

# Goals and Paths of Attainment For 10 Non-Hindu Religions

## SHINTO

**GOALS:** The primary goal of Shinto is to achieve immortality among the ancestral beings, the kami. Kami is understood by the Shintoist as a supernatural, holy power living in or connected to the world of the spirit. All living things possess a kami nature. Man's nature is the highest, for he possesses the most kami. Salvation is living in the spirit world with these divine beings, the kami.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Salvation is achieved in Shinto through observance of all tabus and the avoidance of persons and objects which might cause impurity or pollution. Prayers are made and offerings brought to the temples of the gods and goddesses, of which there are said to be 800 myriad in the universe. Man has no Supreme God to obey, but needs only know how to adjust to kami in its various manifestations. A person's kami nature survives death, and a man naturally desires to be worthy of being remembered with approbation by his descendants. Therefore, fulfillment of duty is a most important aspect of Shinto.

## ZOROASTRIANISM

**GOALS:** The goal of Zoroastrianism is to be rewarded with a place in heaven where the soul will be with God, called Ahura Mazda, sharing His blessed existence forever.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Man's life, according to Zoroastrianism, is a moral struggle, not a search for knowledge or enlightenment. He is put on the earth to affirm and approve the world, not to deny it, not to escape from it. Salvation is found in obedience to the will of Ahura Mazda as revealed and taught by His prophet, Zoroaster. Man has but one life. He also has the freedom to choose between good and evil, the latter being embodied in Angra Mainyu who rebelled against God. At death, each is judged and consigned to his deserved abode.

Zoroastrians hold truth as the greatest virtue, followed by good thoughts, words and deeds. They value the ethical life most highly. Though there is a resurrection of the dead, a judgement and a kingdom of heaven on earth, followed by punishment of the wicked, all sins are eventually burned away and all of mankind exists forever with Ahura Mazda. Hell, for the Zoroastrian, is not eternal.

## JUDAISM

**GOALS:** The goal of Judaism lies in the strict obedience to the Torah, Jewish scripture, which can alleviate the plight of the individual and of society, bringing rewards in the future life when the Messiah will come to overthrow evil and reward the righteous in God's kingdom on the earth, the Day of the Lord. The soul thereafter will enjoy God's presence and love.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Man has two impulses: good and evil. He can either follow God's law or rebel and be influenced by Satan, who caused God's creation to go astray. It is the highest morality, possible through obedience to the Torah, which pleases God. One must follow justice, charity, ethics and honesty, being true to the one true God, Yahweh.

## CHRISTIANITY

**GOALS:** The goal of Christianity is eternal life with God in heaven, a perfect existence in which God's glory and bliss are shared. It is also a personal life, enjoyed differently by souls according to the amount of grace achieved in life.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Man's plight is caused by disobedience to God's will. Man needs redemption from the forces which would enslave and destroy him—fear, selfishness, hopelessness, desire and the supernatural forces of the Devil, sin and death against which he is powerless. His salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, that is, in acceptance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead as proof of God's power over the forces of sin and death. The good Christian lives a life of virtue and obedience to God out of gratitude to God for sacrificing Jesus for the sins of all who come to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. Jesus is to return again to judge the world and bring God's rule to the earth. Through following the law of God as found in the Holy Bible and through God's grace man attains salvation.

## ISLAM

**GOALS:** The primary goal of Islam is to enjoy eternal life, both physical and spiritual, in heaven with Allah. Heaven is a paradise in which all the joys and pleasures abound, in which one lives amid beautiful gardens and fountains, enjoying the choicest foods served by sweet maidens. Man is the noblest creation of God, ranking above the angels.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Total submission to Allah is the single path to salvation, and even that is no guarantee, for Allah may desire even a faithful soul to experience misery. The good Moslem surrenders all pride, the chief among sins, and follows explicitly the will of Allah as revealed in the Koran by His last and greatest prophet, Mohammed. This and this alone brings a full and meaningful life and avoids the terrors of the hell which befalls sinners and infidels. He believes in the five doctrines and observes the five pillars. The virtues of truthfulness, temperance and humility before God are foremost for Islam, and the practices of fasting, pilgrimage, prayer and charity to the Moslem community are most necessary to please Allah.

# Goals and Paths of Attainment in Hinduism

## SAIVISM

**GOALS:** The primary goal of Saivism is moksha, mukti or veedu, realizing one's identity with God Siva, in perfect union and non-differentiation, thus gaining liberation from the cycles of birth and death. This is also termed Nirvakalpa Samadhi and may be attained in this life. A secondary goal is Salvakalpa Samadhi or experience of God Siva as Satchidananda or pure consciousness. The soul's final destiny is to merge with God Siva.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** The path for Saivites is divided into four progressive stages of belief and practice, called Chariya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana. The soul evolves through karma and reincarnation from the instinctive/intellectual sphere into virtuous and moral living, then into temple worship and devotion, followed by internalized worship or yoga and its meditative disciplines. Union comes through the grace of the Sat Guru and culminates in its maturity in the state of jnana or wisdom.

## SAKTISM

**GOALS:** The primary goal of Saktism is moksha, defined as complete identification with God Siva. A secondary goal for the Saktas is to perform good works selflessly so that one may go, on death, to the heaven worlds and thereafter enjoy a good birth on earth, for heaven too is a transitory state. For Saktas God is both the formless Absolute (Siva) and the manifest Divine (Sakti, Durga or Kali), but stress is given to the feminine manifest by which the masculine unmanifest is ultimately reached.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** The spiritual practices in Saktism are similar to those in Saivism, though there is perhaps more emphasis in Saktism on God's Power as opposed to Being, on mantras and yantras, and on embracing apparent opposites: male/female, absolute/relative, pleasure/pain, cause/effect, mind/body. A minor sect undertakes tantric practices, consciously using the world of form to transmute and eventually transcend that world.

## VAISHNAVISM

**GOALS:** The primary goal of Vaishnavites is termed Videha mukti, defined as liberation—attainable only after death—when the self realizes blissful union with God's body as a part of Him, yet maintains its pure individual personality. Lord Vishnu is God—all-pervasive consciousness and the soul of the universe, distinct from the world and from the jivas which constitute His body. A secondary goal—the experience of God's Grace—can be reached while yet embodied through taking refuge in God's unbounded love.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Orthodox Vaishnavites believe that religion is the performance of bhakti sadhanas, that man can communicate with and receive the grace of Lord Vishnu who manifests through the temple deity or idol. The path of karma yoga and jnana yoga leads to bhakti yoga. Through chanting the holy names of Lord Vishnu's incarnations, and total self-surrender to Him, liberation is attained.

## SMARTA/LIBERAL HINDUISM

**GOAL:** The ultimate goal of Smarta/Liberal Hinduism is *Mukti*, to realize oneself as Brahman—the Absolute and only Reality—and become free from samsara. For this one must conquer the state of avidya, or ignorance, which causes the world to appear as real. All illusion has vanished for the realized being (Jivanmukta). At death, his bodies are extinguished. Brahman alone exists.

**PATH OF ATTAINMENT:** Most Smarta/Liberal Hindus believe that Mukti is achieved through jnana yoga alone—defined as an intellectual and meditative but non-kundalini-yoga path. Devotees may also choose from three other paths to cultivate devotion, accrue good karma and purify the mind. These are bhakti yoga, karma yoga and raja yoga, which many teach can also bring enlightenment. This non-sectarian sampradaya follows the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Adi Shankara. Their worship is eclectic, including a wide range of deities.