SCOP Indian Religion
Version 3.0

For the purpose of these sheets, religions are categorized as belief systems that are still widely practiced. Green-shaded terms are the most frequent subjects to appear in SCOP question sets. Important terms are marked in bold; a bolded term is worth researching online for more information.

Indian Religions
The following religions focus on samsara (the cycle of life, death, and rebirth) and how karma (positive or negative actions and intent) and dharma (the laws and duties that govern a person's life) influence a person's path through samsara. Many terms below are used by more than one of these religions, but are listed with the religion for which they are most often used as a clue.

Buddhism

Divisions
Theravada; Mahayana (including Zen, Pure Land, and Tibetan)

Beliefs
Enlightenment brings a person to Nirvana (a state without suffering, the end of samsara). A Buddha is someone who has achieved enlightenment. Gautama Buddha’s teachings include the Four Noble Truths (including the Eightfold Path), and the Middle Way. Bodhisattvas are enlightened individuals who remain on Earth to help others become enlightened.

Texts
Triпитaka (or "Tipitaka" or "Three Baskets"), the Theravada version of which is the Pali Canon. The Tripitaka contains the Sutta Pitaka, a collection of Sutras (or "Suttas" or "sayings"). Some notable sutras are nicknamed Lotus, Diamond, and Platform

Rituals and Practices
Meditation, accompanied by the recitation of mantras or reflection on koans

Stories and Figures
Siddharta Gautama (Gautama Buddha), the first Buddha of the current Buddha cycle, and the recognized founder of Buddhism. At the Buddha's birth, a seer named Asita announced that he would become either a great king or a great religious leader. His father raised him in seclusion in a pleasure palace, away from human suffering, to ensure that he became a king. After encountering three people representing age, poverty, and sickness, he left the palace to live an ascetic life. He later shifted from pure asceticism to the Middle Way (a more moderate way to avoid self-indulgence), and achieved enlightenment after meditating under a Bodhi tree.

Hinduism

Beliefs
Moksha is the condition of escaping samsara. Gods govern various aspects of human life (see "Stories and Figures" below).

Texts
Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavad Gita; Vedas; Upanishads

Rituals and Practices
Puja. a prayer ritual

Stories and Figures
The Trimurti consists of three Hindu gods: Brahma (representing creation), Vishnu (preservation), and Shiva (destruction and regeneration).

- Shiva is often depicted with a blue throat, a result of drinking the halahala poison to save the world. He has a destructive third eye. His primary consort is Parvati, and he is the father of the elephant-headed god Ganesh (or Ganesha). His mount is the bull Nandi.
- Vishnu has ten avatars (earthly incarnations), including the blue-skinned Krishna (who serves Arjun as a charioteer in the Bhagavad Gita) and Rama (the hero of the Ramayana). His consort is Lakshmi.
- Brahma (not to be confused with Brahman or Brahmin) has four heads and four arms. He was born from a lotus that emerged from Vishnu's navel. His consort is Saraswati, and he rides a swan or goose.

Holidays
- Diwali, a festival of lights that celebrates the birth of Lakshmi.
- Holi, a festival in which celebrants throw colored powders over each other and burn a bonfire to celebrate the defeat of the demon Holika.
Jainism

**Divisions**
Digambara ("sky clad"); Svetambara ("white clad")

**Beliefs**
Ahimsa is the practice of extreme non-violence; to avoid harming insects, some sects sweep in front of them as they walk or wear masks. Some sects do not wear clothing.

**Stories and Figures**
Mahavira is the twenty-fourth Tirthankara (spiritual teacher).

Sikhism

**Beliefs**
Founded on the principle that there is truth in every religion and that it is essential to establish a relationship with the divine.

**Texts**
The Adi Granth (respectfully called the Guru Granth Sahib)

**Rituals and Practices**
The Five Ks are the five signs of Sikh faith that Sikhs must wear. They are:
- **Kirpan**, a symbolic blade. Kirpans vary in size from small daggers to near-sword length.
- **Kesh**, uncut hair, which is often wound under a turban.
- **Kanga**, a comb.
- **Kara**, an iron bracelet.
- **Kachera**, a cotton undergarment.

Male Sikhs take on the name Singh as a surname or a middle name; female Sikhs take on the name Kaur.

**Stories and Figures**
Ten gurus (holy teachers), including Guru Nanak (the first Sikh guru) and Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Sikh guru). The eleventh and permanent guru is the holy text Adi Granth, also called the Guru Granth Sahib.

**Holy Sites**
Sikh holy buildings are gurdwaras, which welcome people of all faiths (or no faith). The Golden Temple at Amritsar is the holiest gurdwara.