

## HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

The aim of this theme is to give readers an insight into some of the resources that different religions and worldviews have to offer on the issue of how the world and wider universe came into existence. This pack includes texts from Sikhi, Chinese and Muslim traditions.

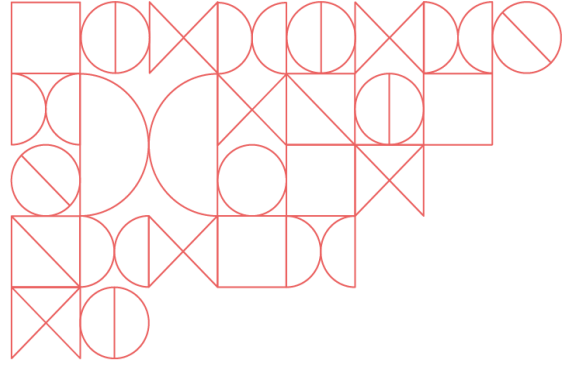
### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To increase teachers' subject knowledge about sacred texts and other significant carriers of meaning.
- To improve teachers' understanding of the practice of Scriptural Reasoning through active, personal and critical participation.
- To equip teachers with the confidence needed to apply their knowledge of Scriptural Reasoning to their own local school communities and contexts.
- To develop a mutually supportive community of learning.

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE (RUNNING A SCRIPTURAL REASONING SESSION)

- Gather a group of people- between 6-10 is ideal- from the communities for whom the texts are sacred or significant. Having at least two people from each community works well, as it allows the plurality within communities to come through. The group should have a facilitator whose main job it is to keep time and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- Each community takes it in turns to read their text aloud to the group in English and sometimes in the original language. Someone may give some background to the text for the benefit of those for whom it is unfamiliar.
- As a group, spend some time reflecting on one text. A good way to start a discussion is for each participant to mention a word or phrase that stands out to them. Participants may then ask questions for clarification or expand on their thoughts. In this way, an open and interactive discussion begins.
- Aim to spend an equal amount of time on each text.

For more guidance and resources, visit [www.scripturalreasoning.org](http://www.scripturalreasoning.org)



**Gurū Granth Sāhib  
3 and 276**

Akaal (God) created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word.

Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.

How can this creativity be described?

(Guru Granth Sahib 3)

Akaal created the entire Universe, including the Earth, solar systems and galaxies, billions of years ago, and the Universe is still being created and evolving ever since.

"Many millions are the fields of creation and galaxies.

Many millions are the skies and solar systems.

Many millions are divine incarnations.

Unfolded in so many ways.

Creation has been expanded so many times.

Forever and ever, the One, the One Universal Creator.

Many millions are created in various forms.

From Akaal they emanate, and into Akaal they merge once again.

No-one knows the limits.

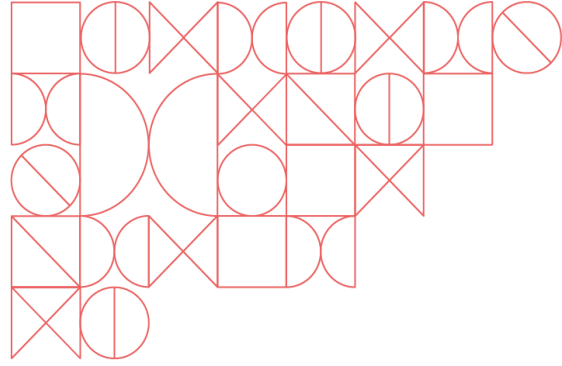
O Nanak, only Akaal exists."

(Guru Granth Sahib 276).

(This is not the only time Akaal has created the Universe; it has been done many times. Only Akaal is constant.)

**Introduction**

In the Sikh faith, the origin of the world is described multiple times in the Sikh scripture: the Gurū Granth Sāhib. The Gurū Granth Sāhib is written in poetic form that contains the actual words and verses as uttered by the Sikh Gurūs themselves. This extract is from different parts of the scripture and gives some insight into the Sikh perspective of how the world began.



## Chinese Mythology

The story Pangu Created Heaven and Earth (盘古开天地)

"The Most Beautiful Chinese Folklores" (最美最美的中国童话)

### Pangu Creates the World

Before time began, there was no sky, no earth, no light or sound. The whole universe was a mass of mixed substances in the shape of an egg. In the core of the egg, a titan, called Pangu, was born. He had been sleeping in the darkness for 18,000 years. One day, the titan Pangu woke up. He stretched his arms and the egg cracked. The substances inside were then released. The light air floated up and formed the sky. The heavy dust settled down and formed the earth. Pangu feared that the sky and the earth would come together again, so he used his hands to support the sky and pressed his feet down on the earth to keep them separated.

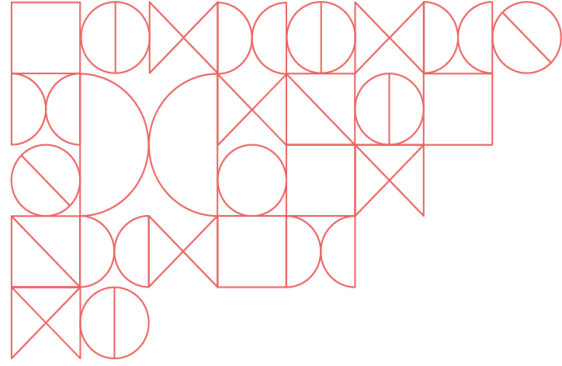
For the next 18,000 years, Pangu continued to hold them apart. Each day, the sky rose ten feet higher and the earth grew ten feet thicker, and Pangu grew ten feet taller. By the time the sky and the earth seemed to have stabilized, Pangu was very tired. He lay down to take a rest and fell asleep. He never woke up again.

After Pangu died, different parts of his body became different parts of the world. His arms and legs became the four directions; his breath, the wind and clouds; his blood, the oceans and rivers. His sweat became the rain; his veins, the roads; his flesh, the soil. His teeth and bones became the rocks; his marrow, the pearls and jades; his sweat, the rain; his voice, the thunder; his left eye, the sun; his right eye, the moon. The hair on his head became the stars. The skin and other hairs from his body became the grass and flowers. The vitality in Pangu, touched by the wind, turned into the common people. Thus came the dawn of the vigorous earth.

### Introduction

According to the Chinese lore, in the beginning there was nothing in the universe but a dark, formless chaos. When the mythic hero Pangu realized that he was confined to this dark and chaotic environment, he decided to break out to create order and the world as we know it.

The lore has a profound significance on Chinese culture and traditional values. Through the imagination of how the universe began in chaos and darkness and how a hero sacrificed himself to create a world of order and beauty, a worldview can be inferred that humans create everything in the world and thus are of central importance. This humanist perspective can also be observed in ancient Greece in the fifth century BCE, as a philosopher Protagoras said, "Man is the measure of all things."



## Qur'an

### Made Distinct, 41: 9-12

9 Say, 'How can you disregard the One who created the earth in two Days? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds!' 10 He placed solid mountains on it, blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four Days. 11 Then He turned to the sky, which was smoke—He said to it and the earth, 'Come into being, willingly or not,' and they said, 'We come willingly'—12 and in two Days He formed seven heavens, and assigned an order to each. We have made the nearest one beautifully illuminated and secure. Such is the design of the Almighty, the All Knowing.

Translation: Abdel Haleem

### Introduction

This passage is taken from chapter 41 of the Qur'an titled *Fussilat*, meaning elaborated, detailed or designed. This chapter was revealed in Mecca and takes its name from the second verse, which describes the Qur'an as a book whose verses are logically explained in Arabic recitation for the people who know.

There is no single creation story in the Qur'an. Rather, different aspects of creation are described throughout the scripture. Verses 9-11 occur after a series of questions addressed to those who doubt the origins of revelations. One of the answers to their doubts is the miracle of creation as explained in this passage.

Note that the term 'day' in the Quran does not always refer to 24 hours; for example, in verse 22:47, it is stated that a day in the sight of God is like a thousand years of our reckoning.