



**Voices  
from Religions  
on Sustainable  
Development**

Religion influences many people's world views, lifestyles and engagement, making it a powerful force for individual and collective change. This book offers an insight into how religions and indigenous traditions from all over the world understand sustainable development and contribute to it. Its publication marks the launch of the new *International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)* during the international Berlin conference *Partners for Change – Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in February 2016. The *PaRD* aims to strengthen and institutionalise cooperation between governments, multilateral organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, and religious actors working in the fields of development, peace, interreligious dialogue and humanitarian assistance.

**Voices  
from Religions  
on Sustainable  
Development**



## Contents

- 4 Introduction**  
Gerd Müller  
Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development
  
- 6 Foreword**  
His Holiness the 17<sup>th</sup> Gyalwang Karmapa  
Ogyen Trinley Dorje
  
- 9 Foreword**  
H.E. Horst Köhler  
Former Federal President of Germany
  
  
- 11 Voices from Religions**
- 12** The Bahá'í Faith
- 24** Buddhism
- 34** Christianity
- 46** Confucianism
- 58** Daoism
- 70** Hinduism
- 84** Indigenous traditions: *Lankuntuwakan*, the Lenape way of life
- 96** Islam
- 108** Judaism
- 120** The Sikh Religion
  
  
- 135 Authors**
  
  
- 159 Acknowledgements**

## Introduction

**Gerd Müller**

**Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development**

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has charted a path to ensure that all human beings can live in dignity while respecting the limits of our planet. Yet, if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the Agenda, we will need to change how we think and act at all levels. In the long term, this can only succeed if the partnerships we build include those who appeal not only to people's minds, but who also move their hearts.

Religion plays an integral part in all societies and is the most important source of values for many people. Any development policy that respects people as individuals must also respect their individual world views. For most people, this world view is fundamentally shaped by their religion.

For centuries, religious institutions have also been making a practical contribution to meeting people's basic social needs. In many developing countries, the education and health care systems would be inconceivable without this contribution. Therefore, we can only truly breathe life into a new global partnership to implement the 2030 Agenda if religions are involved.

This was very much the consensus during international consultations on religion and development held last summer under the auspices of the United Nations, in which the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) took part. The idea for this publication originally arose during talks with representatives of the world's major religions. What do Buddhists say about global justice? What status does the preservation of creation have for Christians? What do Muslims understand by responsible business practices?

In this publication more than 25 authors attempt to find answers to these, and many other, questions. I am particularly pleased because this book is a

joint project. For every chapter, several representatives of each religion came together – high-ranking dignitaries, dedicated believers, leaders of religious institutions and research scientists. As the title implies, this book lays out important insights and ideas to help us tackle the major challenges of our time. It does not offer cut and dried theological positions.

Nine religions and one indigenous tradition voice their views in this book – the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, the Sikh Religion and the Native American Lenape. The authors take their lead from the five 'P's – planet, people, prosperity, peace and partnership – which together make up the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

I very much hope that this publication will encourage a discussion of the contribution that religions can make to sustainable development – both in the political arena and within the religious communities.

Germany would like to contribute to this debate. It is our goal to tackle hunger and poverty even more effectively by taking into greater account the potentials offered by the world's religions. The BMZ has thus published its own strategy on the role of religion in development policy for the first time and is hosting an international conference on the issue in February 2016 in Berlin.

I would like to thank everyone who helped make this book a reality. Special thanks go to the dedicated authors for their remarkable inputs. I hope that all readers will enjoy the new insights and that the book will provide food for thought.



*Dr Gerd Müller*

## Foreword

### His Holiness the 17<sup>th</sup> Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje

*Through peaceful hearts, peaceful feelings, and peaceful intelligence –  
May this world truly move from darkness to light.*

The publication you hold in your hands brings together the wisdom of many religions about how we can live together in harmony on this earth. I believe that it can make a difference and am thankful to have received the opportunity to contribute a foreword to this important book, which is being launched at the international conference “Partners for Change – Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in Berlin.

I was born in 1985 into a nomadic family in a remote part of Tibet. My birthplace did not have modern technology and I grew up experiencing the old way of life as it had been led for centuries in Tibet. We lived lightly on the land, being careful how we used natural resources such as wood and water. There was little pollution and we found ways to use and reuse what was given to us. We were watchful of weather patterns and the coexistence of wildlife in our shared landscape. You could say that we were natural environmentalists. At the age of eight, I was recognised by the senior lamas of my tradition and by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, the head of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and taken to the monastic seat of the Karmapas. I grew up realising that the purpose of my life is to help alleviate suffering. It is not an easy responsibility to live up to. But since then, I have been trying my best to do so.

Possibly because I was born in a herder family and was raised to know the rhythms of nature intimately, I have always felt that we humans are a part of an interdependent web of life. And, if we unbalance this relationship, the consequences are severe for all life on earth. Therefore, in 2009, I created an association of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries that implement environmental projects all over the Himalayas. Today, we have more than



50 monasteries and nunneries in India, Bhutan, and Nepal that are reforesting their lands, setting up solar power, running organic gardens and educating their communities on issues such as climate change resilience, freshwater protection, reforestation, and sustainable development as part of this mission.

When talking about development, we must consider carefully what we mean by this word. Most people think of it as a combination of two things: economic growth and material affluence. These two things are seen as a measure of our personal and national successes and we therefore dedicate our time to this pursuit relentlessly, despite the many costs that are associated with such an unsustainable path. It is difficult for governments and international organisations to place restrictions on economic growth when the majority of the world is seeking its short-term benefits. However, while the Earth can provide for our needs, it cannot meet our insatiable desires. I find it interesting that young people often ask me whether there is an alternative explanation for the purpose of life beyond material affluence. I think it is safe to say that all religions would agree that there is one – finding harmony with a higher consciousness, regardless of whether it is a God, or gods, or no gods. In order to find that harmony, we have to let go of our intense attachment to materialism and find a balance between economic and spiritual development on a personal and societal level.

The concept of sustainable development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the best starting point for all of us to come together. Religion has a resilience like no other force. It can not only give us explanations for the purpose of life but also the power to overcome key issues our societies face such as poverty, pollution, exploitation, corruption and violence, which are all priorities for the new Agenda 2030. While our individual activities in themselves may seem small, they can become a compelling global force if we work more closely together. Therefore, I congratulate everyone who is part of the new International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development. This initiative will bring together state development agencies, religious followers and leaders, religious organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that want to join forces

in order to address the key challenges we face today. I believe it is important that religious leaders and followers have the courage to make a change in their own behaviour before encouraging change in others. I hope that we can create a much larger global movement – of which religions are a part – leading to a new path towards peace, environmental protection and sustainable development.

We all must be the voices of hope where there is suffering and we must continue to inspire the evolution of the human spirit towards compassion and respect for all living beings.



*Ogyen Trinley Dorje  
His Holiness the 17<sup>th</sup> Gyalwang Karmapa*

## Foreword

### **H.E. Horst Köhler** **Former Federal President of Germany**

In these troubled times, we are so used to bad news in international politics that we often overlook the good news. And yet, despite the omnipresent crises that all too often seem to reveal the fragility of the consensus between nations and cultures, there are legitimate grounds to hope that dialogue and cooperation can once again increase. In 2015, the 193 states of the United Nations, for all their differences in other areas, agreed on two major frameworks: the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a comprehensive set of 17 goals for people and planet that the world wants to achieve by 2030. Both agreements document a growing awareness that we are all in the same boat and that cooperation, not confrontation, will lead us to a good future for all. These frameworks could guide the emergence of a new paradigm in world politics, the paradigm of global partnership: a sense of interconnectedness, of common interest and of mutual accountability. The two agreements are a counterpoint to the current world of friction, conflict and mistrust.

There is, in particular, a new global consensus that extreme poverty must be eradicated within the lifetime of one generation – but not at the expense of destroying our planet. And there is also a consensus that in order to achieve this, the peoples of this earth must work together – or humanity as a whole will fail. Transformation is needed everywhere, not just in developing or emerging economies, but also in industrialised countries.

While the irrefutable fact of economic, ecological and political interconnectedness forces us to cooperate, the world needs to strive to be more than just a community which reality has coerced into solidarity. We urgently need to search for common ground based on values that we all share.

Religions will have to play a major role in that quest. Already in 1993, the Parliament of World Religions declared the existence of a global ethic, under-

pinned by two principles that can be found in all major religions: humanity (every individual has the right to be treated humanely) and reciprocity (we must treat others as we wish others to treat us – the Golden Rule).

When we consider strategies for development and elaborate plans for political action, the issue of fundamental values and religious beliefs is often ignored. Shouldn't that be left to philosophers and clerics? I think that quite the reverse is true. The world needs a new dialogue on values, on what binds us together. Otherwise, many technocratic approaches will fail; otherwise, the easy politics of division and hatred and the cynical tactics of terrorism will prevail.

For this dialogue to happen, we need religious actors to become involved. They have a special responsibility to engage in that dialogue. It is they who must start building the bridges between one another, bridges that can then be consolidated by society as a whole. The German theologian Hans Küng once said, "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions." We now need to act on this realisation with a new urgency, in churches and mosques, in temples and synagogues.

I am therefore glad that this book has brought together so many voices from around the world, speaking about their own religious identities – and about what makes them work towards a global culture of dialogue that will help shape the future we want for all. May this book have many readers, and may its message capture not only our minds, but also our hearts.



*Professor Dr Horst Köhler*

# Voices from Religions



# The Bahá'í Faith

Bani Dugal  
Hoda Mahmoudi  
Ulrich Gollmer

## The Bahá'í Faith in a nutshell

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion with more than five million followers in virtually every country and territory in the world. Founded in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Persia, the Bahá'í Faith teaches that throughout history, God has sent to humanity a series of divine Educators whose teachings have provided the basis for the advancement of civilisation. These Manifestations have included Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad. Bahá'u'lláh, the latest of these Messengers and founder of the Bahá'í Faith, explained that the religions of the world come from the same source and are in essence successive chapters of one religion from God. Bahá'ís believe that the crucial need facing humanity is to find a unifying vision of the future of society and of the nature and purpose of life. Such a vision, they believe, unfolds in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

*Left page: A bird of paradise in the form of the phrase "In the name of God, the Glorious, the Most Glorious" sitting on the tree of paradise.*

Source: Bahá'í calligraphist Mishkin Qalam

***“Great is the station of man.  
Great must also be his endeavours for  
the rehabilitation of the world and  
the well-being of nations.”***

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'ís believe that humanity today is approaching the crowning stage of a millennia-long process of collective social and spiritual development. The defining characteristic of this dawning age of maturity is consciousness of the oneness of humankind. Although outwardly diverse in many respects, human beings constitute just one human species. This is a principle whose implications are becoming increasingly clear in numerous facets of life. It is also a principle which requires the abandonment of every kind and form of prejudice. If sustainable development is to be advanced on a global scale, then widely accepted practices, attitudes, and habits will need to be re-examined in light of the imperatives of unity and oneness.

“Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements,” wrote Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, raising the call to action for the common good. Warning against passive belief or the mere intellectual acknowledgement of lofty principles, he counselled the peoples of the world to “strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action”.<sup>1</sup> In thousands of settings across the planet, therefore, Bahá'ís are working shoulder to shoulder with neighbours and acquaintances to learn about new patterns of relationship and social structures that embody the principle of the oneness of humankind.



## Planet

The current global order has often approached the environment as a reservoir of material resources to be exploited. The grave consequences of this paradigm have become all too apparent. And with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and other international processes, momentum for meaningful change is building. Yet sustainability is defined as much by human and social factors as ecological ones. Correlation has been found, for example, between inequality and environmental degradation. This suggests that the relationships linking human beings with one another have a direct impact on the physical resources of the planet.

*“Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it.”*

Shoghi Effendi, letter of 17 February 1933

If more sustainable approaches toward the environment are to be built, then human interactions must be addressed as deliberately as the natural world. Just as effective technologies must be deployed and policies enacted, social norms and patterns of action must become infused by qualities such as justice, equity, and solidarity. But characteristics such as the capacity to sacrifice for the well-being of the whole, to trust and be trustworthy, and to give freely and generously to others derive not from environmental pragmatism or political expediency alone. Rather they arise from the deepest sources of human inspiration and motivation. In this, faith has shown itself to be key, and religion offers a vital source of commitment to new and potentially challenging patterns of daily life.

## People

Many have noted that the true test of Agenda 2030 will be its practical implementation – particularly the degree to which it is able to galvanise the peoples of the world. Structural reform, largely the purview of governments, will be crucial in numerous areas. But it is people who enforce regulations or

ignore them, who uphold positions of authority or abuse them. For this reason, the ability of people, individually and as members of communities and institutions, to achieve something they collectively value is an indispensable means of achieving lasting progress.

*“Individuals must strive by day and by night, using all those means which will conduce to progress, until the government and the people develop along every line from day to day and even from moment to moment.”*

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*

Appreciation for the human element has by no means been absent from contemporary discourse. In the process of crafting Agenda 2030, for example, the Secretary-General of the UN declared that “if we are to succeed, the new agenda cannot remain the exclusive domain of institutions and governments. It must be embraced by people”.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the process of crafting the SDGs focused heavily, at times almost exclusively, on finance and technology as the means by which ambitious plans could be implemented. Financial and technological resources will of course be critical to global development. But attributing change primarily to institutions and structures significantly limits the agency of individuals and communities. People are at the centre of Agenda 2030, and this is a major victory. But care must be taken lest people be treated primarily as passive objects to be developed, rather than as protagonists of development in and of themselves.

Conceptions about what is required to make meaningful contributions to society will need to be reconsidered if we are to harness the constructive potential of multitudes around the world. Those with limited material means, for example, far outnumber those living in abundance, and it can no longer be realistically imagined that a small segment of humanity should bring about the advancement of all the rest. At this point in the development of the global community, such a proposition is neither feasible nor desirable. Efforts to achieve the Agenda 2030 goals will therefore need to ensure that those who have traditionally been regarded as passive recipients of aid are meaningfully integrated into global processes of development. Such systems will need to increasingly reflect the fundamentally spiritual principle of universal participation in the betterment of society.

## Prosperity

A central function of religion in every age has been refining understanding of human well-being and prosperity. In particular, the founders of the world's enduring religious traditions have time and again addressed the relationship between material affluence and the more transcendent dimensions of human existence. In the context of Agenda 2030, religion has an important role to play in facilitating thoughtful inquiry into the nature and purpose of the development process itself. Religion, in its truest form, safeguards and promotes the happiness and welfare of humanity as a whole.

The many targets and indicators of the SDGs, technical and procedural as they can be, ultimately centre on one primary aim: expanding the basis of well-being and happiness. This is an objective shared by the world's religions. Instead of two discrete fields, then, development and religion offer complementary means of expanding the limitless potentialities of human consciousness and applying them toward the betterment of civilisation. Here we can see a powerful force for addressing seemingly intractable problems such as poverty, ignorance, and conflict. But applying individual and collective capacities to social challenges has intrinsic value above and beyond the outcomes of specific projects. In contributing their share to the betterment of society, more and more people are able to partake in the blessings that every religion has ascribed to the station of selfless service to the common good. As stated in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, a Bahá'í holy text:

“The honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.”

*“Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.”*

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablet of Wisdom*

## Peace

For the first time in history it is possible for all to view the entire planet in one perspective. Nationalism, racism, and similar forms of superficial prejudice still exist, to be sure. Yet no longer can it be realistically imagined that the destiny of any one people remains unaffected by that of countless others. The interdependence seen in spheres ranging from the ecological and technological to the political and the economic belie such simplistic notions. In this sense, the oneness of humankind is no longer an abstract proposition to be debated, but rather a reality to be reckoned with in concrete terms. And peace will only be possible to the degree that this unity is increasingly reflected in the realities of daily life and global relationships.

The bedrock of a strategy that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must therefore be consciousness of the oneness of humankind. The idea that the peoples of the world constitute a single human family receives wide support at the level of theory. Yet global interactions are still firmly based in entrenched conceptions of race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, and similar designations. Such affiliations will

## The Bahá'í Faith in practice

Bahá'ís see the generation, application and diffusion of various kinds of knowledge as central to the process of social betterment, regardless of any given project's form or focus. The Bahá'í community has therefore established a decentralised, world-wide process of spiritual and moral education, open to participants of all backgrounds. Structured in age-specific stages, this system tends to the moral education of children,

facilitates the spiritual empowerment of young adolescents, and assists youth and adults to explore the application of spiritual teachings to daily life and the challenges facing society. It aims to help participants to analyse the constructive and destructive forces operating in society, to recognise the influence those forces exert on their thoughts and actions, and to take constructive, principled action in response.

need – without in any way detracting from the rich diversity of social origins, history, language and tradition – to be informed by a wider allegiance to a global civilisation if concern for the prosperity of all is to become anything more than politically expedient rhetoric.

Such a reorientation has significant implications for the current international order and the United Nations itself. Though the global character of numerous challenges has been widely recognised, and though initial steps have been taken toward international coordination and governance, unyielding national sovereignty and limited regional partnerships remain the fall-back position of virtually all international relationships. This reflects the hard-won victories of a millennia-long process of social evolution that began with the family unit, passed through the stages of tribe and city-state, and arrived at the current conception of the nation-state. Yet taking the present arrangement as the culmination of social organisation would be a significant failure of vision. For only to the extent that global institutions acknowledge the implications of their shared destiny and begin to move beyond the pursuit of narrowly conceived national agendas will it be possible to meet the challenges of the present age.

*“The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.”*

**Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from  
the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh**

## Partnership

Discourse around sustainable development often places individual choices and governmental action in subtle opposition to one another. In reality, both are needed. Agreements and protocols at the governmental level will not be sufficient if individuals do not adopt new lifestyles and behaviours. Similarly, individual actions alone will not be sufficient if governments do not make the necessary changes at the structural level. The community is also crucial. As a distinct unit of civilisation with its own capacities and qualities, it has a unique and vital role that cannot be overlooked. Increasing integration

between the individual, the community, and the institutions of society will be needed if long-lasting progress is to be achieved.

Thus while strategic partnerships will be important, a more fundamental redefinition of the relationships sustaining society is needed. Present-day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships – among human beings, between humanity and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions – reflect levels of understanding arrived at in earlier stages of the development of the human race. These understandings were not without value, but do not provide a reliable basis for partnership today, for the premise that humanity constitutes a single people presents fundamental challenges to the way that most institutions of contemporary society carry out their functions.

*“The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity.”*

'Abdu'l-Bahá,

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

To take just one example, conflict is accepted as a mainspring of human interaction, whether in the form of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life. It represents an expression, in social organisation, of a narrowly materialistic interpretation of life that has grown in prominence and influence over the past two centuries. The imperatives of maturity require human beings to free them-

selves from such ideological limitations inherited from the past and learn to, in the *Words of Wisdom* of Bahá'u'lláh, “look into all things with a searching eye”. As humanity recognises that all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities will have to be recast.



*A group of individuals studying Bahá'í writings in Bolivia. Bahá'ís around the world engage in collective study of the writings of the Bahá'í Faith in order to apply the teachings to service for the community.*

Source: Bahá'í International Community

## **Vision**

Religion has been a feature of civilisation since the dawn of recorded history and has inspired multitudes to exert themselves toward the advancement of civilisation and the well-being of others. It offers an understanding of human existence and progress that lifts the eye from the rocky path to the distant horizon. And when true to the spirit of its transcendent founders, religion has been one of the most powerful tools for the creation of new and beneficial patterns of individual and collective life. As the Universal House of Justice, the world governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, has written:

“Religion promotes upright character, instils forbearance, compassion, forgiveness, magnanimity, high-mindedness. It prohibits harm to others and invites souls to the plane of sacrifice, that they may give of themselves for the good of others. It imparts a world-embracing vision and cleanses the heart from self-centredness and prejudice. It inspires souls to build unity, to endeavour for material and spiritual betterment for all, to see their own happiness in that of others, to advance learning and science, to be an instrument of true joy, and to revive the body of humankind. It burnishes the mirror of the soul until it reflects the qualities of the spirit with which it has been endowed. And then the power of the divine attributes is manifested in the individual and collective lives of humanity and aids the emergence of a new social order.”<sup>3</sup>

Now that the community of nations has embraced the SDGs, many have noted that a crucial next challenge will be building ownership for Agenda 2030 among the peoples of world. This will be a matter of communication and education, but also one of motivation, volition, will, and self-discipline. Countless people in widely differing contexts will need to take this agenda as their own and make changes in their thinking and behaviour. And it is here that faith and belief can be of central importance, for religion reaches to the roots of motivation, prompting individuals to not just agree, but to arise and *act*.

### Recommended links

[www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org)

The website of the worldwide Bahá'í community

[www.bahai.org/frontiers](http://www.bahai.org/frontiers)

Film about community building based on concepts enshrined in Bahá'í teaching

[www.bic.org/statements/all-statements](http://www.bic.org/statements/all-statements)

Official statements of the Bahá'í to UN bodies and other international organisations



## Recommended reading

*Summoning Our Coming Will: A Bahá'í Contribution to the United Nations Global Development Agenda*, Bahá'í International Community United Nations Office, 2015, [www.bic.org/publications/summoning-our-common-will-bahai-contribution-united-nations-global-development-agenda](http://www.bic.org/publications/summoning-our-common-will-bahai-contribution-united-nations-global-development-agenda)

*For the Betterment of the World*, Bahá'í International Community Office of Social and Economic Development, 2008, [www.bahai.org/documents/osed/betterment-world.pdf](http://www.bahai.org/documents/osed/betterment-world.pdf)

Paul Hanley, *ELEVEN (Eleven billion people will share this planet by century's end. This will change everything.)*, FriesenPress, 2014

- 1 Key sources of the Bahá'í Faith include the writings of Bahá'u'lláh as well as those of his precursor, known as the Báb, and authorised successors, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. The writings of the present-day world governing body, the Universal House of Justice, can also be consulted. Major works of Bahá'u'lláh include *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the *Kitáb-i-Iqán*, and *The Hidden Words*.
- 2 Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" (A/69/700).
- 3 Letter dated 29 January 2014.



# Buddhism

Ha Vinh Tho  
Parichart Suwanbubbha  
Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai

## Buddhism in a nutshell

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived in northern India approximately 2,500 years ago. Today it has about 488 million followers worldwide, making it the fourth largest religion in the world. Buddhism is based on the oral teachings of Buddha, which were later transcribed by his followers. Key scriptures include the *Sutta*, the words of the Buddha, the *Vinaya* on monastic discipline and ethics, and the *Abhidhamma* on philosophy. Buddha's teachings are not considered to be a divine revelation but rather guidance, based on his own experience, on how to follow a spiritual path towards enlightenment by purifying the mind and leading a virtuous life. The main schools of Buddhism are *Theravada*, the School of the Elders, *Mahayana*, the Great Vehicle, and *Vajrayana*, the Diamond Vehicle. The first emphasises that the ultimate goal is to end the cycle of rebirth through a state of mind without desire and suffering. Mahayana Buddhism emphasises the Bodhisattva ideal with the vow to remain in the cycle of existence to help all beings attain enlightenment; Vajrayana uses elaborate meditations and rituals to attain enlightenment by transforming negative emotions into wisdom and love.

*Left page: A Mandala symbolises the dependent co-arising of all phenomena. Everything in life is interconnected and part of a higher consciousness.*

Source: Ha Vinh Tho

*“Ceasing to do evil, cultivating the good,  
purifying the heart:  
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.”*

According to Buddhist tradition, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, spent his youth in the luxury of a royal palace. His father, the king, tried to protect him from experiencing suffering of any kind. But one day, as he wandered outside his palace, he saw a sick person, an aged person, and a corpse. He was directly confronted with the reality of suffering and of the impermanence of life and sensual pleasures. He then saw a wandering ascetic, a yogi. He longed to follow a spiritual path that would enable him to overcome suffering. At the age of 29, Siddhartha Gautama left his home to discover the deeper meaning of birth and death and to find everlasting peace of mind. With five companions, he lived the rigorous life of an ascetic for six years. Yet enlightenment seemed no closer. Based on this experience, he decided to follow his own path, the Middle Path, avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Eventually, Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment or Buddhahood at the age of 35 under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, now in Bihar in India. He began teaching, focusing on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path, and came to be known as the Buddha, the enlightened one. His teachings say that birth, aging, sickness and death are suffering; that experiencing unpleasant things is suffering; that to be separated from the pleasant is suffering; that not to receive what one craves for is suffering. Buddha taught that craving for sensual and emotional pleasures leads to rebirth. Cessation of craving, ignorance and hatred is therefore the key to overcoming suffering. His path to enlightenment is based on three components:

**Wisdom** comprises right thought and right understanding. Discerning the nature of the mind and seeing “reality as it is” is the foundation of wisdom. This includes awareness of the impermanence of all objects, the law of cause and effect and the illusion of the self.

**Ethics** comprises right speech, right action and right livelihood. These involve developing one’s own wisdom and compassion in order to understand what

brings lasting happiness and well-being to oneself and others and what brings suffering to oneself and others.

**Concentration** comprises right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The mind is seen as the most important factor in suffering or happiness. The emphasis is thus placed on developing positive inner qualities such as compassion, loving kindness, joy, equanimity, contentment, generosity and altruism. The fundamental assumption is that it is possible to train oneself in these inner qualities by the practice of meditation.

## Planet

Buddhist values – such as compassion towards all sentient beings, including plants and animals, respect for life and living a simple life – help to save the Earth. Applying Buddhist principles in politics and economics has a direct, positive effect on ecological footprints and helps to overcome ecological violence. For example, during the COP21 Climate Conference in Paris, Bhutan pledged to absorb three times more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than its 700,000 citizens produce and to keep its forests intact to help mitigate climate change. Buddhist leaders from all schools of Buddhism have been very active in promoting environmental protection. They delivered the “Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders 2015” at the COP21. It says: “Our concern is founded on the Buddha’s realization of dependent co-arising, which interconnects all things in the universe. Understanding this interconnected causality and the consequences of our actions are critical steps in reducing our environmental impact. Cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion, we will be able to act out of love, not fear, to protect our planet. [...] However, everyday life can easily lead us to forget that our lives are inextricably interwoven with the natural world through every breath we take, the water we drink, and the food we eat. [...] Phasing out fossil fuels and

*“Life is as dear to a mute creature as it is to man. Just as one wants happiness and fears pain, just as one wants to live and not die, so do other creatures.”*

Dalai Lama , the spiritual leader of Buddhism

moving toward 100 percent renewable and clean energy will not only spur a global, low-carbon transformation, it will also help us to embark on a much-needed path of spiritual renewal.”<sup>1</sup>

## People

Buddhism focuses on serving people. Buddhist ethics have been applied in politics since the rule of the Indian emperor Ashoka (304-232 BC). Inspired by Buddhism, he became famous for his tolerant governing style and extensive philanthropic work.

*“We will develop and cultivate the liberation of mind by loving kindness towards all beings.”*

Samyutta Nikaya<sup>2</sup>

This form of governance is not self-serving but is the foundation for creating an environment conducive to bringing happiness to people and ensuring sustainable development. The realisation that all beings strive for happiness and seek to avoid

suffering leads to kinder and more compassionate policies in governance and economics.

## Prosperity

Buddhist economics promotes a spiritual approach by examining the functioning of the human mind as its first principle. The aim is to create an inner process that enables the positive transformation of ignorance, greed and violence – the very basis of the current economic model – into wisdom, contentment and peace. The intention is to reveal what is harmful and beneficial in all human activities, including production and consumption, and thus support people in making ethical choices. It strives towards a middle way of balancing economic development and human values. When we understand what creates desire and craving and what leads to contentment, we realise that mere wealth can never satisfy us. We become aware of the importance of leading a simple but dignified life.





*The Buddhist tree ordination ritual reminds people of the value of respect for all life forms, including plants, and the need to preserve our sacred planet.*

Source: Parichart Suwanbubha

Buddhist economics challenges the vision of “homo economicus” that is the basis of the current capitalist economic model: the assumption that humans are purely rational and egoistic and will always attempt to maximise their profit without pangs of conscience. From a Buddhist perspective, attributes such as altruism and compassion are qualities of the mind that are innate but need to be discovered and cultivated.

*“Health is the greatest gift,  
contentment the greatest wealth,  
faithfulness the best relationship.”*

Dhammapada

“Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.”

With this famous declaration in the 1970s, the fourth King of Bhutan challenged conventional materialistic notions of progress. He realised that the existing development paradigm based on Gross National Product (GNP)/Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does not take account of the ultimate goal of every human being: contentment and happiness. Inspired by the Buddhist tradi-

tions of Bhutan, the King concluded that GDP should not be the primary focus for governance. The philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) was born. Since that time, GNH has guided Bhutan's development and policy formation. This does not mean that Bhutan is not facing economic and societal challenges. But Bhutan is trying to find a balanced "middle path" in which equitable socio-economic development is integrated with environmental protection, cultural promotion and good governance. To implement GNH, indices have been created, measurements recorded and screening tools for government policy put in place. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, GNH is likely to attract even more international attention

## Buddhism in practice

Symbolic tree ordination is a ritual initiated by a group of Thai Buddhist Monks, *Phra Nak Anuraksa*. It has also been practised by Cambodian, Vietnamese and Burmese monks in the last two decades. Tree ordination is an original idea that uses the widely respected symbol of monastic robes to make loggers hesitate to cut down trees. It combines the pre-Buddhist values of spirit worship, the Buddhist values of respecting nature and the message of saving the forests from destruction. Through this ritual, the monks also question the role and responsibility of the local municipalities and national government in deforestation and conservation and offer a solution in cooperation with local communities.

The *Sangha Metta Project* is unique in the sense that it engages Thai monks in HIV/AIDS work. It was initiated by monks themselves in response to the need for Buddhist monks to play a more active role in preventing HIV/AIDS and caring for people living with the virus. Taking the Buddha's teachings as their inspiration, the monks realised that a core challenge of HIV/AIDS is the ignorance about the condition among both the sufferers and the general public. The active involvement of the monks is strengthening the trust between them and the people. It is also developing community potential and encouraging greater grass roots participation in solving problems at the local level.



as an economic and development model that offers a credible alternative for meeting the challenges of our time.

The Sufficiency Economy, as propounded by King Bhumipol Adulyadej of Thailand, is a Buddhist model of development based on contentment. It uses wisdom and virtue as the guiding principles leading to lasting happiness in life. Its three pillars are built on knowledge in the relevant fields and virtues comprising honesty, patience, and perseverance:

**Moderation** involves avoiding excess and leading a lifestyle respectful of oneself and others. The solution is sufficiency: in other words, producing and consuming only what is needed to live a life in dignity at a moderate level.

**Reasonableness** means that decisions concerning the level of moderation must be made rationally with consideration of all the factors involved and careful anticipation of the outcomes.

**Risk management** requires an assessment of positive and negative cross-sectoral impacts as part of all decision-making processes. Decisions and activities must be executed at an appropriate level to fulfil the two conditions of knowledge and virtue.



## Peace

Even though the precept “Do not kill” is one of the most universally recognised ethical principles, war and violence remain a reality in the life of humankind. The preamble to the constitution of UNESCO declares that: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”. Education therefore plays a central role in developing a global culture of peace. A transformation of the current mind-set is necessary to create a caring economy and society and to preserve our environment. This can only be achieved if we change

*“The whole world is in flames,  
by what fire is it kindled?  
By the fire of lust, hatred  
and ignorance.”*

Dhammapada

our approach to education to include the teaching of social and emotional skills as well as ethical values from the early years onwards. Buddhism has developed effective methods of transforming the mind that could be embedded in pre-schools, schools and universities in a secular context beyond the boundaries of Buddhism.

## Partnership

*“Conquer anger with non-anger.  
Conquer badness with goodness.  
Conquer meanness with generosity.  
Conquer dishonesty with truth.”*

Dhammapada

Buddhist leaders and communities are already actively involved in international and interfaith partnerships in many fields, including in peace and reconciliation work in Cambodia and Viet Nam, human rights advocacy, development and ecology. To name just a few examples: Buddhists played an active

role in the summit of world faith leaders to end modern slavery and human trafficking; they have established new development paradigms with a focus on happiness; and they published a Climate Change Statement to World Leaders in 2015<sup>3</sup>. Buddhists hope that all people – especially those belonging to a religion – can create a global movement leading to the alleviation of suffering, to truthfulness and peace, and to better protection of the environment.

## Vision

Buddhist teaching on the dependent co-arising of phenomena is relevant and applicable to the present day situation that endangers the Earth and all living beings. No-one can afford to say “It is not our business”. The Socially Engaged Buddhist movement is aware of the problems and suffering in this world and takes compassionate action. Buddhism is a religion with specific scriptures, clergy and traditions. But it is also a profound philosophy and a science of the mind based on centuries of contemplative and epistemological

inquiry. As such, it has a positive impact beyond the boundaries of Buddhist communities and opens up ways of understanding and resolving the pressing challenges of our time.

### Recommended links

[www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net)

Buddha Dharma Education Association

[www.ecobuddhism.org](http://www.ecobuddhism.org)

Ecological Buddhism – A Buddhist Response to Global Warming

[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

### Recommended reading

Dalai Lama, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011

Sallie B. King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009

Sulak Sivaraksa, *The Wisdom of Sustainability*, Koa Books, 2009

**1** <http://gbccc.org>

**2** All quotes from the Buddhist tradition, including those from the *Dhammapada*, are from the *Pāli Canon*, the most important collection of Buddhist scriptures.

**3** <http://gbccc.org>



# Christianity

Thabo Cecil Makgoba  
Stephan Ackermann  
Qiu Zhonghui  
Theresa Chong Carino

## Christianity in a nutshell

Christianity is a monotheistic religion grounded on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Today it has an estimated 2.17 billion followers, making it the largest religion in the world. Christians believe Jesus Christ to be God's own Son and God in one person. Jesus Christ was crucified in his thirties in Jerusalem. Christians believe that he saved the world and redeemed humanity with his martyrdom. The Holy Bible contains the holy writings of Judaism, the Old or First Testament, and the teachings of Jesus Christ – also known as the Gospel – as they were handed down by later generations of his disciples. During the first 300 years of our time Christianity evolved to become the leading religion in the Roman Empire. Due to differences over church structures and the interpretation of the Holy Bible, Christianity now consists of numerous denominations, including Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Anglicans, Methodists, Orthodox, Adventists, Pentecostals, New Apostolics and many localised, independent churches and new movements such as the Mormons. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of larger churches have been cooperating with each other in the global ecumenical movement. This has found its primary expression in the World Council of Churches (WCC), which also cooperates closely with the Vatican.

*Left page: A make-shift Christian church with the typical symbol of Christianity, the cross, in a refugee camp in France.*

Source: Sean Hawkey, World Council of Churches

***“We serve people from our heart.  
Because our Creator came to serve us first.”***

In Christian faith and tradition, we are comforted by the knowledge that the world belongs to God; that we do not belong to ourselves or exist for ourselves. God is the creator and he has entrusted us to be stewards of his wonderful creation. We believe in the triune God – the Father, the Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christians aspire to follow Jesus Christ’s example in every aspect of life. For Christians, God has created all humanity in his image. By sending his Son and making him one of us, he confirmed the dignity of every member of the human family. Christ is God’s assurance of forgiveness and his death and resurrection set all humans free, according to Christian belief.

All people are intrinsically valuable in the eyes of God and worthy of dignity and respect, regardless of their living circumstances, beliefs, culture, gender, social or economic status. A Christian understanding of dignity upholds every person’s entitlement to be respected as a human being. As the psalmist exclaims, “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalms 8: 4-6).<sup>1</sup>

Christians advocate an understanding of development that is not based solely on economic achievements and growth but considers these a precondition that enables people to realise their full emotional, intellectual and physical potential.

Care and compassion towards those in need is a fundamental part of Christianity. It gives voice to the voiceless. In the Old Testament, the prophets denounced the leaders of nations as shepherds who have failed the flocks entrusted to their care, since they have not “strengthened the weak, healed the sick, and bound up the injured” (Ezekiel 34:4). In the New Testament, Jesus tells his followers that those who are ill actually look after those who take care of them – and whoever fails to offer help stands condemned (Matthew 25).

Christians regard themselves as stewards of God's creation. From this conviction stems the involvement of Christians in the social sphere, where they endeavour to promote social justice and protect human life and dignity. As good stewards, Christians all over the world strive to ensure that God's creation is not desecrated by human action.

## Planet

We are only stewards of God's wonderful creation. As Christians we are deeply concerned about the direction of humankind's journey on this planet. Excessive use of natural resources by human beings and an ever-increasing amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have led to a continuous destruction of the planet. Simply continuing current global economic practices will lead to a dead end. We have to turn the process around. A transformation towards an ecologically sustainable economy is essential and urgent. Climate justice demands a faith response.

Christian leaders and the global network of Christian organisations have articulated an urgent call for governments, the corporate world and communities worldwide to undertake effective measures to curb global warming. In February 2015, a group of 17 Anglican bishops from all six continents gathered in Cape Town and declared a call to urgent action for climate justice. They demanded binding climate change agreements at national and international levels and assistance for climate refugees, especially women and children. Africa's first female bishop Rt Revd Ellinah Wamukoya said: "Women are more often dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, so the contribution of women is essential in decisions around climate change. The equality of all human beings in the eyes of God,

*"The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."*

Genesis 2:15

as it is symbolised in the Eucharist, must be stressed in the communities.”<sup>2</sup> The bishops highlighted their acceptance of scientific evidence: Human activity, especially in fossil-fuel based economies, is one of the main causes of the climate crisis, the acidification of seawater, the depletion of fishing grounds, and the creation of climate refugees. The environmental problems were identified as economic, scientific and political, as well as religious, since Christians have been complicit in a theology of domination. The declaration of the bishops commits Christians to specific actions including energy conservation measures in churches, more use of renewable energy, nurturing biodi-

## Christianity in practice

Leaving no one behind: Churches and Christian faith based organisations advocate an inclusive society where no-one is left behind. Hence education is a key focal area in ensuring a bottom-up approach to human development. Educational work provides more equal opportunities for young people, especially from rural areas and poor families, to enter colleges and universities and start a career. In Africa, Asia and other regions, Christian organisations offer a wide range of social services, with the effect that governments are now encouraging Christian as well as organisations from other religions to help the poor and vulnerable and to participate in relief work.

Worldwide, Christians offer medical services, basic healthcare training and HIV/AIDS education. They finance and manage hospitals, care homes for the elderly, orphanages and educational centres for autistic and mentally challenged children. Christian organisations help in developing employment opportunities and in removing isolation and stigma attached to these vulnerable groups. They also offer scholarships to poor children and organise train-the-trainer programmes to strengthen local human capacities. Increasingly, Christians support poor communities in fair trade practices and social entrepreneurship. The work of Christian organisations is only possible with the help of hundreds of thousands of volunteers worldwide.



versity on church land, supporting sustainability in water, food, agriculture and land use, reviewing churches' investment practices including a call for divestment, and closer ecumenical and interfaith cooperation.

The Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* by Pope Francis set out the teachings of the Catholic Church on the “care of the common home” of all humanity. The letter helps us to understand the connections between injustice, marginalisation and global environmental deterioration. This encyclical came just in time to be part of the debate on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and to be a source of guidance for its implementation. For example, if we wish to address the second Sustainable Development Goal on the ending of hunger seriously, we also have to talk about changing international agricultural policy and trade relations, according to the encyclical letter.



## People

God is a relational God. God calls and invites people to develop a relationship with each other, all creation, and with God. It is when that relationship is lived out in a respectful and caring way that we experience the presence of God and see God in all. Many Christians therefore see charity as a testimony of their faith. Apart from activities which aim at the happiness and benefit of believers, extending service to all of society is regarded as of utmost importance. Without action, belief will be meaningless. It is in social action that faith becomes manifest and leads to social transformation.

*“Break the chains of oppression  
and the yoke of injustice,  
and let the oppressed go free.”*

Isaiah 58:6

## Prosperity

Prosperity is not about short-term economic growth. We need a new understanding of growth. People can grow and prosper in their abilities, in their potentials, in spiritual dimension and in their solidarity with their neighbours. The necessary preconditions start with free access to safe and clean water, sufficient and healthy food, education, and the rights to freedom of religion and speech as enshrined in human rights.

At the same time, Christians should acknowledge their share in the injustices manifest in today's world and join in an anti-poverty strategy which focuses on the suffering of the poor. Sustainable development is only possible through the informed participation of the affected communities. The poor ought to be stakeholders in their own future and be given opportunities to create and develop community-based projects for themselves.

Christians should also address the role of entrepreneurs in societies. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and compliance management ought to be more than window-dressing. A social market economy needs entrepreneurs with the ability to make ethical judgments. What should be done in

conflicts of interests? What does decent work mean? Thus, it is necessary to include ethical questions in all fields of education, especially in economic and business studies. As the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace stated in 2012 in *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*: "Respect for human dignity and the

common good are foundational principles which should inform the way we organise the labour and capital employed, and the processes of innovation, in a market system. The deep and abiding purpose of individual businesses and commercial systems is to address real human needs."<sup>3</sup>

*"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

John 10:10



*Christian volunteers helping earthquake victims in Nepal in 2015. Christian organisations worldwide offer humanitarian assistance and many other services for people in need.*

Source: Amity Foundation China

## Peace

War is a reality in the history of humankind. Christians are challenged to resist war and all justifications for it. The tragedy is that religion and faith are often misused by fundamentalists for political reasons and to justify acts of violence and war. The peace of Christ is not the same as the tranquillity that comes about when conflict is absent, but is rather to be understood as the just peace that comes about when the prevailing conditions are such as

*“Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called  
the children of God.”*

Matthew 5:9

to allow people to attain their full potential. We cannot speak about peace in the absence of economic justice, as a large part of a society may then not share in a claimed economic boom.

For Christians, God made peace with the world in that Jesus Christ died “for all”, especially for those who are the “others”. This belief encourages overcoming any form of exclusion, demonisation or annihilation of other people, religions and cultures. God’s power of reconciliation is greater than the human force to destroy. God gives the courage to win the enemies for a common future instead of simply seeking to defeat them. Peace is only possible with the enemy, not against or without them.

## Partnership

Partnership needs respect, engagement and dialogue. Dealing with the multiple challenges facing the world requires macro and micro level cooperation among governments, civil society and faith communities. This does not mean that churches and Christian organisations will replace the state. It involves

developing new alliances and partnerships, and trying to build bridges between different approaches and capacities in civil society and faith communities. Development and job creation projects, together with small and micro enterprises targeting poverty, should be a central focus of such efforts. There are many indications that the expanded space for religious organisations and their collaboration with international

partners in countries like China have helped poor people and boosted sustainable development. The fact that nearly 75% of the orphanages in China are run today by religious organisations speaks for itself.<sup>4</sup>

*“If one member suffers,  
all suffer together;  
if one member is honoured,  
all rejoice together.”*

1 Corinthians 12:26



## Vision

The Christian vision of society is oriented towards honouring the reign of God on Earth. This vision is both big and small at the same time. It is small because Christians may trust that it is not their task to realise the reign of God; his reign already began with the coming of his Son. It is big because Jesus Christ asks his followers to do whatever they can to be a sign of God's love to people. It means creating conditions that allow humanity to flourish. Practical commitment to human rights is not something merely external to the Gospel but a crucial part of it. Christianity takes into consideration the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious settings of all continents when reminding states, business corporations and others of their duties to safeguard human dignity. Christianity addresses all people of good will, thus reaching out beyond its own followers.

Christianity is essentially about changing the “me” – egoistic and individual needs – into a “we” – altruistic and embracing the needs of the world community. Societies focused on “we” produce the most contented citizens – people who care for others and respect diversity. We invite all governments and major religions to cooperate, join inter-religious initiatives and share their experiences. This will lay the foundations for peaceful and sustainable development. As Christians, we pray that the new Agenda 2030 may not be merely a list of boxes that we tick, but that we as people of faith do all we can to create a just world. We are willing partners in the effort to help those who are left behind.

## Recommended links

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf)

Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* of the Holy Father Pope Francis on Care for Our Common Home, 2015

[http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/COP21\\_Statement\\_englisch2.pdf](http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/COP21_Statement_englisch2.pdf)

Statement of religious representatives on the UN Climate Change Conference, COP21 in Paris 2015

<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/media/148818/The-World-is-our-Host-FINAL-TEXT.pdf>

Call to urgent action for climate justice by The Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network 2015

## Recommended reading

Allan Boesak, Johann Weusmann and Charles Amjad-Ali (editors), *Dreaming A Different World, Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth – The challenge of the Accra Confession for the Churches*, The Globalisation Project, Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Deutschland, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, 2010

Philip L Wickeri, Janice K. Wickeri and Damayanthi M. A. Niles (editors), *Plurality, Power and Mission: Intercontextual Theological Explorations on the Role of Religion in the New Millennium*, The Council for World Mission, Hong Kong, 2000

Julio De Santa Ana (editor), *Towards a Church of the poor*, World Council of Churches, 1979

- 1** The quotations in this chapter are taken from the Bible. It consists of two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each Testament is made up of different sections or books. The first name in brackets refers to the specific section or book within the Bible. The first number refers to the chapter within the book and the second number refers to the exact verse.
- 2** Quoted in: *The World Is Our Host: A Call to Urgent Action for Climate Justice*, The Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, 2015
- 3** *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection* (4th edition), Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2014
- 4** “Notes on Information concerning homes run by religious organizations for orphans and abandoned babies”, Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/jd/201405/20140500631722.shtml>



# Confucianism

Yao Xinzong

Peng Yongjie

Mary Evelyn Tucker



## Confucianism in a nutshell

Confucianism first emerged as a school of thought distinguishable from other cultural traditions through the work of the Chinese teacher and philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE). Although it became influential early on, Confucianism did not gain dominance until the second century BCE. It adopted an open attitude towards other traditions or religions such as Daoism, and later spread to other parts of East Asia such as Korea, Japan and Viet Nam. Today many people in these regions continue to follow the Confucian way of life, although not all of them overtly identify themselves as Confucian. The core of Confucian teaching is preserved in the “Five Classics” and the “Four Books”. Focusing on how to lead a virtuous life, it derives its moral principles from the heavenly Way, the *Dao*. Confucianism requires its followers to take responsibility for enabling a peaceful world based on a “harmony of differences” and not on the “total sameness” of other people and nations. It endorses the protection of the environment based on an organic understanding of the world and the oneness that unites humans and nature.

*Left page: “Harmony is most valuable” – a quote from “The Analects of Confucius”.*

Source: Picture and calligraphy by Professor Zhang Liwen

***“All people are my fellow beings,  
and all things are my companions.”***

Confucianism can be traced to the teachings and practices of ritual masters, called *ru*, in the later Shang dynasty (c.1760–1045 BCE) and early Western Zhou dynasty (c.1045–770 BCE). However, it first became prominent as a distinctive school of thought with Confucius (551–479 BCE), who initiated private education and taught students and government officials about rituals, history, music, poetry, and the art of governance. Confucius believed that the only way to continue the splendid culture of the early Zhou dynasty was “rule by virtue”, and emphasised that rulers must cultivate such virtues in themselves in order to bring security and peace to the people and to set a good example for the world.

### **Key teachings of Confucius**

Confucius had a firm belief in Heaven and its power to determine human success or failure. However, in chaotic periods on Earth, it was necessary to devote more attention to the human condition, especially through education. To this end, the Confucian curriculum focused on setting one’s heart on the Way, the *Dao*, relying on humaneness (*ren*) for support, and taking recreation in the arts (*yi*). Confucius believed that this would enable one to become a cultivated person (*junzi*). As the foundation of personal and social life, he propounded the positive qualities of humaneness or benevolence, filial piety (*xiao*), brotherly love (*ti*), honesty (*zhi*), respectfulness (*jing*) and trustworthiness (*xin*). These virtues were acquired by following the rules of ritual (*li*). Although these rituals were originally religious, Confucius transformed them into moral standards as codes of conduct.

Confucius spent 13 years travelling through different Chinese states in the hope that his ethico-political strategy would be adopted and put into practice. Although he was welcomed to the court by a number of states, his blueprint for governance and philosophy was rejected. In his later years he concentrated on education, editing ancient records into the canonical texts for all to

study. These are the *Book of History*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Rites* and the *Annals of Spring and Autumn*. His teaching was spread by students and followers after his death, and was further expanded in various Confucian schools during the period of Warring States. Among the great Confucian masters of this period were Mencius (c. 372–289 BCE) and Xunzi (c. 313–238 BCE) who each set up his own school, dedicated respectively to the inward value of cultivating the original good heart and to the external practices of education and ritual. Despite disagreeing about whether or not humans have innate goodness, both Mencius and Xunzi believed that all humans could become a sage, highlighting this as the ideal that humans could attain. In later Confucianism, however, the sage is considered to be not only a human ideal but also the connection between humans and Heaven and Earth, partaking in the transformative processes of the universe.

## Historical development

Confucianism suffered from suppression by its rivals and at the hands of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty (221–210 BCE). It did not recover until 140 BCE, when Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) accepted Confucianism as the state ideology for the country. Han Confucianism differs from earlier Confucian teaching through syncretising elements from other schools such as Daoism, Legalism and Mohism. Han Confucians introduced *yin-yang* – referring to the negative and positive powers of the universe – and the Five Elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water into Confucian doctrines. They also paid more attention to teachings on the interaction between Heaven and humans. Earthly rulers were urged to guard against immoral behaviour based on heavenly warnings and to be virtuous and righteous in governing the country.

With the introduction of Buddhism from India to China and the rise of Daoism in the first century CE, the popularity of Confucianism declined. It took time for these religions or “three teachings”, *san jiao*, to accommodate one another and gain acceptance among the people as being mutually complementary rather than contradictory. In response to Buddhism, however, Confucians eventually developed a new system of teachings during the Song-Ming dynasties (960–1644). These teachings are known in the West as Neo-Confu-

cianism. They give priority to the Four Books with an emphasis on the unity of the human heart and mind (*xin*) and the heavenly principle (*li*).

Western advances in China from the middle of the 19th century onwards crushed not only the institutions that Confucianism relied on but also the confidence of Confucians in their own tradition. In response to this, prominent Confucian scholars revived the reformative spirit of Confucian teachings so as to resist the westernising of China. Modern “New Confucians” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century absorbed western learning into their own reconstruction of Confucianism and proposed various ways to transform Confucian culture and save China from foreign aggression. The revival of Confucianism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has attracted attention from scholars as well as the general public. This strengthens the view that Confucianism is not only a tradition of learning, but a way of life to be relied on. In recent years, a great number of private Confucian academies (*shu yuan*), temples (*kong sheng tang*) and centres (*zhong xin*) have been established as the focal points of cultural revival in rural and urban areas. The ancient ways of life and practice are being reintroduced to counterbalance the undesirable side-effects of rapid globalisation and modernisation. They can help to address moral decline, loneliness and psychological problems like depression, as well as political corruption, environmental degeneration, and internal and external tension and conflict. The moral teachings of Confucianism can contribute to the common good, for example by encouraging citizens and government officials to avoid corruption and conduct themselves responsibly. Working actively for the betterment of society, especially through education, can assist individuals to overcome isolation or depression.

Historically, Confucianism did not have its own clergy or priests to uphold its tradition. All officials or scholars who were educated in the Confucian classics regarded themselves as Confucian. Educated people were expected to practise Confucian virtues or to follow Confucian paths in government, education, and communal, familial and personal life. This unique characteristic, however, became one of Confucianism’s weaknesses after it was abolished as the state ideology and disconnected from public education at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Confucianism today

Drawing a lesson from this failure, Confucian practitioners and scholars have resolved to establish a range of organisations to support a religion-like Confucianism, and have launched projects dedicated to reading the classics, practising ancient rituals, and applying Confucian rites of passage to the ceremonies of birth, adulthood, marriage and death. Confucianism is being revived as a fully functioning cultural tradition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is participating actively in all communal, national and international programmes to promote sustainable development in China and the world. Indeed, the idea of creating an “ecological civilisation” relying on Confucianism has gained traction on many levels in China including government, academia, and broader society. The aspirations of “ecological civilisation” are in accord with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030.

### Planet

Confucianism believes that Heaven and Earth (*tian di*) are the dual powers underlying the creation process for all creatures and for all natural changes, and the origin of all things and all beings, including humans. Confucians insist that humans must take Heaven and Earth as their roots (*ben*) and must subject themselves to heavenly and earthly laws. This is because in these natural laws and movements of the universe human feelings, emotions, behaviours, political designs and educational programmes can be explained and regulated. In this spirit, humans should be in harmony with the rhythms of the day and of the seasons. That which produces and sustains life is the root of our own lives. In this way, Heaven and Earth have different functions in the creation of myriad things and beings – Heaven “giving birth to”, “generating” or “producing” (*sheng*), and the Earth “sustaining” (*yang*) and “completing” (*cheng*). This teaching binds humans to the planet and requires us to treat the planet in the same way as we do our par-

*“Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds a place in their midst.”*

Western Inscription<sup>1</sup>



*Young children in traditional costume learning Confucian values in China.*  
Source: Sihai Confucian Academy, Beijing

ents, namely with respect and sincerity. It is in line with SDG 14, protecting life below water, and SDG 15, valuing life on land, and can be summed up as living within our planetary boundaries.

## People

As a human-focused tradition, Confucianism believes that because humans originated from the powers of Heaven and Earth, they are subject to these same powers in terms of “generating and regenerating” (*sheng sheng*). Human activities must be in harmony with nature and its life-generating processes. Since all humans are of the same nature, they should treat one another as brothers and sisters. The core teachings of Confucianism say that “humaneness – *ren* – is to love the people”, and “all people within the four seas are brothers”. All people belong to the same “community of life”. The Confucians also recognise, however, that “One who destroys humanity is a robber. One who promotes evil lacks (moral) capacity”. It is important to identify what is morally wrong, while acknowledging that all humans are potentially good. That is why humans need the education and spiritual cultivation that can be gained from reading the classics and studying the examples of the sages and other illustrious Confucian teachers. Confucian societies in China and across East Asia have promoted high-quality education throughout their history and continue to do so today, in the spirit of the fourth SDG.

*“That which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature.”*

Western Inscription

## Prosperity

Since humans are considered to have embodied the spirit of Heaven and Earth, Confucians regard humans as the “mind and heart” of the world – the noblest of all creatures – because they consciously cultivate moral virtues.

At the same time, humans shoulder the greatest responsibility to protect the natural environment and use resources in moderation. Humans act accord-

ing to the properly set codes of conduct (*li*) and must not pursue wealth and high rank if this conflicts with moral virtue and natural laws. For a truly humane person, prosperity is the means to develop one's moral character, while a morally underdeveloped person would relentlessly pursue riches and thus ruin his own inner good heart. Therefore although it is morally permissible for humans

*“One who knows the principles of transformation will skilfully carry forward the undertakings of [Heaven and Earth].”*

Western Inscription

to pursue prosperity, this pursuit must be guided by humaneness (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*), because only then can prosperity truly fulfil human nature and destiny. “Decent work and economic growth” is one of the SDGs, and Confucians have always supported this. The Chinese are now realising that growth needs to be sustainable to avoid the consequences of pollution. Confucian leaders have consistently promoted the elimination of poverty and hunger (the first two SDGs), both historically and in modern times. It has always been part of their efforts to work for the common social good.



## Peace

For Confucians, peace arises from one's inner heart and world peace is the natural result of learning and practising virtues. The *Great Learning*, one of

the Four Books, specifically takes cultivation of one's person as the foundation for regulation of one's family, governance of the state and bringing peace to the world – *tian xia*. Cultivation of one's person can be achieved by following the two paths of *zhong* and *shu*: one is to treat others as oneself and not impose upon others

*“In life I follow and serve [Heaven and Earth].  
In death I will be at peace.”*

Western Inscription



what one does not want for oneself, while the other is to do good to others and enable other people to achieve what one wants to achieve for oneself. Confucianism emphasises family virtues such as filial love (*xiao*) and brotherly love (*ti*), but it also specifically requires that we must extend this love to all others, no matter whether or not we know them, to all other families and to all things. This includes all living beings on Earth, known metaphorically as the “10,000 things”. We can then achieve oneness not only with other people, but also with all things and beings, and fully realise peace and harmony in the universal commonwealth. All of this is similar to the third SDG that promotes good health and well-being.

## Confucianism in practice

### *Reading the Confucian classics:*

Confucianism is a tradition sustained through education. Traditionally this is carried out in classrooms and with textbooks. Today the internet plays a larger role as many texts are available online. In the 20th century, public education was uncoupled from Confucianism, endangering the continuity of the Confucian tradition and diminishing its impact on ordinary life. In recent years, Confucian academies have been focusing their resources on teaching the Confucian classics, especially to young people and children. Confucian ideals like fostering well-being and responsible consumption thereby become incorporated into the educational curriculum, which aims to cultivate responsible, caring and honest new citizens.

*Rural Confucianism:* Rapid urbanisation is causing large-scale degeneration in rural regions, as capable young people leave for the cities. In order to revitalise rural life, committed Confucians have launched “rural Confucianism” projects that aim to promote Confucian education, propagate Confucian values, and cultivate the love that is believed to be hidden in everybody’s heart. A direct consequence of these projects is the renewal of villagers’ spiritual aspirations, and an improvement in the local ethos and neighbourly relations. Following Confucian virtues enables villagers to once more appreciate traditional wisdom and encourages them to respect and support the elderly, nurture the young, abide by laws, and conserve the environment.

## Partnership

Confucianism recognises the diversity of existences, beings and actions. Humans, too, differ from one another in character, preferences and abilities.

*“Even those who are tired and infirm, crippled or sick, those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no-one to turn to.”*

Western Inscription

However, diversity should not be used as an excuse for conflict. On the contrary, humans must collaborate with one another to form communities in which they can lead a good life and reach fulfilment of their own nature. Humans should seek “harmony while preserving differences”, and differences must not be resolved through force or violence. Wars and injustice are therefore condemned. True partnership can be achieved only by respect and sincerity, by

manifesting one’s own virtue and by setting good examples for others. Understood in this way, collaboration on the basis of Confucian teachings would add moral strength to SDG 17, which aims to build a global partnership upon principles and values that place people at the centre.

## Vision

Confucians have cultivated invaluable resources that can be harnessed to tackle the problems humankind is facing and to maintain the sustainable development that is urgently needed in the new millennium. Confucianism presents a new sense of sustainability by creating an “ecological civilisation” to which everyone can contribute. Within this broader framework, it offers the goal of working for the common good, which is one of the most important aspects of Confucian principles and practice. This is a valuable counterpoint to modern hyper-individualism and meaningless consumerism. Confucianism encourages humans to understand limits and to work not simply for their own benefit, but also for that of society as a whole. This is at the heart of the

Confucian world view, which values the kinship of humans with one another and the interdependency of humans with nature.

### Recommended links

<http://fore.yale.edu/religion/confucianism>

Article on Confucianism and ecology

[www.sfsu.edu/~news/2010/fall/42.html](http://www.sfsu.edu/~news/2010/fall/42.html)

Lessons from Confucius on sustainable living

[www.confucianacademy.com](http://www.confucianacademy.com)

Confucianism as a living religion in Hong Kong

### Recommended reading

Weiming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker (editors), *Confucian Spirituality*. 2 Vols. Crossroad Publishing, 2003/2004

Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2000

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong (editors), *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*, Harvard University Press, 1998

**1** All quotes in this chapter are from the famous statement known as the “Western Inscription”, written by the great Neo-Confucian master of the Song dynasty (960–1279), Zhang Zai (1020–77). The English translations are from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Volume 2, Wm. Theodore deBary and Irene Bloom (editors), Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 683.



# Daoism

Fan Guangchun  
He Yun

## Daoism in a nutshell

Daoism, also known as Taoism, emerged in China on the basis of what are known as the “One Hundred Schools of Thought” during the period 770–221 BCE. From the formal establishment of Daoist organisations in the East Han period (25–220 CE), the religion has a history going back nearly 2,000 years. Today it is estimated that 170 million people follow Daoism. The majority of Daoists live in mainland China, Taiwan, Japan and South-East Asia. Daoism gained its name from the Chinese word for Way – *Dao* – and it teaches how to follow the Natural Way of the Universe based upon its core text, the *Dao De Jing* (Tao Te Ching), which is said to have been written by Lao Zi. Daoism has a class of clerics. According to the statistics provided by the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, there are 50,000 Daoist clergymen and women, known as Daoist masters, resident in over 9,000 temples in China alone. In addition, there are about 100 Daoist associations all over China, affiliated to the China Daoist Association. They are responsible for coordinating events and charitable work among local temples, setting up colleges to train Daoist masters and facilitating the research and teaching of Daoism.

*Left page: “Dao follows Nature.” This is a quote from the Book of Dao. The Dao is the path of nature, of the universe. To follow nature is the highest achievement of all life.*  
Source: Calligraphy by Master Ren Farong, former President of the China Daoist Association

***“Humankind follows the ways of the Earth,  
The Earth follows the ways of the Universe,  
The Universe follows the ways of the Tao.  
Tao follows nature.”***

Dao De Jing, chapter 25

Daoism has been one of the main components of Chinese traditional culture for over two thousand years and has exerted great influence on the Chinese people’s way of thinking, working, and acting. It is one of the five recognised religions in China – the others are Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Daoism is the only native-born religion in mainland China apart from Confucianism, which is not officially recognised as a religion. Predating Buddhism but in many ways contemporary with the development of Confucianism, Daoism has been influenced by both but especially Buddhism. The rise of a monastic movement, the creation of major temple complexes and the creation of a canon of texts all show the influence of Buddhism. From Confucianism came the hierarchy of deities such as the Jade Emperor – mirroring the Imperial world below.

A key concept in Daoism is the balance of Yin and Yang. They represent two opposing but complementary forces in the cosmos. Yin is the force behind earth, shadow and death and Yang forms heaven, light and life. Though the two forces compete with each other, inside each one is the seed of the other. Without one there would not be the other, in the same way as there cannot be death without life or shadow without light. Only when they are in balance can the world prosper. This belief shapes how Daoists view development and climate change. According to this view, the earth is Yin and the heaven is Yang. When we burn fossil fuels taken from the earth and emit greenhouse gases, we are transforming Yin to Yang, thereby disturbing the balance of the cosmos. Global warming is a consequence of this imbalance and only when it is corrected can the world prosper. Destroying nature for the sake of development also causes disruption to the natural balance of Yin and Yang and should therefore be avoided too.

Compassion is another key concept in Daoism. While Confucians' compassion is directed more towards humanity and Buddhism considers compassion necessary as a vehicle to reach enlightenment, Daoist followers feel the need for compassion for "all under heaven", including humankind and all of nature. This is because Daoism believes that the outer cosmos corresponds to the inner cosmos of the individual. Compassion extended, acts of good *karma*, will be rewarded internally with a sense of balance and peace. Therefore, Daoists strive to maintain a balance in the external world and between the external world and our human society. This means that certain elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as peace and conservation will have a particular significance for Daoist activists.

Nature and simplicity are also cherished concepts. Daoism believes that the greatest Dao lies in supreme simplicity – 大道至简. All Daoist followers are therefore asked to live simply with as little material sustenance as possible. In the past, Daoists retreated to remote areas and lived in caves, surviving on herbs and dew. Even today, Chinese people have huge reverence for these Daoist sacred sites. A study in the 1990s showed that forest coverage on mountains with sacred sites is much better preserved than those without. In this sense, Daoists are not only followers of Nature's Dao, but defenders of Nature and Nature's Dao.

## Planet

There are two ways to view humankind's place in the universe. One is anthropocentric. It assumes that humankind is the central, most significant species on this planet. The other is non-anthropocentric, believing that humankind is just another species on earth and this world is not created for our consumption. Daoism takes the latter view.

There is a famous story that reflects the Daoist view of the world. A rich man decided to host a large banquet in his house. Over one thousand guests

*“Only by forsaking desires  
can one’s original nature  
be at peace.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 37

arrived and the feast was the most extravagant that anyone had ever seen. There were many different kinds of fish, a variety of birds, oxen, pigs – anything you could name. The rich man was very pleased. He looked around and said, “Heaven has been extremely generous to us. It yields grain for our meals and made fish and birds our food.” His guests agreed with him eagerly: “Yes, yes, how wonderful it is that heaven created all of these just to satisfy our needs.”

There was, however, a little twelve-year-old boy at the dinner. And he disagreed with everyone. He came up to the host and said, “It is not the way you said. Just because we eat these birds, fish and beasts, it doesn’t mean that they are created for our consumption. You see, mosquitoes take our blood.

## Daoism in practice

Daoists are actively involved in work that helps people to live a good life. They run clinics for the sick and subsidise school attendance for children from poor families. In areas of northern China, where access to clean drinking water is difficult, Daoists dig wells and share water with the locals. Wealthy Daoist temples have set up foundations to assist in disaster relief, nursing for the elderly and poverty reduction.

Since over 40% of poverty is caused by high medical expenses in China, more and more Daoist temples are

opening Daoist clinics to help treat patients who cannot afford healthcare or prescriptions. Patients only need to pay a small price for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) prescriptions and acupuncture. Qigong classes are sometimes offered free of charge. Some Daoist temples are also starting to grow herbal TCM ingredients in nurseries in or around the Daoist temples. This has the twin benefit of bringing down medical costs as well as encouraging the use of herbal remedies in TCM to replace animal ingredients and hence protect wildlife and biodiversity.



Tigers and wolves eat our flesh. But we are not created for the purpose of feeding mosquitoes and tigers, are we?”

This story comes from *Lie Zi*, one of the most important Daoist classics. It was written two thousand years ago, but its message still rings true today. Even though we humans have become the dominant species, this does not make the rest of the living planet our dinner table. Rather, because we have the capacity to think and tell right from wrong, we all have a duty to protect the world’s animals and plants – and the environment we live in – so that all of us can live and thrive on this planet, side by side.



## People

According to Daoism, people can only live a good life if they are healthy. Daoism therefore places great emphasis on health. Daoism believes it is possible to preserve the body and to become immortal through the physical body, though only a very few ever achieve this. This quest has led to many centuries of health exercises and medical practices which form the foundation of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Qigong and acupuncture. Daoists are often famous practitioners of TCM, and Daoist temples are places where people go to seek treatment. Daoism therefore has a long history of facilitating healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, and is looking to play a similar role in the context of the SDGs.

Daoism advocates a vegetarian diet. In Daoist tradition, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month are considered as “fasting days” when no meat should be consumed. It is believed that those who fast on these two days receive blessings from heaven. Since more than a quarter of all the meat produced worldwide is consumed in China, increased meat consumption has become a burden for Chinese agricultural land, polluting the water and causing diabetes, obesity and

*“Health is the greatest possession.  
Contentment is the greatest treasure.  
Confidence is the greatest friend.”*

Lao Zi

other illnesses.<sup>1</sup> Livestock is also one of the major producers of greenhouse gases. By encouraging people to follow the Daoist diet and refrain from eating meat two days a month, Daoism is helping to cut down meat consumption, encouraging the development of sustainable agriculture and assisting in the battle against climate change.

## Prosperity

Daoism does not measure prosperity in terms of personal wealth or material abundance, but rather in the well-being of the planet and the number of species that co-exist with us harmoniously. According to the Daoist classic, the *Taiping Jing*:

*“I have three treasures.  
The first is compassion.  
The second is simplicity and  
the third is never putting oneself  
before the rest of the world.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 67

“Heaven is our father and earth is our mother. All the species that live in between heaven and earth are their creations. If these species become extinct, then it means our mother and father are depleted. If our father and mother are depleted, how can we prosper?”

This Daoist understanding of “prosperity” puts the development of humankind alongside the relative well-being of nature and all other species. But how do we achieve Daoist prosperity? The “Three Treasures” of Lao Zi cast a clear light on the path to prosperity:

- to have compassion towards oneself, other people and this living planet;
- to live in simplicity, keeping our use of resources to the minimum and avoid exhausting nature’s generosity;
- to refrain from competing with the others over resources.

“Others” means not just other people, but also future generations to come. With this world view, Daoist teachings match the very definition of sustaina-

ble development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is therefore imperative that all Daoists protect wildlife, the eco-system, water and biodiversity while society transforms and becomes more prosperous. Because the notion of the Dao covers all life, not just human existence, biodiversity is seen as a gift and a manifestation of the wealth and creativity of the universal Dao. Protecting, treasuring and also making appropriate use of this diversity is therefore central to Daoist practice.

## Peace

Daoism advocates tolerance over exclusion, peace over warfare and accommodation over violence. Lao Zi said, “No victory is free of grief, and so to celebrate one is to glory in the death of innocent people. No-one who revels in death like this can be true to the Dao or is fit to rule in our world.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a famous story about how Daoists used a chess game to resolve a major dispute with the Buddhists in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. A Buddhist monk called Hui Si wanted to build a Buddhist temple on Hengshan, a traditional Daoist sacred mountain. Yue Jun, the powerful Daoist deity there, proposed a chess game to decide the matter. Hui Si agreed and won the game. He then told Yue Jun that he wanted the site of the original Daoist temple to build the first Buddhist temple. Instead of becoming angry, Yue Jun generously conceded and moved to the bottom of the mountain. This is why today the major Daoist temple in Hengshan is located at the bottom of Hengshan instead of the top. This story of dispute resolution was widely celebrated both among the Buddhists and the Daoists. It is a good example of how the Daoists would handle a situation involving major disputes.

*“A faithful Daoist  
does not use force.”*

Dao De Jing, chapter 38

Another famous legend concerns Master Qiu Chuji, who is the founder of the Quanzhen School of Daoism. When he saw that the Mongols were destroying cities and slaughtering people, he travelled great distances through devas-

tation and war zones to meet Ghengis Khan and convince him to spare the northern cities in China. Advocating peace and non-violence is an enduring legacy of Daoism.

At a time of growing religious confrontations and intolerance, Daoist advocacy of peace, sharing and accommodation shines like a beacon of light through the heavy shadow cast by religious terrorism and rising extremism.

## Partnership

The Daoist interpretation of partnership is closely related to its understanding of the relationship between Yin and Yang in the Taiji symbol. The balance of Yin and Yang can be understood as the perfect partnership (和合) as while the two compete with each other, they also complement and nourish one another.

*“The perfect partnership  
between Heaven and Earth  
is the driver for all life.”*

The Annals of Lu Bu Wei

As the story from Hengshan above shows, working together is central to Daoism. China is unique in never having had a major conflict between its major faiths – Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. Nor has there been conflict between the different traditions within Daoism. Combined with the notion that human life is a partnership

with the Dao, and through the Dao with all that lives, the yin/yang model has laid firm foundations of cooperation rather than competition. This is manifested in the fact that the Daoists of China have been the first of the Chinese traditional faiths to develop major environmental programmes with outside agencies such as the UN, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and WWF International.

We are facing a dangerous world with global warming, water scarcity, religious extremism and the greatest wave of extinction ever seen on this planet, but it is precisely because of this that we should and we will partner with



*Daoists in China in traditional robes planting the first ginkgo tree in their Traditional Chinese Medicine (TMC) organic herbal nursery in 2015. These robes are worn daily by Daoists in their temples. The cap symbolises Heaven, as in Chinese traditional belief Heaven is round and the Earth is square.*

Source: Fan Guangchun

each other, overcoming our differences and biases, to form the perfect partnership in the pursuit of a common future as set out in the SDGs. Daoists are confident that this partnership will happen, and they will work to make it happen based upon core values, a narrative of both hope and engagement and a true sense that they have a role to play.

## **Vision**

Daoism is an inspiring force for facilitating the realisation of the SDGs of Agenda 2030 – especially in the most populated country in the world, China. In contemporary China, the quest for something deeper and more significant than just consumerist capitalism is drawing millions to seek wisdom in their ancient traditions. Daoism is increasingly being seen as a storehouse of such wisdom and, more than this, a way of life that can give vision and thus hope to millions.



## Recommended links

[www.taoist.org.cn](http://www.taoist.org.cn)

Official website of the China Daoist Association

<http://daoism.org>

World Organisation of Daoism

<http://arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=11>

Daoist ecology



## Recommended reading

Allerd Stikker, *Sacred Mountain: How the Revival of Daoism is Turning China's Ecological Crisis Around*, Bene Factum, 2014

Martin Palmer and Victoria Finlay, *Faith in Conservation*, The World Bank, 2003

Martin Palmer and Jay Ramsay, *Tao Te Ching translated by Man-Ho Kwok*, Element, 1994

**1** Earth Policy Institute, [www.earth-policy.org/plan\\_b\\_updates/2012/update102](http://www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2012/update102)

**2** Book of Dao, Chapter 31



# Hinduism

Anantanand Rambachan  
Kezevino Vinu Aram



## Hinduism in a nutshell

What is spoken of today as “Hinduism” is a very diverse tradition. The name originates from the word Hindu, which is the Iranian name for the river that the Europeans referred to as the Sindhu, the Greeks as the Indos and the British as the Indus. Many Hindus speak instead of their tradition as Sanātana Dharma, the Eternal Way. Hindu traditions have always been varied, reflecting India’s rich diversity of geography, culture and language. These traditions, on the whole, do not problematise religious diversity or see it as something to be overcome. It is helpful to think of Hinduism as a family name, recognisable through shared features, but preserving also the uniqueness of its individual members. The world Hindu population is estimated to be approximately 1 billion, making Hinduism the third largest religion. 90% live in South Asia, but there are growing Hindu communities all over the world.

The Hindu tradition stems from the Indian subcontinent and does not have a historical founder. It is centred on a body of teachings, the earliest and most important of which are derived from the four Vedas. The four Vedas – Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur, and Atharva – that include the Upaniṣads, ancient texts, are regarded by most Hindus as revelation and enjoy a special authoritative status. Scholars date the Ṛg Veda to around 1,200 BCE or earlier. Other important texts include the Bhagavadgītā, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa. The Hindu tradition affirms the oneness of *brahman*, but teaches also that it may be called by many names such as Vishnu, Shiva or Durga, and represented in numerous iconic forms - *mūrtis*. These names and forms may be feminine, masculine or neuter.

*Left page: Aum is the most ancient and comprehensive name for God in the Hindu tradition. Its three letters A-U-M represent the physical, mental and unmanifest realities as well as their ultimate source - God.*

Source: [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

## ***“In all actions, consider the common good.”***

Bhagavadgītā 3:20

The Hindu tradition has much to contribute in wisdom and practice to addressing contemporary global challenges and especially to the sustainability of our planet’s precious resources. It teaches that the universe has its source and origin in a self-existent and uncreated being that the Vedas speak of as *brahman*, the limitless. *Brahman*, however, is not a supernatural being separated spatially and temporally from the universe. The universe is consistently described as existing in *brahman*, even as *brahman* exists equally and identically in everyone and everything. Ultimately, for Hindus, no single name can fully define and no form can limit the limitless. Brahman transcends all human-made categories and gender distinctions.

Contrary to popular impressions, Hinduism is neither life-denying nor other-worldly. The tradition identifies four goals as necessary for a flourishing human life. The first is wealth, *artha*. By acknowledging *artha* as a goal of life, Hinduism recognises the need of every human being for access to those material necessities that make life possible. The second is pleasure – *kama*. It legitimises the human need and capacity for pleasure; the necessities of life are to be enjoyed as a way of fulfilling human nature. Wealth and pleasure, however, must be sought by attentiveness to the third of life’s goals, *dharma*. *Dharma* emphasises the social context in which we exist. Through *dharma*, we are reminded that the selfish pursuit of wealth and pleasure lead to social chaos and even violence. *Dharma* asks that we broaden our perspective to incorporate the good and well-being of the community. The personal attainment of wealth and pleasure by inflicting pain and suffering on others, or by denying them the opportunity to freely seek these two ends is opposed to *dharma*. In all that we do, we must be attentive to the common good. The fourth and highest goal of Hindu life is liberation, called *moksha*. It can be understood as the overcoming of ignorance, *avidyā*, about the nature of *brahman* and the relationship between *brahman* and the human self, called *ātman*. The consequence of *moksha* is the overcoming of greed and suffering. *Moksha* empowers us to identify with others in joy and sorrow and to be compassionate and generous in relationships with all.

Hindus affirm the moral law of cause and effect, otherwise known as the law of *karma*. This emphasises free will and responsibility. The choices that we make in action are consequential for others and for ourselves. These consequences reach far into the future, even into future lives, shaping our individual and social existence and determining whether we flourish or suffer. The Hindu teaching about *karma* is connected to the belief in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, called *samsāra*. Our futures and our future lives are being shaped by our choices in the present. To avoid suffering, these choices should be guided by the values of non-injury, compassion, truth, generosity, and self-control.

## Planet

In the Hindu tradition, the world of nature has an intrinsic value that is derived from the teaching that God is present in everything. In the Bhagavadgītā (7:8-9), Krishna, regarded by Hindus as a divine incarnation, asks us to see divinity in the elements of nature: “I am the taste in water, the brilliance in the moon and the sun, the sound in air, the pure fragrance in the earth, the radiance in fire, life in all beings, and austerity in the ascetics.”

The Bhagavadgītā invites us repeatedly to take delight in the welfare of all beings – *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ*. The value for the universal common good – *lokasaṅgraha* – that is advocated in the text does not privilege human beings. *Loka* is inclusive and embraces the entire creation. Any philosophy of development that sharply separates human beings from the natural world is inconsistent with the Hindu tradition. The natural world has its own integrity, and does not exist only to serve human ends. The Hindu tradition does not confer the right to dominate, possess and make all other living beings subservient to our needs and wants. A Hindu view of development promotes the flourishing of all life and harmony between human beings and nature.

*“Dharma exists for the welfare of all beings. Hence, that by which the welfare of all beings is sustained, that for sure is dharma.”*

Mahābhārata 109.10<sup>1</sup>

Every Hindu has an obligation to care for the planet, *bhūtayajña*. This is an expression of gratitude for the multiple ways in which nature blesses our lives and makes our existence possible. If we selfishly receive from the planet without care and generous self-giving, the resources of our world will be depleted. Such thoughtless over-consumption results in suffering for all. The Bhagavadgītā condemns and describes as thieves those who selfishly exploit the planet’s resources without regard for its sustainability. It recommends a life of moderation in consumption and mutuality in receiving and giving.

In 2015 a group of Hindu leaders and scholars issued a Hindu Declaration on Climate Change – *Bhumi Devi Ki Jai*. The text begins with a famous line from the Atharva Veda (12.1.12): “The Earth is my mother and I am her child.” It emphasises the significance of Hindu teachings of non-injury – *ahimsā*, reverence for the planet, promoting the well-being of all and the moral law of *karma*. The latter teaches that our choices are also consequential for the planet. What we do to the planet, we do to ourselves. The Declaration says: “We must consider the effects of our actions not just on ourselves and those human beings around us, but also on all beings. We have a religious duty for each of us to do our part in ensuring that we have a functioning, abundant and bountiful planet.”<sup>2</sup>

## People

The equal presence of God in all beings is the source of the inherent dignity and equal worth of every human being. It is the Hindu spiritual antidote to any effort to deny the personhood, value and dignity of another.

The implication is that we cannot honour and value God and devalue human beings. We cannot give our assent or support to any social or cultural system that is founded on human inequality and indignity. To see women as inferior to men, to prefer the boy child, to mistreat the elderly, to ascribe unequal worth and to demean persons on the basis of birth, and to discriminate and practice violence against any group are all in fundamental contradiction to the deepest Hindu teachings.

## Hinduism in practice

The eminent Swami Vivekananda, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, chose the words “For one’s own salvation and for the welfare of the world” as the organisation’s motto. He coined the phrase *daridra narayana* – God in the poor. Today, Hindus are working actively for the betterment of the world, not only in South Asia but elsewhere. The traditional Hindu practice of *daan* – voluntary giving and personal renewal – continues to inspire millions to donate and engage.

Hindus have established educational institutions at all levels, including for vulnerable children, hospitals, medical dispensaries that also offer support for people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as orphanages and homes for the elderly. They are providing vital services to tribal communities, educating the faithful about environmental challenges and protecting forests and waters. Community service centres have been integrated with temples to serve the poor and provide shelter and security for widows and women affected by violence. Monks and lay workers deliver services in natural disasters, famines and health epidemics. During

the floods in Chennai in November 2015, volunteers from religious institutions were at the forefront delivering food, clothing and medical supplies to the affected communities. Pioneering work for vocational and economic empowerment of rural women and the girl child is being carried out by institutions like Shanti Ashram. Significant numbers of women have not only come out of poverty but have also built bridges of solidarity to address issues that affect them. These include child marriage, discriminatory practices such as dowry, violence, hunger, limited access to financial resources and decision-making in the family. Changing public opinion has led to a series of progressive new laws in India, including a 30% quota for women in local governments, *panchayat raj*, and equal inheritance of property at the family level. The government has in the recent past also sought the support of Hindu institutions to provide relief and rehabilitation during natural disasters in India and neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh.

*“God exists in  
the heart of all beings.”*

Bhagavadgītā 18:61

For the Hindu, every human encounter is an encounter with God and an opportunity also to serve God who is present in the other. Swami Vivekananda, who lived from 1863 to 1902, is regarded as one of the greatest Hindu teachers. He explained powerfully what this means in a lecture delivered at the Rameshwaram Temple in southern India in 1897: “He who sees Shiva (God) in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary.”

Similarly, for Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), God is manifest in all beings and may be found only by unity and identity with all. The highest expression of this unity is service and especially for those who are poor and in need. As Gandhi said, “I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical is directed to that end. And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service.”<sup>3</sup>

## Prosperity

Hinduism has never given its blessings to involuntary poverty. It recognises poverty to be a great cause of suffering. By including wealth, *artha*, as one of life’s four goals – along with pleasure, virtue and liberation – Hinduism recognises the need of every human being for access to those material necessities, such as food, healthcare, shelter and clothing, that make life possible and that enable human beings to live with dignity. It is important, therefore, that we be concerned about those structures, social, political and economic, that impede and deny persons the opportunities to attain life’s necessities. These need to be identified and measures implemented to make these goals accessible and attainable by all.

One of the important insights of the Hindu tradition in this regard is its critique of greed and the culture of consumerism. Gandhi reminded us in one of his most famous sayings: “The world has enough for everyone’s needs, but not everyone’s greed.” We live in a world in which there are great disparities between the rich nations of the north and the poor of the south and between the rich and poor within nations, and in which too many children die each week from malnutrition and infection. We have a moral responsibility to call attention to these disparities and to the culture of greed that contributes to the perpetuation of such disparities. When considering greed, it is very important that we do not see it only as an individual human issue. Greed finds expression also in political, institutional and corporate structures that contribute to human suffering.

The Hindu tradition shares common ground with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 regarding its concern for the well-being of the children of our world. The birth of every child repeats the cosmic process of God creating and entering into that which is created. The Yajur Veda speaks of the womb as the birthplace of the divine. Children have the same dignity and value as adults since the divine exists equally in the child. Dignity is not dependent on biological age, or emotional and intellectual maturity. Children's value does not lie in fulfilling economic or adult needs. In honouring the child, we honour God.

*“Lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu”  
“May the world be happy.”*

Hindu prayer from the oral tradition

Our respect for children must find expression in the practice *ahimsā* or non-injury, the cardinal virtue of the Hindu tradition. Although *ahimsā*, literally meaning non-injury, is a negative construction, it is much more than abstaining from violence. For Mahatma Gandhi, *ahimsā* is compassion and self-giving action. Gandhi also emphasised that the helpless among us are most deserving of our protection from violence and abuse. Our willingness to protect them from injury is a test of our reverence for life and our loyalty to *ahimsā*.

## Peace

Every Hindu prayer ends with a threefold recitation of the word peace, *śāntiḥ*. The repetition of the word expresses the Hindu hope for peace in the natural world, in the human community and in one's own heart, while emphasising the interrelatedness of all three spheres. We will not attain peace in a world in which there is violence and injustice in human communities and in which nature is plundered and recklessly exploited. At the same time, we cannot be effective agents of peace in the world if we lack peace within ourselves.

*“There is no ‘way to peace’,  
there is only ‘peace’.”*

Mahatma Gandhi

One of the most ancient and beautiful prayers for peace is recorded in the Yajur Veda (36:17). Here also we see an appreciation for the fact that there can be no individual peace without universal peace:

*“Aum dyauḥ śāntirantarikṣam śāntiḥ  
pṛthivī śāntirāpaḥ śāntiroṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ  
vanaspatayaḥ śāntirviśvedevāḥ śāntirbrahma śāntiḥ  
sarvaḥ śāntiḥ śāntireva śāntiḥ  
sā mā śāntiredhi  
Aum śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ”*

*“May there be peace in the skies and on earth  
May there be peace in the waters, plants and in the forests  
May there be peace in the divine beings  
May there be peace everywhere  
And may that peace be ours”*





*Hindus value knowledge, sacred and secular, as necessary for overcoming suffering and realising the potential of every human being. The gift of knowledge, vidya dānam, is judged to be among the best of gifts to a child.*

Source: Anantanand Rambachan

## Partnership

All of our religious traditions, in addition to what they proclaim and teach about individual human destiny, also imagine and include a social vision of the ideal human community characterised by justice, peace, prosperity and freedom from violence, exploitation and fear. Any religious tradition which is today concerned about the social order and its transformation is challenged to reach across borders and find common ground and values with people of other religions, and those without religious commitment. Together we must strive to confront and overcome the causes of human suffering and conflict. Our hopes for just and peaceful communities will only be realised together or not at all.

The Bhagavadgītā urges us to think about and work for the universal common good in everything we do. Today, this common good and our global challenges cannot be addressed effectively without partnerships with people of other religions, secular organisations and state agencies. Our commitment to the overcoming of suffering requires such partnerships.

*“Saha vīryam karavāvahi”  
“May we work together  
energetically.”*

Upaniṣad prayer

The Hindu tradition does not make a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular. The languages of India offer no easy equivalent for “religion”. The Sanskrit word

*dharma* is often mistakenly equated with religion but it is far more comprehensive and holistic, and embraces all dimensions of human life, including what we may regard as the political. The reasons articulated by Mahatma Gandhi for his political activism as the preeminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India stem from this understanding of *dharma*. He also offers a Hindu rationale for the formation of broad partnerships to overcome our global challenges:

“To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devo-

tion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.”<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi’s religious justification of his political activism does not imply that the Hindu tradition advocates a religious state. Although the majority of India’s population is Hindu, the Indian constitution was amended in 1976 to assert that India is a secular state. The ideal is the equal treatment of all religions in a democratic pluralist society, whether in India or in other countries around the world.

Achieving the SDGs will only be possible on the basis of robust ethical foundations. The Hindu goal of *dharma* emphasises the social context in which we pursue our goals. Through *dharma*, we are reminded that the selfish and uncontrolled pursuit of wealth leads to suffering. Asserting our rights is only possible and meaningful in a context where equal, if not greater, recognition is given to our duties and obligations. In Hindu mythology the symbol of *dharma* is the bull, whose four feet are truth, purity, compassion and generosity.

## Vision

A well-known Hindu prayer, often used to conclude temple and home worship, expresses the desirability and hope of freedom from suffering for all beings.

*“Sarve bhavantu sukhinah Sarve santu nirāmayah  
Sarve bhadrāni paśyantū Mā kaścit duḥkha bhāgbhavet”*

*“May all be happy. May all be free from disease.  
May all know that which is good. May no-one suffer.”*

In his popular version of the Rāmāyana, which tells the life story of Rama, the great 16<sup>th</sup> century religious poet Sant Tulasidas writes of an ideal commu-

nity in which “there is no premature death or suffering of any kind; everyone enjoys beauty and health. No one is poor, sorrowful or in want; no one is ignorant”. There is no violence, and nature flourishes. “The trees in the forests,” writes Tulasidas, “bloom and bear fruit throughout the year; the elephant and lion live together as friends; birds and beasts of every kind are no longer hostile and live in harmony with one another.” This metaphoric communal paradise of the Hindu vision makes the overcoming of suffering

its ideal. The aspiration towards universal literacy and healthcare and an end to poverty articulates fundamental aims of the SDGs. All Hindus can commit to these goals and to working with our fellow human beings for their attainment.

*“Mā kaścīt duḥkha bhāgbhavet”*

*“May no one suffer.”*

Traditional Hindu prayer  
from the oral tradition

### Recommended links

[www.bhumiproject.org](http://www.bhumiproject.org)

An international Hindu response to the environmental challenges facing our planet

[www.hafsite.org/resources/hinduism101](http://www.hafsite.org/resources/hinduism101)

General information on Hindu teachings and practice

[www.belurmath.org/swamivivekananda.htm](http://www.belurmath.org/swamivivekananda.htm)

Life, work and teachings of Swami Vivekananda

## Recommended reading

Anantanand Rambachan, *A Hindu Theology of Liberation*, State University of New York Press, 2015

M.V. Nadkarni, *Ethics for Our Times: Essays in Gandhian Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2015

Swami Agnivesh, *Applied Spirituality: A Spiritual Vision for the Dialogue of Religions*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2015

**1** All quotes are taken from standard Sanskrit versions of these texts. The translations were prepared by Anantanand Rambachan. The translation of *brahman* as God does not imply that *brahman* is equated with all attributes of God in monotheistic traditions.

**2** [www.hinduclimatedeclaration2015.org](http://www.hinduclimatedeclaration2015.org)

**3** Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, Continuum Books, 2001, page 68

**4** Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, Continuum Books, 2001, page 55



# Indigenous traditions: *Lankuntuwakan*, the Lenape way of life

Hadrien Coumans  
Joe Baker

## Lankuntuwakan, the Lenape way of life in a nutshell

Indigenous peoples all over the world maintain a rich diversity of traditions. They include the Inuit, Aborigines, Tuareg, San, Maya, Chakma, Circassians, Ladakhi, Yakut and Sami, to name but a few. The total population of indigenous peoples worldwide is estimated at between 220 and 350 million.

The Lenape, also known as Delaware Indians, are indigenous to the north-eastern region of the United States of America (USA). Their ancestral lands, known as *Lenapehoking*, included southern New York State, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware and western Connecticut. Algonquian speakers and matrilineal, the Lenape lived in separate bands held together through their clan relationships, settling in semi-permanent seasonal villages. Expanding European colonies forced most of the Lenape out of their homeland during the 18th century. Their communities became weakened by genocide and intertribal conflicts, new diseases and forced removals brought about by colonial pressure. Despite their turbulent history, the Lenape have maintained their communities, traditions, values and languages while adapting to constantly changing circumstances in a global world. Today, the Lenape are geographically scattered. Some live in two federally recognised nations in Oklahoma and two nations in Ontario.

Like every indigenous group, the Lenape have their own unique way of life and traditions. Also, in common with the core of most indigenous traditions, they have a deep spiritual understanding of life and respect for the living Earth. *Lankuntuwakan*, the Lenape concept of a balanced relationship, informs a way of life that could help to overcome the current challenges facing the world.

*Left page: Joe Baker wearing a traditional bandolier of the Lenape. The bandolier bags are worn for dances, ceremonies and other official events. They have a bilateral symmetry and are decorated with contemporary and antique beads and a pattern inspired by abstract and floral natural elements of the indigenous homeland.*

Source: Lenape Center

*“The Earth is in us when we are alive.  
And we are in the Earth when we die.  
In every sense, we are the Earth.”*

Indigenous values, such as those of Native Americans, have ancient roots and are an integral part of human efforts to develop long-term means for sustaining life on the Earth. Traditionally practised in small, collective groups, they are relevant today at global level as they offer responses to the worsening ecological and social crisis.

Indigenous peoples are the holders of unique knowledge, beliefs and practices for the truly sustainable management of natural resources. They have faced existential challenges to their sovereignty, environment and access to natural resources since colonial times. Today, their ways of life are still under threat, for example from the deforestation of tropical rainforests, extractive activities by multinational companies, and assimilative policies by nation states. International and national legislation is in place to protect the specific rights of indigenous peoples, based on their historical ties to a certain territory and their cultural or historical distinctiveness. In 2007, the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to guide member-state national policies on the collective rights of indigenous peoples, such as culture, language, health, education, and access to natural resources and employment. Therefore this declaration ought to be followed.

### **How we relate to the Earth**

In Lenape cosmology, the relationship to the Earth has never been one of entitlement, but rather inclusion. Prior to colonisation and industrialisation, there was no conception that the Earth could be reduced to geometric plots of land based on monetary values, since it included all of the plants and animals on it, the water, the sun and clouds above it and the air around it. In Lenape cosmology, land, water, sky and sun cannot be owned, since they are understood as part of a whole living entity, “Our Mother”, which gives and sustains all life through the generations. When we die, we return to the Earth. When



we are alive, it nourishes us. The Earth is in us when we are alive. And we are in the Earth when we die. In every sense, we are the Earth. As the cycles of generations live and die on the land, they become part of the land itself, reinforcing the depth of connection to land and blurring the lines between people and the Earth itself. Elders visiting *Lenapehoking* from Oklahoma have expressed their oneness to their original homeland, reflecting on their ability to see and sense their ancestors.

Although environmentalism seeks to address the crises of energy, climate change, pollution, food production and waste, a fundamental disconnection in the world is hindering any holistic effort to resolve these crises. The very perception of our separateness from the Earth is the key problem. The “environment” or “nature” implies an external entity that surrounds us, yet the “environment” and “nature” are inside us. Polluted water or soil is no different from a polluted human body. Through the food chain, they enter the body, and the polluted body will at some point merge with ground water and the Earth. Whatever is in the Earth sooner or later becomes part of us, as we in turn again become part of it.

## Planet

Unsustainable short-term, profit-driven economic practices are causing rapid global climate change. They can no longer provide for the increasingly unrealistic twentieth century definition of the so-called “American Dream” that influenced global aspirations so strongly. On both an individual and a corporate level, immediate self-interest has borrowed against the future at the expense of our environment. Short-term profits will not be able to pay for the direct and indirect long-term costs of climate change. This is the worst economic gamble in human history. Environmental destruction and degradation have caused economic and political disruption and ignited conflicts, compounded by the world’s dependency on oil and its unethical acquisition and transportation.

The reality of climate change has been scientifically established and the wide spectrum of recent natural disasters demonstrating this is undeniable. The

impacts of hurricanes, record droughts and devastating tornadoes have led to intolerable human and economic losses. Around the world, the confluence of natural disasters and lack of access to vital resources will continue to fuel conflict and bring about chaos. Rising sea levels could soon displace millions of people who live on coasts and islands. The costs of the environ-

mental destruction are already staggering. It is evident from the COP21 Paris discussions that the USA and other nations will need to prioritise a concerted and calculated effort to stop climate change.

*“The Lenape acknowledge all life as part of creation with each part having its own spirit. We are part of a living universe.”*

The negative impacts of our current lifestyles cannot be mitigated by conferences or military interventions. A

radical change in the way of life of people everywhere is needed. However, this change cannot be formulated on the basis of the very political and economic ideologies that have led us down the path of destruction and egoism. It must be generated from a perspective which views life on Earth as a complete, single, integrated yet diverse and complex eco-system. A new twenty-first century “dream” informed by spiritual wisdom and values could supply the means for designing policies and economic models in a sustainable and ecologically sane fashion, which would not obstruct life but allow it to reach its full potential.

### **How we relate to the sun and its energy**

The solar and lunar cycles once dictated the Lenape activities of harvesting and ceremony, using the alignment with seasonal renewal to sustain life and health. All energy on the Earth originates from the sun. In the face of this, our dependency on fossil fuels is highly problematic. According to Lenape cosmology, the Creator provides enough for people everywhere to survive and thrive if we act wisely. But we have yet to appreciate the extent to which the sun is part of us. We would be incapable of functioning at any level without its energy. The sun powers plant life on earth, the creation of our thoughts and ideas, the transformation of our thoughts into material creations and the

material creations themselves, including forms of electricity. From a Lenape perspective, there is no need to rely on fossil sources of energy. Professor Nocera of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who is an expert on energy issues, backs this indigenous wisdom. Nocera “sees the sun as the only energy source to replace fossil fuels”. Human activities currently consume around 12.8 terawatts of energy, but the sun continuously supplies the Earth with 800 terawatts.<sup>1</sup> We only need to find ways of using this energy efficiently on a daily basis.

## Indigenous traditions in practice

Most of the regions of the world that are rich in biodiversity are also homelands for traditional and indigenous peoples. Despite many challenges, these communities have found ways to preserve their traditional ways of life. This has gone hand in hand with the maintenance of local ecological systems and the conservation of biodiversity, as indigenous populations have worked with the natural rhythms of nature. Indigenous peoples’ interaction with their environment has even enhanced diversity. For example, in Australia the Aborigines’ use of fire to manage the landscape has created more diverse habitats. Communities that have preserved traditional production methods have today become vital

custodians of the world’s crop and domestic animal diversity. Furthermore, they are contributing to the scientific documentation of diversity through their own categorisations of local fauna and flora, and their knowledge and collective memory of their environment are helping to understand processes of change on both a local and global scale.<sup>2</sup>

## People

How do we relate to each other? We are connected with the Earth and the universe because they are made of us and we of them. We exist individually, made from each other, originating from each other as parents to child. We are also made from each other collectively, from generation to generation and through the cultures and societies we share. *Lankuntuwakan* means relationships, kinship and peace, and the original Lenape economy embodies this: Fishing, hunting, planting and harvesting were carried out while thank-

ing *Kishelemukong*, the Creator, and honouring the spirits of those who gave their lives for other people to live. This resulted in a way of life and an economy that was infused with respect and reverence towards the animals and crops that sustained the people. To ensure that sufficient animals were available for hunting and that the seasonal crops

*“We are connected with the Earth and the universe because they are made of us and we of them.”*

flourished, it was necessary to treat human existence as a balanced part of “Mother Earth”. This was exemplified by not taking or killing more than was needed and not wasting any food or animal resources.

Today we can learn from the wisdom of *Lankuntuwakan* by being fully aware that all our actions have consequences for our well-being, and that it is possible to restore a balance. Otherwise, our rising global population will result in an exponential increase in the numbers of casualties due to human-made disasters and conflicts. More droughts and famines will ultimately lead to many, many more displaced persons and refugees. Other side-effects will also continue: damage to land and whole eco-systems, irreversible pollution, disease, loss of infrastructure, lack of potable water, diminishing food supplies and disrupted social order. Defence and military logistics will increasingly be called upon to alleviate the impacts of these disasters. We will be called upon morally to embark on humanitarian rescue efforts beyond what has ever been attempted. It is time to change our course now. Otherwise there will be no tomorrow for the people of this Earth.

## Prosperity

Today, a large segment of humanity goes hungry, while some nations waste enormous amounts of food. How do we account morally for inequality that leads to malnutrition among our own and others' children? The Lenape sense of responsibility towards one another includes the distribution of food and basic necessities, which are shared communally. It is not advantageous for the survival of any group to have disparity and inequality – ideally, every member works towards the common good. However, this should not be misunderstood as communist political ideology. Individuality, spirituality, personal success and accomplishments are honoured and rewarded. In Lenape history, some people were recognised as being exemplary hunters, warriors or chiefs, but they were never rewarded at the expense of a child going hungry or others being indebted. On the contrary, with greater success came greater responsibility and power through the ability to provide for others. Leadership was defined by generosity and service, maintaining peace and diplomacy, leading by examples of humility. In today's world, we need this kind of political, economic and religious leadership.

*“Real wealth is marked by responsibility, generosity and service.”*

## Peace

If we want to live in peace, we need to learn from history. The American and Native American relationship through history exemplifies the wrongs of the ideas of development imposed on indigenous people and traditions. In terms of Native Americans, one can even speak of genocides in the context of the centuries of wars and massacres since the beginning of colonisation. Caught in the middle of European colonial warfare, Native Americans were murdered or forcefully removed to reservations, while assimilation policies led to abuse and discrimination. The slogan to “kill the Indian and save the man” reminds us today that all forms of direct or indirect colonisation, violence and proselytisation need to be overcome to create peace and a just world.

The Lenape are known as peacemakers and for their good judgment and fairness, often having been called upon to resolve conflicts. Additionally, neighbouring native tribes long ago identified the Lenape as the “grandfathers”, in the knowledge that they are an ancestral people to many other peoples.

### **Native Americans and a new “American Dream”**

Although indigenous people around the world still face discrimination, injustice and loss of their homelands, they carry values that the world needs more than ever. Native American values informed the founding of the USA, as for instance Native American ideas of governance played an important role in shaping the U.S. Constitution. Today, the world needs a new “dream” that no longer accepts the short-term economic practices and goals of the colonial past. The Earth and all living beings are endangered by the use of fossil fuels, the pollution caused by industrialisation, and other unsustainable economic practices. Indigenous values help to overcome the short-sighted and profit-driven practices that hinder peace in the world.

*“We need to overcome all forms of colonisation and proselytisation to create peace and a just world.”*



### **Partnership**

If we could accept the principle that there is no division between the health of our bodies and the health of the Earth, we could develop – both as individuals and organised societies – more intimate and responsible responses to challenges like climate change, self-interest and ways of thinking centred on physical needs. In politics, we need to move beyond the dominating model of separateness and nationality. The relationship between the Earth and ourselves has always existed and will always exist, as long

*“Partnership is about relationships. About healthy relationships.”*



*Inuit wearing traditional winter clothing made of animal skins. Indigenous peoples respect and revere all of nature. This is exemplified by not taking or killing more than is needed and not wasting any food or animal resources.*

Source: [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org)

as human beings survive. If we have the courage to do so, we can choose to create a living relationship with the Earth and among all its peoples, to the benefit of the health and well-being of all species and the cohesion of societies all over the world.

 **Vision**

The central Lenape idea of *Lankuntuwakan* comprises relationship, kinship, peace and a deeper understanding of well-being: We are made of the Earth, the sun, and each other; we exist through our composition of these parts. These aspects of ourselves are essential to our existence, both as individuals and organised societies, and our relation to them determines our well-being and our peace and happiness. *Lankuntuwakan* offers a means of navigating the turbulent waters caused by short-term thinking and disconnectedness from the Earth. Indigenous knowledge has always been a call to calibrate ourselves to “Mother Earth”. The great Lakota Chief Crazy Horse once said: “The Red Nation shall rise again and it shall be a blessing for a sick world. A world filled with broken promises, selfishness and separations. A world longing for light again.” The world is called upon to break away from its current course guided by narrow self-interest and embrace a new “dream”. This dream transcends borders by taking the lead in a global paradigm shift that invests in the long-term calibration of the needs of humans and the Earth.

 **Recommended links**

[www.thelenapecenter.com](http://www.thelenapecenter.com)

Non-profit organisation based in the ancestral Lenape island of Manhattan that promotes Lenape language and culture

<http://fore.yale.edu/publications/books/cswr/indigenous-introduction/>

Introduction to indigenous traditions by the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School

<http://cwis.org>

Center for World Indigenous Studies



 **Recommended reading**

*State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, United Nations, 2015  
[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2015/sowip2volume-ac.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/2015/sowip2volume-ac.pdf)

Melissa K. Nelson (editor), *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, Bear & Company, 2008

John A. Grim, *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* (Religions of the World and Ecology), Center for the Study of World Religions, 2001

**1** [http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/all-energy-roads-lead-to-the-sun/?\\_r=0](http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/all-energy-roads-lead-to-the-sun/?_r=0)

**2** For further details see [http://portal.unesco.org/science/es/files/3519/10849731741IK\\_People/IK\\_People](http://portal.unesco.org/science/es/files/3519/10849731741IK_People/IK_People)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

وَخَلَلْنَا لَهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبُرِّ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِمَّنْ  
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا  
زُفًى

# Islam

El Hassan bin Talal  
Mohamed Ashmawey  
Safwat Ali Morsy Mahgoob

## Islam in a nutshell

The religion of Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic faith that arose on the Arabian Peninsula between 610 and 632 CE. Muslims believe that the Islamic message was revealed to Prophet Muhammad and recorded in the Holy Qur'an, which is considered to be the pure word of God, whom Muslims mostly refer to as Allah. Twenty-three per cent of the global population, a total of 1.7 billion people, are Muslims, making Islam the second largest religion in the world. Muslims believe that Islam covers all aspects of life. Its central values are equality, justice, solidarity, patience, abstinence, trust and forbearance, as well as forgiveness. Based on these, Islam promises a fulfilled life founded on freedom and on responsibility towards all of creation. There are five basic pillars of Islam: the declaration of faith, praying five times a day, giving money to charity as dues of the poor, fasting in the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage to Mecca. The Holy Qur'an and examples derived from the Sunnah, the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad, provide principle guidance for Muslims in life, and to achieve spiritual, moral and material fulfilment in their lives.

*Left page: A verse from the Holy Qur'an 17:70: "We have bestowed dignity on the progeny of Adam [...] and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our creation."*

Source: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an

***“Our Lord, Give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good.”***

Holy Qur’an 2:201

Islam upholds the basic goal of sustainable development and the creation of an environment that enables people to enjoy spiritual, moral and socio-economic well-being in this world and success in the Hereafter. At the core of Islamic teaching about development is the innate *dignity* conferred by God on every man, woman and child. The Holy Qur’an (17:70) unambiguously declares: “We have bestowed dignity on the progeny of Adam [...] and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our creation.”<sup>1</sup> Thus everyone has the right to live a life worthy of dignity and *respect* simply by virtue of being human and regardless of nationality, religion, gender, ability, age or economic status. The Islamic principle at the core of preserving the dignity of man is *justice*. Its centrality is displayed by the Qur’anic verse 57:25: “We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice [...]”

The Islamic conception of justice embraces all aspects of life and is concerned with the mind and the body, as well as the heart and conscience. It is not only a social concept but a personal and moral virtue. Islam views social justice as the balance of rights and obligations with freedoms and responsibilities, within a framework of solidarity. Islamic scholars are of the view that the enabling conditions for maintaining human dignity can only be achieved in societies that work to remove sources of human deprivation in multiple dimensions. *Maqasid al-Shari’a* – The Objectives of the *Shari’a*, the “Divine Judgment of Human Actions” – is an important scientific method to understand the *Shari’a*. Its purpose is to apply the higher purposes and objectives behind the rulings upon which Islamic ethics and norms are based: justice, solidarity, rights and obligations. Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450 – 505 AH/1058 – 1111 CE)<sup>2</sup>, the great Islamic theologian, identified the various dimensions of human development as follows: “The objective of the *Shari’a* is to promote the well-being of humans, which lies in safeguarding their faith, their life, their intellect, their posterity, and their wealth. Whatever ensures the safeguarding of these five fundamentals serves public interest and is desirable.”

## Planet

Climate change and other forms of environmental destruction are symptoms of a greater challenge. The major cause of environmental degradation today is unsustainable consumption and production. As energy resources are largely based on fossil fuels, their use pumps greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, disrupting ecological cycles and aggravating climate change. God has created the universe in all its diversity, richness and vitality. It reflects and manifests the boundless glory and mercy of the Creator. All created beings by nature serve and glorify their Maker, all bow to their Lord's will. We human beings are created to serve the Lord, to work the greatest good we can for all the species, individuals, and generations of God's creatures.

Islam teaches that God created the Earth in perfect equilibrium – *mīzān*. The Earth functions in natural seasonal rhythms and cycles, a climate in which living beings thrive. The present environmental crises are a result of the human disruption of this balance. Humans have caused corruption – *fasād* – due to our relentless pursuit of economic growth and consumption. The consequences of this are climate change, pollution and the degradation of the natural environment. Allah has made humankind His vicegerents – *khalifa* – on the Earth. The Holy Qur'an (6:165) says: "And it is He who has made you successors upon the Earth." This trust comes with a heavy responsibility to act as guardians and protectors of the environment and to ensure that we use the Earth's resources sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations. We are and will be accountable to Allah for how well we have discharged this duty of stewardship.

*“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].”*

Holy Qur'an 30:41

Muslims have a responsibility to act according to the example of Prophet Muhammad who declared and protected the rights of all living beings: he guided his companions to conserve water even in washing for prayer, forbade the felling of trees in the desert, and ordered a man who had taken bird

chicks from their nest to return them to their mother. Prophet Muhammad also established inviolable zones – *harams* – around Makkah and Al-Madinah, within which native plants could not be felled or cut and wild animals could not be hunted or disturbed, and established protected areas – *himas* – for the conservation and sustainable use of rangelands, plant cover and wildlife.



## People

Islamic teachings are clear that development should focus on the impacts on human beings as opposed to money, structures or systems. The true test of sustainable development is the outcomes it achieves in terms of enhancing the faith, life, intellect, prosperity and wealth of all people. To achieve truly

sustainable human development, people need to be able to practise their faith and religion, as well as be free from the ravages of hunger, ill-health, oppression and discrimination. Faith is an essential dimension of well-being because it brings meaning and purpose to life, and can transform

*“And He found you poor and made [you] self-sufficient.”*

Holy Qur’an 93:8

a person in a way that will lead to the actualisation of all other spiritual and material needs. Faith promotes social solidarity, a key asset in addressing adversity and vulnerability. Faith also enables adherents to take a long-term view of their self-interest through belief in accountability now and in the Hereafter. Islam recognises the freedom of worship. The Holy Qur’an (2:256) says: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong.” The Holy Qur’an also emphasises the need for education (58:11): “Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.”

Health is viewed as a blessing from Allah. The Qur’an and the practical examples of Prophet Muhammad, known as *Sunnah*, offer guidance for the preservation of health and well-being. The Prophet said: “Ask Allah for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health.” Muslims believe that they are mere custodians of their bodies that have been entrusted to them by Allah, and therefore are accountable for what

they subject the body to. Prophet Muhammad said: “No one will be allowed to move from his position on the day of judgment until he has been asked how he spent his life, how he used his knowledge, how he earned and spent his money and in what pursuits he used his health.” The Muslim prayers cater to spiritual needs and also entail physical movement and mental concentration, aiding the preservation of both physical and mental health. Significant emphasis is also given to cleanliness with the ablution before prayers, and the requirement for washing and bathing in other contexts.

## Prosperity

Today’s monetary, financial and economic systems are based on the mistaken notion that increased consumption and economic growth result in real human prosperity and mental and physical well-being. The desire for goods leads to excessive consumption, which fuels production and, in turn, rapidly depletes resources. To support the quest for economic growth, unjust and unstable global financial and monetary systems have been created and maintained. It is clear that economic growth for its own sake, which does not put human beings at its centre, inevitably leads to prosperity for some and extreme poverty for many. Islamic teachings show clearly that human well-being does not depend on material wealth alone.

At the same time, Islam encourages the legitimate pursuit of wealth and the enjoyment of the bounties created for human fulfilment, in recognition that wealth is only one determinant of well-being. Individuals are merely trustees of the wealth bestowed on them by Allah. Islam considers wealth as the life blood of the community which must be in constant circulation; its possession therefore excludes the right to hoard it. This implies that wealth must be invested to improve people’s well-being. Islam accepts unequal distribution of wealth, but it does not allow the existence of wide disparities and therefore gives those in extreme

*“Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love. And whatever you spend – indeed, Allah is knowing of it.”*

Holy Quran 3:92

poverty a clear right over the wealth of anyone whose wealth exceeds subsistence level. The Holy Qur'an (51:19) says: "And in their wealth was given the right of the needy and deprived."

To narrow the gap between the rich and the poor and ensure just and equitable distribution of economic resources, Islam provides a suite of positive and prohibitive measures. These include *zakat* – obligatory alms-giving – and *sadaqat* – voluntary charity – as well as laws of inheritance and bequest, monetary atonements, and compulsory contributions in the form of taxes. Prohibitive measures include the abolition of interest, prohibition of acquisition of wealth through illegal and unfair means, and the prohibition of hoarding of wealth.

## Islam in practice

Many of the countries of the world most prone to natural disasters have large Muslim populations. In these countries, mosques are an important centre for disaster preparedness and relief. They are often the only buildings left standing following destructive high winds and floods. The mosque building and the influence and respect in which the Imam is held are increasingly being utilised in the event of disasters. In one example from the work of Islamic Relief Worldwide, loud-hailers used for the call to prayer can serve as an early warning system when flooding is imminent or issue evacuation instructions in flood-prone areas, and the *khutba* discus-

sions at Friday prayers are providing a platform to raise awareness of developmental issues and disaster risk, and to inspire action. Also, disaster risk reduction programmes have been planned and implemented in partnership with local faith communities to establish disaster funds, facilitate food storage, and deliver health services and psychosocial support to survivors of humanitarian emergencies. Mosques and other Muslim institutions are engaged in various forms of humanitarian and development work inspired by their faith. These good works are supported by the institutions of *zakat*, voluntary charity (*sadaqat*) and endowments (*awqaf*).



## Peace

While many Muslims recognise that life involves conflict, they also understand that peace is the highest goal. This can be seen in examples from the life of the Prophet where he faced situations of conflict or sought peace. It is noteworthy that there were only three real instances when the Prophet entered into battle (*Badr*, *Uhud* and *Hunayn*), and the battles lasted for just half a day – from noon to sunset. When presented with the chance to establish peace and the conditions for justice, the Prophet chose to sign the treaty known as *Sulh al-Hudaybiya*, despite seemingly unfavourable terms to the Muslim community.

*“And if anyone saved a life,  
it would be as if he saved  
the life of the whole people.”*

Holy Qur’an 5:32

An Islamic conception of peace begins with its attribution as a Divine name, since the Arabic word for peace, *as-Salam*, is one of the ninety-nine names of God. There are many references to peace – *salam*, *silm* – in the Holy Qur’an (3:83; 4:58; 5:8) that suggest that peace, together with justice – *adl* – is a central message of Islam. The Qur’anic conception of peace was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad’s attitude towards peace and his diplomacy, which can be epitomised as the “reconciliation of hearts”. Drawing on this conceptualisation of peace and nonviolence, Islam offers various values, principles, and practices that can lead to peace in human life. Adopting, implementing, and living by these is a necessary part of fulfilling the Islamic faith. They include concepts that promote non-discrimination and pluralism. Discrimination based on religious, ethnic, racial or gender differences is often one of the main factors that contribute to conflicts. The Holy Qur’an (49:13) says: “Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.”

Islamic traditions affirm the sacredness of human life and recognise the worth and dignity of each human being. The Prophet said, “There should be neither harming, nor reciprocating harm,” highlighting the obligation upon humankind to not harm each other or indeed other things. Unjust social, political and economic systems often exert a form of structural violence on communities by depriving them of their basic needs and rights, which leads

to grievances and resentment. Just social, political and economic systems and institutions are a prerequisite for resolving conflicts.

Terror and violence often involve the creation of an enemy through the process of dehumanisation, where the opponent is stripped of his or her human qualities. Dehumanisation makes atrocities such as rape, murder, torture and mutilation, among others, possible during conflicts, as the “opponent” is no longer viewed as a human being. Transforming this relationship from one of enmity to a peaceful coexistence requires a re-humanisation of the “other”. The Qur’anic principles of *Rahman* – compassionate – and *Rahim* – merciful – are two main tools that can facilitate this process.

## Partnership

Islam lays down the principle of social solidarity and mutual responsibility in all its various shapes and forms. It defines the relationship between people and their family and neighbours, between an individual and society, and between a community and other communities. In Islam, the state should safeguard the space for believers to practise their faith in a multi-religious setting.

Since the genesis of Islam, religion and the political state were inseparable. Prophet Muhammad headed the city state of Madina (Medina) in the seventh

century, where he governed the affairs of the pluralistic community of Muslims, Jews and Christians. Religion has been interwoven with the state in various forms and entities throughout the thirteen centuries of Islamic civilisation. Religion prescribes the role, objectives and ethics of political authority or gov-

ernment. However, the political processes and organisational aspects of governance are left to the people to decide, based on the most effective means of attaining the ultimate goals of governance.

*“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.”*

Holy Qur’an 5:2



*Women acquiring mat-making skills for income generation in Mali with the help of Muslim volunteers. Mosques and other Muslim institutions are engaged in various forms of humanitarian and development work inspired by Islam.*

Source: Islamic Relief Worldwide

An aspect of social solidarity in Islam is reflected in the concept of the brotherhood of all people, and brotherhood among Muslims. Referring to Muslims, the Holy Qur'an (49:10) states, "The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers", and (9:71) "The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another". These statements are illustrated vividly in the *hadiths*, where the Prophet said: "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other." He added: "The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever."<sup>3</sup> With respect to all of humanity, Muslims believe that God created everyone from Adam and Eve. Regardless of differences in religion, the fact remains that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity.

In 2014, three quarters of all appeals for humanitarian aid were related to Muslim-majority countries. The humanitarian and development sector is looking to Muslim agencies to provide insights into how to gain access to areas experiencing religious conflict, and identify humanitarian and development approaches that are more appropriate. Meanwhile, Muslim agencies require mutual capacity building and the sharing of information with other actors. None of this is possible without a spirit of partnership and collaboration.

Muslims are requested by their faith to collaborate in their affairs, but never in illegal action. God has enacted mutual rights for people, and these requirements can only be met through collaboration and mutual respect. Islamic teachings enjoin partnership, cooperation and competition to achieve the best outcome for all while working towards a worthy cause. The Holy Qur'an (5:48) says: "God wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good deeds."

## Vision

Islam teaches that all human beings deserve respect and should be given opportunities to progress at all levels. Allah says that we are all children of the same ancestors. We have been divided into nations and tribes only for the purpose of recognition. Thus Allah has stressed the importance of acting in the interests of and for the benefit of all human beings, since we belong to the same human family. The effects of poverty are so far-reaching that they can shatter a person economically, socially, morally and spiritually. We are called upon to seek ways of creating an open and supportive system that will eradicate extreme poverty in the world.

## Recommended links

[www.introductiontoislam.org](http://www.introductiontoislam.org)

An introduction to Islam for a non-Muslim audience with no or little knowledge about the key principles of Islam

[www.islamreligion.com](http://www.islamreligion.com)

Information for people seeking to understand Islam and Muslims

[www.islam101.net](http://www.islam101.net)

Educational website on Islam, its key theology and rituals

## Recommended reading

Odeh Rashed Al Jayyousi, *Islam and Sustainable Development: New Worldviews*, Series: Transformation and Innovation, Gower Publishing, 2012

Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah – A Beginner's Guide*, International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2008

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islamic: Theory and Practice*, University Press of Florida, 2003

- 1 All translations of verses of the Holy Qur'an are taken from the Saheeh International version ([www.saheehinternational.com](http://www.saheehinternational.com)) unless otherwise stated (source: The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes, Riyadh: Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, 2001-2011; Jeddah: Dar Abul-Qasim 1997-2001). The recent translation of the Holy Qur'an uses plain English and is available at <http://quran.com>.
- 2 AH refers to the Islamic lunar calendar, beginning from the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madina in 620 CE.
- 3 Riyad us-Salihin, number 224.



# Judaism

Awraham Soetendorp

Burton L. Visotzky

Eliana Fisher

## Judaism in a nutshell

Judaism was founded as the religion of the Israelites in the second millennium BCE, as witnessed by the text of the Hebrew Bible. From its beginnings as a tribal religion, Judaism grew into a world religion, and also gave rise to Christianity and Islam. Judaism is covenantal, with its adherents observing commandments from the One God preserved in the Torah or Five Books of Moses, which constitute the beginning of the Bible. Its primary commandments are to love God and to love our fellow human beings. Theft, murder and adultery are prohibited. The orders also include the adumbration of the commandments by generations of rabbis, leaders in the community over the past two thousand years. The Bible teaches that humanity was created male and female in God's image. Men and women are thus afforded equal respect and dignity. The human being is a partner of God in creation, commanded to strive for the good and help move the world towards a state of universal peace and justice, known in Judaism as the Messianic age. Jewish theology has survived and evolved due in large measure to its adherents' commitment to God and their tradition. The number of followers of Judaism is estimated at 13 million worldwide. The two largest centres of Jewry are in Israel and the United States.

*Left page: The Torah, which constitutes the beginning of the Bible, being copied letter for letter by a scribe with a feather on parchment.*

Source: Photographer Ido Menco



***“For the poor will never cease out of the land:  
therefore I command you, saying,  
Open your hand wide to your brother,  
to your poor, and to your needy.”***

Deuteronomy 15:11

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 have much in common with the ancient dictates of Judaism found in the Hebrew Bible and the later interpretations of the rabbis through the generations. The old insights of Judaism are highly relevant today, given the two faces the world community seems to be showing at this juncture. On the one hand is the utter despair of the largest group of refugees ever roaming the world in search of safety and the shameful inability of nations to offer adequate hospitality. On the other hand is the hope engendered by the extraordinary achievement of all nations in unanimously accepting the SDGs in New York and committing to measures on climate change in Paris. Judaism teaches that in every individual resides the confrontation between the inclination to be constructive and the inclination to be destructive, *yetser tov* and *yetser rà*. The ability to destroy and act aggressively is not bad per se. If used properly, it can have a positive effect; for example to build a city or create a family. The process of building occasionally requires decisive action, which may seem aggressive on first sight. What is applicable on the individual level is applicable on a global scale. In the words of the Jewish sage Hillel, “If I am not for myself who is there for me? If I am only for myself what kind of person am I? And if not now, when?”

The Jewish community embraces Agenda 2030 with its SDGs. The rabbis were fond of saying that “one who quotes in the name of the author brings redemption to the world” (Midrash on Proverbs). To honour this sentiment, each of the five sections below contains examples of how Judaism approaches the SDGs, expressed in quotations from Jewish texts of the past millennia.



## Planet

We can turn the threat of climate change into a blessing of cooperation dedicated to safeguarding the earth and the community of life. We can put an end to acute poverty. This is a call to humanity that Judaism as a spiritual tradition heeds in particular: “For thus said the Lord, The Creator of heaven who alone is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who alone established it – He did not create it a waste, But formed it for habitation: I am the Lord, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:18).<sup>1</sup>

Maimonides, the preeminent medieval Jewish philosopher and legalist, commented in the 12<sup>th</sup> century on environmental obligations based on the biblical passage of Deuteronomy 20:19-20:

“It is forbidden to cut down fruit-bearing trees outside a city, nor may a water channel be deflected from them so that they wither [...]. This prohibition does not apply to trees alone. Rather, anyone who breaks utensils, tears garments, destroys buildings, stops up a spring, or ruins food with a destructive intent transgresses the command.”<sup>2</sup>

This urgency to preserve and protect, and not destroy, the environment is explained in a seventh century rabbinic commentary on the biblical book of Ecclesiastes. It imagines God instructing the humans God created about their stewardship of God’s Earth: “Observe God’s doing; for who can straighten what God has twisted?” (Ecclesiastes 7:13).

When God created the first human beings, God led them around all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said: “Look at My works! See how beautiful they are – how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it” (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13). This early teaching confronts our present human dilemma, and failure to change our behaviour means that all life on this planet is at risk.

*“The Earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”*

Psalm 24:1

This requirement for Jews to responsibly and sustainably cultivate the land is captured in the beautiful sixth century Talmudic statement which emphasises the need for continuity in environmental care: “I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. So, too, will I plant for my children” (Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 23a).

A recent statement by rabbis on the climate crisis refers to the relevance of the concept of the Sabbatical year, by which every seventh year should be one of restful release for the earth. These seven-year cycles culminate in the biblical Jubilee Year – the 50<sup>th</sup> year during which debts are annulled, all slaves are released, lands are returned and peace ensues (see Leviticus 25). It is a time of restoration and recovery that protects the earth from exhaustion and allows it to regain its fertility. The release of slaves brings tranquillity to society, and the suspension of warfare provides space for negotiations that offer the hope of an end to violent conflicts. At the turn of the last century, the Jubilee Year inspired the states of the global north to enter into debt relief arrangements with states in the south. This law of the ancient Torah may have been practised in antiquity. Today, it serves as a clarion call for an

## Judaism in practice

The biblical commandments to “not stand idly by” and to “love your neighbour” have led Jews and Jewish organisations to become deeply involved in rescue, relief and development missions. Further, the commandment to “teach your children” has placed a very high value upon education, both religious and general. In recent years several initiatives, such as the Global Interfaith Wash Alliance (GIWA), have seen religious leaders working

shoulder-to-shoulder to provide basic sanitation facilities and access to clean water. EcoPeace, a strong coalition of committed Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian leaders, works towards the rehabilitation of the Jordan River and general access to clean water. These activities also advance the cause of peace.

ethical approach. This concept underpins many of the SDGs relating to land usage, freedom from extreme poverty, and environmental preservation.

## People

In Judaism the particular is intertwined with the universal. This means preserving Jewish identity while at the same time caring for the whole of humanity and the Earth. Throughout their history, the Jewish people frequently had to endure persecution and genocide on their long and painful journey on the Earth. They faced extremities of hatred in exile, yet never gave up the universal dream of mutual respect. Jews have until recently lived as exiles from their homeland, scattered in a diaspora, residing among non-Jews. This meant that Jews were always a minority and often reviled. Nevertheless, the second century sage Rabbi Akiva expands the meaning of the golden rule to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev. 19:18) by commenting: “This is a basic principle in the Torah, so that you will never say, ‘because I have been degraded, my fellow should be degraded with me, because I have been cursed my fellow should be cursed with me.’” The fifth century sage Rabbi Tanchuma adds: “When you act this way, you taint the image of God” (Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 24). These insights are very valid today, in times of war and terror. The memory of suffering caused by ill-treatment and hatred transmitted from generation to generation is often a stumbling block preventing us from moving forward on the road towards peace. The sharing of the pain and recognition of the hurt opens doors to reconciliation. Judaism advocates supporting those who are oppressed or marginalised in such a way that constructive and peaceful ways of changing the situation can be found. The Torah and all subsequent Jewish teaching decree peace and harmony between the Jewish community and their neighbours.

*“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Lord am your God.”*

Leviticus 19:34

In the Torah, the Jewish people are commanded over and over again to care with love for the stranger, as they were strangers in the land of Egypt and know the heart of the stranger. When the biblical book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, teaches that God created humanity from one original human, the rabbis of old conclude that therefore no-one may say that “my ancestor was greater than yours”. The obligation to take responsibility for each other within the Jewish community is to be understood in the wider global context. Humanity is one body – when one part of the body aches, the whole body will feel it. If the body does not feel any pain, this is the beginning of death and inimical to survival. When the human family is not touched by the pain of others, it cannot sustain itself. It will die.

## Prosperity

The Torah commands that Jews care for their fellow human beings: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:18). Jews are thus instructed to give generously to support fellow humans who are experiencing poverty – without considering these persons’ background.

In his landmark code of Jewish law, the *Four Pillars*, the fourteenth century European Rabbi Jacob ben Asher taught: “It is a positive commandment to give charity according to your capacity. And you must be very careful regarding this commandment, more so than with any other positive commandment,

for it is possible to wind up shedding blood [by neglecting it], since a poor person may die if you do not give him [what he or she needs] right away [...]. You should not think, ‘How can I possibly reduce my wealth by giving to the poor?’ Rather, you should understand that the wealth is not yours, but rather a trust that you must use to carry out the will of the One who has entrusted it to you. And it is the will of that Provider of that trust

*“Understand that the wealth is not yours, but rather a trust that you must use to carry out the will of the One who has entrusted it to you.”*

Tur, Yoreh De’ah 247



*Jewish activists and community leaders in India meeting with underprivileged young women to discuss their aspirations.*

Source: Ruth W. Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service

that you distribute a part of it to the poor. Indeed [that which you distribute] is the best part of your wealth, as it says, ‘Your charity will proceed before you’” (Isaiah 58:8; *Tur, Yoreh De’ah* §247).

Indeed, feeding the hungry is considered in much the same vein. As Rabbi Moses Maimonides taught in his 12<sup>th</sup> century legal code: “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger” (Leviticus 23:22). “The general principle is that a person’s goal should be to have his property succeed, to supersede that which is temporary with that which is durable, and his intention should not be to have momentary enjoyment or to benefit a little [now] and lose much [later]”

(Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deot*, 5:12). The rabbis of medieval Europe make clear here that the Torah's laws are binding commitments on the Jewish community in every generation. Caring for the needy and sharing prosperity remains an obligation on the Jewish community to this very day.

## Peace

In recent years, representatives of the different religious and faith communities have finally come to the conclusion that we desperately need each other to reach our common goal of peace and justice. We can and must form the

vanguard of this concentrated human effort to secure harmonious and equitable life for future generations. It is significant that the very last words of the biblical prophets state that the only way to avert the complete destruction of the Earth and all its inhabitants is to restore harmony between the generations: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible

*“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and security forever. Then my people shall dwell in peaceful homes, in secure dwellings, in safe resting places.”*

Isaiah 32:17-18

day of the Eternal, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the heart of the children to their parents – lest I come, and smite the Land with destruction” (Malachi 3:23-24). The ultimate goal of all Jews is to create peace and security. Peace is the main requisite for *tikun olam*, the restoration of the world. And we all long for the time “when no nations will wage war against each other and the art of war will not be taught any more” (Isaiah 2:4).

## Partnership

Care for the whole community of life is the sacred task given by God the Creator to all humanity. This concept permeates Judaism from its inception. The human being is seen as God's partner in creation. Endowed with free will, men and women are enabled to perfect the world in the way God intended it to be – a world filled with cooperation, love, truth, and righteousness. The Jewish people are chosen to fulfil their particular duties, as others are chosen to fulfil theirs, so that together in unison with all others on the Earth, Jews can foster peace and security. Jews cannot achieve this ideal state by particularist efforts alone.

Humans, who are created in God's image, are commanded to muster all their given powers to help bring forth universal peace and justice at the end of time; this is the messianic redemption according to Jewish belief. The revival of this concept by a coalition of representatives of religious and faith communities at the end of the last millennium has had a tremendously beneficial effect on decision-makers and contributed greatly to the massive debt relief granted by the countries in the global north to the countries in the south. This example shows clearly what sustainable cooperation between religious communities can achieve. At the closure of the historical UN conference on the environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, politicians implored the assembled religious leaders to continue urging them to take measures that appear to contravene national interests but are necessary in the long term to preserve the Earth. The power of the united moral force of spiritual traditions has increasingly been recognised. And now representatives of governments and representatives of faith traditions are working side by side to realise the SDGs. We all feel the urgent prophetic call to overcome egoism and move even closer to compassionate living. A popular prayer on the New Year and Day of Atonement beautifully summarises the point: "And so grant your awe, Eternal One, our God, to all your works, and your fear over

*"It is the way of peace that Jews should treat their non-Jewish neighbours with the same high regard that they are commanded to do for one another."*

**Mipnei Darkei Shalom**

all you have created. That all your works will fear you and all who have been created bow before you, and form one union to do your will with one heart.”

## Vision

The enduring lesson of Judaism is never to lose hope, by planting a dream of the future into the present. The core of the pragmatic vision of the SDGs of Agenda 2030 is that every child, at least in the early years when it cannot survive by itself, will receive the love, basic care and security it needs. We want to address the words we use to encourage each other within the Jewish community to all our brothers and sisters in the global village. *Chazak, chzazak venitchazeik*: Let us draw strength from each other to do what has to be done.

## Recommended links

[www.foeme.org](http://www.foeme.org)

EcoPeace Middle East – an organisation bringing together Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli environmentalists

[www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)

The American Jewish World Service – dedicated to ending poverty and promoting human rights in developing countries

[www.jdc.org](http://www.jdc.org)

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – a relief organisation serving the needy worldwide in times of disaster



 **Recommended reading**

Martin Yaffe (editor), *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader*,  
Lexington Books, 2001

Raymond E. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People:  
From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood*, Oxford University Press, 2000

Burton L. Visotzky and David E. Fishman (editors), *From Mesopotamia To  
Modernity: Ten Introductions To Jewish History And Literature*,  
Westview Press, 1999

**1** This and all subsequent citations are taken from classical Jewish sources ranging from as early as the Hebrew Bible up to the fifteenth century. It is the custom for Jewish teaching to rely heavily on earlier textual traditions.

**2** Quote from Maimonides' legal code, *Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchot Melakhim*", Chapter 6:8, 10.



# The Sikh Religion | Gurmat

Dharam Singh Nihang Singh

Gurjeet Singh

Teerath Kaur

Suneet Singh

## The Sikh Religion | Gurmat in a nutshell

The Sikh Religion – also known as Sikhi or Sikhism – is based on spiritual wisdom revealed to over 30 enlightened ones called Bhagat or Gur. It took on the shape of a unique religion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Panjab on the Indian subcontinent. Today, around 25 million people regard themselves as Sikhs, seekers of truth. The original insights of the Bhagat, known as Gurmat, are preserved in written poetry called *Gurbani* and enjoy the highest religious authority amongst Sikhs. Their holistic and timeless wisdom focuses on the unifying impact of religion on everyday life. Gurmat values a virtuous and modest way of life in harmony with the Creator and creation. It enables lifelong development in tune with nature, spreading unity and well-being amongst all people. Gurmat inspires us to acknowledge our common spiritual origin and trust in the wisdom of the all-inherent, nameless and formless Creator. It offers universal wisdom to those who want to overcome suffering, move beyond beliefs and intellectuality, and understand the purpose of life through self-realisation of the divine purity within us as part of the Divine Will – *hukam*. Sikh men are traditionally recognisable by their uncut hair, beard and turban that express a humble, noble and natural way of life. The togetherness of Sikhs is symbolised by common last names. Women use the name Kaur – prince – and men Singh – lion. The majority of Sikhs live in the Indian state of Panjab, the United Kingdom, North America and Australia. They have set up religious centres – *Gurdwara* – in nearly every country in the world that welcome people regardless of belief, background and gender. Sikhs are often seen as a model minority since they value their traditions whilst being economically successful as well as socially engaged and law-abiding citizens. Several Sikhs hold high-ranking positions, such as the Canadian Defence Minister.

*Left page: Calligraphy showing Gurbani poetry. The first two characters “ik oankar” comprise the core insights of the Sikh Religion. They signify that all manifestation originates from the One Eternal Source. The following verses refer to the Creator as the only source of enlightenment. He is the father and all sentient beings his children (AG, M. 5, 611).*

Source: Artist Manpreet Kaur

***“Without spiritual wisdom, successful development is impossible. Good development is like good medicine: it has no side-effects.”***

In a global world facing existential challenges, unifying values and virtues are becoming increasingly important. To overcome the current focus on life’s physical and material aspects, convincing wisdom is needed that speaks to the heart and soul of all people and gives meaning to life – thus helping to develop an ethical attitude that strengthens our individual as well as communal responsibility, whilst respecting cultural diversity. If peace is to be accomplished, accepted attitudes as well as political and economic models need to be questioned. The wisdom of the Sikh Religion supports this process of reconsideration. It inspires us to surmount the selfishness and short-termism that leads to injustice and environmental destruction, thus contributing to the 2030 Agenda that was adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

### **Journey of self-discovery towards the Divine Will**

The uniqueness of Gurmat, the spiritual basis of the Sikh Religion – also known as Sikh Mat –, lies in its exploration of the soul, which has a direct relationship with the Divine Will – *hukam* – of the Creator that always strives for the best. Gurmat reminds us that ignorance towards our divine self – *chit* – is the root cause of all personal and societal problems. The material aspects of the divine principles, such as gravity, can be explored through scientific research. Their spiritual aspects can be realised through self-exploration – *atam khoj* or *nam*.

ਸੇ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਖਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ॥ ਆਪਣੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜੋ ਚਲੈ ਭਾਈ ਵਿਛੁੜਿ ਚੇਟਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥  
*“A Sikh<sup>1</sup> who lives in harmony with the Divine Will is a true friend, relative and sibling. One who follows his own will, O brother, suffers from separation from the Divine Will [which is like self-inflicting wounds on the consciousness].”* AG, M. 3, 601<sup>2</sup>

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਬੁਝਿ ਪਰਮ ਪਦੁ ਪਾਈ ॥

*“Realising the Divine Will, the highest spiritual ecstasy is attained.”* AG, M. 5, 292

According to Gurmat, the One, who is described as the Ocean of Peace – *sukhsagar* – allows creation to exist and evolve according to cosmic laws. Nothing in the universe is arbitrary but is the result of the Divine Light from which everything has been created (AG, M. 1, 464). Cosmic laws cannot be challenged by any living species. Everything is interconnected and everything that happens is meaningful and enlightening, even though we might not realise it immediately.

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਿਰ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥

*“Everyone and everything is subject to the Divine Will, nothing is outside it. Nanak, if one realises the Divine Will, egoism vanishes [and consciousness is in tune with the One].”* AG, M. 1, 1

## Evolution of the Sikh Religion

The Bhagat analysed prevalent religious beliefs and scriptures, as well as practices such as asceticism, yoga and meditation techniques, but they found neither lasting inner peace nor enlightenment. The Bhagat distanced themselves from existing religious codes of conduct and traditions such as circumcision, pilgrimage and fasting. They rejected superstition, esotericism and practices like mantra chanting and casting horoscopes. The Bhagat criticised pomp and demarcation in the name of religion. They also criticised the hierarchical caste system, discrimination against women and so-called untouchables, purity and food regulations in the name of religion, and the dependency on priests (AG, M. 1, 12; 1289).

ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥੪॥

*“We are neither Hindus nor Muslims. Our body and breath of life belong to Allah and Ram [the nameless Divine].”* AG, M. 5, 1136

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਿਹ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥ [...]

*“From woman we receive friendship; through woman life is sustained. [...] Why disrespect her? She gives birth to [spiritual and worldly] kings [...]. Nanak, only the One is without woman. [...] Those who are continually in tune with the One are blessed and beautiful.”* AG, M. 1, 473

The Bhagat began exploring the way to enlightenment with the help of ancient Vedic spiritual wisdom that emerged several thousand years ago. They realised that the way to overcome suffering is to discover the origin of the cause of life through the continuous exploration of the soul – *atma* or *brahm*.

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

*“O my Mind [the part of the soul that is associated to the material world], realise your original divine root, the pure inner self.”* AG, M. 3, 441

Once the Bhagat had positively transformed desire, anger, greed, emotional identification and egoism and attuned their souls to the Divine Will, they were bestowed with revelation that they described as beyond liberation. Vedic wisdom, which had lost its core through an increasing focus on outward practices such as idol worship, rituals and the capitalisation of religion through payments for prayers and other services, was refined and expanded in a unique way.

ਵੇਦਾ ਮਿਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਉਤਮੁ ਸੇ ਸੁਣਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਫਰਿਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਬੇਤਾਲਿਆ ॥

*“Although the Vedas carries the essence of spiritual wisdom, ignorant beings do not realise it and are out of tune with the Divine Will.”* AG, M. 3, 919

ਸਾਸਤ ਬੇਦ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਭਿ ਸੋਧੇ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਬਾਤ ਪੁਕਾਰੀ ॥

*“The ancient scriptures, Shastras, Vedas and Smritis, after refinement and expansion, have been found to carry the message of the One.”* AG, M. 5, 495

One of the key Bhagat was Kabir, who lived around 1398–1448 in Varanasi. His spiritual legacy and those of the other enlightened souls reached a peak beginning with Gur Nanak, who lived from 1469–1530. He was followed by nine direct successors called Gur. All enlightened ones regarded themselves as humble servants – *das*, *jan* – of the Creator and not as saints or prophets. Accordingly, they rejected any kind of personality cult. They did not claim exclusivity and emphasised that throughout history messengers of the Creator will be born (AG, M. 1, 933; M. 4, 451; M. 5, 74). The Bhagat stressed that the litmus test to identify a truthful messenger is that whatever is uttered cannot be inconsistent or proven false in this life and the hereafter.

ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸੁ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਜੋ ਬੋਲੈ ਈਹਾ ਸਚੁ ਹੋਵੈ ॥੨॥੧੪॥੪੫॥

*“Devotee Nanak utters only what is true now and in the hereafter.”*

AG, M. 5, 681

Over a period of about three hundred years, the enlightened ones inspired many seekers of truth, but also faced opposition and genocide. Hindu and Muslim authorities saw their dominance challenged and tried to suppress the emerging Sikh Religion. The Sikhs took a firm stand against this – also against oppression of the weak. This reminds us today that self-defence is a human right if all other means fail – and that it is just to resist all forms of colonisation and proselytisation (AG, M. 9, 1427).

To help humankind on its evolutionary path, the original revelations of the Bhagat were preserved in written form, in the new script and language *Gurmukhi*. The final anthology, comprising 1,430 pages, was completed in 1708 by the tenth Gur Gobind Singh. It is mostly referred to as *(Adi) Guru Granth Sahib*, and is accorded the highest religious authority by Sikhs. It contains words from various languages and is highly metaphorical, poetic and based on musical melodies.



## Planet

Without a healthy Earth, we cannot live a healthy life. We are directly dependent on the gifts that the Creator unconditionally provides. The survival of all forms of life is closely linked to the rhythm of nature. The writings of the Bhagat vividly illustrate their loving relationship with nature, animals and vegetation. Spiritual wisdom is even called Voice of Heaven – *akash bani*. Gurmat values all natural resources, including the most vital ones, air and water (AG, M. 1, 472). Air is symbolically compared to the Guru, the Enlightening Creator.

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥

*“The eternal father is the water, the eternal mother the Earth [both enabling the soul to heal]. As vital as the air is to nourishing all life, so is spiritual wisdom equally vital to the soul.”* AG, M. 1, 8

## The Sikh Religion in practice

Sikhs regard promoting unity, justice and human well-being as a responsibility. Helping the needy is a tradition. Examples include the work of Bhai Ghaneya and the food offered free of cost to needy people in the Gurdwara (*langar*). Several organisations such as UNITED SIKHS, EcoSikhs and Khalsa Aid, as well as other initiatives that are not formally registered, are providing emergency aid, education, environmental conservation and human rights work at both local and international levels. Based on the principles of the Sikh Religion, the services are free of any missionary agenda and impartial with regard to those in need. This approach promotes respect, understanding and cohesion. The majority of activities are carried out by volunteers, who work in the knowledge that any misconduct would cause them to lose all their credibility. Social media and smartphone apps play a key role in managing these activities as well as fund-raising campaigns, volunteer recruitment and media work. Humanitarian work is usually based at a local Sikh community centre. It acts as a free base camp, a place to store donated materials and a gateway to the local population and administration. Following the earth-

quake in Haiti in January 2010, Sikh volunteers helped to provide water, food, medical care and other relief items. The emergency deployment was praised by US President Barack Obama at the “National Prayer Breakfast”. Sikhs also provided emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters in Banda Aceh, Myanmar, Japan, India, Pakistan, Nepal and the United States. They have also worked together with other NGOs, including the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Sikh practitioners highlight that religious organisations can mobilise a large number of volunteers quickly who are motivated by their religion and not by salaries or careers. This allows administrative costs to be kept very low.

Sikhs are also active in inter-religious dialogue. The president of the renowned Council of Religions in Frankfurt in Germany is a Sikh. Interfaith dialogue is seen by Sikhs as instrumental in raising religious literacy, promoting value-oriented dialogue and social cohesion. Sikhs are also increasingly focusing on their original tradition of helping people to gain spiritual insights in order to live a balanced and healthy life free of depression and anxieties.



Air and water give us life. Spirituality gives us the purpose of life. It is therefore our responsibility to nourish our souls, treat the body with respect, and protect the life-giving Mother Earth. By doing so, every species can progress towards liberation.

The pollution of the Earth is the outer expression of inner pollution. Hence, focusing primarily on political, financial and technical solutions or treaties will never save the planet. We need to transform our attitude. This includes rejecting the misconception that natural resources belong to individuals or nations. They are gifts from nature to all beings. But short-term self-interest, coupled with the desire of so called developed countries to accumulate even greater wealth and luxury, has led to uncontrolled economic growth and exploitation. The result is devastating (AG, M. 1, 470).

If we want to save the Earth from the dangers of global warming, nuclear disasters and the hormonal contamination of humans, animals and the water, we need to consciously listen to the Divine Voice in our heart. It will guide us to lead a natural and frugal life as a human family. It will also help us to overcome the side-effects of pollution like allergies. The moment we accept that we eat and work to live, and do not live to eat and work, we will be able to distinguish between necessities and desires. We will then conform to our role of guests on the Earth. We will then regard the whole cosmos as a sacred landscape. We will slow down and reconsider from which inventions we really benefit. A rapidly beating heart is just as unhealthy as a heart that beats too slowly. Natural development is guided by the pace of evolution itself.

ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ॥ [...] ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥  
*“The desires of the ignorant mind will never be appeased, even by piling up worldly goods. If you had immense intellectual knowledge, it would neither further enlightenment nor accompany you in the hereafter. So how can one become truthful? How can the veil of ignorance be torn away? The way to enlightenment is to discard the personal will that you have always carried with you and attune yourself to the Divine Will, says Nanak.”* AG, M. 1, 1

ਮਨਿ ਮੈਲੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਮੈਲਾ  
 ਤਨਿ ਧੋਤੇ ਮਨੁ ਹਛਾ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥  
*“A mind affected by vices  
 produces polluted thoughts  
 and results. Cleaning the body  
 will never purify the mind.”*

AG, M. 3, 558

Fair and equal access is needed to organic food, natural resources and a state-sponsored, decentralised form of energy production, for instance through solar panels on every larger building. Moving on from the fossil era is a must. There is no longer any justification for a monopoly of a few multinational energy producers. To use the energy and resources of the universe for free is a human right.

## People

Everyone enjoys harmony. But life is full of disputes. If we want to understand the root cause of human conflict, we need to understand our origins. Gurmat reminds us that we descend from one self-existent source. We all are created

from the same genetic elements, and we were all given a consciousness. If we acknowledge that we all belong to one family, we behave like one and take care of each other. We no longer discriminate against people based on race, ethnicity or other human-made categories.

On a spiritual level we need to understand that life with its biological cycles and ongoing evolution, its law of action and reaction, is a place of learning. According to Gurmat, the very reason for

being incarnated is that we parted from the spiritual chorus of all the enlightened souls due to the egoistic misbelief – *bharam* – that we could survive independently from the collective family that governs the universe on the spiritual level of the Ocean of Peace (DG, 12; AG, M. 5, 1075). As a result we are born with an innate lack of wisdom in the material Ocean of Desires called *bhavsagar*. Humans are especially prone to egoism and over-confidence because of their extraordinary intellectual capacities. Hence conflict arises.

In the ephemeral material world, the soul can realise its true origin through the very experience of separation from the Ocean of Peace. The realisation

ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ  
ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

*“Realise the true self [in yourself and every being] and do not look at the [biological and social] background since it will have no value in the hereafter.”*

AG, M. 1, 349

of the deeper cause of life initiates the healing process of the soul on its journey to complete purity called *puranbrahm* (AG, M. 5, 294; M. 2, 466). This is considered the highest art, since the estrangement from the divine self is deepened over time through interaction and identification with the material world by the acquired self. Capitalism is the structural outcome of this. The prerequisite for healing is de-conditioning. This includes a process of disassociating from the body, thoughts and emotions, and ultimately realising that physical life is a dream – *maya* – that will end (AG, M. 5, 294).

ਪੜਿਆ ਅਣਪੜਿਆ ਪਰਮ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥੧॥

*“If you practise unlearning [the worldly wrongs] then you can reach the highest realm [of enlightenment].”* AG, M. 5, 197

ਮਨੁ ਪਰਦੇਸੀ ਜੇ ਥੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਦੇਸੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ॥

*“The mind can be overcome once you realise that the outer world you have regarded as your home is actually the diaspora.”* AG, M. 1, 767

Regaining our lost relationship with our virtuous self is the key to creating healthy relationships with our fellow human beings and overcoming attitudes that create hatred, denominations in the name of religion, ideologies and nation states. In order to achieve this, worldly as well as spiritual education is vital. With the help of the internet all people can access knowledge. What we need is a human right to a free or low-cost internet connection and cheap portable devices, and a global political solution for implementing this.



## Prosperity

Development is harmful if it leads to over-complexity, causes problems rather than solving them, and disturbs inner peace. Good development has no side effects. Today there is enough global wealth, yet many people are poor. It is therefore a false notion that material affluence can lead to justice and peace of mind – rather the sacrifice of affluence does. Gurmat regards a person to be prosperous who is wise and full of virtues, because the only property that is taken along after the death of the body is the degree of spiritual realisation. Gurmat does not consider money, property or any kind of luxuries as real prosperity. None

of the Bhagat and Gur accumulated wealth. They lived a simple, yet graceful life, and considered gold and dust to be the same (AG, M. 5, 275; 638; 745).

ਵਡੇ ਵਡੇ ਜੋ ਦੀਸਹਿ ਲੋਗ ॥ ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਬਿਆਪੈ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਰੋਗ ॥੧॥

*“The people who appear to be important and powerful are infected by the disease of anxiety and fear of losing power.”* AG, M. 5, 188

**ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਨਿਰਧਨੁ ਹੈ ਸੋਈ ॥  
ਜਾ ਕੇ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੪॥੮॥**

*“Kabir says the poor are those whose heart is not filled with spiritual wisdom.”*

AG, Kabir, 1159

The idea of Gross National Happiness is a step in the right direction. Development ought to be measured in terms of spiritual, physical and communal wealth, comprising the level of contentment of humans, the meaningfulness of their lives, and the sustainability of their actions. If this paradigm shift happens, countries will not invest in economic growth regardless of the con-

sequences. They will establish a social welfare state with a mechanism of redistribution that minimises disparities and guarantees free basic medical services and an elementary income for citizens through higher taxation of rich people and companies. The publication of income would be a standard procedure of transparency. Education would be free, to give the children of poor people and vulnerable groups the chance to improve their life situation. Greater accountability would be required of state expenditures, and investments with no long-term benefit to the people would be cut, for instance for the development of nuclear power plants and space missions. This would strengthen civil society, protect human rights, and encourage investment in corporate social responsibility. Sustainable and organic farming would be standard, and over-consumption and over-production of cheap products manufactured by poorly paid workers avoided.



## Peace

Gurmat regards peace as a state of lasting bliss. It is a state of mental and emotional equanimity. Its quality of calmness cannot be disturbed through outer circumstances and supposedly negative experiences. Real peace is



*Baptised Sikhs (Khalsa) from the Nihang tradition share their comprehensive spiritual and historic knowledge free of charge and without any rituals in Panjab according to the original tradition. The aim is to help students through holistic exegesis of Gurbani to live a modest and virtuous life in tune with nature. Modern technology is used to teach students all over the world.*

Source: Sach Khoj Academy

marked by virtues and a lack of worries, fears, stress or scepticism and a total awareness of the present moment (AG, M. 21, 995).

ਹਰਿ ਜਨੁ ਐਸਾ ਚਾਹੀਐ ਜੈਸਾ ਹਰਿ ਹੀ ਹੋਇ ॥੧੪੯॥

*“The truthful devotee of the One carries the virtues of the One.”*

AG, Kabir, 1372

If we look at the world, we are confronted with the lack of peace. War and terrorism, and also depression, are the result of a disturbed soul that is out of tune with its divine self. Difference of opinion along with lack of tolerance is another factor. Gurmat inspires us to invest in personal peace first, since the outer cosmos is a manifestation of the inner. It also encourages learning from

history. We all make mistakes – as individuals but also as nations. The key to peace is to avoid repeating mistakes, to take full responsibility for correcting them and to seek reconciliation. Germany for instance does not mask its hor-

rifying past of the Third Reich but deals with it self-critically and openly. Such an honest approach is always rewarded. Germany's reunification contributed to peace in Europe.

Looking to the future, an independent world council could be of help. In this council, leading experts from all fields, together with the wisest and most knowledgeable representatives of the world religions, could reach agreements

on basic principles and actions to safeguard peaceful coexistence in the long term. Ideally, all governments would take the advice of this council into account. It would be the responsibility of the council to draw attention to erroneous developments and to arbitrate in conflicts and recommend sanctions if all other means fail. This council could also develop a global constitution that would aim to ensure human rights and peace for the whole of the human family without neglecting the local context.

**ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ  
ਸੁਖੁ ਸੁਭਾਨੁ ॥੩॥**

*“Those who follow their mind  
never find peace, but Gurmukh  
[the ones who are in tune with  
the One] enjoy everlasting joy.”*

AG, M. 1, 21

## Partnership

The wisdom of religion is an offer to others. Truthful religion never imposes convictions through missionary zeal, either directly or through subtle persuasion. Mistrust and prejudice – also between state and civil society actors – can be broken down by critical reflection and by engaging in respectful debate with those who work for the common cause. Dialogue, including inter-religious work, is a key to partnership. In the Sikh Religion we talk of true love and friendship – *dosti* – when truthfulness meets truthfulness. A healthy partnership is only possible when individual short-term longings are left behind and no-one wishes to gain the upper hand. A harmonious partnership requires sincerity and patience. It needs an understanding of what is natu-

ral and is guided by wisdom and not by personal desires and opinion. Gurmat reminds us that only those who conquer the desires of the mind – *man*, the part of the soul prone to worldly attachment – can resist seduction and live in tune with the Divine Will (AG, M. 1, 6).

ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਜਨ ਭਏ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨੀ ॥੪॥੩॥  
*“Kabir says those devotees are pure [Khalsa] who know the art of love and devotion [to the One].”* AG, Kabir, 655

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੋ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ  
 ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਇਓ ॥੯॥੨੯॥  
*“I speak the truth so listen  
 carefully: only those who love  
 humanity from their heart  
 will realise the One.”*

DG, 37

## Vision

The history of all religions reminds us that we constantly have to make an effort to stay truthful to the path we claim to represent. Spiritual wisdom provides resilience and can guide us through all challenges towards the path of sustainability. The prerequisite is that we acknowledge that truthful religion is shaped by selfless devotion, concerned with the well-being of all humankind and is neither group-led nor interest-led. Religion ideally offers far-sighted guidance to humanity and to those who are in responsible political and economic positions. It does not seek power to govern or oppress people and does everything to avoid the misuse of religion (AG, M. 2, 474; M. 5, 534; M. 1, 145). In today’s world that is shattered by terror, it is in particular the responsibility of the adherents of religion to eradicate what is bad in us and our religious communities. We need to take a firm stand – even if this involves personal losses. When our actions match our words, honesty and sincerity arise. This is a prerequisite for justice, solidarity and good governance. Ultimately, it will lead us to peace and a conscious way of life in harmony with nature. Transformation is a choice (AG, M. 1, 474). It begins at home, with a look in the mirror.

ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

*“Dwelling upon spiritual wisdom [and enabling others to do so] is genuine altruistic service.”* AG, M. 1, 233

## Recommended links

[www.sachkhojacademy.wordpress.com](http://www.sachkhojacademy.wordpress.com)

Lectures and articles on spirituality and development based on Gurmat

[www.gurmatwisdom.wordpress.com](http://www.gurmatwisdom.wordpress.com)

Information portal on Gurmat | Timeless spiritual wisdom

[www.twitter.com/gurmatwisdom](https://www.twitter.com/gurmatwisdom)

Tweets on Gurmat | Timeless spiritual wisdom

## Recommended reading

Dharam Singh Nihang Singh, *Sahj Samadhi Vers. Sunn Samadhi*

(Sidh Gosti Viakhia), Sach Khoj Academy, 1999

Khushwant Singh, *Ethik in der Sikh-Religion (Ethics in the Sikh Religion)*,

Ethik im Weltkontext. Geschichten – Erscheinungsformen – Neuere Konzepte, Springer VS, 2014

*Gurmat – The Art of Spiritual Wisdom*, forthcoming

- 1 Grammatically, terms like “Sikh” are masculine, but the meaning behind them is not, since the soul has no gender.
- 2 AG refers to the key scripture for Sikhs, *Pothi Sahib* or *Adi Granth*, mostly known as (*Adi*) *Guru Granth Sahib*. This is followed by the name of the Bhagat or M. 1/2 referring to the author within the line of the ten Gur, and the page of the quoted verse in the standard edition. DG refers to the writings of Gur Gobind Singh in the collection known as *Dasam Granth*. It is of special importance for baptised Sikhs (who have *taken khande di pahul*) and belong to the order of Khalsa. The number indicates the page of the standard edition. All translations and explanations were produced in collaboration with Harminderjit Singh and Khushwant Singh.



## **Authors**

## Introduction and Forewords



### **Gerd Müller**

has been German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) since December 2013. From 2005 to 2013, he was Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture. In this position, Dr Müller was responsible, among other things, for international relations, development projects and world food affairs. Müller has been a Member of the German Bundestag since 1994, representing the constituency of Oberallgäu/Kempen/Lindau. He has been a member of the EU, Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the German Bundestag and spokesman of the group of parliamentarians from the CSU in the German Bundestag for foreign affairs, European policy and development policy. From 1989 to 1994 Müller was a Member of the European Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary of the CDU/CSU group. Prior to this he was also Deputy Head of the Office for Foreign Relations of the Hanns Seidel Foundation as well as Policy Officer at the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs. Müller has a Master's Degree in Business Education. He is married and has two children.

**Ogyen Trinley Dorje**

His Holiness is the 17<sup>th</sup> Gyalwang Karmapa. The Karmapa is the head of the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism and Ogyen Trinley Dorje is regarded as the 17<sup>th</sup> incarnation in a lineage that dates back 900 years. He was born in 1985 into a nomadic family in Tibet. At the age of eight he was recognised by senior lamas and by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa of Tibetan Buddhism and taken to the monastic seat of the Karmapas. At the age of 14 he left Tibet and settled in India and has lived there since January 2000. Today Ogyen Trinley Dorje is highly respected by millions of Buddhists and gives lectures all over the world. He is a dedicated environmentalist and leads an association of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries that are working toward environmental solutions for their own communities in the Himalayas ([www.khoryug.com](http://www.khoryug.com)).

**Horst Köhler**

served as the ninth President of the Federal Republic of Germany from 2004 to 2010. During his term of office Professor Dr Köhler not only engaged in the domestic arena but was very committed to foreign affairs. He advocated a human dimension to globalisation with clearly defined rules and was a staunch campaigner for poverty eradication and a new partnership with the African continent. Köhler was appointed as State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Finance in 1990. In this position he negotiated the German-German monetary union with the leadership of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as well as the agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR. Köhler went on to become chief negotiator for the Maastricht Treaty on European Monetary Union, as well as the Personal Representative (Sherpa) of Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl for the World Economic Summits of the then G7. In 1993 he became President of the German Savings Bank Association and worked to give it a modern image. He recognised the particular responsibility of the savings banks for small and medium-sized enterprises and for the social climate in local communities. In 1998 Köhler was appointed President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London where he worked until 2000, when he was proposed as the new Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC. He held this position until his election as Federal President in 2004. Köhler was a member of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda from 2012–2013 and continues to serve in a number of national and international organisations.

## The Bahá'í Faith



### **Bani Dugal**

is the principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN. As part of the community of international NGOs at the UN, she is currently serving on the Steering Committee of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council. Dugal has served as President of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, as co-facilitator of the NGO Working Group on UN Access, co-facilitator of the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) campaign, chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, chair of the Global Forum of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, and Convenor of the NGO Committee on UNIFEM. Born in India, Dugal holds a Master's degree (LL.M) in environmental law from Pace University School of Law, New York and a law degree (LL.B) from the University of Delhi, India.



### **Hoda Mahmoudi**

was born in Iran and since 2012 has held the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland – an endowed academic programme that advances interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. As the Bahá'í Chair professor, she is developing a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies that explore the role of social actors and structures in removing obstacles to peace and creating paths to a better world. She collaborates with a wide range of scholars, researchers, and practitioners, and advocates a “worldview approach” to peace-making that draws insights from all cultures. Before joining the University of Maryland faculty, Mahmoudi served as the head of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, from 2001 to 2012.



### **Ulrich Gollmer**

has worked for the publishing house Bahá'í-Verlag for more than 30 years, serving as its director since 1994. Central among his responsibilities is translating the Bahá'í holy scriptures into German. His own work focuses on political, historic and social aspects of the Bahá'í Faith, often in comparison to other religions and with the intention of contributing to interreligious dialogue. In 1984 he became a founding member of the Gesellschaft für Baha'i-Studien. Gollmer's publications include "Die Haltung zur Welt/Natur/Umwelt – eine Bahá'í-Perspektive" in *Die Erde – lebensfreundlicher Ort für alle. Göttinger Religionsgespräch 2002 zur Umwelt- und Klimapolitik*, LIT Verlag, 2002, and "Friedensbildung aus Sicht der Bahá'í" in *Handbuch Friedenserziehung. Interreligiös – interkulturell – interkonfessionell*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006.

## Buddhism



### Ha Vinh Tho

is the Program Director of the Gross National Happiness Centre in Bhutan and the founder and chairman of the Eurasia Foundation, a humanitarian NGO developing educational programmes for children and youths living with disabilities as well as ecological projects in Viet Nam. Dr Tho holds a PhD in psychology and education and was the head of training, learning and development at the International Committee of the Red Cross from 2005 to 2011. He is a Buddhist teacher, a *Dharmacharya*, ordained by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in the tradition of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism. Tho is the author of several articles and books including *Grundrecht auf Glück* (The right to happiness).



### Parichart Suwanbubba

is an assistant professor at the Development and Religion Graduate Study Programme, Humanities Department, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakornpathom, Thailand. A Buddhist herself, she was the director of the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University where she has been engaged in dialogue work with military personnel, religious leaders and Buddhist and Muslim villagers including women and children in the three provinces in the deep south of Thailand. Dr Suwanbubba is also a secretary of Religions for Peace and the Interreligious Council of Thailand, and a member of the International Women's Coordinating Committee (IWCC) of Religions for Peace.



**Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai**

is a Buddhist monk. He is the chairperson of the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA) and director of Thailand's Chiang Mai Buddhist College. Dr Boonchuay has brought together Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim representatives through AINA with support from the Christian Conference of Asia. Through country-level interfaith HIV/AIDS networks, Boonchuay has built the capacity of faith-based organisations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Through an innovative network project, he helped to raise capacities for the care of HIV/AIDS patients through Thailand's monks. His engagement is aimed at strengthening the collaboration between religious organisations, leaders and development organisations.



## Christianity



### **Thabo Cecil Makgoba**

was born in 1960 in South Africa. He is the South African Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town. Archbishop Makgoba holds a BSc, a BA (Honours) in Applied Psychology, and a MEd in Educational Psychology. In 2009 he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa, from the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York City and earned a PhD from the University of Cape Town. Dr Makgoba was Dean of Knockando Residence at Wits College of Education as well as Senior Lecturer. In 2008 he was awarded the Cross of St Augustine, the second highest international award for outstanding service to the Anglican Communion, by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Makgoba has been a panellist and discussion leader at various World Economic Forum meetings and conferences, on topics that included fostering political stability, restoring faith in economics and the sustainability of communities.



### **Stephan Ackermann**

was born in 1963 in Germany. He has been Bishop of Trier since 2009. Bishop Ackermann studied at the Gregorian University in Rome and at the Jesuit-run Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt. In 2000 he received his doctoral degree on the subject of dogmatics with P. Medard Kehl SJ. Dr Ackermann is a member of the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace and president of the German Commission for Justice and Peace (J&P), established by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics. J&P promotes development, human rights and peace and advocates exchange between religious organisations and interreligious dialogue. J&P is involved in ongoing dialogue with parliament, government, political parties and other actors in society.



### **Qiu Zhonghui**

is the General Secretary and Vice-President of the Amity Foundation, one of the largest faith based organisations in China. Amity Foundation has a UN-ECOSOC Consultative Status and offices in Hong Kong, Addis Ababa and Geneva. Qiu is a lay Christian leader, president of the Jiangsu Christian Council, and a member of the committee of the China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. He heads the Amity Printing Company which is the largest Bible printing company in the world. Qiu was granted the Annual Salute Award at the Responsible China 2015 event. He is a board member of the China Foundation Center in Beijing and a member of the standing committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of Jiangsu Province. Qiu was a board member of ACT Alliance between 2010 and 2014. In 2014, he was identified by the *Philanthropy Times* as one of the most influential persons in promoting China's philanthropy sector.



### **Theresa Chong Carino**

is senior advisor and consultant of the Amity Foundation. Dr Carino has authored several books and articles on Christianity and social development in China and China's relations with South-East Asia. A Singaporean, she taught political science at De La Salle University in Manila where she headed the China Studies Program from 1983 to 1990. Carino was the founding director of the Philippines-China Development Resource Center (1991–1997), which promoted educational exchanges on poverty, health, renewable energy and sustainable development. She was also the founding president of the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies. In 2001, Carino became the executive director of the Amity Foundation Hong Kong Office. Since 2010, she has been involved in research related to sustainable development and the role of NGOs and religious and faith based organisations in China.

## Confucianism



### Yao Xinzong

is a leading scholar in the study of Confucianism. He was born in China in 1957 and went to the UK in 1990 where he researched and taught religion and ethics until 2014, when he returned to China. Professor Xinzong is Confucian by education and is committed to the spreading of Confucian wisdom in the world. He approaches classical Confucian learning from a comparative perspective, with a particular interest in the comparative study of Confucianism and Christianity. Among others, Xinzong is the author of *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study of Jen and Agape*, Academic Press, 1996 and *Wisdom in Early Confucian and Israelite Traditions*, Ashgate, 2006. He co-edited with Wei-ming Tu *Confucian Studies – Critical Concepts in Asian Philosophy*, Routledge, 2010.



### Peng Yongjie

is Professor of Confucian Studies and the Deputy Director of the Confucius Institute at Renmin University of China where he researches and teaches on ancient philosophy in China and the history of Confucian thought. Among his publications are *The Dialogue between Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan*, Renmin Press, 2004 and *A Report on the Development of Confucian Religion in China (2001–2010)*, Hebei People's Press, 2011. Apart from academic work on Confucianism, Yongjie is also a committed Confucian, devoted to Confucian culture and education, and has been involved in the revival of Confucian religion in China.

**Mary Evelyn Tucker**

is a Senior Lecturer and Research Scholar at Yale University where she has appointments in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies as well as the Divinity School and the Department of Religious Studies. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in Japanese Confucianism. Dr Tucker's Confucian publications include *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism* (SUNY, 1989) and *The Philosophy of Qi* (Columbia University Press, 2007). With Tu Weiming, she edited two volumes on *Confucian Spirituality* (Crossroad, 2003/2004). Tucker's concern for the growing environmental crisis, especially in Asia, led her to organize with John Grim a series of ten conferences on "World Religions and Ecology" at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard (1995–1998). Together they are series editors for the ten volumes from the conferences distributed by Harvard University Press. In this series Tucker co-edited *Buddhism and Ecology*, Harvard, 1997, *Confucianism and Ecology*, Harvard, 1998, and *Hinduism and Ecology*, Harvard, 2000.

## Daoism



### Fan Guangchun

works as senior research fellow and director of the Daoist Studies Center at the Shaanxi Academy of Social Sciences. Professor Fan is both a Daoist practitioner and a leading authority in Daoist studies. He is the editor of *Sanqin Daoism – 三秦道教*, one of the main Daoist magazines in China. Fan's book on the history of Daoism in Northwest China is one of the most influential studies of Daoism published in mainland China. Fan is also very active in Daoist conservation. He played an important role in facilitating the Daoist ecological long-term plan and other projects related to Daoist conservation and sustainable development.



### He Yun

is a Daoist and the manager of the China Programme for the Alliance of Religions and Conservation. She is a political scientist and has worked with the Daoist community on designing and executing several Daoist environmental programmes for the past five years. She is currently working on her PhD in Tsinghua University Beijing and was a Fulbright scholar to the United States in 2012–2013.

## Hinduism



### **Anantanand Rambachan**

is Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College, Minnesota, USA. He is also visiting professor at the Academy for the Study of World Religions at the University of Hamburg in Germany. Rambachan was born in Trinidad and obtained his PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds, U.K. His major books include: *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Shankara*; *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Authority of the Vedas*; *The Advaita Worldview: God, World and Humanity*; and *A Hindu Theology of Liberation: Not-Two is Not One*. The British Broadcasting Corporation broadcast a series of 25 of his lectures around the world. Rambachan is President of the Board of Arigatou International, New York, an international, interreligious organisation working with UNICEF and other children's organisations for the well-being of children. Rambachan has been involved in the field of interreligious relations and dialogue for over 25 years as a Hindu participant and analyst. In 2008, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he delivered the distinguished Lambeth Interfaith Lecture at Lambeth Palace in London. Rambachan led the first two White House celebrations of the Hindu Festival of Diwali in 2003 and 2004.



### **Kezevino Vinu Aram**

is Director of Shanti Ashram, a Gandhian centre for international development, learning and collaboration. The Ashram serves over 250,000 people through its development programmes locally and works worldwide with UN agencies, the Government of India, development organisations, faith based initiatives and academic institutions. Dr Aram serves as co-moderator and executive committee member of Religions for Peace – International and as chairperson of the International Interfaith Council for Children at Arigatou International. Aram is a member of the Governing Council of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, Union Ministry of Home Affairs, India. She is also a distinguished member of the board of management of the Gandhi Gram Rural University and a trustee of M.S.Swaminathan Foundation. Aram is an alumnus of the Harvard School of Public Health and PSG Institute of Medical Sciences and Research. She has led critical child development initiatives in rural India, been part of public health initiatives in the areas of HIV/AIDS, child survival and health, and served as a consultant on UNICEF's studies on violence against children and children in world religions, the Global Health Council's interfaith initiative on women, religion and HIV/AIDS and the multi-agency Women, Faith and Development initiative. Her publications include the Nagaland Human Development Report.

## Indigenous traditions: *Lankuntuwakan*, the Lenape way of life



### **Hadrien Coumans**

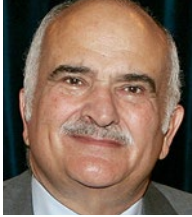
is co-founder and director of the Lenape Center. He was a spokesperson at the U.N.-affiliated Caux Forum for Human Security in 2010/11 and at the historic event of reconciliation between the Lenape and the Dutch colonial or Collegiate Church in 2009. Coumans is a peacemaker and certified in “Mediating Violent Conflict” and “Land, Property and Conflict” by the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. He brings to the organisation a life-long commitment to Lenape and Native American cultures, founded on his in-depth study of the Red Road and ceremonial traditions under his *Leksi*, the late Lakota chief Phil CrazyBull, for over twelve years. Coumans developed a museum-exhibited textile line with Lenape artist Joe Baker. He curated a historical exhibition on artist Yves Klein entitled *L’Arbre de Vie* in 2001. He is fluent in French and has studied at the University of New Mexico and New York University. Hadrien is an adopted member of the Whiteturkey/Fugate Lenape family of the Delaware Tribe of Indians.



**Joe Baker**

is co-founder and executive director of the Lenape Center. He is also the executive director of Palos Verdes Art Center, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA. Previously, Baker raised the national profile of the historic Longue Vue House and Gardens in New Orleans LA through innovative art exhibitions with a focus on environmental education, social equity, and civic engagement. He also served as the first director for community engagement at Arizona State University's Institute for Design and the Arts. Baker is the recipient of several awards, including the Virginia Piper Charitable Trust 2005 Fellows Award, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art's Contemporary Catalyst Award for 2007, the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of the American Indian Design Award 2008, and ASU's Presidential Medal for Social Embeddedness, 2009. He is a member of IKT International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, Luxembourg. Baker graduated from the University of Tulsa with a BFA degree in Design and an MFA in painting and drawing, and completed postgraduate study at Harvard University. Baker is Lenape and an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma.

## Islam



### **El Hassan bin Talal**

was born in Amman in 1947. His Royal Highness (HRH) Prince El Hassan bin Talal is the youngest son of their late Majesties King Talal and Queen Zein El Sharaf, the brother of His late Majesty King Hussein, and the uncle of HM King Abdullah II. HRH served as Jordan's Crown Prince from April 1965 until January 1999. He chaired the committees overseeing Jordan's first four development plans (1973–1975, 1976–1980, 1981–1985 and 1986–1990). HRH had a critical role in the Jordan-Israel peace negotiations that culminated in the Peace Treaty between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel in 1994. Prince Hassan established the West Asia North Africa Institute (WANA) Institute and the Regional Security Centre in Jordan. He initiated and hosted on-going interfaith consultations with the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Chambesy, Switzerland and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue at the Vatican. Prince Hassan is co-founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD). Now President Emeritus, Prince Hassan was Moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) from 1999–2006. Prince Hassan has long had an active engagement with environmentally focused organisations, in particular the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation (TREC) Network and the Jordan-based Badia Research and Development Program. Prince Hassan recently served as the Chairman of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, UNSGAB, and continues to work on water-related issues as the Chairman of the High Level Forum for the Blue Peace Middle East plan. Prince Hassan is the recipient of numerous honorary degrees from across the world and is the author of several books and articles, including *To be a Muslim: Islam, Peace and Democracy*.



### **Mohamed Ashmawey**

is the former CEO of Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW). Dr Ashmawey received his PhD in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Maryland USA in 1988, where he later also worked as a visiting professor. Before joining Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), Ashmawey worked for General Motors' subsidiary Electronic Data Systems (EDS). His 18 year career with EDS included working in three continents in different capacities, from a senior engineer, to the vice-chairman and country head and management consultant. Ashmawey joined IRW as CEO in early 2012 and lead the Islamic Relief family in over 40 countries around the world. He helped transforming IRW into an impact-led and rights-based development INGO that supports people lift themselves sustainably out of poverty. Ashmawey has served on the boards of bodies including the Islamic Society of North America, and through IRW is seeking to collaborate with other faiths and religions in implementing life-changing projects for people around the world.



### **Sheikh Safwat Ali Morsy Mahgoob**

is a Professor of Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Foundation in the USA. Dr Mahgoob received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Arabic Islamic Studies at Al Azhar University in Egypt. He earned the Master of Theology in Islamic Studies degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation with a thesis entitled *Muslims Coexisting with Others – An Historic Important Reality*. Mahgoob obtained his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Foundation with his thesis entitled *The Islamic Discourse and the Changing Reality*, for which he was awarded the Imam Malik Fellowship in Islamic Studies.

## Judaism

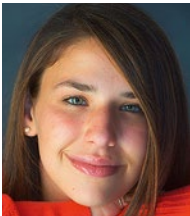


### **Awraham Soetendorp**

is founder and president of the Jacob Soetendorp Institute for Human Values. Born in 1943 in Amsterdam, he was saved by a righteous couple and survived as a “hidden child”. Besides playing an instrumental role in the reestablishment of Jewish communities in the Netherlands, Rabbi Soetendorp was also active in the movement to free Soviet Jewry and was a member of the World Council for Soviet Jewry. He is the rabbi emeritus of the Beth Jehuda congregation in The Hague and former president of the European region of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Soetendorp is a founding member of Green Cross International and founder and chair of the Day of Respect Foundation, as well as the Hope for Children Fund which promotes universal education for children. He serves as an Earth Charter Commissioner and a Millennium Development Ambassador. Soetendorp is a founding member of the Islam and the West dialogue group, formerly C100, of the World Economic Forum and co-president of GIWA, the Global Interfaith Wash Alliance. In 1994, Soetendorp was honoured by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands with the Royal Distinction as an Officer of the House of Orange. He received the Peacebuilders Award from The Alliance for International Conflict Prevention and Resolution in 2005, the “Peace Through Dialogue” Interfaith Gold Medallion from the International Council of Christian and Jews in 2007, and the James Parks Morton Interfaith Award from the Interfaith Center of New York in 2008.

**Burton Visotzky**

is Appleman Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies and serves as Louis Stein Director of the Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies. He also directs the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. Rabbi Visotzky is the author of ten books and editor of two others. His newest volume, *Aphrodite and the Rabbis: How the Jews Adapted Roman Culture to Create Judaism as We Know It* will be published in late 2016. He has taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. In 2012 he was awarded the Goldziher award for his work in Jewish-Muslim relations.

**Eliana Fisher**

is a student of political science and human rights at Barnard College in the USA. She studies with Professor Visotzky at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she is majoring in Talmud and Rabbinic Studies. Her senior research project was on Jewish tradition and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## The Sikh Religion | Gurmat



### Dharam Singh Nihang Singh

is one of the Sikhs with the most comprehensive knowledge of spiritual and historical matters. He is an expert of Adi and Dasam Granth, Sikh history, and the Vedas, and can be regarded as having accomplished the art of interpreting *Gurbani* – the key writings of the Sikh Religion – according to the original meaning and underlying spiritual principles of Gurmat. Following the traditional way, Nihang Singh passes on spiritual wisdom free of charge. He was born in Panjab in India in 1936 and comes from the Nihang tradition, which is committed to preserving the wisdom of religion. Nihang Singh is the founder of the Sach Khoj Academy (Academy for Discovering the Truth), which is dedicated to the pursuit of spirituality. He conducts holistic, critical exegesis, and addresses in depth the nature of spirituality, religion and evolution, as well as existential issues, such as what it is good development and how global challenges including terror, corruption and environmental destruction can be overcome. He has broadcast thousands of hours of lectures on YouTube and published several articles and books. In February 2015, Nihang Singh was the first speaker of the dialogue series “Religion matters – Rethinking the challenges of tomorrow”. In this series organised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), distinguished individuals are invited to exchange views on values, religion and sustainable development. Nihang Singh is the author of *Vakh vakh vishean te gurmat anusar vichar*, Gurmat Prakash, Dharam Prachar Committee, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, 2001–2003 as well as *Naad Ved Bhichar* (Japu Viakhia), 1996.



### **Gurjeet Singh**

was born in Panjab, India. He completed his secondary education as a boarder at King George School in Chail followed by postgraduate studies at Panjab University Chandigarh, culminating with a Master of Applied Science in Chemistry from Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Singh has worked as an industrial chemist and is currently teaching science. He serves as a volunteer at Sach Khoj Academy. He teaches Panjabi and *Gurbani* via internet to Australian-born Sikh children and Sikhs from all over the world. Singh is actively engaged in inter-religious dialogue and a regular contributor on the Sikh Religion in *The Punjab* community newspaper and also in the *Indian Times*, a local newspaper in Brisbane. He was awarded with the “Lilley Australia Day Awards for 2016” for outstanding volunteer work in the local community.



### **Teerath Kaur**

is British born and holds a degree in European Business and French, which she obtained from Nottingham Trent University in 2003. Kaur is fluent in English, Panjabi and French. She has been instrumental in respectfully transporting a hand written version of (Adi) Guru Granth Sahib from the United Kingdom to Panjab. Kaur recites *Gurbani* alongside the harmonium and the flute with her family. She is a student of Sach Khoj Academy.

**Suneet Singh**

is Chief Executive Officer of DataWind Inc. The innovative products and technologies created through this venture have received numerous awards and accolades, including recognition by the Guinness Book of Records. DataWind has received worldwide attention, as the company executes its vision to empower the next 4 billion people and bridge the digital divide with its low-cost Atablets and smartphones bundled with free internet access. On 28 November 2012, DataWind's Aakash2 tablet computer was launched at the United Nations by the Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon. Singh was recognised by Forbes magazine in its 2012 Impact 15 list as a "classroom revolutionary" using innovative technologies to reinvent education globally. Singh regularly speaks about social innovation and entrepreneurship at various forums internationally. In 2014, he delivered the prestigious Mercier Lecture. In addition to speaking at numerous universities, Singh has also given a TED lecture and spoken at many symposiums, including the Internet Freedom Conference in Stockholm. In 2015, he participated in the 2nd International German Forum as a Dialogue Partner of the German Chancellor. Singh is a board member of EcoSikh, a religious NGO focused on environmental sustainability. He graduated in 1990 with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Engineering from the University of Toronto.



## Acknowledgements

This publication is the outcome of a respectful cooperation across different religions and continents. It could not have been realised without the great creativity, support and networks of many highly motivated people from different parts of the world.

The idea for this book took shape during UN consultations on development and faith in July 2015 in New York. The proposal for the book project was received positively by the participants, who included representatives from governments, multilateral organisations, academia as well as the Bahá'í Faith, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and the Sikh Religion. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) took on the responsibility for publishing the book and commissioned its implementing agency, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with the project.

Since then, many people have contributed directly or indirectly to this inspiring book. We warmly thank Professor Dr Dr Dietrich Werner for his sound advice when the ideas behind it were taking shape. Our deepest gratitude is due to all authors, their supporters and the participants in the UN consultations. We also thank Dr Azza Karam, Tahereh Matejko, Marianne Marstrand, Martin Palmer, Dr Katherine Marshall, John Bond, Dekila Chungyalpa, Kunzang Chungyalpa, Renier Koegelenberg, Dr Daniel Legutke, Daniel Perell, Bjoern Zimprich, Erica Harper, Marlene Sieverdingbeck, Winfried Brenner and last but not least Judith Steinau Clark.

**Ulrich Nitschke and Khushwant Singh**

*GIZ Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development*



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

Published by

German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ)  
Division 111: Churches; political foundations; social structural programmes;  
religion and development

Responsible

Martin Mauthe-Käter

Addresses of the BMZ offices

BMZ Bonn

Dahlmannstraße 4

53113 Bonn

T +49 (0)228 99 535 0

F +49 (0)228 99 535 3500

BMZ Berlin | Im Europahaus

Stresemannstraße 94

10963 Berlin

T +49 (0)30 18 535 0

F +49 (0)30 18 535 250

Project coordination

Ulrich Nitschke and Khushwant Singh

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Sector Programme Values, Religion and Development

Registered offices

Bonn

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 36

53113 Bonn

T +49 (0)228 4460 3933

Eschborn

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1–5

65760 Eschborn

T: +49 (0)6196 79 0

[www.giz.de/Values-and-Religion](http://www.giz.de/Values-and-Religion)

[www.twitter.com/ReligionGIZ](https://www.twitter.com/ReligionGIZ) | [www.facebook.com/ReligionMattersGIZ](https://www.facebook.com/ReligionMattersGIZ)

Editors

Khushwant Singh and Judith Steinau Clark

Design

kipconcept GmbH, Bonn

Book orders

Copies of this book can be ordered from [ReligionMatters@giz.de](mailto:ReligionMatters@giz.de)

First edition February 2016, second edition May 2016, third edition April 2017

Cover: Paul Klee, *Highway and Byways*, 1929

Religion is sometimes seen as a hindrance to development and peace. This book shows that religion can be part of the solution to the global challenges we face. It brings together the multifaceted wisdom of religions and indigenous traditions on sustainable development.

More than 25 inspiring followers, theologians, practitioners and academics from the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Indigenous traditions, Islam, Judaism, and the Sikh Religion share their spiritual and religious insights on the five dimensions of the new Agenda 2030: Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Without claiming any form of representative authority, their authentic contributions increase our knowledge of religions and describe how religious actors promote development. The book demonstrates that common spiritual values are at the heart of all religious and indigenous traditions – and that bringing these virtues to life can contribute to overcoming environmental destruction, poverty, forced migration, corruption, terror, discrimination and injustice.

The authors give cause for optimism that the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 signed by 193 nations at the United Nations in September 2015 can be achieved through a conscious individual and collective effort – provided we ourselves are willing to change in the first place.

Published by the German Federal Ministry for  
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)