

(1) Keywords

Dharmic Faiths	Hinduism / Buddhism / Sikhism
Dharma	The rules of rebirth/reincarnation
Rebirth/ Reincarnation	Two different ways of describing the process where one's soul/self/mind returns to a new
Atman/Citta/Atma	Hindu/Buddhist/Sikh name for soul/self/mind
Samsara	Cycle of death and rebirth
Moksha	Hindu concept of freedom from Samsara
Sewa	Selfless-Service

(2) What are the Dharmic Faiths?

All the Dharmic Faiths originated in the Indian Subcontinent; particularly in what is modern day Pakistan, India, and Nepal.

All three Dharmic Faiths believe that death is not the end and that one's soul/self/mind takes on a new physical form after death and that this is repeated in a near-endless cycle called samsara.

The three religions take different perspectives on the existence and importance of God's. Sikhism is monotheist whilst Hinduism believes the one main God, Brahman, can take on millions of different forms. Some Buddhists believe in Gods but others are not so sure if they exist or are important.

Whilst Buddha founded Buddhism and Guru Nanak founded Sikhism, the founder of Hinduism is unknown and its stories are incredibly old.

(3) What is Reincarnation?

All three Dharmic Faiths agree that we come back again after death but each takes a slightly different view of what counts as the identity of a person which is returned.

1. Atman—Hindu's believe in a 'self' which comes back
2. Citta—Buddhists believe in a 'mind' which comes back
3. Atma—Sikhs believe in a 'soul' which comes back

In any case, the ultimate goal is escape from this cycle of rebirth.

1. Moksha-Hindu's aim to reunite with **Brahman** (God)
2. Nirvana-Buddhists aim to escape rebirth and find peace
3. Mukti—Sikhs aim to reunite with **Waheguru** (God)

Dharmic masters may choose to take another human rebirth.

(4) What the Caste System?

1. **Caste System** a hierarchy of society which organised people into levels **based on their reincarnation**.

2. **Caste was for life.** The only way to improve things was to work for a better reincarnation.

3. **Following one's dharma** was the only way to achieve this as the story of warrior Arjuna's conversation with the God Krishna shows.

4. **Karma determines reincarnation.** Good actions produce good karma and good rebirths. Only following one's dharma achieves this.

5. **Dalits are outside of the system**, causing them immense difficulty.



(5) What is Samsara?

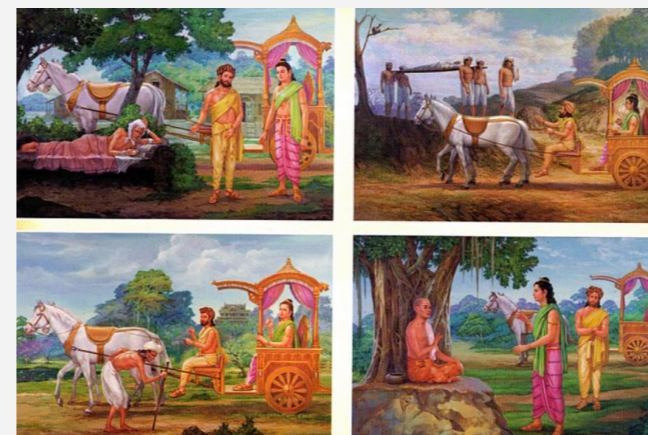
Siddhartha was a prince who never saw any suffering in his life of luxury. His father's only heir, Siddhartha's family were desperate to prevent him from leaving the palace and fulfilling a prophecy that he would leave the palace to become an ascetic (one who gives up all comfort) holy man.

Bored of life, one day the prince snuck into town where he saw four sights which would change him forever:

1. A sick man
2. A very old man
3. A dead body
4. A holy man (ascetic)

He decided to immediately live an ascetic and holy life, giving up all pleasures and comforts. At first he starved himself but realised this was too extreme.

After long meditation under a Bodhi tree he realised desires caused suffering, touching the ground with one hand, the earth shook. 'Now I am awake!'



(6) What is Selfless-Service?

The langar (or free kitchen) was introduced by Guru Nanak, who was the founder of Sikhism and the first Guru, because of his belief in the oneness of humanity. Famously declaring, 'There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim!', Guru Nanak argued that as everyone was equal in the eyes of Waheguru (God), people should serve others selflessly. So sewa, or selfless service, became a core Sikh belief.

Guru Nanak offered free vegetarian meals to everyone, regardless of their caste, gender or wealth. The langar, or communal kitchen, became a specific part of a gurdwara (Sikh place of worship). It was a place where everyone gathered and ate together. The langar is also the free food that is served.

Many Sikhs today serve langar to people outside the gurdwara such as the homeless on stalls in cities or by dropping off meals to the elderly.



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