

Path to Siva

A Catechism for Youth

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Lesson 4

What Is a Religion?

Religion ?



A religion is a system of belief about God, soul and world.

Throughout history, seekers around the world have tried to understand the nature of things.

Man tried to unravel mysteries...

They struggled to unravel the mysteries of the mind, of ultimate reality and the purpose of life.

They puzzled about the cause of suffering and the way to relieve it.

They analyzed good and evil, virtue and vice.

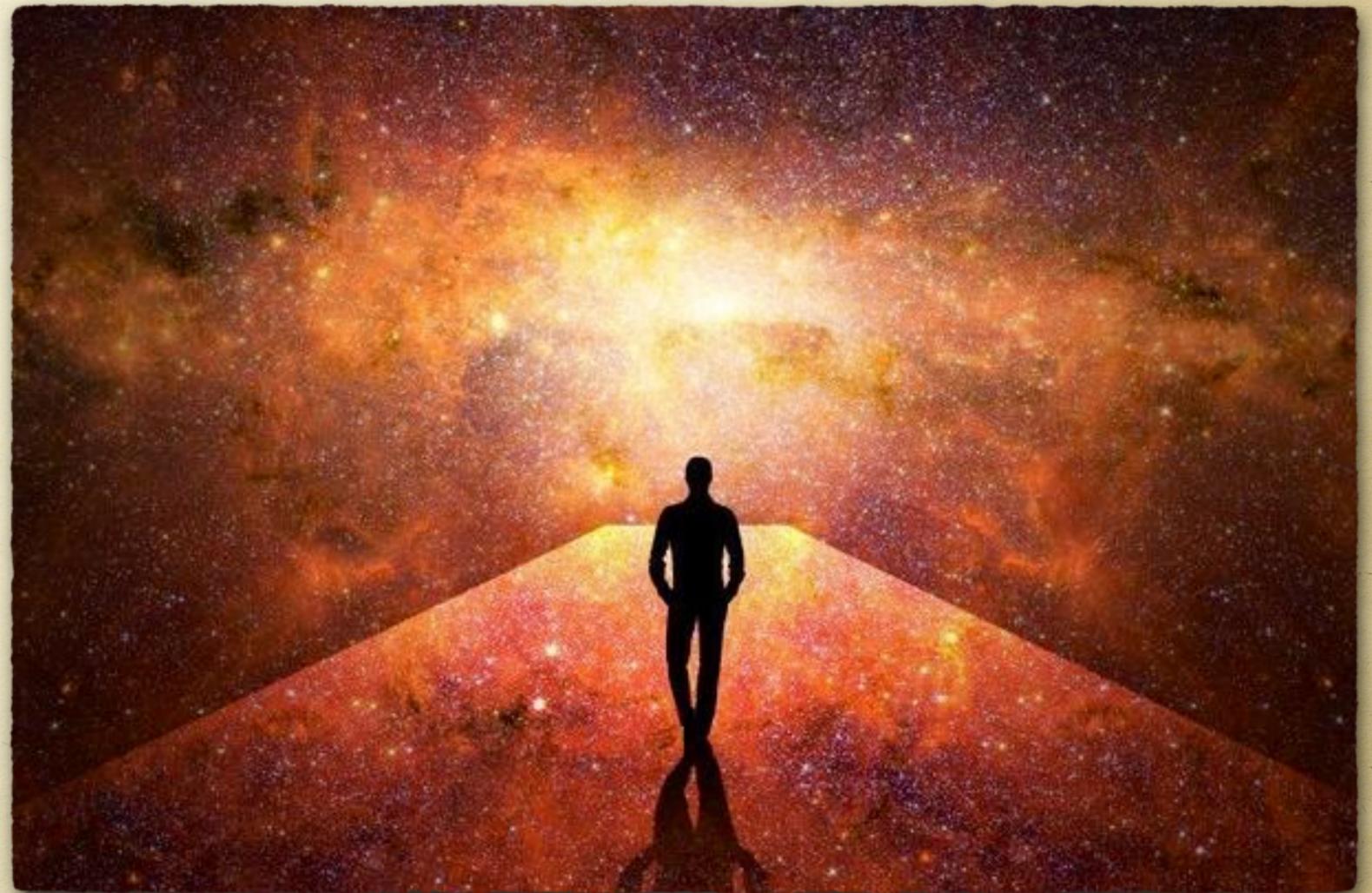


Thoughts based on a holy presence

These quests for truth have produced various systems of thought.

Those based on a belief in God or a holy presence are called religions or faiths.

Today there are about a dozen major religions in the world and hundreds of smaller ones.



The five largest religions

Of Earth's 7.4 billion people, six billion are followers of a religion.

Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Chinese folk religion and Buddhism are the five largest.



Sacred texts or scriptures

Many traditional cultures have ancient faiths.

Most religions have sacred texts, called scriptures.

Hinduism's primary scriptures are the *Vedas*.

Buddhists have the *Dhammapada*, Christians look to the *Bible* and Muslims have the *Koran*.



What happens when we die?

Scriptures, and the teachings of saints through history, define how life should be lived and what happens when we die.

Each faith has its places of worship, priesthood and holy rites.



Eastern and western religions

Religions are not all the same.

Their beliefs and practices differ, often greatly.

Of Earth's major religions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are Eastern.

Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam are Western.



Vast differences between eastern and western.

There is a vast difference between Eastern and Western religions, with Eastern goals being unitive and introspective and Western goals being dualistic, extroverted.



Where to seek God?

Eastern faiths tend to see God in all things, and everything as sacred.

Western faiths tend not to believe that God pervades everything, and make a strong distinction between what is sacred and what is profane.



Single life or many lives?

While Eastern faiths hold to karma, reincarnation and liberation, the Western postulate a single life for the soul, followed by reward or punishment.



Gurudeva explains...

Religion is the connection between the three worlds, and temple worship is how you can get your personal connection with the inner worlds.



QUESTIONS

Lesson 4



4.1 Religion is a system...

- A. Of understanding the planets and stars
- B. Of belief about God, soul and world
- C. Of understanding society

4.2 Enter the letter from list below of A - D for the correct primary scripture for the religion.

- ___ Hindus
- ___ Buddhists
- ___ Christians
- ___ Muslims

- (A) Dhammapada
- (B) Bible
- (C) Vedas
- (D) Koran

4.3 Scriptures define how life should be lived and what happens when we die.

- True
- False

4.4 Check the statement that is true.

- A. Religions are all the same because they all believe in God or a holy presence.
- B. Religions are not all the same because their beliefs and practices differ, often greatly.

4.5 In the list below, check those beliefs and practices which belong to Eastern religions.

- A. Believe in a single life, followed by reward or punishment
- B. Unitive and introspective
- C. Do not see God pervading all things
- D. See God in all things, and all things as sacred
- E. Believe in karma, reincarnation and liberation
- F. Dualistic, extroverted.