

NOTES ON ISLAM

The 5 Pillars of Islam

The main items of religious practice:

1. The confession of faith. (“ There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his apostle and last prophet ”.)
2. Prayer, at five set times, daily.
3. Almsgiving
4. Fasting, especially during daylight hours of the month of Ramadan. The distribution of excess food to the poor, and also identification with the poor, i.e. charity .
5. Pilgrimage, if possible, at least once in a lifetime , to the holy city and shrine of Mecca (Saudi Arabia).

Concept of Jihad

In Arabic, literally, “ striving , or effort, in the Way of God “. But in the course of Islamic history acquired the connotation of “ Holy War” or conquest to expand the territory of Islam, as with the Christian crusades. Ultimately, the true Holy war or crusade is the inner war to master one’s own self, as depicted allegorically in *The Bhagavad Gita*

The Sunni / Shia Split

This was comparable to the split between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic church in Christianity in the 11th century. It revolved around the question of who inherited the mantle of authority from the founder, Muhammad. Ironically the two sects have coexisted peacefully for centuries and share many fundamental beliefs and