

## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER IN THE RELIGION

In **Islam** water is important for cleansing and purifying. In Islam ritual purity (called *tahara*) is required before carrying out religious duties especially *salat* (worship). This comes from the Koran 5: 7/8 "O you who believe, when you prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hand to the elbows; rub your head and your feet to the ankles" .-



In **Judaism** ritual washing is intended to restore or maintain a state of ritual purity and these ablutions can be washing the hands, the hands and the feet, or total immersion which must done in 'living water', i.e., the sea, a river, a spring or in a *mikveh*. A *mikveh* is a Jewish ritual bath used for cleansing after contact with a dead body or after menstruation.



## 2.3 Islam/Judaism/Shinto/Hinduism

**Ganges** waters are used in *puja* (worship) in **Hinduism** and if possible a sip is given to the dying. It is believed that those who bathe in the Ganges and those who leave some part of themselves (hair, bone etc) on the left bank will attain *Svarga* (the paradise of Indra). Funeral grounds are always located near a river. Sometimes at the funeral, a small hole is drilled in an earthen pot, which is then filled with water. As the son of the deceased walks around the burning funeral pyre with the pot, dripping water forms a limiting line to prevent the soul from escaping back into the earth as a ghost. When the heat of the pyre cracks the skull of the corpse, the mourners bathe in the river and return home. On the third day after the cremation, the ashes are collected and, on or after the tenth day they are cast into a holy river.



**Shinto** is Japan's indigenous religion and is based on the veneration of the *kami*. - the innumerable deities believed to inhabit mountains, trees, rocks, springs and other natural phenomenon. Worship of *kamis*, whether public or private, always begins with the all important act of purification with water.



Shinto Temple

Ganges (Ganga) is the celestial God in Hinduism. She descended from heaven to purify souls of relatives of Bhageeratha rishi. She uses Crocodile as her vehicle.

(PC bearing 1/4 anna stamp 19th April, 1905 delivered at Nagaur)

