ourselves and the world around us'.

'There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.'

Socrates



Prophet Mohammad

Mohammad - 'Praiseworthy, glorified' (*Arabic*)

570-632 CE, Mecca, Arabia

Founder of Islam

A native of Mecca, Mohammad began to receive revelations from the Angel Gabriel at the age of forty. At first suspicious, He spent three years in prayer until He was convinced by His friends and family of their genuineness. These revelations continued throughout His life and His subsequent teachings became the words of the Qur'an.

At first He preached against idol-worship of which Mecca was the main centre for Arabia. This made Him deeply unpopular and after His wife Khadiga and His uncle Abu Talib both died, he narrowly survived several attempts to kill Him.

Finally in 623 He and His followers fled to Medina where Mohammad became their leader in faith, law and economics as well as in the warfare necessary for self-preservation and the spreading of Islam.

The Meccans surrendered to Mohammad and His army of ten thousand in 629 and accepted Islam which had spread throughout Arabia by the time of the Prophet's early death by poisoning at the age of sixty-two.

'One hour's meditation on the work of the Creator is better than seventy years of prayer'.

Prophet Mohammad

"Mohammad means the one who deserves to be praised and is the Redeemer of the World."

09-12-73, Mumbai



Gurū Nānak

Nānaka - 'Born in the mother's village' (*Punjabi*)

1469-1539 CE, Punjab, India

The first of the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs

Gurū Nānak spoke of the oneness of all religions, of experience of the Divine achieved through meditation and reciting the Name of God. He believed in the equality of all men and women and in universal compassion and service to humanity.

After receiving a Divine revelation at the age of thirty, He made four major journeys to spread the message, each of several years, to East, South, North and West, reaching Burma, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Nepal, Arabia, Iraq and Iran. He was widely recognised as a great Man of God by Hindus and Muslims alike.

Like Kabīr, He incorporated His teaching into His songs which He taught to His followers across India and neighboring countries.

After twenty-four years of travelling He settled down in the Punjab with His family and founded an agrarian community at Kartārpur which grew into the Sikh nation.

'See the brotherhood of all mankind as the highest order of yogis; conquer your own mind and conquer the world.'

'Truth is the highest virtue. But higher still is truthful living.'

Gurū Nānak

See 'Appendix 1. The Symbols of the Ten Adi Gurus' on page 267 for an explanation of the significance of the symbols we use in Sahaja Yoga and why the above symbol is appropriate for Guru Nanak.



Sāī Bābā of Śhirdī (*Shirdī Sāī Nāth*)

Sāī –‘swāmī, saint, self-realised, ancient’,

Bābā –‘father, respected person’,

Nāth –‘master’ (*Marathi*)

1838-1918 CE, Shirdī, Maharashtra, India

From unknown origins, Shri Sāī Bābā appeared in Shirdī at the age of sixteen. He took up residence in a disused mosque and lived a quiet life of contemplation and it took some time - and a few miracles - before the people of Shirdī started to recognise His greatness.

He tried to eradicate divisions between Hindu and Muslims, teaching about love, forgiveness, unity, charity, contentment, inner peace, devotion to the Guru and to God, encouraging His followers to celebrate festivals and rituals from both Hinduism and Islam. His attention was always on achieving Self-realisation and first-hand experience of the Divine.

Before He died in 1918 He predicted that another incarnation would be born within seven years.

‘Never forget that you are not alone. The Divine is with you, helping and guiding you. He is the companion who never fails, the friend whose love comforts and strengthens. Have faith and He will do everything for you.’

Sāī Satcharitra

‘See the Divine in the human being.’

Śhrī Sāī Bābā

THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE GURU

The Guru is one with God, the All-pervading Consciousness.

The Guru is God.

The Guru's Feet are to be worshipped.

The Guru's Feet are to be washed, anointed and venerated.

The Guru's Feet are the Feet of the Divine.

From the Feet of the Divine emanates this whole creation.

By connection to the Feet of the Divine we realise
our true nature as the Pure Self.



“Guru means a person who tries to help the evolving souls to evolve; helps the people who are trying to swim ashore, to the shore of the Kingdom of God; by their guidance.” *30-06-77, London*

“Guru means the one who is sitting at a place higher than us. As the water collected at a height spontaneously flows down, it is eager to find a level for itself and to bring everyone to its level. You keep water at a certain height; it will be willing to uplift everyone.” *09-12-73, Delhi*

Dharma

The Indian word for 'religion', Dharma, means 'firmly-established duty' and also 'that which supports, sustains'. The Primordial Masters taught that of all Dharma, the highest is to utter the praise and the names of God with devotion. That is the foremost practice of all religions and the work of the Ten Primordial Masters was to bring knowledge of the Lord and His Power to all people.

Religion abides in every soul; it is the innermost nature of everything that exists. It is the yearning of man to lose the sense of separation. There is only one God; there can be only one religion: the religion of the droplet becoming the ocean; of the flame merging with the fire; of the incomplete soul becoming fulfilled, receiving enlightenment and realising the Self. Not by lighting lamps outside, but by the lamp of faith, devotion and surrender within our own Void, can we find illumination.

A seeker without a spiritual guide is like an orphan child in the wilderness. The word Guru can mean 'he who lighteth the darkness'*; when a seeker has become convinced that His intellect, education, position, wealth and all worldly knowledge, without the guidance of a true Guru, is actually darkness and delusion, they are ready for the Path.

How much more blessed are we who have called the Divine Mother Incarnate our Guru; She who has granted us awakening, spiritual rebirth and the highest knowledge!

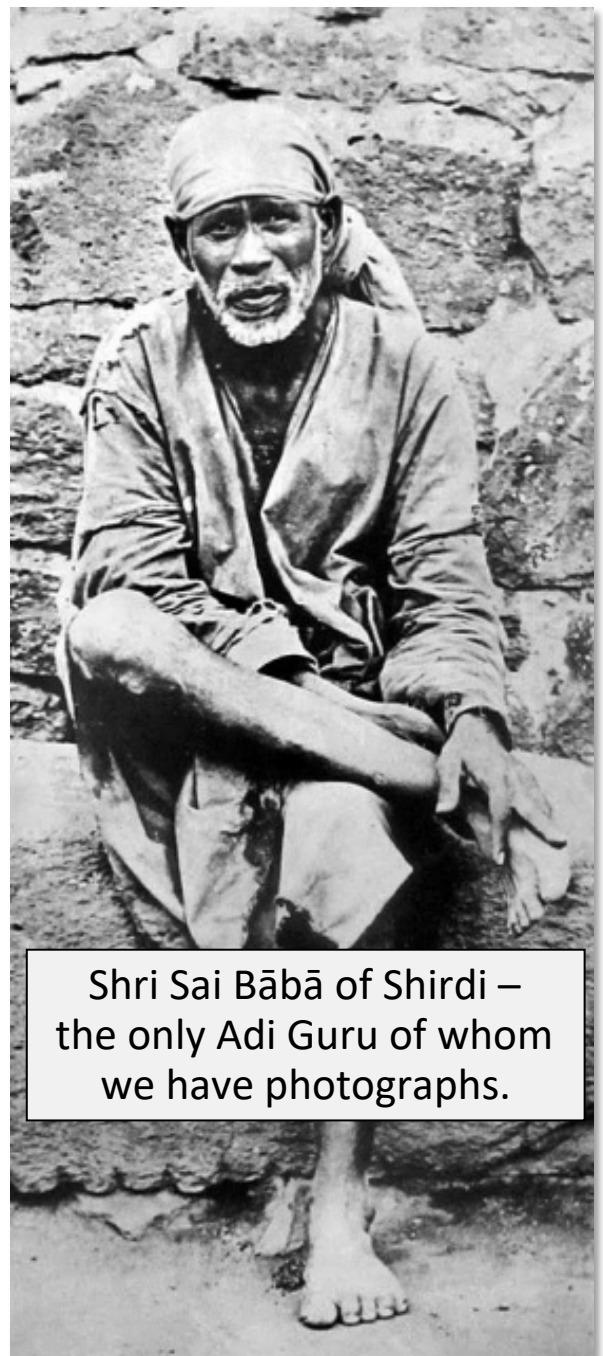
* **Gu** = **guha** – 'dark, hidden, secret'; **ru** = **ruchi** – 'light, brilliance'. **Guru** originally means 'heavy' and is the root of the word 'gravity' (**gurutvā** in Sanskrit) A Guru is one who has gravity, who is to be respected.

The Path through the Void

Periodically tides of ignorance sweep the planet, reaffirming the Divine need to send Spiritual Masters to establish Dharma, nurture spiritual seeking and warn society against false prophets. These Divine Messengers, experiencing communion with the Supreme Spirit, seek to guide, help and awaken the Guru principle within humanity. Since the dawn of civilisation enlightened souls wandered amongst the tribes of men seeking to lift our blindness.

A spiritually oriented character is gained over many lifetimes on the climb towards Self-realisation. Instruction is of two kinds: the guru principle within us and the Teacher who knows us better than we know ourselves and provides wisdom and direction.

In the scriptures, the Guru-disciple bond is revered as the highest relationship. The disciple's qualities and readiness are tested; their obedience and surrender reflect their earnestness to be taught. The Guru is the guide and the goal; the disciple must tread the path with humility and devotion; having faith that only knowing the Spirit gives real satisfaction and lasting blessings.



These masters revealed spiritual laws through direct knowledge of the Ātmā –‘Self’ and communion with the All-Pervading Power of the Divine. They knew the Divine Language of mantras, prayers and silence; living daily at one with the Divine, not thinking or theorising, but directly communicating the message of the Almighty to Its creation. A seeker requires no rational learning as preparation for spiritual experience, although rationality can be a useful ladder to reach the point where it must be left behind. Intelligence should bring us the wisdom to understand that detachment and humility are essential to approach the Divine. Although words are important vehicles of sacred information and rational thought, and if pursued sincerely can lead the seeker to the gates of Truth, they cannot enter with us; we have to pass the limits of personal effort. Mystical experience comes only through surrender; it is a gift to experience the boundless, pure and unconditional love of the Divine.

The Ten Primordial Masters, having the highest spiritual experience, were attuned with the Supreme All-Pervading Power and allowed the Divine to work through them. This often resulted in conflict with the ‘organised religions’ of the day.

They are all one, yet their followers dispute amongst themselves who is the greatest. Instead of a pathway to God, human beings have often turned their religions into instruments of oppression and subjugation of their fellow men.

Sahaja Yoga fulfils the promises of all the Prophets and Incarnations and allows us to glimpse the depth of their experience. By humbly accepting Shri Mataji as our Guru, She plants and nourishes the ways of Truth in our heart. Fortunately we are forgiven our shortcomings if we have a genuine desire to purify ourselves.

Common Themes

Some teachings common to all the Adi Gurus are:-

Detachment from worldly desires - All incarnations stressed the need for Vairāgya – *‘dispassion, aversion to worldly appetites’* but the Ādi Gurus particularly emphasised the well-being of the soul over any material concerns.

Questioning accepted norms - The path of the seeker always runs counter to the flow of society – to swim upstream, seeking the source where, paradoxically, the drop dissolves into the ocean!

Creating a good society - The Ten Adi Gurus are particularly characterised by their concern with creating enlightened human societies. Often being law-givers and definers of Maryādas – *‘boundaries’*, religions were founded in Their names (*Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam, Sikhism*). Moses, Confucius, Mohammad and Socrates* can be said to have defined good behaviour for 80% of the world’s population - almost everyone except Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

The Golden Rule - *‘Do not do to others what you do not desire for yourself.’* They stressed the primacy of *‘consideration and concern for others’*, of living in and doing some good for the world.

Equality of all people – The Adi Gurus decried divisions such as religion and caste and emphasised the equality of men and women.

Humanity – Above all the Adi Gurus all had tremendous humanity, loving and caring deeply for all people despite our ignorance, wilfulness and stupidity.

* *Socrates’ ideas were promoted by his pupil Plato whose philosophy, along with that of his pupil Aristotle, formed the basis of much Christian and western philosophy.*



RAJA JANAKA

RAJA JANAKA



Nepalese stamp commemorating
Rājārṣhi –‘king-seer’ Janaka

The Śhrīmad Bhagavatam recounts that Mahārāja Nimi performed a great sacrifice where He left His body, refusing to take another human birth. So, to continue His dynasty, the sages churned the body of Nimi and a child manifested who was named Janaka – ‘*generating*’. Since, He was not born from a motherly body, He was called Videha – ‘*liberated from the body*’.

All the descendants of the Videha dynasty were named Janaka and, by the grace of Sage Yājñavalkya, they all achieved enlightenment. Into this dynasty was born Sīra-dhvaja – ‘*Plough-bannered*’ Janaka, more commonly known as Rājā – ‘*King*’ Janaka, the adoptive father of Śhrī Sītā. He ruled the kingdom of Mithila, around modern-day Janakpur in Nepal.

In the Bhagavad Gītā, Śhrī Kṛṣṇa says: ‘By performing their prescribed duties, King Janaka and others attained perfection’.

(III.20)

Sītā's Birth

Rāja Janaka was a great warrior, a great scholar and an enlightened soul. While still child-less He performed a ritual ploughing of some land to ensure the prosperity of the kingdom. The plough struck a hard object which, when unearthed,

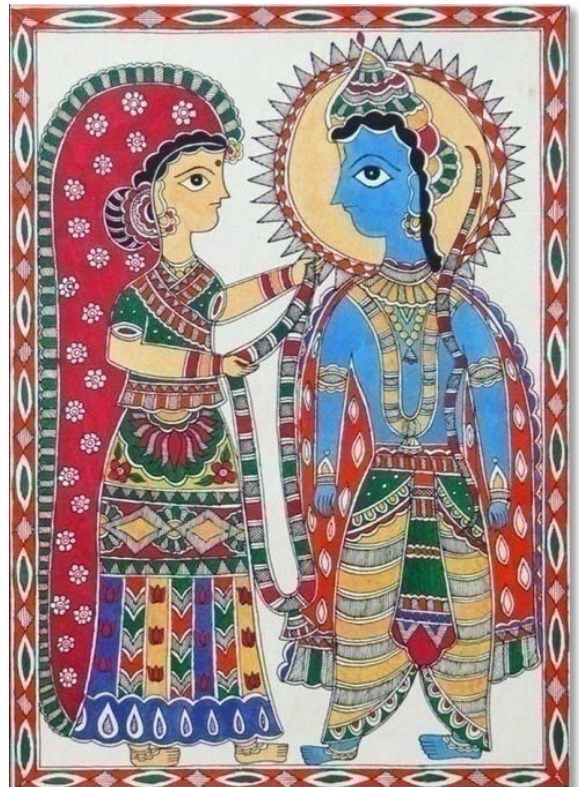


King Janaka finding Sītā while ploughing

turned out to be a chest containing a baby girl. Rājā Janaka adopted the girl and named her Sītā –‘furrow’.

The Marriage of Rāma and Sītā

Sītā grew to be a beautiful and devout princess, and on reaching marriageable age, Rājā Janaka organised a Swayamvara –‘self-choice’ for Her – a ceremony where the bride chooses her husband after a series of tests. For Sītā's Swayamvara, kings and emperors from all parts of the world were invited; all of them desirous to have Sītā as a bride for their son or themselves. Among those present was the King of Lanka, Rāvana, who fell in love with - and later abducted - Śhrī Sītā.

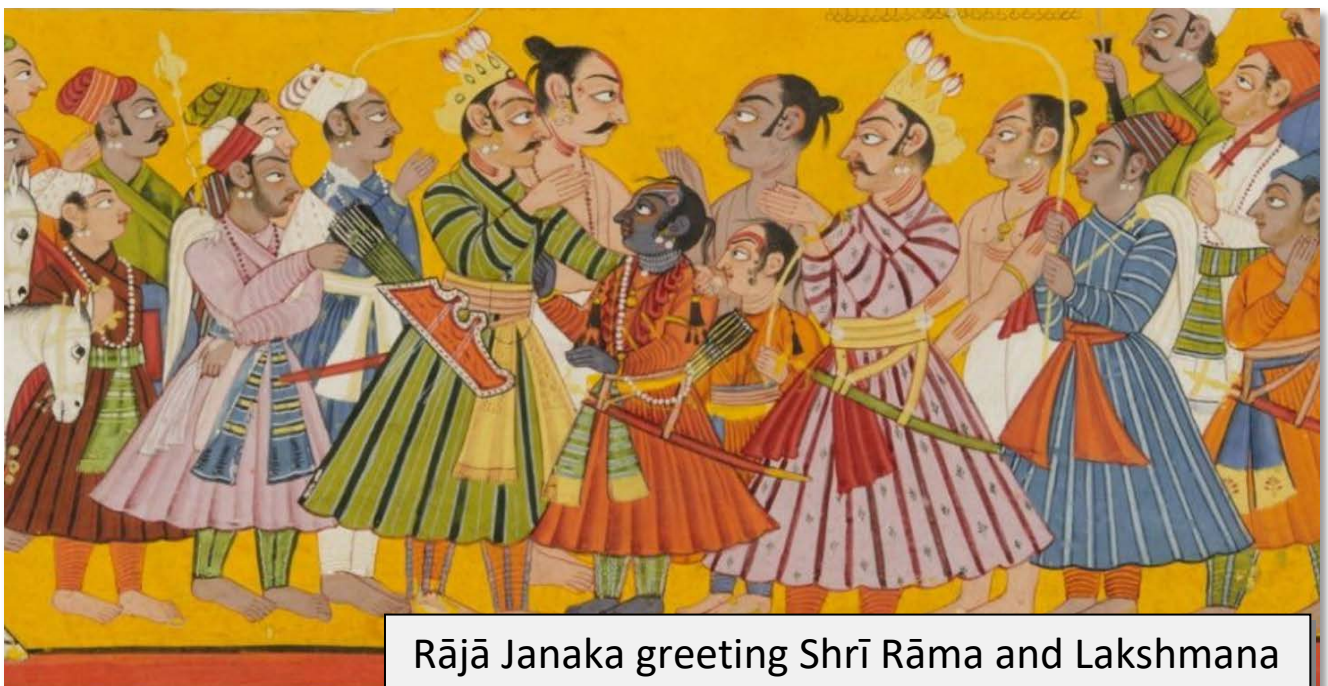


Sage Vishwāmitra had brought Śhrī Rāma and Lakshmana to His hermitage with the permission of their father, King Dasharatha. These boys had the ability to destroy a demon with a single arrow, allowing Vishwāmitra and the other sages to perform their religious rites peacefully, protected from the demons' interference.

When the invitation to Sītā's Swayamvara arrived Vishwāmitra took Rāma and Lakshmana with Him and set off for Mithila.

As soon as King Janaka came to know of Vishwāmitra's arrival, He hastened to see him, inviting Him with Śhrī Rāma and Lakshmana to His palace with great respect. King Janaka was curious to know about the identities of Rāma and Lakshmana and asked:

‘O Lord of the Sages, please do not hide anything from me, tell me who are these two boys? The Supreme Lord in whose thoughts my mind is completely engrossed, does the same Lord manifest in these two children? My mind which has renounced everything and is not the least disturbed by desires is behaving strangely today. The effects which the red-legged partridge has on its heart after seeing the Moon, I am experiencing that after seeing these two children’.



Rājā Janaka greeting Shrī Rāma and Lakshmana

Thoughts of the Formless Almighty vanished from Janaka's mind and were replaced by thoughts of Śhrī Rāma. It was only natural because



who would run after the unseen, if fortunate enough to see the 'real' Incarnation?

Rājā Janaka's affection for Śhrī Rāma was boundless. After the marriage, He accompanied Śhrī Rāma and Sītā part of the way back to Ayodhya. Rāma's father Daśhratha asked whether He was not needed in His kingdom but, not willing to let Rāma go out of His sight, Janaka refused many times to go back. After repeated insistence of Daśhratha, He got down from the chariot with tears in His eyes. He came towards Śhrī Rāma and said: *'O Rāma, I do not have words for your praise, you are the 'swan' swimming in the Mansarovar –'sacred lake', likened to the minds of the sages and Lord Mahadeva (Śhiva) for the acquirement of whom, the Yogis abandon anger, attachment and arrogance and practice yoga'*.

When Janaka heard of Rāma's fourteen year exile, He sent His spies to Ayodhya to discover Bharat's intentions. But He was satisfied when He learnt of Bharat's deep love for Śhrī Rāma. Later He went to Chitrakūta to see Śhrī Rāma in exile, but He



Chitrakūta

found Bharat there also, so He could not say anything to either for fear that it might hurt the feelings of both.

Rājā Janaka's mystical love for Śhrī Rāma was beyond any words. He was the supreme follower of Karma Yoga and one of the twelve 'Bhagwat'ācharyas' –*'Divine Preceptors'*.

Ātmā-jñāna – 'Knowledge of the Self'

Once King Janaka sent a message to the people in His kingdom: 'If there be amongst you a great scholar, a Pandit, a Yogi, a Mahārishi, a Sage, whoever He may be, let Him come and teach me the knowledge of Ātmā.' In His message He said that He expected to attain Ātmā-jñāna –*'Self-knowledge'* within a few moments of being properly instructed. Even while climbing onto His horse, before He was completely settled on it, He should have attained it. He said: 'If the person offering to teach me Ātmā-jñāna is not able to accomplish this task of providing me an experience of instant illumination, then I don't want to see him, even if He is the greatest scholar, or the most learned or highly educated person in the land.'

The Pandits and Ṛishis saw that this would be a severe test on their scholarship and learning and so none dared to come forth and offer to instruct the king.

At this point the boy Aṣṭavakra entered the kingdom. On the road to the capital city Mithilapuram, he encountered learned and holy men leaving the city looking worried and grief-ridden. Ashtavakra asked them the cause for their distress and they explained what the king had announced. But Ashtavakra couldn't understand why they should be frightened over such a small thing.

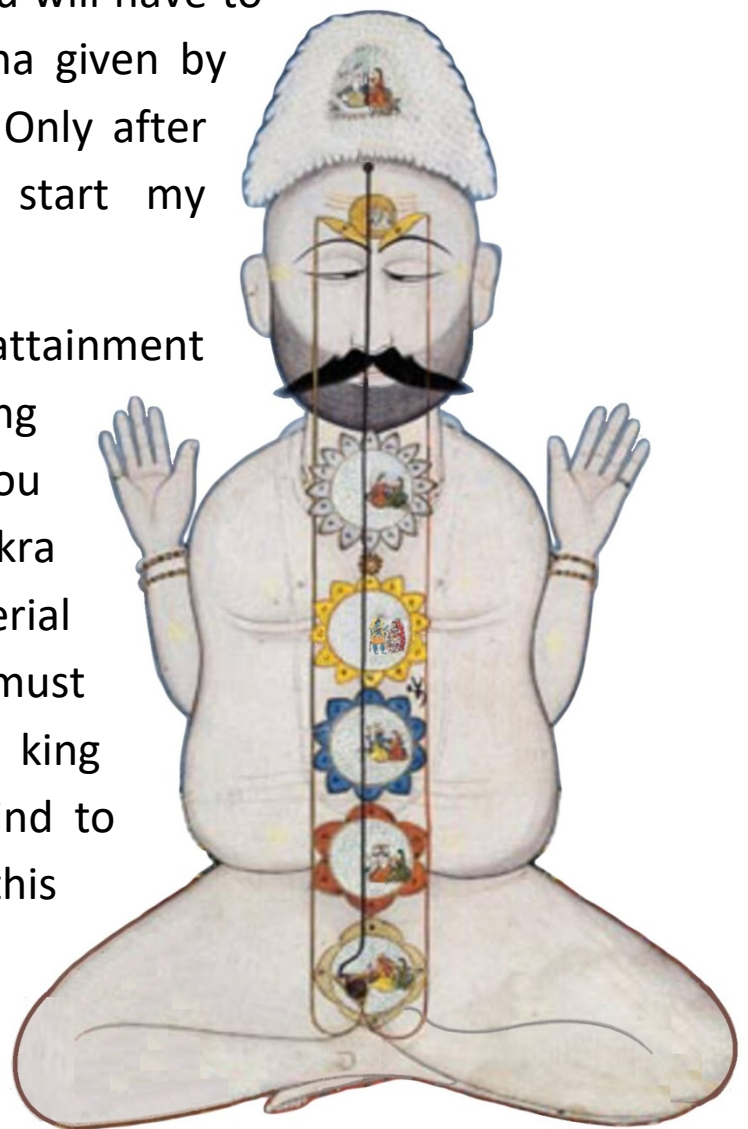
'I will gladly solve this problem for the king.' So saying He went directly to Janaka's court. Bowing, he addressed the king: 'My dear

King, I am ready to enable you to experience the knowledge of Ātma as you desire. But this sacred knowledge cannot be taught so easily. This palace is full of Rajo and Tamo Guna (*Right and Left Side activity*). We must leave this place and enter an area of pure Sattva.'

So, they took the road out of the city towards the forest. As was the custom whenever the emperor left His palace walls, the army followed; but Janaka had them remain outside the forest.

Ashtavakra and Janaka entered the forest. Ashtavakra told King Janaka: 'I am not going to fulfil your wish unless you accept my conditions. I may be only a boy, but I am in the position of a preceptor; and you may be an all-powerful emperor, but you are in the position of a disciple. Are you prepared to accept this relationship? If you agree then you will have to offer the traditional Guru-dakshina given by the Shishya –'pupil' to the Guru. Only after you give your offering will I start my instruction to you.'

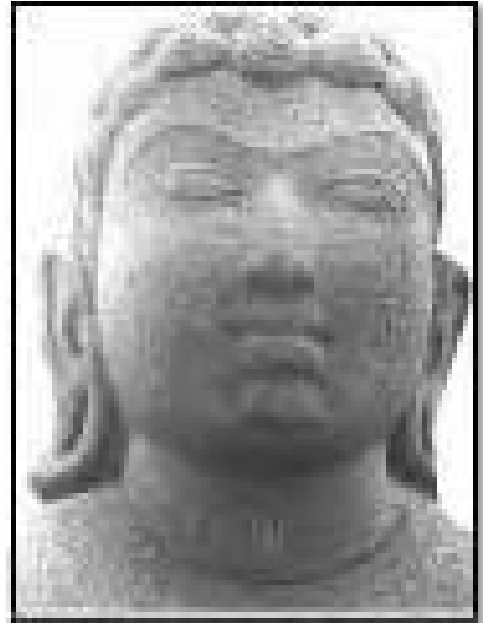
King Janaka told Ashtavakra: 'The attainment of God is the most important thing to me, so I am prepared to give you anything you want.' But Ashtavakra replied: 'I don't want any material thing, all I want is your mind. You must give me your mind.' The king answered: 'Alright, I offer my mind to you. Up to now I thought that this was my mind, but from now onwards it will be yours.' Ashtavakra told Janaka to



dismount and to sit down in the middle of the road with the horse standing in front. Ashtavakra walked into the forest and sat quietly under a tree. The soldiers waited for a long time but neither the king nor Ashtavakra returned from the forest so they cautiously proceeded to look for them.

On entering the forest, they found the king seated in the middle of the road with the horse standing in front of Him. The king sat perfectly still with eyes closed; Ashtavakra was not to be seen. The officers were afraid that Ashtavakra might have exercised some magic spell over the king to make Him lose consciousness and they went to look for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister came and addressed Janaka: 'O King! O King!' But Janaka did not open His eyes or move at all. The time when the King usually took His food passed and the king still did not stir. Evening came, but the king continued to sit immobile on the road.



The Prime Minister sent to the city for the Queen thinking He would surely respond to her, but when she came and addressed the king: 'Rajah, Rajah!' there was no response. Meanwhile the soldiers searched the forest for Ashtavakra. There, under a tree, Ashtavakra sat, calm and serene. The soldiers brought him to the the king but he said: 'Why are you all so worried? The king is safe and everything is alright.' But still the King sat with eyes closed, His body completely still.

Although oblivious to the Prime Minister and the queen, when Ashtavakra spoke the king immediately opened His eyes and

replied, 'Swami!' Ashtavakra asked Him: 'When the ministers and the queen and so many others have come, why did you not reply to their entreaties?'

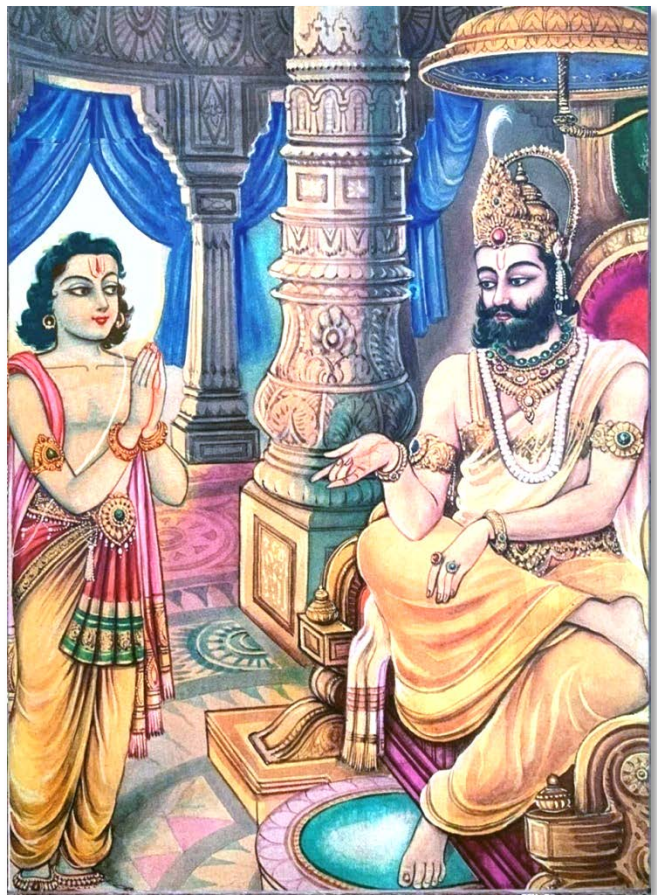
Janaka answered: 'Thoughts, words and deeds are associated with the mind and I offered my mind entirely to you. Therefore before I can use the mind for anything, I need your permission. What authority do I have to speak or use this mind in any way without your permission and command.' Ashtavakra said: 'You have attained the state of God-realisation.'

Ashtavakra told Janaka to put one foot in the stirrup and mount the horse. By the time He had climbed up and seated himself, He had the full experience of Ātmā.

Nachiketa

Śhrī Mataji: "Nachiketa came to Râma's father-in-law, Janaka, and asked Him if He could get His Self-realisation. So Raja Janaka said: 'I can give you all my kingdom but not Self-realisation. Very difficult.'

He put Him to test, many a times, for years, and then he was the first who got Realisation, at the time of Shri Râma. He made him run up and down, He hung a sword on his head, did everything, and then He gave him Realisation. But at last Nachiketa understood that this man (*King Janaka*) has no attachments. He is not worried at all, neither He has



any sticking with worldly things or what we call as world. He is like an ascetic.” *12-10-83, 26-11-84, 09-06-88.*

“I will tell you a story of Raja Janaka who was a great king in India. He was called as Videhi – means an ascetic. And He was a king and whenever He went to any Ashram the saints used to get up and touch His Feet.

So one disciple of a Guru got very angry - his name was Nachiketa - and he said, ‘How can you all touch His Feet when He is a king and enjoying living like a king, wearing a crown? How can you touch His Feet?’

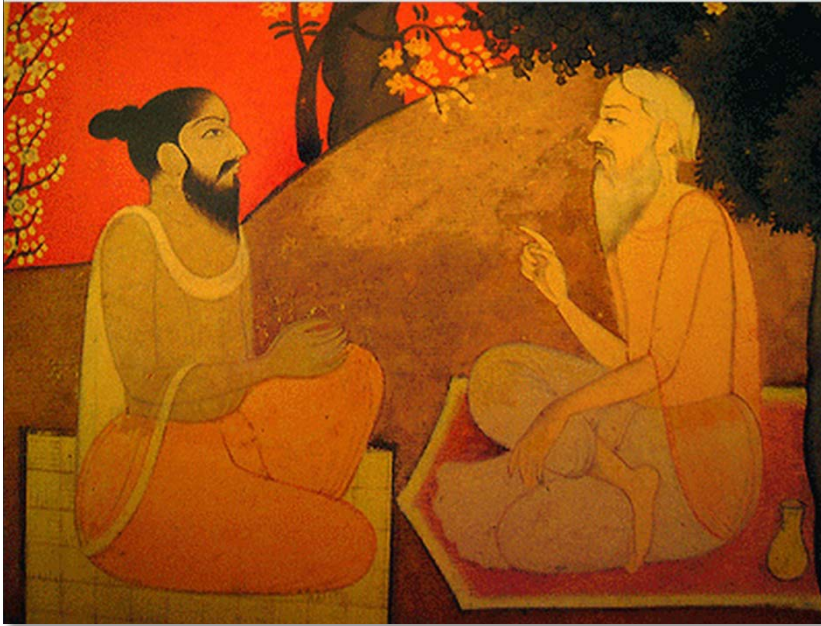
So the Guru said that: ‘He is the Primordial Master. To Him it does not matter whether He lives in a palace or on the street.’ So this Nachiketa went to Him to see. And he was very bold and he told Him that: ‘How can you call yourself a king and also an ascetic, allow people to call you an ascetic?’

So He told that, ‘All right, tomorrow we will go to the bath together in a river.’ And He told him now you go into meditation. I am going into meditation. So the people came and told that, ‘Your palace is on fire.’ Still He was meditating. Then they said that, ‘All your things are being burnt. Your children and families are running away.’ Still He was meditating. Then they came and shouted, ‘Now the fire is coming here and all your clothes will be burnt.’



So Nachiketa ran out of the water to catch hold of his clothes and to look after it. But He was still meditating. After sometime He came out and Nachiketa said, 'Aren't you worried about your palace being burnt, everything being burnt?' So He said that, 'When you live in the realm of Divine Power, the Brahma, that looks after you.'” *10-09-83, Rome*

Seeker after the Supreme Truth



Once King Janaka approached Sage Yājñavalkya and asked him, 'O Sage! please let me know the facts about my previous life'. The sage replied, 'What is past is past. There is no use in recalling it. You have completed a

journey along a road. Do not bother about the road that has been traversed. It does not help in your journey to your glory.' Although the sage used many arguments to dissuade Him from His request, Janaka insisted on knowing about His previous birth.

So Yājñavalkya resorted to His Divine insight and told the King: 'Janaka, your wife in the present birth was your mother in your previous life'. Janaka was shocked. He reflected, 'What a wicked person have I been to treat my former mother as my wife! I must give up such a wicked life'. From that moment he began to treat His queen as His mother and giving up all attachments to worldly things, began to pursue spiritual wisdom.

One night, Rājā Janaka had a dream where He lost His kingdom and became a beggar. He was going round the streets of the city begging for alms. The pangs of hunger made Him cry. Some kind-hearted person gave Him some food, but, to His great sadness, even that morsel slipped from His hand. The horror-stricken king woke from His dream and found himself in the royal palace. He asked himself, 'Which is real - the dream world or the conscious world?'

The queen who was observing Him was also perplexed. They decided to consult the great sage Vasishtha. The sage said: 'O king, both are real in one sense or unreal from another point of view. You became a beggar in the dream world and you are the king in the conscious world. 'You' exist in both the worlds. While they are both unreal, 'You' alone are real. You are the absolute reality of the dreaming state as well as of the conscious state'.

The Bowl of Milk

Shri Mataji: "You know King Janaka was called Vidheha - 'Ascetic, liberated from the body'. Great Sage Nârada asked Him one day: 'Revered Sir, how are you called as Vidheha, you live in this world, how can you be a Vidheha?'

Rājā Janaka said, 'This is very simple. I will tell you about it in the evening. Now, please do this little job for me. There is milk in this bowl. You take this bowl and come along with me. Please see that not a single drop of milk is spilled on the Earth. Then only I will tell you why I am called Vidheha.'

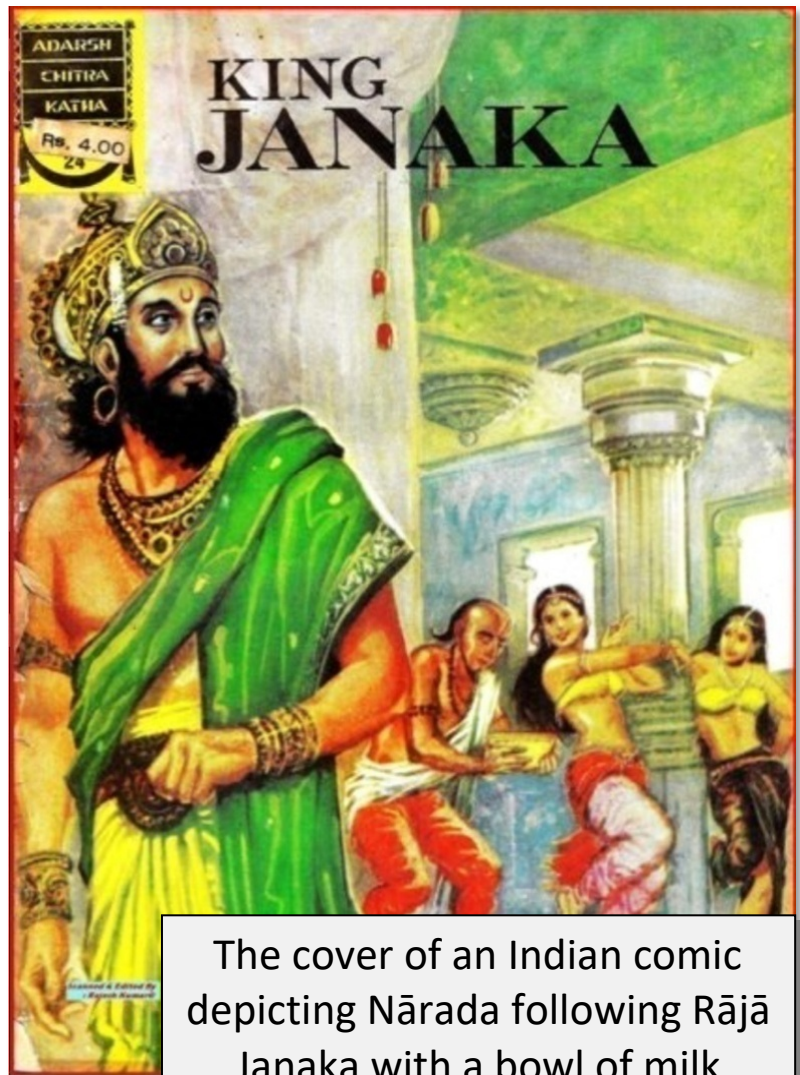
Nârada took the bowl and followed Janaka everywhere. He had to be very careful because the bowl was such that by the slightest movement the milk might have spilled. He got very tired. When they returned in the evening Nârada asked 'Please

tell me now, I am quite fed up with carrying this bowl and following you everywhere.´

Râjâ Janaka said; ´First of all tell me what you have seen?´

Nârada; ´Nothing except this bowl of milk; so that it won't spill.´

Râjâ Janaka; ´Didn't you see, there was a big procession in my honour, then there was a court wherein there was a program of dancing? Didn't you see anything?´



The cover of an Indian comic depicting Nârada following Râjâ Janaka with a bowl of milk (unaware of the dancing girls).

Nârada said; ´No sir, I have not seen anything.´

Râjâ Janaka; ´My child, likewise with Me, I also see nothing. All the time, I just watch my attention. Where is it going? Making sure that it won't spill away like the milk'. ´This sort of attention one has to develop: Chitta Nirodh –*restrained attention*.´”

03-04-81, UK

“No saints were ascetics, they all had wives, they all had children. But all their attention was at the Lotus Feet of the Mother. As Guru Nanaka has said, that a little boy is playing with his kite, the kite is going all over and he's talking to his friends, joking, but see the attention is on the kite. My attention is always on your Kundalini.”

23-09-90, Switzerland

Ashtavakra Gita

“Raja Janaka had a guru called Ashtavakra and if you read His Gita, you'll find how clearly he's described about Sahaja Yoga.”

16-10-93, New York

This Advaita –‘non-duality’ classic is a dialogue between King Janaka and Sage Aṣṭavakra (*literally meaning ‘eight crookednesses’ due to the eight physical deformities he was born with*). Aṣṭavakra was a young boy of only ten years when he defeated Rājā Janaka’s courtier Vandin in philosophical debate.

Janaka: How is knowledge to be acquired? How is liberation to be attained? And how is dispassion to be reached? Tell me this, sir.

Ashtavakra: If you are seeking liberation, my son, shun the objects of the senses like poison. Practice tolerance, sincerity, compassion, contentment and truthfulness like nectar. You are neither earth, water, fire, air or even ether. For liberation know yourself as consisting of consciousness, the witness of these. If only you will remain resting in consciousness, seeing yourself as distinct from the body, then even now you will become happy, peaceful and free from bonds.

You do not belong to the Brahmin or any other caste, you are not at any stage, nor are you anything that the eye can see. You are unattached and formless, the witness of everything - so be happy.

Righteousness and unrighteousness, pleasure and pain are purely of the mind and are no concern of yours. You are neither the doer nor the reaper of the consequences, so you are always free. You are the one witness of everything and are always totally free. The cause of your bondage is that you see the witness as something other than this. Since you have been bitten by the black snake of

the self-opinion that 'I am the doer', drink the nectar of faith in the fact that 'I am not the doer' and be happy. Burn down the forest of ignorance with the fire of the understanding that 'I am the One Pure Awareness' and be happy and free from distress.

That in which all this appears, imagined like the snake in a rope, that joy, supreme joy and awareness is what you are, so be happy. If one thinks of oneself as free, one is free and if one thinks of oneself as bound, one is bound. Here this saying is true, 'Thinking makes it so.' Your real nature is as the one perfect, free and action-less Consciousness, the All-pervading Witness - unattached to anything, desireless and at peace.'

Aṣṭavakra Gītā, Ch.1 v.4-14

Further Reading

The **Bṛihadaranyaka Upanṣhad**, one of the earliest and longest of the Upaniṣhads, is recited mainly by Sage Yajñavalkya, Rājā Janaka's preceptor, and includes their conversations on various spiritual topics. It is its last chapter of the **Śhatapatha Brahmana**, the foremost commentary on the **Śhukla** –'white' **Yajur Veda**.

Aṣṭavakra Gītā. There are several English translations available on the internet.



Sage Yājñavalkya instructing Rājā Janaka

Rāmāyāna. There are many stories about Rājā Janaka in the Rāmāyana including how He found Śhrī Sītā while ploughing.





ABRAHAM

ABRAHAM

It is not stated how, or when, Abraham came to believe in the One God, but His experience marked the beginning of the Jewish nation who today speak with great fondness of 'Our Father Abraham' (*Avraham Avinu*).

Abraham's firm belief in the One Almighty God founded the great seminal religion of Judaism from which emerged Islam and Christianity, together followed by more than half of the world's population. He is considered the perfect model of faith in God by Christians, Muslims and Jews.



In prayer Abraham encountered the One God who created and controlled the whole of Creation and its history. This One Supreme Lord was willing to enter into a covenant with Abraham and His descendants. Following God's commandment Abraham left the city of Ur near Babylon and travelled a thousand miles to the town of Hebron where God revealed to Him that His descendants would be protected and would in time become a great nation.

Abraham is the first of the Jewish Patriarchs –'Father-Rulers', followed by His son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob and later Moses. The life of Abraham is told in the first book of the Bible, Genesis Ch.12-25, including the story of how God tested Abraham by asking Him to sacrifice His son Isaac.

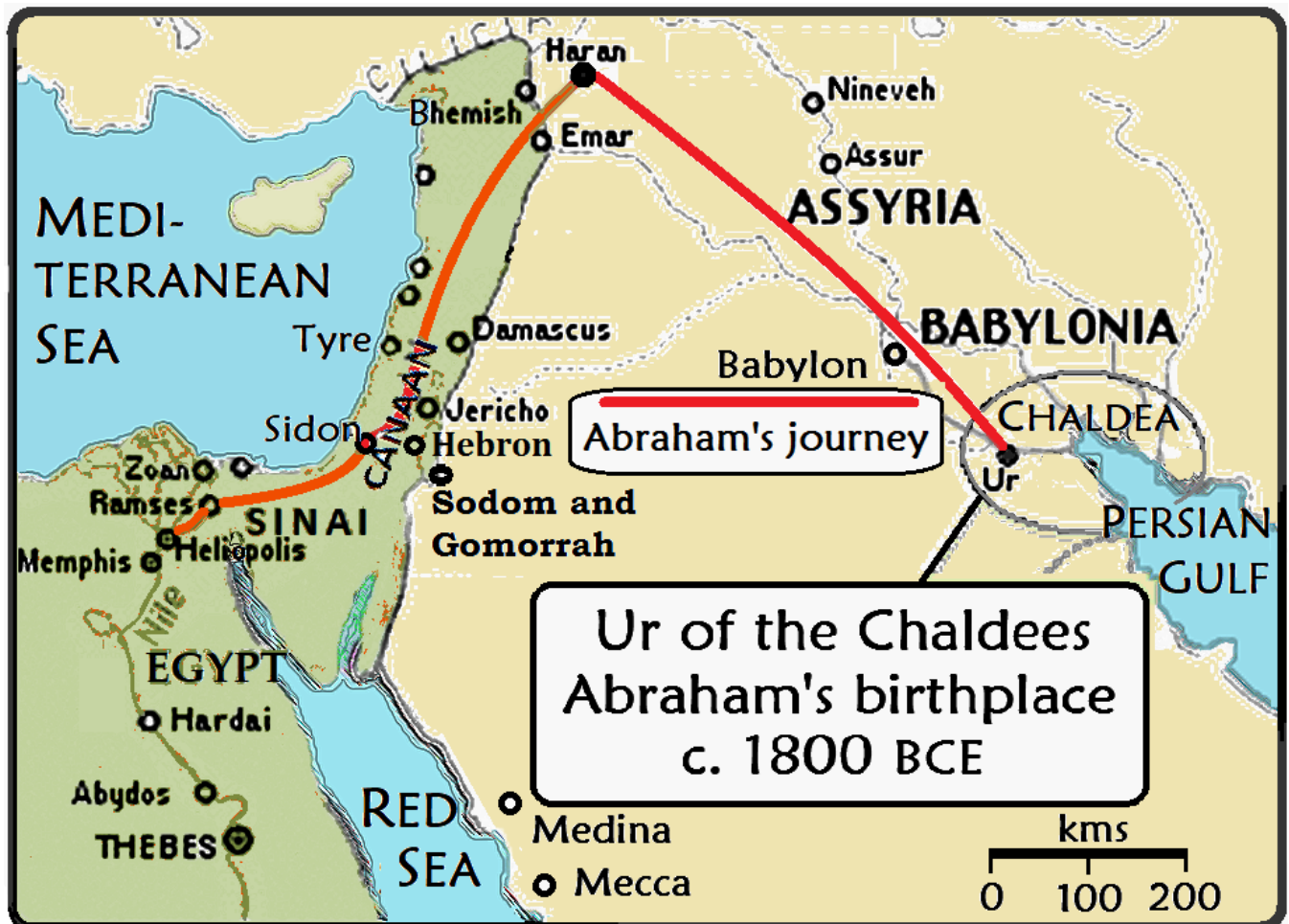
The painting by Rembrandt on the previous page shows Abraham being reprieved from sacrificing His son Isaac by an angel.

The One God

Abram, or Abraham as God later named Him, was brought up in the prosperous city of Ur on the banks of the Euphrates around 2000 - 1800 *BCE*.

He grew up with His father Terah, who was ninth in line from Noah, and His brothers Nahor and Haran. He and His brothers loved watching people coming and going through the city gates. People worshipped and made sacrifices to a multitude of gods who were believed to control nature. The main god worshipped was the Moon, many temples to whom have been unearthed in that area.

Abram one day asked His father who was the creator of the world. Terah had a shop selling idols and, pulling one off the shelf, told the boy that the idol had created the world. Abram found this hard to believe so He went and asked His uncle who told Him that the



Moon and stars had created the world. Unconvinced, Abram imagined an almighty and formless power in the heavens who created the world.

One day God spoke to Abram: ‘Now the Lord said unto Abram, ‘Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred. and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee and curse Him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed’.

Genesis 12

Abram had faith in God’s promises and undertook the long arduous journey with His family including His father Terah and cousin Lot. They finally settled in Canaan where they found pastures for their flocks and herds. God was with Abram and enlarged upon the promises He had made to Him in Ur: ‘All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the Earth’.

Genesis 12

The Promised Land was the land He saw - the land now called Israel. The people gave Him the name ‘the Hebrew’ meaning ‘the man from across the river.’ Abram was married to the beautiful Sarai (*later called Sarah*) and they prospered in Canaan until a famine hit the land, forcing them to travel south to Egypt to find food.



Abraham's Journey
by Molnar (1850)

In Egypt

Before entering Egypt, Abram asked Sarai to say that they were sister and brother, because Sarai was so beautiful that He feared the Egyptians would kill Him and take her. They lived happily until the Pharaoh was struck with Sarai's beauty and abducted her to be part of His household. However God sent a plague on Pharaoh's house and He realised that Abram and Sarai were not brother and sister, but husband and wife; being told in a vision that Abram was a great prophet and not to be harmed. He called Abram and gave Him a hundred shekels of silver as compensation and made Him free to settle wherever He liked. After some years Abram, Lot and their families left Egypt and returned to Canaan taking with them the great wealth they had accrued.

The land of Canaan was not rich enough to support the large herds of both Abraham and Lot, so they agreed to separate and Lot headed south towards Sodom (*see map p.54*), one of the two cities with which the Lord was very angry due to their ungodly behaviour.

Sign of the Covenant

God spoke to Abram making circumcision a sign of the covenant between God and Abram's people. He also said: 'Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham [*father of many*]; for a father of many nations have I made thee.... As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [*princess*] shall her name be.'

Genesis 17

Ishmael and Isaac

Although God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's progeny who would become a 'Great Nation', He and Sarah had no children. They had longed for a child for many years but it seemed that she was unable to conceive. Sarah told Abraham to go and lay with their servant girl, Hagar, who bore a child whom they named Ishmael. Hagar had promised to give up the child so that Abraham and Sarah could raise him as their own son; but she was so attached to the baby that she ran away with it. However after a few days she returned realising that she had to keep her promise. Abraham finally had a child at the age of eighty-six.

When Abraham was ninety-nine, three men appeared at the door of His tent. He offered them water to wash their feet and invited them to stay for food. They were in fact three archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Michael told Abraham that, when He returned at the same time next year, Abraham and Sarah would have a son. Sarah overheard



Abraham serving the three angels by Rembrandt

their conversation and laughed at the idea of her having a child at such an old age. However by the time the angel returned, Sarah had borne a child. They named him Isaac, which means laughter, as Sarah had laughed when the angel had foretold the birth.

After the birth of Isaac, Sarah asked Abraham to banish Hagar and Ishmael, which upset Him greatly. But God told Him to do as she asked as Ishmael would engender a great nation.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The Lord revealed to Abraham that the archangels had come to bring destruction on the ungodly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham pleaded with God to spare them if fifty righteous men could be found. God agreed, and Abraham continued 'But what if only forty-five good men can be found?' God relented again and so it went on down to ten righteous souls. However the cities had to be destroyed; so Lot and His family were escorted to safety by two angels before the rain of burning brimstone consumed the cities. Lot's wife disobeyed the order not to look back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

God tests Abraham

Though deeply attached to His child, when God told Him to go up to the mountain-top and sacrifice His son, Isaac, Abraham reluctantly prepared to do as God commanded.

** Archaeological finds suggest that an earthquake as well as burning sulphur destroyed these cities. The city of Sodom gave its name to the term 'sodomy'. There seems to be a parallel with San Francisco, the 'Gay Capital of the World', and Los Angeles, both of which could be swept away by an over-due major earthquake on the San Andreas Fault.*

He collected the wood and built a stone altar for the sacrifice. He placed His son on the altar and Isaac, not understanding what was going on, asked His father where the sheep was. Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the lamb. As Abraham was about to take the knife to Isaac's throat, an angel appeared and told Him to stop; explaining that it was a test of His trust in God.

Nearby was a ram whose horns had become entangled in a thorn bush, and the angel directed Abraham to sacrifice the animal instead.

Sarah died at a very old age and, after a long period of mourning,



Abraham decided that Isaac should marry. So their servant Eliazer was sent out in search of a wife for Isaac. He returned after some weeks with a woman named Rebekah. It transpired that she was a cousin of Isaac's, but the marriage was blessed by God.

‘He believed in the Lord; and He counted to Him for righteousness.’

Abraham died shortly after the marriage at the age of 175 and was buried in Hebron (*map p.43*) at the site of the Al Ibrahimi Mosque.

Viewpoint of the Old Testament

As the first prophet to aver the Oneness of God, Abraham is the foundation of the Jewish religion and from that time men spoke of the One Formless God as ‘the God of Abraham’. God says to Moses: ‘I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of

Jacob'. Jehovah's promises to Him and to His seed have sustained the Jewish people ever since.

His trust in God was shown by His leaving Ur and journeying with His family to the unknown country of Canaan; but the greatest demonstration was His willingness to sacrifice His only son Isaac in obedience to a command from God. Abraham's descendents include Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus Christ, and all the other great Jewish people who have helped to create our modern civilisation*.

Viewpoint of the New Testament

Abraham's devotion is the seed of the two largest religions in the world, Christianity and Islam. He may be considered therefore as the founder of all monotheistic religions outside India, with the



exception of Zoroastrianism.

The lineage of Jesus Christ is traced back to Abraham by St. Matthew; St. Luke gives His descent right back to Adam. John the Baptist says: 'Do not say: We have Abraham for our father, for I say to you God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.'

In the Bible the Jews with whom Jesus was speaking, boast 'We are the seed of Abraham' and Jesus replies: 'If ye be the children of Abraham, do ye the works of Abraham'.

* Although comprising only 0.25% of world population (about 20 million) people of Jewish origin have won 20% of Nobel prizes (more than 150 since they began in 1901). The list of famous Jews is long: philosophers: Spinoza, Marx; music: Bizet, Mendelssohn, Mahler, Listz, scientists: Einstein, Bohr, Oppenheimer, Feynman and many actors, film-makers, psychologists, financiers, etc.

Ancestor of Jews and Arabs

Abraham's son, Isaac was also a great devotee of the Lord. When old and blind He was tricked by His younger son Jacob into promising him the birth-right, normally given to the older son Esau was very hairy. On the advice of His mother Rebekah, Jacob covered His arm with a goat-skin to fool the old man. Jacob is famous for dreaming of a stairway up to Heaven (*Jacob's Ladder*) where angels passed up and down carrying out the Lord's orders.

God gave Jacob the name Israel meaning 'persevering in God'; His twelve sons became the Twelve Tribes, the Children of Israel. He gave His favourite youngest son Joseph a 'Coat of Many Colours' which made His brothers jealous; so they sold Him to a passing Egyptian caravan, and told his father he had been killed by a lion.

In Egypt Joseph became a favourite of the Pharaoh after interpreting His recurring dream and saving the country from a terrible famine. When the famine hit neighbouring countries, Jacob and Joseph's eleven brothers came and settled in Egypt, where they multiplied quickly. A later Pharaoh, probably Seth 1, fearing the strength of the Israelites, enslaved them, setting the stage for Moses to lead them out of bondage.

The Ka'aba at Mecca, the cube-shaped building enclosing the Black Rock, the holiest shrine of Islam, was built by Abraham and His eldest son Ishmael from whom the Arabs trace their ancestry. So the tribes of both Israel and Arabia are descended from the brothers Isaac and Ishmael and share their ancestry with Abraham. Hence the Prophet Mohammad was a direct descendent of Ibrahim, as He is known in Arabic; as was Jesus, who was born of the line of David and Solomon.





*O, What a Blessing! For us is born
The Divine Helper, Zarathustra the Spitama!*

ZARATHUSTRA

ZARATHUSTRA



Zarathustra Spitama, or Zoroaster* as He is also called, was born in present-day Iran probably around 1500 *BCE* although suggested dates (*depending on whether you are a traditionalist devotee or a learned scholar*) vary from 6000 to 500 *BCE*. He was one of the first prophets outside India to preach a monotheistic religion; revealing that there was only one God, Ahura Mazda –‘*existence, consciousness*’ and that life in the physical world is a battle between good and evil.

A soul must strive to align thoughts, words and deeds with Aśha –‘*truth, righteousness, Divinity, existence,*’ and resist the tendency to Dhruj –‘*deceit, falsehood, delusion*’. According to a man's deeds, He will either cross the Chinvento Peretu –‘*sword bridge*’ after death and reach Heaven, or fall from it and go to the abode of the Evil One. In the final days there will be a battle where evil will be vanquished and the world will be purified. Ahura Mazda will judge the world, resurrecting the dead and His Kingdom will be established on Earth.

‘Your good thoughts, good words and good deeds alone will be your intercessors. Nothing more will be wanted. They alone will serve you as a safe pilot to the Harbour of Heaven, as a safe guide to the Gates of Paradise.’

Zarathustra, Gathas

* ‘Zoroaster’ –‘*Golden Star*’ is a Greek translation of Zarathustra (also spelled Zarathushtra). In modern Persian He is known as ‘Zartosht’.

The teachings of Zarathustra are collected in the Avesta, including the Gāthas –‘songs’ and the Yasna Haptanghaiti written by Zarathustra and some other works of law and cosmogony*. The ancient Avestan dialect is close to Vedic Sanskrit and the Gāthas (*Sanskrit –‘gātā-‘song’*) may be as old as later parts of the Vedas (*c.1800 BCE*).

“The Parsee (*Zoroastrian*) Avesta Scriptures and the Sanskrit Shlokas of the Hindus are all Divine words which carry Divine Vibrations.”

Creation. Ch.10.

The Early Years

The little we know about Zarathustra’s life is from legends passed down through generations.

About four thousand years ago, by the banks of the Ditya river in north-western Iran lived a large family named Spitama –‘very white’. The head of one branch of this family, Hechadaspa –‘stallions’, had two sons: Pourushaspa –‘many horses’ and Arasti –‘tidy & neat’.

Pourushaspa married Dughdova –‘milkmaid’. When she was five months pregnant, she had a dream in which she saw the world being destroyed and she was very frightened. But an angel appeared in her dream and told her that she was bearing a great prophet who would change the impending destruction.

On March 26th Dughdova gave birth to a healthy boy. Strangely, He did not cry but had a broad smile on His face which was shining with a divine glow. They named Him Zarathustra, meaning ‘Golden Light,

* *These are the remains of what was a huge literature which was largely destroyed by Alexander the Great’s invasion of Persia in 334 BCE.*

Golden Star or Possessing Yellow Camels’. Arasti also had a son Maedhyoimaha –‘*Mid Moon*’.

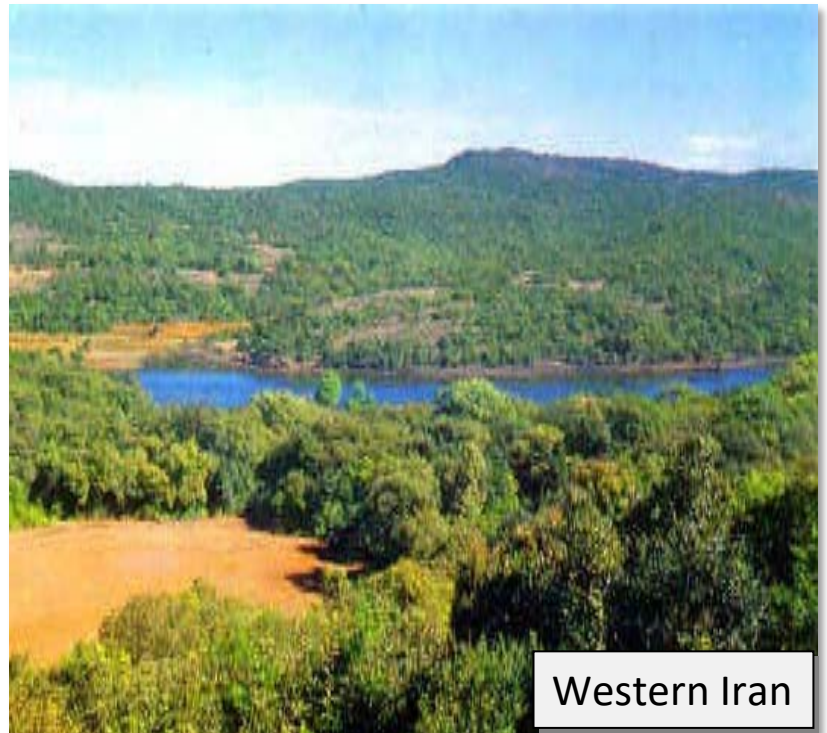
Zarathustra grew up intelligent and energetic. He was very observant and could see the deeper meanings and causes beneath the surface of things. He began training as a priest at the age of seven until He was fifteen. Being naturally curious, He had many questions for the priests and teachers but was rarely satisfied with the answers He received.

A legend recounts that when He was nine, due to His deep and unsatisfied curiosity about spiritual matters, a meeting was arranged with the head priests to discuss His questions. They spent a number of hours in debate but neither side managed to convince or satisfy the other.

Other legends tell of how Zarathustra had to face all sorts of black magic and powerful demons and managed to escape them.

Youth

Zarathustra spent much of His youth in the pastures surrounding the town, contemplating nature. During these meditations many of the questions that the priests could not answer would unravel themselves and their answers would be revealed to Him.



Western Iran

Legend has it that when Zarathustra was fifteen, His four brothers approached Him to divide their father's wealth. Zarathustra only took one item, a lamp, symbolizing the spiritual life and left His father's entire wealth to His brothers. At the age of twenty, He left home for ten years, travelling in search of the Truth. He spent years in the wilderness seeking God before His first Divine revelation.

Illumination

Early one morning, in His thirtieth year, He went to fetch water from the river. It was dawn; the sky had coloured and the sun was about to rise. As He went into the river, Vohu Mana –‘good mind’ appeared to Him as a huge angel and opened the portal to the Divine Light of Ahura Mazda.

In His vision, He saw Ahura Mazda as the Wise Lord of Creation. The six emanations of Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas –‘Bounteous Immortals’, are the creators and guardians of this physical world.

He perceived the laws upon which the universe operated and understood the relationship between Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas and the Creation. Vohu Manah and the other Amesha Spentas instructed Zarathustra in the ways of Heaven and He received perfect knowledge of past, present and future.



Propagation

After His illumination, Zarathustra wanted to share His acquired wisdom with the world, but where to start? He invited His family and relatives and explained His new understanding to them.

When He finished, His cousin Maedyoimaha decided to join Him, becoming His first follower; and His wife Hvovi also embraced His teachings. His children, three boys and three girls, one by one, accepted His philosophy as their way of life. However, according to other records, it took ten years before His cousin accepted Zarathustra's teachings and become His first convert.

‘Doing good to others is not a duty; it is a joy, for it increases your own health and happiness.’

Zarathustra

Challenges

However when He tried to share His teachings with the people of the city, Zarathustra met with deep-rooted resistance from the priests, whose life and livelihood were based on the old religions.



Zarathustra tried many different techniques and every time He met with renewed opposition and greater resistance. In fact, over the next twelve years, He managed to win over only twenty-two people to His philosophy, including His wife, six children and His cousin.

In view of such vehement opposition from the rulers and priests of His own land, He decided to travel to other countries. So the group of twenty-three set off on their migration.

Everywhere they met with the same opposition, due to the self-interest of the rulers and priests and because of the superstitious ignorance of the people and their unwillingness to change.

Then they heard of a wise and just king in nearby Bactria, King Vishtaspa, who might be open to new teachings.

Breakthrough - King Vishtaspa

Zarathustra was forty-two when He and His followers reached the court of King Vishtaspa and Queen Hutaosa. The King granted Zarathustra an audience and invited the priests and wise men of His court to listen to Zarathustra and question Him about His philosophy. The scene was set for a debate.



Zarathustra spoke eloquently and responded convincingly to all challenges and questions. The King saw the wisdom of this man and His teachings and embraced the religion. The King also encouraged His subjects to listen carefully and consider the Zoroastrian religion. This was a major breakthrough for Zarathustra.

Not everyone was happy with this turn of events and the priests plotted against Zarathustra, planting objects of black magic in His quarters. In front of the King they accused Him of evil acts, and His room was searched. The artefacts were discovered and Zarathustra was imprisoned and denied food or drink.

However the King's favourite horse went down with a deforming disease and none of the physicians in the kingdom could offer a cure. On hearing of this in His prison cell Zarathustra asked the King for a chance to save His beloved steed.

Reluctantly the King agreed and Zarathustra prayed to God for help. The horse recovered and the King realized He had misjudged Zarathustra and embraced His teaching. The King discovered who was behind the plot to discredit Zarathustra and punished the priests.

The King's embracing Zarathustra's teaching was a turning point in the fortunes of the Zoroastrian religion. Zarathustra went about freely propagating His teachings in that country and soon His message crossed the borders to neighbouring states. If Zarathustra's illumination was the moment of conception, this was the birth of the Zoroastrian religion as we know it today.

Two of King Vishtaspa's courtiers also took to the new teaching, the brothers Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa, of the Hvogva family. They are mentioned in the Gathas and continued to be among Zarathustra's

disciples until the end. Jamaspa married one of Zarathustra's daughters and became His successor.

In the Shahnameh –‘*Book of Kings*’, an epic Iranian poem written around 1000 CE, it is mentioned that, while visiting the state of Kashmar, Zarathustra planted a Sarv – ‘cypress’ tree. This tree, which became famous as Sarv-e-Kashmar, survived for more than two thousand years until it was cut down by order of Caliph al-Mutawaqqil in 861 CE. However the Cypress of Abarkooh, also called the Zoroastrian Sarv, is still preserved today.



Cypress of Abarkooh, reputed to have been planted by Zarathustra. Scientists estimate it is over 3500 years old.

Character

While there are few details of the events of Zarathustra's life, there is evidence of His character from His short Divine Songs, the Gathas. It is clear that Zarathustra was a natural man; and an exceptionally wise and righteous person. He was an Ashu – one who has reached the apex of Self-realisation, perfection and thenceforth immortality. He was loving and kind, yet resolute on adhering to truth and justice. He was wise and discerning, possessed an observant and incisive mind. He had a clear vision and understanding of the

physical laws and moral principles of the world and always adhered to righteousness. In short, He was the epitome of spiritual strength.

What little biographical material there is in the Gathas indicates that Zarathustra was cast out of His original home state and wandered with His followers and their animals.

‘To what land should I turn?
Where should I turn to go?
They hold me back from folk
and friends. Neither the
community I follow pleases
me, nor do the wrongful rulers
of the land... I know that I am
powerless. I have a few cattle
and also a few men.’



The last Gatha is composed for the marriage of Zarathustra's daughter Pouruchista –‘*Full of Wisdom*’ to Jamaspa, who became Zarathustra’s successor. Zarathustra’s six children, three boys and three girls, may be symbolic since the number and gender equals that of the six Amesha Spentas –‘*Divine Powers*’.

It was probably at court that Zarathustra composed the Gathas as the names of the King and courtiers appear as if they were there listening to the poems being recited. The prophet may have spent three decades there, before His death at the age of seventy-seven.

In the later Avesta, Zarathustra is credited with having direct dialogue with Ahura Mazda. Born into a family of priests, He had a

natural flair for ritual and law-giving and much ritual doctrine is attributed to him, whether He was the originator or not.

In later Zoroastrian traditions, some of which were not recorded until after the Arab conquest, His life abounds with miracles and Divine interventions.

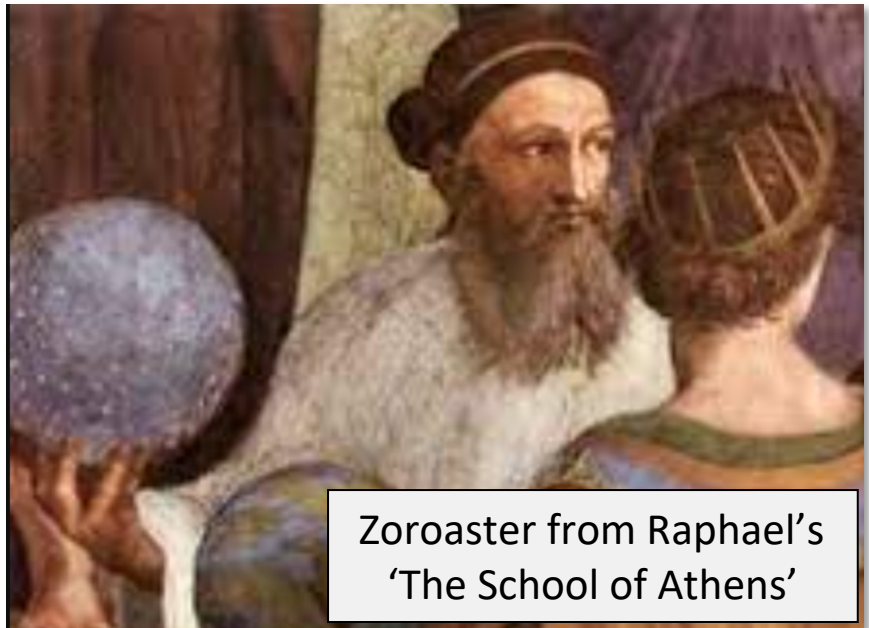
‘His mother glowed with the divine glory usually reserved for kings; the soul of the prophet was placed by God in the sacred Haoma plant (*which He condemned in the Gathas – this may be the Soma of the Vedas*) and the prophet was conceived through the essence of Haoma in

milk (*though not of a virgin birth, but the offspring of two special, but earthly, parents*). The child laughed at His birth instead of crying and He glowed so brightly that the villagers around Him were frightened and tried to destroy Him. All attempts to destroy young Zarathustra failed; fire would not burn Him nor would animals crush Him in stampedes; He was cared for by a mother wolf in the wilderness.’



Links with the Western World

Since ancient Greek times the name of Zoroaster has stood for mysterious and magical Eastern wisdom. Many esoteric texts were written in His name and Zoroaster was thought of as one of



Zoroaster from Raphael's
'The School of Athens'

the greatest magi, or mystics. When translations of the Avesta appeared in Europe in the 18th century, His name again became famous; this time not for magic, but for the humanistic, monotheistic, moral philosophy propounded in the Gathas.

Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Diderot take Him as a model; Voltaire wrote a play 'Zoroastre.' Here was a philosopher from 'pagan' antiquity who was monotheistic and moral without any help from the Christian Church. The French composer Rameau wrote an opera 'Zoroastre' and the free-thinking Mozart used the name in 'The Magic Flute;' for His character Sarastro - the priest of the Sun and Light who defeats the Queen of the Night.

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche expounded His philosophy of the Uber-mensch –'*higher man*' in His book 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', although there is no identifiable Zoroastrian teaching in the book. The German composer Richard Strauss' tone poem of the same name was inspired by Nietzsche's work.

The Life of the Spirit

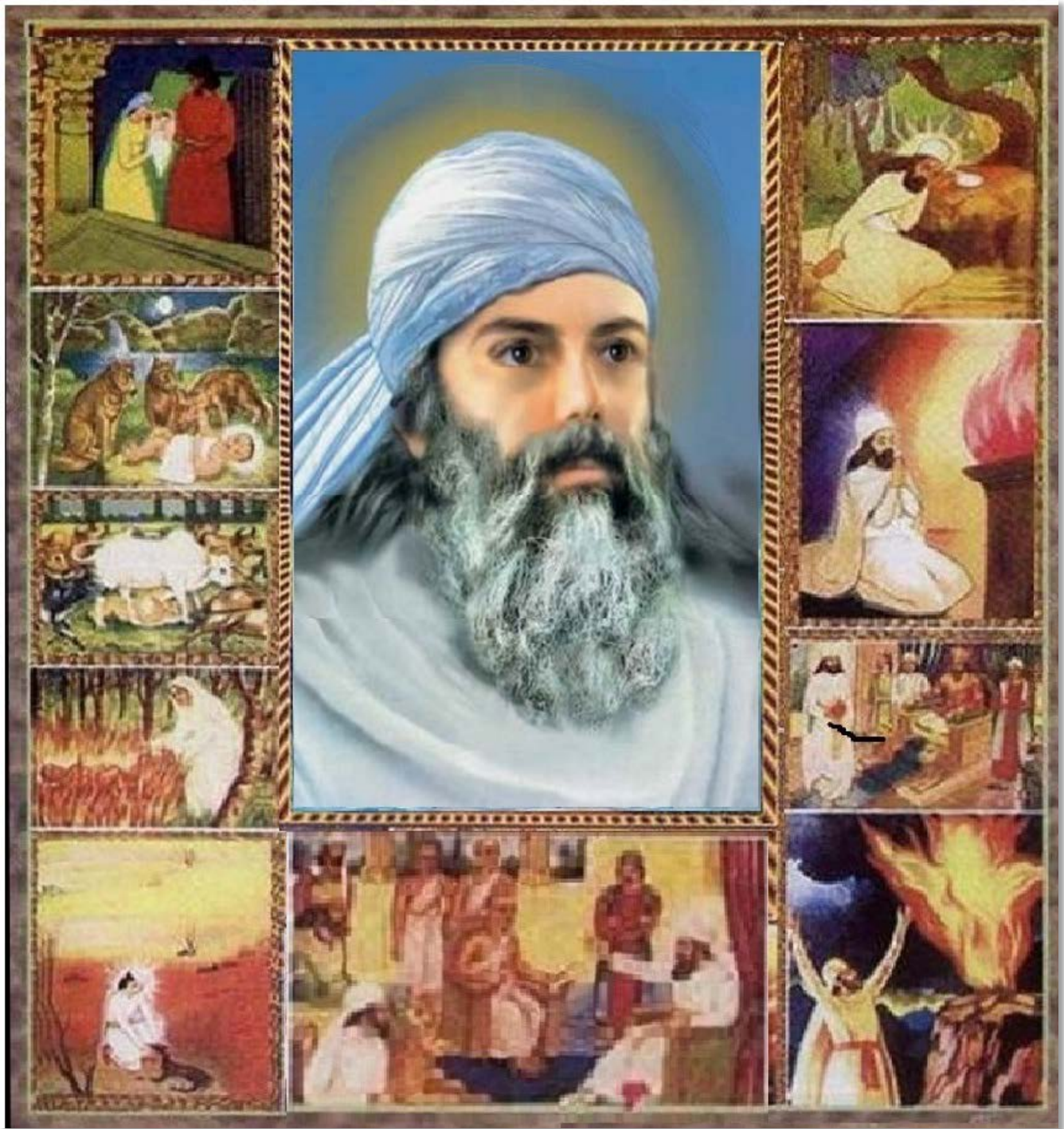
Ahura Mazda, the Fravashi –‘*Personal Spirit, guardian angel*’ and the Yazatas – ‘*Angels, Deities*’ (including the Amesha Spenta) create and pervade the material manifestation but remain ineffable. The Urvan –‘*soul*’ is sent into the world by the Fravashi - the immortal Divine Principle residing in the heart of man - to fight the battle between good and evil and is judged after death. The idea of reincarnation does not figure except for a final Judgement Day, as in Islam.



‘One need not scale the heights of the heavens, nor travel along the highways of the world to find Ahura Mazda. With purity of mind and holiness of heart one can find Him in one’s own heart.’

Gathas

The Amesha Spenta are the six first emanations of Ahura Mazda – Mainya –‘*creative spirit*’, Vohu Manah –‘*good mind*’, Asha –‘*truth, righteousness*’, Kshatra –‘*dominion*’, Armaiti –‘*devotion*’, Haurvatāt – ‘*wholeness, health*’ and Ameretāt –‘*immortality*’, who create this world and rule its elements. They each have an evil opposite, the most powerful of which is Angra Mainya, also called Ahriman, the original prototype of the Devil. Through good thoughts, words and deeds, by mantras and rituals, the soul strives to imbibe the qualities of each of the Amesha Spenta and overcome their antithesis.



‘With an open mind, seek and listen to all the highest ideals. Consider the most enlightened thoughts. Then choose your path, person by person, each for oneself.’

‘Always meet petulance with gentleness and perverseness with kindness. A gentle hand can lead even an elephant by a hair. Reply to thine enemy with gentleness.’ *Zarathustra, Gathas*

Mantras as Divine Energy

‘All flows out from the Deity and all must be absorbed in Him again.’

Through prayers the soul becomes the receptacle of a higher spiritual consciousness, the Divine Light. Zarathustra composed the Manthra Spenta –‘*Holy Spells*’ as a means of communing with Ahura Mazda, who is Raevat-Khvarnavat -‘*The Source of Endless Light*’. Mantras are rooted in Staot Yazna –‘*Worship of Sacred Sounds*’ where the Primordial Sound created by the First Ray of Light which burst forth at the beginning of Creation is diffused throughout Nature. Being at the very root of Nature, Staot –‘*Primordial Sound*’ brings into existence the space-time continuum.



‘Things divine are not attainable by mortals who indulge in sensuality.’ **Zarathustra**

Fire

Being spiritual as well as physical, fire is regarded as a Divinity, equated with Ahura Mazda's own Inner Light and Life Energy. There are parallels with the Vedic and Judaic forms of worship which also utilise mantras and sacred fire.

Fire transmutes the physical into the spiritual. As energy it is the source of all Creation. No Zarathusti ritual is complete without the presence of fire. In the Gathas, Zarathustra Himself expressly seeks a vision and a communion with Ahura Mazda through fire, which is worshipped as the ‘Holiest Spirit’.

In Zarthushti homes and temples, the Divo – ‘*Hearth Fire*’ is kept perpetually burning. It is the physical manifestation of the Divine Light permeating time and space. Ahura Mazda, being Spirit, resides

in the spiritual world while He sends His Son, Fire, to adorn the Earth and impel the Creation towards Frasho-Kereti –‘*Final Renovation*’.

‘Happiness comes to them who bring happiness to others.’

Revelations

Zarathustra was given the Augusto-Vacho – ‘*Revelations unheard before*’ and was sent by Ahura

Mazda to reaffirm the ancient faith. He was the first prophet, to be followed by three Saviours. When the final Saviour comes, the world will be purged by fire and evil will be overcome in a final great battle.

‘Be good, be kind, be humane and charitable. Love your fellows, console the afflicted, pardon those who have done you wrong.’

Zarathustra

Passing

Legends of Zarathustra’s death include stories where Zarathustra ascended to the skies, much like the Ascension of Jesus.

Vishtaspa, Zarathustra and their followers fought a war against the Homa-worshipping Turan tribe and drove their King, Aryasp, back into the mountains. Eighteen years later Aryasp invaded Iran again, burning and looting. It is said that Zarathustra was killed in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan by a Turan soldier while He was praying.



Another account is that in His seventy seventh year, Zarathustra, one night, after His evening prayers, bid His family members farewell and retired to bed. He passed away quietly in His sleep. In the morning, when they noticed that He had not awakened, His family members went to His bed-side to find His body lying peacefully.

His son-in-law, Jamaspa, became Zoroaster's successor.

Zoroastrianism

Zarathustra's religion, known as Mazda-yasna – ‘worship of God’, remained prominent in Iran until the Arab conquest of 651 CE, which converted the Persians to Islam. To preserve their ancient faith, a band of Zarathushti sailed across the Arabian Sea and settled in Gujarat in India, where they are known as Parsees (*Persians – speakers of the Farsi language*).

“I wish all of you a very happy New Year today because it is Navroz* and Navroz is the day when Zartosht [*Zoroaster*] started His work on this Earth. He was a great Sahaja Yogi. He was an incarnation of Dattâtreyâ Himself.”

21-03-77, Mumbai



The Fravahar – the winged disc representing the Fravashi – ‘Individual Spirit’ is the symbol of Zoroastrianism.

The figure supported by the winged disc may be the emperor Darius, Cyrus the Great or Zoroaster Himself.

* Navroz – ‘new day’, the Zoroastrian New Year, is still celebrated in Iran on the spring equinox. It may have been started by Zarathustra Himself.

However, due to the customs of marrying within the religion and not converting others, their numbers are dwindling and recent estimates of practicing Zoroastrians are about 120,000 world-wide, half of whom are in India. They are successful at business due to their public-spirited benevolence and strict moral code which includes business practice. Many of the great manufacturing houses of India are Parsee owned (*Tata, Godrej, etc.*).

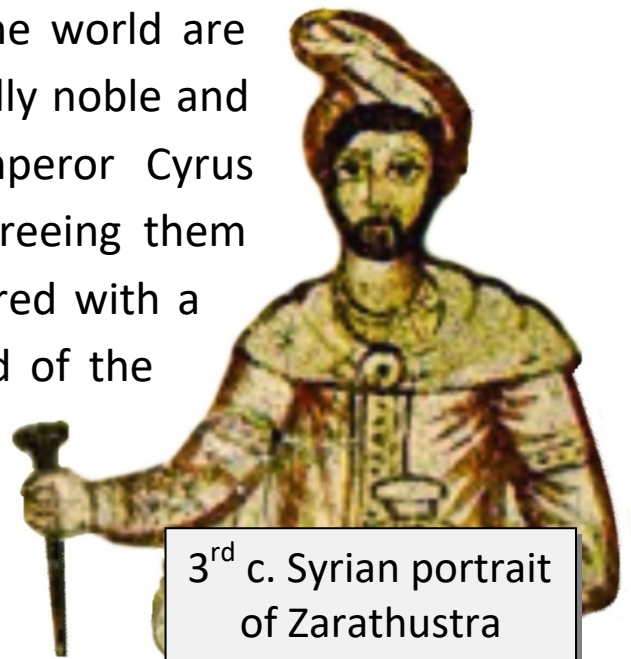
Many Jewish, Christian and Islamic concepts are derived from Zoroastrianism, such as Mashya and Mashyana, the first man and woman, like Adam and Eve, the concepts of

Heaven and Hell, the One God and the Evil Adversary Ahriman, the coming of the Saviour Saoshyant who will be born of a virgin, the end-of-time purge of the world by Fire followed by the Resurrection of the Dead; the making afresh of the world and the great battle where good finally vanquishes evil and the Kingdom of God is established on Earth. These beliefs filtered down to Judaism during the reign of King Khushru (*Cyrus*) of Iran.



Gayomard, the man-headed winged bull, was God's sixth creation. He was destroyed by the evil Ahriman but His seed lived on and gave rise to the animal kingdom.

Zoroastrians believe that all races in the world are created by God and are equal - a typically noble and tolerant Aryan trait. The Persian Emperor Cyrus rebuilt the temple of the Jews after freeing them from Babylon. For this, He is remembered with a Jewish festival and called the 'Anointed of the Lord' in the Bible. Many Jews stayed in Iran under Cyrus and His successors such as Darius, as equal subjects. Books of the Bible written after this



3rd c. Syrian portrait of Zarathustra

time incorporate these Zoroastrian concepts, which thence came to Christianity and Islam. Some scholars consider Zoroastrianism to be the mother of all the present world religions outside India.

“Zoroaster was born five times in His country, Persia. But the people who followed Mohammad Sahib never realised the oneness of His preaching and that of Zoroaster, and they made all the Persians run away to all the other countries and so many of them came to India.”

Creation. Ch.8

“Evolution is led by Vishnu and His Incarnations on the Earth. Apart from this there were the incarnations of the Primordial Master, Adi Guru, in the Void or Bhava-sâgara. He incarnated many-a-times to guide humanity across the Void. These Masters evolved new personalities endowed with the disciple principle or Shishya Tattwa, who manifested as great disciples of this Adi Guru. They were human beings but they achieved salvation with the help of their Gurus or their own efforts. They were not Divine Incarnations and are known as Avadhûts – *‘those who have renounced the world’*. They incarnated on this Earth as other personalities; Solomon, David, John the Baptist,

second and third Zoroaster, Mârkandeya, Gagan Gadh Mahârâj and the nine Nâths. They had the True Knowledge of the Kundalini.”

29-12-80, India

Zoroastrians revere all the creatures and creations of God such as the Sun, Moon, stars and elements. The Holy Fire, kept permanently alight in the temples, is fed by priests with sandalwood and cedar while intoning the sacred Avestan Manthras.

The Gathas –‘songs’ of Zarathustra are not considered Divinely dictated texts, but the compositions of a prophet-poet inspired by the Amesha Spentas –‘Bounteous Immortals’ such as Vohu Manah –‘Good Mind’ and Asha –‘Truth’. According to Zoroastrian philosophy, Zarathustra reached God through His own efforts simultaneously with God's communication to Him. He is not regarded as divine, even in the most extravagant legends, but remains a man like others, though divinely inspired and close to Ahura Mazda. After His death Zarathustra's great soul rises to the level of a Bounteous Immortal.



His life is a model for all His followers, traditionalist and modern, in His insatiable desire for the truth, loving relationship with God and indomitable spiritual courage.

‘Let us be such as help the life of the future.’

Zarathustra, Gathas



ZARATHUSTRA

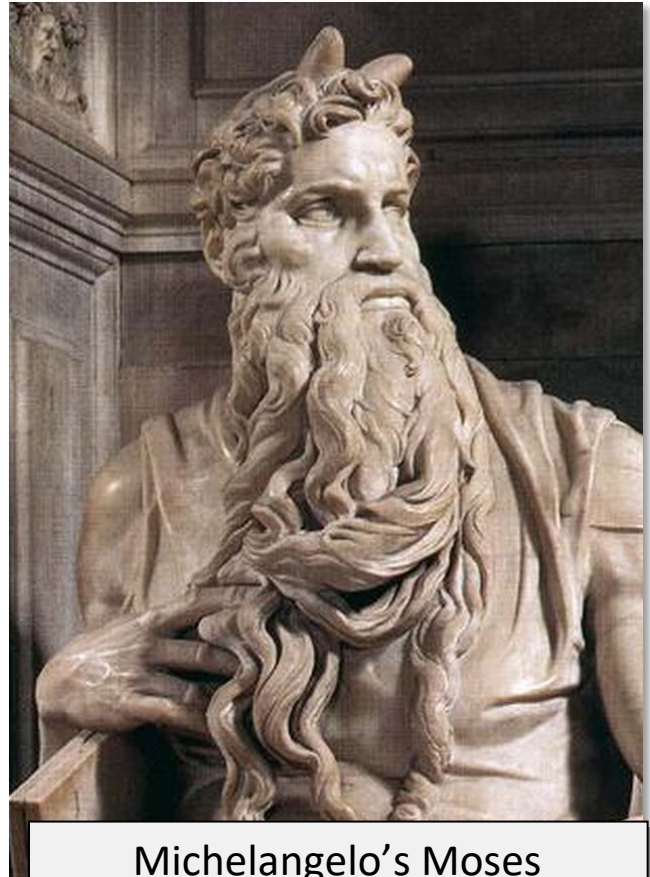


MOSES

MOSES

Moses, known in Hebrew as Moshe, was a prophet, law-giver and leader who, in the 13th century *BCE*, delivered the Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery.

In the Covenant Ceremony at Mt. Sinai, where the Ten Commandments were given, He founded the religious community known as Israel. As the interpreter of the Covenant, He organized the community's religious and civil traditions. He is revered as the greatest of prophets and teachers in Judaism which is called the Mosaic faith. His influence continues to be felt



Michelangelo's Moses
“*(The horns)* means the open Sahasrara. A Guru always uses these horns to hit his disciples to clear out their left and right side. They have two horns and they go on pushing into your Void.”

10-02-82, India

in the religious life, moral concerns and social ethics of Western civilization and therein lies His undying significance.

To deny or to doubt the historic personality of Moses, would be to undermine and render unintelligible the subsequent history of the Jews. Rabbinical literature teems with legends touching every event of His marvellous career. While some tales may be purely legendary, they are based on the sense of a great personality, of strong character, high purpose and noble achievement, so deep,

true and powerful in His religious convictions as to thrill and subdue the minds of an entire race for millennia after His death.

Historical View

Few historical figures have engendered such disparate interpretations as Moses. Early Jewish and Christian traditions considered Him the author of the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah –‘*Law, Teaching*’, or Pentateuch –‘*Five Books*’, which are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Genesis recounts the Creation up to the Children of Israel settling in Egypt; including Adam and Eve, Noah’s Ark, the Tower of Babel and the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The next four books document the life of Moses and the law handed down to Him by God.

The Bible is the only source of information on Moses’ life and character, there being no other historical evidence.

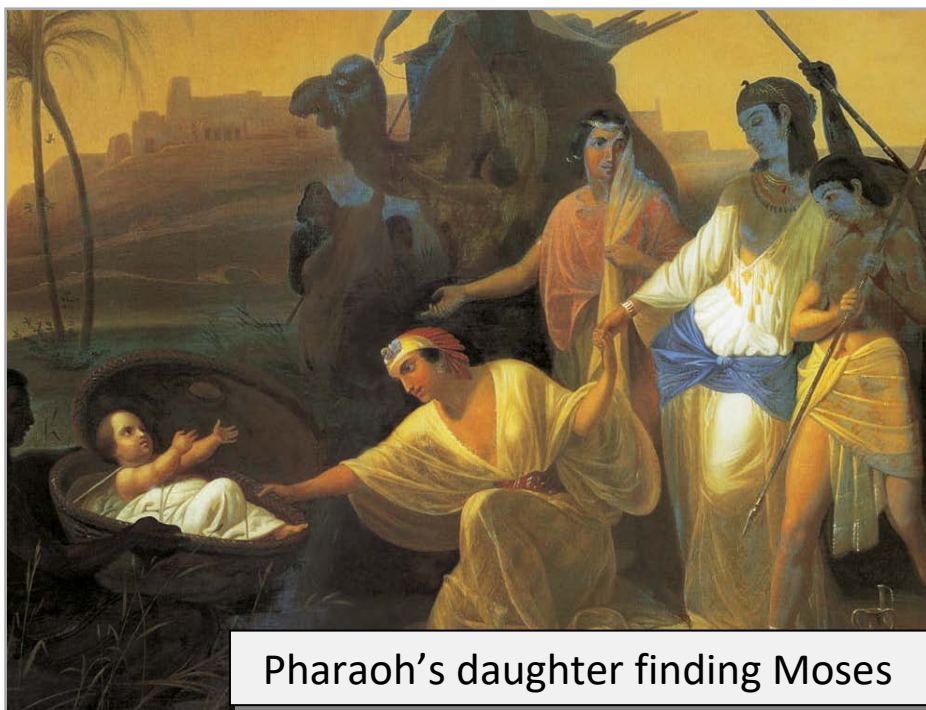
The Age of Moses

According to the Book of Exodus, Moses’ parents were Levites, the priests of the Hebrews, descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob who was named Israel by God. The Hebrews had been in Egypt for many generations, since Jacob and His sons had come to settle there. Their numbers had increased until they became a threat, so one of the Pharaohs enslaved them. The Pharaoh who fought with Moses was probably Ramses II (1304–1213 *BCE*) and the Exodus from Egypt occurred around 1270 *BCE*. Moses would have been born around 1350 *BCE* and probably left Egypt before Ramses was born.

Archaeological evidence dates the cities of Pithom and Rameses, built by the enslaved Hebrews near Goshen (*see map on next page*) at around 1300 *BCE*. Excavations of towns the Hebrews destroyed in Moab during their wanderings are dated around 1250 *BCE*.

Early Life

In a parallel to the birth stories of Lord Jesus and Shri Krishna, there was a decree by Pharaoh that all male Hebrew babies were to be put to death, in an



Pharaoh's daughter finding Moses

attempt to restrict the phenomenal population growth of the Hebrews. So Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed (*whose other children were Aaron and Miriam*) hid Him for three months and then set Him afloat on the Nile in a reed basket daubed with pitch.

The child was found by Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him and reared him in the Egyptian court. The name Moses is Egyptian meaning 'son' (*Rameses = Ra-mose – 'son of Ra the Sun God'*).

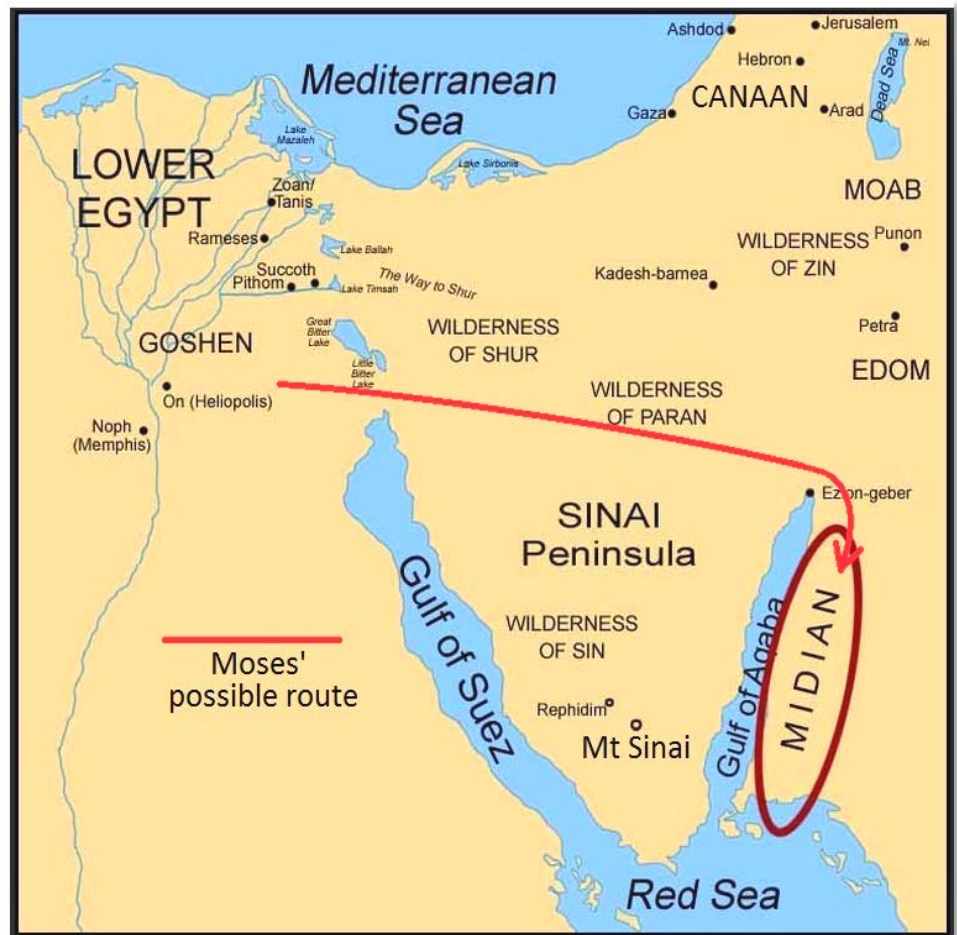
Moses' years growing up in the court are passed over in silence, but as a prince He would have been educated in religious, civil and military matters. The Bible says that Moses was about forty when He visited His people presumably after discovering His Hebrew origins. There He saw the oppression under which they laboured. Incensed at the sight of an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew, He killed the man and buried the body in the sand.

Moses went back the next day and this time He found two Hebrews fighting. After parting them, He attempted to mediate the disagreement; however their response shocked him: 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' His crime was no secret and soon Pharaoh knew and sought to arrest Moses. He quickly left Egypt crossing the Sinai wilderness to Midian in northwest Arabia.

Moses in Midian

Although no details of the flight to Midian are given in the Bible, it would involve crossing the inhospitable Sinai Peninsula.

Like Sinuhe, an Egyptian court official whose earlier flight in 1960 BCE is recorded, Moses would have had to filter through the 'Wall of the Ruler,' a series of forts on the eastern border, roughly where the Suez Canal is today; and then travel southeast through very desolate country.



While Moses was resting at a well in Midian, seven daughters of the priest Jethro came to water their father's flocks but were

obstructed by other shepherds. Moses drove off the shepherds and helped the girls refresh the sheep and goats. When their father learned of the incident He insisted that His daughters invite the Egyptian to stay. Moses settled down with Jethro who gave Him one of the daughters Zipporah as a wife and they had two sons. Moses spent forty years tending Jethro's flocks.

One day while roaming the wilderness for pasture He came to the base of the sacred mountain Horeb (*Mt Sinai*). His attention was attracted by a flaming bush, which burned but, strangely, was not consumed. He approached to investigate it but before He could do so, a voice warned Him to come no closer:

‘Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’

Then God spoke again, ‘I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid His face; for He was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said:

‘I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the Children of Israel out of Egypt.’ **Exodus 3**

Moses did not feel equal to the task that God asked of him, especially as He was ‘slow of speech’ – He may have had a speech impediment – but God assured Him that His brother Aaron would

accompany Him and speak for Him. God reassured Moses that in the future He and the Hebrews would worship at this mountain. Then Moses asked why the Hebrews would believe that God had sent Him and what name¹ of God He should tell them.

‘And God said unto Moses, ‘I am that I am’: and He said, ‘Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, ‘I am’ hath sent me unto you.’

Even after further assurances, Moses was still reluctant to accept Yahweh's call. Awed by His assignment, Moses made a final desperate plea, ‘Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person’; but God was angry at Moses: Moses would be God's representative, but His brother Aaron would be the spokesman. God assured Moses that those Egyptians who had sought to kill Him were² now all dead.

Moses returned to Jethro and took leave to visit His people in Egypt, taking His wife and sons. His brother Aaron was also instructed by God to go into the desert and meet Moses on His way back.

¹ *In the Old Testament God has two main names: Yahweh (or YHWH, also written Jehovah) and Elohim (similar to Allah). Both names appear in the earlier parts of the Bible. God was also known as El'Elyon – ‘The Most High’ or El Shaddai – ‘God of the Mountain’, but He identified himself to Moses as Yahweh and gave instructions to be called by this name from then on. From the verb root ‘to be,’ Yahweh means ‘He who causes things to be, the Creator’.*

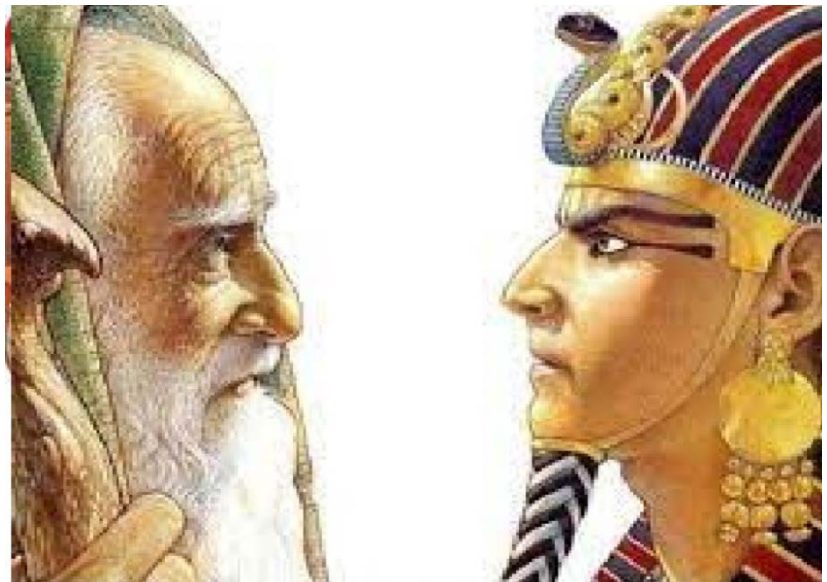
² *Moses lived for a hundred and twenty years, spending the first forty in Egypt, the next forty in Midian and the last forty wandering in the desert with the Israelites. The Bible states that He was four-score years (eighty) when He confronted Pharaoh.*

Moses and Pharaoh

Ramses II became Pharaoh as a teenager and reigned for sixty-seven years. He aspired to defeat the Hittites and control all of Assyria, but in the fifth year of His reign He walked into a Hittite trap at Kadesh in Syria. He managed to fight His way out, but the incident dampened His ardour for conquest.

Like all pharaohs, Ramses claimed to be divine; so the defeat was interpreted as a marvellous victory in which He subdued the Hittites. He undertook a massive program of building throughout Egypt and the boasts of His success filled acres of wall space.

It was some years after the Kadesh incident that Moses and Aaron confronted Ramses, saying 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Let my people go.' As a god in human form Ramses was not accustomed to



taking orders. 'Who is this Lord?' He inquired, 'that I should heed His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and moreover I will not let Israel go.' Thus the stage was set for an epic confrontation between a megalomaniac ruler and a prophet on a mission from God.

The Plagues

God instructed Moses to ask Pharaoh to allow His people to travel three days into the desert to sacrifice to their God. He assured

Moses that Pharaoh would never agree, and that He would send plagues upon the Egyptians, but they would still not agree, until He sent one final disaster upon them.

Moses and Aaron went together to Pharaoh and delivered their message. Pharaoh's response was that if the people had time to go into the desert for three days, they were obviously idle and He increased their work-load. The over-seers were told not to give the

Hebrews straw to make their quota of bricks, so that they had to forage for straw as well and still produce the same number of bricks. The people complained to Moses that He had made matters worse.

Following God's instructions Moses and Aaron continued to demand that the people to be allowed to go into the desert and sacrifice to their God. God hardened

Pharaoh's heart (*which was probably not too difficult in such a proud man!*) and He refused. Aaron threw His rod on the ground where it became a snake: but the Egyptian sorcerer-priests did the same with their staffs. Even though Aaron's snake ate



“Look how He put the hand on the Void, how the right Nabhi, the right knee, was not covered to show the place of the Void and the Nabhi.”

24-11-81, Rome

up their rods, Pharaoh was not impressed and still refused.

Aaron stretched His rod over the river Nile and it turned to blood, along with all the streams and wells. The people could find no fresh water to drink. But still Pharaoh did not agree.

Again God spoke to Moses, Aaron stretched out His rod and a plague of frogs* infested the land. Pharaoh finally relented but as soon as the frogs had gone, His heart was hardened and He refused to let the Israelites go.

Again and again Moses and Aaron predicted these abominations and again and again Pharaoh relented only to change His mind when the scourge was lifted. The dust of the land turned to lice*, then swarms of flies covered everything, the horses and cattle died, though not one of the Israelites'; then there was a mighty hail, the like of which had never been seen before with fire running along the ground, which killed any man or beast outside and destroyed trees and crops; locusts consumed any vegetation still standing. Pharaoh kept relenting while the disasters lasted, but 'hardened His heart' when Moses had spoken to God and they ended.

Finally Moses predicted that in the night the first-born child of every Egyptian family and of every beast would die. The Hebrews were instructed to daub their door-posts and lintels with lamb's blood, so that the Angel of Death would pass over their houses. This became the Feast of the Passover.

* *These plagues and disasters could be caused by natural agents and have been linked to a volcanic eruption on Santorini in the Mediterranean in 1500 BCE which destroyed the Minoan civilisation on Crete and left archaeological traces in Egypt. This makes them no less Divine in nature – how else would we expect God to perform His miracles?*

A mighty wailing went up from the Egyptians in the night and in the morning Pharaoh called Moses and told Him and his people to leave immediately. On God's instructions they borrowed gold ornaments and fine raiment from their Egyptian neighbours who now viewed the Hebrews with great admiration and saw Moses as a god. The people left in a hurry and their bread did not have time to rise, so only unleavened bread is consumed at the time of Passover.

From Goshen to Sinai

For many days the Hebrews, numbering about 25,000 with their carts, goats, sheep and cattle, travelled through the desert led by a pillar of smoke in the day and a pillar of fire at night, until they reached the Red Sea. The Lord did not lead them along the 'main road' out of Egypt to avoid conflict with the local people.

God was determined to 'have honour' upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, so Pharaoh's heart was hardened again and He ordered six hundred chariots and His best cavalry to pursue the Hebrews who were now trapped by the Red Sea. A pall of smoke came between the two camps preventing the Egyptian attacking, but still the people complained that Moses had led them into the desert only to die.

God caused a strong East Wind to blow all night and in the morning the Red Sea had become dry land. The Hebrews crossed it safely, but when the Egyptians tried to follow, God blew a West Wind* and they were completely annihilated by the on-rushing waters. Thus was God honoured on Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

“This Chakra is a flexible one. Swâdhishthân, which is actually the Star of David. This crossing of the Void represents the crossing of Moses, the sea that He crossed. All that is represented here. Because the Sea of Illusion you cross is the work of Moses Himself.”

18-10-81, U.S.A.

Safely on the other side, Moses and His sister Miriam led the people in a victory song of praise to Yahweh. The style of the poetry is consistent with 14th century BCE Canaanite literature:

‘I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and His rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare a habitation for Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.’

Exodus. 15:1–21

The Hebrews now wandered through the wildernesses of the Sinai Peninsula. (See map: p.66) They were often short of food and water, and complained bitterly. God sent food; in the evenings quail flew into the camp and were easily caught and cooked, and in the mornings they collected Manna from the desert to make bread,

* *Although the Bible describes the Hebrews as crossing the Sea with the water as a wall on the left and right, there is an explanation which does not involve massive walls of water (as in Cecil B DeMille’s magnificent film ‘The Ten Commandments’): The left-hand branch of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez, deteriorated into treacherous swamps and mangroves where the Suez Canal is today, known as the Reed Sea. Crossing these swamps with a large body of people would be impossible. However following the explanation of a volcanic eruption; then before a tsunami comes to land, the sea retreats quite dramatically, allowing the Israelites to cross, but as the Egyptians follow, the tsunami hits and they are annihilated.*

except on the Sabbath as God sent double the day before. The Manna was small fragrant morsels, like coriander seed, and the Israelites lived on it for their forty years of wandering in the desert.

The people still complained about the lack of water and food. After a month Moses brought the people to ‘the Mountain of God,’ Mount Sinai, also called Horeb, where God had spoken to Moses from the burning bush. Here He struck the rock with the rod He had used to part the Red Sea and water flowed forth.

“All these great incarnations had a special power over water, because in the stomach we have our Void and Nâbhî Chakra which is made of ocean. Ocean represents the incarnations of Âdi Guru Dattâtreyâ. These had great powers over oceans and over water, like Moses. He crossed the ocean by creating a road, which shows that the Void can be crossed with the help of the Rûh –‘*Holy Spirit*’. And even Mohammed Sâhib had a tremendous power over the ocean; Nânaka once put his hand on a rock and water started coming out.” **23-11-80, London**

Moses’ father-in-law Jethro had heard of His miraculous escape with the Hebrews and came to visit Him. He was shocked to see Moses trying to deal with every small issue of the people and told Him to devise a system to delegate decision-making and legal judgements, which He did.

The Covenant at Sinai

A terrific storm occurred over Mt. Sinai, and the voice of God called Moses to ascend the mountain alone. Moses spent forty days and forty nights upon Mount Sinai, being instructed by God, firstly with the Ten Commandments and then with details of the Jewish law.

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the water under the Earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold Him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor His manservant, nor His maidservant, nor His ox, nor His ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The Golden Calf

As Moses had been absent for more than a month, the people did not know what had become of Him and they implored Aaron to allow them to make an idol to worship. So all the gold was collected and a Golden Calf fashioned, placed on an altar and worshipped



Adoration of the Golden Calf
- from the Sistine Chapel

with nakedness, lasciviousness and abandon. When Moses came down from the mountain He was enraged at the sight and threw the stone tablets down, breaking them. The Levites, the priests of the people, had not indulged in these debaucheries and on Moses' instructions they went through the camp killing the worst offenders – more than three thousand were put to death.

Moses went back up the mountain for another forty days and nights. He pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites and even offered himself as a sacrifice in their place. God relented and gave Moses many laws and stipulations for the people to follow, as well as a new set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments. There is a theory that the original Ten Commandments were more subtle than the final version created for the erring Israelites. On His return Moses explained the Covenant between God and the Israelites. The people agreed to follow all the the laws and conditions which God had given to Moses, which are recorded in Exodus and Leviticus.

Moses concern for the Hebrews was unwavering, in spite of their stubborn, complaining and rebellious ways. God said that He would not travel with them through the desert as they were a 'stiff-necked people'.

The 'Tent of the Congregation', where Moses spoke with God, was set apart from the camp. It housed the Tabernacle, a jewelled box containing the Ark of the Covenant, and anyone wishing to know the word of God could come there to ask. A pillar of smoke stood at the doorway of the tent in the day and a pillar of fire by night. The people would not break camp and move on until the pillar of smoke lifted.

From Sinai to the Promised Land

After leaving Mt. Sinai, the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years. This was necessary to cleanse the sin of worshipping the Golden Calf and perhaps to toughen up the people who would have to fight their way into the Promised Land.

Moses faced daily frustration and resistance. He encountered opposition from even His closest family, Miriam and Aaron, for marrying an Ethiopian woman rather than a Hebrew. At Kadesh-barnea the pessimistic report of the spies who had reconnoitred the land thwarted Moses' desire to march north and conquer Canaan. When He urged the people to reconsider they almost stoned Him. But again, Moses interceded for the people with Yahweh, who threatened to destroy them and raise up another and greater nation.

In Transjordan the states of Edom and Moab, vassals of the Midianites, rejected Moses' request for passage and He wisely circled east of them and moved north to conquer Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan. Moses permitted some of the tribes to settle in Transjordan, which evoked opposition from the Moabites and their Midianite overlords who hired the Syrian diviner Balaam to put a curse on the Hebrews, but instead He pronounced a blessing. Moses responded to the enmity of the Midianites with a successful campaign against them which opened the way to the Promised Land.

Shortly before His death, as the Children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses gave three sermons recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. Renewing the Covenant between God and the Israelites He reminded the people of the hardships they

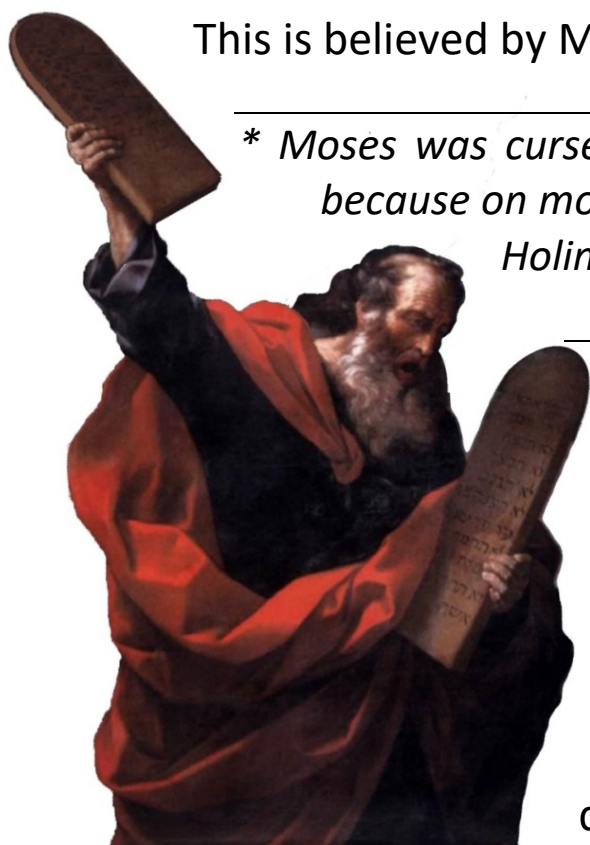
had faced and the promises they made to God. He talks of a future Prophet, like to Himself, whom the people are to receive and then bursts forth into a sublime song of praise to Yahweh and adds prophetic blessings for each of the twelve tribes.

‘He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of Truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.’ **Deut.32**

From the camp in the Jordan Valley, Moses climbed Mount Nebo, on ‘the top of Pisgah’ and views the Promised Land which He is cursed never to enter*; He then dies at the age of one hundred and twenty. He is buried ‘in the valley of Moab over against Phogor’, but ‘no man knows His sepulchre’ which is ‘opposite Beth-peor’.

This is believed by Muslims to be 20km east of Jerusalem.

** Moses was cursed by God not to enter the Promised Land because on more than one occasion He did not ‘uphold the Holiness of the Lord’ and took credit for miracles that God performed.*



Moses the Man

Although undoubtedly enhanced by time and legend, a striking portrait of Moses emerges – a man of tremendous strength of character who communed daily with Yahweh.

Throughout history very few saints are credited with the constant dialogue with God that Moses had. This stammering shepherd understood His destiny as coming from the grace of a merciful Lord who had given Him a tremendous mission. Moses had an understanding spirit and a forgiving heart because He knew how

much Yahweh had forgiven Him. He was truly humble because He recognized that His gifts and strength came from God.

He fulfilled many roles for the people. As Yahweh's agent in the deliverance of the Hebrews, Moses was their prophet and leader. As instrument of the Ten Commandments and mediator of the Covenant, He was the founder of the religious community. As interpreter of the Covenant and the Law, He was an organizer and legislator. As intercessor for the people, He was their priest. He began the process of codifying and interpreting the Law*.

Moses was succeeded as leader by Joshua and in religious matters by the priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron. Later prophets such as Elijah and Jeremiah also spoke with God and delivered His Message as Moses had, but they were not called on to fulfill so many roles. He is indeed the greatest of the prophets, and a mere handful of mankind's great personalities of any era equal Him in influence.

He is the ideal embodiment of 'God's Chosen People' outshining other prophets, so that thirty-two centuries after His death, only Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest culmination of the Jewish race, whom Moses foretold, eclipses Him.

'Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. . . . For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel'

Deuteronomy 34:10-12

"They knew Moses was great, He had overpowered Nature."

02-12-79, London

* One of the interesting features of Judaism is that the Torah is constantly being reinterpreted to keep it relevant. The Torah, the first five books of the Bible, gives the history of the Jews from the Creation up to the end of Moses' life and contains the very detailed Law given by God to Moses.

Jewish Beliefs

Judaism, known in Hebrew as Yahadut (*from Yehudah –‘Judah’, the name of the ancient kingdom and one of the twelve tribes*), believes in the perfection of the soul, which means overcoming all base desires and obstacles to facing God. At core this involves reincarnation, but not all Jewish people hold this belief.

Jews pray three times a day, or more, as they have prayers for all events such as saying ‘grace’ before meals. According to the Ten Commandments they have to observe the Shabbat –‘*Sabbath*’ which runs from sunset (6pm) on Friday until three stars appear on Saturday evening. Candles are lit a few minutes before sunset and prayers offered. During this twenty-four hours no work or journeys are undertaken and family meals accompanied with singing and prayers are an important part of Shabbat.

Other Interpretations

There are other groups of people who consider themselves to be the descendents of the Israelites, from as far afield as England to Ethiopia, from South India to Japan! Many of these groups claim to be the ‘Lost Tribes of Israel’, who were dispersed by later Assyrian invasions involving the capture and deportation of many Jews.

There is a tradition in Kashmir that they are descended from Moses and some of the Kashmiri people have a distinctly Semitic look. If one came out of Egypt and wandered east for forty years, this is where you would arrive.

‘I was fortunate enough to meet the great Santoor player Bhajan Sapoori and His family from Kashmir after they gave a concert for Śhrī Mataji at Her house in Noida in 2010. I asked them whether they knew of the idea of Kashmiris being descended from Moses and they assured me that it was a well-known part of their culture.’ **Ed.**



Bhajan and Abhay Sapoori from Kashmir

According to the book ‘Jesus Lived in India’* the names of the places given in the Bible surrounding Moses’ burial place correspond to a site known locally in Kashmir as ‘Moses’ grave’. The Bible gives the names but says the location is not known. Jesus’ tomb is also a well-known shrine in the centre of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. It is called the Roza Bal and is said to be the tomb of Yuz Asaf.



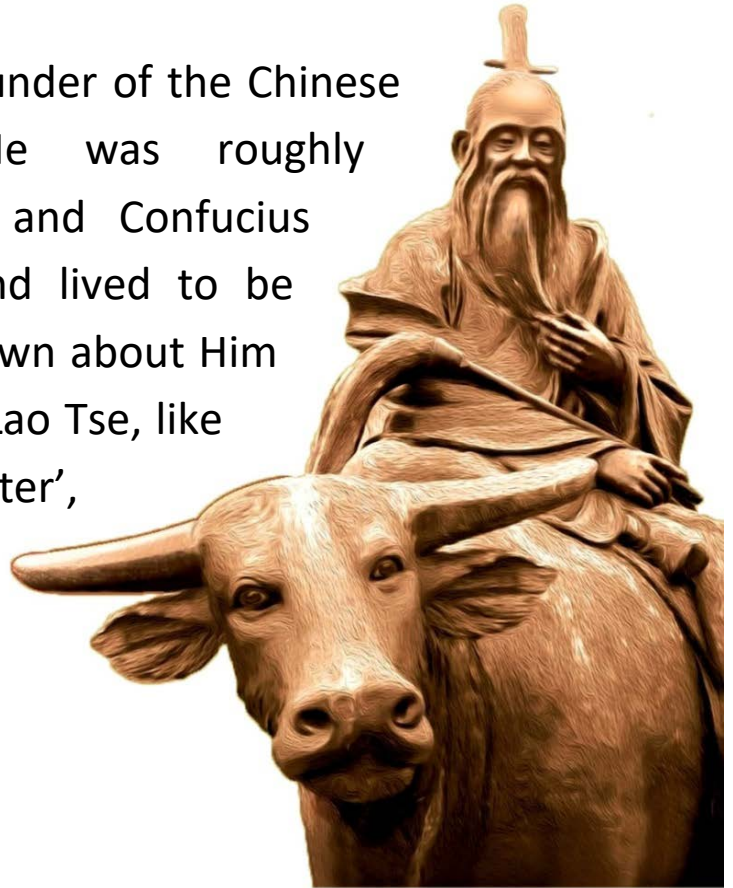
* ‘Jesus lived in India’ (1983) by Holger Kirsten, reads as if written by a Sahaja Yogi. Śhrī Mataji read it, generally approved of it and occasionally quoted from it. Kirsten collected many already discovered sources of material such as Buddhist monastery records from Leh and wove them into a convincing whole. He also talks about the legend of Moses arriving in Kashmir and the authenticity of the Turin Shroud. The book is still in print and is available on Amazon. Śhrī Mataji also quotes from an earlier book ‘The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ’ written by Nicholas Notovitch (1890) which provided some sources which Kirsten used.



LAO TSE

LAO TSE

Lao Tse* is considered the founder of the Chinese philosophy of Taoism. He was roughly contemporary with Buddha and Confucius (*possibly born in 604 BCE*), and lived to be about eighty. Very little is known about Him - not even His real name, for Lao Tse, like 'Sāi Bābā', means; 'Old Master', 'Respected Ancient One', and is a title of endearment and respect.



Life

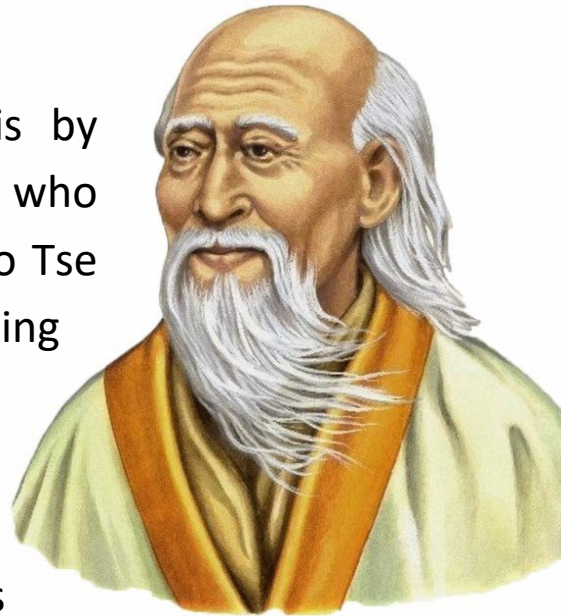
About His life we have only a mosaic of legends, some of which are fantastic: that He was conceived by a shooting star, carried in His mother's womb for eighty-two years and born already a wise old man with white hair. Other legends are more credible: that He kept the government archives in His native state, living a simple and unassuming life. It is said His name was Li Dan from Quren Village in the southern state of Zhou and he was the State Archivist.

His personality is deduced from the single slim volume attributed to Him. Some conclude that He was a solitary recluse absorbed in meditation; others picture Him as a down-to-earth genial neighbour with a lively sense of humour.

* Also written *Lao Tzu*, *Lao-zi*. *Lao* – 'old, ancient', *tse*, *tzu*, *zi* – 'master, respected one'

Appearance

The only contemporary description is by China's first historian Sima Qian, who speaks of the enigmatic impression Lao Tse gave - the depths of understanding defying comprehension. According to this account Confucius, intrigued by what He had heard, visited Lao Tse and Sima Qian's description suggests that the unusual man impressed Him deeply but left Him baffled.



'I know a bird can fly; I know a fish can swim; I know animals can run. Creatures that run can be caught in nets; those that swim can be caught in wicker traps; those that fly can be hit by arrows. But the dragon is beyond my knowledge; it ascends into Heaven on the clouds and the wind. Today I have seen Lao Tse and He is like the dragon!'

He concludes by saying that Lao Tse, saddened by His people's disinclination to cultivate natural goodness and seeking solitude for His closing years, climbed on a water buffalo and rode westward toward what is now Tibet.

At the Hankao Pass a gatekeeper, sensing the unusual character of the traveller, tried to persuade Him to turn back. Failing this, He asked if the 'Old Boy' would at least leave a record of His wisdom to the civilization He was abandoning. This Lao Tse consented to do. He retired for three days and returned with a slim volume of five thousand characters titled Tao Te Ching, or The Way of Virtue. One of humanity's greatest books, it can be read in half an hour or for a lifetime and remains to this day the essential text of Taoist thought.

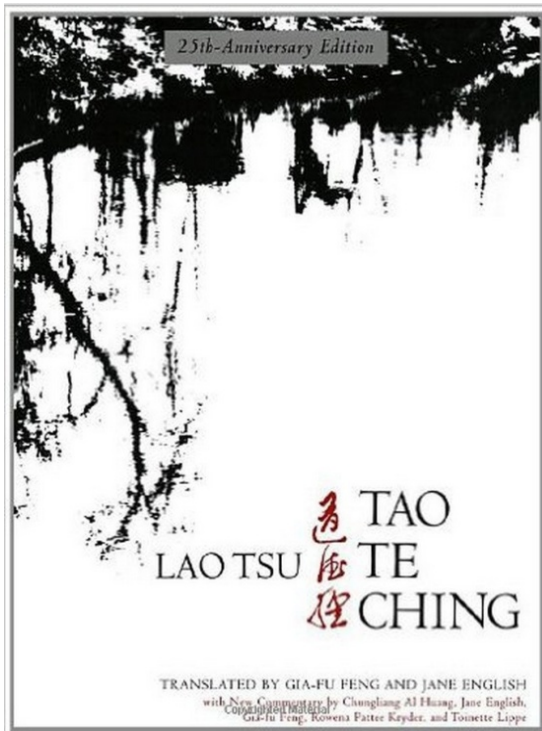
Lao Tse didn't preach, organize or promote. He wrote a few pages on request and rode off on a buffalo into the sunset. How unlike the Buddha, who wandered the dusty roads of India for forty-five years to enlighten the people; or Confucius, who cultivated dukes and princes, trying to gain a foothold (or at least a hearing) for His ideas. And yet, whether the story of Lao Tse's life is fact or fiction, it is so true to Taoists principles that it will remain a part of Taoism forever.

“Confucius has taught the humanity how we can improve our relations with other human beings. But Lao-Tse in China has very beautifully described Tao, meaning the Kundalini. And I have had a voyage through the Yangtze River through which Lao-Tse had gone many times. I know he was trying to show that this river, which is the Kundalini, is flowing towards the sea and one should not be tempted by the nature that is around.

The nature around the Yangtze River is very, very beautiful, no doubt, but one has to go through the river. Also there are lots of currents, which flow and can be quite dangerous and we need a good navigator who should take his ship across to the point where it is nearer the sea. At that stage it becomes very silent and extremely simple in its flow.

China has been endowed with great philosophers; I would say the greatest was Lao-Tse, because humanism was for the preparation of human beings for their ascent about which Lao-Tse had spoken.... The greatest thing is that you become a universal being; like a drop becomes the ocean. Lao Tze has described this.” *13-09-95, International Women's Conference, China*

Tao Te Ching - The Way and its Power



Tao is 'way' and Te is 'virtue, inner power', so 'Tao-Te' can mean 'the way of virtue, morality, ethics'; Ching means a 'great book, classic'. Translating Tao Te Ching (*pronounced 'Dao De Jing'*) as 'The Book of Ethics' would be misleading as in English 'ethics' implies intellectual principles; but Lao Tse emphasises going beyond mental concepts to spontaneous actions in tune with the All-pervading Consciousness.

The verses of the Tao Te Ching are arranged by topic which may not be the order in which Lao Tse wrote them.

The first two lines: 'Tao is Tao is not Tao. Name is Name is not Name.' Is particularly cryptic and open to many interpretations.

On the Meanings of Tao

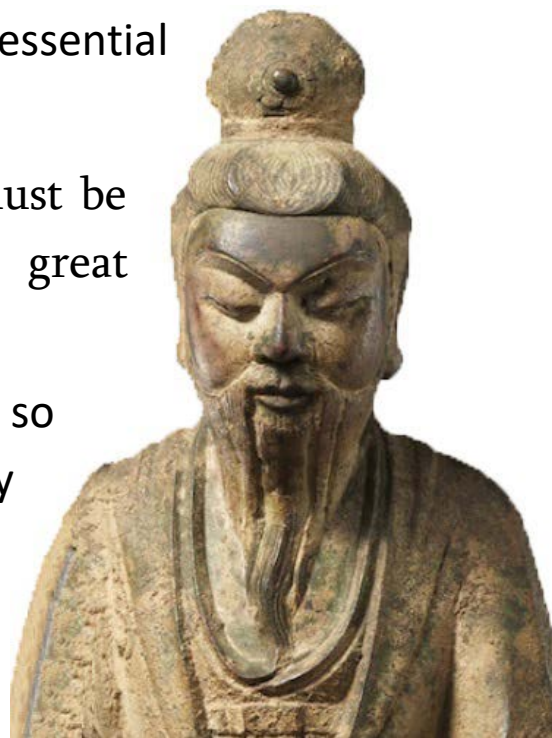
There are three main senses in which Tao --'way', may be understood. First, Tao is the Way of the Ultimate Reality. This Tao cannot be perceived or even clearly conceived, for it is too vast for human rationality to fathom. The opening line reveals that words are not equal to it: 'The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao.' Nevertheless, this ineffable and transcendent Tao is the ground of all that follows. Above all, behind all, beneath all, it is the womb from which all life springs and to which it returns. Awed by the thought of it, Lao Tse bursts recurrently into praise, for this

primal Tao confronts Him with life's essential mystery, the mystery of all mysteries.

‘How clear it is! How quiet it is! It must be something eternally existing! Of all great things, surely Tao is the greatest.’

But its ineffability cannot be denied, so we are taunted, time and again, by Taoism's epigram:

‘Those who know don't speak. Those who speak don't know.’



Though transcendent, Tao is also immanent. In this sense it is the Way of the Universe, the rhythm, the driving power in all nature, the ordering principle behind all life. Behind, but also in the midst of all life, for in this second mode Tao ‘assumes flesh’ and informs all things. It ‘adapts its vivid essence, clarifies its manifold fullness, subdues its resplendent lustre and assumes the likeness of dust.’

Being Spirit rather than Matter, it cannot be exhausted; the more it is drawn upon, the more it flows, for it is ‘that fountain ever on’. When autumn comes ‘no leaf is spared because of its beauty, No flower because of its fragrance.’ Yet, ultimately, it is benign. Graceful rather than abrupt, more flowing than hesitant, it is infinitely generous. Giving life to all things, it may be called ‘the Mother of the World’.

* A Taiwanese Sahaja Yogini living in London assured me that everyone learns the Tao Te Ching in school from a young age, and it seemed incomprehensible but intriguingly mysterious to her as a child. (Ed.)

Taiwan is home to the Chinese who fled from the Communist revolution in 1949 and consider themselves the true guardians of Chinese culture.

Tao is also the Way of the Wise Man, the path of harmony and surrender. Like the reed which bends in the wind, the Wise Man does not resist the forces of life but, by being adaptable and flexible, gains from them.

‘The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao;

The Name that can be named is not the eternal Name

The Nameless is the Origin of Heaven and Earth;

The Named is the Mother of ten thousand things.

Free of desire, one observes its wonders;

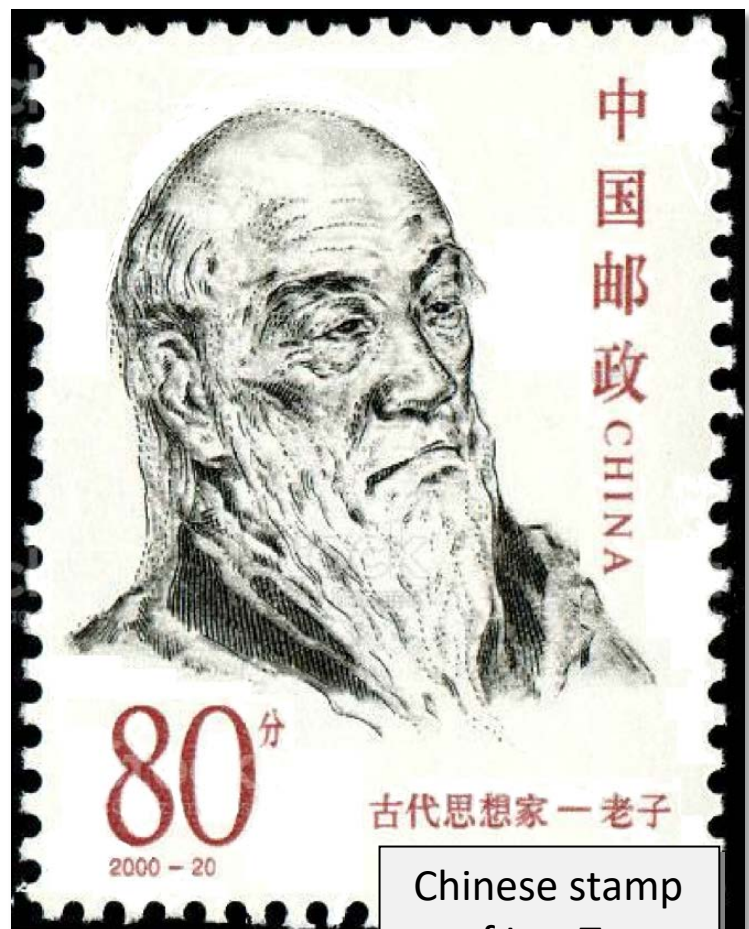
Full of desire, one sees the manifestations.

These two have the same source but differ in name;

The unity is said to be the mystery, mystery of mysteries,
the door to all wonders.’

First verse, Tao Te Ching

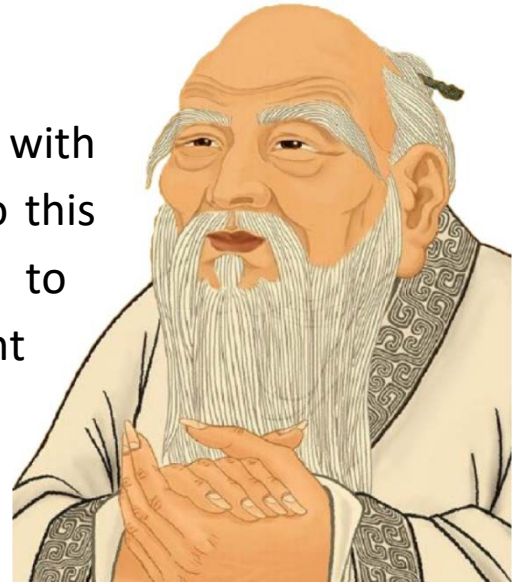
To embrace the paradoxes and contradictions of the Truth requires a subtle intelligence; it is akin to juggling many balls in the air at the same time. To settle on one interpretation is to fall on the side of dualism. Those of lower understanding seek firm answers in black-and-white resulting in dogma and fanaticism.



Chinese stamp
of Lao Tse

Te

We could equate Tao with Spirit and Te with the Kundalini, but there are limitations to this interpretation. 'Virtue' is often used to translate Te - virtue in the sense of inherent quality or natural power. It is the 'Mysterious Female', the 'Valley Spirit' in which one abides as a natural state. One must know how to act but not to seek action.



'Bearing without possession, achieving without arrogance, uplifting without domination, this is called the mystic virtue.'

'Know the masculine, but hold to the feminine,

Be the watercourse of the world. Being the watercourse of the world, the eternal virtue does not depart,

Return to the state of the infant,

Know the white (*Yang*), but hold to the black (*Yin*),

Be the standard of the world. Being the standard of the world, the eternal virtue does not deviate,

Return to the state of the boundless,

Know honour, but hold to humility,

Be the valley of the world. Being the valley of the world, the eternal virtue shall be sufficient,

Return to the state of uncarved wood,

Plain wood splits, then becomes tools,

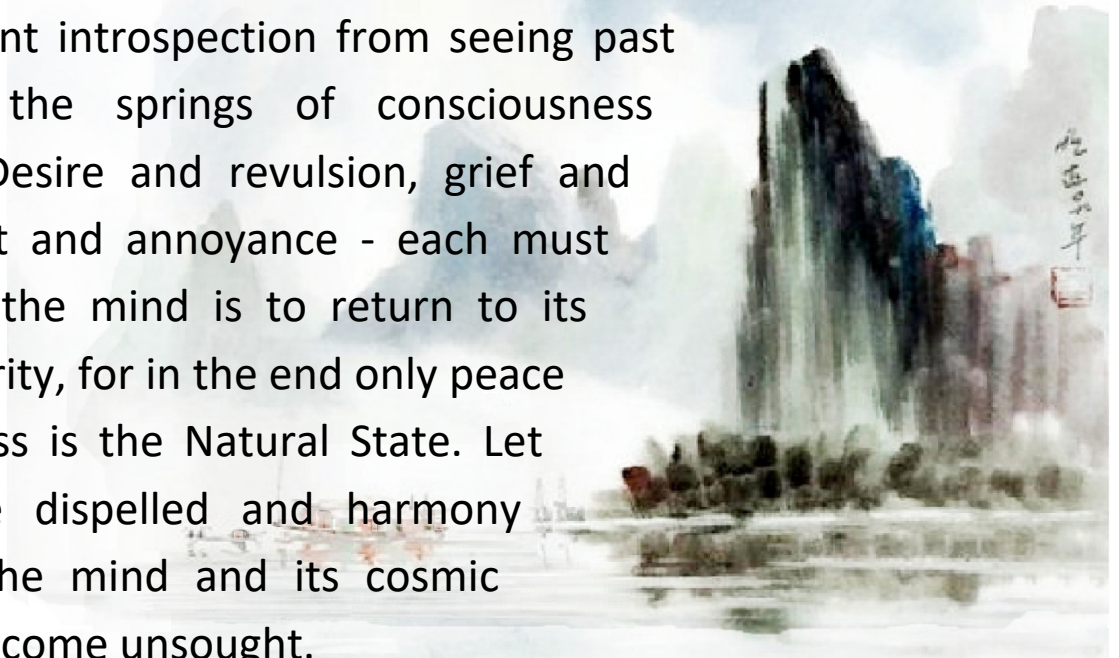
The sages utilize them, and then become leaders,

Thus the greater whole is undivided,'

Meditation

Taoist meditation involves shutting out distractions and emptying the mind to the point where the power of the Tao bypasses mental filters and enter the Self directly.

To arrive at this inwardness. self-seeking is reversed and perfect cleanliness of thought and body cultivated. Pure spirit can be known only in a life that is 'garnished and swept.' Only where all is clean will it reveal itself; therefore 'put self aside.' Perturbing emotions must likewise be quelled. Ruffling the surface of the mind, they prevent introspection from seeing past them to the springs of consciousness beneath. Desire and revulsion, grief and joy, delight and annoyance - each must subside if the mind is to return to its original purity, for in the end only peace and stillness is the Natural State. Let anxiety be dispelled and harmony between the mind and its cosmic source will come unsought.



It is close at hand, stands indeed at our very side; and yet is intangible, a thing that, by reaching for it, cannot be grasped. It goes, yet has not departed. It comes, yet is not here. It makes no note that can be heard, yet of a sudden it is there in mind. It is dim and dark, with no outward form, yet it flows as a great stream.

Selflessness, inner cleanliness and emotional calm are the preliminaries to arriving at full self-knowledge, climaxed by deep meditation. 'Bide in silence and the radiance of the spirit shall come in and make its home.'

Outward impressions are stilled and the senses withdrawn to an interior point of focus. 'Muddy water allowed to stand,' says the Tao Te Ching, 'will clear.'

Postures paralleling Yoga Āsanās were recommended and breath-control; it must be as soft and light as that of an infant, or even an embryo in the womb. The result will be a state of alertness known as 'sitting with a blank mind', 'returning to the state of the uncarved block' or the 'unwritten paper'.

Realisation

It is said that only He who 'carries water and chops wood' can attain realisation, implying a natural person living a natural life. The direct perception of the source of one's awareness as 'serene and immovable, like a monarch on a throne,' brings joy unlike any other. Once connected to the whole the Wise Man 'could shift Heaven and Earth.' A ruler who is desireless automatically liberates His subjects from their unruly desires; ruling without even being known to rule.

'The sage relies on action-less activity; puts himself in the background; but is always to the fore. Remains outside; but is always there. Is it just because he does not strive for any personal end, that all his personal ends are fulfilled?'

The Mingling of the Powers

For Lao Tse, Te –'virtue' is quite different from Confucius' idea where one should strive to cultivate good qualities; Te is the innate property. In tune with Tao, behaviour flows spontaneously.

'The way to do is to be.' Tao is a gracefulness and vitality that flows in and flows out until all is a dance without striving or imbalance. Far from inaction, it is the embodiment of simplicity and freedom - with nothing wasted on outward show.

'The supreme good is like water, which nourishes all things without effort. It is content with the low places people disdain. Thus it is like the Tao.'

Have you the patience to wait: 'Till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?'

'Nothing in the world is as soft and yielding as water. Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible, nothing can surpass it.'

'The soft overcomes the hard; the gentle overcomes the rigid. Everyone knows this is true, but few can put it into practice.'

One who embodies these virtues of water, says the Tao Te Ching, 'works without working, acts without strain, persuades without argument, is eloquent without flourish and achieves results without violence, coercion, or pressure'. The less the agent is noticed, the more decisive their influence.



‘A leader is best when people barely know that he exists. Of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, ‘We did this ourselves.’

‘One may move so well that a foot-print never shows, Speak so well that the tongue never slips, Reckon so well that no counter is needed.’

‘The five colours blind the eye, the five tones deafen the ear, the five tastes cloy the palate. Racing and hunting drive men wild and their booty leaves them no peace. Therefore a sensible man prefers the inner to the outer eye.’

Taoist Values

Like water, the self needs no assertion. The world is full of people determined to stand out, to be somebody, to get ahead.

‘He who stands on tiptoe doesn't stand firm. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far. He who tries to shine dims his own light.’

‘Those who would take over the earth and shape it to their will never, I notice, succeed. The earth is like a vessel so sacred that at the mere approach of the profane it is marred; and when they reach out their fingers it is gone.’

Taoism seeks at-one-ment with nature, not dominance, which deeply influenced Chinese art.

‘Let the people return to the use of knotted cords, their food sweet, their clothing beautiful, their homes comfortable, their rustic tasks pleasurable.’

Travel is pointless and conducive to idle curiosity. ‘The neighbouring state might be so near that one could hear the cocks

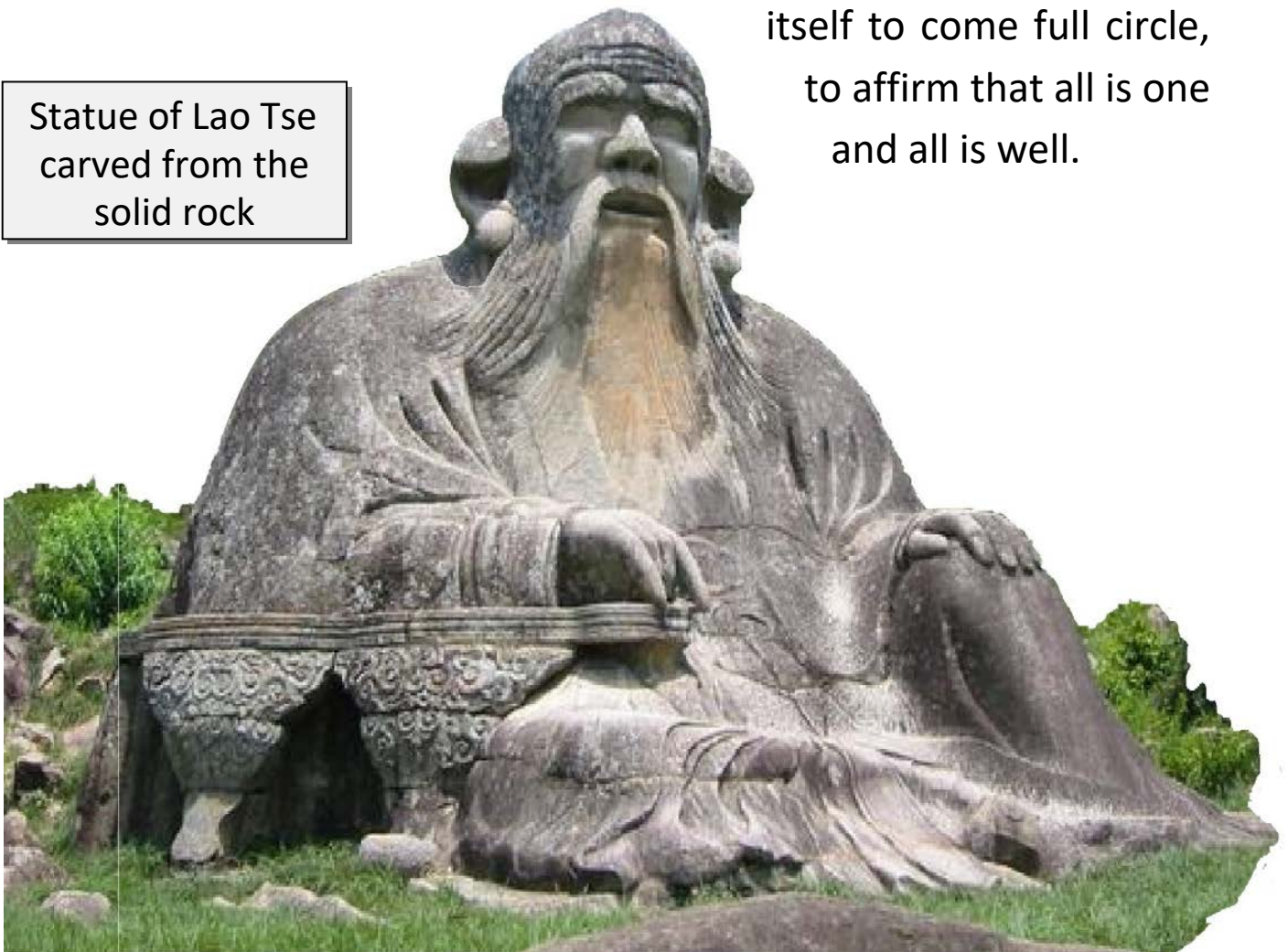
crowing in it and dogs barking; but the people would grow old and die without ever having been there.'

The basic objectives of Taoism and Confucianism did not differ widely, but the Taoist shunned formalism and ceremony. Confucianism encourages the human tendency to regulate life.

Taoism is in tune with the notion of Yin-Yang – the identity of opposites; good & evil, active & passive, positive & negative, light & dark, summer & winter, male & female. Though in tension, the halves complement and balance each other; invading each other's hemisphere and residing in the deepest recess of its opposite's domain. And in the end both are resolved by the circle that surrounds them, the Tao in its eternal wholeness; mere phases in an endless cycle, each turning incessantly into its opposite. Life does not move upward towards a fixed pinnacle; it bends back upon

itself to come full circle,
to affirm that all is one
and all is well.

Statue of Lao Tse
carved from the
solid rock



Taoism and Confucianism

Intertwined like Yin and Yang, Taoism and Confucianism are the two poles of the Chinese character. Confucius proposes the classical, Lao Tse the romantic. Confucius stresses social responsibility, Lao Tse spontaneity and naturalness. Confucius' focus is on the human, Lao Tse's on what



transcends the human. As the Chinese themselves say, Confucius roams within society, Lao Tse wanders beyond. Life reaches in both directions and Chinese culture would be poorer without either.

‘There is a being, wonderful, perfect; It existed before Heaven and Earth. How quiet it is! How spiritual it is! It stands alone and it does not change. It moves around and around, but does not on this account suffer. All life comes from it.

It wraps everything with its love as in a garment and yet it claims no honour, it does not demand to be Lord. I do not know its name and so I call it Tao’

Other Taoist Influences

Chuang Tze (Zhang-zi)

The other main text of Taoism is Chuang Tze (*Zhuang-zi*), written about two centuries after Lao Tse. This is a larger, more earthy work, containing stories and much humour. Chuang Tse is sceptical of the human condition and doubts the efficacy of using imperfect instruments such as the mind to achieve perfection.

‘A friend visited Chuang Tse and found him contorted with pain and his left arm bent and twisted in a most unnatural way.

‘Isn’t it wonderful’ said Chuang Tse, ‘just imagine what other miraculous things the Supreme Spirit might send tomorrow!’

Like Lao Tse, Huangbo and all great masters, Chuang Tse emphasised that there is nothing to be achieved, nothing to be gained or added to a person, as the Sahaja –‘*natural*’ state of Pure Consciousness is always there, merely obscured by our mental and emotional activity. There is really no ‘way’ or journey as we are already there if we only knew it.



Chuang Tze

‘The Way (Tao) is to man as rivers and lakes are to fish, the natural condition of life.’

‘(In meditation) make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes’.

‘Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy.’

Chuang Tse describes Confucius’ visit to Lao Tse:

‘Confucius had reached the age of fifty-one and still had not ‘heard the Tao.’ Finally he went south to Pei and called on Lao-tse.

‘Ah, here you are!’ said Lao-tse. ‘I’ve heard of you as a worthy man from the north. Have you attained the Tao?’

‘Not yet,’ replied Confucius.

‘How have you sought it?’ asked Lao-tse.

‘I sought it through rules and regulations. Five years went by and I could not attain it.’

‘How else did you seek it?’ asked Lao-tse.

‘I sought it in the Yin and the Yang. Twelve years went by and still I could not attain it.’

‘Of course not!’ replied Lao-tse. ‘The Tao cannot be sought in this manner . . . The *perfecti* of olden times wandered freely in the wilds, they found nourishment in the fields of Simplicity, they took their stand in the garden of No-Giving. They abode in Non-Action, and found easy nourishment. Their wanderings brought them to the True Tao. This was their Wealth . . .’

Confucius called on Lao-tse again and this time asked him about the Virtues of Benevolence and Righteousness.

Lao-tse replied: ‘When chaff from the winnowing fan blinds the eyes, then Heaven, Earth, and the Four Directions all appear to be out of place. The sting of a mosquito or of a horsefly can keep a man awake all night. Similarly, these so-called Virtues of yours do nothing but muddle the mind and cause confusion. Let the world cleave instead to Simplicity and the Uncarved Block. Let it move freely with the wind, and abide in Inner Power. Don’t go around huffing and puffing, beating a big drum as if to chase an errant child! The snow goose needs no daily bath to stay white. The crow needs no daily ink to stay black...’

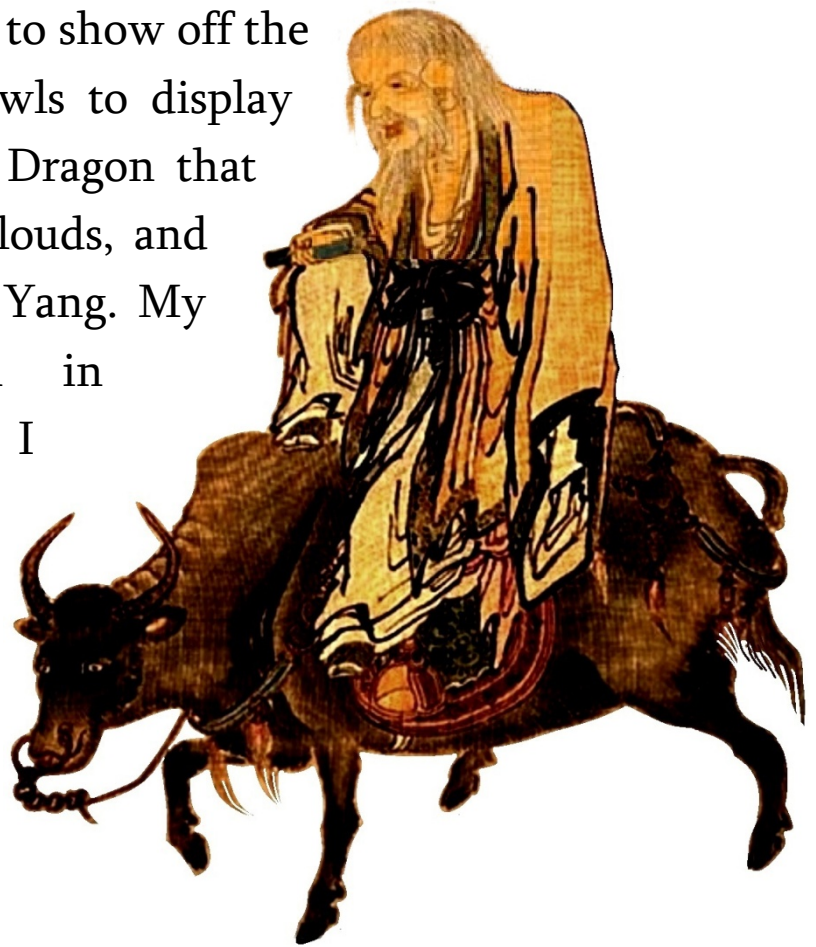
When Confucius returned from this visit to Lao-tse, he was silent for three days. His disciples questioned him, saying:

‘When you met Lao-tse, what advice did you give him?’

‘Finally,’ replied Confucius, ‘I have set eyes on a Dragon! A Dragon that coils to show off the extent of its body, that sprawls to display the patterns on its scales. A Dragon that rides on the Breath of the Clouds, and feeds on the purest Yin and Yang. My mouth simply fell open in amazement. How could I possibly offer such a Dragon advice?’

In the words of the I Ching:-

‘The Dragon flies in Heaven.
It profits to see a Great Man.’



Zen Buddhism

Zen Buddhism is a combination of the subtle understanding of Taoism with the equally subtle truths of Buddhism which came to China within a few hundred years. The legend of Bodhidharma (5th Century CE) bringing Buddhism to China (*and establishing the Shaolin Monastery and Kung Fu martial arts*) may have some truth in it, but there are records of Han Dynasty rulers embracing Buddhism before the time of Christ.

Known in China as Chan Buddhism, this blend of Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism spread to Vietnam, Korea and Japan where Zen developed. One of the main practices is Za-zen –‘*just sitting*’, stilling the mind and emotions until a thoughtless state is achieved and one enters into communion with the Ultimate Reality.

“Zen is such a great thing. Zen is nothing but meditation, is Sahaja Yoga only.”

13-11-78, Caxton Hall

“Za-Zen means Dhyân, Meditation.”

15-10-78, London

“Buddha and Tao; these two are expressing Sahaja Yoga. Tao is nothing but Sahaja Yoga. Tao means how it works out, and Zen means Dhyâna –‘meditation’.”

04-08-91, Belgium

Zen Story (from Huangbo)

The master was giving a series of lectures to the monks and every evening a shadowy monk would appear at the back of the hall, whom the others could not see, but who left immediately the master had finished. One evening the ghostly monk stayed behind when the others had left and, approaching the master respectfully, said:

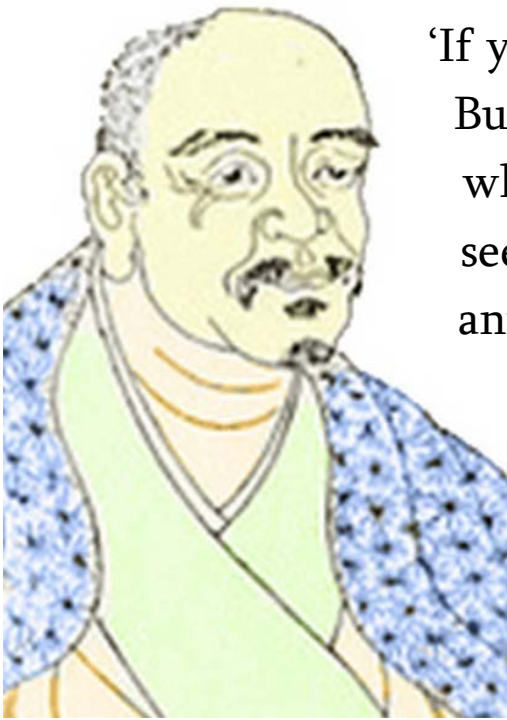
‘I was the head of a monastery and I was asked by one of the students whether a realised soul is beyond the laws of Karma. To this I replied ‘Yes, a realised soul is beyond Karma’, but this answer was deemed to be dualistic in nature, and I have been condemned to live twenty-four lifetimes as a fox. However I still do not fully understand my mistake. Is a realised soul beyond Karma or not?’

The master smiled and remained silent for a minute or two.

‘A realised soul is at one with the laws of Karma’, he answered finally.

The shadowy monk fell at his feet in gratitude. ‘Thank you, you have released me’, he said and left.

Next day the master gave instructions to search the caves and hollows of the surrounding area. The dead body of a fox was found which was buried with the full rites for a head of the monastery.



‘If you students of the Way wish to become Buddhas, you need study no doctrines whatever, but learn only how to avoid seeking for and attaching yourselves to anything.’
Huangbo (c.850 CE)

Huangbo understood that it could be scary to give up the mind and ego and jump into the boundless ocean of Pure Consciousness, and suggested that one must let go suddenly ‘like a knife-thrust’.

Further Reading

Tao Te Ching: (1) Gia-fu Feng and Jane English (1972) – the classic edition with some beautiful photographs. (2) Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo (1993) – shorter and more direct translations. (3) Derek Lin (1994) – clear with some useful commentary. There are many other English translations.

Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, by Paul Reys (1935) Penguin. A small collection of Zen and other eastern texts recommended by Shri Mataji. The last section is a Hindu treatise where Lord Śhiva explains to Śhrī Pārvatī twenty-four ways to remain thoughtless.

Chuang Tse: Huangbo (Huang Po): Other Zen Masters: Various English translations are available in print or on the internet.





孔子
CONFUCIUS

CONFUCIUS

‘By three ways we may learn wisdom:
By reflection, which is noblest;
By imitation, which is easiest;
By experience, which is the bitterest.’



Confucius* (551-479 BCE) has been a major philosophical influence in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam for more than two thousand years. This may account for the generally held view in those societies that the individual is subservient to the greater whole and that human beings will be happy fitting in to a balanced and harmonious society.

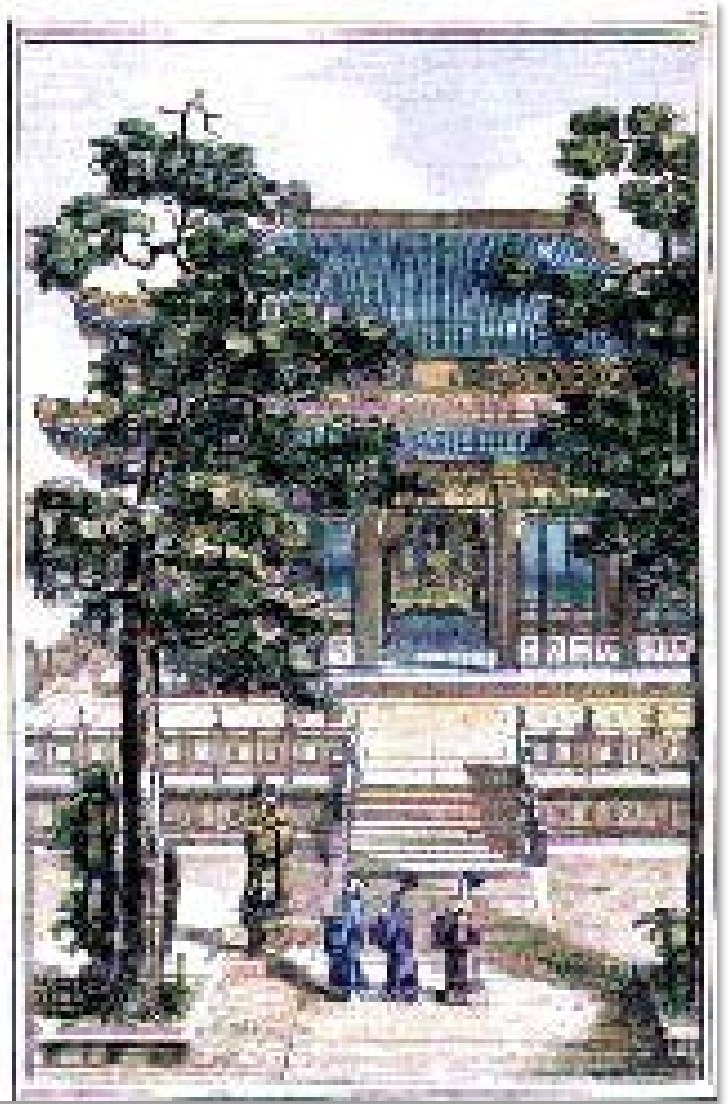
Confucius' main concern was always human society; He did not discuss God, liberation or life after death. His sayings treat of personal wisdom leading to peace and harmony in the lives of men. After studying His country's literature and history deeply He became convinced that only if the rulers are benevolent and righteous can the state prosper and the people be made virtuous.

However, after a successful career as a state minister, He spent many years wandering from state to state in search of an ideal ruler but was ultimately disappointed.

* 'Confucius' is a Latinisation of Kong-Fu-zi (Kong-fu-zi-us) given by Jesuit missionaries. Kong or Kung was His family name and Fu-zi means 'Master, Teacher, Respected One'. -us is the nominative ending in Latin.

Early Life

Confucius was born in 551 BCE* in the state of Lu in north-eastern China into the ancient royal family of Shang. His father took a young wife at an advanced age as He had only daughters, and Confucius was the result of this union. He lost His father at the age of three and grew up poor under His mother's care. As a boy He liked to set up sacrificial vessels and to imitate the gestures of ritual.



He grew to be a large man of great physical strength.

He was given the name Kong Chiu (*family name first*) and His students called Him Kong Fu-tse or Kong-tse –‘*Master Kong*’.

When Master Kong was born, we are told, mysterious music was heard with no apparent source and a voice from the sky announced the event. Two dragons patrolled the sky to ward off evil influences, while five old men, representing the spirits of the five planets, came down from Heaven.

* *His birthday is celebrated mainly in China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan on 28th September (or the 25th day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar).*

By the age of fifteen young Kong had dedicated himself to learning and becoming a 'Universal Man.' At nineteen He entered the service of the powerful Li family as superintendent of parks and herds.

He married soon after and had a son and two daughters. At thirty-two He was teaching the ancient ritual to a minister's sons. At thirty-three He went to Lo-yang, the imperial capital, to study the customs and traditions of the Zhou Empire, which had split into numerous warring states* and whose capital remained solely a religious centre. On this occasion He is said to have visited Lao-tse.

Later Life

By the age of fifty He had risen in the government to the post of minister of crime and justice in the state of Lu which was nominally ruled by the Duke of Lu.

However the three main families under the Duke of Lu - the Ming, Shi and Li families - were vying with each other for power and had fortified their cities. Confucius wished to restore the rule of the Duke and encouraged the three families to tear down their fortifications and live peacefully together. In spite of promises made, only the Ming family razed the walls of their city.

* *This was around the beginning of the 'Warring States' period of Chinese history (479–221 BCE) and the end of the 'Spring and Autumn' period (771–480 BCE) whose name comes from the 'Spring and Autumn Annals' – a history of the period compiled by Confucius Himself (551–479 BCE).*

After Mencius (c.300 BCE) Confucius' ideas became more widely accepted and from 220 BCE there followed two millennia of relatively peaceful and unified development of Chinese culture.

As a result of Confucius' efforts the Duke of Lu was becoming increasingly powerful; this worried the neighbouring states who sent a hundred fine horses and eighty dancing girls as a present to him. To His dismay the Duke became obsessed with riding and womanising and neglected his duties to the state, so Confucius decided to leave. He had also made powerful enemies especially Li Huan, head of the Li family.

Not wishing to embarrass the Duke by openly resigning He waited until a minor mistake was made – He was not allocated His share of ritual food – and then left the state.

He wandered for twelve years, from His fifty-sixth to His sixty-eighth year. He went from state to state in the hope of finding a noble ruler with whom He could put His political doctrine into practice, but found none who lived up to His ideal of a Superior Man. In all the years He never lost confidence in His calling as political mentor and orderer of the Empire, though occasionally He cried out: 'Let me go home, let me go home.'



When He finally returned to His native state, He lamented in a poem that after all His wanderings in nine provinces there was still no goal in sight: men are without insight, quickly the years pass.

He spent His last years as a teacher, instilling in His students the virtues required for being a good administrator and had seventy-seven main disciples and three thousand pupils altogether, many of whom got good posts in government as they were known to be honourable, benevolent and trustworthy.

A profound change is said to have taken place within Him at the end. A hermit had once said of him: 'Is that not the man who knows that striving is without hope and yet goes on?' All through the years this had been Confucius' greatness. But now He was old and strove no more.

'Old age, believe me, is a good and pleasant thing. It is true you are gently shouldered off the stage, but then you are given such a comfortable front stall as a spectator.'

One morning Confucius felt the approach of death. He walked about the courtyard, humming the words: 'The great mountain must collapse, the mighty beam must break and the wise man wither like a plant.'



Confucius the Traditionalist?

Confucius claimed that He had invented nothing new and was merely a transmitter of ancient wisdom. However His teaching was radical in many ways and harked back to an ideal that had probably never existed. The main reasons He is thought to be a traditionalist are:-

- He encouraged the learning of the great ancient classics of Chinese thought and wished to return to the old ways of rulership.
- He highly valued the performance of traditional rituals, believing that this inculcated self-mastery and reduced the power of self-interested emotions and desires. He also believed traditional music was very important but only if performed properly.
- He was a strong advocate of filial piety; of respect and service to one's parents and to one's rulers.

The Four Books and Five Classics

There are four major books which are considered the foundations of the Ru philosophy, as Confucius' teachings are known.

The Analects* (Lunyu – '*selected sayings*') – The most famous of His works, this is a collection of Confucius' sayings collected and codified by His followers after His death. Its twenty-two chapters may be roughly divided into social philosophy, political philosophy and views on education.

* *The dictionary defines Analect as 'a collection of short literary or philosophical extracts'. Literally it means 'gathered up' – **ana** – 'up', **lekta** – 'gathered, picked, chosen' (Greek) (as in 'collect, select, elect').*

Mencius (Meng-zi) – Meng-zi (c.300 BCE) was a fourth generation follower who expounded and developed Confucius' ideas. Known in China as the 'Second Sage' (*after Confucius*) his book is a record of conversations he had with and the counsel he gave to the rulers of many states which he visited.

The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean – these two books are chapters of the Li-jing – '*Classic of Rituals*' (see below) which were elaborated and expanded by Zhu Xi (c.1170 CE).

Confucius restored and edited the works of the Chinese ancients, particularly the Five Classics listed below. Some nineteen works in all are credited to Him as author or editor.

The **Five Classics** are:-

I Ching (Yi Jing) – '*Book of Changes*'. Also used as a manual of divination, this book of wisdom had existed for at least a thousand years before Confucius put it into its present form. Much of Confucius' teachings and concepts can be traced to this book, considered the greatest embodiment of ancient Chinese wisdom.

Shu-jing – '*Book of History, Classic of Documents*'. This contains accounts of four previous eras of China's past from shadowy mythology up to the Zhou dynasty (c.700 BCE).

Shi-jing – '*Book of Poetry*' (*Classic of Odes*)

Xiao-jing – '*Book of Filial Piety*'

Li-jing – '*Book of Rites*'

The main qualification for those seeking Chinese government posts for two thousand years, until the beginning of the twentieth century, was to be proficient in the Four Books and Five Classics.

Jun-zi – ‘The Superior Man’

The idea of the ‘Superior Man’, ‘Gentleman’ or ‘Noble Person’ (*the word Jun-zi has no gender*) is a common theme in Chinese philosophy and is used by Lao-zi, Chuang-zi, etc.. He is one who possesses the five main virtues but primarily Ren –‘humanity’ – that which separates man from the animals.

Confucius ‘had no opinions, no bias, no obstinacy; the superior man is not absolutely for or against anything in the world. He supports only what is right, he is not partisan but for all. He preserves his openness. When he does not understand something, he is reticent. He is firm in character, but not obstinate, congenial without stooping to vulgarity, self-confident but not self-righteous.’

‘To have the truth is the path of Heaven, to seek the truth is the path of men. He who has the truth finds the right action without pains, achieves success without reflection. But he who seeks the truth chooses the good and holds it fast.’

‘Perhaps others can do it the first time; I must do it ten times; perhaps others can do it the tenth time; I must do it a thousand times. But he who really has the perseverance to go this way - be he foolish, he will become clear headed; be he weak, he will become strong.’

‘The superior man's path is like a long journey; you must begin from right here. The superior man's path begins with the concerns of the common man and woman, but it reaches into the distance, penetrating Heaven and Earth.’

‘Wisdom, compassion and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men.’

‘No one can be regarded as a superior man who does not know the calling of Heaven; no one can be regarded as mature who does not know the laws of conduct, no one can know men who does not understand their words. Morality is the love of mankind; wisdom is the knowledge of men. But in all this we have lost sight of the One’.

‘The way to become a superior man is to set one’s affections on what is right, to love learning, which is the source of knowledge and virtue, with which nothing else can be compared. When righteousness is pursued with sincerity and a mind free from self-deception, the heart becomes rectified.’

The Five Virtues

The five virtues are what separates man from the animals. Confucius believed that they are inherent in man and merely need nurturing through education and the practice of rituals:-

Ren– ‘Humanity, benevolence (*caring for others*), reciprocity (*consideration for others*)’

Yi – ‘Righteousness, morality (*resistance to corruption or to acting badly for personal gain or pleasure*)’

Li – ‘Ritual propriety, proper performance of rituals and music’

Zhi – ‘Wisdom, discrimination (*assessing others wisely, knowing one’s own faults*)’

Xin – ‘Trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty, integrity’

Ren – ‘Humanity, Benevolence’

‘A man must become a man. For man is not like the animals which are as they are, whose instincts govern their existence without conscious thought; he is a task to himself. Men actively shape their life together and, transcending all instinct, build it on their human obligation’.

‘Humanity underlies every particular good. Only he who is in Ren can truly love and hate. Ren is all embracing, not a virtue among others, but the soul of all virtues. It is described through its particular manifestations: piety, wisdom and learning, righteousness. The ethical man puts the difficulty first and the reward last.’

‘Without feelings of respect, what is there to distinguish men from beasts?’

When asked for a definition of Ren, Confucius was evasive and gave different examples at different times; saying a person with good Ren would speak carefully and modestly (12.3); be resolute and firm (12.20), courageous (14.4), free from worry, unhappiness, and insecurity (9.28; 6.21); moderate their desires and return to propriety (12.1); be respectful, tolerant, diligent, trustworthy and kind (17.6); and love others (12.22).

He believed that devotion to one’s parents and older siblings was the basis of developing Ren.

Yi – ‘Righteousness, Morality’

Confucius laments: ‘That good predispositions are not cultivated, that what men have learned is not effectual, that men know their duty and are not drawn to it, that men have faults and are unable to correct them: these are things that grieve me.’

‘I have seen none who loved moral worth as he loves women's beauty.’

Yet Confucius is far from regarding the world as evil; only the times have degenerated, as had often happened before.

‘He knows that the truth will not shine throughout the day.’

Li – ‘Ritual Propriety’

‘A man is awakened by the Book of Odes, strengthened and perfected by music. Mere form, like mere knowledge, has no value without the originality that fulfils it, without the humanity that is enacted in it. A man who does not love his fellow man - what will avail him?’

‘He who overcomes his self and takes upon himself the restrictions of the Li - the laws of custom - he becomes a man. Although righteousness is essential, in practicing it the superior man is guided by the Li. There must be a balance between the Li and the content of a man's original nature. He in whom the content predominates is uncouth; he in whom the form predominates is a scribe. In the practice of the forms, the essential is freedom and lightness, but the freedom must be regulated by the rhythm of set rules.’

'A nation can be guided only by custom, not by knowledge.'

Confucius believed that strict adherence to Li helped to develop the self-discipline necessary for Ren.

Zhi – 'Wisdom, Discrimination'

'A common man marvels at uncommon things. A wise man marvels at the commonplace.'

'Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.'

'They must often change who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.' (*Similar to Einstein's saying: 'Life is like riding a bicycle; to stay in balance you must keep moving'*).

'What the superior man seeks is in himself; what the small man seeks is in others.'

'To be able under all circumstances to practice five things constitutes



A French painting (1827) depicting Mohammad, Moses and Confucius as the great legislators and formers of society.

perfect virtue; these five things are gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.'

‘The perfecting of one’s self is the fundamental base of all progress and all moral development.’

‘To see what is right, and not to do it, is want of courage or of principle.’

‘If I am walking with two other men, each of them will serve as my teacher. I will pick out the good points of the one and imitate them, and the bad points of the other and correct them in myself.’

‘Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue.’

‘Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.’

‘Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.’

Xin – ‘Trustworthiness, Sincerity’

‘The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence.’

‘Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart.’

‘It is easy to hate and it is difficult to love. This is how the whole scheme of things works. All good things are difficult to achieve, and bad things are very easy to get.’

‘Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.’

‘Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles.’

The Middle Path

‘Because the innermost is revealed and everything is decided here at the source, the greatest attention must be devoted to measure and mean.’

‘Nothing is more obvious than what is secret, nothing more evident than what is most hidden; therefore the superior man is attentive to what he is for himself alone.’

‘To be magnanimous and mild in teaching and not to punish those who behave badly: that is the strength of the south. To sleep and die in the stable without having to: that is the strength of the north. But the superior man stands in the middle and bends to neither side.’



Human salvation lies in: ‘The knowledge that influences reality; that is, in the truth of ideas that are translated into an inner transforming action. What is true within takes form without.’

‘Things have roots and ramifications. If the root is good, if it is knowledge, reality, then the ideas become true, consciousness becomes right, the man is cultivated and further, the house will be well regulated, the state in order, the world at peace. From the Son of Heaven to the common man, education is the root. He who cannot teach the members of the household cannot teach others.’

The Golden Rule

‘Do to no one what you would not wish others to do to you. In acting on this rule be bound by a sense of equality. Do not display to your inferiors what you hate in your superiors. Do not offer your neighbours on the left what you hate in your neighbours on the right. The lover of mankind strengthens men, for he himself wishes to be strengthened; he helps men toward success, for he himself wishes to achieve success.’

But when Lao Tse taught that one should repay hostility with good deeds, Confucius answered:

‘With what then shall we reward good deeds? No, reward hostility with justice and good deeds with good deeds.’

The Ideal Ruler

‘Good government requires a good prince. He taps the natural sources of wealth. He chooses carefully what work the people should undertake; then they do not grumble.

He is superior without being haughty; whether dealing with many or few, with great or small, he is not disdainful. He commands respect without a show of force. Like the polestar, he stands fast and lets everything move around him in its order. Because he desires the good, the people become good. If the authorities love good conduct, the people will be easy to handle. If a ruler is right in his own person, he has no need to command, things are done without commanding.’

‘Do nothing over-hastily; that will not succeed. Do not consider the small advantage, for no great work can prosper in this way, a statesman must govern with the consent and understanding of the people.’

‘If a man possesses the throne but lacks the necessary strength of mind, he should not venture to make changes. Similarly, if he has strength of mind but not the highest authority, he should not venture to make changes. The political conditions must be such as to make effective action, the true statesman remains in hiding. He waits. He refuses to compound with evil, to enter into relations with base people.’

He must ‘march in advance of the people and encourage them. He must not be weary.’

Those who are capable of self-mastery, who have learned to do what is good and to know what they are doing, will always be few. The people, on the other hand, ‘can be led to follow something; they may not be led to understand it.’

‘The essence of the prince is the wind, the essence of the crowd is the grass. If the wind blows over it, the grass must incline.’ Order is possible only through authority. Thus the man capable of governing is independent of public opinion. ‘Where all hate, he must examine; where all love, he must examine.’

‘Words must be set aright. What inheres in words should be brought out. The prince should be a prince, the father a father, the man a man.’

‘He who has the inner being also has the words; he who has words does not always have the inner being.’ ‘If words are not

right, judgments are not clear; works do not prosper; punishments do not strike the right man and the people do not know where to set hand and foot.

Therefore the superior man chooses words that can be employed without doubt and forms judgments that can be converted into actions without fear of doubt. The superior man tolerates no imprecision in his speech.'

The Great Mystery

Confucius refrains from all direct statement on metaphysical questions. Though such an attitude may be attributed to agnosticism, it does not signify indifference to the Unknowable, but rather a reverence and unwillingness to translate such mystery into rationality.



Confucius shared the traditional religious conceptions; He did not doubt the existence of spirits and omens. But in all these matters He remained aloof and free from superstition. 'The master never spoke of magic powers and unnatural demons.'

'To serve spirits other than one's own ancestors is adulation.'

'If you cannot serve men, how shall you serve spirits?'

Heaven

'Only Heaven is great, the seasons go their course and all things come into being. But does Heaven speak?'

For Confucius, His whole life is prayer:

'If only the heart follows the path of truth, you need not pray, the gods will protect you.'

'Death and life are the will of Heaven; from the beginning all men have had to die. That some things germinate but do not flower; that some things flower that do not mature - alas, that happens.'

'If you do not know life, how should you know death?'

Traditions

Unlike other Prophets who proclaimed God's revelation, Confucius claimed to be merely the voice of antiquity. However His way of formalising tradition into conscious principles gave rise to a philosophy which was new although identified with the old. He who surrenders to tradition is saved from the presumption of having his own ideas. Confucius considered independent thought, springing from mere reason, to be futile: 'I have gone without food and sleep in order to think; to no avail: it is better to learn.'

Eternal Values

Confucius selects facts that are worth remembering either as models to be emulated or examples to be avoided.

He knows that in restoring what was good in the past one should not try to make something identical. 'A man born in our days who returns to the ways of antiquity is a fool and brings misfortune upon himself.' What He advocates is not an imitation of the past, but a restoration of the eternally true. He laid the groundwork of

school education, primarily with His own school in which He strove to shape young men into future statesmen.

'If a man can recite all three hundred pieces in the Book of Odes by heart and, entrusted with the government, is unable to perform his duties or if, sent abroad as an ambassador, he is incapable of replying on his own, where is the good of all his learning?' Manners and music shape men's nature, not subdue it.

The good man can love and hate in the right way. 'He hates those who themselves are base and slander those who are above them; he hates the bold who know no morality; he hates the reckless, bigoted fanatics.'



Social Life

'The superior man does not neglect his neighbours. But in our association with men, we encounter both good and bad.'

‘Have no friend who is not your equal,’

‘The superior man honours the worthy and tolerates all men.’

But the superior man keeps his wits about him: ‘He may let others lie to him but not make a fool of him. The superior man encourages what is beautiful in men; what makes a place beautiful is the humanity that dwells there. He who is able to choose and does not settle among humane people is not wise.’

‘Let me respect the tranquillity of the aged; let me be loyal to my friends; let me love children tenderly.’

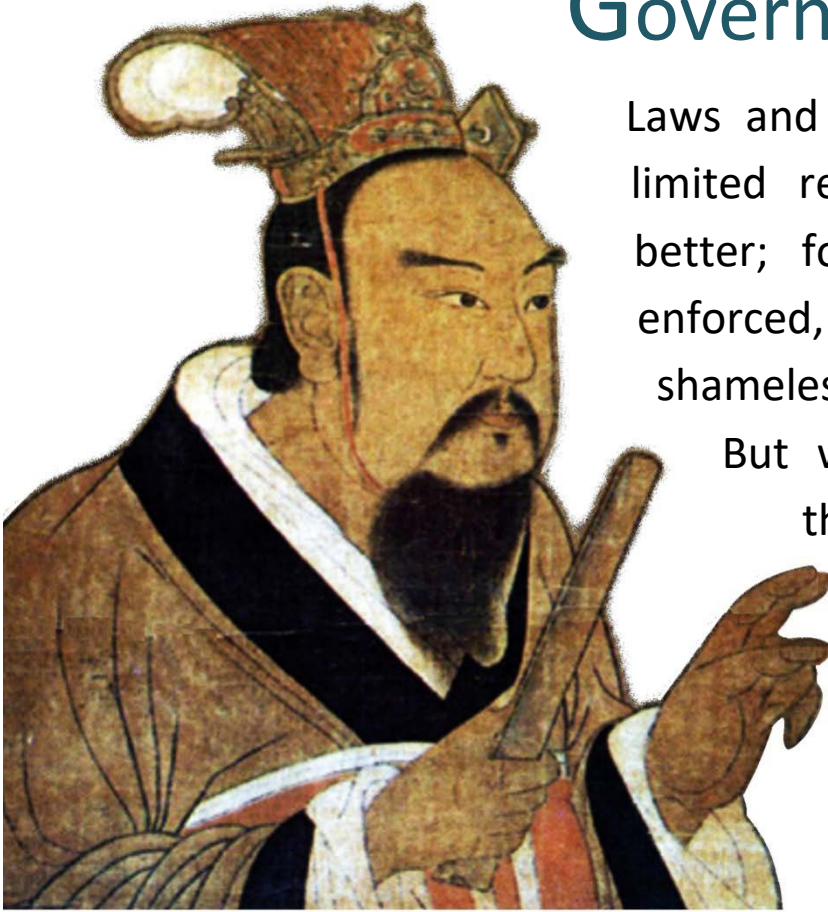
Toward parents: ‘if respect is absent, wherein should we differ from the beasts?’ A son must cover up His father's mistakes.

Toward friends, ‘Take no friends that are not at least as good as yourself, loyally admonish one another and tactfully set one another right.’ Friends can be relied on: ‘Even if the season be cold, we know that pines and cypress are evergreen.’

Toward the authorities: ‘A good official serves his prince in the right way; if that is impossible, he withdraws. He will not circumvent the prince but oppose him openly’; ‘he will speak cautiously.’

Towards subordinates ‘The superior man gives his servants no ground for complaint that he makes insufficient use of them, but he does not expect perfection; he takes men's abilities into account and does not dismiss old and trusted servants without grave cause’.

Government



Laws and punishments bring only limited results, good example is better; for where the laws are enforced, the people are shameless in evading punishment.

But where example governs, the people have a sense of shame and improve. When an appeal is made to the laws, it means that something is not in order.

'When it comes to hearing complaints, I am no better than anyone else. What interests me is to see that no complaint arises.'

A good government must be concerned with three things: sufficient food, a sufficient army and the confidence of the people. 'If the people have no confidence, all government is impossible.' 'Make the people prosperous. The next most important thing is to educate them.'

Doctrine

'Up to this stage the individual has been busy only with his own improvement; but the cultivation of the person influences primarily those around him and ultimately the whole empire. Everyone, therefore, should carefully cultivate his person, having a due regard for others besides himself.'

Each man must guard his words and watch his conduct. He must fly all that is base and disquieting and must take benevolence as his dwelling-place, righteousness as his road, propriety as his garment, wisdom as his lamp and faithfulness as his charm.

Dignity, reverence, loyalty and faithfulness make up the qualities of a cultivated man. His dignity separates him from the crowd, being reverent, he is beloved; being loyal, he is submitted to; and, being faithful, he is trusted.'

'The ancients when they wished to exemplify illustrious virtue throughout the empire, first ordered well their states.

Desiring to maintain well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families they first rectified their purposes.

Wishing to rectify their purposes they first sought to think sincerely. Wishing to think sincerely, they first extended their knowledge as widely as possible. This they did by investigation of things.

By investigation of things, their knowledge became extensive; their knowledge being extensive, their thoughts became sincere; their thoughts being sincere, their purposes were rectified; their purposes being rectified, they cultivated themselves; they being cultivated, their families were regulated; their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed; their states being rightly governed, the empire was thereby tranquil and prosperous'.

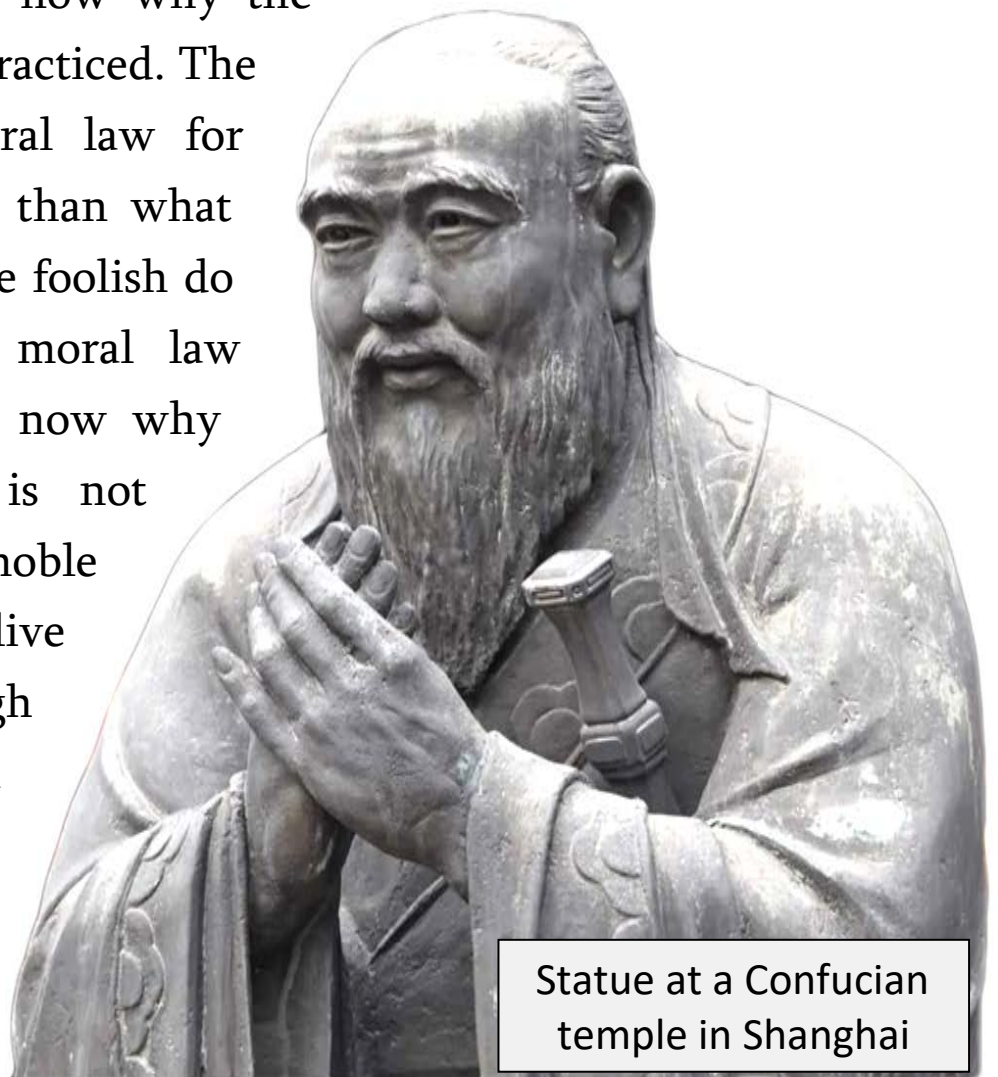
How abundantly do spiritual beings display the powers that belong to them! We look for them, but do not see them; we listen

to, but do not hear them; yet they enter into all things and there is nothing without them'

To restore China to its Golden Age, Confucius gave the formula for restoring harmony to the family of man. 'My doctrine is that of an all-pervading Unity.' As a Teacher He tried to illustrate virtue, to renovate the people and to remain in the highest excellence.

'Things have their roots and their completion. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the Great Learning. From the Emperor down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.'

Confucius observes that men commonly miss the mark in their strivings: 'I know now why the moral law is not practiced. The wise mistake moral law for something higher than what it really is; and the foolish do not know what moral law really is. I know now why the moral law is not understood; the noble natures want to live too high, high above their moral ordinary self; and ignoble natures do not live high enough.'



Statue at a Confucian temple in Shanghai

Learning

‘A virtuous man has three awes:—(1) Awe for Heaven’s decree, (2) Awe for great men and (3) Awe for saints’ words. When worshipping God, one must feel as if He were visibly present.’

‘There was Tao, a way or road of righteousness, only when fathers were fathers, when sons were sons, when rulers were rulers and when ministers were ministers.’

‘The princely man sticks to virtue and the inferior man clings to material comfort. The princely man is just, while the inferior man expects rewards and favours. The princely man is dignified, noble, magnanimous and humble while the inferior man is mean, proud, crooked and arrogant.

The Master said, ‘My children, why do you not study the Book of Poetry? The Odes serve to stimulate the mind. They may be used for purposes of self-contemplation. They teach the art of sociability. They show how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn the more immediate duty of serving one’s father, and the remoter one of serving one’s prince.’

The Path

Confucius was conscious of the spiritual dilemma: to retire into solitude or to live in the world and try to shape it. His decision was unequivocal: ‘A man cannot live with the birds and beasts. If I do not live with men, with whom shall I live?; ‘He who is concerned only with the purity of his own life ruins the great human relations. In evil times it may seem as though nothing else

remains but to go into seclusion and attend to one's own personal salvation’.

Of two hermits Confucius says: ‘In their private lives they found purity; in their retirement they found what the circumstances demanded. I am different. For me there is nothing that is possible or impossible under all circumstances. If the world were in order, there would be no need of me to change it.’

Confucianism

Confucius, Lao-tze and Buddha, the founders of the three religions of China, were roughly contemporaries (c.550 BCE). While they are all in a sense atheistic in that they did not talk about God, their approaches to the purpose of life differ widely but blend together to create the subtlety of the Chinese character. Lao-tse and Confucius never claimed originality, seeking only to restore to man the ancient wisdom and knowledge of His immortal soul.



Meng-zi
(Mencius)
c.300 BCE

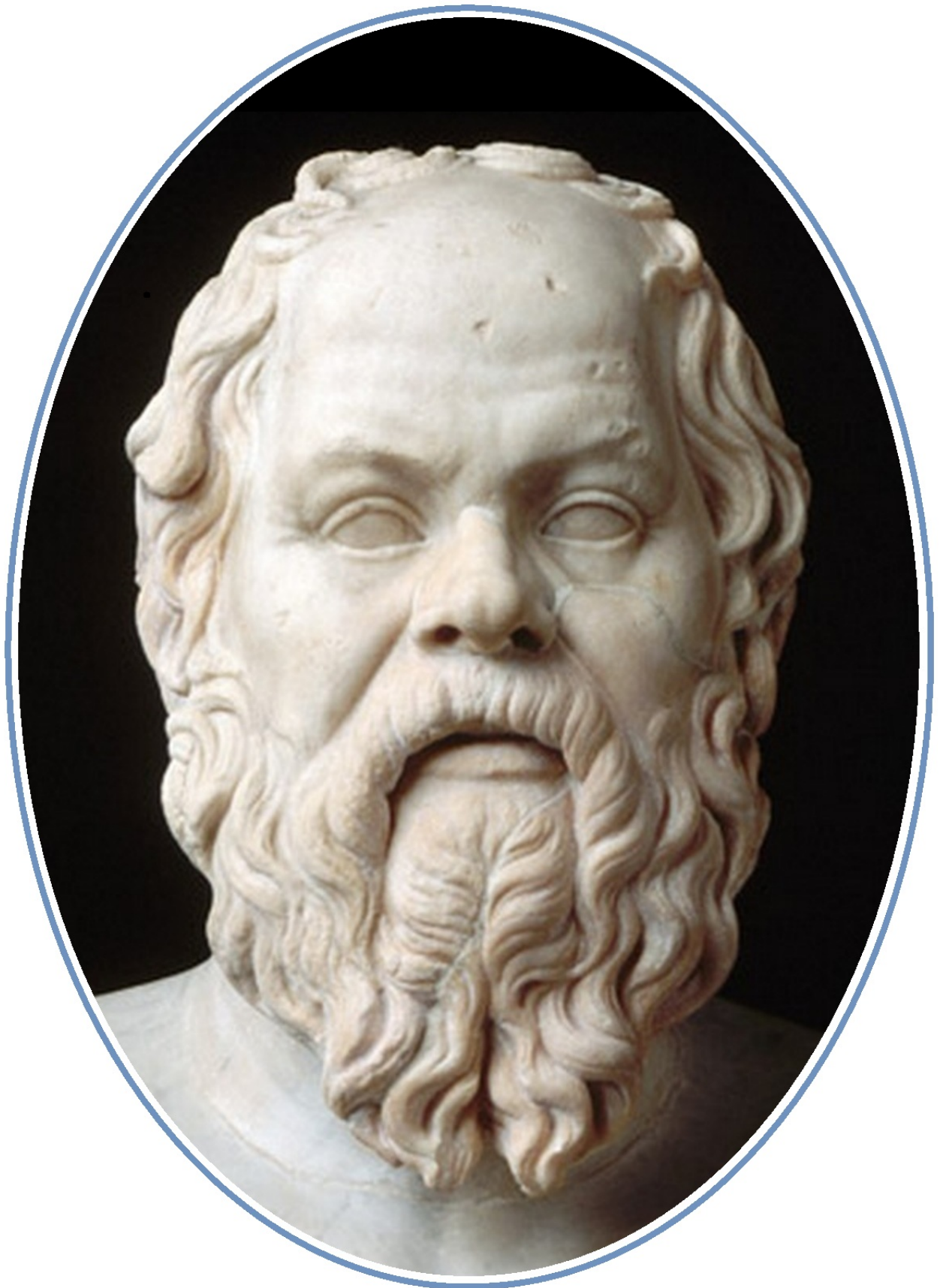
On his death at the age of seventy-two Confucius was a well-known and well-respected teacher but it was not until two hundred years later that His followers, particularly Meng-zi (*Mencius*) made His ideas widely accepted. His sayings and teachings were codified into the *Analects* and Meng-zi, who is known as the ‘Second Sage’ (*after Confucius*) further elaborated His teachings through his discourses.

After some periods of greater and lesser acceptance, Confucius became established as the wisest of teachers and China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam remained the most stable, cultured and prosperous societies that the world has known so far; until the arrival of the Western barbarians (*English, French, etc.*) with their materialistic and ego-oriented culture.

Confucianism developed in many stages but particularly during 8th – 12th c. (*Tang, Song and Ming dynasties*) into Neo-Confucianism, which aimed to become more rational and ethical to get away from the superstitions associated with Buddhism.

Many philosophers and sociologists believe that if we could implant Confucius' wisdom into our modern societies a more balanced, humane and benevolent life would be possible for the whole world. However capitalism rules and those with wealth and power are still not seeking to become Superior Men.





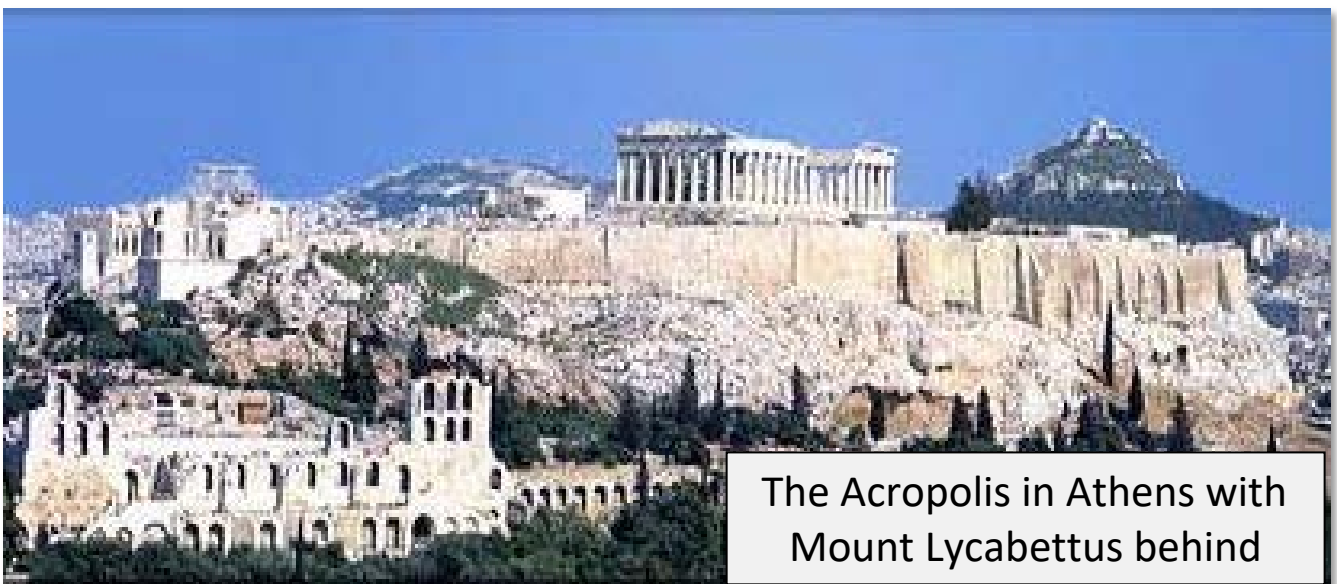
SOCRATES

SOCRATES

As the heir to a wealthy sculptor, Socrates (469-399 *BCE*) used His financial independence to engage His fellow Athenians in philosophical discussion. In a society devoted to beauty, wealth and pleasure, Socrates stressed the importance of seeking the welfare of the soul. It is said He was a short ugly man – a fact He refers to Himself – but He must have had a great charm about Him.

After distinguished service as a soldier in the Peloponnesian War (431-421 *BCE*), He spent the rest of His life in Athens devoting much of His time to discussion in the market-place, mainly with the aristocratic youth, insistently questioning their confidence in the truth of popular opinions and encouraging them to do the same. Ultimately this led to His trial and death.

Socrates accepted no payment from His students, many of whom were fanatically loyal to Him. Their parents, however, were often displeased with His influence and His association with opponents of the democratic regime made Him a controversial political figure.



The Acropolis in Athens with
Mount Lycabettus behind

“Abraham had problems of people who were very ignorant and Moses had problem with very indulgent people. Gradually, at the time of Socrates people had evolved so He could talk to them about something of wisdom, of honesty, of righteousness, of peace. Socrates talked in a very open way, in an open discussion; that shows that the people could understand what He was saying. But still He was given poison and He was killed.”

24-05-89, Greece

Despite His fundamental place in the history of ideas, Socrates Himself wrote nothing. Our only sources of information about His philosophical views and methods are the books of His student Plato (427-347 BCE). The *Apologhma* – ‘*Apology*’, an account of Socrates’ (*unsuccessful*) defence speech at His trial, details the motives and goals of philosophical enquiry as He practiced it. Other conversations of Socrates such as ‘*The Republic*’ aim at understanding, and therefore achieving, virtue through the application of a dialectical¹ method that questions commonly-held beliefs. For example the superficial notion of Moral Rectitude defended by a confident youth is shown by Socrates to be full of self-contradictions.

During Socrates’ imprisonment He responded to friendly efforts to help Him escape by seriously debating whether or not a citizen can ever be justified in refusing to obey the laws of the state.

Socrates defended the doctrine of recollection² as an explanation of our most significant knowledge and maintained that knowledge and

¹ *Dialectics is a method of finding the truth by dialogue using reasoned arguments between two or more people holding opposing views.*

² ‘*Recollection*’ is the notion that we already know everything of moral value and just have to remember it.

virtue are so closely related that no-one ever knowingly chooses evil. Improper conduct is a product of ignorance rather than of weakness of the will.

The little other information we have about His life comes from His disciple Xenophon (430-354 BCE) who describes Socrates' trial and Apology in 'Memorabilia'. In Aristophanes' play 'The Clouds' (424 BCE) Socrates is caricatured as an atheistic sophist.

Why was Socrates Revolutionary?

Athenian law was based largely on retribution and revenge; so if someone stole from you it was right to steal back from them. Socrates proposed a moral absolutism so that, no matter what the provocation, it was never right to do something morally wrong. He contended that what mattered in life was the good of one's soul and that material concerns did not assist in this. He was among the first western philosophers therefore to discuss morals and ethics rather than the nature of reality.

Athenian democracy was strange in that it elected citizens randomly to office who may have had no experience of government. Socrates often proposed that the state should be governed by people capable of governing*, arguing that if one wanted furniture built, one would employ a skilled carpenter.

* *Of our present democracies it is similarly said that the gulf between those capable of winning an election and those capable of running a country is ever widening.*



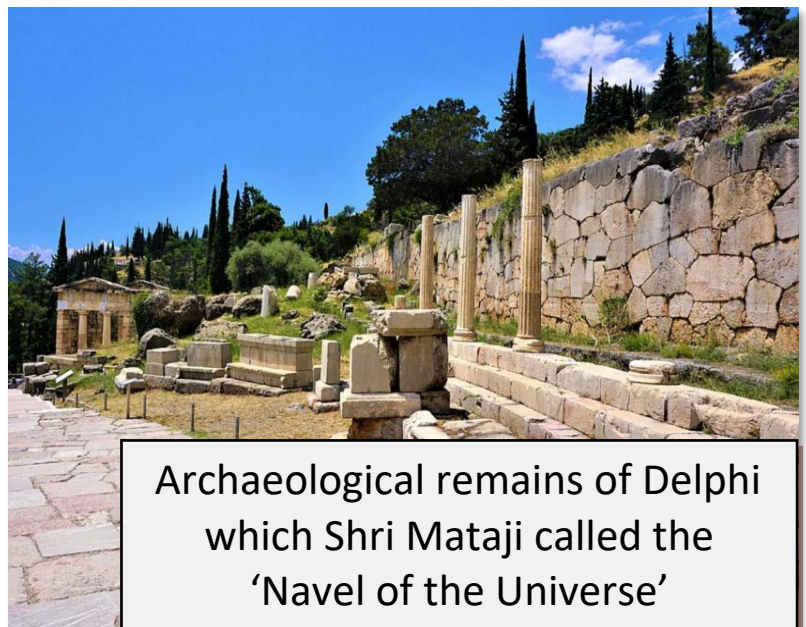
Attitude to Women

In the Greece of His time women were not expected to take part in public life but were relegated to the kitchen and the bedroom. Socrates however admired the intelligence and ability of women and proposed that His students could learn much from some with whom He Himself had studied. He felt that women had a place in politics and public life, but could remain wholly domestic if they so chose.

The Oracle

A friend went to the oracle at Delphi and asked if there was any man wiser than Socrates. 'No', came back the answer, which threw Socrates into confusion - or so He says. For He always held that He was not wise at all. 'After puzzling about it for some time, I set myself at last with considerable reluctance to check the truth of it.'

He did so by interviewing people who had a reputation for wisdom or specialised knowledge. But He was always disappointed, because there was nobody whose wisdom could withstand His questioning. He was always able to baffle their



Archaeological remains of Delphi
which Shri Mataji called the
'Navel of the Universe'

efforts to establish a thesis by exposing some unwelcome and unexpected consequence of their views. He also questioned poets, but they could not even elucidate their poems to His satisfaction.

After one such encounter: 'I reflected as I walked away, Well, I am certainly wiser than this man. It is only too likely that neither of us has any knowledge to boast of, but he thinks that he knows something which he does not know, whereas I am quite conscious of my ignorance. It seems that I am wiser than he is to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know.'

Then it dawned on Him what the Oracle may have meant: 'Whenever I succeed in disproving another person's claim to wisdom in a given subject, the bystanders assume that I know everything about that subject myself. But the truth of the matter, gentlemen, is pretty certainly this, that real wisdom is the property of God and this Oracle is His way of telling us that human wisdom has little or no value.'

Wisdom

Socrates describes himself as an intellectual midwife, whose questioning delivers the thoughts of others into the light of day. But He does not consider this skill in elucidation and debate a form of real wisdom. Real wisdom is perfect knowledge about ethical subjects, about the difference between right and wrong.

The ignorance that Socrates claims is about the foundations of morality; not about everyday matters of fact. He cannot with a clear conscience abandon His mission to encourage ethical reflection in others: 'If I say that this would be disobedience to God and that is why I cannot 'mind my own business,' you will not believe that I am serious. If on the other hand I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about

which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living, you will be even less inclined to believe me.'

"Socrates had said that there are Deities within us and we have to look after those Deities. We have to keep them pleased."

13-06-80, London

His references to the wisdom of God disguise His unconventional attitude to divinity. He says that only God has wisdom. The Delphic oracle was as authentic a voice of God as any available: yet Socrates did not accept its sayings but set out 'to check the truth of it'.

'It has always been my nature never to accept any advice from my friends unless reflection shows that it is the best course that reason offers'; the same approach He adopted to the advice of God.

He says that His mission to argue and question was undertaken 'in obedience to God's commands given in oracles and dreams and in every other way that any divine dispensation has ever impressed a duty upon man.'

'I want you to think of my adventures as a sort of pilgrimage undertaken to establish the truth of the oracle once for all.'

He could claim that questioning others 'helps the cause of God' because it confirms the Delphic pronouncement that nobody is wiser than Socrates. This talk of God may gain the approbation of His hearers but His motive for philosophising was simply that it was the right thing to do.



Guardian Angel

Socrates says He is influenced in His actions by His Daimonion, a guardian spirit or voice which has been with Him since childhood. This is likely the unorthodox divinity or 'new gods' referred to in the charges against Him. Again the advice of the Daimonion is to be reasoned with before it is endorsed. He says that 'when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do and never urges me on'.

His Daimonion warned Him off any involvement in politics, He says, because, had He made a public figure of Himself, He would have been put to death long before He could have done any good. So He chose to work with the people privately.

'I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls, proclaiming as I go; 'Wealth does not bring goodness, but goodness brings wealth and every other blessing, both to the individual and to the state.'

Socrates was nicknamed 'the Gadfly' – an annoyingly persistent pest!

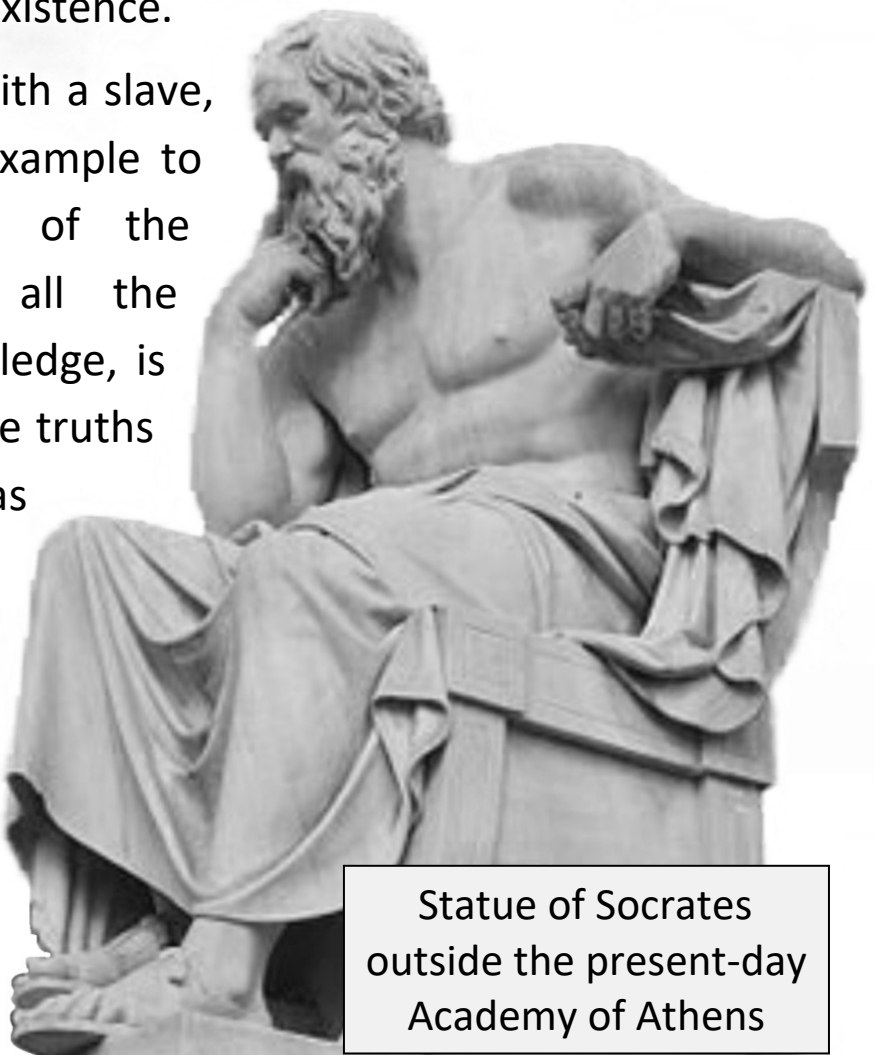
He tells the Athenians that they should be 'ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible and similarly with reputation and honour and give no attention or

thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul'. He must have particularly goaded them when, during His trial, He said He was doing the Athenians 'the greatest possible service' in showing them the errors of their ways.

Socrates believed that an understanding of the virtues was a necessary precondition for possessing them. A man could not be truly virtuous without knowing what virtue is and the way to this knowledge was by examining accounts of the particular virtues. The search for definition was a means to gain virtue.

Socrates' egalitarian approach meant He would happily question and argue with anybody, cobbler or king. His most famous quote 'The unexamined life is not worth living' is not a lifestyle for just a chosen few: every soul should examine His own life and ideas to lead a more worthwhile existence.

In one of His dialogues with a slave, He uses a geometrical example to argue that knowledge of the Forms, which meant all the important kinds of knowledge, is acquired before birth. The truths of pure reason, such as those of mathematics, are not discovered afresh but are painstakingly recollected from a previous existence in which the disembodied soul encountered the



Statue of Socrates
outside the present-day
Academy of Athens

Forms directly. The word 'education' means not to put something into someone but to 'draw out'.

When born into a body, the knowledge a soul previously enjoyed slips from memory: as in Wordsworth's 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting' (*Intimations of Immortality*). Socrates' questions to the slave are indeed leading (*and the diagrams help, too*), yet the slave arrives at the answer by himself. He has not simply been informed as one might be told the number of feet in a yard or the capital of Greece. He has come to appreciate something through His own intellectual faculties.

So Socrates can make His usual claim that He has not handed over any knowledge but has acted as a midwife to bring it out in another person. He adds that, for the slave to know this piece of mathematics properly, he must work through the example many times. At present the slave's knowledge has a dream-like quality, but eventually his knowledge will become firm.

As He says in the Apology, if anyone claims to know about goodness 'I shall question him and examine him and test him'.

Socratic Way of Life

Strength of mind is needed for the pursuit of happiness which, Socrates held, is to be found not in satisfying desires, but in losing them. He epitomised indifference to wealth and comfort but never argued that they were obstacles to happiness.

Socrates said only that so long as one was good, nothing else in life mattered. He never denied that wealth or possessions were, in moderation, better to have than to lack. His lack of attachment to them was a by-product of the search for virtue and a healthy soul.

Socrates might eschew commonly accepted values when His principles demanded it, but if something was neither virtuous nor wicked, then it did not matter whether one did it or not.

This was a powerful recipe for freedom; to be detached from the desire for possessions and liberated from conventional behaviour; the wise man could wander at will declaiming against society's materialistic ways.

The Trial

Socrates' trial took place in 399 *BCE* when He was nearly seventy. The charges were that He refused to recognise the official gods of the state, that He introduced new gods and that He corrupted the youth.

The turbulent political background to the trial does not mean that the charges were baseless and the trial purely political. Politics, religion and education were all intertwined and Socrates was stirring up trouble at the wrong time.

Athens had enjoyed great prosperity under the thirty year rule of Pericles (461 - 429 *BCE*) but five years before the trial, a 27-year war with Sparta ended with the overthrow of the Athenian democracy. The Thirty Tyrants, installed by Sparta, put so many people to death that they lasted only a year, though it was not until 401 *BCE* that democracy was fully restored. Understandably, the democrats were still insecure in 399 and there were reasons to be uneasy about Socrates' influence in the city.

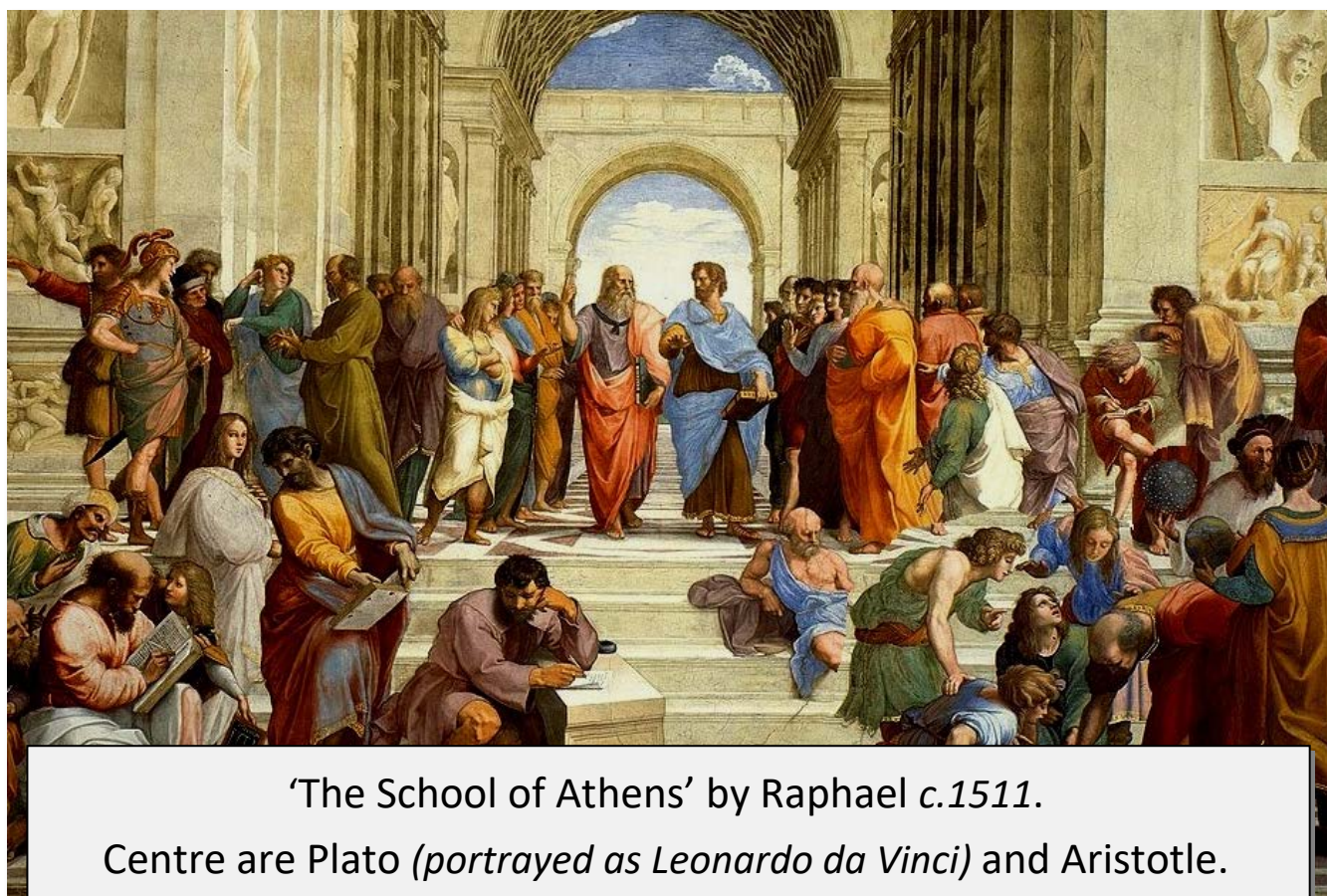
Athenian society felt threatened by intellectuals and Sophists under-mining traditional values. Well might a man who captivated idle youths with His questioning about justice have aroused suspicion. And whatever truth there was to the rumour that

Socrates disbelieved in the traditional gods - He seemed to deny the charge, though not convincingly - there was no doubt that He had an unorthodox approach to Divinity.

His talk of His 'guardian spirit' or 'divine sign', gave reasonable cause that He did indeed 'introduce new gods'. That would have been a grievous sin against the shaky democracy who alone dictated what was a suitable object for religious veneration; anyone ignoring them was challenging the legitimacy of the state.

All this was against Socrates as He faced the five hundred Athenian citizens who were to judge Him. His disciples Plato and Xenophon were there and both wrote an account of the trial and the Apology.

Socrates knew that His judges were already prejudiced against Him and set out to correct their false impressions. He is not, He says, a



'The School of Athens' by Raphael c.1511.

Centre are Plato (*portrayed as Leonardo da Vinci*) and Aristotle.

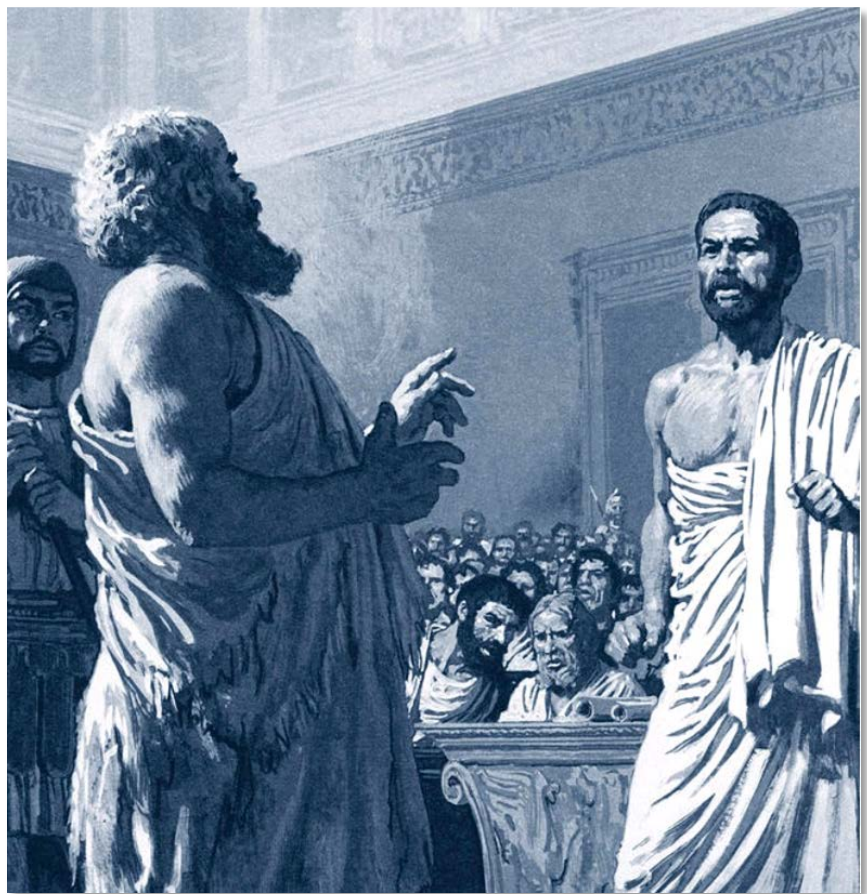
Five figures to the left of Plato is Socrates in a green robe.

Lower right in a cap holding a blue globe is Zarathustra.

man who teaches for money, like the professional Sophists. He also dismissed the slander that He taught people how to win arguments by trickery when they were in the wrong; far from it.

The Apology is more a defence of His way of life than a rebuttal of the official charges. Socrates claims that He has positively benefited the Athenians by subjecting them to His philosophical cross-examinations; but they have failed to appreciate this and merely been angered by it; hence He has ended up on trial for His life. He is fulfilling the wishes of the gods when arguing with people.

However Socrates was found guilty by a majority vote and was awarded the courtesy of choosing a suitable penalty, to counter the prosecution's proposal that He be put to death. Typically, He treats this responsibility with irony. What He actually deserves for doing the Athenians

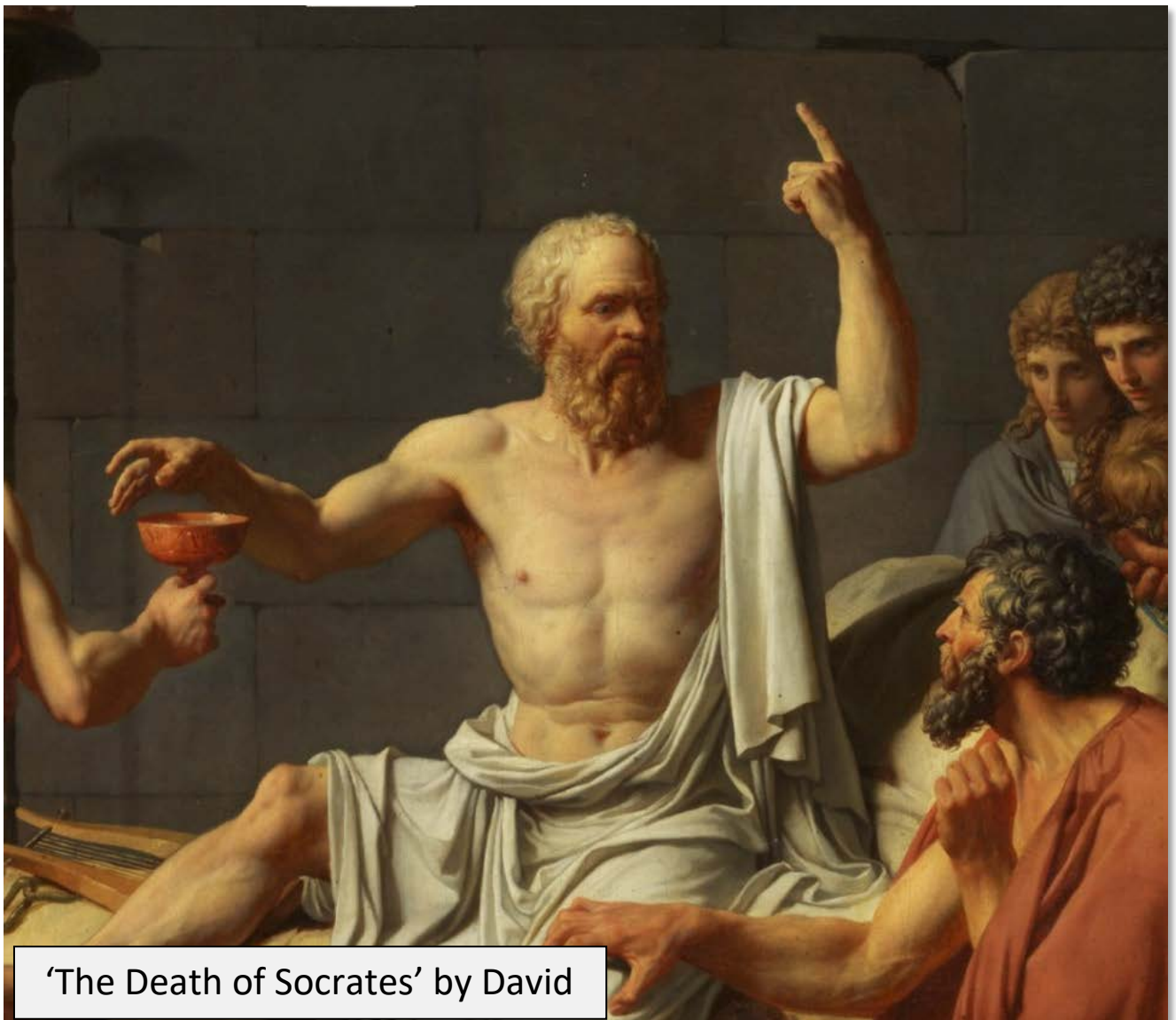


such a service, He says, is not a punishment but a reward. He suggests free meals for life at the expense of the state. Such an honour was usually reserved for victors at the Olympic games and great heroes; He has earned it even more than they have, He says, because 'these people give you the semblance of success, but I give you the reality.'

He ends by suggesting, at the instigation of Plato and other friends, a fine instead, which they offer to pay for Him.

But the Athenians had lost their patience. They voted for the death penalty by a larger majority than that by which they had found Him guilty! His punishment was to die by drinking hemlock, a plant extract that causes first paralysis and then death.

As Socrates was leaving the court, a devoted but dim admirer called Apollodorus moaned that the hardest thing for Him to bear was that Socrates was being put to death unjustly. 'What?' said Socrates 'Would you rather I was put to death justly?'



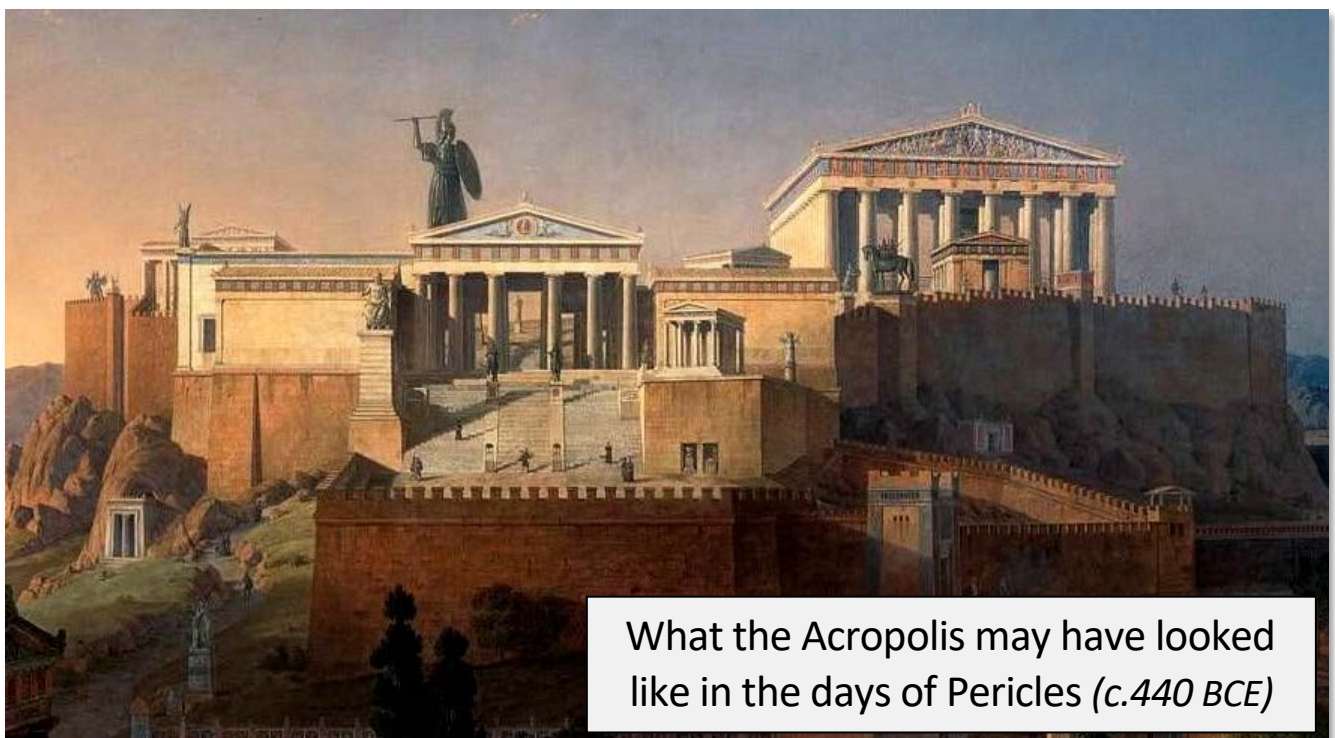
'The Death of Socrates' by David

Socrates' Philosophy in the 'Apology'

Philosophy –‘Love of Wisdom’ [*philos* –‘love, liking’, *sophia* –‘wisdom, knowledge’] is a Greek word probably coined by Pythagoras (570 BCE). Originally philosophy covered all aspects of learning but later came to denote metaphysical or spiritual knowledge or speculation.

Of Plato's writings about Socrates' philosophy, the *Apology* is probably the most accurate. ‘Apology’ is the Greek for a ‘defence-speech’ and Socrates was certainly not saying ‘sorry’! He justifies His life and actions, outlining His main philosophical ideas: the necessity of doing what one thinks is right even in the face of universal opposition and the need to pursue knowledge even when opposed.

Socrates' method is to question people and lead them into a contradiction, which proves that their ideas are unsound. He Himself never takes a firm position; in fact He claims to know nothing except that He knows nothing.



He refers to this method of questioning as 'Elenchus', meaning something like 'cross-examination'. The Socratic Elenchus gave rise to dialectic, where truth is pursued by modifying one's position through questioning with conflicting ideas. It is this idea of the truth being pursued, rather than discovered, that characterizes Socratic thought and much of our world view today.

"Socrates is the master of logic; the whole logic system comes from Him."

24-05-89, Athens

Although in the Apology He claims to know nothing, the Socrates of Plato's other dialogues is of the opinion that truth can be approached by the process of Elenchus.

The Athenian authorities thought of Socrates as a Sophist*, a designation He seems to have resented; but there were similarities. Like the Sophists, He was unconcerned with physical or metaphysical questions, and tears down every ethical position He's confronted with without offering concrete alternatives.

One positive statement that Socrates makes is a definition of virtue: 'Virtue is knowledge. If one knows the good, one will always do the good. It follows, then, that anyone who does anything wrong doesn't really know what the good is.' This, for Socrates, justifies attacking people's moral positions, for if they have the wrong ideas about virtue, morality, love, or any other ethical idea, they can't be trusted to do the right thing.

* *The Sophists were professional teachers of excellence, particularly in political debate, who became associated with scepticism, 'cleverness' and the use of logic to argue against a more spiritual viewpoint.*

Socrates' Spirituality in the 'Phaedo'

In the Phaedo, which gives His last words before He drank hemlock, Plato gives Socrates' thoughts on what happens after death. He produces an array of proofs for the immortality of the soul, explaining that the soul is separable from the body, existing before birth and continuing after death.

“Socrates has told us that we leave our body for the second life and that when we live as human beings on this Earth, we have to keep ourselves in such a way that we do not spoil our being.”

13-06-80, London

These ideas originated with or were at least promoted by Pythagoras (570 – 495 BCE). Although most famous in the West for his geometrical theorem (*which was probably already well-known before his time*) Pythagoras is more importantly a founding father of Greek Philosophy and may be considered one of the most influential thinkers of all time.

Like Pythagoras, Socrates held that, while the soul was tied to a physical body during life, it led a defiled and inferior existence from which it needed to be 'purified' and 'freed from the shackles of the body'. After death the good soul can hope to enjoy reunification, or at least communion, with that incorporeal higher form of existence called the Divine.

The philosopher, in particular, should regard the whole of His life as a preparation for the blissful release of death. Socrates lived what He taught; an unconventional life that was far from materialistic. He felt that earthly life imposed its own duties and brought its own blessings.

The Republic

Several of Plato's books survived the 'Dark Ages', the period after the fall of Rome when much of Europe's ancient culture was destroyed by marauding barbarians. In his most famous book 'The Republic', Socrates is the main protagonist and discusses notions of justice, a just man and a just state. Although the ideas in the Republic are widely held to be those of Plato, they are put into the mouth of Socrates and we do not know whether He was their originator or not.

His utopian republic Kallipolis –'*ideal city*', is ruled by a philosopher-king who is born into an elite and educated and given some governmental roles up to the age of fifty before finally becoming king. Having an understanding of the Forms, the ideals behind everyday reality, he can guide society towards achieving them.

"A benevolent ruler, in the form of a philosopher king (*as put forward by Socrates*) is the ideal person to be the head of government. Such a person must be an extremely wise, detached personality, without any desires for lust, power and money. There have been such persons in the recent past, people like Mahatma Gandhi, Ataturk, Kemal Pasha, Anwar al-Sadat, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Ho Chi Minh, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Dag Hammarskjold and Mujibur Rahman."

Meta Modern Era. Ch.3

The Parthenon – one of the most subtle pieces of architecture ever built.



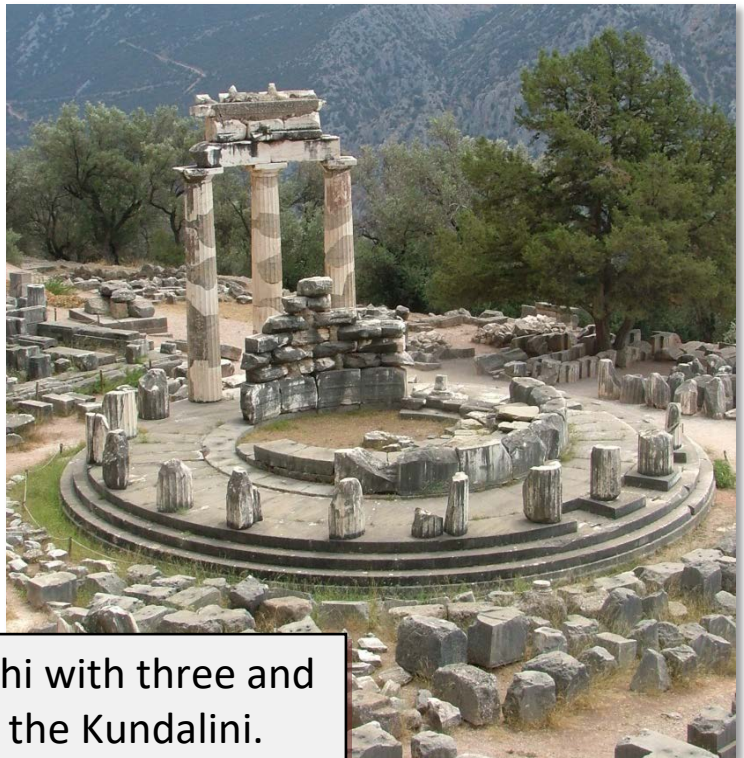
“As Shri Râma, Vishnu came to enlighten human social and political consciousness as the true model of what Plato, thousand of years later, would call ‘the philosopher king’.”

Creation Ch.2

Some ideas like the banning of personal possessions or the state regulation of reproduction where the children do not know who their parents are, seem too idealistic to be practical today.

Socrates proposes that a person’s soul is composed of three ‘selves’; the Appetitive (*base desires*), the Spirited (*passions, ego*) and the Rational (*intellect, intelligence*) which correspond with Left, Right and Centre channels. The welfare of the soul depends on all the selves agreeing to be ruled by the Rational and acting in harmony. The Soul is Immortal moving from birth to birth seeking perfection.

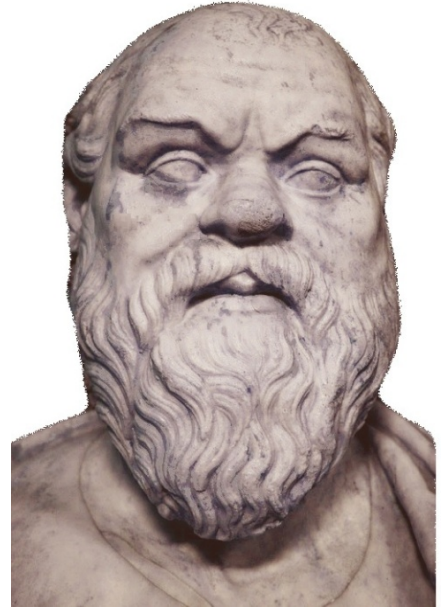
In the Theory of Forms, Socrates (*via Plato*) proposes that there are ideal forms behind the illusory reality which we experience. The Forms are perfect and unchanging, unlike the physical objects which imitate them; dogs, human beings, mountains, colors, courage, love, goodness, etc. He gives the Allegory of the Cave where chained humans see only the shadows of objects cast on the cave wall. The philosopher frees himself of the chains and emerges into the bright light of reality.



The Temple of Athena at Delphi with three and a half steps like the coils of the Kundalini.

The Socratic Method

Bringing a person to an understanding of the truth by the use of his own reasoning teaches more effectively than simply imparting the right answer. The Socratic Method is used in law schools to develop critical thinking – to come up with more questions than answers. It is a powerful tool to question conditionings.



The essence of the scientific method, whose roots lie with Socrates' thought, is that to be able to prove something one must be able to disprove it. A learned Sahaja Yogi once gave a talk where He explained why the benefits of Sahaja Yoga cannot be proven scientifically. The proposition that 'Meditation makes you healthier' is unprovable as, if a person's health does not get better, one can say 'He didn't meditate properly' – there is no way to prove that He did!

The Three Filters

A friend once came to Socrates and said:

'Do you want to hear what I just heard about Eristophanes?'

Socrates stopped him and asked: 'First tell me, is it true?'

'I don't know – probably not.'

'And is it beneficial? Is it good?' - 'No, it's not'

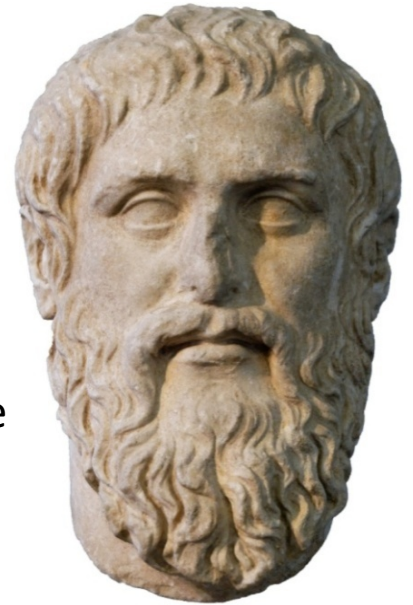
'And is it useful?' - 'I don't think so'.

'Then I do not want to hear it!'

These three questions: 'Is it true, is it good, is it useful?' have become known as the 'Three Filters' of ethical thinking.

Pupils and Followers - Plato

The writings of Plato (427-347 BCE) influenced both Islamic and European thought and became the basis of Christian philosophy. Western philosophy has famously been described as 'merely a series of footnotes to Plato'. He founded the Academy in Athens (387 BCE), the first European centre for higher education.

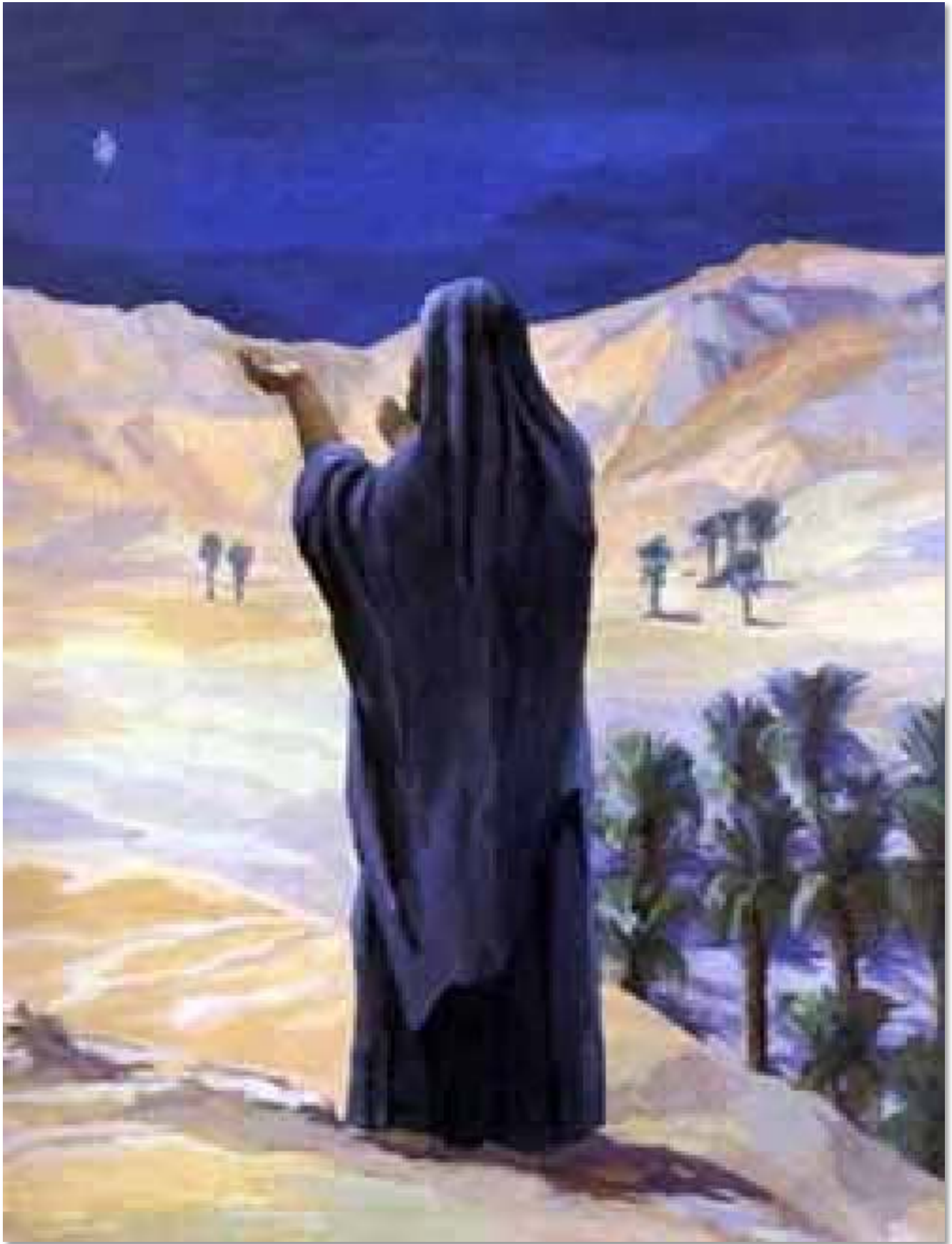


Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) has been called the 'Father of Logic, Father of Ethics, of Metaphysics, Science, Psychology...' and many other disciplines. He was taken as an authority by Christian and Islamic philosophers and scientists and some of his (*incorrect*) theories survived up to the 19th century.

He studied under Plato at the Academy in Athens until Plato's death when Aristotle was thirty-seven. He then became the tutor of Alexander although his influence on the head-strong boy may not have been very great. His philosophy was a synthesis of Socrates and other Athenians, such as Pythagoras, but he was the great pioneer of logic and science and one of the main thinkers leading to our modern 'scientific' viewpoint that everything in this creation has a rational explanation.





THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD

THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD

The Prophet Mohammad¹ (*May Peace Be Upon Him*²) was born in Makkah (*Mecca*) in Arabia in 570 CE. Out of this desert tribeland arose a new civilization inspired by this great soul, extending from Morocco to India and beyond, influencing the culture, attitudes and aspirations of three continents. At a time of widespread superstition and idol-worship He taught humanity to have faith in and worship the One Formless All-pervading Allah. One and a half millennia later Islam is still the fastest growing religion in the World.



Political map of Arabia at the time of Mohammad's birth.

- ¹ Arabic words have three letter roots (H-M-D –‘praise’ as in Hamīd – ‘praising’) Adding Mo or Mu before means ‘one who...’ so Mo-H-M-D is ‘one who is to be praised’; Muslim is ‘one who submits’ from S-L-M – ‘submit, surrender’ as in Islam –‘surrender’. Mohammad –‘praise-worthy’ is also spelt Muhammad, Mohammed, Mohamad, Muhamad, Muhammet, Mahmud and other local variants, and is the most commonly used boy’s name in the world at present.
- ² Muslims will not write or speak the name of the Prophet without adding ‘Peace be Upon Him’ (PBUH) or in Arabic ‘Salla’Allahu ‘alayhi wa-salla’ (SAWS) –‘May Allah honour Him and grant Him peace’. For the sake of brevity, this book will not continue this tradition but we ask forgiveness if this offends anyone.

Mohammad started receiving Divine revelations at the age of forty. At first He was sceptical of their origin but after three years became convinced by His wife and friends and began to preach the Word of God in His home town of Mecca.

His subsequent career has two distinct phases, each of roughly ten years. At first He preached in Mecca against the idol worship of which Mecca was the main centre for Arabia and advocated the One Formless God Allah¹. Although a man of great peace and compassion, this made Him deeply unpopular as the town's wealth depended on those who worshipped their favourite idol at the Ka'aba² (*black rock of Abraham*). However He enjoyed the protection of two powerful leaders of the town, His uncle Abu-talib and His wife Khadija.

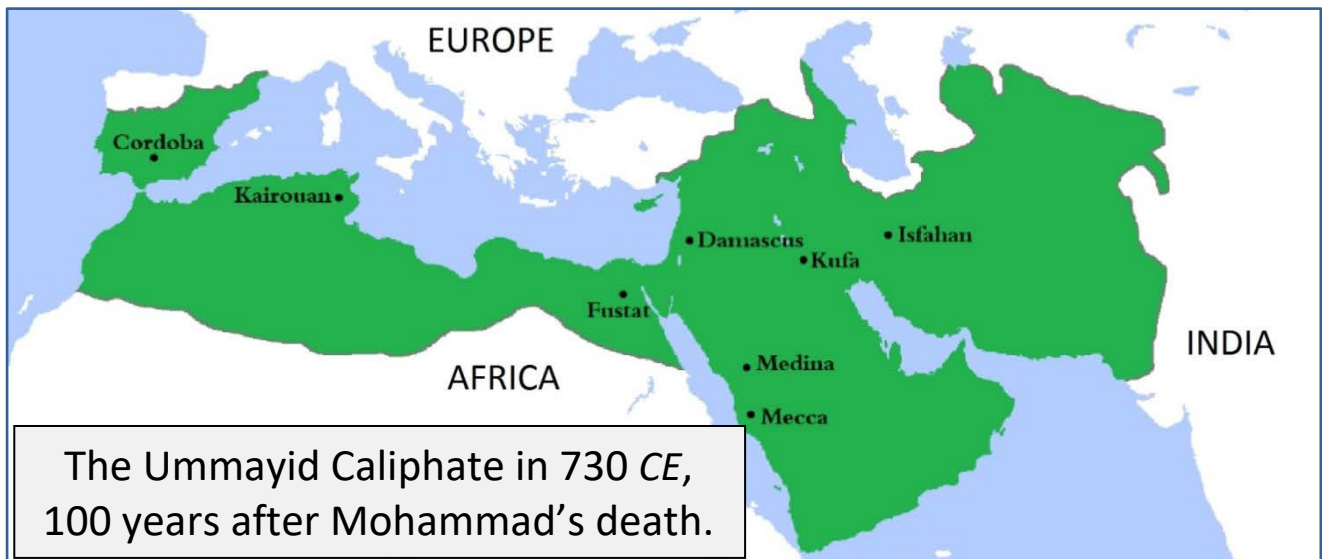
But in 620 CE both His protectors died and, after narrowly surviving several assassination attempts, He and His followers fled Mecca and settled in Medina. Here they had to become militarised to survive the repeated attempts of the Meccans to eradicate them.

Mohammad's followers grew into a mighty force and eventually captured Mecca, whose inhabitants were spared. By the time of His early death at the age of sixty-two, most of Arabia had converted to His teachings.

The enduring success of Mohammad's message lies in the beauty and purity of the Islamic faith. Though a man of peace, Mohammad

¹ *Allah – 'The Divine' is an elision of Al – 'the', illāh – 'divine'. This is similar to Elohim, the Hebrew name of God in the Old Testament.*

* *"Now the Ka'aba is a place where you have a beautiful Shiva-linga, which is called as Makkeshwar Shiva – 'Lord of Mecca' in our Purânas. From ancient times it is mentioned that there is a Pinda which is absolutely vibrating and which is there." 07-02-81, Delhi*



had to take to the battlefield. But even here the Prophet of Islam changed the attitudes and the behaviour. He taught His Followers to pray during battle and follow strict rules of conduct in warfare. Within a hundred years Islam spread all across North Africa and the Persian Empire, including most of Spain, what are now Pakistan and Uzbekistan reaching the Caspian, Ural and Black Seas. This was a dynamic and prosperous empire with tremendous developments in art, music, architecture, mathematics, science and medicine, predating the Renaissance by several hundred years.

Character

Mohammad was a well-built man, of great physical beauty, with thick black wavy hair and beard and a very winning smile. He walked so fast that others found it hard to keep up. His friend and successor Abu Bakr said of Him: 'As there is no darkness in the moonlit night so is Mustafa, the Well-wisher, bright.'

His manner was genial but, when deep in thought, there could be long periods of silence. He always kept himself busy and did not speak unnecessarily; what He said was to the point and without padding; sometimes He would clarify His meaning by slowly repeating what He had said.

He kept His feelings under firm control - when annoyed, He would turn aside or keep silent, when pleased He would lower His eyes. His laugh was mostly a smile. He always dressed simply* with shirt and tamad (*trousers*), a sheet thrown round the shoulders and a turban, although In later years He would occasionally don the costly robes given by foreign emissaries. His blanket had several patches and He had few spare clothes which He kept spotlessly clean.

‘When Allah has blessed you with His bounty, your appearance should reflect it.’ He often observed: ‘Cleanliness is piety’.

* According to the *Shamaa-il Tirmidhi* – a book of the ‘Virtues and Noble Character of the Prophet Mohammad’ by Tirmidhi (9th century).

Life

Born at dawn c.570 CE¹ in Mecca, now in Saudi Arabia, Mohammad was orphaned at the age of six² and was raised by His paternal uncle Abu Talib. His tribe, the Quraysh, was an important one which had the care of the Ka’aba – the Holy Shrine surrounding the Black Rock in Mecca. This was built by Abraham and His son Ishmael, and Mohammad was their direct descendent.

As a man Mohammad worked as a merchant and was hired by the wealthy widow Khadija, one of the most successful traders in Mecca. She had heard of His reputation for honesty and truthfulness, and had received some revelations that Mohammad

¹ **Mawlid** – ‘the Birth of the Prophet’ is celebrated on the 12th (Sunni) or 17th (Shi’a) day of the third *month **Rabi-ul-Awwal** – ‘the First Spring’. **Rāmadan** – ‘Scorching Heat’, the month of fasting, is the ninth month. (See next page)

² **Mohammad’s Father Abdullah** died before He was born and His Mother **Aminah** died when He was six.

was the expected prophet and proposed marriage to Him. So at the age of twenty-five Mohammad married Khadīja who was forty. They had six² children including two sons who died in childhood.

They were married for twenty-five years until the death of Khadīja in 620 CE less than two years before the Hijra. During this time Mohammad was entirely monogamous. Ali, the son of Mohammad's uncle Abu Talib who had fallen on hard times, lived with them and a liberated slave-boy called Zayd whom Mohammad adopted.



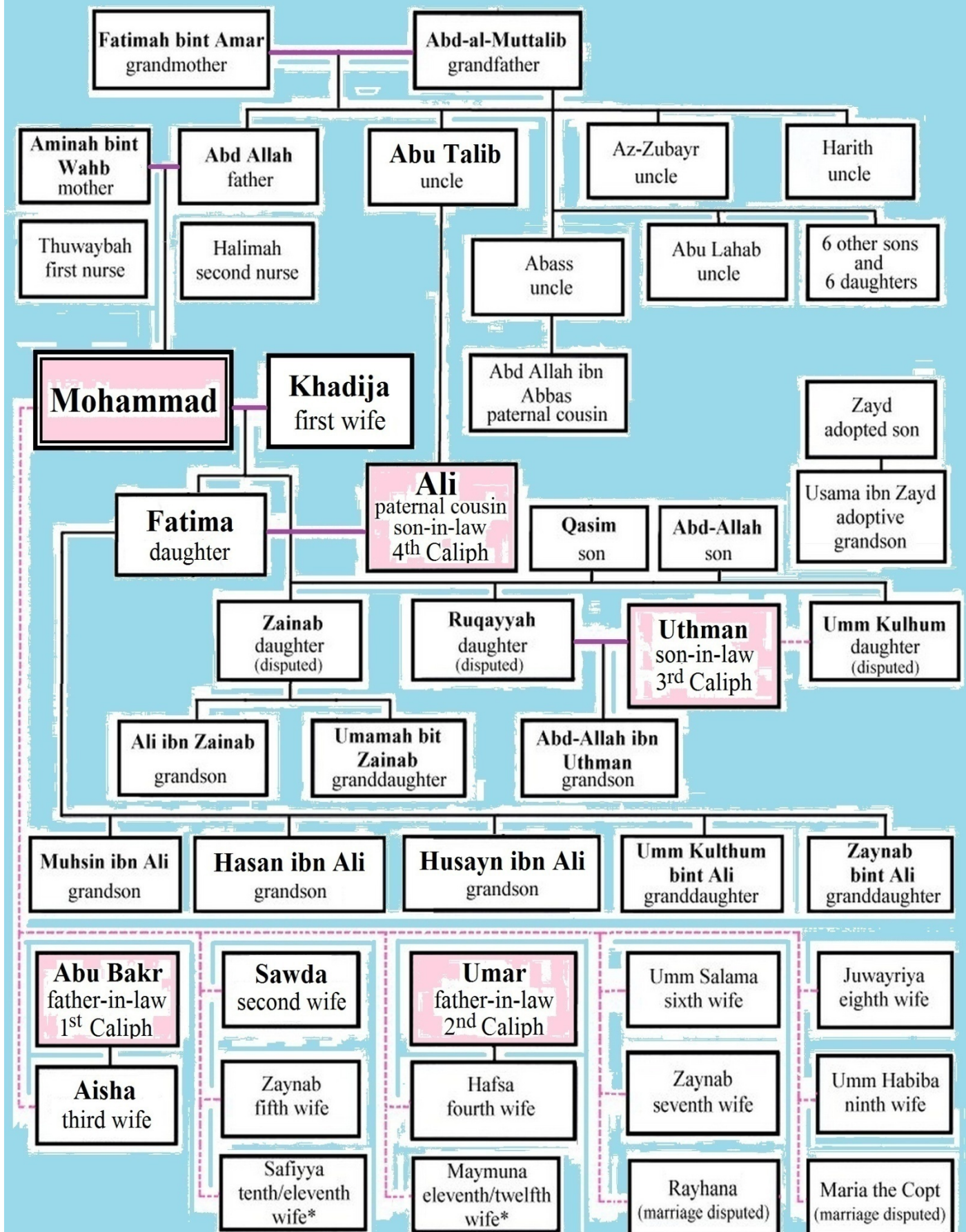
Medallion of Khadīja with the year 1005 H ('from Hijra')(1597 AD)

Mohammad was in the habit of retreating to a cave in the mountains for several nights of meditation and it was here that He was spoken to by the Archangel Jabrīl (*Gabriel*).

* In the **Islamic Calendar** a year is twelve lunar months, making it eleven days shorter than a solar year (354.36 instead of 365.24 days); so the months are always rotating, starting eleven days earlier each year (12 in leap years). One hundred years in the Islamic calendar is 97 solar years. Known as the **Hijri** calendar, it begins in 622 CE with the **Hijra** – ‘the flight to Medina’; so years are labelled **H** (‘Hijraor’) or **AH** (‘Anno Hegirae’). Islamic year 1444 starts at sunset on 30-07-22, 1445 on 19-07-23. etc.

² Some sources say eight but six is the generally accepted number. Another view is that **Fatima** was their only biological child and the others were from previous marriages or adopted. It is known that **Khadija** had four children from two previous marriages.

Family Tree of Prophet Mohammad



Revelations

‘Allah! There is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the Heavens and the Earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave? He knows what lies before them and what is after them, and they comprehend not anything of His knowledge save such as He wills. His Throne comprises the Heavens and Earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the All-high, the All-glorious.’ *The ‘Throne Verse’ (2:255)*

Khadīja became the first convert to Islam, after Mohammad started receiving His revelations from the Archangel Gabriel. The following is an account by Aisha, the favourite of Mohammad’s later wives:-

‘The commencement of the Divine Inspiration to Allah's Messenger was in the form of good dreams which came true like bright daylight, and then the love of seclusion was bestowed upon Him. He used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira where He worshipped continuously for many days before His desire to see His family. He would take with Him the journey food for the stay and then come back to Khadīja to take His food likewise again till suddenly the Truth descended upon Him while He was in the cave of Hira.

The angel came to Him and asked Him to read. The Prophet replied, ‘I do not know how to read.’ The Prophet added, ‘The angel caught me and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read and I replied, ‘I do not know how to read.’ Thereupon He caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it any more. He then released me and again asked me to read but again I

replied, 'I do not know how to read (or what shall I read)?' Thereupon He caught me for the third time and pressed me, and then released me and said, 'Read in the name of your Lord, who has created man from



a clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous.' *Quran: 96.1*

Then Allah's Messenger returned with the Inspiration and with His heart beating severely. He went to Khadīja and said, 'Cover me! Cover me!' They covered Him till His fear was over and after that He told her everything that had happened and said, 'I fear that something may happen to me.' Khadīja replied, 'Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones.'

Khadīja then accompanied Him to her cousin Waraqa, who, during the pre-Islamic period became a Christian and used to write the writing with Hebrew letters. He would write from the Gospel in Hebrew as much as Allah wished Him to write. He was an old man and had lost His eyesight. Khadīja said to Waraqa, 'Listen to the story of your nephew, O my cousin!' Waraqa asked, 'O my nephew! What have you seen?' Allah's Messenger

described whatever He had seen. Waraqa said, 'This is the same one who keeps the secrets (Angel Gabriel) whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out.' Allah's Messenger asked, 'Will they drive me out?' Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said, 'Anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility; and if I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support you strongly.' But after a few days Waraqa died and the Divine Inspiration was also paused for a while.'

It was three years before the Prophet started to preach in public. To preach a new religion in Mecca was no problem as the city's laws and traditions ensured tolerance of all religions and freedom of worship. This was also important economically as followers of all cults came to worship at the Ka'aba. However Mohammad broke those laws and traditions by criticising other forms of worship, and even breaking down the idols being worshipped.

The people of Mecca sought to make peace with Him, offering Him money or power if He would stop attacking people's religious practices. At one time He briefly relented, writing a Surah that accepted three Goddesses as 'Offspring of Allah', but the joy of the Meccans was short-lived as He recapitulated, calling these the 'Satanic Verses'.

So Mohammad and His followers found themselves persecuted in Mecca. In 615 a group of eighty-three Muslims migrated across the Red Sea to live in peace under a Christian King in Abyssinia. As the nephew of Abu Talib, a leader of the ruling Quraysh tribe, Mohammad enjoyed a level of protection despite His unpopularity.



Isrā - Mi'rāj - The Night Journey to Heaven

Led by the archangel Jibrīl (*Gabriel*), Prophet Mohammad was transported to Jerusalem on the winged white steed Al Burāq where He met Moses, Jesus and other great prophets before ascending through the seven levels of Heaven. The quote from the Quran (17.1) is not very specific and in Sahaj this is interpreted as the Kuṇḍalinī carrying the Prophet through the Chakras into the 'higher place of worship' of Sahasrāra and above.

A story from these days illustrates Mohammad's nature. Every morning as He walked to the market-place by the Ka'aba to begin His preaching He passed down a narrow alley. Here lived a lady who, like most Meccans, reviled Mohammad and every morning she would empty her night-pot over Him from an upstairs window and shout curses at Him. One day the lady was ill and was unable to insult the Prophet. As He passed and noticed that no unclean liquids assailed Him Mohammad was concerned and on enquiring discovered that the lady was ailing. He returned bringing some medicines and visited and nursed her every day until she recovered.

The Night Journey

Around 621, about a year before the Hijra, at a time when He was under severe threat from the Meccans, Mohammad experienced the Isrā – Mi'rāj – *'Night Journey to Heaven'*. In the Isrā – *'night journey'*, Mohammad was transported on the white steed Buraq to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (*now the Al-Aqsa mosque*) where He met and conversed with Adam, Abraham, Moses, Idris, Jesus, John the Baptist, Joseph and other prophets. In the second part, the Mi'rāj – *'ascent'*, He was led by the angel Gabriel through the seven levels of Heaven into the presence of Allah where He was given instructions for the faithful about prayer.

“Gabriel gave a horse to Mohammed Sahib to see to seven Heavens, to see God Almighty in His greatness, that is the seven Chakras”

31-08-90, Germany

While this Divine transportation inspired His followers, it further convinced His enemies to eradicate Him. This event is celebrated on the 27th day of the month Rajab with prayers and night observances.

Hijra - Flight to Medina

In 620 both His wife Khadīja and His uncle Abu Talib died, and Mohammad was now in serious danger. After surviving several attempts on His life, Mohammad



and His few hundred followers finally left Mecca in 622 for Medina, a town where He already had converts to Islam and was assured of a welcome. Once Mohammad and the Muslims had left, the Meccans seized all their wealth and property.

The 'Flight to Medina' is called the Hijra, westernised to Hejira or Hegira, and is the starting date of the Islamic Calendar.

Mohammad made a pact with the various tribes of Arabs and Jews living in Medina that they would all support each other and not assist any enemies.

Being now without property or means of livelihood, Mohammad finally agreed that the Muslims could raid the caravans of the Meccan traders – the people who had seized their property. While this seems like banditry these days, the raiding of caravans was a legitimate means of support in Arabia at that time. The first raid in 623 was unsuccessful but they soon improved their technique.

The Meccans retaliated by trying to get the local tribes in Medina to attack the Muslims and several attempts were made to poison Mohammad. For the next six years, the Muslims were under constant threat and had to undertake many raids and pre-emptive strikes to keep their enemies at bay. This is when the verses of the Quran exhorting all Muslims to fight the non-believers were written.

The Jewish tribes in Medina mostly did not convert to Islam and began siding with Mohammad's enemies in Mecca. According to the treaty they were guilty of treason, and so were banished, being allowed to carry their wealth, but not their weapons, with them. The Muslims inherited their land and became financially more independent.

In 629 Mohammad assembled an army of ten thousand and marched on Mecca. The city capitulated without a fight and Mohammad inflicted no deaths or penalties upon the people, except for formally executing five of the most troublesome leaders who refused to accept Mohammad's message.

In the next two years before His death, Mohammad made several expeditions to parts of Arabia to convert the tribes to Islam, and even began to come in conflict with the Byzantine Empire.

Wives

Having been strictly monogamous during the twenty-five years of marriage to Khadija, Mohammad made several matches after settling in Medina.

After the death of Khadija, Mohammad married Sawda, the widow of one of the early Muslims, who was about thirty years old. His third and fourth wives were the daughters of His friends and followers Abu Bakr and Umar.



“Mohammad Sahib had to take the help of five women. They were A-U-M's, the powers, and that's why He had to marry so many. For example His first wife Khadjia was nobody else but Mahâsaraswatî. His daughter was Mahâlakshmî. So it was all His powers expressed as His wife, or sister, or daughter who helped Him in His lifetime, sustaining His powers.” **01-02-77**

Warfare

The Prophet of Islam taught the warring tribes self-control and discipline to the extent of praying on the battlefield. One part of the army would bow their heads before God while the other engaged the enemy; then they would exchange positions. In an age of barbarism, the battlefield itself became humanized and strict instructions were issued not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a child, a woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm nor burn it, not to cut a fruit tree nor to molest any person engaged in worship.

The total number of casualties in all the battles that took place during His lifetime, when the whole Arabian Peninsula came under His banner, does not exceed a few hundred in all.

He accepted the surrender of Mecca, the city which had refused His message, tortured and driven out Him and His followers, and had unrelentingly persecuted them in Medina. By the laws of war in that time He could have justly avenged all the cruelties inflicted on Him and His people. But Mohammad's heart flowed with forgiveness and He declared, ‘This day, there is no reproof against you and you are all free. This day I trample under my feet all distinctions between man and man, all hatred between man and man.’

Farewell Sermon

During the annual Hajj –‘pilgrimage to Mecca’ of 10AH (6th Mar 632) Mohammad gave His final sermon to the assembled Muslims under the shadow of Mount Arafat (20 km SE of Mecca). He stated that He did not know if after that year He would be among them again. He then reiterated the main points of Islam, such as prayers, fasting during Ramadan, no usury, alms for the poor, etc. and called upon Allah to witness that He had delivered His message to His people.

Death

Three months later, after four days of intense stomach pains and severe headaches, Mohammad died quite suddenly on 8th June 632. The demise of such a vigorous and dynamic man at the early age of sixty-two suggests that He was poisoned. Several attempts to poison Him by the Qurayshi Meccans and disaffected tribes such as the expelled Jews had already been foiled.

“Muslims are very fanatical people. I would say Mohammad Sahib was the least fanatic personality. He suffered so much, I think, in that incarnation, no Guru has suffered as much as He has. Ultimately He was given poison; He was killed.”

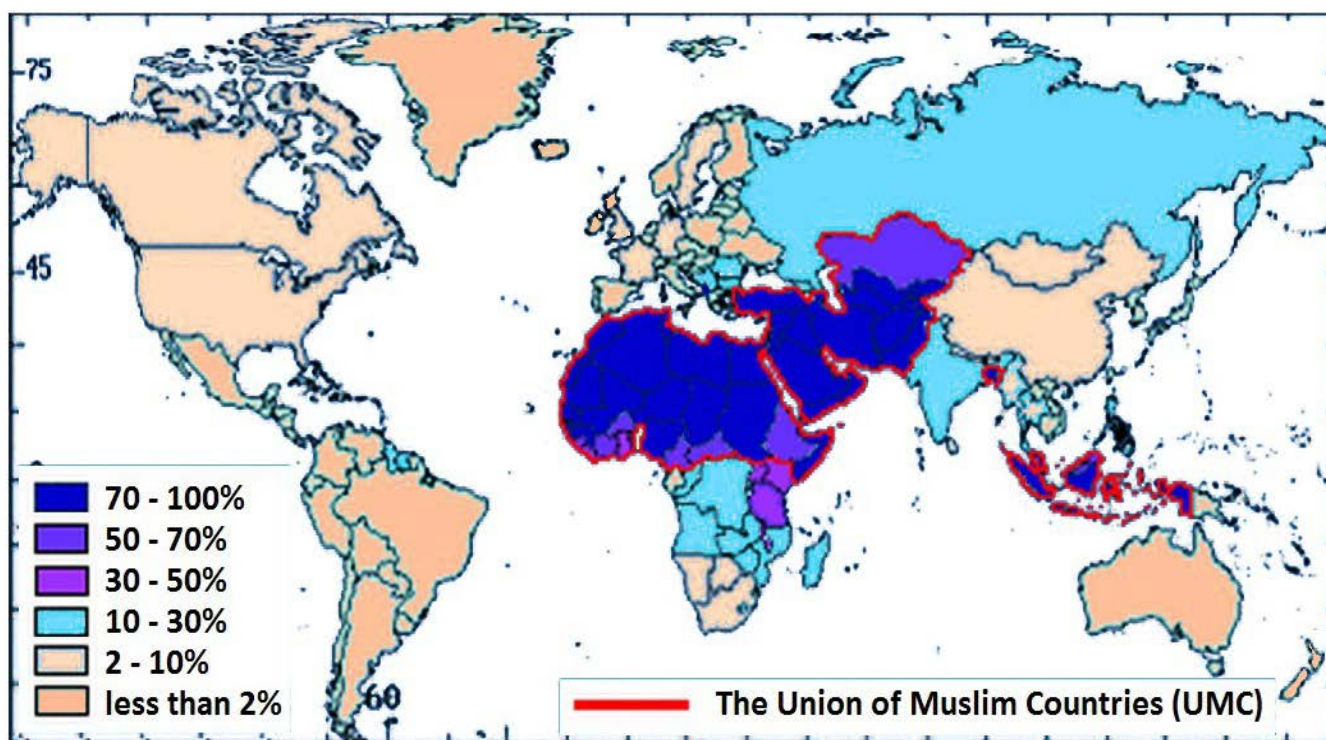
00-03-75, Delhi

In His final illness, the Prophet said to those assembled at His house that if He owed anything to anyone the person concerned could claim it; if He had ever hurt anyone's person, honour or property, He could have His price while He was yet in this world. One man came forward to claim a few dirhams which were paid at once.

Mode of Living

His house was a hut with walls of unbaked clay and a roof thatched with palm leaves and camel skin. He had a small room for each of His wives; His own room contained a rope cot, a pillow of palm leaves, a goat skin on the floor, a leather water bag and some weapons. Besides these He owned only a camel, a horse and an ass and some land which He had had dedicated for the use of the community. Once some disciples, noticing the imprint of His mattress on His body, wished to give Him a softer bed but He politely declined saying, ‘What have I to do with worldly things? My connection with the world is like that of a traveller resting for a while underneath the shade of a tree and then moving on.’

He advised the people to live simple lives and even when He became the virtual king of Arabia, He lived an austere life. Aisha said that there was hardly a day when He had two square meals.



Distribution of the 1,500 million present-day Muslims. The word ‘Muslim’ means ‘one who surrenders’ from the same S-L-M Arabic root as ‘Islam’.

He had declared unlawful for himself and His family anything given by the people by way of zakat or sadaqa (taxes for charity). He was so particular about this that He would not appoint any member of His family as a zakat collector.

Manners and Disposition

‘By the grace of Allah, you are gentle towards the people; if you had been stern and ill-tempered, they would have dispersed from round about you’ (*Abu Bakr*). About himself the Prophet said: ‘Allah has sent me as an apostle so that I may demonstrate perfection of character, refinement of manners and loftiness of deportment.’

By nature He was gentle, kind-hearted and polite, always inclined to be gracious and to overlook the faults of others. In the cause of right and justice He could be resolute and severe but more often than not, His severity was tempered with generosity. His charming manners won Him the affection and devotion of His followers. Though virtual king of Arabia and the chosen apostle of Allah, He never assumed an air of superiority.

He used to pray, ‘O Allah! I am but a man. If I hurt anyone in any manner, then forgive me and do not punish me.’ He always received people with courtesy and showed respect to older people and stated: ‘To honour an old man is to show respect to Allah.’

He would not deny courtesy even to the wicked. A person came to His house once asking to see Mohammad. The Prophet remarked that He was not a good person but might be admitted. When He came in and while He remained in the house, He was shown full courtesy. When He left Aiysha said, ‘You did not think well of this man, but you treated him so well.’ The Prophet replied, ‘He is a bad

person in the sight of Allah who does not behave courteously and people shun his company because of his bad manners.'

He was always the first to greet another and would not withdraw His hand from a handshake till the other withdrew. He did not like people to get up for Him and used to say, 'Let him who likes people to stand up in his honour, he should seek a place in Hell.' He would



Himself, however, stand up for any dignitary and stood to receive the wet nurse who had reared Him and spread His own mat for her. He avoided sitting at a prominent place in a gathering, so that people coming in had difficulty in spotting Him and had to ask which was the Prophet.

He used to visit the poor and the sick and exhorted all Muslims to do likewise. When visiting He would first seek permission to enter the house. He advised people to follow this etiquette and not to be offended if anyone declined, for people may be busy and not mean any disrespect. He would sit with the humblest of persons saying that righteousness alone was the criterion of one's superiority over another. He invariably invited people be they slaves, servants or the poorest believers, to partake with Him of His scanty meals.

There was no work too low or too undignified for Him. He would sweep the floor, feed and milk the animals and do the shopping. Once when there was no man in the house of a devotee who had gone for battle, He went to His house daily to milk the cattle.

Children

He was fond of children and would get into the spirit of childish games with them. He used to give the children lifts on

His camel when He returned from journeys. He would pick them up in His arms, play with them and kiss them.



Daily Routine

The Prophet apportioned His time carefully according to:

1. Offering worship to Allah.
2. Public affairs.
3. Personal matters.

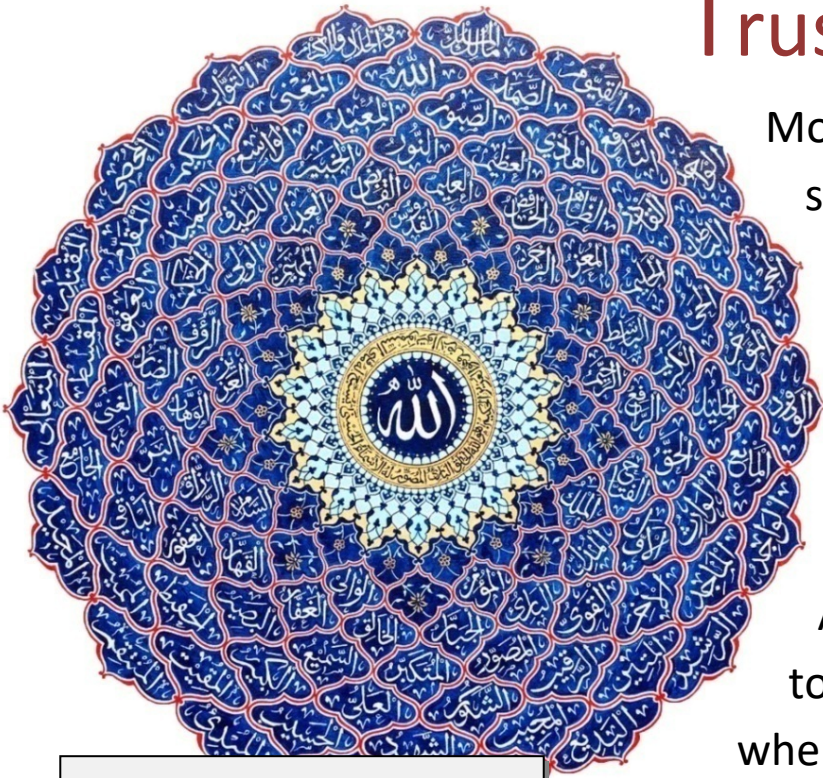
After the early morning prayers He would remain in the mosque reciting praises of Allah till the sun rose and more people collected. He would preach a sermon and then talk with the people, inquiring about their welfare and even exchanging jokes. Taxes and revenues were distributed at this time. After offering prayers, He would go home and get busy with household work.

He would return to the mosque for the mid-day and afternoon prayers, listen to people's problems and give guidance. After the afternoon prayers, He would visit each of His wives who would assemble after the evening prayers for dinner. After the night prayers, He would recite some Suras of the Quran and before going to bed would pray: 'O Allah, I die and live with thy name on my lips.' On getting up He would say, 'All praise to Allah Who has given me life after death and towards Whom is the return.' He used to brush His teeth five times a day, before each of the daily prayers. He was not fastidious about His bed: sometimes He slept on His cot, sometimes on a goat-skin and sometimes on the ground.



On Fridays He gave religious instruction after the weekly 'Jumma' prayers; interruptions did not annoy Him. Once, during a sermon, a Bedouin approached Him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I am a traveller and am ignorant of my religion.' The Prophet explained the salient features of Islam to Him and then resumed His talk. On another occasion His young grandson Hussain came tottering to Him. He took Him in His lap and continued the sermon.

Trust in Allah



The 99 Names of Allah

Mohammad's whole life was a sublime example of trusting in Allah. However great the danger confronting Him, He never lost hope and never allowed himself to be unduly agitated.

Abu Talib knew the lengths to which the Quraysh could go

when Mohammad started preaching and requested Him to

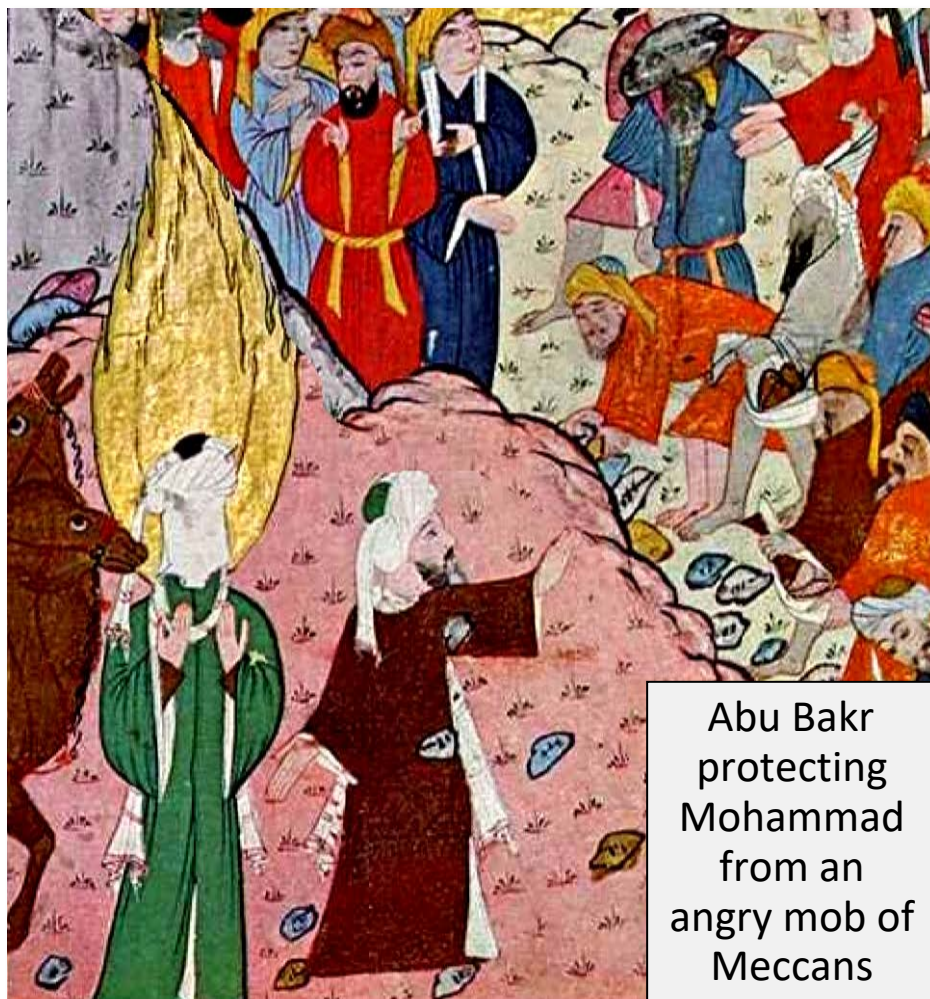
abandon His mission, but He replied, 'Dear uncle, do not go by my loneliness. Truth will not go unsupported for long. The whole of Arabia and beyond will one day espouse its cause.' When the Quraysh became more threatening, Abu Talib again begged His nephew to renounce His mission but the Prophet replied: 'O my uncle, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, to force me to renounce my work, verily I would not desist therefrom until Allah made manifest His cause, or I perished in the attempt.'

A disciple was comforted with the words: 'By Allah, the day is near when this faith will reach its pinnacle and none will have to fear anyone except Allah.' His trust in Allah emboldened the Prophet to say His prayers openly in the market-place.

The Quraysh were once collected there and were conspiring to put an end to His life. His young daughter Fatima overheard their talk

and rushed weeping to Her Father, telling Him of the designs of the Quraysh. He consoled Her, did His ablutions and went to the Ka'aba to say prayers. There was only consternation among the Quraysh when they saw Him.

When leaving for Medina He asked Ali to sleep in His bed and told him, 'Do not worry, no one will be able to do you any harm'. Even though enemies had surrounded the house, He slipped away



reciting the Quranic verse: 'We have set a barricade before them and a barricade behind them and have covered them so that they see not'.

Abu Bakr was apprehensive when pursuers came close to the cavern in which He and

Mohammad were hiding during their flight, but the Prophet heartened him; 'Grieve not. Allah is with us.'

Once a man was caught waiting to ambush the Prophet but he was directed to be released with the words, 'Even if this man wanted to kill me, He could not.' A Jewess from Khaibar had put poison in the Prophet's food. He spat it out after taking a morsel but a

disciple who had His fill died the next day. The Jewess was brought before the Prophet who questioned her: 'Why did you do this?', 'If you are a liar it would kill you and rid us of you, but if you are a true prophet it would not kill you.'

She was told, 'Allah would not have allowed you to do it.'

In the battle of Hunain, when an unexpected assault of the Meccan army had swept the Muslim force off its feet and a defeat seemed imminent, the Prophet did not yield ground but shouted 'O, Allah, send down Your Help!' The Muslim army rallied behind Him to win a signal victory.

Justice

The Prophet had often to deal with warring tribes where showing justice to one might antagonize the other and yet He never deviated from the truth. He made no distinction between believers and non-believers, friends and foes, high or low.



A Quraysh woman with good connections was guilty of theft. Some prominent people interceded to save her from punishment. The Prophet refused to condone the crime, saying, 'Many a community ruined itself in the past as they only punished the poor and ignored the offences of the exalted. By Allah, if Mohammad's daughter Fatima had committed theft, her hand would have been severed.' The Medina Jews, in spite of not accepting the new religion, were so impressed by His impartiality and sense of justice that they would bring their cases for Him to decide according to Jewish law.

Equality

Mohammad asked people to shun notions of racial, family or any other form of superiority and said that righteousness alone was the criterion of one's superiority. He mixed with everyone on equal terms; ate with slaves and the poorest off the same plate (*a practice still followed in Islam*), refused all privileges and worked like an ordinary labourer.

Once while travelling by camel over hilly terrain with a disciple, He asked him to ride the camel, but, thinking this would be disrespectful, the disciple declined. The Prophet insisted and Himself walked on foot, not wishing to overload the animal.

Once on a journey, they stopped to prepare food. The Prophet took upon himself the task of collecting firewood but they pleaded that He need not take the trouble. He replied, 'It is true, but I do not like to attribute any distinction to myself. Allah does not like the man who considers himself superior to His companions.'

Kindness to Animals

The Prophet enjoined on the people to show kindness to all living beings. He forbade the practice of cutting tails and manes of horses, of branding animals at any soft spot and of keeping horses saddled unnecessarily. If He saw any animal overloaded or ill-fed He would pull up the owner and say, 'Fear Allah in your treatment of animals. Verily, there is Heavenly reward for every act of kindness done to a living animal.'

One day, a dying dog approached one of Mohammad's followers. There was no well nearby but, seeing a muddy puddle, he tore His shirt, soaked it in the water, placed the dog in His lap and

moistened its mouth with the wet cloth. Another Arab who saw this went to the Prophet and said, 'One of your followers has touched a filthy animal, a dog, and should therefore not be allowed back here again.' Mohammad questioned, 'What was He doing to the dog?' 'I do not know, but I saw Him moistening its mouth with a torn piece of cloth dipped in muddy water,' replied the man. 'He is a better Muslim than you are, because He is kind to animals,' said the Prophet.



Love for the Poor

'He is not a perfect Muslim who eats His fill and lets His neighbour go hungry.'

'Do you love your Creator? Then love your fellow beings first.'

'It is difficult for a man laden with riches to climb the steep path that leads to bliss.'

He did not prohibit or discourage the acquisition of wealth but insisted that it be acquired by honest means and that a portion of it would go to the poor. He advised His followers to 'give the labourer his wages before his perspiration dried up.' To His wife He said, 'O Aisha, love the poor and let them come to you and Allah will draw you near to Himself.'

He used to pray: 'O Allah, keep me poor in my life and at my death and raise me at resurrection among those who are poor.' While Mohammad was serving a sick slave, the latter asked, 'Has my master sent you to look



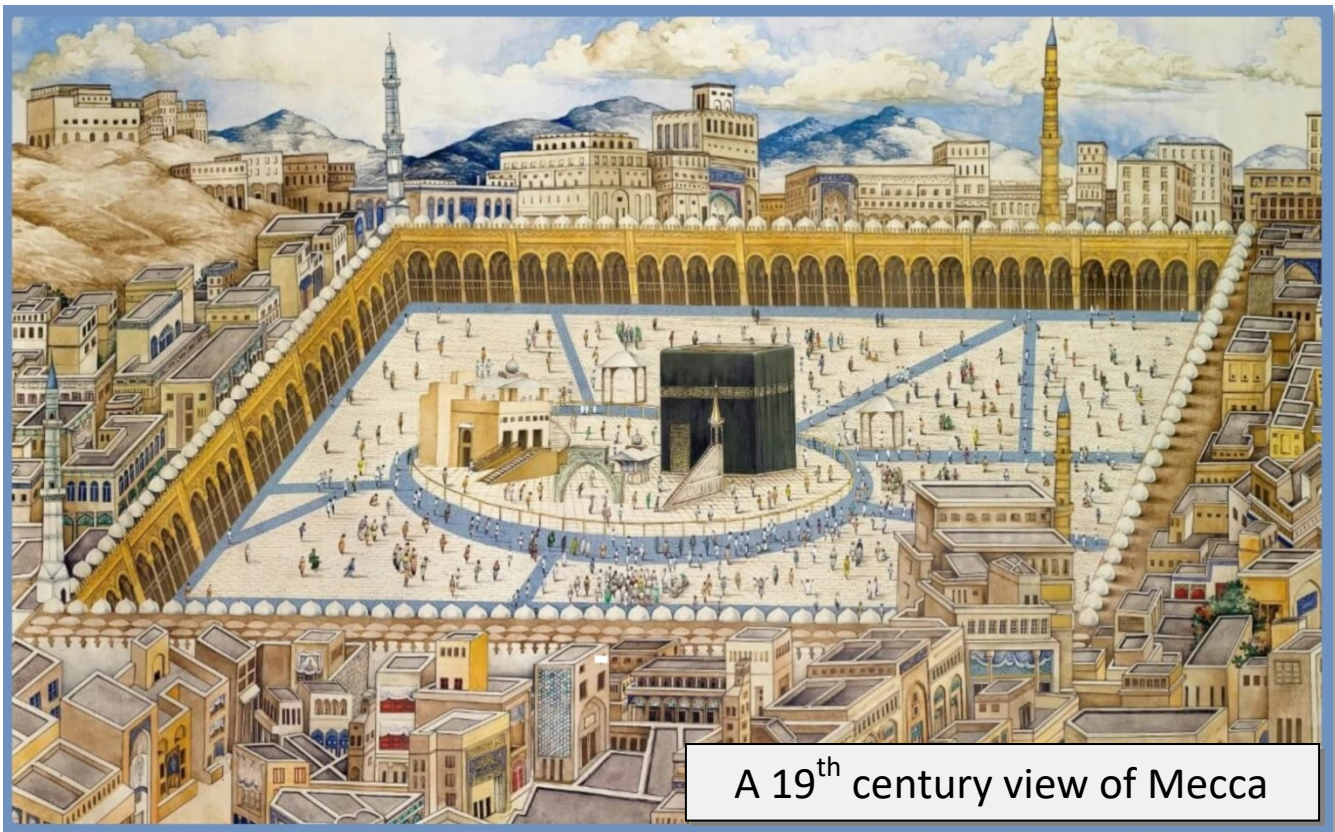
after me?' 'Yes,' said Mohammad, 'the master of masters has sent me to serve you.'

Once, in Mecca, a shepherd from the hills came to worship at the Ka'aba in His own simple way, kissing the stone and bowing before the sacred spot. Tears flowed from His eyes as He prayed: 'O adorable Lord of Love, show me Thy face. Let me be thy servant. Let me mend Thy shoes, apply oil to Thy hair, wash Thy soiled clothes and bring Thee daily the milk of my goat. Let me kiss Thy hand and wash Thy sacred Feet.' Such words of the simple shepherd offended the priests who said to him, 'What blasphemy is this? There is no need of such gifts for the omnipotent Lord.' They were ready to drive Him out of the temple, when the Prophet called them to Him and asked: 'When you are in distant lands, in which direction do you turn your faces?' 'We turn our faces to Mecca,' they answered.

He further asked, 'When you are within these sacred walls, in which direction do you turn your faces?' 'All is holy here,' they replied 'It does not matter which way we turn.' The Prophet then said, 'Your answer is beautiful indeed. Within the mosque it does

not matter how you pray, as long as you have love and reverence. This poor shepherd's simple prayer entered directly into the ears of Allah more clearly than yours, as it was uttered from His heart with intense love, faith, sincerity and reverence. Make room for God's poor lover near me. Let no one be ashamed to have His company. He is humble, pure and an exalted soul.'

Hajj



A 19th century view of Mecca

Every year, during the Hajj, all distinctions of race, colour and rank are levelled. African, Arab, Indian, European and Chinese meet together in Mecca as members of one Divine family, clad in the same dress - two pieces of white seamless cloth, one round the loins, the other over the shoulders, bare headed, without pomp or ceremony, repeating '*Here am I, O God; at Thy command; Thou art One and Alone; Here am I.*'

The Hajj involves five days of visiting holy sites around Mecca as well as the Ka'aba itself. A Muslim should make the Hajj at least once in his life if his finances and health allow; this is one of the five pillars¹ of Islam. The Hajj is undertaken between the 8th and 13th of **Dhu al-Hijjah** –‘*The Month of Pilgrimage*’, the last month of the Islamic calendar. In 2022 this falls at the beginning of July.

‘O mankind, surely we have created you, families and tribes, so you may know one another. Surely, the most honourable of you with God is the most righteous among you. God is All-knowing, Aware.’

Equality of Women

Islam teaches that man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul and are equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainment. There is a strong Arab tradition that only one who can smite with the spear and wield the sword should inherit but Islam came as the defender of the weaker sex and entitled women to a share of the inheritance of their parents. It gave women, centuries ago, the right of owning property. The Prophet of Islam had proclaimed that:

‘Woman are twin halves of men. The rights of women are sacred. See that women keep the rights granted to them.’

The ‘Five Pillars’ are the core practices of Islam:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| (1) Shahada -Profession of Faith. ‘There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger’. | |
| (2) Salat -prayer. | (3) Zakat -alms. |
| (4) Sawm -fasting. | (5) Hajj - pilgrimage. |

In spite of this, after His death, Mohammad's own daughter Fatima was denied Her inheritance by Abu Bakr and his followers!

“The benevolent ideas Hazrat* Mohammed propounded to protect the women and give a chaste life to them, have been worked in the opposite direction by the people who are in charge of religions. The message of Paigambar – ‘*The Prophet*’ has been absolutely misinterpreted. All the goodness and chastity has been practiced by women but not by men.

Mothers or sisters are the feminine force of the family. They live in fear. This is a situation where the mother has to be the guiding, controlling power because the men are busy in their work; they have no time to watch and guide the children.”

Meta Modern Era, Ch. 5

Law

There are four sayings of Prophet Mohammad which form the basis of Islamic Law:

1. Actions are judged by their intentions.
2. A sincere Muslim does not pay heed to anything that is not connected with Him.
3. A true believer wishes for others what He wishes for himself.
4. Some things are clearly lawful and some things are clearly unlawful. But there are some which don't fall clearly in either category and it is better to stay away from them.

* ‘Hazrat’ is a term of respect in Arabic which literally means ‘The Presence’.

The Quran talks of five things: lawful things, unlawful things, clear and constructive principles, mysteries and examples. Take the lawful as things that can be done, the unlawful things as those which are forbidden, follow the principles, believe in the mysteries and take the lessons that the examples teach.

Drinking and gambling are illegal. Contributions to schools, places of worship, hospitals, the digging of wells and the opening of orphanages are the highest acts of virtue. The world owes many of its orphanages to this Prophet who became an orphan at an early age. Mohammad's was the natural voice of humanity, of pity, equality and care for all.



Economics

The Principles of Islam do not separate legal, educational, political and economic systems from religion and cover all aspects of life. Sharia Law lays down some important principles to govern economic life. It discourages extremes and has always in view the building of good character as the basis of a good society. This is secured by its laws of inheritance, by an organized system of charity known as *Zakat* and by regarding as illegal all anti-social economic practices like money-lending, unearned incomes, cornering markets and creating monopolies or artificial scarcities of a commodity.

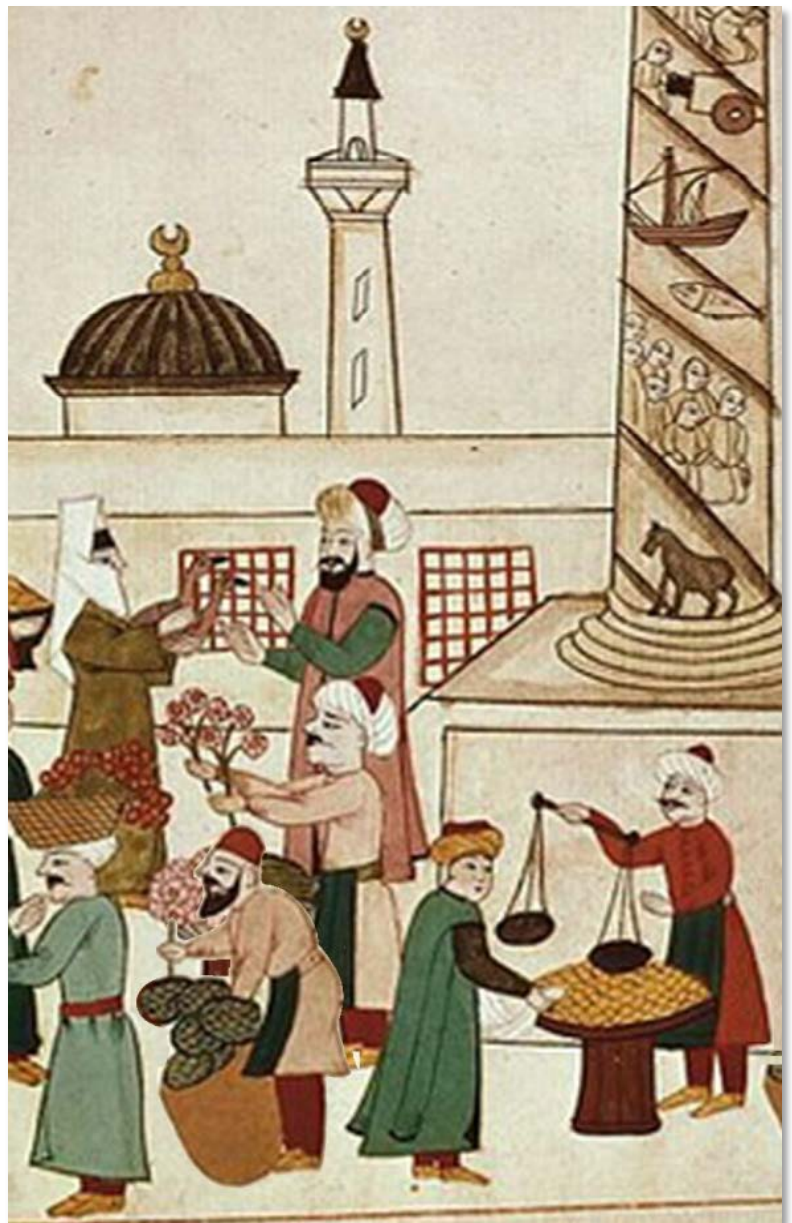
This makes the modern capitalist system directly opposed to Islam. Forming limited companies with stock-holders is forbidden by Sharia Law, as is giving or taking interest; also the law that inheritance must be equally divided between offspring and cannot be 'willed' to an individual, means that fortunes are constantly being split up, undermining the long-term stability of economic enterprises.

Having said this, the Islamic world started the

first stable international monetary system in the 8th-12th centuries with a unified currency, banks and banknotes, lines of credit, etc.

In Sunni countries the laws governing economics are not so clearly defined but depend on interpretations of the Quran and Sharia Law, so entrepreneurs are wary of innovation which may incur a negative ruling resulting in possible expulsion from Islam or even death.

While capitalism is not the ultimate answer to world economics it is the dominant system at present and the Islamic world is at a disadvantage by not being able to effectively take on the Americans, Europeans and Asians on their own terms.



The Great Man

It is said that a great man should be judged by three tests;

Was he found to be of true mettle by His contemporaries?

Was he great enough to rise above the standards of His age?

Did he leave a permanent legacy to the world at large?

Both friends and foes acknowledged Mohammad's honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness in all walks of life. In spite of His own doubts, His wife, cousin, adopted son and His best friends were convinced of the genuineness of His Divine Inspiration.

Though unable to read or write, He spoke with an eloquence and fervour which stirred the deepest longings in men; an orphan blessed with no worldly goods, He created a universal family. A man of peace, He could yet organise His troops against tremendous odds and be victorious. Men gifted with a genius for preaching are rare; Descartes described the perfect preacher among the rarest in the world.

He was a king without a palace, a crown, robes or revenue; He had all the power without the trappings. The simplicity of His private life was in perfect accord with the principles He preached.

Mahātmā Gandhi, speaking on the character of Mohammad: 'I wanted to know the best of one who holds today's undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind. I became more than convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for His pledges, His intense devotion to His friends and followers, His fearlessness, His absolute trust in God and in His own mission. These and not

the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of the great life.'

George Bernard Shaw wrote: 'He (Mohammad) must be called the Saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like Him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, He would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness.'

After the fall of Mecca, with more than a million square miles of land at His feet, this Lord of Arabia still mended His own shoes and patched His coarse woollen garments, milked the goats, swept the hearth, kindled the fire and helped with the cooking. Medina grew wealthy in the later days of His life; everywhere was gold and silver in abundance and yet weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled in the hearth of this mighty potentate who dined on dates and water. He slept on a palm mat; spending most of the night



praying for humility and the strength to discharge His duties.

On the day of His death His only assets were a few coins, some of which went to satisfy a debt and the remainder given to help a needy person. The clothes in which He breathed His last had many patches. The house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.

An honest man, it is said, is the noblest work of God; but Mohammad was not just honest, He was human to the marrow. Compassion was the music of His soul. To serve man, to elevate man, to purify man, to educate man, in a word to humanize man - this was His mission. In thought, word and deed He had the good of humanity as His sole inspiration, His guiding principle. He turned the attention of His followers towards the study of nature and its laws, and appreciation of the Glory of God.



The Qur'ān

The Qur'ān says, 'God did not create the Heavens and the Earth and all that is between them in play. He did not create them all but with the truth. But most men do not know.'

Attributes of God: Adopting the middle path, Islam avoids divesting the Divine of every attribute

but rejects likening Him to things material. The Quran says, 'There is no thing which is like Him' but affirms that 'He is seeing, hearing, knowing'.

He is the King without a fault or deficiency; the mighty ship of His power floats upon the ocean of justice and equality; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Guardian over all, the Mender of every breakage, the Restorer of every loss but also the Creator of problems.

‘There is no God but the One God, above any need, the Maker of bodies, Creator of souls, the Lord of the day of judgment and to Him belong all excellent qualities’.

‘O man, God has bestowed on you excellent faculties and has created life and death to put you to test in order to see whose actions are good and who has deviated from the right path.’

‘We have made subservient to you whatever is on the Earth or in the Universe. You are destined to rule over the Universe.’

On Truth: ‘The real man of truth is the one who is true in his thought, true in his deeds and true in his work.’

‘You should always endeavour to reach the highest point in virtue and truth. A person who always speaks the truth should not stoop to cursing people. Do not tell lies; speak only the truth, even if it is bitter and might hurt other people.’

On Understanding: ‘Devotion alone does not please God. It is only that part of devotion which is offered to God together with understanding that God accepts. There are no returns for prayers, charity and visiting holy places, unless they are accompanied by understanding.’

On Forgiveness: ‘Do not say: ‘If the people do me good, I will do them good; and if the people torment me, I will torment them in return’. Tell yourself instead that if people do you good,

you will do good to them and if they torment you, you will not reciprocate by tormenting them.'

On Knowledge: 'It is better to give more time to learning than to give more time to praying. It is better to teach someone for one hour in the night than to pray all night.'



God to Man: 'It is My will to create any man under conditions that seem best to Me.

'Allah' in Arabic

Cosmic plans finite mortals cannot fully comprehend. But I will certainly test you in prosperity as well as in adversity, in health as well as in sickness, in heights as well as in depths. My ways of testing differ from man to man, from hour to hour. In adversity do not despair and do resort to unlawful means. It is but a passing phase. In prosperity do not forget God'.

'God-gifts are given only as trusts. You are always on trial, every moment on test. In this sphere of life there is not to reason why, there is but to do and die. If you live in accordance with God; and if you die, die in the path of God. You may call it fatalism, but this type of fatalism is a condition of vigorous increasing effort, keeping you ever on the alert. Do not consider this temporal life on earth as the end of human existence.'

'There is a life after death and it is eternal. Life after death is only a connection link, a door that opens up the hidden reality of life. Every action in life however insignificant, produces a lasting effect. It is correctly recorded somehow. Some of the ways of God are known to you, but many of His ways are hidden from you.'

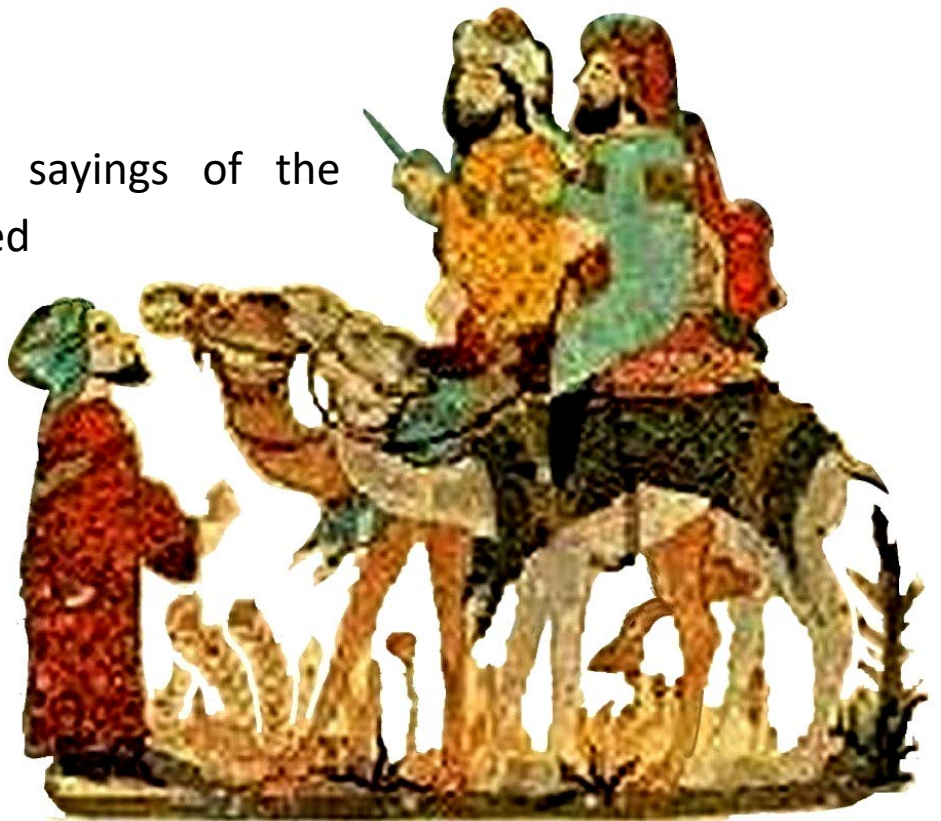
‘What is hidden in you and from you in this world will be unrolled and laid open before you in the next. The virtuous will enjoy the blessing of God which the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of men to conceive of; they will march onward, reaching higher and higher stages of evolution. Those who have wasted opportunity in this life shall under the inevitable law, which makes every man taste of what He has done, be subjugated to a course of treatment of the spiritual diseases which they have brought about with their own hands.’

‘O thou soul that art at rest and retest fully contented with thy Lord; return to thy Lord. Be He pleased with thee and thou pleased with Him; so enter among my servants and enter into My Paradise.’

The German poet Goethe declared that: ‘This book (*The Qur'an*) will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence.’

Hadith

The life, deeds and sayings of the Prophet are recorded in the Hadith, also known as the Sunnah, which are several books written after His death. One of the most reliable is the Bukhari Hadith,



compiled by Imam Muhammad al-Bukhari about 230AH (850 CE). These are taken with the Quran as reliable sources of Islamic knowledge, truth and law. The Quran does not contain much law and Shariya Law is derived mostly from the Hadith.

However the reliability of some of the Hadith is in question as, unlike the Quran which was collected, compiled and codified within twenty years of Mohammad's death under the auspices of his closest followers, these Hadith were compiled several generations later. Usurpers like Muawiyah may have altered them for their own purposes. Stories such as the Prophet, a man of great peace, personally beheading a tribe of treacherous Jews do not ring true.

Jihad

'The best jihad is that undertaken to conquer the self.'

'The ink of the intellectual is holier than the blood of the martyr.'

Scholars and mystics throughout the ages have taken different viewpoints about the call to fight non-believers. The vast majority of Muslims believe that such action is only required in times of extreme danger for self-preservation, as was the case when Mohammad and His followers lived in Medina.

"There are two important things in the life of Mohammed Sâhib. The first one is called as Mi'raj – '*ascent*' which is nothing but the awakening of the Kundalini, absolutely clearly. And the second one He has talked about is Jihad. Jihad means killing your bad things, killing your bad nature, killing all the shad-ripu – '*six enemies*' within you."

25-12-01, Ganapatipule

Mohammad's Family and Successors



Mohammad's daughter Fatima (615-632 CE) was born after He started His message. His wife Khadija narrated: 'At the time of Fatima's birth, I sent for my neighbouring Qurayshite women to assist me. They flatly refused, saying that I had betrayed them by marrying and

supporting Mohammad. I was perturbed for a while when, to my great surprise, I saw four strange tall women with halos around their faces approaching me.

Finding me dismayed, one of them addressed me thus, 'O Khadija! I am Sarah, mother of Ishaq (*Isaac*). The other three are: Mary mother of Christ, Asiya daughter of Muzahim (*Pharaoh's daughter who found and adopted Moses who became the wife of Pharaoh with whom Moses battled*) and Umm Kulthum sister of Moses. We have all been commanded by God to put our nursing knowledge at your disposal.' Saying this, all of them sat around me and rendered the services of midwifery till my daughter Fatima was born.' Fatima was only five years old when Khadija died and she was raised by Mohammad Himself.

After the flight to Medina, in 624 CE, Fatima married Mohammad's first and greatest follower Ali, said to be the only person born inside

the Ka'aba, and they had two boys Hassan and Hussain, and two daughters Zainab and Kulthum.

Fatima died at the age of eighteen just two months after the passing of the Prophet Himself.

After Mohammad's demise there was confusion as to who should succeed the Prophet. Sunni Muslims (*85% of present-day Muslims*) believe that Mohammad designated his friend Abu Bakr as His successor but the Shia believe that Mohammad chose his son-in-law Ali whom He named the Lion of Allah.

Abu Bakr, a great friend of the Prophet and the father of Aisha, Mohammad's third wife, was chosen as the first Caliph (*Imam*) and was succeeded after only two years by Uman, another father-in-law, and later Uthman, a son-in-law of the Prophet. Ali



Hazrat Ali holding the legendary two-pointed sword Zulfiqar.

was finally chosen twenty-four years later as the fourth Caliph but ruled for only four years before being assassinated by a follower of Muawiyah* (*600-680 CE*) who took over Islam and established the Umayyad Caliphate (*661-750 CE*), forcing Hassan, Ali's son and successor, to abdicate. Shia Muslims continued to support the descendents of Mohammad as the true Imams causing a rift in Islam which continues to this day.

* *Muawiyah was a Meccan who had initially fought against Mohammad but after the fall of Mecca had become one of His scribes. There is evidence that Mohammad said he was not a true Muslim....*

continued on next page...

“Abu Bakr became the head of the Islam, and he was a fundamentalist. Actually it was Hazrat Ali who had to become the head but Abu Bakr was a very ambitious man, Now Hazrat Ali you know had a fight. It's a history, where the turning point took place.

As you know Hazrat Ali (*eventually*) became head but later he was killed and his two sons were killed. And the wife of Mohammed Sahib, Aisha, was told that you will fight against the truth and you will know it when the dogs will bark. So when she went on the other side, the dogs started barking but still she didn't listen. And she told the people that you listen to Abu Bakr (*her father*).

So the rift started that time and as you know, later on Hassan and Hussein both were killed in (*the battle of*) Karbala². That's how Shia and Sunni, two parties started. Shia believe in many things which are the truth. One, they believe that you will become a Wali –‘protector, realised soul’.” **09-10-93, Los Angeles**

continued... Under Uthman he became the military governor of conquered Syria. In 661 CE, less than thirty years after the death of the Prophet, he became the ruler of the rapidly expanding Islamic Empire which was taking over the Persian Empire, inflicting defeats on the Christian Byzantine Empire (the eastern branch of the Roman Empire) and expanding into North Africa.

“In the case of Mohammed Sahib it was forty years after His death that the book (Qur'an) was written by one horrible fellow called Muawiyah. He was a hater of women and he tried to change as much as possible. Still there are lots of truths in it.” **25-09-96, L.A.**

² *The Battle of Karbala between Yazid's and Hussain's followers in 680, created the final split between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.*



Hassan (624-670 CE) renounced the caliphate in favour of Muawiyah, in order to avoid divisions and conflict within Islam, but was poisoned by his own wife at Muawiyah's instigation. His younger brother Hussain (626-680 CE) fought against Muawiyah and was killed in the battle of Karbala by followers of Yazid, Muawiyah's son and successor.

The Muslim empire expanded rapidly throughout the Middle East and North Africa, with tremendous innovations in medicine, science, mathematics and astronomy and great outpourings of art, music, architecture and poetry. However around 1300 CE the law became more rigid and free thinking was discouraged; in spite of this, the Islamic world was still far more tolerant and less fanatical than the Christianity of the time.

Shri Mataji about Prophet Mohammad



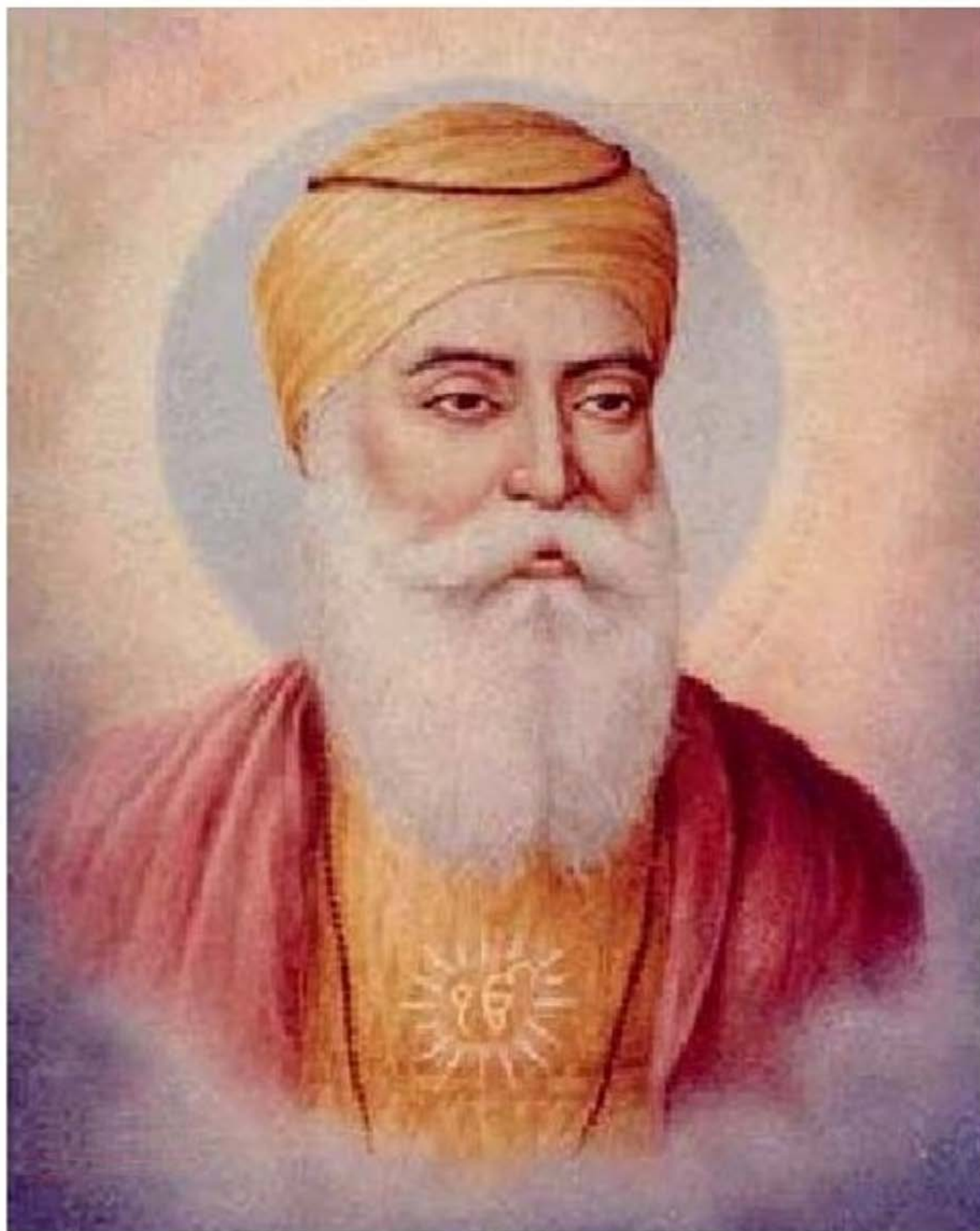
“Mohammed Sahib is the only person who has talked about Mi’raj –‘*ascent*’. Mi’raj is the ascent through our Kundalini. And, not only that He talked of Mi’raj but also he talked of the resurrection time when your hands will speak. Two things He said. First is ‘your hands will speak when you will have your Realisation.’ It’s a very great thing to say, because that is how you can ascertain and you can be sure that you have got

your realisation. That’s the sign He gave. And the second thing He talked about Mi’raj and the white horse He said, was nothing but the Kundalini.

So He is the one who knew what should happen to people when they get their Self-realisation. That is a great revelation and of such a help to Sahaja Yoga. You are all realised Souls because you can feel the vibrations.” **24-07-02, Cabella**

“Every word they (*the Adi Gurus*) have spoken is a Mantra, everything about Namaz which is nothing but Kundalini Jagruti –‘*awakening*’. Mohammad Sahib has done the greatest job in Sahaja Yoga and the greatest advancement as far as the Kundalini Jagruti is concerned.” **21-03-77 Mumbai**





GURU NANAK

GURU NANAK

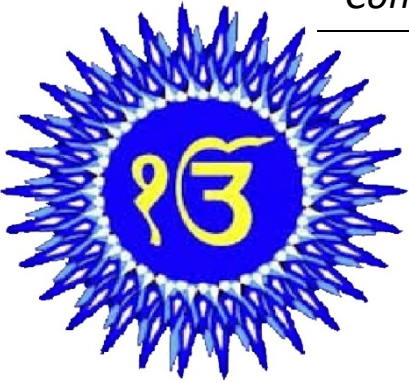
Ik Ōṅkār Satnām Kartā Purakh Nirbhau Nirvair

Akāl Mūrat Ajūnī Saibhan Gur Prasād

One Creator of Everything whose True Name is Om; without fear¹; without hate². Beyond time and the cycle of birth and death; Self-existent; the Ever-gracious Lord.

Mool Mantra, Gurū Nānak

¹ Conditionings - left side qualities. ² Ego - right side qualities.



***Ik Om** –‘One Om’ , the symbol of Gurū Nānak, can be seen in the picture on the previous page. It is the first two words of the Mool -‘root’ Mantra above which starts all Sikh worship.*

‘Me, the bard out of work, the Lord has applied to His Service.

In the very beginning He gave me the order

To sing His praises night and day.

The Master summoned the minstrel to His true court.

He clothed me with the robe of His true honour and eulogy.

Since then the True Name has become my ambrosial food.

They, who under the Guru’s instruction, eat this food

To their satisfaction, obtain peace.

By singing the Guru’s hymns,

I, the minstrel, spread the Lord’s Glory.

Nānak, by praising the True Name

I have obtained the Perfect Lord.’

- Gurū Nānak, Pauri

‘The Kali Yuga shall dawn on Earth with radical manifestation of destruction of Karma and Dharma to such an extent that every situation shall be coloured by sinful activities. At that distressful moment, the Creator shall send down a spiritual luminary in the form of Nānak from the Khatria clan. He will spread the message of Naam –‘*contemplation of the Name of God*’, the Holy Life Force, by introducing the primacy of meditation and thus washing clean the sinful ways by the waters of love.’

Bhavekatha Purāna

Gurū Nānak is one of the most inspiring spiritual figures ever to walk this Earth. His purity, innocence and devotion to God shine as a beacon of hope to those seeking meaning in their lives and the truth of our existence. He believed in finding God in the simple life of the householder and argued against asceticism. He married and had two sons and, when not travelling to spread His message, enjoyed farming. He believed Yoga should be Sahaja –‘*innate, natural*’ achieved through keeping the attention on the Divine by repeating the Satnām –‘*True Name of God*’, one of which is ‘Har’ an aspect of Lord Shiva meaning the Remover or Destroyer. He also referred to God as Ik Ōṅkār –‘*one Om*’, Guru and Wahegurū [*wāhe, vāhi* –‘*wonderful*’, *gurū* –‘*teacher*’].

Gurū* Nānak was a prolific poet and singer of God's praise, incorporating the Divine message in His songs; a message of love, truth, service to our fellow men and renaissance through meditation. He preached against all divisions between human beings such as religion, the caste system or treating women as less than equal to men. Like all Divine Incarnations He created a pathway to the Divine open to all humanity without distinction.

* In Punjabi, unlike Sanskrit, the word Gurū has a long ū at the end.

Gurū Nānak preached that in the eyes of God there are no Hindus or Muslims, the only path is sincere devotion to the Almighty expressed through good thoughts, words and deeds, meditation on the Divine Nature and loving service to all our fellow human beings and the whole of creation. He argued with ascetics against renouncing the world. He brought a vision of a common humanity to a world full of violence and strife. For Him, love of God was love for His Creation and serving humanity was its manifestation.

Early Life

There are many Janamsakhi's –'life stories', books about Gurū Nānak's life written many years after His death. In these His life has become infused with many legends and miracles, although He Himself firmly eschewed any manifestation of occult powers.

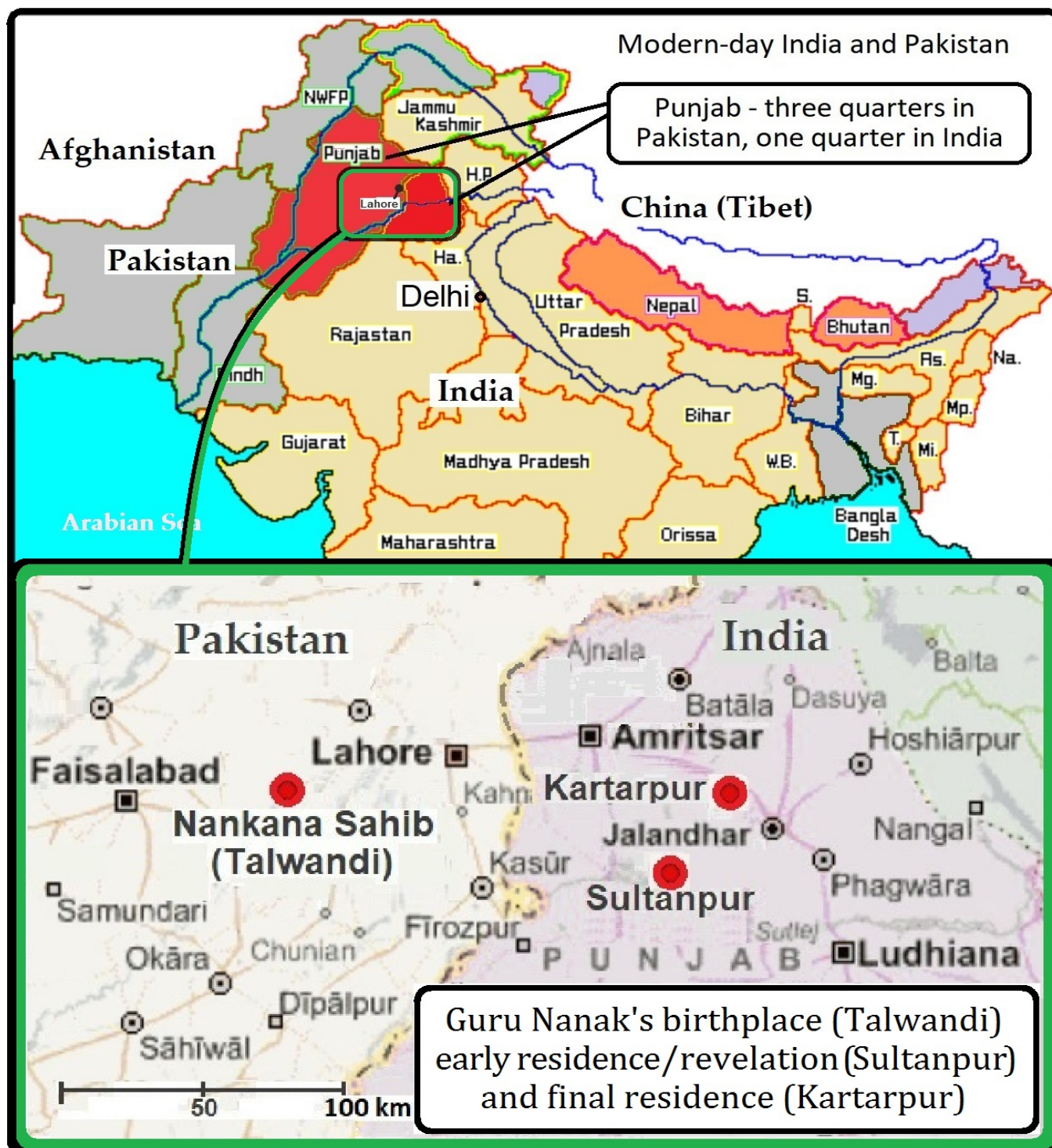
Nānak was born at a time when northern India was ruled by the Muslim Lodhi dynasty¹ who encouraged Hindus to convert to Islam by imposing heavy taxes and discriminatory laws. Hindu society was dominated by the rigid caste system and both Hinduism and Islam were full of ritualism and superstition. Nānak's father, Mehta Kalyan, was an accountant employed by the local Muslim ruler. For many years he and his wife Tripta were childless; so, being a devout Hindu, he undertook a pilgrimage to invoke the Divine blessing.

At the holy site of Kedarnāth he was told by a sage to abandon his pilgrimage as God would bless him with children. He returned to his village of Talwandi (*now in Pakistan*) and a year later the couple

¹ Northwest India had been under Muslim rule since Mahmud Ghazni's invasion of the Punjab in 1001 CE

were blessed with a baby girl whom they names Nānakī, meaning ‘born in the mother’s village’. Five years later on April 15 1469² they had a son whom they named Nānak.

² *Gurū Nānak’s Birthday, a public holiday in India, is celebrated in November on the full moon in the month of Kartik (starting on the new moon between Oct 14 - Nov 12). This may be the date of Gurū Nānak’s enlightenment in the forest.*



Nānak's birth was accompanied by auspicious omens and the local astrologer predicted that He would be a great man whose influence would spread across the whole world. However as a child He showed

no ambition, enjoying the freedom of nature, and soon manifested an exceptional tendency for meditation and interest in spiritual matters; He preferred discussing religion with the holy men in the forest to playing with the other children. He was always kind, gentle and generous to a fault.

From an early age Nānak made friends with Muslims and Hindus of all castes and was very inquisitive about the meaning of life. He loved to sing and spent many hours in the house of Mardānā, the son of a low-caste Muslim musician, singing the praises of the Divine.

His wise questions and spiritual leanings surprised all those who came in contact with Him. When He was sent to school at the age of six to learn Hindi and mathematics, Nānak asked His teacher, 'Teach me only this one lesson of life; tell me of the Creator and the wonder of this great world'. He showed great ability and soon the teacher had to admit He had nothing left to teach Him. In order to understand the sacred texts He studied Sanskrit, picking it up very quickly; but once He had learned enough for His purposes, no amount of persuasion would make Him continue. Again He studied Arabic and Persian so that He could read the Quran – His father hoping this would qualify Him for a career at the Imperial court – but He soon gained proficiency and quit.

Traditionally, on reaching puberty, upper caste Hindu boys are invested with the sacred thread as a symbol of being Dvija – '*twice-born*'. Nānak's thread ceremony was attended by family and friends,

but when the Brahmin came to put the sacred thread on him, Nānak asked whether wearing this piece of twisted grass would make Him pure, holy and devoted. The Brahmin replied that it would not but it would mark Him as a



high caste Hindu; so Nānak refused to wear it. The Brahmin was furious and stormed out, leaving Nānak's father even more exasperated with this kind and gentle, but very stubborn, boy who showed no interest in the things of this world. There is a poem by Gurū Nānak in the Gurū Granth Sāhib on this topic:

‘Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot and truth the twist. O priest! If you have such a thread, give it to me. It will not wear out, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor lost. Says Nānak, blessed are those who go about wearing such a thread’

The True Bargain

A year or two later Nānak's father decided to try getting Him interested in business. He gave Him twenty silver rupees (*a small fortune*) and told Him to purchase some articles from the local big town which could be sold in Talwandi for profit. He told Him to make the best bargains. On the way, Nānak persuaded the friend accompanying Him to take a short-cut through the forest, although this was a bit risky with a large sum of money on them. In the forest

they came across some ascetics who Nānak engaged in discussion and found they were dying of hunger as they would not beg, but only consumed what was given freely.

On reaching the town Nānak's friend was surprised to see Him buying many ordinary items such as rice, dal and vegetables; and was truly shocked when, on the way home, Nānak offered it all at the feet of the holy men, saying 'God has seen fit to feed you this day'.



His father was enraged when He returned empty-handed, but Nānak replied that His father had always told Him that money given to the poor, holy and needy conferred the greatest profit, and so He had made a 'True Bargain'. The story quickly spread throughout the local district.

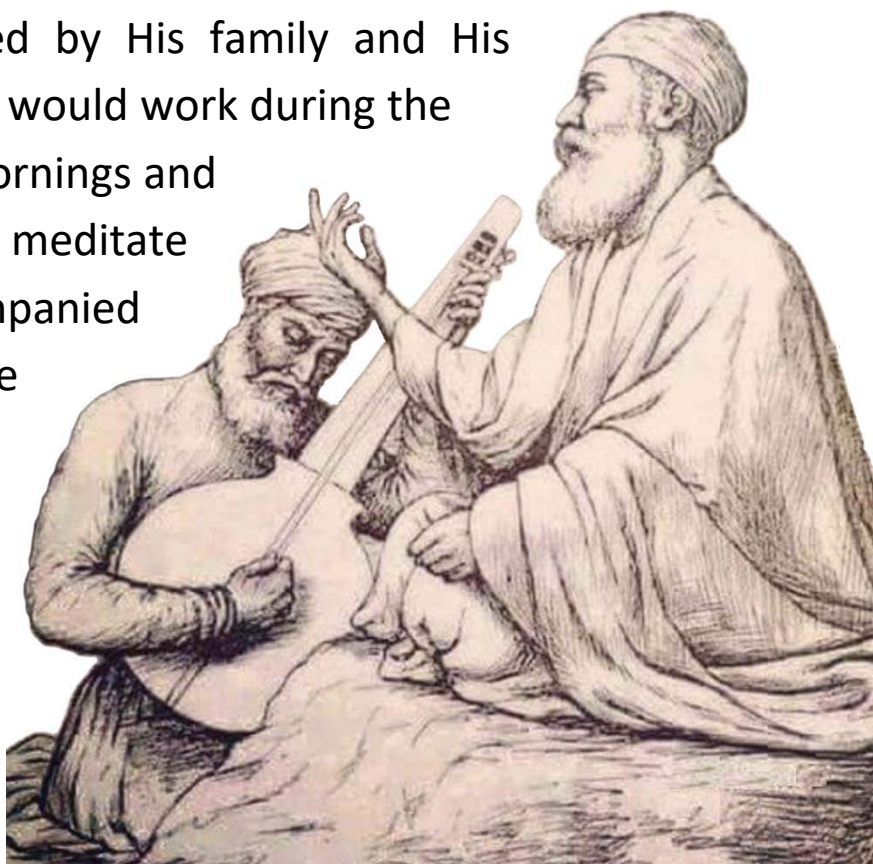
Despairing of Nānak taking any interest in worldly affairs, Mehta sent Him out to tend the family cattle, where He happily spent His days in meditation and religious discussions with the Muslim and Hindu holy men living in the forests around the village. However after a couple of years Nānak fell into depression and lost all interest even in nature or spiritual discourses.

Thinking marriage might encourage Nānak's interest in worldly affairs, a match was found for Him and at sixteen He was married to Sulakhani, a merchant's daughter. She had heard of the 'True

Bargain' and wished to marry such a man even before meeting Him. Nānak did not object as He felt that married life did not conflict with spiritual pursuits. They were happily married, and had two sons; Sri Chand in 1494 and Lakhmi Chand three years later.

His sister Nānaki had also married; to Śhrī Rām who worked for Daulat Khan Lodhi, the Muslim governor of Sultanpur. It was decided that Nānak should move to Sultanpur, and a job was found for Him as a store-keeper (*traditionally in India a job prone to corruption*).

Nānak was soon joined by His family and His friend Mardānā. Nānak would work during the day, but in the early mornings and late at night, He would meditate and sing hymns accompanied by Mardānā on the rebab (*a lute-like string instrument*). After a while people started joining them for the prayers and songs and Nānak would give inspiring talks.



Nānak often gave free grain to the poor and needy, but accounted everything and agreed it with the Governor. However some people started spreading rumours that He was giving away large quantities for free. The Governor ordered an audit, but everything was found perfectly in order. However Nānak quit the job; He had still not found the path He sought to spread the word of God.

Revelation

Early one morning Nānak went to the river Bain for His bath. After plunging into the river, He did not surface and it was reported that He must have drowned. The villagers searched everywhere, but there was no trace of Him and they gave Him up as dead. But the next day He was discovered in the forest, absorbed in deep contemplation.

Nānak had found himself taken into the presence of God, who commanded Him to repeat the 'Naam'* - *'Name of God'* and to teach others the 'Naam'. Then God blessed Him and commanded, *'O Nānak! When you look at anyone gracefully, it is not yours, but My graceful look. Whom you have benevolence, on Him will be My benevolence. My name is Brahman, the Supreme Lord; and thy name is the Guru, Permeshwar, that is the supreme Guru'*.

Nānak had received the message of God which He had sought so long. After three days He reappeared at the riverside but He was no longer the same person, there was a divine light in His eyes and His face was resplendent. He remained in a trance and said nothing.

He broke His silence by uttering 'There is no Hindu, no Musalman', and the verse now known as the Mool –'root' Mantra (*see p.198*) - the primordial Mantra which appears at the start of each chapter of the Guru Granth Sāhib, the Sacred Scripture of the Sikhs. It is one of the finest definitions of God and is amongst the most powerful of all the world's mantras.

* 'Naam' means much more than mere repetition of the Name of God. It implies devotion, surrender and meditation on the Divine Nature. Wahegurū –'wonderful teacher' is one of the main Names of God.

The town governor Daulat Khan wondered what He meant by 'There is no Hindu, no Musalman' and asked Gurū Nānak, 'Perhaps the Hindus were no longer Hindus but the Muslims remain devoted to their faith?'. Gurū Nānak replied;

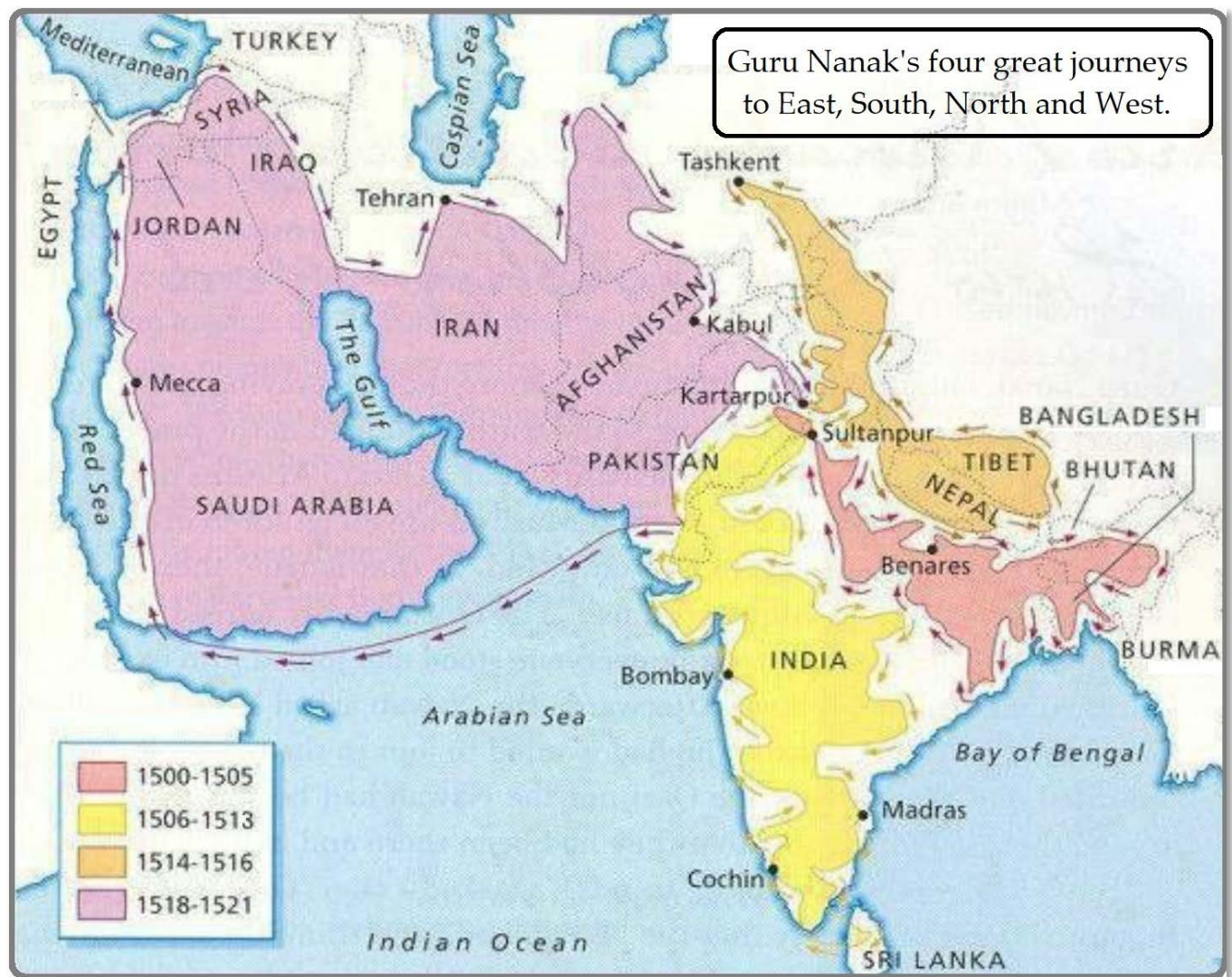
'Let God's grace be the mosque and devotion the prayer mat. Let the Quran be the good conduct. Let modesty be compassion, good manners fasting, you should be a Muslim the like of this. Let good deeds be your Ka'aba and truth be your mentor. Your Kalma be your creed and prayer, God would then vindicate your honour.'

The Qazi of Sultanpur took strong exception to Nānak saying that there was no Hindu and no Muslim. He asked Nānak if He was prepared to offer prayers with Him at the mosque, to which Nānak agreed. However while the Nawab, Qazi and others were performing Namaz, the Guru simply remained standing. This infuriated the Qazi who reminded Him that He had agreed to join them in prayer.

Nānak asked Him what he was thinking about while performing the Namaz; He had to admit that his favourite mare had given birth the evening before and he was thinking about the foal. The Nawab also admitted His mind had been in Kabul with His men busy in the horse-trade. Nānak advised them that true worship is keeping Allah in the heart and mind and not of formal ritualism.



Guru Nanak and Hindu Deities
at the Golden Temple



The Great Udasis – ‘Journeys’

It was 1499 and the thirty-year-old Nānak was now Gurū Nānak, the man with a message for humanity. Over the next twenty-one years He made four extensive journeys, east, south, north and west, to spread the message of God, accompanied always by His faithful friend and rebab player Mardānā. His teaching is embodied in His songs and prayers, which His followers learned and continued to sing after He travelled on. It was an effective medium to propagate His message being easily remembered even by simple illiterate people.

The First Journey (*East, 1500-1506*)

His first journey, of seven years, was towards the east and took Him through many of the great pilgrimage sites of north India; Kedarnath, Kurukshetra, Delhi, Hardwar, Varanasi, Prayāg and as far as Assam. He dressed in such a way that nobody could say what sect or religion He belonged to. He wore the white robe of a Muslim Pīr, a Hindu's turban and the belt of a Zoroastrian.

Wherever He went He set up local cells called Manjis, where His followers could gather to sing hymns and meditate.

One evening on coming to the small town of Saidpur in West Punjab He asked who was the poorest man in town. He was told that it was Lalo, a low caste carpenter. He found the small hut where Lalo lived and requested to stay. Lalo was shocked at the request of this high-born saint and stammered that His bed was broken and He had no food. Nānak replied that a tattered reed-mat and half a dry crust were sufficient for Him – which was exactly what Lalo had and willingly offered to Him and Mardānā.

After a few days a group had gathered who would come to Lalo's house to hear Nānak preach and join in with the heavenly singing. At the same time the local chief Malik Bhago, who was a wealthy and proud man, was holding a feast to which all holy men were invited. When Bhago found out that Gurū Nānak would not attend His feast but instead partook of Lalo's simple fare, he was angry and had the Guru brought to him for questioning.

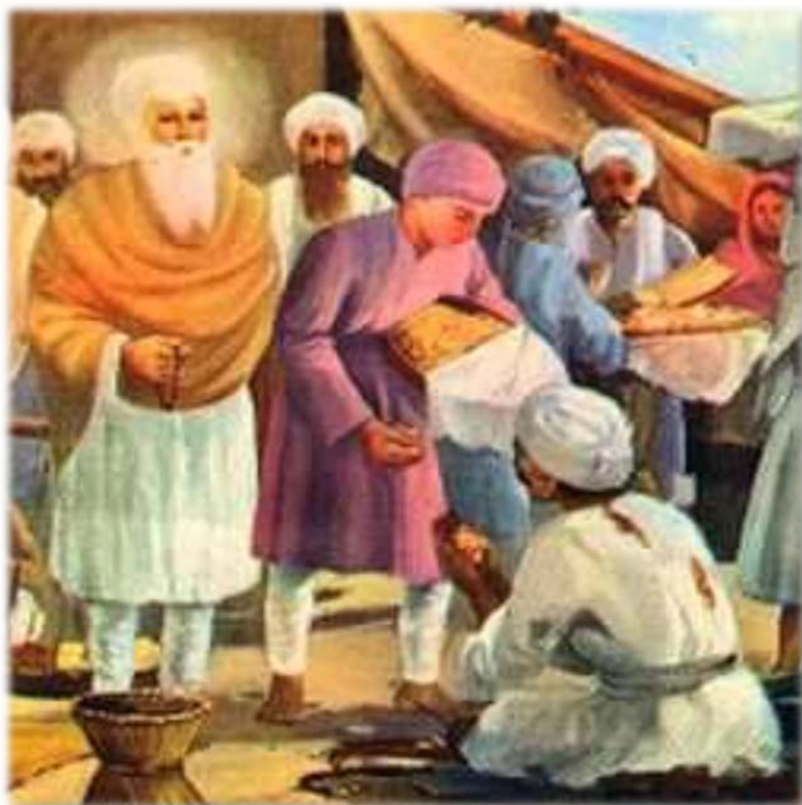
When asked why he didn't join the feast, Nānak sent for the meal served by Malik Bhago and also some of the simple food served by Lalo. Holding these in each hand He squeezed them; blood appeared out of the rich food of Malik Bhago, while milk oozed out

of Lalo's simple fare, making Malik Bhago realize that His riches came from the suffering of the poor, while what Lalo offered was the milk of hard-earned honest work.

Lalo became a great devotee and continued to hold meetings singing the Guru's songs till the end of His life.

At Lahore, Duni Chand, a very wealthy merchant, asked Gurū Nānak Dev what He could do about His insomnia and indigestion. The Guru gave Him a needle and said, 'Duni Chand, keep it with you and give it back to me in the next world.' Duni Chand was puzzled and replied, 'Master, I shall not be able to carry this needle with me after death, how can I return it to you?' and the Guru asked, 'Of what use then are your millions to you?' He asked Duni Chand to help by setting up a food kitchen to feed the poor, which he did. This kept him so busy that he ate and slept just fine, and when Gurū Nānak asked him a few weeks later how his insomnia and indigestion were, he was abashed and realised that he was much happier now.

Duni Chand was transformed and he became Gurū Nānak's follower. According to the advice of the Guru, he distributed most of his wealth amongst the needy and the poor.



‘There can be no worship without performing good deeds.’

Nānak also opposed any sort of distinctions in humanity. He professed that noble character rather than noble birth is the real test of human greatness: 'What power has caste? It is the righteousness that is tested. Whosoever tastes poison will die, no matter what his caste.' Gurū Nānak also raised His voice for the upliftment and equality of the untouchables, low-caste and for women. He had great sympathy for the down-trodden people and flayed those who were responsible for their plight. He exalted the status of women, saying:

'It is from women, the condemned one, that we are conceived and it is from her that we are born. It is to the women that we are engaged and married. It is the woman who is our life-long friend and it is she who keeps our race going. It is woman again who is sought when one loses one's previous wife. It is woman through whom we establish our social ties. Then why denounce her from whom even kings and great men are born.'

While He was camped out at a town during the rainy season, some devotees would come to the Guru daily. One of them



persuaded his neighbour to come along but, on the way, he got allured by a courtesan. Thereafter he would leave home on the pretext of going to see the Guru, but instead visit the woman. A few days later the devotee who paid daily homage to the Guru was gashed by a thorn, while His neighbour, who visited the courtesan, found a gold coin in the street.

The incident bewildered the devotee and he mentioned it at the morning prayer meeting. Gurū Nānak was amused and explained; ‘Your friend was destined to come across a great treasure but due to His evil ways, it has been reduced to a single coin. While on the account of your past karma you were to have been impaled with a stake, but having reformed yourself, you have been let off with the mere prick of a thorn.’

When the Guru visited Kurukshetra, a major pilgrimage site, a big fair was being held at the holy tank to celebrate the solar eclipse. There were a large number of pilgrims from all over the country. On His arrival at the fair, Gurū Nānak had Mardānā cook them a meat dish of a deer presented to them by one of His followers. Upon finding that meat was being cooked on the holy premises, a large angry crowd gathered to attack the Guru for what they thought was sacrilege. Upon hearing the angry crowd Gurū Nānak responded; ‘Only fools argue whether to eat meat or not. They don't understand truth nor do they meditate on it. Who can define what is meat and what is plant? Who knows where the sin lies, being a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian?’

In Hardwar, a pilgrimage centre on the Ganges, Gurū Nānak found a large gathering of devotees taking ritual baths in the holy river and throwing water in the direction of the rising sun. When the Guru asked ‘Why do you throw water like that?’ the pilgrims replied that they were offering it to their ancestors in Heaven.

Upon hearing this, Gurū Nānak started throwing water towards the west. When the pilgrims asked Him what He was doing, Gurū Nānak replied ‘I am sending water to my farm which is dry’.

They asked, ‘How will water reach you crops so far away?’



‘If your water can reach your ancestors in the region of the sun, which is thousands of yojanas away, why can't mine reach my fields only a few hundred miles away?’ The pilgrims realized their folly and fell at the Guru’s feet.

At Gorakhmata He discussed asceticism with some yogis; ‘Asceticism doesn't lie in saffron robes, or in a walking staff, nor in the ashes. Asceticism doesn't lie in the ear-ring, nor in the shaven head, nor blowing a conch. Asceticism lies in remaining pure amidst impurities. He is an ascetic who treats everyone alike. Asceticism doesn't lie in visiting burial grounds or in bathing at places of pilgrimage. Asceticism is to remain pure amidst impurities.’

Gurū Nānak’s journey brought Him and Mardānā home to the Punjab after seven years of propagating His message and establishing centres of worship all over North India.

The Second Journey *(South, 1506-1513)*

After a few months with His family, Gurū Nānak set out on a second journey southward down the east coast of India to Sri Lanka and back up the west coast. The second journey was also of about seven years.

Nānak always travelled wearing a combination of styles and was often asked whether He was a Hindu or a Muslim to which He preached the unity of all religions.

Gurū Nānak first visited the Sufi dervish Sheikh Ibrahim at Ajodhan in the Punjab. When asked by Ibrahim which of the two religions was the true way to attain God, Gurū Nānak replied; 'If there is one God, then there is only His way to attain Him, not another. One must follow that way and reject the other. Worship not Him who is born only to die, but Him who is eternal and is contained in the whole universe.'

On the way south Gurū Nānak had discussions with many great holy men of the day and converted the king of Vijaywada with His Divine vision. The king of Sri Lanka had been converted to Nanak's teachings by a devotee who had moved there some years before; however his desire to see the Guru in person was so strong and so well-known that many charlatans had pretended to be Gurū Nānak. So the king sent two beautiful dancing girls to tempt and test the Guru but they immediately fell at His Feet and sat to imbibe His teaching. Eventually the king came looking for them and, recognising the great soul, himself fell at the Feet of the Guru.

Nānak collected the songs of Nāmdev (c.1275) in Mahārāshtra which were later included in the Granth Sāhib *(holy book of the Sikhs)*.

When Kalu asked him for a definition of a holy man, the Guru replied: 'Recognize him as holy in whom are to be found friendship, sympathy, pleasure at the welfare of others and dislike of evil company. In the first place, the intentions of holy men are pure. Secondly, they are pleased on hearing the praises of others. Thirdly, holy men serve the virtuous. Fourthly, they honour those who can impart to them learning and good counsel. Fifthly, as others have a craving for food or intoxicants, so they feel a craving for the Guru's word and for divine knowledge. Sixthly, they love their wives, and renounce other women. Seventhly, they avoid subjects from which quarrels may arise. Eighthly, they serve those who are superior to themselves in intelligence or devotion. Ninthly, even if strong, they are not arrogant, and trample not on others. Tenthly, they abandon the society of the evil, and only associate with the holy.'

He established groups of followers in many of the towns and cities He visited often staying for a few months holding meditation meetings every evening, giving inspiring talks and singing His songs, always accompanied by His friend Mardānā on the rebab. He would teach His followers the songs which encapsulated His message and when He felt they were ready He would move on.

After seven years and covering more than six thousand miles on foot, the forty-four year old Nānak returned to His family in the Punjab where He founded an agricultural settlement called Kartārpur – *'the Abode of the Creator'* on the western banks of the Ravi river. Gurū Nānak would settle down here in His old age. It was also here that He met a young devotee Bābā Budha – *'the wise friend'* who would faithfully serve five of the following Gurus.

The Third Journey *(North, 1514-1518)*

Gurū Nānak spent about a year with His family in the Punjab before setting out northwards towards Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet and Nepal.

In Srinagar *(the capital of Kashmir)* he encountered an arrogant Brahmin called Braham Das who was proud of his book learning. When asked about the creation, Gurū Nānak quoted from the Ṛig Veda and said:

With His order, the world was created.

It is maintained without any support.

He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

He created also the love of Maya.

Only a few are blessed with His Word.

He watches and rules over all.

He brought about the planets, the hemisphere and the underworld.

And became Himself manifest.

It is the True Guru alone who imparts this understanding.

Says Nanak: those who are truthful live in Eternal bliss.

They are blessed with recitation of God's Name.

Braham Das was won over by the Guru's holiness and wisdom and devoted his life to spreading the message.

Gurū Nānak's journey took Him to the Mansarover Lake *(Mount Kailāsh)*. He admonished a group of ascetics who had moved there to escape persecution, for abandoning a difficult life. In Tibet His teachings gave comfort to certain persecuted tribes who still make a yearly pilgrimage to the Golden Temple in Amritsar.



A miracle is attributed to Him that the local people in a high mountain area of Tibet had difficulty getting fresh water in winter and he vibrated the highly elevated Gurudongmar Lake so that it never entirely freezes over. The lake and mountain are pilgrimage sites for Sikhs with a Gurdwara (*Sikh temple*) established there.

Gurū Nānak stayed in Katmandu, Nepal for nearly a year around 1516 establishing a strong following at a place now called Nanak Math. As in India Gurū Nānak's birthday is a public holiday in Nepal. So after five years travelling throughout the Himālayas, Gurū Nānak returned to His family in the Punjab and developed the farming community in Kartārpur for two years before heading off again.

The Fourth Journey (*West 1519-1521*)

On His fourth great journey to the west Gurū Nānak dressed in the blue garb of a Muslim pilgrim to visit Mecca, Medina and Baghdad. Arriving at Mecca, Gurū Nānak fell asleep with His feet pointing towards the holy Ka'aba. When the watchman on His night rounds

noticed this He kicked the Guru, saying, 'How dare you turn your feet towards the house of God.'

Gurū Nānak woke up and said: 'Good man, I am weary after a long journey. Kindly turn my feet in the direction where God is not.'

So the man turned His feet facing the east, but it was dawn and there was a most glorious sunrise. 'Is God not here also?' enquired the Guru. Nānak pointed out that a true Muslim believes God is Formless and All-pervading, not embodied in a rock.

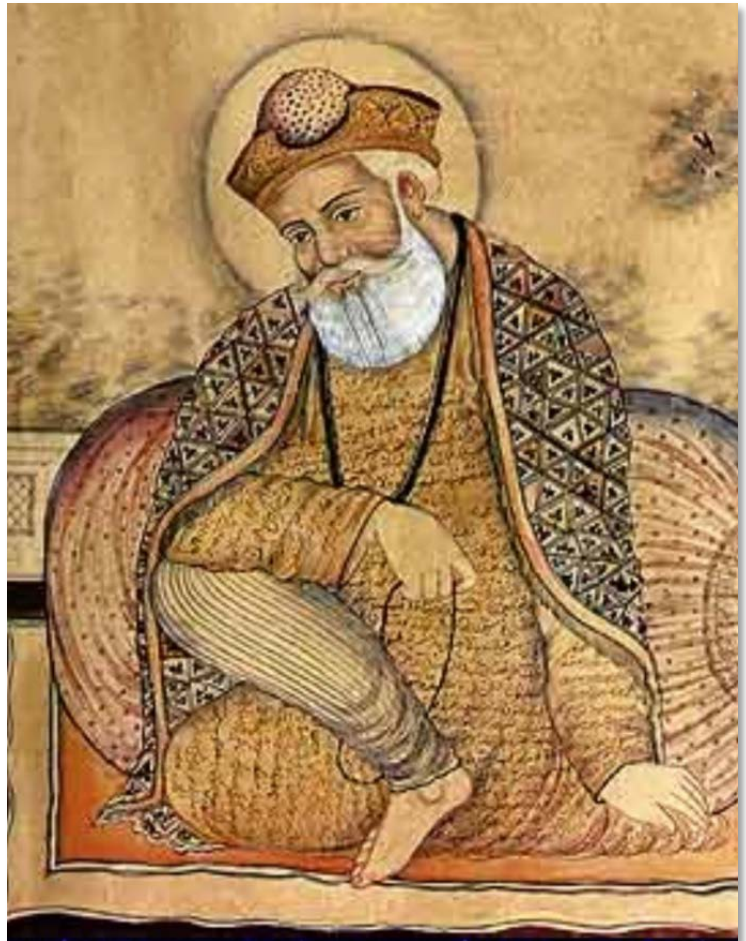
When pilgrims and the holy men of the Shrine gathered to hear Gurū Nānak and question him, He sang in Persian:

'I beseech you, O Lord! pray grant me a hearing. You are the truthful, the great, the merciful and the faultless Creator. I know for certain, this world must perish and death must come, I know this and nothing else. Neither wife, nor son, nor father, nor brothers shall be able to help. I must go in the end, none can undo what is my fate. I have spent days and nights in vanity, contemplating evil. Never have I thought of good; this is what I am. I am ill-starred, miserly, careless, short-sighted and rude. But says Nānak, I am yours, the dust of the feet of your servants.'

In Baghdad the Muslim priests were discussing the view that there were seven upper and as many lower regions. Gurū Nānak replied: 'There are worlds and more worlds below them and there are a hundred thousand skies over them. No one has been able to find the limits and boundaries of God. If there be any account of God, that alone the mortal can write the same; but God's account does not finish and the mortal himself dies while still writing. Nānak says that one should call Him great and God Himself knows His own self.'

In 1916 a tablet with the following inscription was uncovered in Baghdad, 'In memory of the Guru, the holy Bābā Nānak, King of holy men, this monument has been raised anew with the help of the seven saints.' The date on the tablet is A.D. 1520-1521.

On His return journey home He stopped at Saidpur in western Punjab during the invasion of the first Mughal Emperor Babur. On seeing the extent of the massacre by the invaders, Mardānā asked Gurū Nānak why so many innocent people were put to death along with those few who were guilty. Gurū Nānak told Mardānā to wait under a banyan tree and after a while He would return to answer His question. While sitting under the tree Mardānā was suddenly bitten by an ant. In anger Mardānā killed as many ants as He could with His feet. Gurū Nānak said to him, 'You know now, Mardānā, why the innocents suffer along with the guilty?' Gurū Nānak and Mardānā were both taken prisoner by the Mughals. While in jail Gurū Nānak sang a song about the senseless slaughter of the innocents by the Mughal invaders. Upon hearing it the jailer was deeply moved and reported it to His king.



Babur sent for Gurū Nānak and upon hearing Him realized that He was a saint. He asked for the Guru's forgiveness and set Him free offering Him a pouch of hashish. Gurū Nānak declined saying the He

was already intoxicated with the love and name of God. Nānak advised Babur to be less cruel and violent to the people.

Fifth Journey (1522-1524)

After two years in Kartārpur His mother Triptā died and Gurū Nānak felt free to travel again, spending two years touring the Punjab and north-west India spreading the word of God to suffering humanity.

The Bowl of Milk

During His travels around the Punjab Gurū Nānak came to the city of Multan. The local religious leaders felt that there were enough 'holy men' already in the town and sent a pīr (*Muslim saint*) to greet Him with a bowl filled to the brim with milk.



Understanding the meaning of the filled bowl Gurū Nānak gently placed a jasmine flower on the milk showing that he would not displace anyone but only add fragrance and entered the town.

After twenty-four years of travelling, preaching and setting up missions, Gurū Nānak settled down at Kartārpur with His wife and sons and many of His followers, who would gather in the mornings and evenings for worship. Pilgrims and devotees came from far and wide to hear the preaching and the Divine hymns of the Master.

One of the institutions which He felt helped to create a casteless society was the Langar - the common kitchen where everyone shared the same meal, whether kings or beggars, without any distinctions of birth, religion or sex.

While working the fields one day in 1532 Gurū Nānak was approached by a new devotee who said, 'I am Lehna,' Gurū Nānak looked at Him and replied, 'So you have arrived Lehna. I have been waiting for you all these days. I must pay your debt.' (*Lehna means 'debt'*) Lehna had been a devotee of Śhrī Durgā, but having heard about Gurū Nānak and His teachings, he went to see the Guru for himself and immediately became a disciple.

Lehna's dedication to Gurū Nānak was absolute; when not working on the farm, He would devote His time to the contemplation of God and he soon became Gurū Nānak's most ardent disciple. Sometimes Gurū Nānak tested His followers to see who was the most faithful. Once while accompanied by Lehna and His two sons Gurū Nānak came across what looked like a corpse covered with a sheet. 'Who would eat it?' asked Gurū Nānak unexpectedly. His sons refused, thinking that their father was not in His senses.

Lehna though agreed and as He removed the cover He found that it was a tray of sacred food. Lehna first offered it to Gurū Nānak and His sons and then partook of the leftovers himself. Gurū Nānak on seeing this replied; 'Lehna, you were blessed with the sacred food because you could share it with others. If the people use the wealth bestowed on them by God for themselves alone or for treasuring it, it is like a corpse. But if they decide to share it with others, it becomes sacred food. You have known the secret. You are my image.'

Gurū Nānak gave Lehna a new name, Angad, saying 'You are a part of my body' (*añga* – 'body'). He placed five coins and a coconut in front of him and bowed before him. He then had Bhai Budha anoint Angad with a saffron mark on his forehead. When the followers gathered together for prayers Gurū Nānak invited Angad to occupy the seat of the Guru. Thus Gurū Angad was ordained as the successor to Gurū Nānak.

As His end was drawing near, the Hindus said; 'we will cremate you', the Muslims said; 'we will bury you'.

'Place flowers on either side, Hindus on my right, Muslims on my left. Those whose flowers remain fresh tomorrow will have their way.'

The Guru prepared to depart from the world of mortals and return to the Eternal Home. He addressed the disciples who had assembled around Him:-

'The appointed hour hath come - the hour of marriage and union with the Spouse Divine. Assemble ye, my comrades: Cluster round me and lift up your merry notes. Sing the praises of the Divine, the Comforting Lord. Anoint the Bride, pour oil on her forehead, give her your blessings and pray that she may meet her Lord and be happy with Him for ever.

Sing ye, my friends, the praises of the Spouse; for the appointed hour of union hath come.'

He then asked them to pray and lay down covering himself with a sheet. Thus on 22nd September 1539 in the early hours of the morning Gurū Nānak merged with the Eternal Light of the Creator.

When the followers lifted the sheet the next morning they found only the flowers, all of which were fresh. The Hindus took theirs and

cremated them, while the Muslims took their flowers and buried them.

Having spread the message of reform throughout His lifetime, Gurū Nānak successfully challenged many religious tenets, laying the foundations of Sikhism.

The Ten Gurus

Sikhs believe that the spirit of Gurū Nānak infused each of the following nine Gurus who founded the Sikh religion. The time-span of

the Ten Gurus (1500-1708) coincides with the main duration of the Mughal Empire, starting with the invader Babur whom Gurū Nānak met, up to Aurangzeb and Shah Bahadur after whom the Empire waned and disintegrated.

Gurū Nānak was a man of great love, peace and gentleness, but by the time of the last five Gurus the Sikhs had, of necessity, become militarised in order to survive the persecutions of the religious zealot Aurangzeb and soon founded a nation based on military strength. They are famous for valour and form a strong part of the Indian army.



1. Guru Nānak (1469–1539)

2. Guru Añgad (1504-1552)

Before His death Gurū Nānak appointed Lehna whom He named Añgad, one of His humblest and most devoted followers, as the next Guru. He passed over His two sons; Sri Chand, the elder, who was a spiritual man but proud and ascetic and Lakhmi Chand who was not spiritually inclined.

Gurū Añgad continued Gurū Nānak's work of spreading the message, developing the caste-less society with love and service to all people. He was Guru for thirteen years and appointed another of Gurū Nānak's great devotees, Amar Das, as His successor.

Babur's son Humayun asked for and received Guru Añgad's blessing to help recapture the Mughal throne, which He achieved in 1555.

3. Guru Amar Das (1479–1574)

Amar Das was only ten years younger than Gurū Nānak and was already seventy-three when He started His twenty years as the third Guru of the Sikhs. Like Guru Añgad He developed Gurū Nānak's institutions such as regular tours to spread the word of God and the common kitchen. He continued reforming Hindu society, opposing all caste distinctions, Sati (*widow burning*), Purdah (*women's seclusion and face-covering*) and encouraged widow remarriage. Both He and Guru Añgad earned their own living refusing to live on collective funds. He survived some attempts to usurp His Guru-ship and became widely venerated. Emperor Akbar visited Him and respectfully gifted Him some land.

4. Guru Ram Das (1534–1581)

Guru Amar Das continued the tradition of not appointing His sons, but chose Ram Das, another humble devotee to follow Him. Gurū Nānak's son Sri Chand was still angry at being passed over, but came to visit Ram Das and was impressed with His humility.

Guru Ram Das inaugurated the building of the Golden Temple in Amritsar – '*lake of immortal nectar*' which became a focal city of the Sikhs. Like all His predecessors He composed devotional hymns which are included in the Granth Sāhib (*sacred book of the Sikhs*).

5. Guru Arjan Dev (1563–1606)

The youngest of Guru Ram Das's three sons, Arjan, showed great spiritual tendencies from an early age and was appointed by His father as the next Guru, which angered the eldest brother Prithvi Chand. Arjan was only eighteen in 1581 when He was appointed and His oldest brother tried unsuccessfully to take over as Guru.

Guru Arjan undertook many building projects apart from completing the Golden Temple. He compiled the original Granth Sāhib including writings by all the Gurus and many great Muslim and Hindu saints such as Kabīr and Nāmdev.

Emperor Akbar paid respects to Guru Arjan but Jahangir opposed His father's religious liberalism and tried to stamp out non-Muslim religions. Guru Arjan was arrested, tortured for five days but refused to renounce even one word of the Granth Sāhib or His religion and was finally drowned in the river. Hence began the militarisation of the Sikhs to counter the fanatical Mughals attempts to eradicate them.

6. Guru Har Gobind (1595–1644)

When He was thirty, Guru Arjan's wife bore a son Har Gobind who became the next Guru at the age of eleven on His father's martyrdom. His father had left instructions to form an army and always remain armed to defend the community, and so the Sikhs began to become a military force.

Guru Har Gobind took on the role of king of the Sikhs, dressing finely, sitting on a throne and administering justice. He was imprisoned in 1611 by the Mughal emperor Jahangir but released eighteen months later. He had no further problems with Jahangir but in 1628 Shah Jahan became emperor and started persecuting the Sikhs and destroying their temples. This resulted in three battles which the Sikhs won. In the battle of Amritsar in 1628 700 Sikhs defeated a Mughal Army of 7000.

Shri Rām Das met Guru Har Gobind and asked him; 'What kind of guru are you, wearing fine clothes, armour and carrying weapons?' Guru Har Gobind replied that saintliness is within and that His sword was for the protection of the poor from tyrants. Rām Das was satisfied and himself raised an army in Maharashtra becoming the guru of King Shivaji whom He trained to resist the Mughals.

7. Guru Har Rai (1630–1661)

Har Gobind's grandson Har Rai kept a permanent army and ruled the Sikh nation as a king. His period was peaceful and He was not troubled by Shah Jahan, who once requested the Guru for some medicine which saved His son Dara, who had been poisoned by His brother Aurangzeb. However Aurangzeb eventually killed all His brothers, imprisoned His father and became Emperor. The peace

was over. Aurangzeb enlisted the favour of Har Rai's elder son Ram Rai and tried to undermine His authority.

Guru Har Rai continued expanding the organisation of the Sikhs and promoted preaching and missionary work establishing large communities in Bihar and Afghanistan.

8. Guru Har Krishan (1656–1664)

Before He died at the early age of thirty-one Guru Har Rai installed His six-year old son as the next Guru. Aurangzeb wished to meet the Guru but He declined; however He visited Delhi anyway and impressed the imperial court with His saintly behaviour. During an outbreak of smallpox the Guru visited the sick, some of whom recovered miraculously. However He himself succumbed to the disease and died at the age of eight. His last words were 'Bābā Bakale' indicating that He wished His great-uncle Tegh Bahadur, who lived in Bakala, to be the next Guru.

9. Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675)

Born Tyag Mal as the youngest son of Guru Har Gobind, He was named Tegh Bahadur –*'hero of the sword'* after a battle against the Mughals in 1634. He lived a simple, contemplative and secluded life. After Har Krishan's words 'Bābā Bakale' many imposters claimed the Guru-ship. Finally a Sikh who had vowed to give five hundred gold coins to the Guru, went to Bakala and offered each pretender two gold coins. They all accepted until He



came to Tegh Bahadur who replied; 'But you promised five hundred', and He realised He had found the true Guru.

Tegh Bahadur became the Guru at the age of forty-three and travelled to the east of India, even visiting Assam where He helped negotiate a peace treaty. He founded and encouraged Sikh communities wherever He went.

Aurangzeb continued His persecution of non-Islamic religions and proclaimed that any Hindus who did not convert would be put to death. Some Kashmir Pandits appealed to Tegh Bahadur and He agreed to a statement that if He converted then they would convert too. With three followers He was arrested, imprisoned and tortured. When offered freedom if He could show some miracles, He refused, as Gurū Nānak had firmly rejected any demonstration of occult powers.

His three companions were tortured to death before His eyes, but they did not quaver. Finally His turn came but He resisted torture and was beheaded before a crowd of thousands at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. A legend goes that He wrote some words on a piece of paper and tied it around His neck saying that their swords would not touch Him. After He was beheaded the paper was read; 'You have destroyed my body but I am the Eternal Spirit which is untouched'.

In a unique sacrifice, Guru Tegh Bahadur gave His life to protect the followers of a different religion. His execution made Aurangzeb deeply unpopular and halted His program of forcible conversion. India still remains the only country invaded by Muslims which did not become Islamic.

10. Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708)

Guru Tegh Bahadur appointed His nine-year-old son Gobind Rai as the next Guru who realised that the Sikhs must unite as a nation and defend themselves, so all men had military training.

In 1699 He summoned a congregation of eighty thousand Sikhs. He asked them to be prepared to give their lives for the Khalsa – ‘*congregation of the pure*’, requiring them to keep the five K’s – Kesh – ‘*uncut hair*’, Kangha – ‘*comb*’, Kara – ‘*iron bracelet*’, Kachera – ‘*dhoti*’ and Kirpan – ‘*sword or dagger*’. He gave them all the name Singh – ‘*lion*’ and became Guru Gobind Singh.

He updated the Granth Sāhib – ‘*Holy Book*’ to include the songs of all the Gurus and declared that after His death, there would be no more human Gurus but that the book would be the Guru. Hence it is called the Guru Granth Sāhib.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Sikhs lived peacefully with the Emperor Shah Bahadur, with whom they had an alliance.

At the age of forty-two an assassination attempt wounded the Guru which was stitched by an English surgeon; but when pulling a bow soon after, the wound re-opened and He died.

“At the time of Guru Gobind Singh, when the war had started, they had to wear all these things (5 K’s), which was important. To protect Hinduism from the invasion of the Muslims, the fanaticism of the Muslims, they took to this kind of a military stuff.”



01-11-82, Nightingale Lane

Gurū Granth Sāhib

The sacred book of the Sikhs is a collection of spiritual poetry from all over India by Sikh, Muslim and Hindu saints. It is written in many languages including Punjabi, Sanskrit, Marathi and Persian. Akhand Path –‘*continuous recitation*’ of the whole book is often undertaken which takes about two and a half days.

Apart from Guru Nānak (974 poems) and the other Gurus, the largest contributors are Sant Kabīr Das (15thc. 541 poems) and Sheikh Farid (12thc. 134 poems). The Marathi poet Nāmdev (14thc.) has sixty poems which were collected by Guru Nanak Himself during his travels.

“A very simple poet called Namdev was just a tailor, ordinary, and he has written a very sweet poem. He says that ‘a little boy is flying a kite in the sky. He's talking to his friends, he's moving up and down and he's discussing things here and there but his attention is on the kite.’

Then he says: ‘A lady who is carrying her little baby, is doing the work in the house, she's giving water to her husband and cooking. But her attention is all the time on the child.

A lady is walking with a pitcher of water on her head, with many other ladies; they are all laughing, smiling, talking to each other and discussing things, but her attention is on that pitcher of water.’ Same way is with the saints and yogis. They do all kind of work but their attention is always on their Spirit. In the same way, though we have to lead a life here, it is absurd that we do not have our attention on our Spirit which is the giver of joy, the ultimate in life.”

31-05-83, London. 26-11-84, Mumbai

The Sikh Religion

“Guru Nānak always talked of the Spirit. He said ‘know thyself’ (*‘apa chine’*). Only this is the teaching of Guru Nānaka, this is what is called ‘Sikh’; Sikh comes from Shishya – ‘disciple, student’ and means the person who has learnt the Divine laws.”

29-02-92, 03-04-92

The Sikh Religion follows most of the basic tenets of Hinduism, with a belief in karma and reincarnation, but eschews ritualism and outward practices such as the caste system and pilgrimages. The purpose of life is to be reabsorbed into the Formless All-pervading God known as Waheguru (*Vāhigurū*) – ‘Wondrous Lord’, Akāl Purakh – ‘Being beyond Time’ and Ik Onkar – ‘One Spirit’.

Worship starts with the Mool – ‘root’ Mantra (see p.204) declaring the Oneness and Greatness of God. One of the main paths to God is Nām-japna – ‘Reciting and meditating on the Name of God’.

The Gurū Granth Sāhib is considered to be the direct words of God, as attested by Gurū Nānak and the other Gurus. Collectivity is also an essential ingredient in salvation. A good life lived in and for the world is the basis of liberation; not withdrawal or asceticism but through universal brotherhood and in praying, meditating and working for the well-being of all.

Community prayers involving singing the songs of the Guru Granth Sāhib and collective eating at the Langar – ‘common kitchen’ are two of the main features of Sikh worship. The Langar at the Golden Temple gives free food to thousands of devotees daily.

Shri Mataji's Quotes on Gurū Nānak

“We can say on Guru Principle Nānak Sāhib came. Even in His time so many could not know their Spirit. He was breaking His head advising the people. He had taken human form but still He was not recognized. I was with Him, in fact with all of Them.”

18-08-79, Delhi

“Then a great personality like Guru Nānaka came on this Earth and He said that all these nonsensical things are not what Kundalinî is: ‘The Kundalinî is your Mother and She rises without any trouble through different Chakras.’ And the one who supported Him and explained Sahaja Yoga in a very good way was the great personality of Kabîra.”

29-09-83, USA

“He (*Guru Nanak*) came to create amity, to create understanding, to create unity between religions. This was a very big step for Sahaja Yoga. After that, as you know, He was born again, no one knows where, but He appeared as Shirdi Sâi Nâth. He too said the same thing, that to talk ill of any religion is a sin.”

Guru Nanak's Birthday, 01-11-82

“One day I was travelling and one Indian lady came to see Me and said, ‘I was surprised to see your disciples. Their faces were shining with such light. I've never seen any disciples like that.’ I asked her, ‘Who are you?’ She said, ‘I'm married in Guru Nānak's family and all the people in His family are just the opposite to what Shri Guru Nānak was.’ So I said, ‘Because they worship Shri Ganesha.’ She said, ‘In our family nobody worships Shri Ganesh.’ I said, ‘It cannot be possible? How is it? They believe in the Nirākâr, the formless God of Chaitanya. But who is the Source of that Chaitanya?’

So she said that Nânaka has only talked up to this point; not about the Source. I said, ‘Better find out. Because in this book maybe some things have been taken away.’ Then somebody gave me a passage where He had described the innocence, the Deity of Shri Ganesha. He had described that the whole Creation was done by the Mother.”

10-09-95, Cabella



“If you read His (*Guru Nanak’s*) talks then you will be surprised that he has always talked of Sahaja. He has said “Sahaja samâdhi lago.” (*meditation is effortless*) He has said, ‘Why go to forest to find Him, He is always there with you just like there is a fragrance in a flower and just as the reflection is there in a mirror, in the same way God is residing in you eternally; seek Him within.’ He is just inside, achieve Him inside.”

09-12-73, Delhi

“Mohammad Sahib Himself was born as our great Guru, Guru Nanaka. Guru Nanak was not (*just*) a human being; He was not only a Paigambar –‘*Messenger of God*’ but He was the reincarnation of Âdi Guru, the Primordial Master, He was a Divine personality. He also has said that it is the Primordial Mother who has created the Universe. At that time in this country people were following a ritualistic, nonsensical Hindu religion which was very much departed from the real ancient religion of Upanishads.”

22-02-82, Delhi

Guru Nanak about Shri Mataji:

‘Obeisance, obeisance to Her, the Primal, the Immaculate, without beginning, without end, constant through all ages. The One Mother existed alone in some mysterious way and She created the three Deities. One was the Creator, one the Sustainer and one the Destroyer. The world moves as She ordains and as She pleases. She sees all, but no one sees Her; this is a great wonder.’ ***Gurū Granth Sāhib***



Further Reading:

Max Macauliffe – Life of Guru Nanak. Macauliffe, a senior British administrator in India, converted to Sikhism in 1860 and spent the last thirty years of his life translating the holy books into English and raising awareness of the Sikh religion in the west. This biography is one of the most factual and contains translations of many of Guru Nanak’s songs. Download free at symb-ol.org.

Kushwant Singh – History of the Sikhs, vol.1. Kushwant Singh, a well-known Sikh writer (*and joke-collector!*) gives a pleasingly devotional and inspiring rendition of Guru Nanak’s life in Volume 1.

Harish Dhillon – Guru Nanak. (*Spiritual Masters Series*) Adding some historical and imaginative detail, Dhillon weaves a very readable account of Guru Nanak’s life with a summary of His teaching and Sikh worship at the end.





SAI BABA



ai Baba

Though having no home or possessions, no wife or progeny, nothing to call 'mine', Sāi Bābā lived in the world, in the society of people whose lives He tried to uplift. He begged His bread, sat at the foot of the Neem tree, dealt with the worldly concerns of His devotees and taught people to direct their attention towards the Divine. He had no attachment to anything transitory and His sole concern was Self-realisation.



“You feel tremendous love for others and some people, I would say Sâi Nâth was one of them who had this left-hand side gift with Him, and He was love personified. He was so much full of love for people that once there was a woman who was very poor and she couldn't celebrate her Diwâlî Day and He couldn't bear it so He gave her some water and the water became like oil and she burnt lights in that; and it's a fact, you can do that, it's possible.”

26-01-77, Bordi

Rich or poor were the same to Him and He cared nothing for honour or dishonour. He mixed freely with all people, saw the dances of Nautch-girls and heard Gajjal songs; still He maintained His mental equilibrium with the name of Allah always on His lips. Though a Siddha -‘realised soul’, He acted like a Sadhaka -‘seeker’; He was meek, humble and pleasing to all. The soil of Shirdî trodden by His Feet attained great sanctity.

As Sāī Bābā's fame spread, people from all over India, even some Europeans, came to see Him and be blessed. By mere darshan – 'presence', their minds became quiet and they experienced deep joy.

“We had about hundred years back a very great Saint born in India known as Sâī Nâth - 'ancient master'. They (*Ādi Gurus*) all represent the same element, that is the water element. Being born out of that they are anxious to maintain water element as the one which is within us for sustaining ourselves.

We are sustained by water so they help us to sustain ourselves. They are the sustainers, tell us how to sustain us as a human being. And all of them have tried to establish religion within us. A religion doesn't mean outside, but the religion means the capacity of a man, or you can say, the quality of a man; what a human being should be like.”

21-04-80, Caxton Hall

Sai Baba's Advent in Shirdi

Like Nāmdev and Kabir¹, nobody knew Bābā's parents or birth-place. Enquiries were made, questions were put to Bābā², but no definite answer was forthcoming. We know practically nothing of His origins. Appearing in Shirdī as a young man of sixteen He was described thus:

‘This young lad, fair, smart and very handsome, was first seen under the Neem tree, seated in an Āsan – 'Yogic posture'. The people of the village were surprised to see such a young lad practising hard penance, not minding heat and cold. By day He associated with none, by night He was afraid of nobody. People were wondering

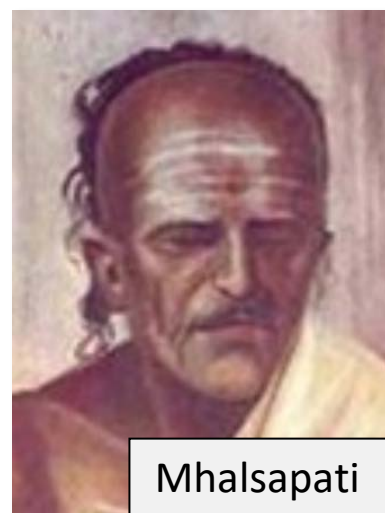
¹ They were both found as infants, Nāmdev on the bank of the Bhimrathi river by Gonayee and Kabir beside the Bhagirathi river by Tamal.

² Much of this material comes from the Sai Satcharitra where He is referred to as 'Bābā' by the devotees who wrote the book.

whence this young chap had turned up. His form and features were so beautiful that a mere look endeared Him to all.'

His first advent in Shirdi was in 1854, when He was about sixteen, suggesting a possible birth-date of 1838. This would have made him about eighty when He died in 1918. After three years He left Shirdi for a year and returned in 1858, never to leave again. He once told a devotee that He had fought with Jhansi-ki Rani in the 1857 uprising.

On His arrival in Shirdi the local priest Mhalsapati, who became one of His greatest devotees, greeted Him with the words 'Aao, Sāī' – '*welcome, saint*' and He was called Sāī Bābā ever after – no-one knew His given name. 'Bābā' is a term of respect meaning 'father, guru, sir'. Shri Mataji generally refers to Him as 'Sāī Nāth'.



Mhalsapati

First Meeting

Chand Patil was the head-man of Dhoop village in Mahārāshtra. On a trip to near-by Aurangabad, he lost his mare and for two months made a diligent but fruitless search for the animal. Disappointed, he was on his way home from Aurangabad carrying the saddle when he came upon a young man in a long robe seated under a mango tree. The young fakir – '*ascetic*' invited Chand Patil to share a chillum – '*pipe*' with him and rest a little.

On being asked about the saddle on his shoulder, Chand Patil explained that it belonged to his lost mare. The fakir suggested that he search around the stream close by. He went and - wonder of wonders! - there was the mare. He surmised that this fakir was no ordinary man.

He returned to the fakir with the mare. The chillum was ready for smoking, but two things were wanting; fire to light the pipe and water to wet the cloth through which to inhale the smoke.

The fakir thrust his stick forcibly into the ground and out came a glowing coal, which He put on the pipe. Then He again struck the stick on the ground and water began to ooze out. The cloth was wetted and wrapped round the pipe. With everything complete, the fakir lit the chillum and shared it with Chand Patil.

Chand Patil was wonderstruck; he requested the fakir to come and bless his home and accept his hospitality. So next day Bābā went to the Patil's house and stayed for some time.

As his nephew was to be married to a girl from Shirḍī, Patil and his family headed there for the marriage. Bābā accompanied them but when the family were leaving for home after the marriage, Bābā decided to stay in Shirḍī.



Contact with Other Saints

Sāi Bābā slept in a deserted Masjid –'mosque' at one end of the town. He did not generally seek company but He would sometimes stay in the Maruti temple with a saint named Devidas who had been in Shirḍī for many years. Another saint Jankidas used to visit Bābā occasionally for discussions and meditation.

A house-holder saint from a nearby village, named Gangagir, when he saw Bābā carrying pitchers of water for the garden, was amazed and said, ‘Blessed is Shirḍī, that it has this precious jewel. This man is carrying water today; but He is no ordinary fellow. As this land (*Shirḍī*) was lucky and meritorious, it has secured this jewel.’

A well-known saint called Ānandnāth visited Shirḍī while Bābā was still a youngster and, on seeing Him, said: ‘This is a precious diamond in reality. Though He looks like an ordinary man, He is not a ‘gar’ (*stone*) but a diamond. You will realize this in the near future.’

Baba’s Dress and Daily Routine

Sāi Bābā did not shave His head as ascetics traditionally do but wore a turban of white cloth which flowed down behind His left ear. He wore one simple long robe with a wasit-band. He kept a satka – ‘*short stick*’ with Him and never wore shoes or sandals. A piece of sack-cloth for a seat was one of His few luxuries.

By day He sat under the Neem tree, or sometimes in the shade of a Babul tree near the stream at the edge of the village. Other times He would wander in the forest finding lonely spots where He would get absorbed in deep Samādhi – ‘*contemplation*’. One lady devotee would cook for Bābā daily and search the forest for Him to give Him food. Although having no attention on eating, He allowed her to feed Him out of love.

At night He sat in front of the Dhuni – ‘*sacred fire*’ which He kept always burning, facing south with His left hand resting on the wooden railing. Into the Dhuni He offered egoism, desires and all thoughts and would utter ‘Allah Malik’ – ‘*God is the boss*’.

For many years Bābā slept on a narrow plank of wood suspended from the ceiling six feet in the air with a lamp burning at each corner. No-one knew how He managed to get



on – or stay on – it. In later years He broke the plank into pieces and slept on the floor of the Masjid in the company of two of His closest devotees, Mhalsapati and Madhav-rao. Lying in three directions with their feet touching, they would often talk late into the night.

On a visit to a nearby village, He brought back some small marigold plants which He planted outside the masjid. For three years Vaman Tatya, a devotee, gave Him two earthen pitchers every day. With these Bābā drew water from the well and carried it to His garden. The pitchers were kept at the foot of the Neem tree but, being made of unfired clay, they would disintegrate. The next day, Tatya would supply two fresh pitchers. Bābā's flower-garden flourished.

Turning Water into Oil

Bābā used to keep lamps burning at night in the Masjid and every morning would beg oil from the banias –'shop-keepers'. After some time they got fed up with giving oil for free and decided to draw the line. So when Bābā made His morning round, they all replied that this morning they had no oil.

Unperturbed, Bābā returned to the Masjid and put the dry wicks in the lamps. Some of the banias had sneaked up to Bābā's window and were watching Him with curiosity. Bābā took the tin pot which contained only a few drops of oil, put some water into it, of which He took a sip and spat into the container. After consecrating the pot in this way, He filled the lamps with the water and lit them.

To the surprise of the watching banias, the lamps began to burn and kept burning the whole night. The banias begged Bābā's forgiveness and He asked them to be more truthful in future.

Gentle Man

He walked, talked and laughed with the towns-folk, muttering 'Allah Malik' – '*God is the King*'. He disliked discussions or arguments and remained calm and controlled, though irritable at times, treating princes and poor people alike. He always preached full Advaita Vedānta – '*non-dualistic Hinduism*' but advocated a path of purity and devotion for both Hindus and Muslims. He knew the innermost secrets of all and often surprised devotees with His insight.



He would sometimes feign ignorance and once allowed an arrogant local 'Guru' to treat Him as his disciple, organizing and bossing Him around for eighteen months, while Bābā restrained the anger of His devotees. Finally the man realized his foolishness and begged Bābā's forgiveness.

All who came benefited from Bābā's darshan; the sick became well; the lame walked; the blind saw; wicked people turned to the good; even some lepers were cured; and many had their desires fulfilled.

His fame spread far and wide and pilgrims flocked to Shirḍī. Bābā sat by the Dhuni, ever in meditation.

Shri Sai Satcharitra

On the suggestion of a devotee to whom He had given the name Hemadpant, in 1916 (*shortly before His death*) Sāī Bābā allowed the compiling of the Śhrī Sāī Satcharitra – '*true character of Sāī Bābā*'. This collection of His followers' first-hand accounts contains many anecdotes about Sāī Bābā, including His teachings and illustrative stories He told. (*An English translation is available to download free on symb-ol.org.*)

'Regarding the writing of Sat-charita; do your duty, don't be the least afraid, steady your mind and have faith in My words. If my Leelas – '*dramas*' are attentively and devoutly listened to, the Avidya – '*ignorance*' will vanish, worldly consciousness will abate and strong waves of devotion and love will rise up. Diving deep into My Leelas, one would get precious jewels of knowledge.'

'Hearing my stories and teachings will create faith in devotees' hearts and they will easily get Self-realisation and Bliss;'

'If a man utters My name with love, I shall fulfil all his wishes, increase his devotion. And if he sings earnestly My life and My deeds, him I shall protect in front and back and on all sides. Those devotees, who are attached to Me, heart and soul, will naturally feel happiness, when they hear these stories. Believe Me that if anybody sings My Leelas, I will give him infinite joy and

everlasting contentment. It is My special characteristic to free any person, who surrenders completely to Me and who worships Me faithfully and who remembers Me and meditates on Me constantly. How can they be conscious of worldly objects and sensations, who utter My name, who worship Me, who think of My stories and My life and who thus always remember Me? I shall draw out My devotees from the jaws of death.'

'Be wherever you like, do whatever you choose, remember this well that all that you do is known to Me. I am the Inner Ruler of all and seated in your hearts. I envelop all the creatures, the movable and immovable world. I am the Controller, the wire-puller of the show of this Universe. I am the Mother, the origin of all beings, the harmony of the three Gunas, the propeller of all senses, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Nothing will harm him who turns his attention towards Me, but Maya will lash or whip him who forgets Me.'

All quotes by Sai Baba are taken from the Sai Satcharitra.



Baba's Mercy

In 1910, Bābā was sitting in the masjid on Diwali pushing fire-wood into the brightly-burning Dhuni. Suddenly, instead of logs, Bābā thrust His arm into the fire which was scorched and burnt immediately. Madhav and the other devotees at once ran to Bābā, clasping Him by the waist from behind and dragging Him back, asking, 'Deva, why have you done this?' Collecting Himself, Bābā replied, 'The wife of a blacksmith at some distance, was working the bellows of a furnace when her husband called her. Forgetting that her child was on her waist, she ran hastily and the child slipped into the furnace. I immediately thrust My hand into the furnace and saved the child. I do not mind My arm being burnt, and I am glad that the life of the child is saved.' Some time later the blacksmith's wife, who had called out Bābā's name when the child fell, ran in and prostrated at Bābā's Feet thanking Him profusely for saving the child who was completely unhurt.

Though often inexplicable, Sāi Bābā's actions were always for the benevolence of His bhaktas. Sometimes He looked on those who came to Him with affection and at other times threw stones at them; sometimes He scolded them, other times embraced them and was calm, tolerant and even-tempered. His favourite utterances were 'Allah Malik' – *'God is the boss'*, 'Śhraddha-saburi' – *'have faith, be patient'*, 'Sab-kā malik ek' – *'everyone's master is one'* and 'Allah rakhega vaisa rahena' – *'Let us be content with what we have, and submit our will to Allah.'*

Fortunate indeed were those who recognised Him and had access to this treasure-trove of Divine Love, Protection and Wisdom.

Baba's Mission and Advice

Like Kabīr, Gurū Nānak and other later Indian saints, Sāī Bābā tried to bridge the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. His advice was:

‘Rāma (*the God of the Hindus*) and Rahim (*the God of the Muslims*) are one and the same; there is not the slightest difference between them; then why should their devotees quarrel among themselves? You ignorant children, join hands and bring both the communities together, act sanely and thus you will gain your object of national unity. It is not good to dispute and argue. So don't argue, don't emulate others. The Lord will protect you. Yoga, sacrifice, penance and knowledge are the means to attain God. If you do not succeed in this by any means, vain is your birth. If anyone does any evil unto you, do not retaliate. If you can do anything, do some good unto others.’

He would advise reading the Rāmāyana and Bhagavad Gītā for Hindus and the Qur'an for Muslims. He quoted from the Upanishads and followed Muslim forms of worship. He enjoyed the performance of Mawlid and Qawallis but allowed Hindus (*to the consternation of His Muslim followers*) to do Pūjā by washing and worshipping His Feet. There are several instances of devotees being granted a vision of His physical form as Śhrī Rāma, Śhiva, Kṛishṇa and other Deities.



Sai Baba Satguru

The two aspects of Brahman –‘God’, the formless Unmanifest (*Nirguna* –‘without attributes’) and the Manifest (*Saguna* –‘with attributes’, ie. *Rāma*, *Kṛishṇa*, *Jesus*, *Sāi Bābā*, etc.) both denote the same Brahman.

Devotees start with the worship of the Saguna. As the Gītā says (*ch.12*): Man has a form (*body*) so it is easier for him to worship the God with a form. Love and devotion develop as we worship the Saguna Brahman (*Divine Incarnation*) for some time and, once Self-realization is achieved, He leads us to the knowledge and worship of the Nirguna Brahman (*Formless Divine*).

Sāi Bābā said: ‘My Guru was a great master full of kindness. He did not ask me for any material thing. He only demanded two things: *Nishtha* –‘Trust’ and *Saburi* –‘Patience’.

Controlling the Elements

One evening, there was a ferocious storm; thick black clouds blotted out the sun and the wind blew fiercely; thunder roared, lighting flashed and rain descended in torrents, flooding the whole town. The people were filled with fear and flocked to the Masjid for shelter.

Prayers to the local deities having gone unanswered, they all prayed to Bābā to intercede and quell the storm. Bābā was much moved. He came out and standing in front of the Masjid, addressed the storm in a loud and thunderous voice: ‘Stop, stop your fury and be calm.’ In a few minutes the rain subsided, the wind ceased and the

moon rose in the sky. The people bowed to Bābā and returned home chastened.

On another occasion the fire in the Dhuni flared up and flames were licking the rafters. Those in the Masjid dared not ask Bābā to quench the fire, but Bābā took up His Satka –‘*short stick*’ and dashed it against a pillar, saying: ‘Get down, be calm.’ At each stroke of the Satka, the flames lowered and in a few moments the Dhuni was burning calmly.

Grinding Wheat

In His later years Bābā used to grind wheat in a small hand mill (*two round stones, the upper with a hole in the middle and an off-centre hole for the turning stick*). In the same way that He threw negativity into the Dhuni –‘*sacred fire*’, it was a way of clearing out problems.

Once during an outbreak of cholera Bābā had a winnowing fan full of wheat, laid a cloth on the floor, put the mill on top and started grinding. Four ladies present pushed to the front of the crowd that had gathered and, nudging Bābā out of the way, took over the work*. At first He got angry but then smiled and allowed them to continue. Thinking that Bābā had no need of flour as He lived on alms, the ladies started to divide up the flour to take it home. Bābā went wild, accused them of thieving and they were abashed. He told them to take the wheat and scatter it all around the outskirts of the town, which they did. Soon after the cholera epidemic subsided.

* *In rural Maharashtra they are not in the habit of asking before doing something. The editor lived there for a few years and can tell some illustrative tales which seem surprising to our western conditionings about politeness!*

Mâyâ

The Self-Existent Brahman, His Power (*Mâyâ*) which creates this world and the world created are ultimately one and the same: ‘Those who think I reside in Shirdi, do not know the real Sāī. Sāī is not this three and a half cubits (*about 5’ 3”*) of body residing in Shirdi. I have no abode. By the cause of Karma I got embroiled and took this body. The world is my abode. Brahma is my father. Mâyâ is my mother. By their interlocking I got this body.’

‘It is my special characteristic, that I always look to and provide for the welfare of those devotees who worship Me wholeheartedly with their minds ever fixed on Me. Lord Krishna has also said the same in the Gita. Therefore, strive not much for food and clothes. If you want anything, beg of the Lord, leave worldly honours, try to get the Lord’s grace and blessings and be honoured in His Court. Do not be deluded by worldly honour.’

The form of the Deity should be firmly fixed in the mind. Let all the senses and mind be ever devoted to the worship of the Lord, let there be no attraction for any other thing; fix the mind in remembering Me always, so that it will not wander elsewhere, towards body, wealth and home. Then it will be calm, peaceful and carefree.

This is the sign of the mind being well engaged in good company. If the mind is vagrant, it cannot be called well-engaged.’

‘Though I have become a fakir, having no house or wife and though, leaving off all cares, I have stayed at one place, the inevitable Mâyâ teases Me often. Though I forgot Myself I cannot forget Her. She always envelops Me. This Mâyâ (*illusive power*) of



Bābā leaning against the wall of Dwarakamayi – the name He gave to the mosque in which He lived. Dwaraka is the name of Śhrī Kṛṣṇa's city meaning 'doorway'; mayi means 'mother'.

the Lord (*Shri Vishnu*) teases God Brahma and others; then what to speak of a poor fakir like Me? Those who take refuge in the Lord will be freed from Her clutches with His Grace’.

Dakshina

Sometimes Bābā asked for Dakshina (*the fee or offering to a Guru*) from those who went to see Him. One may ask: ‘If Bābā was perfectly non-attached, why would He care for money and ask for Dakshina?’ According to the scriptures, when one goes to see God, a King, a Saint or a Guru, one should not go empty-handed. Bābā took Dakshina out of love for His devotees so that they fulfilled their dharma and learned non-attachment. Bābā would distribute the entire amount the same day and the next morning be a penniless fakir as usual.

He did not ask Dakshina from all. If some gave without being asked, He sometimes accepted it and at other times refused it. He asked it from certain devotees only. If anybody offered it unwillingly, He never touched it and would ask them to take it away. The amount He asked for could be small or large and He asked even from women and children. It was not always the rich He asked, nor always the poor.

‘If you spread your palms with devotion before Me, I am immediately with you, day and night. Though, I am here bodily, still I know what you do; beyond the seven seas.

Go wherever you will, over the wide world, I am with you. My abode is in your heart and I am within you. Always worship Me, who is seated in your heart, as well as in the hearts of all beings, Blessed and fortunate, indeed, is he who knows Me thus.’

Self-Realisation

A seeker from afar came to the Masjid, fell at His Feet and said, 'Bābā, hearing that You show the Brahman without delay to all who ask, I have come from my distant place. I have travelled far but, if I get the Brahman from You, my troubles will be well rewarded.'

Bābā replied: 'Oh, my dear friend, do not be anxious, I shall immediately show you the Brahman; all My dealings are in cash and never on credit. So many people come to Me and ask for wealth, health, power, honour, position, cure of diseases and other temporal matters. Rare is the person who comes and asks for Brahma-jñāna – *'knowledge of God'*. I consider it a lucky and auspicious moment when someone like you comes and presses Me for Brahma-jñāna.

For seeing Brahman one has to give five things, i.e. surrender five things viz. (1) Five Pranas (*vital forces*) (2) Five senses (*five of action and five of perception*) (3) Mind (4) Intellect and (5) Ego. This path of Brahma-jñāna, of self-realisation, is 'as hard as to walk on as the edge of a razor'.

Bābā tested the man's mettle by sending one of His devotees out to borrow Rs.5 in the town but he came back a few times empty-handed. However the man did not offer the money himself and even became impatient at the delay.

Finally Bābā turned to the gentleman and said: 'There is in your pocket the Brahma (*or Mammon*) in the form of fifty times five rupees (*Rs.250/- -a lot of money in those days!*); please take that out.'

The seeker took out from his pocket a bundle of notes and, to his surprise, found that there were twenty-five notes of ten rupees

each. Seeing this omniscience, He fell at Bābā's Feet and begged His forgiveness and blessings. Bābā said to him;

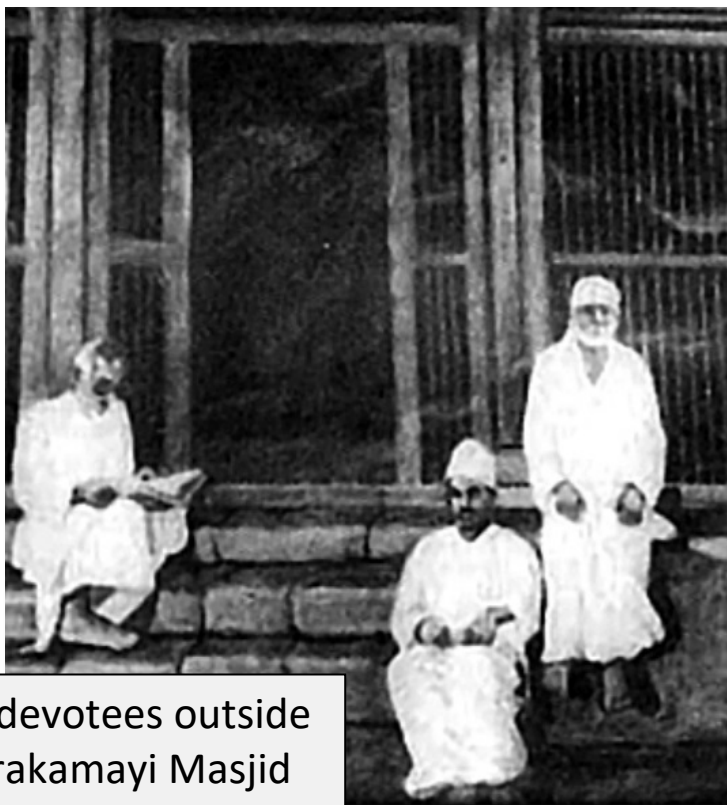
‘Roll up your bundle of Brahma (*viz. currency notes*). Unless you get rid completely of your greed, you will not get the real Brahma. How can he whose mind is engrossed in wealth, progeny and prosperity expect to know the Brahma? The illusion of attachment or the love for money is a deep whirlpool of pain full of crocodiles in the form of conceit and jealousy. He who is desireless can alone cross this whirlpool.

Greed and Brahma are as poles asunder, they are eternally opposed to each other. Where there is greed, there is no room for thought or meditation of the Brahma.

My treasury is full and I can give anyone what He wants, but I have to see if He is qualified to receive it. If you listen to Me carefully, you will certainly be benefitted. I never speak any untruth.’

‘The Self cannot be gained by studying the Vedas, nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, to him the Self reveals Its nature.’ says the Katha Upanishad.

Sāi Bābā then gave a discourse on the qualifications needed to achieve Brahma-jñāna or Self-Realisation:-



Bābā and devotees outside the Dwarakamayi Masjid

(1) **Virakti** - a feeling of disgust with the things of this world. Unless a man feels disgusted with the objects, payments and honours which His action would bring in this world and the next, He has no right to enter into the spiritual realm.

(2) **Antar-mukhata** (*introversion*). Our senses have been created by God with a tendency to move outward. He who wants self-realisation and immortal life, must turn his gaze inwards to his inner Self.

(3) **Catharsis** (*purging away*) of sins. Unless a man has turned entirely away from wickedness and has composed himself with His mind at rest, he cannot gain self-realisation, even by means of knowledge.

(4) **Right Conduct**. Unless, a man leads a life of truth, penance and insight, a life of celibacy, he cannot get God-realisation.

(5) **Preferring Shreyas** (*the good*) **to Preyas** (*the pleasant*). There are two sorts of things viz., the good and the pleasant; the former deals with spiritual affairs and the latter with mundane matters. The wise man prefers the good to the pleasant; but the unwise, through greed and attachment, choose the pleasant.

(6) **Control of the mind and the senses**. The body is the chariot and the Self its master; intellect is the charioteer and the mind is the reins; the senses are the horses and sense-objects their paths. He whose mind is unrestrained, his senses unmanageable like vicious horses, does not reach His destination (*get realisation*); but he whose mind is restrained, His senses under control, like good horses, reaches the state of self-realisation, where he is released from rebirth and reaches the supreme abode of the all-pervading Vishnu.

(7) **Purification of the mind.** Unless a man discharges satisfactorily and disinterestedly the duties of His station in life, His mind will not be purified and, unless His mind is purified, He cannot get self-realisation. It is only in the purified mind that **Viveka** (*discrimination between the unreal and the real*) and **Vairāgya** (*aversion to passions*) crop up and lead to self-realisation. Unless egoism is dropped, avarice got rid of and the mind made desireless, self-realisation is not possible. The idea that 'I am the body' is a great delusion and attachment to it is the cause of bondage. Leave off this attachment therefore, if you want to get Self-realisation.

(8) **The necessity of a Guru.** The knowledge of the Self is so subtle and mystic, that no one by his own effort could hope to attain it. So the help of a teacher, who has himself got self-realisation, is absolutely necessary. Such a teacher has walked on the path himself and can take the disciple, step by step on the ladder of spiritual progress.

(9) **Lastly the Lord's Grace is the most essential thing.** When pleased with a devotee, the Lord gives Viveka – '*discriminative wisdom*' and Vairāgya – '*freedom from passions*'; and takes Him safe beyond the ocean of mundane existence.



The Chavadi Procession

There was a room near the Masjid, which Bābā used to stay in, known as the Chavadi. From 1909 onwards, Bābā would spend alternate nights in the Dwarakamayi Masjid and in the Chavadi. His move to the Chavadi every other day became celebrated as a procession and devotees would flock to Shirdi to see Bābā's worship, where He would shine with a divine light. In the afternoon, people would bring musical instruments and sing bhajans in front of the Masjid for a couple of hours. Finally when all the preparations were complete, Bābā would leave for the Chavadi in the evening, walking slowly with a decorated horse leading the way and an umbrella held over His head. A large crowd formed the procession with music, dancing and the throwing of red powder (*as is traditional in Maharashtra*). Inside the Chavadi, which was cleaned and decorated, Bābā was worshipped by washing and applying kum-kum and sandal paste to His Feet, adorning Him with a crown and a shawl and performing Aar.ti.

The Nine Forms of Devotion (*Bhakti*)

Shortly before He died Sāī Bābā gave nine rupees to Laxmibai, a lady who had devotedly looked after and fed Him for many years. These nine coins represented the nine types of devotion (*Bhakti*) emphasized by Him.



1) Shravan (*Hearing*): Shravan means listening to the glories, stories and plays (*leela*) of the Divine Incarnations with a pure and sincere heart. The devotee gets absorbed in the hearing of Divine stories and His mind merges with His beloved God with deep faith, and loses its charm for worldly pleasures.

2) Kirtan (*Bhajans*): Singing the Lord's praises and glories; Kirtan opens the heart, purifies the mind and gives Divine Bliss as well as purifying the whole environment. Kirtan is one of the quickest ways to get Oneness with God.

3) Smaran (*Remembering*): Smaran means remembering the Name and Form of the Lord throughout the day. Whatever we remember all the time in our life, we remember the same at the time of death. Remembering God at the time of death, we get liberated and become One with God.

4) Pada-sevan (*Resorting to Feet*): Pada-sevan is serving the Lotus Feet of the **Guru**. The devotee becomes absorbed in the Lotus Feet of the Lord showering Divine Grace and all blessings.

5) Archana (*Worship*) Worship can be done either through an image or a picture or even in a mental form. Traditionally there are five offerings of **Dhūpa** –'Incense', **Dīpa** –'Light', **Pushpa** –'Flowers', **Naivedya** –'Eatables, fruit or water' and **Gandha** –'Perfume'. Performing **Aar.ti** (*circling with a lamp*) also pleases the Deity.

6) Namaskār (*Bowing*): Humble prostration to the Divine touching the earth with the nine points of the body (*hands, feet, knees, elbows, and forehead*) with faith and reverence, keeping attention on humility and absorbing Divine Grace. The ego is effaced through devout prayer and prostration to God.

7) Dāsyā (*Service*): The devotee considers himself a servant of God; surrendering oneself to performing whatever actions the Divine Will indicates; fulfilling His wishes, realizing His virtues, His nature, His mystery and glory; considering oneself as an instrument of God is Dāsyā Bhakti.

8) Sakhyam (Friendship): God raises the human to His level and becomes one with the soul. Becoming friends is to be in close company of God all the time, love Him and feel oneness with Him.

9) Ātma-nivedana (Surrender of the Self): Ātma-nivedana means complete self-surrender to God. The devotee offers everything to God; his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. This self-surrender is absolute love for God. By complete surrender of self, God takes all responsibility of His devotees who become egoless and desireless, experience oneness with the Divine and merge into God at the end.

Through the nine modes of Bhakti a devotee attains the Supreme.

(Note: All these forms of devotion form the practice of Sahaja Yoga! Ed.)



Shri Mataji's quotes about Sâi Bâbâ

"When this state of 'Dasha' is achieved you become like a kind of Superman. Like Sai Nath of Shirdi, was appearing everywhere and was helping everybody. People would say that we had seen you there, 'Yes', He would say, 'it is possible, why not.' These people became so subtle because this wanting in them had disappeared and they became subtlety." **16-03-97, Delhi.**

"There's a story of Sai Nath where a snake charmer was given a lot of money just to kill Shri Sai Nath. Because in the night Sai Nath used to suddenly go up to His own swing He had made about twenty feet above the ground. God knows, nobody

knew how He used to get up there, but they would find Him sleeping there. So the snake was taken by this snake charmer and He put the snake on to Sai Nath. And Sai Nath talked to Him and He said, 'Oh God, you've come here to meet me after such a long time. What is your job?' Snake said, 'This horrible snake charmer has asked me to bite you so I've come to tell you to be careful about these people.'

The snake charmer was looking with amazement that He was talking to him, Sai Nath said, 'Alright, you go now.' These are age-old snakes you see. So the snake went and bit the snake charmer. But then He came down and He sucked His poison and threw it away. 'Because, after all,' He said, 'the snake is angry with you because you tried such a trick.' So He sucked it. That's compassion. And He sucked His venom out and the fellow was completely changed and He said, 'Now I'm going to announce it to all the people that these Brahmins wanted to kill Shri Sai Nath.'" **02-04-82, London**

"Sai Nath who was the last incarnation of the Guru Principle, He was a Muslim. But all His disciples are Hindus, they are not Muslims. Muslims don't accept Him even as God...



Once you become the Pir
The first Guru Puja in UK, 01-07-77, London

once you become a realised soul, then He has no religion. He is beyond religion, He becomes the religion."

02-03-83, Delhi

Finally....

In August of 1918 Sāi Bābā told His devotees that He would be leaving His body soon. Shortly after, He developed a high fever and stopped eating. His devotees read to Him from holy scriptures as He lay and finally on 15th October, on the day of Dussehra, He passed away. It is said that before He passed He announced that He would return, that there would be another incarnation, within seven years.



"Just be silent and be witnesses. As Sāi Bābā has said, 'Saburî' - patience, it comes in."

02-04-76, Delhi

"You feel tremendous love for others and some people, I would say Sāi Nāth was one of them, who had this left-hand side gift with Him, and He was love personified." *26-01-77, Bordi*

Further Reading

Sāi Satcharitra. This wonderful collection of the stories, teachings and miracles of Sāi Bābā, in very readable English, is available to download free at symb-ol.org (*Sacred Books page*). 332 pages.



Appendix 1. The Symbols of the Ten Adi Gurus



Rājā Janaka

As one of the founding fathers of Sanātana Dharma – ‘*the Eternal Religion*’ – the proper name by which Hinduism is known – Rājā Janaka’s symbol is the Om. He is featured in the Upaniṣhads which form Vedānta – ‘*final knowledge*’ - the philosophical basis of Hinduism. One of the recurring themes of the Upanishads is the significance of Om and the importance of understanding and chanting it.



Abraham

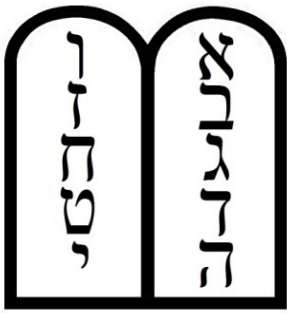
Abraham founded Judaism by receiving and obeying instructions from the One Formless God. He is the first patriarch of the Jewish nation and the ancestor of both Jews and Arabs. The Star of David, the symbol of Judaism, is His symbol.

The star is composed of the upward triangle of spiritual aspiration superimposed on the downward triangle of material attachment, representing the dichotomy of our lives on Earth. Originally known as the Shield of David or Seal of Solomon it was used to ward off evil and is featured on the Israeli flag.



Zarathustra (*Zoroaster*)

Ahura Mazda – ‘*Formless God*’ is worshipped through mantras and the sacred fire, which is always kept burning in Zoroastrian temples. Zarathustra explained the use of all the elements in aiding our spiritual growth.



Moses

Moses was given the Ten Commandments by God on Mt. Sinai during the Israelites forty years of wandering in the desert and the two tablets with the Hebrew numbers 1-10 on are His symbol.

While not strictly adhering to all the Ten Commandments* in Sahaja Yoga, we recognise that the Nābhī has ten valencies which must be fulfilled to satisfy our Dharma and allow the Kundalini to rise.

* For example Commandments Two and Four 'Thou shalt not make any graven images' and 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'.



Lao-Tse (Lao-Zi)

As He expounded the Tao -'way' of balance, the Yin-Yang symbol represents Lao-tse. Yin (*black*) is the feminine, passive and inertial principle (*Left Side*) and Yang (*white*) is the restless masculine energy (*Right Side*), whose interplay creates the material and mental worlds we inhabit. They each have the other at their heart and are united by the circle.

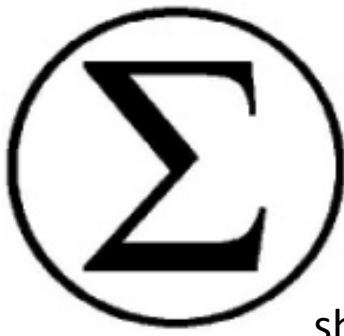


Confucius (Kong-zi)

Confucius is a Latinisation by Jesuit missionaries of Kong-Fuzi-us [Kong -family name, Fuzi -'teacher', -us nominative ending in Latin] and in

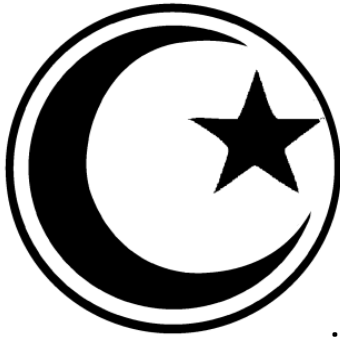
China He is called Kong-zi -'Master Kong'. As the spiritual preceptor of government, society and culture in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam for more than two thousand years, Confucius' symbol is His own name (*Kong-zi*) in Chines pictograms.





Socrates

Socrates' symbol is the Greek capital S, the letter Sigma. As well as the first letter of His name, it is also a mathematical symbol meaning 'the sum of', showing the link between mathematics and philosophy which was so dear to the Greek philosophers.



Prophet Mohammad

The symbol we use for the Prophet Mohammad is the crescent moon and star*, widely used in Islam.

The crescent moon is the Spirit and the star (Venus) is the Kuṇḍalinī. Their union connects us with Allah, the Supreme Spirit, to give Self-realization and knowledge of the Ultimate Reality.

* This is normally a C-shaped crescent (waning moon) although a D-shaped crescent is sometimes used.

The crescent was used as an Islamic symbol from c.1400 CE onwards but the crescent and star only became widely adopted in Islam after use by the Ottoman Turks around 1770 CE.

The colour green, often associated with Islam, is said to have been Mohammad's favourite and He wore a green robe and turban.

Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia and several other Islamic countries have the symbol on their flags.



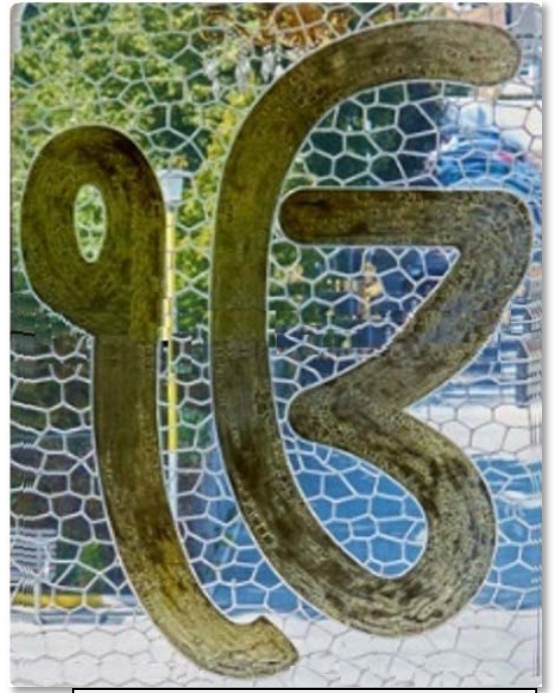
A mosque finial. More often a simple crescent is used.





Gurū Nānak

Although the Sikh Khanda symbol (below) is often used in Sahaja Yoga as a symbol for Gurū Nānak, the 'Ik Oṅkār' – 'One Om' is more appropriate. This widely used Sikh symbol is the first two words of the Mool – 'root' Mantra, the Punjabi praise written by Gurū Nānak that starts every Sikh recitation and ceremony.



Ik Oṅkār – 'One Om' in a Gurdwara (Sikh temple) window in India. The script is Gurmukhi (Punjabi).



The Khanda symbol is used as a symbol of the Sikh nation. With its knife, discus and swords it is

more appropriate for Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh Gurus who brought together and militarised the Sikh nation to counter the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's attempts to eradicate them. Guru Nanak was a man of peace who possibly never held a sword.



Sāī Bābā of Śhirdī (Shirdī Saī Nāth)

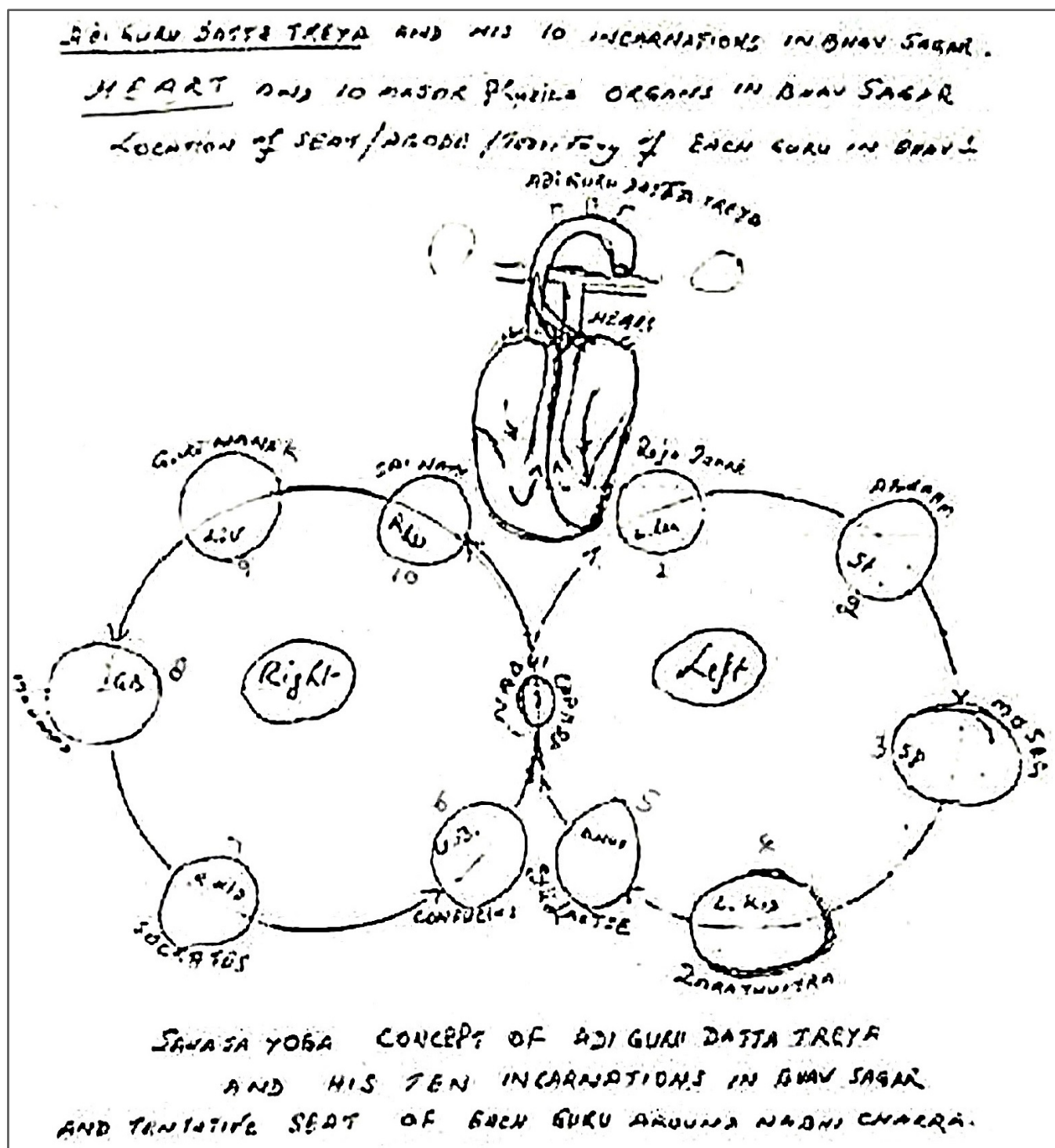
Like Gurū Nānak, Kabīr and many later saints, Sāī Bābā tried to remove the divisions between Hindus and Muslims – He had followers of both faiths – so His symbol is a combination of Om (Hindu) and the crescent and star (Muslim).



Appendix 2. Seats of the Adi Gurus in the Void

The drawing below (*cleaned up a bit*) was made by a Sahaja Yogi in 2011 based on some comments Shri Mataji made:-

The Adi Gurus are arranged in possible chronological order, although Zarathustra (c.1500 BCE) may have come between Abraham (c.1800 BCE) and Moses (c.1250 BCE). In Her book



‘Creation’ (Ch.3) Shri Mataji mentions Zoroaster and says “Earlier He had taken birth as Abraham and later as Moses”.

The correspondence given (*assuming we have interpreted the shorthand correctly*) is:

Left Side

- 1) Rājā Janaka Left Lung
- 2) Abraham Stomach
- 3) Moses Spleen (*‘Speedometer’, Gṛuhalakṣhmī/Left Nābhī*)
- 4) Zarathustra Left Kidney
- 5) Lao Tse Anus

Right Side

- 6) Confucius Urinary Bladder
- 7) Socrates Right Kidney
- 8) Mohammad Gall Bladder
- 9) Guru Nanak Liver
- 10) Sāī Nāth Right Lung

Anatomically the Liver and Gall Bladder are on the right side and the Stomach and Spleen are on the left of the abdomen. The intestines do not get a ruler unless they are grouped with the stomach.

It is possible that, on the Right Side of the Void, the arrows should also be rotating clockwise as this is the chronological order of the incarnations (*and the way they are numbered*). Vibrationally it feels better to be rubbing or bandhanning the Void clockwise (*viewed from in front*).

Negative emotions generally have their roots in the Void. Worshipping the Ādi Gurus would help to overcome these.

Anger – Liver and Gall Bladder (*Right Side - Fire element*)

Fear – Kidneys and Bladder (*Left Side – Water element*)

Grief, sadness – Lungs and Intestines (*Air element*)

Worry, over-thinking – Stomach, Spleen and Pancreas (*Earth element*)

The Six Enemies (*like the Seven Deadly Sins; lust, anger, greed, jealousy, pride and delusion*) are more associated with the six lower chakras.

Symmetry

The left : right pairing seems to work well:

(1) Janaka : Sāi Bābā (*Indian - oldest and latest*)

(2) Moses : Mohammad (*descendants of Abraham, founders of
Judaism and Islam*)

(3) Lao Tse : Confucius (*Chinese*)

(4) Zarathustra : Socrates (*Middle Eastern philosophers*)

(5) Not-so-obvious pair of Abraham : Guru Nanak (*founders of
Judaism and Sikhism*)

Ādi Guru Dattātreya appears to be seated in the Heart (*which is very anatomically drawn!*) It may be that He rules the Viṣṇu Granthi which allows the Kuṇḍalinī to rise from the Void up to the Heart (*He was an incarnation of Śhrī Viṣṇu*). He judges whether we are worthy to enter the higher states of blessedness.

Ekādaśha Rudras

The Ekādaśha Rudras –‘eleven destroying powers’ have their seats in the Void and Shri Mataji often talked about them in Her Guru Puja talks. It may be that each of the Ādi Gurus has a connection with one of the Rudras if we include Ādi Guru Dattātreyā as the eleventh.

The two main catches of Ekādaśha Rudras are drugs and false gurus. The Ekādaśha Rudras are also across the top of the forehead (*hairline*) which is the Void area in the Sahasrāra. The ten Adi Gurus may also have their seats on the forehead. Ādi Guru Dattātreyā would seem to be the central point with the sides swapped as for Āgñyā (*Left Side on Right and vice versa*). The centre Ekādaśha Rudra is the Viśhuddhī point in Sahasrāra (*Shrī Kṛishṇa and Dattātreyā were both incarnations of Śhrī Viṣhṇu*).

The location of the Rudra Granthi is in this vicinity and perhaps Śhrī Dattātreyā who rules the Viśhṇu Granthi in the Void rules the Rudra Granthi in the Sahasrāra. Being an incarnation of all three Trimūrtis, Brahmā, Viṣhṇu and Rudra, He may be taken as the controller of all three Granthis.

“The Sat–‘true’ Gurus taught us the rules of Dharma to keep this delicate mechanism fit for Kundalinī rising.” **31-03-81, Sydney**

“A Sat Guru is one who gives you the connection with God.”

28-12-86, Maharashtra

ॐ ❀ जय श्री माताजी ❀ ॐ
Jay Shri Mataji!

‘Researches in Sahaja Yoga’

‘Researches in Sahaja Yoga’ (RiSY) is a series of books on topics connected with Sahaja Yoga, researched through Shri Mataji’s talks and other scriptures, and through meditation.

Books published or planned in the series so far include:

1. Om Namaste Ganapataye

- a detailed translation of the Ganesha Atharva Sheersha.

2. Shrī Lalitā Sahasranāma

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– a collection of humour by Shri Mataji and other Sahaja Yogis.

The books can be downloaded free from the symb-ol.org website.

Some are available to order in print from lulu.com.

After covering print costs, profits from the sale of all ‘Researches in Sahaja Yoga’ books go to Sahaj projects.



“The collective should research the scriptures and books written by enlightened souls and should produce books supporting Vishwa Nirmala Dharma.”

H.S.H. Shri Mataji, ‘Sahaja Yoga’

“So you have to study. For example, there are Jews with us, let them study Torah and see where is Sahaja Yoga in their written law? Find it out. If you are Christians read the Bible, find out. You should read Gîtâ, you should read Upanishads and you should be masters.

You'll find that Sahaj Yoga is such a light that you will know what it is. We have got the Devi's names and the Sahasranâmas. Read them

and try to understand the meaning of that, how far it goes. That's how the depth of your knowledge will increase and your Sahaj Yoga will tell you what is right and what is wrong.”

23-11-80, London.

“The Goddess Saraswati carries books of knowledge to suggest that the scholar must create books out of the eternal truths discovered during his pursuit of knowledge.”

‘Swadhishtan Chakra’, Creation Ch.14.

For over 400 books, magazines and other publications produced by Shri Mataji and Sahaja Yogis visit the websites:

sahajbooks.org and divinecoolbreeze.com

