

Diversity of World Religious Expression

Western

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Eastern (Indian)

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

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Topics

- **Man's Suffering**
- **Creation of the Universe**
- **The True God**
- **Proof and Knowing of God**
- **Paths to God and Salvation**
- **Destiny**
- **Evil**
- **Hell**
- **Conduct and Virtue**
- **Religious Origin**
- **Reality**
- **Doctrine**
- **Ascetic Life (Sainthood)**
- **Worship**

Man's Suffering:

Western

- Suffering is due to disobedience to God's Will not believing and not accepting of His law
- Acceptance of God's Will (one true God and religion) ensures that one will enjoy God's grace in eternal Heaven

Eastern

- Suffering is due to soul's (man's) ignorance of its own nature
- Path which leads from ignorance to knowledge allows soul to attain immortality and liberation from death

Creation of the Universe:

Western

- Created by God at some point in time
- In future it will be forever destroyed by Him
- He is separate from it, and rules it from above
(dualistic nature)

Eastern

- Exists in Endless Cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction
- No absolute end to the world
- No duality of God and World but a unity

The True God

Western

- There is only one true God and One true religion
- God is loving as well as wrathful
- Those who accept God will enjoy God's grace in eternal Heaven
- All others will suffer eternally in Hell

Eastern

- One true and absolute Self or God
- Many images of one Supreme God
- God is pure bliss and consciousness
- There are many paths to God by way of understanding, temperament, and maturity
- All souls are destined to receive Liberation

Proof and Knowing of God:

Western

- Indirect proof through Prophets, Messiah, and Paygambar
- Through His unchanging and unique revealed scripture
- It is essential to seek personal knowledge of God
- Ultimately one must have belief and faith in God, coupled with a virtuous life

Eastern

- Direct proof through self-realization
- Indirect proof through the enlightened Guru (teacher) and the revealed scriptures
- Knowing is personal, inner, and a mystical experience
- Ultimately one must directly know God during an earthly life

Paths to God and Salvation

Western

- Only one path leads to God, others are false and futile
- Strictly dualistic (God and Man are separate)
- One must accept the one true religion otherwise the soul, laden with sin, will be damned on Judgment Day
- Salvation is through strict obedience to God's will, through a messiah/prophet
- Salvation comes at the end of the world

Eastern

- Freedom to choose own form of worship
- Beliefs may be dual or non-dual (all paths lead to God)
- Liberation or Salvation is through Self realization and/or Surrendering to God's Will
- Salvation is to be found in this life and within oneself
- Sin is only of the mind, not of the soul, which is pure
- God does not judge or punish (No Judgment day)

Destiny:

Western

- Man's destiny lies beyond this world, which is eternal joy in heaven or eternal suffering in hell

Eastern

- Purpose of life is to evolve, through experience, into higher spiritual destiny and ultimately attain Liberation or Nirvana

Evil:

Western

- A genuine evil exist in the world, which opposes God's will
- Evil is embodied in Satan and his demons, and partially in man as one of his tendencies

Eastern

- There is no intrinsic evil, all is good and all is God
- No force in the world or in human opposes God
- Veiling the instinctive intellectual mind keeps one from knowledge of God

Hell:

Western

- On Judgment Day the physical body of every soul that ever lived is brought to life
- God consigns pure souls to heaven and sinners to Hell
- Hell is a physical place where the body burns without being consumed
- One suffers the anguish of knowing he will never be with God

Eastern

- Hell is not eternal
- Hell may be a physical place where the body burns without being consumed
- Exists as a period of Karmic suffering, a state of mind in life or between lives

Conduct and Virtue:

Western

- Obey God's commands for a Moral and Ethical life
- Opposite conduct leads one away from God
- Believe in Him and in His Prophets (i.e. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, or Zoroaster) Salvation is assured

Eastern

- Virtuous conduct, Moral living, and Right Belief are foundation to spiritual progress
- Unrighteous thoughts, words, and deeds keeps one from liberation
- It is the first step toward higher mystical communion
- Liberation requires knowledge and personal attainment, not only belief

Religion Origin:

Western

- Religion is Historical, Beginning with a Prophet or an Event
- Stress is on the Past and on Future rewards or punishments
- History is linear, never to be repeated

Eastern

- Religion is Cosmic, Eternal, and transcends cyclical human history
- Stress is placed on revelation of God's presence in the Here and Now

Reality:

Western

- The Soul is immortal, deathless, and eternal
- There is more to reality than the things of this world
- Ultimately the Soul is living forever in God's presence or separated from Him in Hell

Eastern

- The Soul is immortal, deathless, and eternal
- There is more to reality than we experience with the five senses
- Ultimately the soul is liberated from the death and rebirth cycle

Doctrine:

Western

- Doctrines tend to be simple, clear, and rational
- Worship and belief are formalized and required
- Other paths are endured, but not totally honored
- It is exclusive and some times dogmatic

Eastern

- Doctrines tend to be subtle, complex, and even paradoxical
- Freedom to worship and to believe in a variety of ways is predominant
- Other paths are accepted as God's divine will at work
- It is universal and tolerant

Ascetic Life (Sainthood):

Western

- Submit to God through self-sacrifice, and concern for others
- Value is placed on good work, social concerns, and scriptural study
- Little emphasis on yoga and meditation

Eastern

- Through renunciation, self discipline, purification, contemplation, and meditation
- Value is placed on individual religious practice (Sadhana): yoga, meditation, and super conscious awakening
- Little emphasis on social work and concerns

Worship:

Western

- Worship is congregational, simple in its rituals
- Centers around the church, synagogue, or mosque
- Mostly on a Sabbath day (Moslems 5 or 3 times a day)

Eastern

- Worship is individual, more ritualistic, and meditative
- Centers around the temple and home shrine
- All days of the week

Western Religions

(Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

Common Features

- One and Only One God
- Universe was Created By God
- Human Suffering - Disobedience of God's Will
- God's Message Revealed Through Prophet
- One Life and Eternal Judgment
- Judgment Day
- Eternal Hell / Heaven

Western Religion...

(Judaism, Christianity, Islam)

Common Features (Continued)

- Scripture has Ultimate Authority
- Non-mystical (God chooses Prophet)
- Congregational (Society is Essential)
- Worshipping - Sabbath Day

Systems of Philosophy

- Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Eastern (Indian) Religions

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

Common Features:

- Goal of Life - Liberation (Moksha) Eternal
- Human Suffering - Soul's Ignorance
- Philosophy of Karma
- Continuity of Life (Reincarnation)
- Mystical (Human Experience)
- Self Realization (Direct contact with God/Self)
- Scripture has no authority over Realized Person
- Individual

Eastern (Indian) Religion

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

Common Features (continued):

- Freedom to choose God(s)/no-God
- No Judgment Day
- No Eternal Hell/Heaven
- Worshipping - All Day
- Universe Exists in Endless Cycle
- Religious Symbols (OM, Swastika, Lotus)
- Cremation

Systems of Philosophy Developed

- Brahmana System (Hinduism)
- Samana System (Jainism, Buddhism)