

## COMPARATIVE RELIGION GRID

### 1. The Basics

- I have made many generalizations in this grid and have often omitted caveats that are found when discussing concepts. An example is that often we will say “it is believed” or “it is thought that”. I may have excluded these comments in order to be more brief.

<u>Category or Question</u>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Buddhism</b>	<b>Jainism</b>	<b>Comparative Analysis?</b>
<b>Founder or Founders</b>	Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be the last of the prophets of God.	There is no clear founder or founding moment however the most important person is Siddharta Gautama (Buddha)	Mahavira is the man who comes the closest to being the founder of Jainism although there is no real founder. He was a tirthankara (teacher).	Islam has a clear founder in the last prophet while the Eastern religions center on a single important person.
<b>God or Gods</b>	Allah is the Arabic word for one God. Sura 112 in the Qur'an deals with the indivisible oneness of God.	No belief in a personal God. Buddhists believe in gods and angels but they don't believe that gods will save us.	There is no belief in a personal God. Jainism is Pantheistic, they believe that all reality is divine so everything is a god.	There is a real contrast between Western and Eastern concepts of God in the religions chosen. They run the gamut from a single divine God figure to the concept of All Diviine.
<b>The Message of The Religion in One Sentence</b>	There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.	Buddha taught loving kindness and life is suffering. Nothing is permanent. You are responsible for your own spiritual condition.	Ahisma – extreme non violence is the main principle.	The focus on a God vs the focus on behavior and personal responsibility is a clear difference in these religions.
<b>The Central Problem</b>	To follow the Qur'an which is the word of Allah is the central concern of a devout Muslim.	Life is suffering. The Four Noble Truths describe the existence and reason for suffering and how to end the	The main emphasis is behavior. One must behave so one can avoid contamination of all matter and karma to protect ones	In all three religions correct behavior and following set precepts in order to reach a certain spiritual goal is the problem.

		suffering which leads to Nirvana.	spirituality. Live life following the 5 great Vows	
<b>The Goal of Religious Life</b>	Salvation in Islam means believing in Allah. The goal is Eternal life in heaven with Allah	Attain Nirvana by following the Middle Path.	Attain liberation by following the 5 great vows.	Salvation, nirvana and liberation. We can say they are three different concepts but it is likely that they are close to the same – at their core.
<b>Number of World Followers</b>	1.7 Billion adherents estimated in 2015	535 Million estimated in 2010s	6-7 million followers, although some identify as Hindu so the numbers may be low.	Islam is the largest of the three.
<b>Geographic Distribution</b>	Asia 60%, Middle East and North Africa 20%	Primarily in SE Asia but very distributed worldwide.	Primarily in Asia but distributed worldwide in lower numbers.	The largest numbers of all three religions examined are found in Asia.
<b>One Fundamental Set of Numbers</b>	<p>The number seven (7).</p> <p>There are 7 heavens in Islam.</p> <p>Pilgrims walk around the Kaaba 7 times.</p> <p>They throw 7 pebbles at the Jamarat (devil rocks).</p> <p>They walk between Mt. Safa and Mt. Marwah 7 times (like Hagar did).</p> <p>When a newborn is 7 days old, they are named.</p>	<p>The number four (4).</p> <p>Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) was disturbed by the 4 passing sights. These sights caused him realize there was suffering.</p> <p>The Four Noble Truths are a core teaching.</p> <p>Sangha Day or Fourfold Assembly is celebration of community which is important in Buddhism.</p>	<p>The number five (5).</p> <p>There are 5 Great Vows and 5 Lesser Vows.</p> <p>There are 5 Supreme Beings on the path to liberation.</p> <p>There are 5 colors in the Jain flag.</p>	<p>People like lists or sets as they make concepts easier to remember, they summarize concepts quickly, and allow our brains to more quickly make sense of new information.</p> <p>The information presented in this way stands out from the rest of the narrative of the religion.</p> <p>In this way, a leader can stress these items as important concepts or take-away items.</p> <p>Numbers in nature (Fibonacci) repeat in a way that show mathematical order underlying the seemingly randomness of creation.</p>
<b>One Image That Captures the Essence of the Religion</b>	The image that captures Islam for me is a mosque, with its distinctive dome, the minarets from which the call to prayer comes and the open	The image that captures Buddhism for me is the statue of the Buddha which inspires Buddhists to follow in his path	The image that captures the essence of Jainism is a monk wearing a mask to avoid killing small organisms by inhaling them.	A sacred place, a statue and an aesthetic: these are contrasting images. One focuses on community and prayer, one on devotion to a holy teacher and one focuses on responsibility

	<p>courtyard with a place for ritual washing.</p> 	<p>by following his teachings.</p> 		<p>of the individual on the journey.</p>
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## 2. History And Development

<u>Category or Question</u>	Islam	Buddhism	Jainism	Comparative Analysis?
<b>Origins</b>	<p>Originated in Mecca and Medina in early 7<sup>th</sup> century with Muhammad. Has roots in Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Christianity.</p>	<p>Originated in India. It rose out of the Sramana movement. Buddha founded it in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE</p>	<p>Originated in India in 800-600 BC. It rose out of the Sramana movement. People were rejecting Vedic ritualism and the authority of the Brahmin priests.</p>	<p>The Eastern religions seem to have earlier roots on the surface, but Islam is rooted in the Christian history of Abraham which is much older than the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Jainism is much older that both as it predates Buddhism.</p>
<b>Schisms and Divisions</b>	<p>The Sunni (the Way) believed that Muhammads friend Abu Bakr was the rightful caliph.</p> <p>The Shi'a (Partisans of Ali) believe his cousin Ali was chosen by Allah to rule.</p>	<p>The Theraveda(doctrine of the Elders) believe that you obtain liberation through personal efforts, meditation is vital.</p> <p>The Mahayana(includes Zen, Pure Land, Tibetan) believe that the bodhisattva path is the way to liberation.</p>	<p>The Digambara (sky clad) and Svetambara (white clad) agree on basic tenants. Digambaras believe that women must be reborn as a man before they can achieve liberation, they don't believe monks should wear clothes and worship in a simpler way than Svetambara.</p>	<p>Most religions eventually experience some division as differences in interpretation of scriptures arise and strong opinions are held.</p>
<b>Two Key Historical</b>	<p>Abraham(Ibrahim), the father of the people and Isaac(Ishmael) his</p>	<p>Dalai Lama: the head monk of Tibetan Buddhism and Thich</p>	<p>Mahavira is a tirthankara (teacher) who popularized the ascetic life of</p>	<p>In all three religions, key historical figures include teachers or leaders who were a part of</p>

<b>Figures</b>	son.	Nhat Hanh: Zen master and renowned Buddhist teacher.	a Jain. Atmaramji revived Jainism in the Svetambara sect.	the beginning or the continuation of the spread of the religion.
<b>Two Key Historical Moments</b>	622 CE the Hijra: Muhammad and followers flee to Medina which is the start of the Muslim calendar.  610 CE the Angel Gabriel came to Muhammad and told him to recite the word of God. Muhammad was an illiterate trader at the time.	After 49 days of meditating under a Bodhi tree Buddha achieved enlightenment in the 6 <sup>th</sup> century BCE.  544/545 BCE Buddha died from food poisoning.	The birth and life of Mahavira, the last tirthankara (599-527 BCE)  In 1974 all the Jain sects agreed on the Jain Prateek Chihna as the official symbol.	Life events of the leaders or teachers are often key historical moments in a religion.
<b>Historical Relations with One Other Religion</b>	Both Christianity and Judaism precede Islam and share Abrahamic roots.	Buddhism came out of Hinduism, some say as a reaction to how Hinduism had evolved into a religion with superstitious, corrupt, degenerate practices with worn out rituals.	Jainism and Buddhism both share roots with Sramana, although Jainism began first.	Geographical proximity generally allows shared philosophical roots with other local faiths. Sharing of oral histories by traveling monks and intermarriage also contributed to their commonalities.

### 3. The Sense Of The Sacred

<u>Category or Question</u>	Islam	Buddhism	Jainism	Comparative Analysis?
<b>Sacred texts</b>	The Qur'an is said to be the word of God as spoken to Muhammad.	Tripitaka, Mahayana sutras and the Dhammapada , are canonical texts believed to be sayings of the Buddha.	The Digambara and Svetambara sects both have scriptures. The texts are not considered to have a divine source but are truths that individuals may use to access eternal truths.	Jain and Buddhism share the Sanskrit language which gives them key concepts in common such as karma, dharma and yoga, although each tradition have unique interpretations of them. Both have sacred texts but share and comment on some stories. Eg.The Rama in the Ramayana, (Hindu) was such an influential story that Buddhists and Jains both retold the

<p><b>Quoting Sacred Scripture (Two key quotations)</b></p>	<p>"In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the most Merciful": this is the Bismillah, which is the invocation at the beginning of and most chapters of the Qur'an.</p> <p>"He is Allah, who is One, Allah, the Eternal, Absolute, He neither begets nor is begotten. Nor is there to Him any equivalent.": this is surah 112:1 which affirms the oneness of God. It gives you three times the reward each time you recite it.</p>	<p>"All experiences are preceded by mind, having mind as their master, created by mind." Verse 1, Dhammapada.</p> <p>"There is no meditative absorption, for one without insight. There is no insight, for one without meditative absorption. With both, one is close to Nirvana." Verse 372, Dhammapada.</p>	<p>"There is no knowledge without right faith, No conduct is possible without knowledge, Without conduct, there is no liberation and without liberation, no deliverance." Mahavira Uttaradhyayana Sutra C27.30</p> <p>"Endowed with conduct and discipline, who practices control of self, who throws out all his bondage, He attains the eternal place." Mahavira Uttaradhyayana Sutra C20.52</p>	<p>story in their own way.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the sacred scripture is used to reinforce the right way to behave and believe.</p>
<p><b>One Key Sacred Symbol</b></p>	 <p>This is the word Allah in script. Islam discourages the use of symbols and images of God are forbidden so there is a lot of beautiful art using script.</p>  <p>— The star and crescent are best known symbol but are not Muslim in origin.</p>	 <p>This is Buddha in Chinese script.</p>  <p>The Dharma wheel is an important symbol as it represents the 6 realms of heaven and the Noble</p>	 <p>The Jain Prateek chihna is the official symbol of Jainism.</p>  <p>Ahimsa</p> <p>The symbol represents the basic belief of Jainism which is extreme</p>	<p>Islam doesn't permit idols. Jains do not worship the Tirthankaras, they worship the ideal of their perfection. Buddhists do not believe that Buddha was a god so they aren't worshipping an idol of a God, they are worshipping the Ideal of the Buddha.</p>

		Eightfold Path to achieve liberation from samsara.	non violence.	
<b>Sacred Places: Houses of Worship</b>	Mosques are the sacred houses of worship. The Kaaba is the focus of prayer, the sacred place where all Muslims face when in prayer.	Worship can be done anywhere but temples (sometimes shaped as pagodas) and Stupa are often places of worship..	Pavilions with simplified representations of revered beings are common as houses of worship. Open air shrines are on summits, next to rivers or lakes and below trees.  Impressive temple cities draw thousands of pilgrims to small shrines.	Jainism has ashantanas, which are activities that are not decent in a temple. These echo the sanctity of the Muslim Barahah or holiness.  Islam doesn't permit idols. Jains do not worship the tirthankaras, they worship the ideal of their perfection. Buddhists don't worship the idol of a God, they are worshipping the Ideal of the Buddha.
<b>Sacred Places: Two Key Specific Sites</b>	Mecca is the location of the Kaaba which is the most sacred site in Islam, toward which they face to pray.  Medina is the second holiest city as it is where Muhammad lived for years and also where he died.	Bodhgaya is where Buddha achieved Nirvana under the Bodhi Tree.  Bouddhanath Temple in Kathmandu build over sacred relics of Buddha and is the largest Stupa in Nepal.	Temples on the Shatrunjaya hills in Gujrat are very important sites for worship and pilgrimage.  The Jal Mandir or Water Temple in Pawapuri is a highly revered temple dedicated to Mahavira, the 24 <sup>th</sup> Thirthankara.	Locations which have a connection to a revered teacher or leader are considered sacred in each of these religions.  Followers like to connect to their leaders by journeying to the locations where they are sure the leaders were in the past.
<b>Sacred Officials: Clergy, Monastics, Nuns, Shamans, etc.</b>	Caliphs were leaders after Muhammad died. Imam is a scholar and leader in Sunni, Ayatollah is a major Shia clergyman.	Ordained monks are officials of a sort. Arhats were early disciples of the Buddha.	Jainism has no priests. There are monks and nuns who lead strict and ascetic lives.	Islam has a more structured set of officials and there have been conflicts within the religion around which leader to follow. Buddhist hierarchy has increased over time.
<b>Relationship Between Sacred Officials and the Laity</b>	Caliphs are sacred leaders of the entire community. Ayatollahs are the living scholars who represent the Hidden Imam on earth.  Individuals are to study the Qur'an	Monks renounce the world but they are dependent on the generosity of the laity for food.  Supporting a monk is a way to develop merit and so it	Temple worship is important to lay Jains. Svetambara Jain temples have priests but they are only there to help with rituals and don't have special status in the eyes of the divine. Monks and nuns	Generally, all three religions encourage individuals to study the doctrine and follow it.

	and follow the word of Allah.	encourages the laity to perform this duty.	depend on charity for their food.	
<b>Sacred Times: Two Important Sacred Festivals</b>	<p>Eil ul Adha or Festival of Sacrifice commemorates the binding /ordered sacrifice of Ishmael.</p> <p>Eid al-Fitr celebrates the end of fasting and is an official festival.</p>	<p>Vesak is the birthday of Buddha and is the most important festival.</p> <p>Sangha Day or Fourfold Assembly is celebration of community and is the second most important festival.</p>	<p>Mahavira Jayanti celebrates the day of Mahavira's birth.</p> <p>Paryushana is a time of reflection and repentance for the Jain devotee. This festival consists of eight days of intensive fasting, repentance and pujas.</p>	<p>Jains don't celebrate by fasting and meditating while Muslims celebrate the end of fasting. They all celebrate in community with others of their faith.</p>
<b>Sacred Time: Other Separation of Sacred from Profane Time</b>	<p>Ramadan is the month of fasting which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Fasting is an important purification ritual.</p> <p>Wudu, or ritual ablutions are a purification done before prayer.</p>	<p>Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are always present and active in the world so all time is sacred.</p> <p>There are a wide range of rituals and ceremonies. Meditation is the main way to spend sacred time.</p>	<p>Extreme asceticism is practiced by Jains.</p> <p>Sallenkhana or last vow is a way that a very devout Jain can remove karma from his soul, speeding liberation. They slowly fast to their death. It is also called Santhara.</p>	<p>Jain and Buddhism have similar views of ascetic life, set within their individual religious systems. Some monastic rituals and meditation practices are similar in structure.</p>
<b>Sacred Ritual: Daily</b>	<p>Muslims pray five times daily. It is one of the Pillars of Islam.</p>	<p>Meditation is practiced in most forms of Buddhism. Mantras are used to focus the mind. Prayer beads or prayer wheels or flags may be used. Puja is a daily ritual in Theraveda.</p>	<p>Daily reciting of the Namokara mantra serves as a gesture of respect to spiritually advanced people. Daily practice includes following the five vows and the three jewels: Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The 6 essential duties are to be followed by Jain householders and are: worship, following preachings, study, discipline, meditation and charity.</p>	<p>Prayer vs meditation, all three religions have daily requirements.</p>

<b>Sacred Ritual: Weekly</b>	On Fridays Muslims go to the mosque for congregational prayers at midday if possible. Men are expected while it is optional for women.	Meditation is practiced in most forms of Buddhism. Mantras are used to focus the mind. Prayer beads or prayer wheels or flags may be used.	There is no specific weekly ritual to follow. The daily life of a Jain continues.	Muslims have a specific weekly ritual though Buddhists and Jains may follow local customs and are focused on continuing their daily rituals.
<b>Life Ritual: Birth</b>	Babys are given a taste of something sweet. They hear the call to prayer as the first words whispered in their ear. Males are circumcised. Aqiqah: When a newborn is 7 days old, their head is shaved, they are given a name and then sheep are slaughtered.	Buddhists don't have a religious ritual to mark a birth, but they may have a ritual specific to their country. E.g. In Sri Lanka, Theravada Buddhists take a newborn for blessing to the temple on the full moon or another favorable day.	Snatra Puja is a ritual related to the birth of Tirthankara (teachers) and although Jains do not have a specific birth ritual for their faith they do celebrate by reciting prayers, fasting and meditation. They may also follow local customs.	Muslims have a specific birth ritual though Buddhists and Jains are likely to follow local customs by taking the baby to temple or other rituals.
<b>Life Ritual: Initiation</b>	In order to become a Muslim, you say the Shahadah and believe. There are internet sites where you can become a Muslim although it is better to attend a mosque.	Laity may become a Buddhist by declaring the Three Refuges. To become a Buddhist monk, a novice shaves their head, wears yellow robes, shows respect to ordained monks and declares the Three Refuges.	Jain rites of passage include birth, initiation, marriage and death.  Three phases are : separation, threshold and incorporation. At each of these stages Jains celebrate by fasting, meditation and prayer, reading sacred scriptures.	Within Islam and Buddhism, there is a need to declare your faith with an initiation and Jains live their faith. There is no baptismal initiation unless they follow local custom.
<b>Life Ritual: Marriage</b>	The groom's father pays the bride Mahr, like a dowry. The ceremony is a nikah and usually is not in a mosque. It is a very simple exchange of vows. Cultural differences add rituals that are not specifically Muslim. Polygamy is allowed in Islam but may not be	Monks often bless the couple but can't be a marriage celebrant. No official religious ceremony for marriage though a secular ceremony is often performed by another official.	Jain rites of passage include birth, initiation, marriage and death.  Three phases are : separation, threshold and incorporation. At each of these stages Jains celebrate by fasting, meditation and prayer, reading sacred	All three religions have a ceremony for marriage although they may follow local customs for Buddhists and Jains.

	allowed in certain countries.		<p>scriptures</p> <p>Many Jains follow local traditions for rites of passage where there are no specific ceremony as long as they follow Jain principles.</p>	
<b>Life Ritual: Death</b>	<p>The dying person should say the shahadah. After death, the eyes and jaws are closed, the body is washed 3 times and shrouded. Burial should be asap. Embalming is not allowed. Cremation is forbidden. Only men are allowed to be present at the burial. The body is placed on its right side, facing mecca. It is prohibited to place a large monument on the grave. Widows mourn for four months and ten days.</p>	<p>Cremation was common as the Buddha was cremated. Funerals are simple, meditation may be used and a sharing of merits. Mourners hope the deceased are one step closer to Nirvana.</p> <p>Monks chant to comfort the dying and to release the dead person's energies and they may attend the funeral.</p> <p>Buddhism teaches rebirth but not reincarnation as it does not recognize a universal self that reappears in a new incarnation.</p>	<p>Reincarnation occurs instantly upon death.</p> <p>A short simple ceremony to celebrate the passing on of the jiva to the next incarnation is done.</p> <p>Fasting, meditation, chanting, and prayer may occur.</p> <p>Many Jains follow local traditions for rites of passage where there are no specific ceremony as long as they follow Jain principles.</p>	<p>Islam has a complex ritual and forbids cremation while both other religions advocate cremation.</p> <p>Jains and Buddhists don't mourn – they meditate or chant - as they are pragmatic about death. They consider it a passing to the next life or a release from this one.</p> <p>Islam has the most ritual and rules around death.</p>
<b>Sacred Objects</b>	<p>The Quran is extremely sacred as it is the word of Allah. Images of Allah are prohibited. Artists use calligraphy extensively in beautiful ways to express the sense of sacred. The Kaaba in Mecca is a sacred shrine. Artifacts believed to be Muhammad's belongings are preserved as sacred objects.</p>	<p>Begging bowl of a monk symbolizes the Buddha's teachings. A Buddha image is sacred to Mahayana Buddhists. The mandala represents the universe and impermanence as they are often destroyed just after constructed.</p>	<p>Brahmadeva, snake stones or memorial stones. Natural objects such as round pebbles, coconuts or flowers.</p> <p>Rare figural representations of Jinas or Jain martyrs are sacred but rare.</p>	<p>Jains and Buddhists revere objects but Muslims hold the Qur'an in high esteem as a book of the word of God.</p>

<p><b>Purity and Taboo (Rituals of Purification?)</b></p>	<p>Ritual washing before prayer is wudu.  Ritual state of purity during the Hajj.</p>	<p>Cleansing rituals include offerings using an offering bowl and meditation with a butter lamp or drilbu (bell) for focus.</p>	<p>Confession, aestheticism and fasting are purification rituals.</p>	<p>Attaining a state of purity involves some sort of ritual in all three religions.</p>
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#### 4. Theology

<u>Category or Question</u>	Islam	Buddhism	Jainism	Comparative Analysis?
<p><b>Central Teachings</b></p>	<p>The Five Pillars are basic acts that are the foundation of Islamic Life. 1. Shahada-Belief in one God, Allah.  2. Salat – Five daily prayer times.  3. Zakat- alms giving.  4. Sawm-fasting at Ramadan.  5. Hajj-pilgrimage to Mecca.</p>	<p>Life is Suffering. Suffering comes from attachment. Liberation comes from extinguishing attachment. The solution is to follow the Eightfold Path or the Middle Way.</p>	<p>The Five Great Vows.  1. Ahimsa-non violence  2. Satya-truth  3. Asteya-honesty  4. Brachmachanya-celibacy  5. Aparigraha-no possessions</p>	<p>There are basic rules in each of these religions. Some of the rules are intended to help followers live in harmony with society and the world and some of the rules are intended to support them in attaining spiritual goals.</p>
<p><b>Nature of the Divine</b></p>	<p>God is Oneness and that Oneness is central to the nature of Allah, who is the one God of all time and all humans.</p>	<p>Buddhists do not believe in the concept of a single divine being. The devotion to Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are one tradition. They believe in the existence of gods and the miraculous, as they appear in the telling of many Buddhist tales.</p>	<p>Jainism is Pantheistic, which means they don't believe in a distinct god or a higher power. They believe that all reality is divine, so everything is potentially a god.</p>	<p>The Divine exists although the concept of the divine differs – from a single God to a fully Divine universe.</p>

<p><b>Is there a central sacred story that is the most important one?</b></p>	<p>The stories of Abraham are important, especially the binding, but the story where Muhammad had his first vision from Allah through the archangel Gabriel is the most important one.</p>	<p>The moment where the Buddha achieves Nirvana is important. So is the first Turning of the Wheel of Dharma at Sarnath where Buddha gave his first sermon.</p>	<p>The moment when Mahavira attained enlightenment and became a teacher to all Jains.</p>	<p>Enlightenment and visions, there is always the element of divine belief in sacred stories. I chose these stories as they seem to me to be the moment when the wheel turned – the moment when a shift toward the beginning of the religion occurred.</p>
<p><b>Structure of the Universe</b></p>	<p>God created the Earth including humans. This is the observable universe.</p> <p>In the unseen universe: 7 heavens and a vast universe, Allah, the angels, Heaven and Hell.</p>	<p>The 6 realms are: Heaven, the Human realm, the Titan realm, the realm of Hungry Ghosts, the Animal realm and Hell.</p> <p>They have always existed.</p> <p>They are depicted on the Wheel of Life or Dharma.</p>	<p>The universe we perceive is not an illusion. Nothing is destroyed or created, they change form</p> <p>It has 5 parts: The supreme abode, the upper world, the middle world, the lower world, the base.</p> <p>There are 5 substances in the universe.</p>	<p>Islam and Buddhism have a complicated view of the universe with layers or realms. Jains do as well, but they also believe that the universe is an illusion. They also don't define Heaven specifically. Buddhists don't use the word Hell, but some of the worlds sound hellish.</p>
<p><b>Creation Stories</b></p>	<p>The Qur'an tells us Allah created the universe including humans. The creation story of Adam and Eve is part of the Islamic faith.</p> <p>The Ahmadiyya Muslims promote evolutionary theory.</p>	<p>There is a creation story in the Rig Veda where existence comes out of non existence but there is no God of creation. Space and time are cyclical.</p>	<p>The universe has always been here and will always exist. They don't believe in a God creator.</p>	<p>The contrast of a single creator of all in Islam vs existence just appearing vs a universe that has always existed. These are three positions on a the same line.</p>
<p><b>Structure of Time</b> <b>How old is the universe</b></p>	<p>The Qur'an says one day on Earth is 50,000 years.</p>	<p>Existence is endless. The wheel of life symbolizes the never ending and never beginning time.</p>	<p>The universe has no beginning or ending.</p> <p>Kala is the substance of time and is one of the six astikaya, or substances that the universe is made up of.</p>	<p>They are unanimous in believing that the universe is very old, the Eastern religions consider that it is endless.</p>

<p><b>Nature of Our World (What type of world do we live in?)</b></p>	<p>The Qur'an says that Allah created the Heavens and the earth and everything in between them in 6 days. Allah is in full control of what happens in this world and beyond.</p>	<p>World is full of suffering.</p>	<p>The world is illusion.</p>	<p>There is a strong contrast between the control of Allah and the illusory world of the East.</p>
<p><b>Afterlife</b></p>	<p>There is a focus on the importance of the afterlife instead of this world, (sura 55). Muslims believe in the soul and a day of judgment where humans will be divided by Paradise and Hell</p> <p>Humans have free will and this life prepares us for eternal life to come.</p> <p>Warriors that die in service of Allah will be rewarded with Paradise.</p>	<p>Buddha says it's pointless to have too much speculation or to seek to know too much. The parable of the poisoned arrow describes his views on speculation about the afterlife. (p 95 The World's Religions)</p> <p>The soul can be reborn into six interlinked realms, Heaven, humanity, titans, ghosts, animal and hell.</p>	<p>Jains believe that your soul (jiva) is separate from matter and reincarnation is instant.</p> <p>The many kinds of karma attach physically to your soul and determine your next life. Ultimately you could achieve liberation.</p>	<p>There is a concept of an ultimate afterlife, a Paradise, Liberation or Heaven.</p>
<p><b>Problem Of Evil</b></p>	<p>Evil is based on the nature of man. The guidance of the Qur'an shows the way to avoid evil.</p>	<p>Buddhists do not sort people by good and evil but teach that suffering is the result of greed, isolation, emptiness. Karma determines the effect of action.</p>	<p>Destructive karma or evil would seriously affect your jiva and cause you to be reincarnated into a less desirable situation.</p>	<p>Behaviour of man seems to be the source of evil in all three faiths.</p>
<p><b>Violence and Non-Violence</b></p>	<p>Jihad means struggle, not holy war. The Qur'an advocates peace in some suras and violence against those that would prevent you from practicing your faith in others.</p>	<p>Ahimsa means non injury and non killing and is an important spiritual doctrine shared by Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. This is the first of the five precepts.</p>	<p>Ahimsa, or non violence toward all living things is a primary tenant of Jainism. They take care when eating, breathing and walking to ensure they do not hurt anything. Non violence includes thoughts and actions as well.</p>	<p>There is a time and place for violence in Islam and Buddhism to protect your right to worship in your faith or to protect your dharma. In Jainism, it is forbidden.</p>

<p><b>A Role For Martyrs?</b></p>	<p>Muslims who have died fulfilling jihad are honored as martyrs. The act of martyrdom is istishhad.</p>	<p>Tibetan Buddhist monks have been setting themselves on fire in a desperate attempt to bring attention to the plight of their people under China's occupation.</p>	<p>Pavilions commemorate Jain martyrs from the period of Islamic invasions.</p>	<p>Martyrdom is a two sided sword in all religions. There is a tendency to honor them when they are killed protecting the faith.</p>
<p><b>A Role For A Messiah Figure?</b></p>	<p>Islam suggests that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah sent from God to call Jews back to the true faith. Jesus the Messiah is mentioned in the Qur'an.</p>	<p>Maitreya will return and teach the Dharma again. He is also called Ajita.</p>	<p>There are no expectations of another teacher coming in the future.</p>	<p>There is no expectation of another future Messiah in two of these religions. Buddhism is the exception.</p>
<p><b>Universalistic vs. Particularistic Orientation?</b>Universality: all-inclusive, complete, comprehensive.- emphasizes the universal fatherhood of God and the final salvation of all souls  Particularism: exclusive attention to your interests. -divine grace is provided only for the elect.</p>	<p>Islam is inclusive of Abrahamic religions as "People of the Book"(sura 3). Liberal views in Islam are that all monotheistic religions have a chance of salvation (sura 2:62) But sura 9:5 refers to the killing of idolators.  The Ummah is a universal community bond of faith that links all Muslims in the world.</p>	<p>Buddhism is considered a universalist system as it is generally inclusive, either absorbing other faiths or accepting parity with them.</p>	<p>Jainism is universal in that each of us are responsible for our own liberation. There is particularism when it comes to women as they are not considered able to achieve liberation without reincarnating as a man first.</p>	<p>The two Eastern religions are generally more inclusive of all, which makes them more universalistic. Islam includes only a specific people.</p>
<p><b>A Theological Conundrum</b></p>	<p>How to adapt to the western world and still keep following the Qur'an. <b>The Verse of the Sword</b> (9:5). This verse is most frequently quoted when justifying jihad or Holy War against idolaters. Critics of Islam say that this verse prevents Muslims from living in community</p>	<p>How to overcome the corruption and racism found within Buddhist monks in powerful positions in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar for example. How to find their way back to the original</p>	<p>How to attract followers to this small ascetic religion that is difficult to follow.</p>	<p>I couldn't find a contradiction such as the virgin birth in Christianity</p>

	with non Muslims as it tells them to seek non Muslims out and kill them. Supporters put it in the context of the time it was written and claim that it was written to allow Muslims to kill in self defense against those who would prevent them from worshipping as a Muslim.	teachings of the Buddha.		
<b>Your Own Category (List your own comparative theological theme here)</b>	Muhammad goes with Gabriel to heaven.	Buddha story of a trip to heaven to visit his mother.	Mahavira experienced past lives so he may have visited heaven from earth.	

## 5. Social Issues

<u>Category or Question</u>	Islam	Buddhism	Jainism	Comparative Analysis?
<b>Social Justice</b>	Muhammad preached the need to implement social justice for the vulnerable, women, children and orphans. This is sometimes considered the "greater jihad"..	There is a strong social justice ethic that comes from the principle of compassionate action.	Jainism argues that we can never be rich when others are poor. The concept of social justice and equality are at it's core.	All of these religions have a strong social justice ethic.
<b>Gender Relations</b>	Muslims treated women as equals in the context of their time, but they both supported non feminist views. (Sura 4) This sura starts with the assumption of equality but then confirms that women are not equal. S4 has been used to enact	Women were ordained at one point but are no longer. Buddha treated women as equals and says women have the same potential as a man. However, nuns must pay	Jain is in many ways dedicated to equality. Women are not equal in this religion though. The Digambara sect believes that women must be reborn as men in order to achieve liberation.	Women aren't exactly equal in any of the three religions although they may have started out that way. Current attitudes have influenced beliefs about equality.

	legislation requiring women to have a male guardian to leave the home, open a bank account, enroll in school. Moderates interpret it that men are to be supporters of women. Men are instructed that they can strike a women in S4. Again, different interpretations exist as to when and with how much force.	tribute to monks.	Jains believe that women are intrinsically harmful (himsic) because of menstruation which is considered a sign of impurity.  They believe that women are less able to release from attachments because of their ability to bear children.	
<b>Homosexuality</b>	The Qur'an considers homosexuality a punishable crime and a sin.	The Dalai Lama says homosexuality is wrong for Buddhists.	Jainism shuns sexuality except for sex within a marriage. Homosexuality is considered the same way as pre marital sex.	It is a no across the board. Islam doesn't consider the fact of homosexuality a crime, it considers the act a crime.
<b>FREE Will</b>	Allah tells Muslims that they are responsible to take the words of the Qur'an and interpret them for themselves. (Sura 10). In verse 100, God brings disgrace on those who do not take the time to think for themselves	Buddhism feels that we may be freed from the control of our karma by practicing the 8 fold path. Our karma determines much of the course of our lives which reduces our free will. There is a Koan about a fox that ponders the meaning of free will	Jainism teaches personal responsibility for one's decisions, self reliance and individual effort alone to attain liberation.	In all three religions free will to follow is taught. Free will to follow isn't exactly freedom.

## 6. Miscellaneous

<u>Category or Question</u>	<b>Islam</b>	<b>Buddhism</b>	<b>Jainism</b>	<b>Comparative Analysis?</b>
<b>Process of Conversion</b>	Say the Shahadah (the testimony) and believe.	Repeat the Three Refuges three times and you are	You become Jain by observing the Five Vows.	Islam and Buddhism require a statement of belief in order to convert. Jains require that you

		converted.		live the life.
<b>Role of Pilgrimage</b>	Hajj, or the once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Hajj is something every devout Muslim should do at least once in their lifetime.	Pilgrimages are associated with the life and teachings of Buddha. The Buddha emphasized the importance of pilgrimages to purification of accumulated karma.	Pilgrimages in the footsteps of the sacred teachers are considered very important to Jains. Becoming a wanderer who is free of attachments is a way of life for a Jain monk.	How and where is most important to all religions as they follow in the footsteps of their holy teachers or make the journey to a holy site.
<b>The Mystic Tradition</b>	Sufism is an Islamic practice where Muslims search for knowledge through direct personal experience of Allah. They are ascetics, who repent, practice abstinence, poverty and meditate in specific ways.	Buddhism and Jainism share roots in Sramanic traditions which taught the way to knowledge was through meditation and emphasized asceticism.  Zen is the meditation school of Buddhism, which puts contemplation as a discipline at its centre.	Jains have always stressed the ascetic path to spiritual purity, fighting against the passions and senses of the body to gain enlightenment.	All faiths have practitioners who follow strict ascetic practices in order to remove themselves from bodily needs. They are attempting to move closer to their truth.  I have not found a religion that focuses on indulgences as a religious practice.
<b>Food and Diet</b>	Food is considered halal (lawful) or haram (bad). Pork is haram, alcohol is also forbidden.	Vegetarian is recommended in general and fasting is observed.	Vegetarian and strict adherence to non violence requires inspection of food to ensure no harm is done to minute living things. Ritual starvation is considered a sacred death.	All three religions restrict diet in some way and fasting is routine and recommended. Vegetarianism is often connected to the principal of non violence or loving kindness.  Diet restrictions sometimes are a result of lack of refrigeration or local availability in historical times.
<b>Two Factoids (Strange but True)</b>	Annually at the Dubai National Qur'an Awards children recite the Qur'an from memory to win prizes.  To many westerners it is strange to	Some Buddhists believe in the Pure Land which is a parallel universe where you can practice Buddhism in perfect	Jain monks pull their hair out by the roots on initiation.  Beautiful masterpieces of Jain architecture are the beautiful and	There are many strange factoids about all of these religions. They are strange to me but likely not strange to their followers.  Also, new knowledge may seem strange at first

	realize that Islam shares the same Abrahamic roots of Christianity and Judaism.	harmony with masters. Buddha became a Christian saint (St. Josaphat). Maybe this is a strange factoid about Christianity.....	delicately carved Delwara temples on Mount Abu in Rajasthan. The masons are said to have been paid according to the weight of marble dust removed.	and then accepted when you learn more about something. So strange is a matter of perspective.
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## 7. Concluding Thoughts

I chose Islam, Buddhism and Jainism as the three religions to compare for this assignment. Islam was chosen because it is one of the Abrahamic religions, focused on Mecca and Medina with roots in Israel. Buddhism and Jainism originated from the same Sramana movement in India, however they have developed differently, resulting in some interesting comparisons.

The purpose of religion is essentially the same no matter what the creed. Beliefs provide followers with an orderly model of the universe. The creation story that is told in many oral histories helps us understand how we came to exist. Knowing that there is an all powerful being that is responsible for what is occurring in our lives can give us a sense of comfort, reducing anxiety. We can relate to many of the shared experiences of humanity.

Religious law provides firm guidelines for behaviour in a community. It gives us the moral code to follow; we understand the difference between right and wrong. The guidelines for punishment are often set out, allowing people to choose between following the law and suffering the consequences. It removes the burden of decision making from people. God will decide. I believe that is not possible to truly understand people and their culture without having a good look at their motivations. Religious belief is one of the strongest motivators: Eternal suffering vs. Eternal peace.

Some religions focus more on personal responsibility for each individual's salvation. In each of these religions, the practice includes the performing of some sort of prayer, ritual, meditation or chanting and the following of a prescribed way of life. Often the ritual

is as important as the belief because it is soothing and gives comfort.

Religion is a powerful force which can unite a population or it can divide regions that would otherwise be allies. A global congregation, acting in unison, can affect events in a major way, outside of national or continental divisions. It is important to be aware of current beliefs and religious trends so that you can participate in a meaningful way.

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