



Appendix 4

Glossary of religious terms

This glossary of terms is closely based upon the SCAA Glossary of Terms for Religious Education (1994) which was drawn up in consultation with members of the faith communities concerned.

Christianity Glossary

Unlike the other five world faiths included in this glossary, most of the terms given below are in English and will be familiar to many people. The historic languages of the Christian scriptures are Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The Old Testament was written largely in Hebrew, with some texts in Aramaic and Greek (Apocrypha). The whole of the Old Testament was translated into Greek, although many words and passages have their origin in Aramaic. Latin became increasingly the language of the Western Church from the 5th century AD when the Bible was translated into Latin.

Absolution

The pronouncement by a priest of the forgiveness of sins.

AD (Anno Domini)

In the Year of our Lord. The Christian calendar dates from the estimated date of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Advent

Coming. The period beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas (40 days before Christmas in the Eastern Orthodox tradition). A time of spiritual preparation for Christmas.

Agape

The love of God. New Testament word used for the common meal of Christians; a Love Feast.

Altar (Communion Table, Holy Table)

Table used for Eucharist, Mass, Lord's Supper. Some denominations refer to it as Holy Table or Communion Table.

Anglican

Churches in full communion with the See of Canterbury. Their origins and traditions are linked to the Church of England, and are part of the Anglican Communion.

Apocalyptic

(i) Revelatory, of God's present purposes and of the end of the world. (ii) Used of a literary genre, for example, the Book of Revelation.

Apocrypha

Books of the Old Testament that are in the Greek but not the Hebrew Canon. Some Churches recognise the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament Canon.

Apocryphal New Testament

A modern title for various early Christian books which are non-canonical.

Apostle

One who was sent out by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel.

Ascension

The event, 40 days after the Resurrection, when Jesus 'ascended into heaven' (see Luke 24 and Acts 1).

Ash Wednesday

The first day of Lent. In some Churches, penitents receive the sign of the cross in ashes on their foreheads.

Atonement

Reconciliation between God and humanity; restoring a relationship broken by sin.

Baptism

Rite of initiation involving immersion in, or sprinkling or pouring of, water.

Baptist

(i) A member of the Baptist Church, which grew out of the Anabaptist movement during the 16th century Reformation. (ii) A Christian who practises Believer's Baptism.

Baptistry

(i) Building or pool used for baptism, particularly by immersion. (ii) Part of a church, where baptism takes place.

BC (Before Christ)

Period of history before the estimated birth of Jesus Christ.

Believer's Baptism

The baptism of people who are old enough to understand the meaning of the rite.

Benediction

Blessing at the end of worship. Also, late afternoon or evening service including the

blessing of the congregation with the consecrated host (usually in a Roman Catholic context).

Blessed Sacrament

Bread and wine which have been consecrated and set aside for future use (usually in the Roman Catholic Church).

Brethren

Christian, Exclusive or Open Brethren are Christian groups which emphasise piety, high moral values, faithfulness to the bible and plural leadership.

Canon (Scripture)

The accepted books of the Bible. The list varies between denominations.

Catholic

(i) Universal. (ii) Often used as an abbreviation for Roman Catholic.

Charismatic

A modern movement within the Church, emphasising spiritual gifts, such as healing or speaking with tongues.

Chrismation

(i) The Orthodox second sacrament of initiation by anointing with chrism (a special oil). Performed at the same time as baptism. (ii) Anointing with oil, for example, healing or coronation.

Christ (Messiah)

The anointed one. Messiah is used in the Jewish tradition to refer to the expected leader sent by

God, who will bring salvation to God's people. Jesus' followers applied this title to him, and its Greek equivalent, Christ, is the source of the words Christian and Christianity.

Christmas

Festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ (25 December, in most Churches).

Church

(i) The whole community of Christians. (ii) The building in which Christians worship. (iii) A particular denomination.

Confession

Contrition; penance. (i) One of seven sacraments observed by some Churches whose priest confidentially hears a person's confession. (ii) An admission, by a Christian, of wrong-doing. (iii) A particular official statement (or profession) of faith.

Congregationalist

Member of a Christian body which believes that each local church is independent and self-governing under the authority of Christ.

Consubstantiation

Doctrine of the Eucharist associated with Luther, which holds that after consecration, the substances of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and of the bread and wine co-exist in union with each other.

Creed

Summary statement of religious beliefs, often recited in worship, especially the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Crucifixion

Roman method of executing criminals and traitors by fastening them to a cross until they died of asphyxiation; used in the case of Jesus Christ and many who opposed the Romans.

Easter

Central Christian festival which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ecumenism (Oikoumene)

Movement within the Church towards co-operation and eventual unity.

Episcopacy

System of Church government by bishops.

Epistle (Letter)

From the Greek word for letter. Several such letters or epistles, from Christian leaders to Christian Churches or individuals, are included in the New Testament.

Eucharist

Thanksgiving. A service celebrating the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, using elements of bread and wine (see Holy Communion).

Evangelical

Group, or church, placing particular emphasis on the Gospel and the scriptures as the sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Evangelist

A writer of one of the four New Testament Gospels; a preacher of the gospel.

Font

Receptacle to hold water used in baptism.

Free Churches

Non-conformist denominations, free from state control (used of 20 Churches).

Good Friday

The Friday in Holy Week. Commemorates the day Jesus died on the cross.

Gospel (Evangel)

(i) Good news (of salvation in Jesus Christ). (ii) An account of Jesus' life and work.

Grace

(i) The freely given and unmerited favour of God's love for humanity. (ii) Blessing. (iii) Prayer of thanks before or after meals.

Heaven

The place, or state, in which souls will be united with God after death.

Hell

The place, or state, in which souls will be separated from God after death.

Holy Communion

Central liturgical service observed by most Churches (see Eucharist, Mass, Lord's Supper, Liturgy). Recalls the last meal of Jesus, and celebrates his sacrificial and saving death.

Holy Spirit

The third person of the Holy Trinity. Active as divine presence and power in the world, and in dwelling in believers to make them like Christ

and empower them to do God's will.

Holy Week

The week before Easter, when Christians recall the last week of Jesus' life on Earth.

Icon or Ikon

Painting or mosaic of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, a saint, or a Church feast. Used as an aid to devotion, usually in the Orthodox tradition.

Iconostasis

Screen, covered with icons, used in Eastern Orthodox churches to separate the sanctuary from the nave.

Incarnation

The doctrine that God took human form in Jesus Christ. It is also the belief that God in Christ is active in the Church and in the world.

Jesus Christ

The central figure of Christian history and devotion. The second person of the Trinity.

Justification by Faith

The doctrine that God forgives ('treats as just') those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ

Kerygma

The central message about Jesus proclaimed by the early Christians.

Kyrie (Greek)

O Lord. Addressed to Jesus, as in 'Kyrie eleison' (Lord have mercy).

Lectern

Stand supporting the Bible, often in the shape of an eagle.

Lectionary

List of scriptural passages for systematic reading throughout the year.

Lent

Penitential season. The 40 days leading up to Easter.

Liturgy

(i) Service of worship according to a prescribed ritual such as Evensong or Eucharist. (ii) Term used in the Orthodox Church for the Eucharist.

Logos

Word. Pre-existent Word of God incarnate as Jesus Christ.

Lord

Title used for Jesus to express his divine lordship over people, time and space.

Lord's Supper

Alternative term for Eucharist in some Churches (predominantly Non-conformist).

Lutheran

A major Protestant Church that receives its name from the 16th century German reformer, Martin Luther.

Mass

Term for the Eucharist, used by the Roman Catholic and other Churches.

Maundy Thursday

The Thursday in Holy Week. Commemorates the Last Supper.

Methodist

A Christian who belongs to the Methodist Church which came into existence through the work of John Wesley in the C18th.

Missal

Book containing words and ceremonial directions for saying Mass.

Mother of God

The title given to the Virgin Mary, mainly in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, to underline the Trinitarian belief that Jesus was truly God (in this context, God refers to God incarnate as seen in Jesus Christ).

New Testament

Collection of 27 books forming the second section of the Canon of Christian Scriptures.

Non-conformist

Term used to describe Protestant Christian bodies which became separated from the established Church of England in the C17th.

Old Testament

That part of the Canon of Christian Scriptures which the Church shares with Judaism, comprising 39 books covering the Hebrew Canon, and in the case of certain denominations, some books of the Apocrypha.

Ordination

In episcopal Churches, the 'laying on of hands'

on priests and deacons by a bishop. In non-episcopal Churches, the 'laying on of hands' on ministers by other representatives of the Church.

Orthodox

(i) The Eastern Orthodox Church consisting of national Churches (mainly Greek or Slav), including the ancient Eastern Patriarchates. They hold the common Orthodox faith, and are in communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. (ii) Conforming to the creeds sanctioned by the ecumenical councils, for example, Nicaea, Chalcedon.

Palm Sunday

The Sunday before Easter, commemorating the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem when he was acknowledged by crowds waving palm branches.

Paraclete (Comforter)

Advocate. Term used for the Holy Spirit.

Parousia

Presence. The Second Coming or return of Jesus Christ.

Passion

The sufferings of Jesus Christ, especially in the time leading up to his crucifixion.

Patriarch

Title for principal Eastern Orthodox bishops. Also used for early Israelite leaders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

Pentecost (Whitsun)

The Greek name for the Jewish Festival of

Weeks, or Shavuot, which comes seven weeks ('fifty days') after Passover. On the day of this feast, the followers of Jesus received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostalist

A Christian who belongs to a Church that emphasises certain gifts which were granted to the first believers on the Day of Pentecost (such as the power to heal the sick and speak in tongues).

Pope

The Bishop of Rome, head of the Roman Catholic Church.

Presbyterian

A member of a Church that is governed by elders or 'presbyters'; the national Church of Scotland.

Protestant

That part of the Church which became distinct from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches when their members professed (or 'protested' - hence Protestant) the centrality of the Bible and other beliefs. Members affirm that the Bible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the ultimate authority for Christian teaching.

Pulpit

An elevated platform from which sermons are preached.

Purgatory

In some traditions, a condition or state in which good souls receive spiritual cleansing after death, in preparation for heaven.

Quaker

A member of the Religious Society of Friends, established through the work of George Fox in the 17th century.

Reconciliation (Confession)

(i) Sacrament of the (Roman) Catholic Church, consisting of Contrition, Confession of sins, and Absolution. (ii) The human process of reconciling Christians with one another.

Redemption

Derived from the practice of paying the price of a slave's freedom; and so, the work of Jesus Christ in setting people free through his death.

Reformation

A 16th reform movement that led to the formation of Protestant Churches. It emphasised the need to recover the initial beliefs and practices of the Church.

Resurrection

(i) The rising from the dead of Jesus Christ on the third day after the crucifixion. (ii) The rising from the dead of believers at the Last Day. (iii) The new, or risen, life of Christians.

Roman Catholic

That part of the Church owing loyalty to the Bishop of Rome, as distinct from Orthodox and Protestant Churches.

Sacrament

An outward sign of an inward blessing, as in baptism or the Eucharist.

Salvationist

A member of the Salvation Army founded by William and Catherine Booth in the 19th.

Sanctification

The process by which a believer is made holy, to become like Jesus Christ.

Sin

(i) Act of rebellion or disobedience against the known will of God. (ii) An assessment of the human condition as disordered and in need of transformation.

Synoptic

Having a common viewpoint. It is applied to the presentation of Jesus' life in the first three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in contrast with that given in the Gospel of John.

Tabernacle

(i) A receptacle for the Blessed Sacrament, not immediately consumed but set aside or 'reserved' (mainly in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches). The presence of the consecrated elements is usually signalled by a continuously burning light. (ii) Term used by some denominations of their building.

Transubstantiation

Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Mass, defined at the Lateran Council of 1215, and confirmed at the Council of Trent in 1551. This states that in the Eucharist, at the words of consecration, the substance of the bread and wine becomes the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that he is thus present on the altar.

Trinity

Three persons in one God; doctrine of the three-fold nature of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Unction (Sacrament of the Sick)

The anointing with oil of a sick or dying person.

United Reformed Church

A Church formed by the union of English Congregationalists with the Presbyterian Church of England, and subsequently the Reformed Association of the Churches of Christ.

Vatican

The residence of the Pope in Rome, and the administrative centre of the Roman Catholic Church. The chief building of the Vatican is St Peter's Basilica, built on the traditional site of St Peter's tomb.

Virgin Birth

The doctrine of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit and without the agency of a human father.

Buddhism Glossary

As Buddhism spread throughout the East, it came to be expressed in many different languages. Terms in the Sanskrit and Pali of India are in most common use in the West, although Japanese and Tibetan terms also occur frequently. Pali is the language of the texts of the Theravada school, whilst Sanskrit is used for general Mahayana. Zen Buddhism uses terms expressed in Japanese, and Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan. There is no preferred form. For convenience, the Pali term appears first, followed by the Sanskrit, except where otherwise indicated.

Abhidhamma

Abhidharma

Further or higher teaching. The philosophy and psychology of Buddhism in abstract, systematic form.

Abhidhamma Pitaka

Abhidharma Pitaka

This is the third of the three principal sections of the canon of basic scripture. It is a systematic, philosophical and psychological treatment of the teachings given in the Sutta Pitaka.

Amitabha Amitayus (Sanskrit)

Also, Amida (Japanese). Buddhas having unlimited light and life respectively.

Anapanasati

Anapanasmrti

Mindfulness of the breath. The practice most usually associated with the development of concentration and calm, but also used in the training of Vipassana (insight).

Anatta

Anatman

No self; no soul. Insubstantiality; denial of a real or permanent self.

Anicca

Anitya

Impermanence; transience. Instability of all things, including the self.

Arahat, Arahant

Arhat

Enlightened disciple. The fourth and highest stage of Realisation recognised by the Theravada tradition. One whose mind is free from all greed, hatred and ignorance.

Asoka

Ashoka

Emperor of India in the 3rd century BCE.

Atta

Atman

Self; soul.

Bhikkhu

Bhikshu

Fully ordained Buddhist monk.

Bhikkhuni

Bhikshuni

Fully ordained Buddhist nun.

Bodhi Tree (Pali)

The tree (*ficus religiosa*) under which the

Buddha realised Enlightenment. It is known as the Tree of Wisdom.

Bodhisatta (Pali)

A Wisdom Being. One intent on becoming, or destined to become, a Buddha. Gotama, before his Enlightenment as the historical Buddha.

Bodhisattva (Sanskrit)

A being destined for Enlightenment, who postpones final attainment of Buddhahood in order to help living beings (see Mahayana).

Brahma Viharas (Pali)

The four sublime states: loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and evenness of mind.

Buddha

Buddha

Awakened or Enlightened One.

Dalai Lama (Tibetan)

Great Ocean. Spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people.

Dana

Dana

Generosity; giving; gift.

Dhamma
Dharma

Universal law; ultimate truth. The teachings of the Buddha. A key Buddhist term.

Dhammapada
Dharmapada

Famous scripture of 423 verses.

Dukkha
Duhkha

Suffering; ill; unsatisfactoriness; imperfection. The nature of existence according to the first Noble Truth.

Gompa (Tibetan)

Monastery; place of meditation.

Gotama
Gautama

Family name of the Buddha.

Jataka (Pali)

Birth story. Accounts of the previous lives of the Buddha.

Jhana
Dhyana

Also Ch'an (Chinese) and Zen (Japanese). Advanced meditation.

Kamma
Karma

Action. Intentional actions that affect one's circumstances in this and future lives. The Buddha's insistence that the effect depends on volition marks the Buddhist kamma as different from the Hindu understanding of karma

Karuna
Karuna

Compassion.

Kesa (Japanese)

The robe of a Buddhist monk, nun, or priest.

Khandha
Skandha

Heap; aggregate. The Five Khandhas together make up the 'person' (form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness).

Khanti
Kshanti

Patience; forbearance.

Kilesa
Klesa

Mental defilement or fire, such as greed, hatred or ignorance.

Koan (Japanese)

A technical term used in Zen Buddhism referring to enigmatic or paradoxical questions used to develop intuition. Also refers to religious problems encountered in daily life.

Kwan-yin (Chinese)

Also, Kannon (Japanese). Bodhisattva of Compassion, depicted in female form. Identified with Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

Lama (Tibetan)

Teacher, or one who is revered.

Lotus Sutra (Sanskrit)

A scripture of major importance to various schools within the Mahayana tradition. It describes the virtues of the Bodhisattva, and emphasises that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature and can attain Enlightenment (Nirvana).

Magga
Marga

Path, leading to cessation of suffering. The fourth Noble Truth.

Mahayana

Great Way or Vehicle. Teachings that spread from India into Tibet, parts of Asia and the Far East, characterised by the Bodhisattva ideal and the prominence given to the development of both compassion and wisdom.

Mala (Pali)

Also, Juzu (Japanese). String of 108 beads used in Buddhist practice (like a rosary).

Metta
Maitri

Loving kindness. A pure love which is neither grasping nor possessive.

Metta Sutta (Pali)

Buddhist scripture which describes the nature of loving kindness.

Metteya
Maitreya

One who has the nature of loving kindness. Name of the future Buddha.

Mudda
Mudra

Ritual gesture, as illustrated by the hands of Buddha images.

Mudita
Mudita

Sympathetic joy. Welcoming the good fortune of others.

Nibbana
Nirvana

Blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and ignorance, and the state of secure perfect peace that follows. A key Buddhist term.

Nirodha
Nirodha

Cessation (of suffering). The third Noble Truth.

Panna
Prajna

Wisdom. Understanding the true nature of things.

Parami
Paramita

A perfection or virtue. One of the six or ten perfections necessary for the attainment of Buddhahood.

Parinibbana
Parinirvana

Final and complete nirvana reached at the passing away of a Buddha.

Patimokkha
Pratimoksha

The training rules of a monk or nun - 227 in the case of a Theravada monk.

Pitaka (Pali)

Basket. Collection of scriptures (see Tipitaka).

Rupa
Rupa

Form. Used of an image of the Buddha; also, the first of the Five Khandhas.

Sakyamuni
Shakyamuni

Sage of the Shakyas (the tribe of the Buddha). Title of the historical Buddha.

Samadhi
Samadhi

Meditative absorption. A state of deep meditation.

Samatha
Samatha

A state of concentrated calmness; meditation (see Vipassana).

Samsara
Samsara

Everyday life. The continual round of birth, sickness, old age and death which can be transcended by following the Eightfold Path and Buddhist teaching.

Samudaya
Samudaya

Arising; origin (of suffering). The second Noble Truth.

Sangha
Sangha

Community; assembly. Often used for the order of bhikkhus and bhikkunis in Theravadin countries. In the Mahayana countries, the Sangha includes lay devotees and priests, eg in Japan.

Sankhara
Samskara

Mental/karmic formation. The fourth of the five Khandhas.

Sanna
Samjna

Perception. Third of the five Khandhas.

Satori (Japanese)

Awakening. A term used in Zen Buddhism.

Siddattha
Siddhartha

Wish-fulfilled. The personal name of the historical Buddha.

Sila
Sila

Morality.

Sutta
Sutra

Text. The word of the Buddha.

Sutta Pitaka
Sutra Pitaka

The second of the three collections - principally of teachings - that comprise the canon of basic scripture.

Tanha
Trishna

Thirst; craving; desire (rooted in ignorance). Desire as the cause of suffering. The second Noble Truth.

Tathagata
Tathagata

Another epithet for the Buddha.

Theravada
Sthaviravada

Way of the elders. A principal school of Buddhism, established in Sri Lanka and South East Asia. Also found in the West.

Thupa/Cetiya
Stupa

Reliquary (including pagodas).

Tipitaka
Tripitaka

Three baskets. A threefold collection of texts (Vinaya, Sutta, Abhidhamma).

Tiratana
Triratna

The triple refuge. Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Another way of referring to the three jewels.

Tulku (Tibetan)

Reincarnated Lama.

Upaya (Pali)

Any skilful means, eg meditation on loving kindness, to overcome anger.

Upekkha

Upeksha

Equanimity; evenness of mind.

Vajrayana (Sanskrit)

Thunderbolt; Diamond Way. Teachings promulgated later, mainly in India and Tibet. Another term for esoteric Buddhism.

Vedana (Pali)

Feeling. The second of the Five Khandhas.

Vihara (Pali)

Dwelling place; monastery.

Vinaya (Pali)

The rules of discipline of monastic life.

Vinaya Pitaka (Pali)

The first of the three collections of the canon of basic scripture, containing mostly the discipline for monks and nuns, with many stories and some teachings.

Vinnana

Vijnana

Consciousness. The fifth of the Five Khandhas.

Vipassana

Vipashyana

Insight into the true nature of things. A particular

form of meditation (see Samatha).

Viriya

Virya

Energy; exertion.

Wesak

Vesak (Sinhalese)

Buddha Day. Name of a festival and a month. On the full moon of Wesak (in May or June), the birth, Enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha took place, although some schools celebrate only the birth at this time, eg Zen.

Zazen (Japanese)

Meditation while seated, as in Zen Buddhism.

Zen (Japanese)

Meditation. Derived from the Sanskrit 'dhyana'. A school of Mahayana Buddhism that developed in China and Japan.

Hinduism Glossary

The main references are to Sanskrit terminology, although variants are found and used in other Indian languages. Lakshmi, Laksmi, Vishnu or Visnu type variants are not always included because of their frequency. Many of these terms will also be found in books on Buddhism and Sikhism, but with somewhat different meanings. Proper names and place names are only included in this list if variant forms are commonly used. The preferred form appears first, followed by any variants.

Acharya

Acarya

One who teaches by example. Usually refers to a prominent or exemplary spiritual teacher.

Advaita

Adwaita

Non-dual. Refers to the impersonalistic philosophy which unqualifyingly equates God, the soul and matter.

Ahimsa

Ahinsa

Not killing. Non-violence; respect for life.

Artha

Economic development. The second aim of life.

Arti

Arati

Welcoming ceremony in which auspicious articles such as incense and lamps are offered to the deity or to saintly people.

Aryan

Noble. Refers to those who know the spiritual values of life. Scholars say it refers to the original inhabitants of the Sindhu region in India.

Ashram

Asram

A place set up for spiritual development.

Ashrama

Asrama

A stage of life (of which there are four) adopted according to material considerations, but ultimately as a means to spiritual realisation.

Atharva Veda

The fourth of the Vedas.

Atman

Atma

Self. Can refer to body, mind or soul, depending on context. Ultimately, it refers to the real self, the soul.

Aum

Om

The sacred symbol and sound representing the ultimate; the most sacred of Hindu words.

Avatar

Avatara

Avtara

One who descends. Refers to the descent of a deity, most commonly Vishnu. Sometimes translated as incarnation which, although

inaccurate, may be the best English word available.

Ayodhya

Birthplace of Rama.

Bhagavad Gita

The Song of the Lord. Spoken by Krishna, this is the most important scripture for most Hindus. Tradition dates it back to 3,000 years BCE, though most scholars attribute it to the first millennium BCE. Considered an Upanishad.

Bhajan

Bhajana

Devotional hymn or song.

Bhakti

Devotion; love. Devotional form of Hinduism.

Bhakti-yoga

The path of loving devotion, aimed at developing pure love of God.

Brahma

A Hindu deity, considered one of the Trimurti, and in charge of creative power; not to be confused with Brahman or Brahmin.

Brahmachari
Brahmacari
Brahmacharin
Brahmacarin

One in the first stage of life, a celibate student of Vedic knowledge.

Brahmacharya
Brahmacarya

Also two words – Brahma and chari, cari, charin or carin. The first ashrama or stage of life.

Brahman

The ultimate reality, or the all-pervading reality; that from which everything emanates, in which it rests and into which it is ultimately dissolved.

Brahmin
Brahman
Brahmana

The first of the four varnas, the principal social groupings from which priests are drawn. Some writers, rather confusingly, use the spelling 'brahman', and the meaning only becomes clear in the context of a few sentences (see also Brahma and Brahman).

Darshan Shastras

Six systems of Hindu philosophy – Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Vedanta and Meemansa.

Dassehra
Dussehra
Dassera
Dashara

(Other variants are also found)
Ten days. Also called Vijay Dashami. Celebrates

the victory of Rama on the tenth day of the bright half of the lunar month of Jyeshtha. As is often the case with Hindu festivals, followers may interpret the festival differently, for example in connection with Durga (see Navaratri).

Dharma

Religion or religious duty is the usual translation into English, but literally it means the intrinsic quality of the self or that which sustains one's existence.

Dhoti

A garment made of natural fibre (usually cotton or silk), worn by males, which covers the lower body and legs.

Dhyana

Meditation.

Divali

Diwali

Dipavali

Deepavali

Festival of lights at the end of one year and beginning of the new year, according to one Hindu calendar.

Durga

Female deity. A form of the goddess Parvati; wife of Shiva.

Dvaita

Dwaita

Dual. Refers to the personalistic philosophy that differentiates between God, the soul and matter.

Dwarka

Dvarka

Dvaraka

Dwaraka

Pilgrimage site on the west coast of India.

Ganesha

Ganesh

Ganupati

Ganapati

A Hindu deity portrayed with an elephant's head – a sign of strength. The deity who removes obstacles.

Ganga

The Ganges. Most famous of all sacred rivers of India.

Gangotri

Source of the river Ganges.

Gotra

Exogamous group within Jati.

Grihastha

Gristhi

Grhastha

The second stage of Hindu life; one who belongs to that stage, that is, the householder (grihasti).

Guna

Rope; quality. Specifically refers to the three qualities of sattva (goodness), rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance), which permeate and control matter.

Guru

Spiritual teacher, preceptor or enlightener.

Hanuman

The monkey warrior who faithfully served Rama and Sita. Also called Pavansuta (son of the wind God).

Havan

Also known as Agnihotra. The basis of many Hindu rituals used at weddings and on other ceremonial occasions; the ceremony or act of worship in which offerings of ghee and grains are made into fire.

Havan kund

The container, usually square or pyramid-shaped, in which the havan fire is burned.

Hitopadesh

Stories with a moral.

Holi

The festival of colours, celebrated in Spring.

Homa

Term often used interchangeably with havan.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

A religious group of the Vaishnava tradition.

Janeu**Jenoi**

Sacred thread worn by Hindus who study under a guru.

Janmashtami**Janmashtmi**

Birthday of Krishna, celebrated on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Badra.

Japa**Jap**

The quiet or silent repetition of a mantra as a meditative process.

Jati

Caste is the usual translation, meaning occupational kinship group.

Jnana**Gyan**

Knowledge.

Jnana-yoga**Gyan-yoga**

The path of knowledge, that aims at liberation.

Kali**Kaali**

Name given to that power of God which delivers justice – often represented by the Goddess Kali (a form of Durga).

Kali yuga

The fourth of the ages; the iron age or the age of quarrelling and hypocrisy.

Kama

The third of the four aims of life – regulated sense of enjoyment.

Karma

Action. Used of work to refer to the law of cause

and effect.

Karma-yoga

The path of self-realisation through dedicating the fruits of one's work to God.

Kirtan

Songs of praise; corporate devotional singing, usually accompanied by musical instruments.

Krishna

Usually considered an avatar of Vishnu. One of the most popular of all Hindu deities in contemporary Britain. His teachings are found in the Bhagavad Gita.

Kshatriya**Khatri**

Second of the four varnas of traditional Hindu society, the ruling or warrior class.

Lakshmi**Laksmi**

The goddess of fortune.

Mahabharata

The Hindu epic that relates the story of the five Pandava princes. It includes the Bhagavad Gita.

Mala**Maala**

Circle of stringed beads of wood or wool used in meditation.

Mandala**Mandal**

A circle, area or community/group.

Mandir

Temple.

Mantra

That which delivers the mind. Refers to a short sacred text or prayer, often recited repetitiously.

Manusmriti

The laws of Manu. An ancient and important text on Dharma, including personal and social laws.

Marg

Path (see Jnana yoga, Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga).

Mata

Mother. Often associated with Hindu goddesses who represent shakti (power).

Mathura

Holy place connected with Krishna.

Maya

Not this. Usually, it refers to illusion, particularly where the permanent soul identifies itself with temporary matter, for example, the body. It can also mean power.

Moksha**Moksa**

Ultimate liberation from the process of transmigration, the continuous cycle of birth and death.

Mundan

The head-shaving ceremony. Performed in the first or third year of life.

Murti**Moorti**

Form. The image or deity used as a focus of worship. 'Idol' should definitely not be used, and 'statue' may also cause offence.

Navaratri**Navaratra**

The Nine Nights Festival preceding Dassehra, and held in honour of the goddess Durga.

Nirvana

The cessation of material existence.

Panchatantra

Part of the supplementary Vedic scriptures, composed of animal stories with a moral.

Parvati

The consort of Shiva, also known by other names such as Durga, Devi, etc.

Prahlada**Prahalada**

A great devotee of Vishnu, connected with the festival of Holi.

Pranayam**Pranayama**

Regulation of breath as a means of controlling the mind.

Prashad**Prasad****Prasada****Prashada**

Sacred or sanctified food.

Pravachan

A lecture or talk, usually based on the scriptures.

Puja**Pooja**

Worship. General term referring to a variety of practices in the home or Mandir.

Purana

Ancient. Part of the Smriti scriptures. Contains many of the well-known stories of Hinduism.

Raja Yoga**Raj Yoga**

Path of self-control and meditation to realise God.

Rajas

Passion or creative potency, one of the three gunas (qualities of material nature).

Rakhi**Raakhi**

A bracelet, usually made out of silk or cotton, tied to give protection and to strengthen the bond of mutual love.

Raksha Bandhan

The festival when women tie a decorative bracelet on their brothers' wrists.

Rama

The incarnation of the Lord, and hero of the Ramayana (avoid using the variant 'Ram' for obvious reasons).

Ramayana
Ramayan

The Hindu epic that relates the story of Rama and Sita, composed by the sage Valmiki thousands of years ago.

Ramnavami
Ramnavmi

The birthday festival of Rama.

Rig Veda
Rg or Rc Veda

The first scripture of Hinduism, containing spiritual and scientific knowledge.

Rishi
Rsi
Risi

A spiritually wise person. More specifically, one of the seven seers who received the divine wisdom.

Sadhana
Sadhan

One's regulated spiritual practices or discipline.

Sadhu
Saddhu

Holy man, ascetic.

Sama Veda

The Veda of chanting; material mainly from the Rig Veda, arranged for ritual chanting in worship.

Samsara
Sansara

The world – the place where transmigration (the

soul's passage through a series of lives in different species) occurs.

Samskar
Sanskar
Samskara

Sacraments designed to initiate a new stage of life. There is usually a total of sixteen such rites of passage (though many schools of thought do not practise them all).

Sanatan Dharma

The eternal or imperishable religion; also known as Vedic Dharma. Adherents often prefer this term to Hinduism as it characterises their belief in the revealed and universal nature of religion.

Sannyasa

The state of renunciation, the fourth stage of life.

Sannyasin
Samyasin
Samnyasin

A renunciate who, having given up worldly affairs and attachments, has entered the fourth stage of life, often as a mendicant.

Sanskrit

Sacred language of the Hindu scriptures.

Saraswati

The power of knowledge, often represented by the goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning.

Sattva
Sattwa

Goodness, or the potency to sustain and nourish; one of the three gunas.

Seva
Sewa

Service, either to the divine or to humanity.

Shaivism
Saivism

The religion of Hindus who are devotees of Shiva.

Shakti
Sakti

Energy or power, especially of a Hindu feminine deity.

Shiva
Siva

(many variants – even Civa – have been found) A Hindu god. The name means kindly or auspicious.

Shivaratri
Sivaratri

The annual festival celebrated in February/March in honour of Shiva. Also called Mahashivaratri.

Shraddha
Sraddha

Ceremony in which sanctified food is offered to the poor and needy in memory of departed ancestors.

Shri
Sri

Illustrious. Used as a title of respect, for example Shri Krishna. Also a respectful title for men. The feminine form is Shrimati (Mrs).

**Shruti
Srti, Sruti**

That which is heard. A term specifically applied to the Four Vedas, including the Upanishads.

**Sita
Seeta**

The divine consort of Rama.

**Smriti
Srti**

That which is remembered. Scriptures less ancient than the Vedas. Includes the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

**Sutra
Sutta**

Short sayings or verses relating to various rituals, or encapsulating profound philosophical meaning.

**Swami
Svami**

Controller. Sometimes, more specifically, Goswami (one who can control his/her senses). An honorific title applied to a religious teacher or holy person, particularly the sannyasi.

**Swastika
Svastika**

From the Sanskrit for well-being; a mark of good fortune. The four arms signify the four directions (space), the four Vedas (knowledge), and the four stages (time) in the life cycle. Not to be confused with the Nazi symbol.

Tamas

Ignorance or destructive potency; the lowest of

the three gunas.

**Tilaka
Tilak**

The mark made on the murti or on the forehead of a worshipper. It is a symbol of the power of God within.

Trimurti

The three deities. Refers to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who personify and control the three gunas. They represent and control the three functions of creation, preservation and destruction. 'Trinity' should be avoided.

Upanayana

Ceremony when the sacred thread is tied – to mark the start of learning with a guru.

**Upanishad
Upanisad**

To sit down near. A sacred text based on the teaching of a guru to a disciple. The Upanishads explain the teachings of the Vedas.

**Vaishnavism
Vaisnavism**

The religion of Hindus who are devotees of the god Vishnu.

**Vaishya
Vaisya**

The third of the four varnas of Hindu society, composed of merchants and farmers.

Vanaprastha

The third stage of life, typified by retirement and asceticism.

**Vanaprasthi
Vanaprastha**

Forest dweller. One who is in the third stage of life.

**Varanasi
Banares
Benares
Kashi****Kasi**

City on the river Ganges, sacred to Shiva. It is one of the holiest pilgrimage sites and also an ancient centre of learning.

Varna

Colour. The four principal divisions of Hindu society. It is important to note that the word 'caste' refers strictly to sub-divisions within each varna, and not to varnas themselves.

**Varnashrama
Varnasrama Dharma**

The system whereby society is divided into four varnas (divisions), and life into four ashramas (stages).

Varsha Pratipada

The day of Creation, celebrated as New Year's Day by many Hindus.

Veda

Knowledge. Specifically refers to the four Vedas, though any teaching which is consistent with the conclusions of these scriptures is also accepted as Vedic.

Vijay Dashmi**Vijaya Dashami**

Another name for Dassehra.

Vishnu**Visnu**

A Hindu god. With Brahma and Shiva forms the Trimurti.

Vrat**Vratam**

Vow. Often including abstention from certain foods.

Vrindavan**Brindavan****Vrindavana****Brindaban**

The sacred village connected with Krishna's pastimes as a youth.

Yajur Veda

One of the four Vedas, dealing with the knowledge of karma.

Yamuna**Jamuna****Jumna**

Tributary of the river Ganga (Ganges), considered by many Hindus to be the most sacred of all holy rivers.

Yatra**Jatra**

Pilgrimage. Usually to important sacred places in India.

Yoga

Communion; union of the soul with the Supreme, or a process which promotes that relationship. The English word 'yoke' is derived from yoga.

Yuga

Age, or extended period of time, of which there are four.

Islam Glossary

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. Therefore Arabic is the language of Islam, Islamic worship, theology, ethics and jurisprudence. Islam is inextricably linked with the Arabic language despite the variety of languages spoken by the believers.

For British teachers and pupils who have not encountered Islamic terms, this transliteration is a simplified version of that used by contemporary scholars. An apostrophe is used to indicate a pause. The reader will note that the words salah and zakah end in 'h' when they appear alone. When part of a phrase, these words are written with a 't' at the end, for example, Salat-ul-Zuhr, Zakat-ul-Fitr, as a guide to pronunciation.

Abd Servant. As in Abdullah, servant of Allah.	Akhlaq Conduct, character, attitudes and ethics.	al-Khulafa-ur-Rashidun The Rightly Guided Khalifahs. The first four successors to the leadership role of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them).
Abu Bakr The first Khalifah, successor to the leadership of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).	al-Amin The Trustworthy. The name by which Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was generally known, even before the revelation of Islam.	al-Madinah Madinatu'n-Nabi (The City of the Prophet). The name given to Yathrib after the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated there in 622 CE and founded the first Islamic state.
Adam Adam (peace be upon him). The first man, and first Prophet of Allah.	al-Aqsa Masjid-ul-Aqsa (The Farthest Mosque) in Jerusalem. Located near the Dome of the Rock.	Ali Cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); husband of Fatimah Zahrah; father of Hassan, Hussein, and Zainab; the fourth of 'al-Khulafa-ur-Rashidun' according to Sunnis, and the first successor accepted by Shi'ah Islam (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them).
Adhan Call to prayer. From the same root, Mu'adhin (one who makes the call to prayer).	al-Fatihah The Opener. Surah 1 of the Qur'an . Recited at least 17 times daily during the five times of salah. Also known as 'The Essence' of the Qur'an.	
Aishah One of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and daughter of Abu Bakr. (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them).	al-hamdu-li-Llah All praise belongs to Allah. Frequently used as an expression of thanks to Allah.	
Akhirah Everlasting life after death – the hereafter.	al-Kafi The title of the books of Hadith compiled by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ibn-Yaqub Koleini, a Shi'ah scholar.	

Allah

The Islamic name for God in the Arabic language. Used in preference to the word God, this Arabic term is singular, has no plural, nor is it associated with masculine, feminine or neuter characteristics.

Allahu Akbar

Allah is most great.

Angels

Beings created by Allah from light. They have no free will and are completely obedient to Allah.

Ansar

Supporters. The Muslims of al-Madinah, who welcomed, helped and supported the Muslims who migrated from Makkah.

Arafat

A plain, a few kilometres from Makkah, where pilgrims gather to worship, pray and ask for forgiveness. This takes place on the ninth day of the Islamic month of Dhul-Hijjah, the day before Id-ul-Adha.

Asr (Salat-ul-Asr)

Mid-afternoon salah which may be performed from late afternoon until a short while before sunset.

As-Salamu-Alaykum

Peace be upon you. An Islamic greeting.

Ayah (sing.)

A unit within a Surah of the Qur'an.

Barakah

Blessings.

Bilal

The first Mu'adhin of Islam (see Adhan), a companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), formerly an Abyssinian slave (Radhi-Allahu-anhu – may Allah be pleased with him).

Bismillah

In the name of Allah.

Bismillah-ir-Rahman ir-Rahim

In the name of Allah – All Gracious, All Merciful. The preface to all Surahs of the Qur'an except the ninth one. It is usually said by Muslims before eating or beginning any action.

Dar-ul-Islam

House or abode of Islam. Sometimes used to refer to lands ruled by Islamic Shari'ah.

Da'wah

Call. Inviting people to Islam, whether by literal invitation and preaching, or by the example of good actions.

Dawud

David (peace be upon him). A Prophet of Allah to whom the Zabur (the Book of Psalms) was given.

Dhikr

Remembrance. Remembrance of Allah in one's heart or by reciting His names or sections from the Qur'an.

Dhimmi

A non-Muslim living freely under the protection of an Islamic state.

Dhul-Hijjah

The month of the Hajj, last month of the Islamic year.

Din

Way of life, religion together with its practices.

Din-ul-Fitrah

A description of Islam as the natural way of life.

Du'a

Varying forms of personal prayer and supplication.

Fajr (Salat-ul-Fajr)

Dawn salah which may be performed from dawn until just before sunrise.

Fard

Obligatory duty according to divine law, for example, offering salah five times a day.

Fatihah

See al-Fatihah.

Fatimah (al-Zahrah)

Daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); wife of Ali; mother of Hassan, Hussein and Zainab (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them).

Fatwa

The legal guidance of a pious, just,

knowledgeable Muslim scholar and jurist, based on the Qur'an, Sunnah and Islamic Shari'ah.

Fiqh

Understanding. Islamic jurisprudence.

Ghusl

Greater ablution. Formal washing of the whole body prior to worship (see Wudu).

Hadith

Saying; report; account. The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as recounted by his household, progeny and companions. These are a major source of Islamic law. Some Hadith are referred to as Hadith Qudsi (sacred Hadith) having been divinely communicated to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Hafiz

Someone who knows the whole Qur'an by heart.

Hajar

Hagar. Wife of the Prophet Ibrahim, and mother of the Prophet Isma'il (peace be upon them).

Hajj

Annual pilgrimage to Makkah, which each Muslim must undertake at least once in a lifetime if he or she has the health and wealth. A Muslim male who has completed Hajj is called Hajji, and a female, Hajjah.

Halal

Any action or thing which is permitted or lawful.

Haram

Anything unlawful or not permitted.

Haram Sharif

The grand mosque in Makkah, which encompasses the Ka'bah, the hills of Safa and Marwah and the well of Zamzam.

Hijab

Veil. Often used to describe the head scarf or modest dress worn by women, who are required to cover everything except face and hands in the sight of anyone other than immediate family.

Hijrah

Departure; exit; emigration. The emigration of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. The Islamic calendar commences from this event.

Hira

The name of a place near Makkah, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) went for solitude and worship. It was there that he received the first revelation of the Qur'an.

Ibadah

All acts of worship. Any permissible action performed with the intention to obey Allah.

Iblis

The Jinn who defied Allah by refusing to bow to Adam (peace be upon him), and later became the tempter of all human beings (see Shaytan).

Ibrahim

Abraham (peace be upon him). A Prophet of Allah to whom the 'scrolls' were given.

Id

Recurring happiness. A religious holiday; a feast for thanking Allah and celebrating a happy occasion.

Id Mubarak

Id blessings! Greeting exchanged during Islamic celebrations.

Id-ul-Adha

Celebration of the sacrifice, commemorating the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Isma'il for Allah (peace be upon them). Also known as Id-ul-Kabir – the Greater Id – and Qurban Bayram (Turkish) - feast of sacrifice.

Id-ul-Fitr

Celebration of breaking the fast on the day after Ramadan ends, which is also the first day of Shawal, the tenth Islamic month. Also known as Id-ul-Saghir - the Lesser Id – and Sheker Bayram (Turkish) – sugar feast.

Ihram

The state or condition entered into to perform either Hajj or Umrah. During this period, many normally permitted actions are placed out of bounds to Muslims. Also, the name of the two plain white unsewn cloths worn by male pilgrims to indicate the brotherhood, equality and purity of the pilgrim. For women, the dress of Ihram consists of their normal modest clothing.

Ijma

General consensus of scholars, expressed or tacit, on matters of law and practice.

Imam

Leader. A person who leads the communal prayer, or a founder of an Islamic school of jurisprudence. In Shi'ah Islam, Imam is also the title of Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhu – may Allah be pleased with him) and his successors.

Imamah

Office and function of an Imam. Religious authority in Shi'ah Islam; successor to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as leader of the Muslim community.

Iman

Faith.

Injil

Gospel. A book given to Prophet Isa (peace be upon him).

Iqamah

Call to stand up for salah.

Isa

Jesus. A Prophet of Allah, born of the virgin Mary (peace be upon them).

Isha (Salat-ul-Isha)

Evening salah which may be performed from just over an hour after sunset, until midnight.

Islam

Peace attained through willing obedience to

Allah's divine guidance.

Isma'il

Ishmael. A Prophet of Allah. Son of the Prophet Ibrahim and Hajar (peace be upon them).

Isnad

Chain of transmission of each Hadith.

Jibril

Gabriel. The angel who delivered Allah's messages to His Prophets.

Jihad

Personal individual struggle against evil in the way of Allah. It can also be collective defence of the Muslim community.

Jinn

Being created by Allah from fire.

Jumu'ah (Salat-ul-Jumu'ah)

The weekly communal salah and attendance at the khutbah performed shortly after midday on Fridays.

Ka'bah

A cube-shaped structure in the centre of the grand mosque in Makkah. The first house built for the worship of the One True God.

Khadijah

First wife of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Mother of Fatimah Zahrah (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them).

Khalifah

Successor; inheritor; custodian; vice-regent (see al-Khulafa-ur-Rashidun).

Khilafah

The institution of the Khalifah.

Khums

Contribution (additional to zakah) of one fifth of surplus annual income paid by Shi'ah Muslims. Sunni Muslims only apply Khums to booty.

Khutbah

Speech. Talk delivered on special occasions such as the Jumu'ah and Id prayers.

Laylat-ul-Qadr

The Night of Power, when the first revelation of the Qur'an was made to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is believed to be one of the last ten nights of Ramadan.

Madinah

See al-Madinah.

Maghrib (Salat-ul-Maghrib)

Sunset salah which is performed after sunset until daylight ends.

Mahdi, al-Muntazar

The (rightly) guided one who is awaited and will appear towards the end of time to lead the Ummah and restore justice on Earth. The one who is promised in the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions.

Makkah

City where the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born, and where the Ka'bah is located.

Maryam

Mary. The virgin mother of the Prophet Isa (peace be upon them).

Masjid

Place of prostration. Mosque.

Mihrab

Niche or alcove in a mosque wall, indicating the Qiblah – the direction of Makkah, towards which all Muslims face to perform salah.

Mina

Place near Makkah, where pilgrims stay on the 10th, 11th and 12th of Dhul-Hijjah and perform some of the activities of the Hajj.

Minbar

Rostrum; platform; dais. The stand from which the Imam delivers the khutbah or speech in the mosque or praying ground.

Miqat

Place appointed, at which pilgrims enter into the state of ihram.

Mi'raj

The ascent through the heavens of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Mu'adhin

Caller to prayer (see Adhan). Known in English

as 'muezzin'.

Muhammad

Praised. Name of the final Prophet.

Muharram

First month in the Islamic calendar, which is calculated from the time the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated to Yathrib (Madinah).

Musa

Moses (peace be upon him). A Prophet of Allah to whom the Tawrah (Torah) was given.

Mumin

Faithful. A believer, a practising Muslim who wholeheartedly yields to Allah's guiding wisdom and is thus in harmony with His will and at peace with himself and fellow creatures.

Muslim

One who claims to have accepted Islam by professing the Shahadah.

Muzdalifah

Place where pilgrims on Hajj stop for a time during the night of the day they spend at Arafat.

Nabi

Prophet of Allah.

Niyah

Intention. A legally required statement of intent, made prior to all acts of devotion such as salah, Hajj or sawm.

Qadar

Allah's complete and final control over the fulfilment of events or destiny.

Qiblah

Direction which Muslims face when performing salah – towards the Ka'bah (see Mihrab).

Qur'an

That which is read or recited. The Divine Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Allah's final revelation to humankind.

Rak'ah

A unit of salah, made up of recitation, standing, bowing and two prostrations.

Ramadan

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which fasting is required from just before dawn until sunset, as ordered by Allah in the Qur'an.

Rasul

Messenger of Allah.

Sa'y

Walking and hastening between Safa and Marwah, as part of the Hajj, in remembrance of Hajar's search for water for her son Isma'il (peace be upon them).

Sadaqah

Voluntary payment or good action for charitable purposes.

Safa and Marwah

Two hills in Makkah, near the Ka'bah, now

included within the grand mosque (see Sa'y).

Sahih al-Bukhari

The title of the books of Hadith compiled by Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, a Sunni scholar. The collection is described as Sahih (authentic).

Sahih Muslim

The title of the books of Hadith compiled by Abul Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, a Sunni scholar. The collection is described as Sahih (authentic).

Salah

Prescribed communication with, and worship of, Allah, performed under specific conditions, in the manner taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and recited in the Arabic language. The five daily times of salah are fixed by Allah.

Sawm

Fasting from just before dawn until sunset. Abstinence is required from all food and drink (including water) as well as smoking and conjugal relations.

Shahadah

Declaration of faith, which consists of the statement, 'There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'.

Shari'ah

Islamic law based upon the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Shaytan

Rebellious; proud. The devil (see Iblis)

Shi'ah

Followers. Muslims who believe in the Imamah, successorship of Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhu – may Allah be pleased with him) after the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and eleven of his most pious, knowledgeable descendants.

Shirk

Association. Regarding anything as being equal or partner to Allah. Shirk is forbidden in Islam.

Shura

Consultation of the people in the management of religious and worldly affairs. A duty prescribed in the Qur'an to leaders at all levels, from family to government.

Sirah

Biographical writings about the conduct and example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Subhah

String of beads used to count recitations in worship.

Sunnah

Model practices, customs and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is found in both Hadith and Sirah.

Sunni

Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu

Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhum – may Allah be pleased with them) after the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Surah

Division of the Qur'an (114 in all).

Takbir

Saying 'Allahu Akbar!' Recited during salah, Id and other celebratory occasions.

Tawaf

Walking seven times around the Ka'bah in worship of Allah. Also, a part of Hajj and Umrah.

Tawhid

Belief in the Oneness of Allah – absolute monotheism as practised in Islam.

Tawrah

The Torah. The book given to the Prophet Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him).

Ulama

Scholars of Islamic law and jurisprudence (sing. Alim).

Umar ibn ul-Khattab

The second Khalifah of Islam.

Ummah

Community. World-wide community of Muslims; the nation of Islam.

Umrah

Lesser pilgrimage which can be performed at any time of the year.

Uthman

The third Khalifah of Islam.

Wudu

Ablution before salah.

Yathrib

Town to which the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated from Makkah (see al-Madinah).

Zabur

The Book of Psalms given to Prophet Dawud (David) (peace be upon him).

Zakah

Purification of wealth by payment of annual welfare due. An obligatory act of worship.

Zakat-ul-Fitr

Welfare payment at the end of Ramadan.

Zamzam

Name of the well adjacent to the Ka'bah in Makkah. The water first sprang in answer to Hajar's search and prayers (see Hajar and Sa'y).

Zuhr (Salat-ul-Zuhr)

Salah which can be performed after midday until afternoon.

Judaism Glossary

Most of the terms included in this section are Hebrew in origin. However, since the Jewish diaspora, many terms reflect the different countries where Jews have settled. For example, many words are in Yiddish, a common language (a mixture of German, Russian and Hebrew) developed by Jews throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The preferred form in this glossary uses the Sephardic pronunciation, which is equivalent to modern Hebrew as spoken in Israel today. As with all transliterations, there may be acceptable differences in the ways in which words are spelt.

The preferred form is given first, followed by any variants.

Afikomen (Greek)

Dessert. Portion of a matzah eaten near the end of the Seder.

Agadah

Aggadah

Telling. Rabbinical teachings on moral values.

Aleinu

Key prayer at the conclusion of each service.

Aliyah

To go up. (i) Being called to read the Sefer Torah in the synagogue. (ii) The migration of Jews to Israel.

Amidah

Standing. The standing prayer.

Aron Hakodesh

Holy Ark. The focal point of the synagogue, containing Torah scrolls.

Ashkenazim

Jews of Central and Eastern European origin.

Bar Mitzvah

Son of Commandment. A boy's coming of age

at 13 years old, usually marked by a synagogue ceremony and family celebration.

Bat Mitzvah

Bat Chayil

Daughter of Commandment. As above, but for girls from 12 years old. May be marked differently between communities.

Bet ha Knesset

Beit ha Knesset

Shul

House of Assembly. Synagogue.

Bimah

Dais. Raised platform primarily for reading the Torah in the synagogue.

Brit Milah

Berit Milah

Bris

Circumcision.

Challah

Hallah

Enriched bread used particularly on Shabbat and during festivals.

Chazan

Hazzan

Cantor

Leader of reading, singing and chanting in the services of some synagogues.

Chumash

Five. The Torah in book form, used in the synagogue and the home.

Circumcision

Religious rite of Brit Milah, performed by a qualified mohel on all Jewish boys, usually on the eighth day after birth.

Gemara

Gemarah

Commentary on the Mishnah included in the Talmud.

Genizah

Storage place for damaged religious texts.

Haftarah

Completion. Passages from Nevi'im (Prophets) read in the synagogue (linked to weekly Torah and festival readings).

**Hagadah
Haggadah**

Telling. A book used at Seder.

**Halakhah
Halacha**

The Way. The code of conduct encompassing all aspects of Jewish life.

**Hanukiah
Chanukiah
Menorah**

Nine-branched Hanukkah lamp used at the festival of Hanukkah.

**Hanukkah
Chanukah**

Dedication. An eight-day festival of lights to celebrate the re-dedication of the temple following the Maccabean victory over the Greeks.

**Hasid (plural Hasidim)
Chasid (plural Chasidim)**

Pious. Member of the Orthodox movement of Hasidism.

**Hasidism
Chasidism**

A religious and social movement formed by Israel Baal Shem Tov (from the C18th onwards).

Havdalah

Distinction. Ceremony marking the conclusion of Shabbat.

**Hebrew
Ivrit**

Ancient Semitic language; language of the Tenakh (Hebrew Scriptures) used by Jews for prayer and study. Everyday language in Israel.

**Huppah
Chuppah**

Canopy used for a wedding ceremony, under which the bride and groom stand.

Israel

One who struggles with God. The phrase refers to the world-wide Jewish community; the land of Israel and the modern state of Israel.

**Kabbalah
Cabala**

Jewish mysticism.

Kaddish

Prayer publicly recited by mourners.

Kashrut

Laws relating to keeping a kosher home and lifestyle.

**Ketubah
Ketubbah**

Document that defines rights and obligations within Jewish marriage.

Ketuvim

Writings. Third section of the Tenakh.

Kibbutz (plural Kibbutzim)

Israeli collective village based on socialist principles.

Kiddush

Holy. A prayer sanctifying Shabbat and festival days, usually recited over wine.

**Kippah
Yamulkah
Capel**

Head covering worn during prayers, Torah study, etc. Some followers wear it constantly.

Knesset

Assembly. Israeli parliament.

Kol Nidrei

Kol Nidre

All vows. Prayer recited on the evening of Yom Kippur.

Korach

Name of the leader who defied Moses in the wilderness

Kosher

Kasher

Fit; proper. Foods permitted by Jewish dietary laws.

Ladino

Language used predominately by Sephardim.

Magen David

Shield of David, popularly called Star of David.

Maimonides

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204), a leading Jewish philosopher, medical writer and codifier of Jewish law.

Mashiach
Moshiach
Messiah

The anointed one who will herald in a new era for Judaism and all humankind.

Matzah (plural Matzot)

A flat cracker-like bread which has been baked before it rises; used at Pesach.

Menorah

Seven-branched candelabrum which was lit daily in the Temple.

Mezuzah

A scroll placed on door posts of Jewish homes, containing a section from the Torah and often enclosed in a decorative case.

Midrash

Collections of various Rabbinic commentaries on the Tenakh.

Mikveh

Ritual bath used for the immersion of people and objects.

Minyan

Quorum of ten men, over Bar Mitzvah age, required for a service. Progressive communities may include women but do not always require a minyan.

Mishnah

First writing down of the Oral Tradition. An authoritative document forming part of the Talmud, codified about 200 CE.

Mishkan

Dwelling. The original travelling sanctuary used prior to the building of the permanent Temple in Jerusalem.

Mitzvah (plural Mitzvot)

Commandment. The Torah contains 613 Mitzvot. Commonly used to describe good deeds.

Mohel

Person trained to perform Brit Milah.

Moshav (plural Moshavim)

Collective village or farm in Israel.

Ner Tamid

Eternal light. The perpetual light above the Aron Hakodesh.

Nevi'im

Prophets. Second section of the Tenakh.

Noachide Laws

Seven laws given to Noah after the flood, which are incumbent on all humankind. These laws form the foundation for a just society.

Parev

Parveh

Neutral foods, which are neither milk nor meat, for example vegetables, eggs, fish.

Pesach

Passover

Festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. One of the three biblical pilgrim festivals. Pesach is celebrated in the spring.

Pikei Avot

Pirke Avoth

Sayings of the Fathers. Part of the Mishnah containing ethics of Rabbinical sages.

Pikuakh Nefesh

Save a soul. The setting aside of certain laws in order to save a life.

Pogrom

Organised attack on Jews, especially frequent in C19th and early C20th Eastern Europe.

Purim

Festival commemorating the rescue of Persian Jewry as told in the book of Esther.

Rabbi

My teacher. An ordained Jewish teacher. Often the religious leader of a Jewish community.

Rashi

Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak (1040 – 1105). A French rabbinical scholar and leading commentator on the Torah and Talmud.

Rebbe

Rabbi. The term used by Hasidim for their religious leader.

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Ha-Shanah

Head of the Year. Jewish New Year.

Seder

Order. A home-based ceremonial meal during Pesach, at which the Exodus from Egypt is recounted using the Hagadah.

Sefer Torah

Torah scroll. The five books of Moses hand-written on parchment and rolled to form a scroll.

Sephardim**Sefardim**

Jews originating from Mediterranean countries, especially Spain, North Africa and the Middle East.

Shabbat**Shabbos**

Day of spiritual renewal and rest commencing at sunset on Friday, terminating at nightfall on Saturday.

Shatnez**Shaatznez**

Garments containing a forbidden mixture of wool and linen.

Shavuot

Weeks. One of three pilgrim festivals. Shavuot is celebrated in the summer, seven weeks after Pesach.

Shekhina

The divine presence.

Shema

Major Jewish prayer affirming belief in one God. The Shema is found in the Torah.

Shemot

Names. Seven holy names of God.

Shiva

Seven days of intense mourning following the

burial of a close relation. During this period, all ordinary work is prohibited.

Shoah

Desolation. The suffering experienced by European Jews at the hands of the Nazis, including the systematic murder of six million Jews between 1933 and 1945.

Shofar

Ram's horn blown at the season of Rosh Hashanah

Siddur

Order. Daily prayer book.

Simchat Torah

Rejoicing of the law. Festival celebrating the completion and recommencement of the cycle of the weekly Torah reading.

Sukkah (plural Sukkot)

Tabernacle; booth. A temporary dwelling used during Sukkot.

Sukkot

One of three biblical pilgrim festivals, Sukkot is celebrated in the Autumn.

Synagogue**Shul****Bet Haknesset****Bet Hamidrash**

Building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.

Tallit**Tallith**

Prayer shawl. Four-cornered garment with fringes.

Talmud

Mishnah and Gemara, collected together.

Tefillah**Tefila**

Self-judgement. Jewish prayer and meditation.

Tefillin**Tephilin****T'filin****Phylacteries**

Small leather boxes containing passages from the Torah, strapped on the forehead and arm for morning prayers on weekdays.

Tenakh**Tanakh**

The collected 24 books of the Jewish Bible, comprising three sections: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim (Te;Na;Kh).

Teshuva

Repentance. Returning to God.

Tikkun Olam**Tikun**

Care for the world and environment.

Torah

Law; teaching. The Five Books of Moses.

Tzedaka

Righteousness. An act of charity.

Tzitzit**Tzittzit**

Fringes on the corners of the Tallit. Also commonly refers to the fringed undervest worn by some Jewish males.

Yad

Hand-held pointer used in reading the Sefer Torah.

Yahrzeit

Year-time. Anniversary of a death.

Yeshiva

College for study of the Torah and Talmud.

Yiddish

Language used predominantly by Ashkenazim.

Yishuv

Ingathering. The Jewish community of Israel.

Yom Hashoah

Day to commemorate the Shoah.

Yom Kippur

Day of Atonement. Fast day occurring on the tenth day after Rosh Hashanah; a solemn day of Tefillah and Teshuva.

Zionism

Political movement securing the Jewish return to the land of Israel.

Sikhism Glossary

Sikh terms are drawn from the Punjabi language, and the versions below are based upon that language. Many of these terms will also be found in books on Hinduism and Buddhism but with somewhat different meanings. As with all transliterations, there are problems which are difficult to resolve. This is particularly true when moving from the Gurmukhi script which has an alphabet of 35 letters, to the Roman alphabet which has only 26 letters. Names of persons and places are only included in this list if variant forms are commonly used.

Akal Purakh

The Eternal One. A designation frequently used of God by Guru Nanak.

Akal Takht

Akal Takhat

Throne of the Eternal; throne of the Timeless One. Building facing the Golden Temple in Amritsar, where Sikhs gather for political purposes.

Akhand Path

Continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to end.

Amrit

Nectar. Sanctified liquid made of sugar and water, used in initiation ceremonies.

Amrit ceremony

Amrit Sanskar

Amrit Pahul

Khande di Pahul

Sometimes just 'Amrit' or 'Taking Amrit' ('Amrit Chhakna')

The Sikh rite of initiation into the Khalsa. 'Baptism' should not be used.

Anand karaj

Anand Sanskar

Ceremony of bliss. Wedding ceremony.

Ardas

Prayer. The formal prayer offered at most religious acts.

Baisakhi

Vaisakhi

A major Sikh festival celebrating the formation of the Khalsa, 1699 CE.

Bangla Sahib

The site of the martyrdom of Guru Har Krishan (Delhi).

Bhai Khanaya

A Sikh commended by Guru Gobind Singh for serving water to the enemy wounded.

Bhai Lalo

A humble carpenter who opened his house to Guru Nanak. The Guru preferred Bhai Lalo's simple food to the offerings of a local rich merchant.

Chanani

Chandni

Canopy over the scriptures, used as a mark of respect.

Chauri

Chaur

Symbol of the authority of the Guru Granth Sahib. Fan waved over scriptures, made of yak hairs or nylon. It should not be called a 'fly whisk'.

Dasam Granth

Collection of compositions, some of which are attributed to the tenth Sikh Guru, compiled some years after his death.

Giani

A person learned in the Sikh scriptures.

Granthi

Reader of the Guru Granth Sahib, who officiates at ceremonies.

Gurbani

Bani

Vani

Divine word revealed by the Gurus. The Shabads contained in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Gurdwara
Gurudwara

Sikh place of worship. Literally the 'doorway to the Guru'.

Gurmat

The Guru's guidance.

Gurmukh

One who lives by the Guru's teaching.

Gurmukhi

From the Guru's mouth. Name given to the script in which the scriptures and the Punjabi language are written.

Gurpurb

Gurpurab

A Guru's anniversary (birth or death). Also used for other anniversaries, for example, of the installation of the Adi Granth, 1604 CE.

Guru

Teacher. In Sikhism, the title of Guru is reserved for the ten human Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Arjan

The fifth Guru who was the first Sikh martyr (1563–1606).

Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Govind Singh

(Original name: Guru Gobind Rai) Tenth Sikh Guru. It is important to note that the title 'Guru' must be used with all the Gurus' names. Sikhs usually use further terms of respect, for example Guru Gobind Singh Ji or Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Guru Granth Sahib

Adi Granth ('Granth' by itself should be avoided)

Primal collection of Sikh scriptures, compiled by Guru Arjan and given its final form by Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Har Gobind

Guru Hargobind

Guru Hargovind

Sixth Sikh Guru.

Guru Har Krishan

Guru Harkishan

Guru Harkrishan

Eighth Sikh Guru.

Guru Nanak

The first Guru and the founder of the Sikh faith (1469–1539).

Guru Tegh Bahadur

The ninth Guru who was martyred for the principle of religious tolerance (1622–1675).

Haumai

Egoism. The major spiritual defect.

Hukam

God's will.

Hukam

Vak

Random reading taken for guidance from the Guru Granth Sahib.

Ik Onkar

There is only One God. The first phrase of the

Mool Mantar. It is also used as a symbol to decorate Sikh objects.

Janamsakhi

Janam Sakhi

Birth stories. Hagiographic life stories of a Guru, especially Guru Nanak.

Japji Sahib

A morning prayer, composed by Guru Nanak, which forms the first chapter of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Jivan Mukht

Jivan Mukht

Enlightened while in the material body; a spiritually enlightened person, freed from worldly bonds.

Kachera

Traditional underwear/shorts. One of the five Ks (see panj kakke).

Kakka

See panj kakke. Singular of the Punjabi letter K (plural 'kakke')

Kangha

Kanga

Comb worn in the hair. One of the five Ks (see panj kakke).

Kara

Steel band worn on the right wrist. One of the five Ks (see panj kakke).

Karah parshad
Karah Prasad

Sanctified food distributed at Sikh ceremonies.

Kaur

Princess. Name given to all Sikh females by Guru Gobind Singh (see Singh).

Kesh

Kes

Uncut hair. One of the five Ks (see panj kakke).

Khalsa

The community of the pure. The Sikh community.

Khanda

Double-edged sword used in the initiation ceremony. Also used as the emblem on the Sikh flag.

Kirat karna

Earning one's livelihood by one's own efforts.

Kirpan

Sword. One of the five Ks (see panj kakke). 'Dagger' should be avoided.

Kirtan

Devotional singing of the compositions found in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Kirtan Sohila

A prayer said before retiring for sleep. It is also used at the cremation ceremony and when the Guru Granth Sahib is laid to rest.

Kurahit

Prohibitions, for example intoxicants.

Langar

Guru ka Langar

Guru's kitchen. The gurdwara dining hall and the food served in it.

Mela

Fair. Used of Sikh festivals which are not gurpurbs.

Manji

Manji Sahib

Small platform on which the scripture is placed.

Manmukh

Munmukh

Self-orientated (as opposed to gurmukh).

Mool Mantar

Mul Mantar

Basic teaching; essential teaching. The basic statement of belief at the beginning of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Nam Simran

Nam Simaran

Naam Simran

Meditation on the divine name, using passages of scripture.

Nankana Sahib

Birthplace of Guru Nanak. Now in Pakistan.

Nishan Sahib

Sikh flag flown at gurdwaras.

Nit nem

The recitation of specified daily prayers.

Panj kakke

The five Ks. The symbols of Sikhism worn by Sikhs.

Panj piare

Panj Pyare (other forms may also be found) The five beloved ones. Those first initiated into the Khalsa; those who perform the rite today.

Panth

The Sikh community.

Patases

Patashas

Sugar bubbles or crystals used to prepare Amrit.

Punjab

Panjab

Land of five rivers. The area of India in which Sikhism originated.

Ragi

Sikh musician who sings compositions from the Guru Granth Sahib.

Rahit

Sikh obligations, for example to meditate on God.

Rahit Maryada

Rehat Maryada

Sikh Code of Discipline.

Sadhsangat

Sangat

Congregation or assembly of Sikhs.

Sewa**Seva**

Service directed at the sadhsangat and gurdwara, but also to humanity in general.

Shabad**Sabad****Shabd**

Word. Hymn from the Guru Granth Sahib; the divine word.

Sikh

Learner; disciple. A person who believes in the ten Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib, and who has no other religion.

Singh

Lion. Name adopted by Sikh males (see kaur).

Sis Ganj Sahib

The site of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Delhi)

Vak**Vaak**

A random reading taken for guidance from the Guru Granth Sahib.

Vand chhakna

Sharing one's time, talents and earnings with the less fortunate.

Waheguru

Wonderful Lord. ASikh name for God.