

Introduction To The Major WORLD RELIGIONS

RELIGION according to the **Oxford Dictionary** means : *The belief in and worship of a superhuman power or powers, especially a God or gods : a particular system of faith and worship : a pursuit or interest followed with great devotion.*

According to report published by **CNBC18TV**, under the heading **World Religion Day 2023 – History and Significance**, it mentions that : *There are nearly **4,000 recognised faiths** around the globe. However, almost **75 percent** of the people **follow one of the five main faiths** which include **Buddhism**, **Hinduism**, **Christianity**, **Judaism**, and **Islam**.*

Only two major religions in the world, **Christianity** and **Islam** respectively, **have adherents** that **constituting more than 50%** of the **world population**.

Based on the above understanding, it means that of the **75%** world population that adheres to a religion, **50% plus** belong only to Christianity and Islam respectively and from remaining **25%** of the adherents to the religions you have people following Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and the remaining about 3995 religions recognized in the world.

According to many populations census done by reputed international organizations like the Pew Research Centre etc., they believe that by 2050, Islam will either equal or exceed Christianity based on the number of adherents of Islam, that is the Muslims.

Experts of religious studies have **broadly classified** the **Major World Religions** as **The Non-Semitic Religions** and **The Semitic Religions**. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are studied under Semitic religions while remaining 3997 world religions are studied under Non-Semitic religions or merely as Ethical Systems.

Let us now understand the categorization of the major religions of the world based on Non-Semitic and Semitic classifications.

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NON-SEMITIC World Religions are said to be those religions that are followed by the **Non-Semites**. Non-Semitic world religions are further categorized as the **NON-VEDIC RELIGIONS** and the **VEDIC RELIGION**.

NON-SEMITIC NON-VEDIC RELIGIONS are those religions that **do not believe** in the **Vedas** to be their religious Scriptures and do not believe the Vedas to be the Revealed Book of God. The **most popular Non-Semitic Non-Vedic religions** are **Zoroastrianism** *also called as Parsiism, Sikhism, and Jainism*.

All these three most popular Non-Semitic Non-Vedic religions have their maximum number of followers living in India.

Although **Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism** have also been included in Non-Semitic Non-Vedic religions, but these are actually **Ethical Systems** because all of them i.e., Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism do not believe in any concept of god. All these three most popular ethical systems have their maximum number of followers living in China, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Taiwan, Vietnam and Japan.

NON-SEMITIC VEDIC RELIGION has only one religion in this category and that is referred to as **Hinduism**. This is because, those who religiously refer to themselves as Hindus, generally **believe** in the **Vedas** to be the **Revealed Books of God**.

SEMITIC World Religions are also called **Semites** because according to the Bible, they are supposed to be the children of **Shem** and Shem is supposed to be one of the three sons of Prophet Noah (referred in Qur'an as Nooh[a]). It is mentioned in the **Holy Bible** in the Old Testament : 1st Book of Pentateuch : **Genesis** : Ch : 09 V: 18, 19 : *And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were **Shem**, and **Ham**, and **Japheth** : and Ham is the father of Canaan (Canaan is the old name for what is now referred as Palestine). These are the three sons of Noah and of them was the whole earth overspread.*

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There are only three major or popular religions that are recognized as Semitic Religions and they are **Judaism**, **Christianity** and **Islam** and these three religions are also popularly referred to as **Abrahamic Faiths** because the followers of all the Semitic Religions believe in Abraham as the Prophet of God. The **salient features** of these three religions includes that

- all of them believe in only One God as the Creator of entire Universe
- none of them believes in idol worship or image worship according to their respective Religious Scriptures and strictly forbid making any form of god
- all of them believe in Religious Books Revealed from God to Prophets and Messengers of God to Guide mankind
- all of them believe in a Day of Judgment for recompensating deeds

IS ISLAM TRULY A SEMITIC RELIGION ?

So, my answer to this question is **NO ! ISLAM IS NOT AND ISLAM CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED UNDER THE CATEGORY OF SEMITIC RELIGIONS**. This is **simply because**, Semitic religions exist after the birth of Shem and not before that. But, **Islam** is a **Universal religion** and **not limited to person or region**. **Islam is the only religion** that **does not derive its name like all other religions** on the face of the earth do, **from a person** or from a *certain* **culture** **or** from a **region**. Moreover, **Islam is a religion since time immemorial**, since the very **first man Adam** put his foot on the face of the earth. All Prophets and Messengers from **Adam**[pbuh] **till the last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were Muslims by faith** and Muslim simply means the man/woman submitting own will to the Will of AlMighty Allah – *The God*.

Allah says in **Al Qur'an** : Sura **Imran** : 03 Aayat : **19** : *For a surety the Only Religion in the Sight of Allah is Islam.....* And in Allah Says in **Al Qur'an** : Sura **Imran** : 03 Aayat : **85** : *If anyone returns to Allah (on Day of Resurrection) with any religion except Islam then it shall never be accepted of him / her and such shall be on Judgment Day in catastrophic loss.*