

in its pantheon, although all are believed to be manifestations of the Divine Essence or Absolute Reality, called Brahman. Hindus believe many paths can lead to enlightenment, and Hinduism thus encompasses a wide range of beliefs and rituals.

All Hindus are part of the caste system, a religiously sanctioned order of social relationships that goes back to the beginnings of Indian civilization between 1500 and 1000 B.C.E. A person's caste, into which he or she is born for life, determines social and legal status, restricts marriage partners to other caste members, limits an individual to certain professions, and, in effect, minimizes contacts with members of other castes. The English word *caste* is derived from the Portuguese word *casta*, meaning "pure." Hindus use two different words for caste: *varna* (color) and *jati* (birth). *Varna* refers only to the four most ancient and fundamental social-religious divisions: *Brahmins* (priests and teachers), *Kshatriyas* (warriors, nobles, and rulers), *Vaisyas* (landowners, merchants, and artisans), and *Sudras* (peasants and laborers). Outside the caste system and at the bottom of the Hindu hierarchy are the "untouchables," who are relegated to such despised tasks as gathering manure, sweeping streets, and butchering animals. Each of the four major castes is further divided into *jatis*, local hereditary occupational groups that during the 1500s and 1600s numbered around three thousand.

The caste system is related to belief in the transmigration of souls, or reincarnation. This is the belief that each individual soul, or *atman*, a dislocated piece of the Universal Soul, or Brahman, strives through successive births to reunite with Brahman and win release from the chains of material existence and the cycle of death and rebirth. Reincarnation is based on one's *karma*, the fruit of one's actions, or the soul's destiny, which is decided by how well or poorly a person has conformed to *dharmā*, a Hindu concept connected with the caste system. *Dharma* is the duty to be performed by members of each *jati* and *varna*. If a person fulfills his or her *dharmā*, in the next incarnation he or she will move up the cosmic ladder, closer to ultimate reunion with the One.

Sunni versus Shi'ite in the Early Sixteenth Century



24 ▼ Sultan Selim I, LETTER TO SHAH ISMAIL OF PERSIA

The following letter, written by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520) to the founder of the Persian Safavid Empire, Ismail I (r. 1501–1524), is an example of the enduring bitterness between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims. Selim, who in the Ottoman tradition was a Sunni, was deeply disturbed by the emergence of a Shi'ite state in Persia under Ismail. Ismail, believed by his followers to have descended from Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law, had many supporters among the Turks of eastern Anatolia and had aided Selim's brother and rival, Ahmed, in the

vaded eastern Ottoman territory in 1513, war seemed inevitable. Nonetheless, Selim wrote the following letter to Ismail in early 1514 threatening to destroy him militarily unless he embraced Sunni Islam and relinquished his recent conquests. Ismail did neither, and later in the year, Selim's armies defeated Ismail's forces at the battle of Chaldiran, on the border of the two empires. Despite this loss, Persia remained under Ismail's control and thus committed to Shi'ism. The battle of Chaldiran was only the first act in a long and bitter struggle between the two Islamic empires.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Even though Selim's letter is designed to malign Shi'ism, not define Islam, it contains many references to essential Muslim beliefs. Which ones can you find?
2. What does Selim's letter reveal about the differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites?
3. How does Selim perceive himself within the Islamic world?
4. Selim must have realized that the deeply religious Ismail was unlikely to abandon Shi'ism. Why might he have written the letter, despite the likelihood that its appeal would fall on deaf ears?

The Supreme Being who is at once the sovereign arbiter of the destinies of men and the source of all light and knowledge, declares in the holy book¹ that the true faith is that of the Muslims, and that whoever professes another religion, far from being hearkened to and saved, will on the contrary be cast out among the rejected on the great day of the Last Judgment; He says further, this God of truth, that His designs and decrees are unalterable, that all human acts are perforce reported to Him, and that he who abandons the good way will be condemned to hell-fire and eternal torments. Place yourself, O Prince, among the true believers, those who walk in the path of salvation, and who turn aside with care from vice and infidelity. May the purest and holiest blessings be upon Muhammad, the master of the two worlds, the prince of prophets, as well as upon his descendants and all who follow his Law!

I, sovereign chief of the Ottomans, master of the heroes of the age; . . . I, the exterminator of

idolators, destroyer of the enemies of the true faith, the terror of the tyrants and pharaohs of the age; I, before whom proud and unjust kings have humbled themselves, and whose hand breaks the strongest sceptres; I, the great Sultan-Khan, son of Sultan Bayezid-Khan, son of Sultan Muhammad-Khan, son of Sultan Murad-Khan, I address myself graciously to you, Amir Isma'il, chief of the troops of Persia, comparable in tyranny to Sohak and Afrasiab,² and predestined to perish . . . in order to make known to you that the works emanating from the Almighty are not the fragile products of caprice or folly, but make up an infinity of mysteries impenetrable to the human mind. The Lord Himself says in his holy book: "We have not created the heavens and the earth in order to play a game" [Qur'an, 21:16]. Man, who is the noblest of the creatures and the summary of the marvels of God, is in consequence on earth the living image of the Creator. It is He who has set up Caliphs³ on

¹The Qur'an.

²Legendary kings of Central Asia.

³Deputies, or successors, of the Prophet Muhammad who

earth, because, joining faculties of soul with perfection of body, man is the only being who can comprehend the attributes of the divinity and adore its sublime beauties; but he possesses this rare intelligence, he attains this divine knowledge only in our religion and by observing the precepts of the prince of prophets, the Caliph of Caliphs, the right arm of the God of Mercy; it is then only by practicing the true religion that man will prosper in this world and merit eternal life in the other. As to you, Amir Isma'il, such a recompense will not be your lot; because you have denied the sanctity of the divine laws; because you have deserted the path of salvation and the sacred commandments; because you have impaired the purity of the dogmas of Islam; because you have dishonored, soiled, and destroyed the altars of the Lord, usurped the sceptre of the East by unlawful and tyrannical means; because coming forth from the dust, you have raised yourself by odious devices to a place shining with splendor and magnificence; because you have opened to Muslims the gates of tyranny and oppression; because you have joined iniquity, perjury, and blasphemy to your sectarian impiety; because under the cloak of the hypocrite, you have sowed everywhere trouble and sedition; because you have raised the standard of irreligion and heresy; because yielding to the impulse of your evil passions, and giving yourself up without rein to the most infamous disorders, you have dared to throw off the control of Muslim laws and to permit lust and rape, the massacre of the most virtuous and respectable men, the destruction of pulpits and temples, the profanation of tombs, the ill-treatment of the *ulama*, the doctors and amirs⁴ descended from the Prophet, the repudiation of the Qur'an, the cursing of the legitimate Caliphs. Now as the first duty of a Muslim and above all of a pious prince is to obey the commandment, "O, you faithful who believe,

be the executors of the decrees of God!" the *ulama* and our doctors have pronounced sentence of death against you, perjurer and blasphemer, and have imposed on every Muslim the sacred obligation to arm in defense of religion and destroy heresy and impiety in your person and that of all your partisans.

Animated by the spirit of this *fatwa*,⁵ conforming to the Qur'an, the code of divine laws, and wishing on one side to strengthen Islam, on the other to liberate the lands and peoples who writhe under your yoke, we have resolved to lay aside our imperial robes in order to put on the shield and coat of mail, to raise our ever victorious banner, to assemble our invincible armies, to take up the gauntlet of the avenger, to march with our soldiers, whose sword strikes mortal blows, and whose point will pierce the enemy even to the constellation of Sagittarius. In pursuit of this noble resolution, we have entered upon the campaign, and guided by the hand of the Almighty, we hope soon to strike down your tyrannous arm, blow away the clouds of glory and grandeur which trouble your head and cause your fatal blindness, release from your despotism your trembling subjects, smother you in the end in the very mass of flames which your infernal *jinn*⁶ raises everywhere along your passage, accomplishing in this way on you the maxim which says: "He who sows discord can only reap evils and afflictions." However, anxious to conform to the spirit of the law of the Prophet, we come, before commencing war, to set out before you the words of the Qur'an, in place of the sword, and to exhort you to embrace the true faith; this is why we address this letter to you.

We all have a different nature, and the human race resembles mines of gold and silver. Among some, vice is deeply rooted; these are incorrigible, and one could no more draw them to virtue than one could whiten a Negro's skin; among others,

⁴*Ulama* were bodies of religious teachers and interpreters of Muslim law; *doctors* here means teachers; *amirs* were military and political leaders.

⁵Religious decree.
⁶Supernatural spirit.

vice has not become second nature; they retract their errors when they wish, by a serious return, to mortify their senses and repress their passions. The most efficacious means of remedying evil is to search the conscience deeply, to open one's eyes to faults, and to ask pardon of the God of Mercy with true sorrow and repentance. We urge you to look into yourself, to renounce your errors, and to march towards the good with a firm and courageous step; we ask further that you give up possession of the territory violently seized from our state and to which you have only illegitimate pretensions, that you deliver it back into the hands of our lieutenants and officers; and if

you value your safety and repose, this should be done without delay.

But if, to your misfortune, you persist in your past conduct, puffed up with the idea of your power and your foolish bravado, you wish to pursue the course of your iniquities, you will see in a few days your plains covered with our tents and inundated with our battalions. Then prodigies of valor will be done, and we shall see the decrees of the Almighty, Who is the God of Armies, and sovereign judge of the actions of men, accomplished. For the rest, victory to him who follows the path of salvation!

A Muslim's Description of Hindu Beliefs and Practices



25 ▼ *Abu'l Fazl, AKBARNAMA*

As Akbar, Mughal emperor from 1556 to 1605, extended and strengthened his state, at his side was Abu'l Fazl, his close friend and chief advisor from 1579 until his assassination in 1602. Abu'l Fazl is best known today as the author of the *Akbarnama*, a long laudatory history of Akbar's reign full of information about the emperor's personality and exploits. At the time of Abu'l Fazl's assassination, instigated by the future Emperor Jahangir, his history had covered only the first forty-six years of Akbar's life, but that was enough to ensure his work's standing as one of the masterpieces of Mughal literature.

One reason for the great length of the *Akbarnama* is that in addition to chronicling Akbar's life, it contains numerous descriptions of Indian society such as the passage on Hinduism that follows. Abu'l Fazl, who shared the tolerant religious views of the emperor, was interested in presenting Hinduism favorably to his Islamic readers, many of whom were uncomfortable with the religious freedom Akbar offered his Hindu subjects. Even more disturbing to many Muslims was Akbar's genuine interest not just in Hinduism but also Christianity, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, religions from which he borrowed to found a new religious cult, *Dim Illahi*, or Divine Faith. Abu'l Fazl sought to address concerns of orthodox Muslims that Hindus were guilty of the two greatest sins against the majesty and oneness of God — idolatry (the worship of idols) and polytheism (a belief in many gods). He also explained the religious basis of the Hindu caste system, the rigid hierarchies of which were far removed from the Muslim belief in the equality of all believers before Allah.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does Abu'l Fazl counter the charge that Hindus are polytheists? Do you find his arguments convincing? Why?
2. How does Abu'l Fazl address the charge that Hindus are idol worshipers?
3. In what ways do caste and karma provide Hindus a moral understanding of the universe?
4. What do the dharmas of the castes reveal about Hindu social values?
5. Where do women fit into the structure of the ladder of reincarnation? What does this suggest about their status in Hindu society?
6. Abu'l Fazl is attempting to make Hinduism more acceptable to Muslims, but this does not necessarily invalidate what he writes. If you accept what he says as basically true, what conclusions can you reach about the ways Hindus perceive and relate to Divine Reality?

They one and all believe in the unity of God, and as to the reverence they pay to images of stone and wood and the like, which simpletons regard as idolatry, it is not so. The writer of these has exhaustively discussed the subject with many enlightened and upright men, and it became evident that these images . . . are fashioned as aids to fix the mind and keep the thoughts from wandering, while the worship of God alone is required as indispensable. In all their ceremonial observances and usage they ever implore the favor of the world-illuminating sun and regard the pure essence of the Supreme Being as transcending the idea of power in operation.

Brahma . . . they hold to be the Creator; Vishnu, the Nourisher and Preserver; and Rudra,¹ called also Mahadeva, the Destroyer. Some maintain that God who is without equal, manifested himself under these three divine forms, without thereby sullyng the garment of His inviolate sanctity, as the Nazarenes hold of the Messiah.² Others assert that these were human creatures exalted to these dignities through perfectness of

worship, probity of thought and righteousness of deed. The godliness and self-discipline of this people is such as is rarely to be found in other lands.

They hold that the world had a beginning, and some are of opinion that it will have an end. . . . They allow of no existence external to God. The world is a delusive appearance, and as a man in sleep sees fanciful shapes, and is affected by a thousand joys and sorrows, so are its seeming realities. . . .

Brahman is the Supreme Being; and is essential existence and wisdom and also bliss. . . .

Since according to their belief, the Supreme Deity can assume an elemental form without defiling the skirt of the robe of omnipotence, they first make various idols of gold and other substances to represent this ideal and gradually withdrawing the mind from this material worship, they become meditatively absorbed in the ocean of His mysterious Being. . . .

They believe that the Supreme Being in the wisdom of His counsel, assumes an elementary form of a special character³ for the good of the

Trinity. His Muslim readers would have known basic Christian beliefs.

³That is, the Hindu Supreme Being assumes various bodies. These incarnations are known as *avatars*.

creation, and many of the wisest of the Hindus accept this doctrine. . . .

CASTE

The Hindu philosophers reckon four states of auspiciousness which they term *varna*. 1. *Brahmin*. 2. *Kshatriya*. 3. *Vaisya*. 4. *Sudra*. Other than these are termed *Mlechchha*.¹ At the creation of the world the first of these classes was produced from the mouth of Brahma, a brief account of whom has already been given: the second, from his arms; the third, from his thigh and the fourth from his feet; the fifth from the cow *Kamadbhenu*, the name of Mlechchha being employed to designate them.

The *Brahmins* have six recognized duties.

1. The study of the Vedas² and other sciences.
2. The instruction of others (in the sacred texts).
3. The performance of the *Jag*, that is oblation of money and kind to the *Devatas*.³
4. Inciting others to the same.
5. Giving presents.
6. Receiving presents.

Of these six the *Kshatriya* must perform three.

1. Perusing the holy texts.
 2. The performance of the *Jag*.
 3. Giving presents.
- Further they must,
1. Minister to Brahmins.
 2. Control the administration of worldly government and receive the reward thereof.
 3. Protect religion.
 4. Exact fines for delinquency and observe adequate measure therein.
 5. Punish in proportion to the offense.
 6. Amass wealth and duly expend it.
 7. Supervise the management of elephants, horses, and cattle and the functions of ministerial subordinates.
 8. Levy war on due occasion.
 9. Never ask for alms.
 10. Favor the meritorious and the like.

The *Vaisya* also must perform the same three duties of the Brahmin, and in addition must occupy himself in: 1. Service. 2. Agriculture. 3. Trade. 4. The care of cattle. 5. The carrying of loads. . . .

¹The outcastes of Hindu society.

²The four collections of ancient poetry that are essential sacred texts among Hindus.

³Hindu deities.

The *Sudra* is incapable of any other privilege than to serve these three castes, wear their cast-off garments and eat their leavings. He may be a painter, goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, and trade in salt, honey, milk, butter-milk, clarified butter and grain.

Those of the fifth class, are reckoned as beyond the pale of religion, like infidels, Jews, and the like.⁷ By the inter-marriages of these, sixteen other classes are formed. The son of Brahmin parents is acknowledged as a Brahmin. If the mother be a *Kshatriya* (the father being a Brahmin), the progeny is called *Murdhavasikta*. If the mother be a *Vaisya*, the son is named *Ambastha*, and if a *Sudra* girl, *Nishada*. If the father and mother are both *Kshatriya*, the progeny is *Kshatriya*. If the mother be a Brahmin (and the father a *Kshatriya*), the son is called *Suta*. If the mother be a *Vaisya*, the son is *Mahisya*. If the mother be a *Sudra*, the progeny is *Ugra*. If both parents be *Vaisya*, the progeny is *Vaisya*. If the mother be a Brahmin (which is illicit), the progeny is *Vaideba* but if she be a *Kshatriya*, which also is regarded as improper, he is *Magadha*. From the *Vaisya* by a *Sudra* mother is produced a *Karana*. When both parents are *Sudra*, the progeny is *Sudra*. If the mother be a Brahmin, the progeny is *Chandala*. If she be a *Kshatriya*, it is called *Chatta*. From a *Sudra* by a *Vaisya* girl is produced the *Ayogava*.

In the same way still further ramifications are formed, each with different customs and modes of worship and each with infinite distinctions of habitation, profession, and rank of ancestry that defy computation. . . .

KARMA

Or the ripening of actions. This is a system of knowledge of an amazing and extraordinary character, in which the learned of Hindustan concur

⁷Abu'l Fazl is drawing an analogy for his Muslim readers. Just as Muslims consider all nonbelievers to be outside the community of God, so Hindus regard the *Mlechchha* as outside their community.

without dissenting opinion. It reveals the particular class of actions performed in a former birth which have occasioned the events that befall men in this present life, and prescribes the special expiation of each sin, one by one. It is of four kinds.

The first kind discloses the particular action which has brought a man into existence in one of the five classes into which mankind is divided, and the action which occasions the assumption of a male or female form. A *Kshatriya* who lives continently, will, in his next birth, be born a *Brahmin*. A *Vaisya* who hazards his transient life to protect a Brahmin, will become a *Kshatriya*. A *Sudra* who lends money without interest and does not defile his tongue by demanding repayment, will be born a *Vaisya*. A *Mlechchha* who serves a *Brahmin* and eats food from his house till his death, will become a *Sudra*. A *Brahmin* who undertakes the profession of a *Kshatriya* will become a *Kshatriya*, and thus a *Kshatriya* will become a *Vaisya*, and a *Vaisya* a *Sudra*, and a *Sudra* a *Mlechchha*. Whosoever accepts in alms . . . the bed on which a man has died⁸ . . . will, in the next birth, from a man become a woman. Any woman or *Mlechchha*, who in the temple . . . sees the form of *Narayana*,⁹ and worships him with certain incantations, will in the next birth, if a woman, become a man, and if a *Mlechchha*, a *Brahmin* . . .

The second kind shows the strange effects of actions on health of body and in the production of manifold diseases.

Madness is the punishment of disobedience to father and mother. . . .

Pain in the eyes arises from having looked upon another's wife. . . .

Dumbness is the consequence of killing a sister. . . .

Colic results from having eaten with an impious person or a liar. . . .

Consumption is the punishment of killing a *Brahmin*. . . .

The third kind indicates the class for actions which have caused sterility and names suitable remedies. . . .

A woman who does not menstruate, in a former existence . . . roughly drove away the children of her neighbors who had come as usual to play at her house. . . .

A woman who gives birth to only daughters is thus punished for having contemptuously regarded her husband from pride. . . .

A woman who has given birth to a son that dies and to a daughter that lives, has, in her former existence, taken animal life. Some say that she had killed goats. . . .

The fourth kind treats of riches and poverty, and the like. Whoever distributes alms at auspicious times, as during eclipses of the moon and sun, will become rich and bountiful (in his next existence). Whoso at these times, visits any place of pilgrimage . . . and there dies, will possess great wealth, but will be avaricious and of a surly disposition. Whosoever when hungry and with food before him, hears the supplication of a poor man and bestows it all upon him, will be rich and liberal. But whosoever has been deprived of these three opportunities, will be empty-handed and poor in his present life.

⁸An "unclean" object.

⁹The personification of solar and cosmic energy underlying creation.

Women in Ottoman Society



26 ▼ *Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, *TURKISH LETTERS*

Many of Muhammad's teachings were favorable to women. He taught the spiritual equality between men and women in God's eyes, and in his own treatment of his wives and daughters he exemplified his teachings about the moral and ethical dimensions of marriage. Women were among his earliest and most important followers and sometimes fought alongside men on the battlefield. For reasons that are not well understood, as Islam expanded and developed, women's position changed markedly. Women, especially from the upper classes, were secluded in their homes and required to wear veils in public. Their role in religious affairs disappeared, and vocational and educational opportunities declined. Some came to believe that Heaven itself was closed to females.

As the Ottomans and other Turkic peoples moved into Southwest Asia and became Muslims, they accepted the norms of the people they encountered in regard to the status of women. To Ogier de Busbecq (1522–1590), the European diplomat who resided in sixteenth-century Istanbul for six years, the role of women was one of many extraordinary aspects of Ottoman culture. (For more on Busbecq, see introduction to source 21.)

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Busbecq, why do the Ottomans practice the seclusion of women?
2. What are the distinctions between a man's lawful wife and his concubines?
3. Busbecq's account reveals that despite policies such as seclusion and the veil, Turkish women were not without rights and authority in certain areas. What were some of these rights and powers?
4. What does the Ottoman custom of divorce reveal about the status of women?
5. As a distinguished diplomat, Busbecq was in a position mainly to observe the practices of well-to-do and privileged families. Do you think that he would have seen similar customs in poor and rural families?

The Turks are the most careful people in the world of the modesty of their wives, and therefore keep them shut up at home and hide them away, so that they scarce see the light of day. But if they have to go into the streets, they are sent out so covered and wrapped up in veils that they seem to those who meet them mere gliding ghosts. They have the means of seeing men through their linen or silken veils, while no part of their own body is exposed to men's view. For it is a received opinion among them that

woman who is distinguished in the very smallest degree by her figure or youth can be seen by a man without his desiring her, and therefore without her receiving some contamination; and so it is the universal practice to confine the women to the harem. Their brothers are allowed to see them, but not their brothers-in-law. Men of the richer classes, or of higher rank, make it a condition when they marry, that their wives shall never set foot outside the threshold, and that no

any reason whatever, not even their nearest relations, except their fathers and mothers, who are allowed to pay a visit to their daughters at the Turkish Easter.¹

On the other hand, if the wife has a father of high rank, or has brought a larger dowry than usual, the husband promises on his part that he will take no concubine, but will keep to her alone. Otherwise, the Turks are not forbidden by any law to have as many concubines as they please in addition to their lawful wives. Between the children of wives and those of concubines there is no distinction, and they are considered to have equal rights. As for concubines they either buy them for themselves or win them in war; when they are tired of them there is nothing to prevent their bringing them to market and selling them; but they are entitled to their freedom if they have

borne children to their master. . . . A wife who has a portion settled on her² is mistress of her husband's house, and all the other women have to obey her orders. The husband, however, may choose which of them shall spend the night with him. He makes known his wishes to the wife, and she sends to him the slave he has selected. . . . Only Friday night, which is their Sabbath,³ is supposed to belong to the wife; and she grumbles if her husband deprives her of it. On all the other nights he may do so as he pleases.

Divorces are granted among them for many reasons which it is easy for the husbands to invent. The divorced wife receives back her dowry, unless the divorce has been caused by some fault on her part. There is more difficulty in a woman's getting a divorce from her husband.

²Brings a dowry to the marriage.

³Like Sundays in Christian lands, Fridays (actually beginning at sunset on Thursdays) in the Muslim world were days of rest, given over to religious acts and rituals.

¹Busbecq apparently is referring to the festival of Bairam, which follows Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting from sunup to sundown. He equated Ramadan with the Christian practice of Lent, so the identification of Bairam with Easter is logical but lacking in theological merit.

The Beginnings of Sikhism in India



27 ▼ Nanak,

SACRED HYMNS FROM THE ADI-GRANTH

The Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) was not the only person in sixteenth-century India who dreamed of combining elements of Hinduism and Islam into a new religious faith. Such a process was going on during his reign and resulted in the founding of Sikhism, a religion that now has approximately ten million followers, mostly in the northwest Indian state of East Punjab. The founder of Sikhism and its first guru, or teacher, was Nanak, who lived from 1469 to 1539. Born into a Hindu family in modern Pakistan, Nanak as a young man sought out the teaching of Muslim and Hindu mystics and holy men. At the age of thirty he began to wander through India searching for disciples who would accept his message of love and reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims. He taught that external religious acts such as bathing in the sacred Ganges River or making a pilgrimage to Mecca are worthless before God unless inward sincerity and true morality accompany them. As a strict and uncompromising monotheist, he declared that love of God alone is sufficient to free any person of any caste from the law of Karma, bringing an end to the cycle of reincarnation and resulting in the absorption into the One.

sists mostly of hymns and poetry composed by Nanak and other early gurus. It attained its final form in 1705–1706, when the tenth and last guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), added a number of hymns and declared that from then on the *Adi-Granth* itself, not any individual, was Sikhism's true guru. The following excerpts are taken from poems of Nanak.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What Muslim elements can be found in Nanak's message? What Hindu elements? What Hindu and Muslim practices does he reject?
2. Which religion, Hinduism or Islam, seems to have had the stronger impact on Nanak's religious views?
3. Once Sikhism was established, Hindu and Muslim authorities persecuted it. Why would the Sikhs' religion constitute such a serious threat to both Muslim and Hindu societies?
4. What parallels can you discover between Nanak's message and Martin Luther's (Chapter 1, source 1)? What differences?

There is one God,
Eternal Truth is His Name;
Maker of all things,
Fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing,
Timeless is His Image;
Not begotten, being of His own Being;
By the grace of the Guru, made known to men.

It is not through thought that He is to be
comprehended
Though we strive to grasp Him a hundred
thousand times;
Nor by outer silence and long deep meditation
Can the inner silence be reached;
Nor is man's hunger for God appeasable
By piling up world-loads of wealth.
All the innumerable devices of worldly
wisdom
Leave a man disappointed; not one avails.
How then shall we know the Truth?
How shall we rend the veils of untruth away?
Abide thou by His Will, and make thine own,
His will, O Nanak, that is written in thy
heart.

He cannot be installed like an idol,
Nor can man shape His likeness.
He made Himself and maintains Himself
On His heights unstained forever;
Honored are they in His shrine
Who meditate upon Him.

Those who have inner belief in the Name,
Always achieve their own liberation,
Their kith and kin are also saved.
Guided by the light of the Guru
The disciple steers safe himself.
And many more he saves;
Those enriched with inner belief
Do not wander begging.
Such is the power of His stainless Name,
He who truly believes in it, knows it.

There is no counting men's prayers,
There is no counting their ways of adoration.
Thy lovers, O Lord, are numberless;
Numberless those who read aloud from the
Vedas,¹

Numberless those Yogis² who are detached
from the world;

Numberless are Thy Saints contemplating,
Thy virtues and Thy wisdom;
Numberless are the benevolent, the lovers of
their kind.

Numberless Thy heroes and martyrs³
Facing the steel of their enemies;
Numberless those who in silence
Fix their deepest thoughts upon Thee;

Pilgrimages, penances, compassion and
almsgiving
Bring a little merit, the size of sesame seed.
But he who hears and believes and loves the
Name

Shall bathe and be made clean
In a place of pilgrimage within him.

When in time, in what age, in what day of the
month or week
In what season and in what month did'st Thou
create the world?

The Pundits⁴ do not know or they would have
written it in the Puranas,⁵

The Qazis do not know, or they would have
recorded it in the Qur'an,

Nor do the Yogis know the moment of the day,
Nor the day of the month or the week, nor the
month nor the season.

Only God Who made the world knows when
He made it.

The Vedas proclaim Him,
So do the readers of the Puranas;
The learned speak of Him in many discourses;
Brahma⁷ and Indra⁸ speak of Him,
Shiva⁹ speaks of Him, Siddhas¹⁰ speak of Him,
The Buddhas¹¹ He has created, proclaim Him.

²Persons with occult powers achieved through discipline of the body.

³Muslim warriors.

⁴Brahmins learned in Hindu religion and law.

⁵A collection of popular Hindu books containing stories of the gods.

⁶Muslim judges.

⁷The Hindu creator-god.

⁸The war god of the Aryans and the embodiment of

Maya, the mythical goddess;¹²
Sprang from the One, and her womb brought
forth

Three acceptable disciples of the One:
Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.
Brahma, it is said bodies forth the world,
Vishnu it is who sustains it;
Shiva the destroyer, who absorbs,
He controls death and judgment.

God makes them to work as He wills,
He sees them ever, they see Him not;
That of all is the greatest wonder.

I have described the realm of *dharmā*.
Now I shall describe the realm of Knowledge;

How many are the winds, the fires, the waters.
How many are the Krishnas¹³ and Shivas,
How many are the Brahmas fashioning the
worlds,
Of many kinds and shapes and colors;
How many worlds, like our own there are,
Where action produces the consequences.

... How many adepts, Buddhas and Yogis are
there,

How many goddesses and how many images of
the goddesses;

How many gods and demons and how many
sages;

How many hidden jewels in how many oceans,
How many the sources of life;

How many the modes and diversities of
speech,

How many are the kings, the rulers and the
guides of men;

How many the devoted there are, who pursue
this divine knowledge.

His worshippers are numberless, saith Nanak.

strength, courage, and leadership; a prominent figure in the Vedas.

⁹The god of destruction, death, and fertility.

¹⁰A class of demigods, beings more powerful than mortals but not divine.

¹¹Those who have been enlightened.

¹²A Hindu goddess who symbolizes material creation.

¹³The most popular of the god Vishnu's incarnations.

Chapter 4

Continuity and Change in East and Southeast Asia

Important changes took place in East and Southeast Asia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but in a political and cultural context that remained what it had been for more than a millennium. In terms of size, wealth, population, technology, and military might, China, as it had for centuries, overshadowed the smaller states and nomadic societies that surrounded it. With some justification the Chinese considered their state the "central kingdom" and viewed all other peoples as barbarians. Three neighboring states — Japan, Korea, and Vietnam — had borrowed extensively from the Chinese, but all three maintained their political independence and cultural distinctiveness. Southeast Asia, which includes both the Asian mainland east of India and south of China and also the thousands of islands that today comprise Indonesia and the Philippines, remained an area of small kingdoms, city-states, and stateless societies. The dominance of Islam and Buddhism in the region reflects the many centuries that India, not China, had been the main cultural influence.

Until the sixteenth century direct contacts between these East Asian societies and Europe had been exceptionally rare. True, trade between the two regions had existed for centuries, but it had been carried on by Arab, Indian, and central Asian intermediaries. It is also true that a small number of European missionaries, diplomats, and merchants had taken advantage of Eurasia's relative peace and order under Mongol rule to travel to China in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. But after the Mongol Empire broke apart around 1350, travel between China and Europe became