This glossary of terms is designed to help teachers as a reference point for their subject knowledge. It is very closely based upon the SCAA Glossary of Terms for Religious Education (originally published in 1994, revised carefully since then) which was drawn up in consultation with members of the faith communities concerned.

An additional section on non-religious world views including Humanism has been added: special thanks to Humanists around the country who have helped us to refine this.
**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.

**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.

**Apocalyptic 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).

**Brotherhood**
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.

**Chrsimation**
(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**

**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 wrongdoing. (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.
Cons substantiation
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
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 Icon
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 Nonconformist).

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 18th century.

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 17th century.

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 century 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 century.

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. Italicised phrases represent a literal translation. Bold type indicates that this is also a glossary entry.

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
Anapanasamrti
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; soul. Insubstantiality; denial of a real or permanent self.

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

Arahant, 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.

Ata
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
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.

Karma
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 treatment of karma as different from the Hindu understanding of karma.

Karuna
Compassion.

Kesa (Japanese)
The robe of a Buddhist monk, nun, or priest.

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

Khant
Kshanti
Patience; forbearance.

Kilesa
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-yan (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).

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

Metta Sutta (Pali)
Buddhist scripture which describes the nature of loving kindness.

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

Metta Sutta
Buddhist scripture which describes the nature of loving kindness.

Metteya
Maitrey
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.

Nakama
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 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, of the first of the Five Khandhas.

Sakya
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.

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
Upeksa
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.

Athrav Veda
The fourth of the Vedas.

Atman
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 it is 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
Brahmacarin
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 Brahman and Brahma).

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

Dwarka
Dvaraka
Dwaraka
Pilgrimage site on the west coast of India.

Ganesha
Ganesh
Ganupati
Ganapat
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
Gṛha
The second stage of Hindu life; one who belongs to that stage, that is, the householder (grihasthi).

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
Janmashmi
The 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
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.

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

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

Seva
Seva
Service, either to the divine or to humanity.

Shaivism
Saivism
The religion of Hindus who are devotees of Shiva.

Shakti
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, Srti
That which is heard. AA 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/hersenses). 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), 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
Vaishya
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
Banaras
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.
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).

Akhirah
Everlasting life after death - the hereafter.

Akhlaq
Conduct, character, attitudes and ethics.

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-Aqsa

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.

al-hamdu-li-Llah
All praise belongs to Allah. Frequently used as an expression of thanks to Allah.

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.

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).

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.

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).

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.

As (Salat-ul-Asr)
Mid-afternoon salah which may be performed from late afternoon until a short while before sunset.

As-Salatu-’Laykum
Peace be upon you. An Islamic greeting.

Ayah (sing.)
A unit within a Surah of the Qur’an.

Barakah
Blessings.

Bilal
The first Mu’adhdhin 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-Fitr
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 (Radhia-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.

Ibils
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 unwoven 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.

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.

Ism’a’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-Khilafa 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.

Mihrah
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, successionship 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.

**Sadaqah**
Voluntary payment or good action for charitable purposes.

**Shi'ah**
Followers. Muslims who believe in the Imamah, successionship of Ali (Radhi Allahu anhu - may Allah be pleased with him) 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.

**Tawra**
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’yy).

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.

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).

Haggadah  
Haggadah  
Telling. A book used at Seder.

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

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.

Havdalah  
Distinction. Ceremony marking the conclusion of Shabbat.

Hebrew  
Ivrit  
Ancient Semitic language; language of the Tenakh (Hebrew Scriptures) and used by Jews for prayer and study. Also, 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.

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.

Moshav
Moshavim
Collective village or farm

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 19th and early 20th century 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.

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

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

Shatnez
Shaatnez
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

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
Tephillin
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.

Tzizit
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.
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.

Amrit ceremony
Amrit Sanskar
Amrit Pahul
Khanda 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
Sixth Sikh Guru.

Guru Har Krishan
Guru Harkishan
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.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ik Onkar</td>
<td>The first phrase of the <em>Mool Mantar</em>. It is also used as a symbol to decorate Sikh objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japji Sahib</td>
<td>A morning prayer, composed by Guru Nanak, which forms the first chapter of the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jivan Mukt</td>
<td>Enlightened while in the material body; a spiritually enlightened person, freed from worldly bonds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kachera</td>
<td>Traditional underwear/shorts. One of the five Ks (see <em>panj kakke</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakka</td>
<td>Singh of the Punjabi letter K (plural ‘kakke’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangha</td>
<td>Comb worn in the hair. One of the five Ks (see <em>panj kakke</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara</td>
<td>Steel band worn on the right wrist. One of the five Ks (see <em>panj kakke</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karah parshad</td>
<td>Sanctified food distributed at Sikh ceremonies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaur</td>
<td>Princess. Name given to all Sikh females by Guru Gobind Singh (see Singh).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kesh</td>
<td>Uncut hair. One of the five Ks (see <em>panj kakke</em>).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khalsa</td>
<td>The community of the pure. The Sikh community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khanda</td>
<td>Double-edged sword used in the initiation ceremony. Also used as the emblem on the Sikh flag.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirat karna</td>
<td>Earning one’s livelihood by one’s own efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirpan</td>
<td>Sword. One of the five Ks (see <em>panj kakke</em>). ‘Dagger’ should be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtan</td>
<td>Devotional singing of the compositions found in the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtan Sohila</td>
<td>A prayer said before retiring for sleep. It is also used at the cremation ceremony and when the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em> is laid to rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurahit</td>
<td>Prohibitions, for example intoxicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langar</td>
<td>Guru ka Langar. <em>Guru’s kitchen</em>. The gurdwara dining hall and the food served in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mela</td>
<td>Used of Sikh festivals which are not gurpurbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manji</td>
<td>Small platform on which the scripture is placed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manji Sahib</td>
<td>Self-orientated (as opposed to gurmukh).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mul Mantar</td>
<td><em>Basic teaching; essential teaching.</em> The basic statement of belief at the beginning of the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishan Sahib</td>
<td>Sikh flag flown at gurdwaras.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nirbhang</td>
<td>The recitation of specified daily prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panj kakke</td>
<td>The five Ks. The symbols of Sikhism worn by Sikhs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panj piare</td>
<td>(other forms may also be found) <em>The five beloved ones</em>. Those first initiated into the Khalsa; those who perform the rite today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panth</td>
<td>The Sikh community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patases</td>
<td>Sugar bubbles or crystals used to prepare Amrit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td><em>Land of five rivers</em>. The area of India in which Sikhism originated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>Sikh musician who sings compositions from the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahit</td>
<td>Sikh obligations, for example to meditate on God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahit Maryada</td>
<td>Sikh Code of Discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadhsangat</td>
<td>Congregation or assembly of Sikhs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sewa</td>
<td>Service directed at the sadhsangat and gurdwara, but also to humanity in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabad</td>
<td><em>Word</em>. Hymn from the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>; the divine word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Learner; disciple. A person who believes in the ten Gurus and the <em>Guru Granth Sahib</em>, and who has no other religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singh</td>
<td>Lion. Name adopted by Sikh males (see kaur).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. A Sikh name for God.
Humanism Glossary

Humanism is a major ethical non-theistic tradition. This glossary is based on discussions with several members of the British Humanist Association. The glossary is shorter than the others in this guide because there is no need for terms referring to ritual, practice and other aspects of the historic religions. Several different Humanist SACRE representatives have helped us to create this glossary.

(www.humanism.org.uk)

Agnosticism
The word is formed from “a” [without] and “gnosis” [knowledge]. It implies that the existence of a supernatural dimension, including a god or gods, cannot be known.

Atheism
The word is formed from “a” [without] and “theos” [deity, god]. It implies the absence of belief in a god or gods or the denial of the existence of God or gods.

Autonomy
For Humanists, personal autonomy is a phrase used to describe their own freedom or liberty to choose for themselves the best way to live their lives without the need to follow prescribed and unquestionable rules. This personal autonomy must, however, be balanced with the need for social responsibility and the need to respect the rights and freedoms of others.

Ethics and Morality
Humanism views ethics and morality as human constructions that have arisen within communities for social reasons without any supernatural input. As Humanism is naturalistic, there is no reference to supernatural influences or content (such as religious doctrine, divine law or commandments). Humanist ethics is centred on the principle of taking responsibility for one’s actions and for the consequences of that behaviour on others. By emphasising maxims such as the Golden Rule (see below for the Humanist version) Humanism encourages the pro-social attitudes of empathy, care and co-operation and discourages violence and aggression.

Evolution by Natural Selection
This is the scientific explanation for how life developed. The world wide accumulation of vast amounts of evidence from all the sciences establishes evolution as a scientific fact and provides Humanism with information for understanding the natural place of human beings in the world. Intellectually, the theory of evolution by natural selection provides the structure upon which hypotheses may be devised that can be tested and assessed by means of the ‘scientific method’.

Faith
A term frequently used to mean the same as religion. It also implies confidence and trust in the existence and reality of a supernatural domain or spiritual plane of existence.

Freethinkers
Humanists have often chosen this word as a description of their life-stance or world view, following the evidence where it leads. The implied critique of religion is that tradition holds more influence than evidence of many religious people. Humanists, by contrast, keep their thinking free of any ‘chains of tradition’.

God
In some religions, God is the supernatural cause and support of all that exists, the source of morality, and regarded as taking a direct interest in individuals in this life and judging them after death. Where God is thought of as male, this belief can and has reinforced discrimination against females over thousands of years. Humanists are sceptical of the existence of any supernatural being so are either atheists or agnostics.
Golden Rule
Many versions of the Golden Rule exist including those from all major religions. Recognising our common humanity, the version from the British Humanist Association reads; “Treat other people as you’d want to be treated in their situation; don’t do things you wouldn’t want to have done to you.” (BHA, 1999CE)

Happy Human Symbol
The International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) is the international body that coordinates Humanist activity across the world. The IHEU has adopted a symbol known as the ‘Happy Human’. This symbol is widely used by national Humanist organisations and local Humanist groups. It represents the belief that; “There is but one life that we know of and we should influence that life by being happy, and the best way to do that is by making others so!”

Humanism
Humanism is a worldview, lifestance and system of belief based solely on our understanding of the natural world. This includes human feelings, intelligence and creativity and a personal commitment to valuing and co-operating with one another as fellow human beings. Humanism regards people as responsible for themselves and for the societies and ways of life they create. It considers all cultures, including the religions, as human creations, without any supernatural input. Humanists believe that this is the only life we have, so it is infinitely precious, and that by working together we can make it better and more fulfilling for everyone.

Lifestance
A lifestance shows the relationship individuals have with what ultimately guides their lives and the consequences for their own lives and society that flow from this. It is about what they value most and what they do to show it. Taking a naturalistic point of view, Humanists recognise and celebrate the diversity of life and the differences between human beings. For this reason, Humanist organisations promote freedom of thought, conscience and expression, and support the establishment of a secular state in which all citizens are treated equally and impartially.

Meaning and Purpose
Humanism views meaning and purpose in human life solely in naturalistic terms. Having no transcendent or spiritual authority, Humanists must construct for themselves a rationale that makes sense of their existence, gives meaning to their lives and direction to their efforts. Humanist organisations across the world support them in this task. Many Humanists prefer not to ask the question “What is the meaning of life?” as this question implies some external ‘ultimate’ meaning. Instead they prefer to ask questions like “How should I live?” or “What is a good life?”

Naturalism
Humanism is founded on a worldview that explains in evolutionary terms how we come to be as we are biologically and socially. Having a naturalistic perspective, Humanism asserts that the best and most reliable knowledge we have of the world is achieved through human reason, experience and valid evidence. To this is added the creative power of human imagination and feeling. Themes and ideas developed in this way are shared through community story telling which serves to strengthen social bonding and group identity.

Religion
Many Humanists argue that the distinguishing feature of religion is its supernatural aspect. This may include belief in supernatural beings, things, places or powers (e.g. gods; angels; ancestor spirits; demons; souls; transubstantiation; heaven; hell; reincarnation; life after death). Belief in these features requires faith since valid and reliable evidence is lacking. Humanism has no faith in the supernatural so it should not be called a religion. It is a permanent and long standing alternative to all religions.
Scepticism
Many Humanists describe their attitude towards religion as sceptical. This means they have sincere doubt as to the truth of religious beliefs but are open minded and could be persuaded if convincing evidence was forth coming. This scepticism is conveyed by the words of the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776CE) who said, “A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence”.

Secular
This term has a number of different meanings. How it is used in each case requires clarification to avoid confusion.
- Concerned with the affairs of this world; worldly, not sacred
- Sceptical of religious truth; opposed to religion; excluding or rejecting religion.
- A separation of religion and state: The concept of a secular state is very important in Humanism. The idea does not imply that religion is discriminated against by government; only that it is not privileged. This political separation guarantees that the state treats citizens equally irrespective of their religious or non-religious beliefs and ensures that state laws, programmes and practices are inclusive and impartial. In the non-government sector every one’s rights, freedoms and civil liberties are equally protected. Britain is not a secular state because it has an established religion and privileges religious organisations and their representatives. This is the definition of ‘secular’ the BHA adopts.

Spirit
This is a term fundamental to religion but considered by many Humanists to be inappropriate if used in connection with Humanism. The word ‘spirit’ refers to belief in a supernatural intelligence not dependent on a material body such as an immortal soul, ancestor spirit or poltergeist. It appears as one of the three aspects of God in the Christian Trinity; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is also used when referring to mythological beings such as fairies, elves and gnomes. In some religions, priests are engaged to remove evil spirits by means of ritual exorcism. Some Humanists will refer to the ‘human spirit’ as a phrase to describe their feelings or motivation to act in a certain way - in this sense ‘spirit’ has a purely natural meaning.

Science
Science is the enterprise of developing and organising human understanding of the natural world, including humanity, through open enquiry, critical thinking and imagination. All scientific knowledge is provisional and dependent on evidence about the universe and life that can be challenged and tested to confirm or falsify facts and assertions. Being provisional, science does not claim certainty and is open to new information and committed to correcting inaccuracies. Its strictly controlled procedure is known as the scientific method. Humanists use a combination of reliable knowledge informed by science and their own life experience when deciding what their beliefs, values and actions ought to be.

Supernatural
Humanism questions claims and explanations based on phenomena that are;
- of an ‘other worldly’ reality radically different from ordinary experience;
• superior to this world, more powerful than nature, not limited by space, matter or time;
• able to influence, act in or change this world; or
• revealed spiritually, divinely or through occult practices:
  Humanists reject supernatural beliefs such as these on the grounds that they overturn the laws of nature and are subjective, lacking in sound evidence.

System of Belief
A system of belief is a coherent network of beliefs, ideas, values and practices that connects believers and lays the foundation for a community with a shared understanding and united sense of purpose. Humanism is not a religion, but it is a system of belief.

The Big Bang
This is a term used to refer to the natural scientific explanation for the origins of the universe.

Theism
Theism refers to belief in a god or gods or involving a god or gods. Religions that assert there is only one god are monotheistic; those that assert more than one are polytheistic. There were hundreds of gods in the past that are worshipped no longer. Belief in god or gods in modern times shows great variation across the world and there is considerable disagreement in relation to their form and character, even within a single religion. For instance, the god of the three Abrahamic monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is understood differently by each of these faiths and by different denominations or groups within them. Not all religions involve gods; examples are Confucianism, Taoism and major strands of Buddhism and Jainism.

Ultimate Questions
Ultimate questions are concerned with that which is of supreme significance and most profound in human life and relate to the most challenging dilemmas human beings face. These questions arise out of consciousness of our insecure position in the universe, our fear of death and difficulties with knowing how best to live. They highlight human uncertainties and the precariousness of life itself. Ultimate questions have arisen throughout human history and within all cultures. Answers may be either religious or non-religious. Irrespective of which form they take, they are heavily influenced by social, cultural, environmental and historical factors. Humanist answers reflect the powerful influence of the period in history known as the Enlightenment.

Worldview
This term has come into general usage from the German word ‘weltanschauung’, meaning a personal philosophy and comprehensive view of human life and the universe. It covers how a person or group sees, interprets and responds to the world. Religious worldviews are characterised by their supernatural features. Humanism has none of these features, so it is a non-religious ethical worldview.